Social Policy as Social Vaccine

This study takes the position that the involvement of democratic collective institutions (e.g. local organizations and governments at all levels) in setting societal priorities and directing resources towards achieving those priorities would avoid or mitigate many of the socioeconomic and health problems facing us today. It aims to show that comprehensive social policy could prevent the emergence of such problems and contain the problems that remain, effectively working as a social vaccine. The study uses macroeconomic panel data and socioeconomic indicators from OECD countries to empirically examine the relationships between indicators of population health and measures of social policy while controlling for relevant macroeconomic covariates. It finds that social security expenditure, public spending on education and labor market safeguards have favorable impact on population health outcomes such as mortality rates and life expectancies.