

ON RANKING OPPORTUNITY PROFILES

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The assessment of inequality in resource allocation by means of Lorenz preorders is both well-established for univariate distributions and highly problematic for multivariate ones. The main reason for such a state of affairs is the following: if the relevant variables are real-valued, the univariate case allows a natural *total* ordering of individual endowments, whereas any multivariate distribution, real-valued or otherwise, typically admits only *partial* rankings (e.g. dominance orderings) of the latter as natural and non-controversial. That problem also arises in a discrete setting namely when the resources to be allocated amount to a finite set of items/opportunities. That is so because it is by no means obvious if and how the non-controversial *set-inclusion partial preorder* might be extended to a *total* preorder of opportunity sets in order to define a Lorenz-like preorder of opportunity distributions amenable to characterizations via simple progressive Pigou-Dalton transfers as established by the classic Hardy-Littlewood-Polya theorem for real-valued (income) distributions. My presentation will be devoted to a critical review of the extant literature on the problem of importing such Lorenz-like preorders in finite settings.

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