

Ulrich Schachtschneider

Basic Income is Time Wealth

(for the blog: <https://calendarbygenb.wordpress.com>)

Niko Paech is right. Time is our most important resource. An overkill of products, consumption and events is hindering us to use our time for the things we describe as really necessary for a “good life”: For contemplative and creative leisure, free development of personality, real friendships for example. Even the economist John M. Keynes expected for his great-grandchildren “economic possibilities“ to have a weekly working time of fifteen hours – space for the freed life beyond necessities. So what went wrong when most people today need two or three times of labour time?

Niko Paech proposes half consumption and half gainful employment. Therewith he would nearly meet the vision from Keynes – when we talk about time. But Paech wants to use the freed 20 hours for subsistence: For the organisation of common use, maintenance and reparation as well as for own production. In this way everybody would become (more) independent from industrial production and from money.

But to which kinds of new dependencies from communities and networks does this lead? This problem rises in case of work for low wages or in precarious self-employment. Then even more than 40 laborious working hours could be possible.

Good life beyond growth even means a basic security of life. The less this is ensured the more economic activities will be hoped for, initiated, sustained only in fear of existence – without considering their ecological, social and individual costs. If we want degrowth we have to diminish economic pressure from the individual. The best way to do so is the unconditional basic income.

But how this can be arranged without enabling new consumer parties and creating new imperatives of growth? By financing the basic income through ecological fees for problematical use of environment (e.g. CO₂, scarce resources, nitrates) wasteful behaviour like buying many and short term products will become more expensive. The opposite will evolve with resource light lifestyles with much literacy, arts, communication etc. Beside this “alternative consumption” more people will test and probably learn to like new resource-light lifestyles of cooperation and the “less”. Today only avant-gardists have the heart to do so.

But most important: With such an Ecological Basic Income different ecologically correct lifestyles are possible. I can work high satisfied twenty hours as a specialist in the industry – whose products are even more resource light due to the transformation of relative prices – and additional ten hours subsistence work in my communities. But I can even work somewhere for money five hours a week in average and produce the rest 35 hours through own work alone and in my community. Basic income is time wealth – within and outside the sphere of gainful work. In both areas with the social security in our back we can (more) make what we want – what ever this means in detail.

To which shares of industrial, local, or subsistence work this will lead we cannot and must not know before in an open society. With its divorced cultures we cannot expect an unified life style. This is even not intended – we all have different ideas what personal development does mean. But we have to accept a maximum size of our ecological footprint – in average. Using ecological taxes this will be ensured and by the way we will get a nice “development lump sum” - or vice versa.

September 2015