

LOCALLY UNIVERSAL: UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME POLICIES IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD-ORDER

JULIO LUCCHESI MORAES
Université de Saint-Boniface (Canada)
jlucchesi@ustboniface.ca

CARLOS FREIRE
Independent Scholar
freire@psu.edu

Abstract: Rampant disparities within the capital/labor share, increased pressure on climatically vulnerable communities and mass international migration due to economic hardship or violence. All that without mentioning the ever-haunting specter of automation-induced unemployment and, finally, the outbreak of a world-reaching pandemic: these are some of the ongoing cataclysmic trends that are making an ever-increasing number of academics, policymakers and multilateral organizations revisit the adoption of Universal Basic Income (UBI) models. The idea of furnishing guaranteed, unconditional and universal basic income for people within an assigned geographical locality – and potentially the entire globe – has ebbed and flowed from the pages of authors of all walks of the political spectrum for over two centuries. It appears, though, that such an idea is regaining *momentum* at this point in history, a somewhat unexpected moment, given the worldwide rise of nationalistic and illiberalism worldviews. The ambition of this proposal is not to promote an exhaustive comparative assessment of competing proposals currently taking place – or being aspired at – around the world. Instead, this working paper stands as an introductory effort to be followed by a more robust case study of existing schemes, which should bind them under the theories of *Multipolarity*. This proposal launches the cornerstone of a debate assessing the concrete costs and political coordination challenges that are likely to arise in a scenario of massive and ideally genuine universal effort to start or scale-up existing UBI initiatives through the deployment of digital financing techniques, including its most disruptive variations such as cryptocurrencies.

Keywords: Universal Basic Income, sustainable development goals, cryptocurrencies, Covid-19, digital finance.

ISSN 2283-7949
GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION
2020, 2, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2020.2.4
Published online by "Globus et Locus" at <https://glocalismjournal.org>



IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD – WHICH ONE, THOUGH? UBI AND ITS RHETORIC

Universal basic income (UBI), Citizens’ dividend, social wage, demogrant, negative income tax, basic capital, but also citizenship income, state bonus or stabilization grant – an ever-expanding vortex of letters, words and signifiers whose mere enunciation evoke both the sum of all fears and the cure for all ills. UBI – in its playful and quasi-divine promises – seems to be an acronym better fit for a fantastic short-story devised by the creative pen of Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges than the pages of legal texts or macroeconomic handbooks. An everlasting pecuniary provision to secure dignified subsistence for all, no matter who, where or how, no matter for how many or how long and, above all, no matter why. Could this indeed be the land of milk and honey, the manna-tree forests depicted in ancient biblical scriptures or the ultimate answer to the political question proposed by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (“What would it mean to come to a genuine, unforced international consensus on human rights?” (Taylor 1996).

And, if so, how do we move past the critical breaking zone of distrust? How do we supersede local cultural differences and bigotries and put forward a shared program for a shared human angst? How can we truly operationalize such policies and, at the same time, securing the emancipatory potentialities of this agenda on a truly global scale? Should we not (in a somewhat dystopian framework) see that the existence of a quasi-universal ethical consensus¹ on the merits of such a proposal might, paradoxically, be the reason why it will be everlastingly disputed and maybe even unadopted?

Claiming the socioeconomic merits of UBI is as easy and as divisive as claiming the natural entitlement to any other universalistic prerogative (Adami 2012; Franzoni, Sánchez-Ancochea 2016; Kildal, Kuhnle 2005; Shijun 2009). And yet, to paraphrase the famous passage from George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, the unpleasant reality is that all universalistic programs are equal, but some are more equal than others (Laclau et al. 2000). For that reason, it is precisely the “U” component of the UBI agenda in its differential – not to say ideologically opposing –

epistemological points of view that which our article intends to problematize. We believe that the existence of heterogeneous theoretical apparatuses to justify the implementation of UBI is not, in any way, neutral and that the theoretical and political polyphony (or equivocity) does pose a significant hindrance to an effective realization of UBI on a global level.

The acknowledgment of differential variations of universalisms makes it possible to identify some distinct – although not always explicit – analytical assumptions. Despite claiming to be for all, UBI policies emanate from preconceived – and often unannounced or even subconscious – categories of recipients deemed ideal. As a result, even in a hypothetical scenario where UBI is fully implemented, the transformative outcomes would qualitatively differ from one place, person, or cultural environment to another. This paradoxical diagnosis does not necessarily stem from the distinct starting points of participants but from the equally important mobilization of locally articulated operative (qua intermediate) categories and terminologies (Coutinho 2014). Again, all universalisms are equal, but some will always be more equal than others. Thus, a UBI policy designed to reach individuals will be inherently distinct from competing versions whose target audiences are – whether they have been explicitly determined or not – families, citizens, children, elders, women, minorities, members of a given social classes, workers from a given economic sector, inhabitants of a specific region, practitioners of a particular creed and so on. Furthermore, as we wish to further discuss, this is a field of no neutral or merely technical options (Habermas 1970).

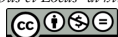
In a journey where the cargo carried is nothing less than humankind and its dignity, every single decision is critical. If the devil is in the details, small choices such as which cash transfer system is to be deployed to proceed with payments, which programming code is to be employed and which media is to be used to broadcast the program and announce its results are only a few out of a number of elements that may determine either the total success or the utter failure of the project. It would be of utmost naivety to believe assume that changes in the flow of resources would maintain unaltered ex-



isting sociopolitical pillar much endeared by the status quo and its supporting institutions. Perhaps the most candent example would be to conceive the effects of a radical shift of power relations in places severely marked by gender roles, where women have restricted autonomy within the economic domain.

Under the shadow of so many flaws, caveats and potential backlashes (some of which have already mapped, others being still completely unforeseeable), and before the possibility of such a weak and pallid outcome, one tends to question whether UBI could indeed be upheld. It is, after all, a limited attack on economic hardship by means of a process of unequal equalization of money. This notwithstanding, supporting arguments abound, varying as much as the political position of the UBI proponents behind them. Perhaps that is due to the fact that, given the context of massive and traumatic human displacement, automation-induced unemployment and, finally, a game-changing world pandemic, one should also concede it is fair to ask whether a program based on the unequal distribution of equity is not better – or at least less damaging – than the [non]alternative offered by the status quo of international capitalism in one of its most perverse [by?]products: the universalization of wealth inequalities within and amongst countries.

Thus, our intellectual ambition here is to further ingrain the promise that an increase in the number of debates on this topic might, eventually, lead to: *a*) the widespread demystification of the nature and ambitions of such programs through the presentation of differential justificatory lines for their implementation; *b*) an enhanced comprehension of the distinct emancipatory levels each of these programs may bring (or, conversely, hinder); and, finally, *c*) a Panglossian call for minimal levels of international coordination within the topic, an appeal which does not entail *convergence* or absolute standardization when it comes to the design, application or replication of said programs regarding their local, national or supranational inflections.



THE CORE OF THE HYSTERIA, HYSTERIA AT THE CORE: UBI AND/IN THE WEST

Pointing the exact historical origins of the UBI debate is as controversial as defining a flawless or universally applicable model. Less divisive, however, is acknowledging that this agenda is gaining traction worldwide and has been translated into different national or even sub-national sociopolitical grammars as the data presented here shows.

Figure 1 depicts the monthly searches conducted worldwide on the World Wide Web through the most popular online search engine (Google) for “UBI” and UBI-related terms between January 2004 and June 2020. Despite its simplicity and methodological problems², this seems to be a relatively reliable proxy method of measuring the increasing and geographically scattered interest on the topic. Interest on the topic has also skyrocketed in the last two months (March and April 2020)³.

Even with its potential shortcomings, the information on queries performed on this leading online search engine allows for a more refined understanding of the issue. For instance, we can assert that UBI has been (and remains) a concern predominant in developed economies. By analyzing figure 2, which shows the amount of searches sorted by their internet protocol addresses (IPs) location up until March 2020⁴, one can clearly see that most of the searches have originated from developed regions of the globe, namely EU-Members (the UK excluded), which were responsible for 29.9 per cent of the total and other developed localities such as Australia and New Zealand, which combined corresponded to 10.0 per cent of the searches, followed by Canada (9.9 per cent), the United Kingdom (5.0 per cent) and the United States (4.7 per cent). Despite this, interest among emerging nations has also been substantial. From the 2,590 identified searches on the proposed topics, 520 (20.1 per cent) of them occurred in devices located within the Global South, where India (4.6 per cent), the Philippines (2.9 per cent) and Kenya (2.2 per cent) have been the most active localities⁵.

ISSN 2283-7949

GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION

2020, 2, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2020.2.4

Published online by “Globus et Locus” at <https://glocalismjournal.org>



Some rights reserved

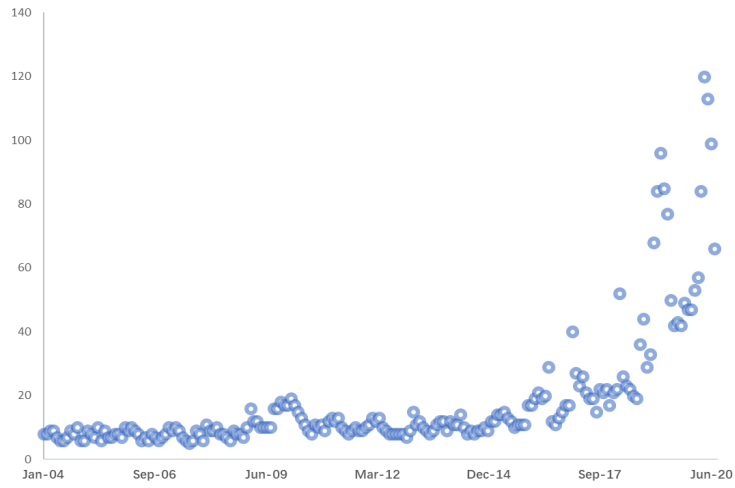


Fig. 1. UBI and Ubi-Related searches on Google (all Countries).

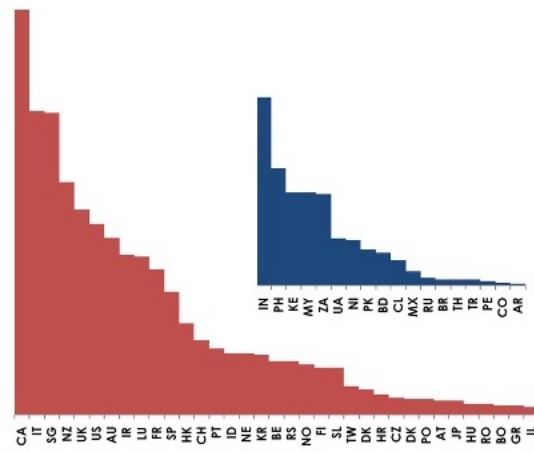


Fig. 2. Searches by Country and by developmental stage of countries.

Source: Google trends, compiled by the Authors.

At this point, it is necessary to indicate the obvious and fundamental implication of this hypothesis. As a candent political topic, UBI (perhaps more than any other matter within the economic domain) is virtually unapproachable without serious consideration of the locally, nationally, or regionally constrained intellectual traditions as well as embedded sociopolitical frameworks. Regardless of that, one could question if the geographical concentration of such debates within the Global North might not end up engendering some form of epistemicide within the Global South (Santos 2016). Our argument here is that even the most trivial – and allegedly neutral – methodological choice (e.g.: how to compose a statistically significant sample to run a pilot study or how to define money, cash, income, basic needs, etc.) will be saturated with local (or, perhaps, more accurately, glocal) politico-ideological layers.

This inherent localized nature of UBI does not mean that references to non-national experiences are absent from the literature, much on the contrary. Our argument, however, is that in selecting certain places in particular (such as Finland, Alaska or even Canada) to serve as paragons and as exemplary experiments, several authors behind the UBI agenda seem to be applying a rhetorical strategy in an attempt to be heard by their peers, policymakers and by the general audience. As a result, UBI frequently appears indexed to a bestiary of eccentric – or, from the standpoint of most countries, truly chimeric – socioeconomic patterns construed by the inhabitants and policymakers of yonder regions of the globe⁶. The practical implications of working under this ideological ditch between idealized hyper-developed places (against the rest of the World) are particularly harmful when it comes to advancing the UBI agenda.

THE “NATURAL” NEXT STEP: RISKS OF LIBERAL CAPTURE

The core of the liberal concern revolves around the logical *deduction* of the potential merits of the UBI project. As it operates from the perspective of a teleological narrative, the liberal

UBI seems to be the natural next step of advanced societies in their ever-expanding developmental journey – or, in Marxist terms, the unfolding of capital accumulation. This accumulation, in its turn, is now found hindered by technological unemployment, which translates into a potential decrease in the consumer spending capacity. This approach has its grounds on traditional micro and macroeconomic modeling, indicating how UBI would fit within such academically consecrated theoretical frameworks (Standing 2017; Widerquist et al. 2005).

We further argue that the zealous mathematical rigor deployed by some of the intellectual exercises (usually performed by mainstream economists) devoted to the issue (Colombino 2010, 2015; Sommer 2016; Tcherneva 2017) seems to be related to this persuasive strategy, i.e., an informed attempt to indicate the validity and the pertinence of UBI programs beyond the mythical walls of idealized modern-day *Valhallas*.

Another group of authors – which we could label as reformists – also place UBI within a teleological debate. Despite operationalizing their narrative within major liberal categories (individual freedom, for instance), they diverge in their hope to, in a way, reserve a separate locus for UBI outside – at least partially outside- the universe of economics. Variations of these debates can be seen in the approximation of UBI to the discussions on Social Justice (Parijs 2009), Human Development (qua Amartya Sen’s debate on human capabilities) (Yamamor 2004) or Human Rights (Birnbbaum 2010, 2012, 2013; Kobak 2016).

ECLECTICISM: IS UBI A TOPIC IN THE LEFTIST FRONT?

Differential positions also occur when the topic is framed from the leftist perspective. Again, debates take place within a heterogeneous spectrum, with some authors defending conceptual proximity of the issue to the original Marxist project (Howard 2002) some praising it on the grounds of Utopian Socialism (Cunliffe, John 2001) and some debating it through the lenses of a hypothetical post-capitalist phase of human his-

tory (Davies 2017). Finally, we have identified a series of UBI debates emanating from the universe of Labor Unionism and its concern over employment and potential threats to other existing social benefits. UBI could, in this sense, be even conceived as a degenerated form of austerity (Coote, Yazici 2019; Ortiz et al. 2018; Public Employees 2017).

Still within the leftist critique, UBI has found a prominent place in Feminist thinking (Koslowski, Duvander 2018; Lakeman et al. 2004; Schulz 2017; Terbonßen 2017). From a gendered perspective, the true promises of UBI relate to its potential to break societal unbalances. According to this interpretation, a guaranteed income could reduce the unequal efforts within areas such as unpaid labor (care economics). In some cases, UBI appears as some sort of price tag towards the promotion of true gendered egalitarianism. Guaranteed income figures serve, in a way, as a form of financial atonement for structurally diminished levels of women's (or other individuals discriminated with regards to their gender or sexual orientation, such as LGBTQ+) agency.

Without leaving the realms of Utopianism, we can further explore an argument on a potential transatlantic divide in UBI debates (Callan et al. 1999; Martinelli 2017). In addition to the North-South axis, transnational projections also materialize through a mainly North American idealization of the Western European Welfare model. Intriguingly enough, while still operationalizing through individualized payments, UBI appears in these works somewhat like an antidote against the disintegration of societal and/or communal ties. The epistemological atomism which constitutes the sheer kernel of mainstream (North-American) Economic Thought is substituted by some degree of societal aggregation, which could mean a region, a nation, a continent or, in its most ambitious propositions, the entire planet (Bay, Pedersen 2006; Christensen 2002; McGahey, Stiglitz 2018; Moss et al. 2019). It is precisely in this varying method of aggregating persons and regions that differences may appear.

The final position we present in this tour-de-force of Western reflections around UBI is what we, the authors, are choosing to call the consensualist approach. This approach

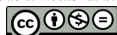


aims precisely at diminishing friction between the diverging interpretations by proposing a unified (Gramsci-esque?) defense for UBI regardless of its informing rationality. A provoking thought would then be to question up to which point this alleged universal defense of UBI is not embedded in the ideological premises of a specific (namely Western) Universalism, informed – consciously or not – by the communalistic values of Christianity, both in its Catholic and Protestant variations (Boraks 2018).

COMPETING UNIVERSALITIES: THE RISKS OF POPULISTIC CAPTURE OF UBI WITHIN AND BEYOND THE WEST

This is, indeed, a remarkably interesting aspect of the debate. As a matter of fact, this is precisely where UBI starts being confronted by strong and perhaps insurmountable ideological confrontation. Despite being universal in its name, UBI demands the constitution – both at the concrete and the unconscious level – of some sense of commonality (or community). In fact, it is no wonder that UBI is not unusual in the right or even the far-right political ambiances (Roosma 2020). Therefore, it is not implausible to envision the topic being somehow appropriated by right-wing regionalist or nationalist partisans to maintain localized (nationally, religiously, or regionally based) group cohesion. The outcome of these feuds might be the surge of parallel models, each claiming in some surreal fashion to have a better (more universal) model than their rivals and their competing (alternative) versions. It stands to reason that the greatest challenge within this agenda will then precisely be finding and then retaining a truly universalistic ambition.

The identification with a Christian-inspired axiological matrix – even in its subtle variations – ascribes a whole additional layer of complexity to the UBI agenda. If all of our arguments on the ideological contours of this debate are to be considered, it would be naive to believe there are not latent religious-based arguments surrounding the implementation of



this policy. In the lack of our ambition to assess the concurrent religious-based arguments against the others, it would be more productive to problematize up to which extent the UBI debate stresses one of the capital Western liberal democratic pillars: the religion-state divide. This split will be considered here under the perspectives of both the realm of academic reflection and the views of policy design and implementation. It is worth noting at this point that allowing religious morality(ies) to enter the debate have substantial epistemological implications.

UBI ends up finding itself right in the eye of the biggest theoretical conundrum of our times, Multiculturalism. A possible and hopefully productive approach to this topic is the mobilization of the debates which contemplate the several modalities of universalism as proposed by concepts such as cosmopolitanism (Benhabib 2006) or to give way to Global South Epistemologies (Santos 2016). There are some benefits in widening the analytical approach to better accommodate regionalized variations to the UBI debate, especially when it comes to addressing what has been deemed last-mile challenges⁷. On the other hand, abandoning the ambitions (at the theoretical level) of truly universally accorded goals poses the caveat of validating localized or perhaps ultra-localized worldviews which might be in severe disaccord with the sheer principles of equality carried by the UBI agenda, at least in its Western variation.

A brief review of the specialized bibliography indicates that this type of culturally intensive approach has indeed been increasing. It is certainly interesting to reflect, for instance, on the elective affinities which are being portrayed between the contemporary Chinese (neo-Confucian, yet communist) Welfare model and its own locally developed UBI model, the Dibao (Gao 2017; Golan et al. 2015; Solinger 2014, 2015). There has also been an academic exploration on the compatibilities between the Qur'anic knowledge and the provision of basic income within the Islamic world (Bullock, Al-Shami 2019; Salehi-Isfahani, Mostafavi-Dehzoeei 2017; Suplicy 2008; Tabatabai 2012). Under the risk of performing a massive generalization, we could also point out approximations of debates



exploring the potentialities of UBI, social security and traditional African epistemologies such as the umbrella and transnationally shared philosophy of Ubuntu (Barid et al. 2010; Haushofer, Shapiro 2016; Pal et al. 2005). As for the Latin-American context, the natural connection occurs through already existing family-based Conditional Cash Transfer programs such as those developed by Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and, perhaps the most paradigmatic case, the Brazilian *Bolsa Família* (Freitas 2017; Paiva, Henrique 2012).

As a final example within this list, we could mention the polarized debate that took place in the 2019 Indian elections. The now opposition party, the Congress and its president Rahul Gandhi proposed the biggest UBI project in the globe to date, targeting no less than 20 per cent of the entire country's population (Coady, Prady 2018; Davala et al. 2015; Ortiz et al. 2018). Curiously, the situation party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also proposed a variation of UBI focusing, by its turn, on rural communities. It is not only the socioeconomic fate of the country that lodges a fifth part of humankind that is at stake: the embracement of the topic by two main opposing political groups (one of which is heavily attached to a religion-based nationalistic ideology) indicated how, by the end of the day, the parental dispute over the “final assault on poverty”⁸ is what really appears to be on the line. Even more importantly, it means deciding which version of it will eventually come to fruition and how far it will be from religious justifications.

DIGITAL CURRENCIES: PROMISE OF A LINGUA-FRANCA?

It seems important to discuss that, due to the inability of machines to deal with the fuzzy edges of both natural languages and socioeconomic norms, it stands to reason that the digitalization (OECD 2018) of our financial systems will require some effort towards standard protocols such as those that served as cornerstones for the Internet and the World Wide Web (OECD 2018). This analogy is flawed since most

digital financial systems today are composed of proprietary silos confined inside large and mainly private organizations while the Internet remains open and supported by a non-profit ethos (McKee et al. 2015). The authors of this paper maintain, though, that competing ontologies (Bruin et al. 2018) regarding both the degree of openness and the inner-workings of these emerging digital finance ecosystems will also depend on a higher-level consensus that precludes the simplistic (and, again, naively techno-optimistic) efficiency-based approach.

In a brave new world of wild potentialities (there including true chances of massive and coordinated eradication of poverty and economic hardship at a global scale), there are approaches yet to be consolidated, economic precepts yet to be codified within structures that can either reinforce the ongoing apparatus or open up for augmented (transparent, horizontally-distributed, democratic etc.) possibilities. The confinement of a financial structure inside a digitized environment does not erase its complexities. If anything, it poses additional challenges (also geopolitical ones, as current debates on the rise of the Digital Yuan clearly indicate) (Clark 2006; Kuleimenov 2014).

Optimistically, it is precisely in solving those challenges that exciting possibilities might arise. An interesting connecting avenue between UBI and digital finance seems to be their shared iterative nature: considering no digital interface is fully accomplished in its first version, digital *UBI* schemes should, therefore, be seen within the framework of learning-by-doing. Just like any other software or app, UBI schemes would constantly be subject to upgrades and ameliorations.

As a matter of fact, even a seemingly stable edifice such as the concept of money is being upended by the digitization of finance (B.I.S. 2017). Three-quarters of a century after Bretton Woods and almost five decades after the Nixon shock, we might be on the verge of a new wholesale overtaking of the global monetary system, a situation only amplified by the current situation of pandemic and, perhaps even more problematic, the ongoing trade war between China and the US. This is an inflection that should not go unnoticed by proponents of



UBI. The new taxonomy of money adapted from the (mainstream) Bank for International Settlements (2017) is a useful shorthand to evaluate new types of functional intersections (see figure 3). Debates about the implementation of UBI should not shy away from these technical challenges, much on the contrary: technological literacy may open new avenues to cope with the new fiduciary international environment through inventive – and hopefully – socially inclusive techniques. In times of COVID-19 and pleas for social distancing, nothing would be more bizarre than developing a bricks and mortars policy, demanding presential, i.e., non-digital, attendance.

Even the most disruptive variations of money such as the electronic peer-to-peer currencies (commonly referred to as “cryptocurrencies” – since their existence hinges on computational cryptography) tend to fit the bill for UBI reasonably well: they are socially scalable, openly distributable, self-organizing, censorship-resistant and have minimal trust requirements regarding security (Nakamoto 2008). They are also trending up in mainstream adoption and awareness, following perhaps a more eventful path in the trail of reports about Bitcoin and its price fluctuations. The fascination with both cryptocurrencies and UBI makes the pairing of the two almost inevitable in the mind of the general public, although there is only thin literature on the subject. The “pie in the sky” vision of UBI distributed in universally accepted cryptocurrency may entice the imagination of the cypherpunk and social reformists out there, but it is our understanding that economic systems are filtered through social constructs and traditions will resist sweeping takeovers⁹.

The technocrat’s dream of an entire world defined by computer code, is both fascinating and daunting in the same. Fascinating because computer code is orders of magnitude more adaptable than social constructs, but daunting because the nexus of control sits squarely in the hands of a fairly inscrutable elite. Worse still, can be even more easily hijacked by bad actors, including single individuals, nation states and rogue groups. Future threads include rogue systems since the rise of artificial intelligence is happening on a parallel track of the digital currency revolution.



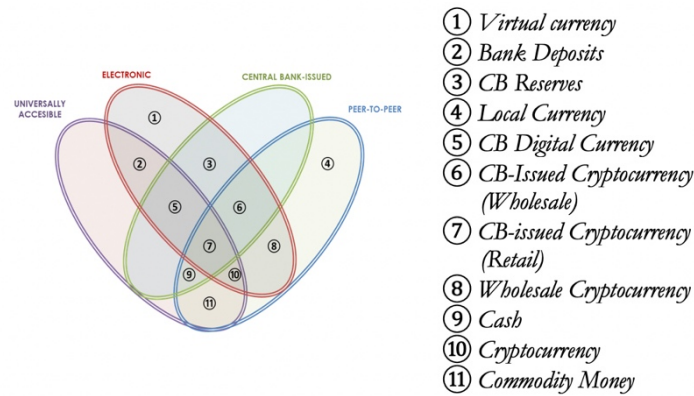


Fig. 3. *The Money-Flower: a taxonomy of Money.*

Source: BIS (2017: 59-60). Adapted by the Authors.

Despite also having interesting implications in other areas, we wish to further explore cryptocurrencies regarding how they relate to UBI and the logistics involved as well as the costs for the allocation of resources. For instance, if the processing costs (measured as cents per dollar sent) for distributing a stipend via cryptocurrency wallets are significantly lower than that by mobile payments, this might be enough to tip the balance in favor of the technology.

Diverse in their scope, budget and objectives, UBI projects throughout the world also vary based on engagement and the existing degree of (dis)trust in traditional finances and financial institutions. The more the possibilities provided by the digital environment stretch up our very (and shared) concept of money and currency; the more plastic our thoughts about UBI initiatives need to be. As the UBI agenda gains traction worldwide, it may be mature to start acknowledging the possibilities of non-convergent solutions – at least when it comes to its technical components.

Devising a way to distribute financial resources will also give sufficient push to other key infrastructure developments, namely access to the power grid, access to telecommunication

networks, access to the Internet, access to cheaply manufactured mobile devices, access to intelligent automation and other artifacts that we deem common in the developed world, but only trickle down to large, impoverished populations.

FINAL REMARKS

This article promoted some preliminary exploration on the differential justifications revolving the burgeoning concept of Universal Basic Income (UBI). Simultaneously lauded as the potential cure for all ills and condemned as the sum of all fears, UBI appears to be a polemic topic, enveloped – almost because of its sheer nature – by thick ideological layers. The authors see the broadening of this agenda with mildly positive eyes; an increase in thematic debates (both within and outside the realms of Academia and of policy-making) tends to translate into a salutary naturalization (demystification) on fundamental topics such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals or, more broadly, the practical possibilities of securing dignified living for all human beings, regardless of their origin, condition or jurisdiction.

At the same time, surge of national (or regional) variations should also be regarded with caution, given the risks of what we have identified as risks of populist capture of the topic, a situation which could, in a strange way, compromise the entire idea on the UBI political edifice. Local adjustments are justifiable for pragmatic reasons since UBI schemes must inevitably operate within localized sociopolitical structures and arrangements. The invitation to internationally alternative models, however, must never overlook the potential caveats of settling extreme levels of cultural relativism, under the risk of validating discriminatory frameworks or eventually losing the central ambition of the whole project, i.e., securing support for all.

In the first sessions, we have briefly visited several competing models, indexing our journey to the ideological affiliation of their proponents. Our evaluation was that the concurrent existence of debates within the liberal, social democrat or even new traditional bibliographies might become a real barrier.

er towards the effective implementation of models on a greater scale. We have also proposed here some tentative approximations between UBI and emerging debates on digital finance, there including its most disruptive versions such as those proposed by defendants of cryptocurrencies. Again, these propositions should be seen with cautious optimism. Debates are never purely technical and all ambitions of such levels of alleged technological neutrality should be abandoned, lest we be naive.

As a final remark, the authors suggest that one more degree of complexity be added: the systemic nature of the global markets and its two main mobile factors: labor and capital or, more specifically, the challenges connected to securing UBI within a landscape marked by mass migration, intense fluxes of capital and illiberalism. The hypothesis we wish to explore in a following paper is that the world might, indeed, start registering a multiplication of UBI models within the next years. Curiously, – so will we argue – this phenomenon might derive precisely from the multiplication of models at a global scale. We will propose that the topic be viewed through the dynamic lenses of Multipolarity. We will then understand how domestic economic policies are never truly local, in the sense that they are either *a*) responding to the international environment or *b*) effectively trying to induce changes in other fiscal jurisdictions (a quite relevant topic in times of “trade wars”). Just like climate change or the process of digitalization, we will debate how countries might end up finding UBI-related exits not out of choice, but out of necessity (as “responses” to international, “rival” models). As our final words, we advocate that some level of international coordination – even at its most basic, regulatory, or technical areas – should be achieved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A preliminary version of this paper has been presented at the 14th World Association for Political Economy Conference (“Class, State and Nation in the Twenty-Fifth Century”) and submitted to the 2019 International Conference on Sustainable Development (ICSD) (“Good Practice: Models, Partnerships, and Capacity Building

ISSN 2283-7949

GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION

2020, 2, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2020.2.4

Published online by “Globus et Locus” at <https://glocalismjournal.org>



Some rights reserved

for the SDGs”) and the UN Secretary-General announced the Task Force for Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals.

NOTES

¹ A consensus whose (ethical) validity seems not only to be acknowledged by almost every culture but also whose beneficial promises appear to be simply “blowing in the wind” (Suplicy 2008).

² Google did improve its data capturing accuracy after 2016, thus explaining the subtle shift in this year.

³ See the note below.

⁴ The authors have decided to maintain regionalized data in March 2020 (and not a later period), given the relative oscillation of searches on the period derived, precisely, due to the outburst of the pandemic. There has been a massive increase in searches on the topic on certain localities, but in order to properly account for them, we would need to consider their national names (the Italian *Reddito di Cittadinanza* or the *Canada Emergency Response Benefit*).

⁵ For visual simplicity, we have deployed 2 Digit ISO codes to represent the countries. For aggregative purposes, France includes both its main European Territory and its maritime possession, such as Réunion Island. Readers should also take in mind that there is a linguistic bias in these searches, since searchers departing from non-anglophone would most likely use vernacular terms such as *renda minima*, *revenu de base* etc.

⁶ Again, Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges is a handful reference, in his (poetical) statement from a 1974 interview, when he states that “Canada is so far away it hardly exists”.

⁷ A fundamental area of research, in this case, relates to securing dignified methods of payments and reception of UBI resources, avoiding stigmatization or shame. There is, in this sense, a substantial amount of academic discussion on how to properly design programs which are “shame-proof”. The role of digitization should not be diminished within this domain.

⁸ This is way through which Congress President Rahul Gandhi referred to his party’s proposal, the NYAY (Nyuntam Aay Yojana, or Minimum Income Plan, an acronym which, in Hindi, also means “Justice”).

⁹ An interesting research topic would encompass a spectrum analysis of these two propositions against the varying backdrop cultural customs, financial and technological readiness and economic suitability.

REFERENCES

R. Adami (2012), *Reconciling Universality and Particularity through a Cosmopolitan Outlook on Human Rights*, in “Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal”, 4, 2.

S. Barid, E. Chirwa, R. Garfein, C. McIntosh, B. Ozler (2010), *The Impact of Cash Transfers on the Educational Attainment, Sexual Behavior, and HIV Status of Adolescent Girls in Malawi* (World Bank).

ISSN 2283-7949

GLOCALISM: JOURNAL OF CULTURE, POLITICS AND INNOVATION

2020, 2, DOI: 10.12893/gjcp.2020.2.4

Published online by “Globus et Locus” at <https://glocalismjournal.org>



Some rights reserved

- A.H. Bay, A.W. Pedersen (2006), *The Limits of Social Solidarity: Basic Income, Immigration and the Legitimacy of the Universal Welfare State*, in "Acta Sociologica", 49, 4, pp. 419-436.
- S. Benhabib (2006), *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty and Democratic Iterations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- S. Birnbaum (2010), *Radical Liberalism, Rawls and the Welfare State: Justifying the Politics of Basic Income*, in "Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy", 13, 4, pp. 495-516.
- S. Birnbaum (2012), *Basic Income Reconsidered: Social Justice, Liberalism and the Demands of Equality* (London, New York: Palgrave).
- S. Birnbaum (2013), *Self-Ownership, Liberal Neutrality and the Realm of Freedom: New Reflections on the Justification of Basic Income*, in "Jurisprudence", pp. 344-357.
- B.I.S. (2017), *BIS Quarterly Review: International banking and financial market developments*, in "September BIS Quarterly Review", pp. 55-67.
- B. Boraks (2018), *Plenary presentation: the very real realities of convergence*, in "NABIG".
- B.D. Bruin, L. Herzog, M. O'Neill, J. Sandberg (2018), *Philosophy of Money and Finance*, in "The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy".
- K. Bullock, A. Al-Shami (2019), *Islamic Perspectives on Basic Income*, in "The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences", 36, 1, pp. 29-52.
- T. Callan, C. O'Donoghue, H. Sutherland, M. Wilson (1999), *Comparative Analysis of Basic Income Proposals: UK and Ireland*, in "Microsimulation Unit Research Note MU/RN/31".
- E. Christensen (2002), *Feminist Arguments in favour of Welfare and Basic Income in Denmark*, in "9th International Congress on Basic Income. Geneva, September 2002", pp. 12-14.
- S. Clark (2006), *Ein Grundeinkommen für Russland?*, in M. Füllsack (Hrsg.), *Globale soziale Sicherheit. Grundeinkommen – weltweit?* (Hamburg: Avinus).
- D. Coady, D. Prady (2018), *Universal Basic Income in Developing Countries: Issues, Options, and Illustration for India*, in "IMF Working Papers".
- U. Colombino (2010), *Alternative Basic Income Mechanisms: An Evaluation Exercise with a Microeconomic Model*, in "CHILD Working Papers".
- U. Colombino (2015), *Ugo, Five Crossroads on the Way to Basic Income: an Italian Tour*, in "Italian Economic Journal", 1, 3, pp. 353-389.
- A. Coote, E. Yazici (2019), *Universal Basic Income – A Report for Unions* (New Economics Foundation).
- D. Coutinho (2014), *Targeting Within Universalism? The Bolsa Família Program and the Social Assistance Field in Brazil*, in "Verfassung Und Recht in Übersee", 47, 1, pp. 26-35.
- J. Cunliffe, G. John (2001), *The Enigmatic Legacy of Charles Fourier: Joseph Charlier and Basic Income*, in "History of Political Economy", 33, 3, pp. 459-484.
- S. Davala, R. Jhabvala, S. Kapoor, G. Standing (2015), *Basic income: A transformative policy for India* (London: Bloomsbury).
- S. Davies (2017), *Basic Income, Labour, and the Idea of Post-Capitalism*, in "Economic Affairs", 37, 3, pp. 442-458.
- J.M. Franzoni, D. Sánchez-Ancochea (2016), *Achieving universalism in developing countries* (UNDP Human Development Report Background Paper).
- F.J.G. Freitas (2017), *Renda básica de cidadania: desenvolvimento do conceito* (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Institute of Economy: Bachelor's Monograph).
- Q. Gao (2017), *Welfare, Work, and Poverty: Social Assistance in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- J. Golan, T.S. Jennifer, N. Umaphathi, Nithin (2015), *Unconditional Cash Transfers in China: An Analysis of the Rural Minimum Living Standard Guarantee Program*, in "Policy Research Working Paper", pp. 73-74.



- J. Habermas (1970), *Technology and Science as "Ideology"*, in *Toward a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon Press), pp. 81-122.
- J. Haushofer, J. Shapiro (2016), *The Short-Term Impact of Unconditional Cash Transfers to the Poor: Experimental Evidence from Kenya*, in "The Quarterly Journal of Economics", 131, 4, pp. 1973-2042.
- M. Howard (2002), *Exploitation, Labor, and Basic Income*, in "Analyse Und Kritik", 37, 1/2, pp. 281-303.
- N. Kildal, S. Kuhnle (2005), *Normative Foundations of the Welfare State: The Nordic experience* (London, New York: Routledge).
- P. Kobak (2016), *A Human Rights Income: How a Basic Income Could Help States Fulfil Human Rights Obligations* (Adam Mickiewicz University: European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation A.Y).
- A. Koslowski, A. Z. Duvander (2018), *Basic Income: The Potential for Gendered Empowerment?*, in "Social Inclusion", 6, 4, pp. 8-15.
- D.K. Kuleimenov (2014), *When a salary is not enough for making a living: Case-study of Livelihood of Kazakhstani households*, in "Life Science Journal", 11(1s), pp. 171-174.
- E. Laclau, J. Butler, S. Zizek (2000), *Contingency, Hegemony and Universality: New Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso).
- L. Lakeman, A.M. Lee, L. Christiansen-Ruffman (2004), *Feminist Statement on Guaranteed Living Income, Benefiting Women?*, in "CWS/CF Journal", Spring/Summer, 23, pp. 3-4.
- L. Martinelli (2017), *The Fiscal and Distributional Implications of Alternative Universal Basic Income Schemes in the UK* (Institute for Policy Research).
- R. McGahey, J.E. Stiglitz (2018), *Universal Basic Income and the Welfare State*, in J.A. Ocampo (ed.), *The Welfare State Revisited* (New York: Columbia University Press).
- K. McKee, M. Kaffenberger, J. Zimmerman (2015), *Doing Digital Finance Right: The Case for Stronger Mitigation of Customer Risks*, in "CGAP Focus Note", 103, pp. 34-36.
- P. Moss, A. Koslowski (2019), *Parental Leave and Beyond: recent developments, current issues, future directions* (Bristol: Policy Press).
- S. Nakamoto (2008), *Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System*, <https://bitcoin.org/bitcoin.pdf>
- OECD (2018), *INFE Policy Guidance on Digitalisation and Financial Literacy*, in "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development", pp. 8-10.
- I. Ortiz, C. Behrendt, A. Acuna-Ulaate, Q.A. Nguyen (2018), *Universal Basic Income proposals in light of ILO standards: Key issues and global costing* (Geneve: ILO).
- L.H. Paiva, L. Henrique (2012), *The Bolsa Familia Programme and Basic Income*, in "14th Basic Income Earth Network Congress".
- K. Pal, C. Behrendt, F. Leger, M.C. Florian, K. Hagemeyer (2005), *Can Low-Income Countries Afford Basic Social Protection? First Results of a Modelling Exercise*, in "International Labour Office, Social Security Department, Issues in Social Protection", 13.
- P.V. Parijs (2009), *Basic Income and social justice: Why Philosophers disagree*, *Joint Joseph Rowntree Foundation/University of York Annual Lecture, Friday*, in "Mar", 13, pp. 1-19.
- C.U. Public Employees (2017), *CUPE Local 79's response to Ontario's Basic Income Pilot*, in "February 10th".
- F. Roosma (2020), *Public opinion on basic income: Mapping European support for a radical alternative for welfare provision*, in "Journal of European Social Policy", 30, 2, pp. 190-205.
- D. Salehi-Isfahani, M.H. Mostafavi-Dehzoeei (2017), *Cash transfers and labor supply: evidence from a large-scale program in Iran*, in "Economic Research Forum, Working Paper".



- B.S. Santos (2016), *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London, New York: Routledge).
- P. Schulz (2017), *Universal Basic Income in a Feminist Perspective and Gender Analysis*, in "Global Social Policy", 17, 1, pp. 89-92.
- T. Shijun (2009), *Varieties of Universalism*, in "European Journal of Social Theory", 12, 4, pp. 449-463.
- D.J. Solinger (2014), *The State, the Poor, and the Dibaos: Three Models of the Wellsprings of Welfare and Lessons for China*, in S. Guo (ed.) *State-Society Relations and Governance in China* (London: Lexington Books), pp. 3-13.
- D.J. Solinger (2015), *Three Welfare Models and Current Chinese Social Assistance: Confucian Justifications, Variable Applications*, in "The Journal of Asian Studies", 74, 4 November, pp. 977-999.
- M. Sommer (2016), *A Feasible Basic Income Scheme for Germany: Effects on Labor Supply, Poverty, and Income Inequality* (New York: Springer International Publishing).
- G. Standing (2017), *Basic Income: and How We Can Make It Happen* (Gretna: Pelican).
- E.M. Suplicy (2008), *Eduardo Matarazzo. A Basic Income to Democratize and Pacify Iraq. BIEN - Basic Income Earth Network*, in "Bien Newsflash", p. 50.
- H. Tabatabai (2012), *From Price Subsidies to Basic Income: The Iran Model and Its Lessons*, in *Exporting the Alaska Model. Exploring the Basic Income Guarantee*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- C. Taylor (1996), *Conditions of an unforced consensus on Human Rights*, in "Dissent", pp. 15-21.
- P.R. Tcherneva (2017), *What Are the Relative Macroeconomic Merits and Environmental Impacts of Direct Job Creation and Basic Income Guarantees?*, in "Praktyka Teoretyczna", 24, 2, pp. 125-154.
- M. Terbonßen (2017), *How might universal basic income influence gender roles?: Exploring gender similarities and differences in the imagination of a basic income future scenario* (Bachelor Thesis Faculty of Behavioural Sciences Psychology: University of Twente).
- K. Widerquist, M. Lewis, M. Anthony, S. Pressman (2005), *The Ethics and Economics of the Basic Income Guarantee* (Farnham: Ashgate).
- T. Yamamor (2004), *Basic Income and Capability Approach: On Recognition and Deconstruction for Difference*, in "BIEN 10th Congress, 19-20 September".

