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Ecological Basic Income for Social-Ecological Transformation: From Having to Have to Being Able to Be

In the current discourse, the Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) is mainly propagated as an automation dividend, poverty prevention, downward redistribution, de-bureaucratisation, creativity promotion as well as a democracy-promoting participation guarantee. These qualities are undoubtedly important arguments. However, the ecological question and a discussion of the effect of a UBI for a socio-ecological transformation are largely missing in the debate so far.

In this context, a basic income can set a process in motion in which the socially still dominant paradigm of productivism is pushed back. Productivism in this context means production as an end in itself: in order to maintain and create as many jobs as possible, economic growth is welcomed, hoped for and promoted.

More being-able in (gainful) work

How many productions or services that have long been recognised as ecologically harmful, socially dubious or hindering individual development are accepted today, if not promoted, because in the capital-dominated economy their personal economic existence is fundamentally linked to them? With an UBI behind them, everyone can say "no" to dubious work offers.

Economic activities that today are undertaken exclusively for the purpose of earning a living will become less attractive with the higher basic economic security provided by a basic income. People will then tend to (want to) participate only in those economic activities that make sense from their point of view - in ecological, social and self-fulfilling terms. They will become fewer, but more authentic: whatever gainful activities remain (or even emerge): they will be more in line with how people think and feel.

The UBI allows us to choose our individual mix of gainful employment, civic work and subsistence in a plural (gainful) employment society of the "many". I can work twenty hours a week in industry as a specialist and ten hours a week in subsistence and community work. But I can also work five hours a

week somewhere for money and produce 30 hours in the community or myself. Both fit the goal of a post-growth economy. It would be one that is compatible with the plurality of lifestyles, and even more: one that makes this plurality more possible.

Less have-to-have

The passport to productivism is consumerism. The attempt to fill the limited life on earth with a maximum of consumption and events, the "promise of acceleration" (Hartmut Rosa), has come under criticism in recent years. The desire for deceleration is not only emerging with a view to one's own quality of life; in the ecological debate, too, a resource-efficient lifestyle of less has been propagated for a long time. However, this appeal, which has been pursued for 20 years by many civil society and state institutions (e.g. the Federal Environmental Agency), has obviously not been translated into everyday practice to any significant extent beyond small avant-garde groups.

A UBI with its basic economic security can change that: It increases the space for trying out other lifestyles and gives everyone the opportunity to step out of the treadmill of "gainful employment-consumption-gainful employment", initially on a trial basis. The risk of failure or not being satisfied would not be as high as it is today, where giving up a job can mean the beginning of a long social decline. New lifestyles of "less", "time prosperity" and "together" would have a chance to be tried out and appreciated even beyond marginalised milieus or avant-gardes with higher problem awareness, self-efficacy expectations and risk acceptances.

The social psychologist Erich Fromm, an early advocate of basic income, wrote: "A psychology of scarcity generates fear, envy and egoism, [...]". A secure basic income creates the socio-psychological conditions for a feeling of abundance and thus for a deconsumerist attitude. Only beyond these fears of being left behind or of being left out could questions of meaning no longer be answered with an increase in the consumption of objects, holidays, relationships, etc.

Making "time prosperity" in gainful employment economically possible

If basic income is to promote the path from "having" to "being" (Fromm), its financing should not at the same time make this cultural change more difficult - at best it should support it. In order for more "being-orientation" to become possible in gainful employment, which is an essential part of our exchange with the social and material world, the monetary signals in the paid world of work must not run counter to this goal. Slowness must also be possible in the market-based economy without incurring economic disadvantages that threaten one's existence.

In order that time-consuming care for people and objects, the participatory development and design of product and production, as well as a personal development process within the framework of an activity with high quality demands is not impeded by the competition-related shortage of time in the world of gainful employment, it is necessary to change the relationship between taxes on labour (time) input and taxes on the use of resources. Those companies that emphasise these "being" orientations will have higher labour costs. However, in order to compete economically against the fast-moving, these extra labour costs may carry less weight than the resource cost savings they achieve through their time-consuming thoroughness. The energetically well-considered and leisurely renovation of a building, for example, will then be economically more attractive than a quick "botch-up" or even a new building, the train journey to a professional appointment will be cheaper than the flight and a daily visit with a personal conversation in the context of caring will be less costly than the purchase of an automatic medication dosing device with remote monitoring and computer-generated "dialogue".

The basic income should therefore be financed less from taxes on labour, but to a greater extent from levies on the consumption of scarce environmental resources. Such an "Ecological Basic Income" is not only a good combination of resource prices that tell the "ecological truth" with social security, but also makes the option of slowness, participation and quality more competitive in the sphere of gainful employment.

How can a Basic Income be financed?

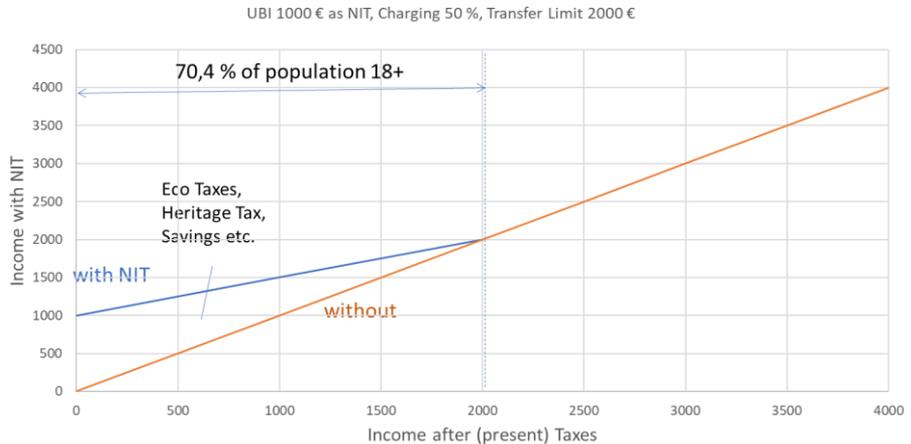
If it is paid out in full (e.g. 1000 € for all over 25, 400 € under 25) as a "social dividend", 829 billion would be needed. That is a gigantic sum, and many are waving it off at this point: Unfinanceable. It should be noted, however, that a full payout as a "social dividend" includes many left pocket-right pocket transactions. Someone pays €1000 more in taxes and gets a UBI of €1000.

Eco-Basic Income as Negative Income Tax

Basic Income	19,3 m.	< 25	400 €/month	93 bn
Basic Income	61,4 m	25+	1000 €/M.	736 bn
Basic Income	financial need as „Social Dividend“			829 bn
	financial need as Negative Income Tax (rough 50%)			415 bn
savings: former social subsidies	basic social subsidies students support, childrens money etc			-99 bn
	federal pension support			-77 bn
remaining				239 bn
	thereof eco fees and taxes			200 bn
	thereof e.g. heritage tax			39 bn

Or someone pays 400 € in taxes, gets them back and 600 € on top of the UBI of 1000 €. If these left pocket-right pocket transactions are automatically offset, we are at the principle of "negative income tax" (NIT). According to estimates, this reduces the effective additional amount to be raised by the state by about half. Of these 415 billion, 99 billion can be deducted from social benefits, which are now covered by a UBI, such as basic social subsidies, student loans, child benefits, etc. (figures from 2017). A pension subsidy from the federal budget is also no longer necessary. The remaining 239 billion should essentially be covered by eco-taxes. But there is room for manoeuvre here. If they are not sufficient, they can be supplemented: Through inheritance tax, an increase in the tax progression at the upper end ("wealth tax") or a wealth levy.

Basic Income as Negative Income Tax (NIT) with Transfer Limit



The Negative Income Tax is paid by the tax office up to a transfer limit. Here in the example, 50% of the income after (current) tax is taken into account.

- Ex: Earnings after tax: 1500 €, credit 750 €, NIT= 250 €.
- Ex: Earnings after tax: 0 €, imputation 0 €, NIT =1000 €.
- Ex: Earnings after tax: 2000 €, imputation 1000 €, NIT = 0 €, transfer limit.

If this rate (50% credit) is chosen, the poorer 70% will be better off after the introduction of the UBI. With other rates, this proportion changes accordingly.

Ecological Basic Income/ Eco-Bonus: A start is possible

- Switzerland: Steering Fee (since 2007):
Eco Bonus Pay Out 87 SF/Person (2020)
- Revenues from revised EU Emission Trade System:
Goal: 200 €/t CO₂, all sectors, 40% reduction:
EU: 500 bn/a
Germany: ca. 20%: 100 bn/a
200 €/t: +4 Ct/kWh natural gas, +60 Ct/ Liter fuel
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A tiny basic ecological income already exists in Switzerland, called the "steering tax". But it could be much larger if problematic environmental consumption were priced in a demanding way. Here is an estimate of how high the revenues from ambitious emissions trading could be:

If all sectors are included, a 40% reduction in emissions would result in annual revenues of about 100 billion for Germany.

In this context, it is initially not decisive at which level emissions trading takes place: Europe or Germany. Most of it currently takes place at the European level. Most of the Eco Basic Income (or Eco-Bonus) would then come from Brussels. This would strengthen the feeling of a social Europe and European citizenship ("I get something from my European eco-social European state") without directly introducing a new tax for it. Of course, it is indirectly financed by the people with the biggest footprint. The need for Germany for a basic income according to the NES principle of about 200 billion can be provided by including other problematic environmental consumptions (e.g. land consumption, fish, raw materials).

A first step is the introduction of a "Transition Income", the right to e.g. 3 years of basic income in life. The financing requirement is much lower, and UBI can already be tried out and appreciated.