

Roundtable Discussion Caring Democracy Panel: Can Markets be Caring?

July 15th, 2015 | 18:00 – 20:30 h
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | House 1 | Hiroshimastr. 17, 10785 Berlin

In 2015, the nexus between sustainability, care, and the political sphere remains widely disputed. Calls for structural changes within the economic system emphasize integrative and distributional aspects of sustainable development. In “Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice”, leading feminist political theorists Joan Tronto critically analyses whether markets are capable of “caring”.

Care work is predominately performed by women as an invisible activity “outside the market”, although it is essential to the proper functioning of market economies. However, attempts to measure care work in traditional economic terms tend to blur the ambiguities of care, even though they might succeed in rendering it more tangible. Setting a metric market value on care can significantly distort the ways in which caring responsibilities are socially perceived.

Institutions focusing on human needs are developing approaches to assess and evaluate care. The market, on the other hand, is blind and allocates resources on the basis of an individual’s market power, rather than on the basis of her or his needs. Thus, it further deepens inequality instead of alleviating it and fails to sufficiently serve freedom, equality, and justice.

It is therefore necessary to establish a sustainable and caring economy in which society adequately acknowledges and values caring activities. As Joan Tronto claims, “we need to look again at how gender, race, class, and market forces misallocate caring responsibilities and think about freedom and equality from the standpoint of making caring more just.” Care already forms the fundamental base of our human lives and should also be at the very core of democratic political life.

Main Questions

1. Which policy reforms are necessary to transform the ways in which caring responsibilities are carried out in order to achieve the freedom, equality, and justice needed to improve democracy?
2. How can we support and nurture a transition towards a caring democracy?

Draft Program

17:30 Registration

18:00 – 18:10 **Welcome & Introduction, Consultation Objective, and Program**
Cäcilie Schildberg, FES

18:10- 18:40 **Introduction to Caring Democracy**
Joan Tronto, University of Minnesota

18:40- 19:30 **Presentations and Expert Comments**
Valeria Esquivel, UNRISD (Moderator)
Comments on the presented thesis from a regional perspective (10 minutes each):

- Soledad Salvador, CEPAL, Uruguay
- Adriana Kemp, Tel Aviv University, Israel (tbc)
- Yumiko Yamamoto, UNDP, Asia- Pacific
- N.N, Trade Union, Global South

19:30- 20:30 **Open Discussion and Q&A**
Summary and wrap up of the session

20:00 Dinner reception

Conference Language: English

Translation English-Spanish will be provided.