A Global Ecological Argument for a Basic Income

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Introduction

Why is an Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) desirable? Basic Income can be argued from very different normative perspectives. One type of normative argument, which comes in various forms, is that basic income may be regarded as a factor in creating real freedom in society. It is a freedom which may, at the same time, be conceived positively (a freedom to) and negatively (a freedom from) because it means that every citizen is guaranteed a certain amount of economic resources. Another type of normative argument is that basic income may be regarded as a further development or consolidation of democracy. Basic income may be viewed both as the fulfilment of the social citizenship and as the beginning of an economic citizenship, and it is not just any right, but a basic right which is a precondition for the exercise of other rights. Finally, there is a third type of normative argument for basic income making it an element in a fair redistribution of resources. This view may be interpreted as an extension of a Rawlsian perspective in which the goal is to secure the possibility for equal freedom for all citizens in a national state, but it may also be seen in the global perspective of sustainable development.

It is this last perspective which I will argue for. This perspective includes a concept of justice which, by adding the three factors of nature, generation and global equality, points to ecology and sustainability as normative arguments for basic income.

What then are the ecological arguments for a basic income? In what way could the right to an unconditional basic income be considered a particular ecological measure and ecologically beneficial in relation to the current social and labour market system?

It may at first appear unlikely with a direct connection between a situation in which a system of transfer payments is changed to one of basic income, and a situation where people would opt for a more ecological lifestyle. Why would people change behaviour in relation to consumption and work just because they are guaranteed a basic income, compared to a situation in which they are guaranteed a support when they are unemployed, provided they are looking for work? If one wants

to argue for such a connection, a more detailed explanation is needed where the close connection between particular types of income is put in a larger economic and ecological macro perspective.

The American economist Herman E. Daly has created a paradigm for a *steady state economy* which I will analyse to understand his concept of basic income as an element of sustainable development.

My conclusion is that Daly's arguments for a basic income must be developed by adding a better defined generational and global dimension. My general thesis about the relation between the different arguments for a basic income is that the global ecological justice perspective must have the highest rank as a superior normative horizon forming the scope for the other arguments for a basic income.

An ecologic-economic pioneer

The American economist Herman E. Daly is one of the key inventors of the new growing paradigm of ecological economy. The basic feature of the new paradigm is found in Daly's first scientific article in 1968 ('On Economics as a Life Science') and in his first book about steady state economy from 1973 (*Toward a Steady-State Economy*). The paradigm was further developed in books and articles in the following years. In a book authored together with theologian John B. Cobb Jr. in 1990 (*For the Common Good*) and in his most recent book from 1996 (*Beyond Growth*), he has given his paradigm a more theoretical dimension through a comprehensive critique of the dominant neoclassical growth paradigm and developed a theory about a sustainable economy for development.

The development of the economy from a means to an end in itself

In what follows, I will demonstrate that Daly's argument for proposing an unconditional basic income as a new mechanism for distribution in a steady state economy is that it opposes the logic of growth which is built into the whole economic system and accordingly into the labour market and transfer system of the traditional welfare state. The thesis is that in the ideology about full employment, and in the mechanism and instruments which support it, a forceful growth imperative is incorporated which a mechanism of basic income would weaken.

The background for Daly's presentation of an alternative to the existing growth economy is a result of his concept of economy and science in general. The world is confronted with a number of fundamental problems that need political and scientific solutions. He observes four positive feed-back loops that need to be broken: economic growth, population growth, technological change and a pattern of income inequality which seems to be self-sustaining and polarising. There is a need for an ecological humanism to create an economy in which economic and population growth are halted, technology is controlled and gross inequalities of income are done away with.

The steady state economy is an answer to this challenge. According to Daly, the economic science must be understood as an instrument, a tool for solving the most urgent social problems. Science should never be an end in itself, but must always be a means, conscious or unconscious, to attaining higher social ends. In line with this argument, Daly looks upon his forming of a new ecological understanding of economy as a continuation of the Aristotelian concept of economy. Economics has its origin in the Greek word for household, *oikos*, implying that one should put one's house in order with regard to resources. It was seen as part of social life and woven together with ethics and politics with the view of creating a good society. To Aristotle, man becomes a being in relation to a community; he is only able to realise himself in a society. The highest end is the manifestation of virtue in the good society. Furthermore, society can only exist if it is materially self-sufficient and built on some form of justice, thereby giving everyone the opportunity to succeed in commonality. I leave out of consideration Aristotle's view on women and slaves.

Aristotle distinguished between two forms of economics: A good, natural form, *oikonomia* “which is the management of the household so as to increase its use value to all members of the household over the long run." (Daly 190: 138). However, economics may also assume another, unnatural form, *chrematistics*, in which economics is an end in itself. It is the part of the political economy which is concerned with the manipulation of property and capital with the view of maximising the short-term profit for the owner. This dual concept of economics has been lost in the last 100 years. Economics has more and more been considered an end in itself. Along with the development of the capitalistic society and the specialisation of science, economy, in the sense of 'material production by human beings', was separated from its origin in society and nature. Nature and society were established as constants, 'other things being equal', and the work in the economic science was

concentrated on the development of models to understand and explain the economic allocation and growth in society. This could only take place because man as well as nature were in practice increasingly commodified, which in turn led to a loss of sense of the unique qualities of man as a being of a vulnerable nature. With the division of labour in science, the field of vision was reduced, while the sense of limitation was lost.

Subsequent to the breakthrough of the natural sciences in conjunction with the industrial revolution, physics stood as the prototype of science. Physics also served as the model for the economic science. Mathematics was not merely regarded as the basis for physics, but for the other sciences as well. This was the background for the American economist Walter A. Weisskopf's (1979) apposite metaphor when he referred to the classical and neoclassical economy as the 'Newtonian' paradigm. It was the same model as the one known from classical physics for the solar system or for the movements of a clock. The economy was construed to be a closed system, the dynamics of which were independent factors coming from without, while the system itself was self-regulated, moving in the direction of equilibrium.

In retrospect, the independence of economics, both in reality and theory, may be regarded as a necessary liberation from restrictive and religious norms and as necessary for economic growth and for the legitimacy of a new capitalist form of production. The new mechanical root metaphor for the economy had both advantages and disadvantages. Daly does not one-sidedly dwell on the negative aspects but also considers the liberating effect of the new model in the social context of his own time: 'Economics contributed to freeing individuals from hierarchical authority, as well as to providing more abundant goods and services' (Daly 1990: 6). Daly also has an eye for the liberating effect of the market society in a specific historical context.

In modern society, plagued with great environmental problems as it is, the machine metaphor is inexpedient if the economic science is to be used for analysing and solving the basic social problems. As opposed to the machine metaphor, Daly uses an 'organism metaphor or a life metaphor' (Daly 1968) and maintains that the similarity between biology and economics is of crucial importance. It is, for example, useful to compare the economic process with the regeneration and decomposition of matter in the metabolic process as well as the steady state and evolutionary aspects of both biology and economics. An increase in throughput of matter and energy can never

be a goal in itself, as the finite physical output of the economic process is waste, something which it is not rational to maximise.

According to Daly, it is fundamental to distinguish between a money economy (consisting of exchange value) and a real economy (consisting of use value), thereby eliminating the narrow 'machine metaphor' which, ignoring the real economy, only looked at the money economy. The economic process is dual. It consists of a circular stream of exchange values coupled together with a linear psychical stream of matter-energy which is not circular. Both of these processes are connected to one another, but can not be reduced to each other. The two concepts for economics (use and exchange value) are both abstractions from the same reality and explain different things. If economics is regarded as a matter of circulation of money without the physical-ecological aspect, something is left out of the equation. If the physical-ecological aspects are included, other questions arise.

The economic process as a physical-economic process may be described as a process in which matter/energy changes state from one of low entropy to one of higher entropy. What happens in the economic process is that free energy is transformed into less free, bound energy, so that the total amount of entropy is increased. The introduction of entropy into economics implies that scarcity must be conceived in a new way. Established economics only knows a relative concept of scarcity, but entropy introduces an absolute concept of scarcity. If the physical side is prioritised, there is an awareness of the physical limits of the economy. On the other hand, if the physical side is not emphasised, there is no awareness of the limits to the scale of the economy, and the GNP is regarded as a measure of wealth. Additionally, if there is an understanding of the physical limits for growth, there is also an awareness of the distribution problems in connection with the economic process, whereas the distribution problem is less important in the event that there is a belief in limitless growth.

Daly uses two basic models (metaphors) for understanding economy. First, 'an empty world economy': economy is thought like a box suspended in boundless space and with unlimited input and output between the two environments, and second, 'a full world economy': a box within a bigger box, meaning limited input and output because of gradually increasing pollution and wear in

a more confined environment. This is a model where the economy is seen as part of a system limited by a finite eco-system.

Sustainable development as a new superior end for economics

What is new in Daly's paradigm is the fact that he argues that the idea of economic growth must be replaced by the idea of sustainable development. Sustainable development consists of three different political goals: ecological sustainability, social justice and economic efficiency, all of which are answers to basic problems in an economy.

Ecological sustainability raises the question about scope and is concerned with the limits of an economic system in relation to a surrounding ecological system. This is not accepted in mainstream economics as a problem of economics, as there is no notion of a 'full world', i.e. an ecological system as a closed system. The problem of sustainability can't be solved by the market alone. It is a political problem.

The problem of social justice is how to implement a just distribution between various receivers of income and across generations. This too is not a problem for the market to solve, but must be dealt with politically from ideas about justice and sufficiency.

Finally, the problem of economic efficiency is one of allocation, in other words how an efficient allocation between the various factors of production may take place. This problem may be solved by the market because of its efficiency in providing the necessary information and initiative.

In the economic theory, it has been recognised that there is, at the same time, a problem of efficiency and a problem of justice, but the problem of sustainability has so far not been recognised. Daly's innovation is his claim that these three goals require three independent political institutions and that the problems of sustainability and justice must be solved politically, while the problem of efficiency may be solved by the market.

In the growth economy all three problems are thought to be encompassed by market thinking. There are no distinct political limits for scope or any norms for distribution. The market evolves

anarchistically with only occasional compensations for the negative effects of the market on the environment and the distribution. It is a picture of a reactive political system which only reacts after the market has played its role. Against this, Daly presents an active preventive political system, establishing limits for both scope and distribution with a view to improving the market.

The definition of a steady state economy

Daly's concept of steady state economics is a physical concept. It is an economy with constant stocks of people and products created by people (physical wealth) kept at the desired level with the least possible flow of matter and energy for maintaining the chosen stock of people and products.

What usually happens with an ordinary economic growth process is that one attempts to increase utility, both by increasing the flow and the stock. However, any attempt to maximise utility in a steady state economy must take place at the chosen stock level, so the efficiency of maintaining this level must be secured by technological advancements in minimising the flow. Steady state economics requires other institutional structures than is the case with growth economics for fulfilling the goals of sustainability, satisfaction of basic human needs and social justice. There must be established: 1. an institution for stabilisation of the stocks of capital, 2. an institution for stabilisation of the population, 3. an institution for distribution leading to a reduction of inequality.

Sustainability can only be achieved if political limits for the flow of matter and energy from nature into the economic system are fixed, allowing the capital stock to be stabilised. It is a political decision on what level the capital stocks in society should be established. Quotas for the use of various natural resources must be set by political decisions, and subsequently it will be left to the market to allocate these quotas of matter and energy.

Additionally, Daly proposes an institution that may secure stabilisation of the population by introducing transferable birth licences. Justice can not be created by the market; instead, it must be created through the establishment of political norms for minimum incomes together with limits for maximum capital.

Connections between sustainability and social justice

According to Daly, the three mentioned institutions are linked together. The institution for resource quotas cannot be conceived without a complementary institution for distribution. It will in itself sharpen the conflict between labour and capital. Furthermore, an institution for distribution requires limitations on the population.

In general, one might say that the increasing importance of the distribution problem is closely and logically connected with the attempts at finding a solution to the growth problem: 'And we will not be able to shift from growth to steady state without instituting limits to inequality.' (Daly 1996: 215). Considerations on a basic income must necessarily be connected with parallel notions about a maximum income: 'In a steady state, if the rich get richer the poor must get poorer, not only relatively, but also absolutely' (ibid: 214).

Growth may be regarded as an attempt at concealing the distribution problem and failing to take it seriously. Or, it may be put like this: growth is the easy way of out of the distribution problem and the struggle about distribution. As long as everyone gets a little more, it is considered acceptable that inequality continues to exist.

Daly's conception of basic income is closely related to his view on justice as a higher goal than equality. Unlimited inequality is unacceptable. As such, society will loose its power of coherence. However, complete equality is not desirable either; it would be tyrannical, failing to allow for the differences between people. Limited inequality is necessary and fair, and it is guaranteed by a basic income.

'The goal for an economics of the community is not equality, but limited inequality. Complete equality is the collectivist's denial of true differences in community. Unlimited inequality is the individualist's denial of interdependence and true solidarity in community' (Daly 1990: 331).

How should we understand Daly's three institutions? Daly says that they are conservative: 'these institutions build on the existing bases of price system and private property and are thus fundamentally conservative' (Daly 1977: 51). On the other hand it may also be argued that with his politically fixed limits for scale and income he is imposing new limitations on the market, and this

has met with the objection that the stationary state is a plan-ecological system. Daly himself asserts that it is neither capitalistic nor socialistic, regarding it instead as a third model. Both capitalism and socialism have agreed about the importance of growth.

The institutions, as conceived by Daly, will allow for stability on the macro-level while securing variability on the micro-level. By setting limits and controls on the macro-level, room is created for indefiniteness, innovation and freedom for individuals on the micro-level. In this sense it might be said that steady state economics represents a dynamic economy as there is in fact more room for variation and innovation than in a growth economy. With growth, part of the change is purely quantitative, while the change in steady state economics must, to a higher extent, be qualitative.

Daly's specific ideas about a guaranteed minimum income: a Positive Income Tax

In his book, *For the Common Good* (1990), Daly puts forward a number of ideas about the role of labour in future society and of how a minimum income system should be designed. As the Marxists before him, he is critical of a total commodification of labour. 'An economics for community supports this resistance to the commodification of labour.' (ibid: 299). But he also sees a common interest between Capital and Labour in a well-functioning business community. Thus he proposes a change in the structure of property and an extensive democratisation of the economy so that this common interest might be further developed (ibid: 303). Everyone should be guaranteed a minimum income. In Daly's view no one should be forced to take a job he finds inappropriate, but everyone should have the opportunity to get a job (ibid: 313). Daly makes a specific proposal as to how the tax and subsidy system could be formed. He supports the idea of a negative income tax which has previously been proposed in USA by George Stiegler (1946) and Milton Friedman (1962) with some modifications among which are the taxing of capital gains. For this reason he calls his tax proposal 'The Positive Income Tax'. His general claims to a tax system are:

A preferred system should: 1. require that the truly basic needs of all be met. 2. be simple and inexpensive to implement. 3. require a minimum of information from recipients and impose a minimum of special conditions upon them, and 4. provide a strong incentive to work. (ibid: 316).

He examines all specific technical and political objections to the proposal and admits that some of them have substance. It is not possible to change a tax system overnight (ibid: 323). Still, he believes that it is important to design a more logical and consistent system guided by a few transparent and overall political goals.

Discussion of Daly's normative foundation

The normative structure of a theory is determined by the theorist's conception of man and nature. What are Daly's ideas? Daly's arguments for a basic income are based on a holistic human-ecological conception of man and his most basic needs: a human being is a social creature, and nature has a value in itself and has absolute limits. This is contrasted with the mainstream utilitarian concept of man and nature in the growth society featuring unlimited needs and unlimited nature. Daly's conception of man and nature contains a number of values on which the steady state economy is founded:

In sum, the moral first principles are: some concept of enoughness, stewardship, humility, and holism. (Daly 1977: 47).

The concept of a steady state has been developed by simple deduction from these moral basic principles. Now, what are the implications of those principles for the setting of biophysical, ethical and social limits to growth, as proposed by Daly? What normative arguments does he use when he defends those ecological and distributive limits to economic growth?

First, Daly's premise is that the problem of scale in economics in relation to nature and the problem of distribution are to be solved politically, collectively and not at the level of the individual because those problems involve social collective considerations and operate within another time horizon. While in the mainstream economy the question of scale and distribution is part of the allocation problem, these three problems are, in Daly's view, independent and require three different political instruments. There is a principal difference between an individual, utilitarian valuation and a collective, political valuation. But what sort of ethics is behind Daly's political arguments? As to the question of the optimum scale where both anthropocentric and biocentric positions are possible options, Daly supports the latter (Daly 1996: 51-52). The anthropocentric optimum is fixed

according to a cost-benefit analysis in such a way that man's marginal value of using nature corresponds to the marginal cost of this use. In contrast, a biocentric optimum goes beyond the instrumental view and is based on the idea that other creatures have an intrinsic value independent of the use value for man. To this Daly adds a political evaluation of the limits, entropy and interdependence of the ecosystems. Daly's biocentric vision also supports the principles of deep ecology (Daly1990: 203-206), though he dissociates himself from the idea of biocentric equality and argues that a man has greater intrinsic value than a mosquito or a bacteria.

When the scale of the economy is fixed (within the ecological limits), room has been made for distribution. What are Daly's normative arguments for distribution? In his first book on the steady state economy, he referred to John Stuart Mill's view on private property as a protection against exploitation and to John Locke's liberal view on property rights.

Thus such a distributist policy is based on impeccably respectable premises: private property, free market, opposition to welfare bureaucracies and centralised control. It also heeds the radicals' call of 'power to the people' since it puts the source of power, namely property, in the hands of many people, rather than in the hands of the few capitalist plutocrats and socialist bureaucrats. The concept of private property here adopted is the classical view of John Locke. (Daly 1977: 54–55).

Here Daly is in support of classical liberal arguments for a basic income by granting everyone property rights. But he also points out that property rights, rather than being a guarantee against exploitation, may be an instrument for it, if some own much and others very little. Property rights can only be made legitimate if inequality is limited.

Daly also evaluates the utility of growth in his reasoning for setting ethical-social limits to it when he weighs the benefits of growth against the cost. It is the situation with the accelerating use of the geological capital where the current benefits must be weighed against the cost for future generations. He criticises the general use of a discount rate where the value of the future is ascribed little or no value. In his view the current basic needs of man must be prioritised over future basic needs, while future basic needs must be prioritised over current luxury needs.

To summarise, Daly's argument for a basic income is only indirectly ecological in that he argues for it by introducing the idea of limiting the economy's physical scale and by setting limits to both a maximum income for wealth and a minimum income (basic income). From Daly's point of view, there are different normative arguments for a basic income. It may be viewed from the point of view of basic needs where the basic income meets the basic needs. But Daly also argues from a property point of view where basic income is a way of distributing property to all citizens as a protection against coercion and exploitation from the state and the market.

An additional ecological argumentation for basic income

Does the steady state economy as presented by Daly constitute a satisfactory set of ecological arguments for a basic income, or, if not, what are its deficiencies? First, the steady state economy is an analysis of the economy made from within the framework of the nation state, even though Daly's perspective on such issues as resource quotas is global. In addition to this, Daly seems to lack a more direct connection between basic income and the ecological limits. The ecological limits are secured by a physical system of quotas which is fixed politically and managed by companies. The citizens receive an income in funds, and no connection is drawn to the physical limits. Finally, the steady state approach has been made exclusively from an economic point of view. The political dimension is left out.

If limits to economic growth are accepted as a premise, as Daly suggests, how then should democracy be formed? What new jobs will be made? And what will the ecological citizenship look like?

In order to make up for the deficiencies in the theory, inspiration may be brought in from other ecological theorists. The English political scientist Andrew Dobson (2003) has analysed the impact of the ecological problems on the citizenship and the democracy. Citizenship is concerned with citizens' rights and obligations in a political community. Dobson thinks that an ecological citizenship is different from both the classical liberal and the republican citizenship. Due to the global nature of the ecological problems, the ecological citizenship must be cosmopolitan, that is, with no territorial limits. The ecological citizenship is similar to the republican in focusing on the common good which is sustainable development on a global level. In addition to this, it must hold

other rights and obligations than the normal national citizenship which include obligations such as taxes and conscription. As opposed to both the traditional liberal and republican citizenship where the citizenship is understood as a contract between the individual and the nation state and where there is a clear distinction between a private and a public sphere, the ecological citizenship is also related to the private sphere and contains an obligation, not only to the nation state, but also between the citizens. The ecological citizenship contains the same virtues as the liberal (e.g. an open and free debate) and the republican (the common good (sustainability)). But the central virtue is, to Dobson, a new global justice (an equal distribution of the ecological footprint). Dobson's position is that the ecological challenge requires both a right and an obligation to an ecological footprint within the global sustainable limits. The expression 'the ecological footprint' was formed by Mathias Wackernagel and William E. Rees (1996) in order to make the concept 'sustainable development' more instrumental. It is based on an estimate of the amount of biologically productive land and sea area needed to regenerate (if possible) the resources which a human population consumes and to absorb and render harmless the corresponding waste, given prevailing technology and current understanding. In 2003, the average biologically productive area per person worldwide was approximately 1.8 global hectares (gha) per capita. The U.S. footprint per capita was 9.6 gha, and that of Denmark 5.8 gha per person, whilst in China it was 1.6 gha per person. In 2003 the capacity of the biosphere was exceeded with about 25% (WWF 2006). The rich countries use and seize a much bigger part of nature to maintain their consumption pattern and lifestyle than in the poor part of the world. The concept of an ecological footprint contains the idea of equality and the obligation of the citizens in the rich part of the world to reduce consumption and waste. Dobson does not extend his concept of ecological citizenship as far as to include a basic income, though it may be seen as a natural consequence of his theory on ecological citizenship.

This connection is brought to light by the Italian Giunluca Busilacchi who talks about: 'Two problems, One Solution: Earth Basic Income' (Paper, BIEN Congress, 2004). The method for implementing a global basic income is to combine it with a global eco-tax on the ecological footprint. The overconsumption of the rich countries appears as a large ecological footprint, and the underconsumption of the poor countries appears as poverty: a small ecological footprint. A basic income in the poor part of the world may be part of a solution to the poverty problems, while an eco-tax and a basic income in the rich part of the world may be an element in the solution to the

pollution and overconsumption problems, the eco-tax being part of the financial basis for the global basic income.

Another way of imagining a global basic income is in the form of a dividend. The Dutch, René Heeskens, who founded 'Global Basic Income Foundation', (http://www.globalincome.org/) proposes an Earth Dividend. His premises are that we have a common equal property right to the earth. In his model a dividend of this common property, Earth Dividend, is not given by the state or other international institutions to the citizens and is not founded on taxes. It could, however, be founded on the income all world citizens receive when they rent out their right to nature (quota) to companies and states, with the condition that these personal quotas may not be bought or sold. In practice, the sales with quotas must be transacted by independent funds (such as pension funds) which should secure all an equal cash payment of the dividend. Such a model of a common dividend fund is already realised in Alaska through The Alaska Permanent Fund where all citizens since 1982 every year receive a dividend (between 1000 and 2000 dollars) based on the revenues from the resources of the state. The Dutch philosopher Wouter Achterberg (1999) supports the idea of an ecological footprint and says that the abstract concept of equality behind the arguments for a basic income is compatible with the core in the concept of strong sustainability. Achterberg uses an argument for treating man equally in the distribution of natural resources which goes back to Thomas Paine's idea about all people having a property right to the earth. On this basis he establishes a resource-equity principle after St. Luper-Foy (1995) which says that the resources should be distributed equally among the current and the future generations, unless good reasons for an unequal distribution may be given. This resource-equity principle may be generalised to a sustainable consumption-production principle: Each generation may consume natural resources, pollute, and reproduce at given rates only if it could reasonably expect that each successive generation could do likewise. With this reasoning Achterberg may conclude that both a basic income and strong sustainability can be ethically justified and that there is a substantial ethical convergence between their justifications. Or, as he says, that an introduction of a basic income would contribute substantially to making the welfare state green.

Conclusion

As emphasised in the introduction, a basic income may be normatively argued for in various ways. It may be argued for from the perspectives of freedom, democracy or equity-distribution. In this article, I have, on the basis of Herman Daly's steady state paradigm, argued that the justice dimension is central, and that the global perspective is important. What this means is that basic income, which is in general only considered a fund, must also be regarded as a material, physical entity, to be respected and kept within global sustainable limits.

Therefore I will now, in concluding, argue for the existence of a specific normative order in the argumentation for a basic income in such a way that the global justice perspective must form the overall frame for all basic income considerations. Within this perspective of global sustainability, it is possible to construct a democratic perspective as a scope. Within the democratic scope, more specific forms of arguments may be developed, arguments connected to problems of the welfare state. One may be freedom in relation to the market, negatively understood as freedom from wage work and positively as the possibility for a wage for artists. It may also be expressed as a freedom to operate on the market, such as a freedom to manage one's capital and establish one's own company (support for entrepreneurs). Furthermore, it may be expressed as a freedom to create the production of subsistence, in other words capital goods to create an alternative economy. And finally, it may be expressed as a freedom in relation to the market, the state and the civil society.

I have previously argued that the idea of a basic income works on different dimensions (Christensen 2000C: 200-201): It may be viewed as: 1) an factor in setting limits to the use of nature, 2) a factor in setting a new limit to the commodification of labour, 3) a factor in setting a limit to clientisation in relation to the state, 4) a development of the citizenship, 5) a factor in creating a new gender balance, 6) an allocation of property rights which could be the foundation for a just market society.

One element in this argumentation was also that basic income may be seen in the light of various types of greater or smaller stories (ibid: 205-206): 1) as a global story about sustainable development and the good society, 2) as a great story about the development of democracy, citizenship and the welfare state, 3) as a couple of small stories about the problems of the welfare state (unemployment, clientisation, gender inequality), 4) as a number of technical stories about simplification and rationalisation of the system of transfer payment.

What is a story? A story tells a narrative about some actors acting on a scene. A story runs through some phases, it has a point and a conclusion. It distributes blame and responsibility, it carries a meaning and a possibility for identification for the actors. It is the narratives in a text (theory) which create coherence and totality in a frame. Like in my earlier argumentation, I think that the idea of sustainable development may bind together the six dimensions listed above (ibid: 467-469). The strength in the narrative of a sustainable development is precisely that it may function as a narrative framework for the smaller stories of basic income as a development of the social citizenship, as greater autonomy in relation to the state, the market and the civil society, and for the technical stories about rationalisation of the transfer system, the abolishment of poverty traps and the development of employment for the weak groups. There is not necessarily a contradiction between the small stories about basic income and the great one. On the contrary, the small story is strengthened by its relation to a greater story, and the greater story may also be strengthened by being put into practice in the small story.

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