

A Research Agenda for Basic Income

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Online appendix

The research that we now need

[References related to this appendix will be found in the lists of future research at the end of each of the chapters of *A Research Agenda for Basic Income*.]

Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the history of basic income is no longer a set of isolated national developments, completely independent and mostly ignorant of each other. Thanks to the existence of an international network, to the power of the internet, and to the spreading of the idea, new initiatives around basic income are now happening every day and are being echoed worldwide. (Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght (2017), *Basic Income: A radical proposal for a free society and a sane economy*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 98)

The global Basic Income debate is now moving extremely fast, and nobody can keep up. There was a time, until about ten years ago, when this author could honestly claim to have read everything published in English on the subject, and a good proportion of what was published in French and German; to have been aware of new developments as they were happening; to have been aware of all of the current research on the subject; and to have been a contributor of research that nobody else was doing. Nobody can claim that now. This is of course highly encouraging; but it also poses some significant problems. It means that the 'current research' sections in each of the chapters of *A Research Agenda for Basic Income* are first of all far from comprehensive, and secondly that they will all be out of date before the book is published. It also means that some of the 'future research' listed will be 'current research', that some of the suggestions will no longer be relevant, and that research will be happening, or will be recognised to be required, that is not mentioned anywhere in the book. All one can say is that research into Basic Income research must be a continuous process, of which this book gives just a snapshot at a particular rather arbitrary point in time.

The purpose of this appendix is to bring together in one place the suggestions for future research to be found at the end of each of the chapters in *A Research Agenda for Basic Income* in order to provide an overview of the list of future research suggested to this author by the current state of research as it is outlined in the main body of each chapter and by a consultation exercise to which members of the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) have contributed.

The research now needed

Chapter 1: A research agenda for Basic Income

- Further research into the history of Basic Income, and into the history of the meaning of 'Basic Income', is essential, and should preferably be done by trained historians.
- Any future research must be multidisciplinary, must use a wide variety of methods, and must be done in each different context.

Chapter 2: What is a Basic Income?

- Research into the history of Basic Income, to complement the material already

available, must be a continuous process. The Basic Income debate is now diverse and worldwide, so any written history is immediately out of date. The debate would be well served by regular historical research to complement existing histories.

- In particular, research is required on the histories of the various names given to Basic Income and of their interpretation.
- Research should be conducted in as many countries as possible, and among as many individuals and institutions as possible, to discover the meanings that are given to a wide variety of terminologies. Translations between multiple languages will be required to achieve this; and usage of terminology by print and electronic media will also have to be understood to enable a full picture to emerge of the diverse meanings attributed to the terminology used in the Basic Income debate.
- Widespread debate, perhaps facilitated by the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), will be required to enable individuals and institutions that use terminology differently to fashion agreements as to how terminology should be understood.
- Detailed research is required on variants of Basic Income, in order to understand the differences between them, the sources of those differences, the reasons for them, and the different effects likely to result from them. Particular attention should be paid to the different ways in which individuals and institutions discuss the level at which a Basic Income should be paid, how the terms used (such as ‘subsistence’, ‘dignity’, and so on) might be understood and researched, and how such particular variants might most usefully contribute to the global debate. Financial feasibility and administrative factors should be at the heart of this research, and practical experiments as well as theoretical discussions might be helpful.
- Widespread debate, perhaps facilitated by the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), should take place to enable individuals and institutions that use terminology about variants of Basic Income differently, and that might have different understandings as to which variants might be feasible and legitimate, to fashion agreements as to how terminology should be understood.
- Detailed research is required on alternatives to Basic Income, in order to understand the differences between them, the sources of those differences, the reasons for them, and the different effects likely to result from them. Administrative factors should be at the heart of this research, and practical and laboratory experiments as well as theoretical discussions might be helpful.
- Widespread debate, perhaps facilitated by the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), should take place to enable individuals and institutions that use terminology about alternatives to Basic Income differently to fashion agreements as to how terminology should be understood.
- Research on definitions, variants, and alternatives, should directly inform all other research on Basic Income: so, for instance, terms used in experiments, during research on experiments, and in reports on experiments, should be carefully studied in the light of the working definition of Basic Income employed in this chapter, in the light of the research discussed in this chapter, and in the light of the future research proposed here.
- Research is required in each context on precisely who within the jurisdiction’s boundaries should receive a Basic Income; on precisely how a Basic Income could be administered; and on feasible levels of Basic Income (Chapters 3 and 9 of *A Research Agenda for Basic Income* also ask for this research).

Chapter 3: How could we pay for a Basic Income?

Funding from within the current income tax and benefits systems

- Microsimulation research will be required in every country, using both traditional static microsimulation programmes and the survey data that they require, and the

now extended research tools that can handle consumption taxes, dynamic effects, and employment market effects.

- The Basic Income community will need to do all it can to ensure that academics with the necessary skills are using them to research feasible Basic Income schemes for dynamic labour market and other effects, and a body of researchers skilled in the new methods will need to come from within the Basic Income community. Constant reskilling will be essential for the Basic Income community as a whole, particularly in the microsimulation field.
- Those countries that already possess microsimulation programmes will need to ensure that they are retained and maintained, and that the required data sources remain available; and those countries that do not currently have microsimulation programmes, and the data sources required to run them, should obtain them whenever possible.
- The typical household method will still be useful for educational purposes, but that is all that it should be used for; and the national accounts method should be abandoned, because it cannot respond to such essential questions as ‘How can we ensure that a revenue neutral Basic Income scheme does not make poorer households poorer?’ and because the only illustrative schemes that it can research would almost certainly tip large numbers of low-income households into deeper poverty if implemented.
- The question of research ethics needs to be addressed, and in particular the question as to how Basic Income microsimulation researchers might be able to publish a broad range of results, some of which will represent infeasible illustrative Basic Income schemes, without those results being misrepresented by politicians and journalists.

What we do *not* need is practical pilot projects and experiments to reveal the financial effects of Basic Income schemes. Microsimulation can do that for us. What we need pilot projects and similar experiments for is to provide information on the likely employment market and other economic and social effects of Basic Income.

Funding a Basic Income with newly created money

- Rigorous macroeconomic research into the feasibility and effects of money creation as a means of funding a Basic Income is required. This will entail research into monetary theory; the possibility of funding an initial Basic Income using newly created money; the possibility of funding a long-term Basic Income using newly created money; and how these different research projects might relate to each other.
- Research into different monetary theories, and into their relationships with actual economies, is crucially important in today’s complex economic and political world, and research into whether and how a Basic Income might be funded by newly created money needs to learn from contemporary research in this field and should also contribute to it.

Funding a Basic Income with a carbon tax

- The kinds of microsimulation research into this option currently being undertaken by expert amateurs working in a silo needs to enter mainstream economic, social policy, and climate change research.
- Microsimulation tools that can handle carbon taxes should continue to be developed, and they should be used separately in each country to evaluate illustrative Basic Income schemes funded by carbon taxes as well as from within the current tax and benefits system.
- Dynamic microsimulation research techniques should continue to be developed in

order to predict the longer-term effects of funding a Basic Income with the proceeds of carbon taxes.

- The effects of existing carbon taxes and their associated dividends, as in Canada, should be researched in relation to both their economic and political effects.
- Every research project undertaken in this field will have to factor in the fact that a successful carbon tax will reduce its own tax base, so how any Basic Income funded by the proceeds of a carbon tax will be able to transition to a different funding method will also have to be researched.

Funding a Basic Income with a Land Value Tax

- Microsimulation programmes that can include a Land Value Tax as a means of funding a Basic Income scheme should continue to be developed for each country, and Basic Income researchers should learn how to use them.
- Further research is needed on instances in which databases have been combined so as to include Land Value Taxes in microsimulation projects, and particularly research on the extent to which it is possible to reduce the number of assumptions that have to be made when databases are combined.
- Research into existing Land Value Taxes would be useful to discover feasible and justifiable ways to value land.
- While a Land Value Tax would not be able to alter the amount of land in a country, it might affect what is done with that land, and those potential effects should be researched.
- The political feasibility of a Land Value Tax would have to be researched differently in each national context, as would the feasibility of funding or part-funding a Basic Income with a Land Value Tax, and the effects that such funding would have on household net disposable incomes, poverty and inequality rates, and so on. As a Land Value Tax would probably have to be combined with other funding sources if a Basic Income were to be implemented that would provide anything like a useful financial platform on which to build, it will be important to run microsimulation and other research projects on the dynamic effects of Basic Incomes funded by combinations of different kinds of taxation and not just on the effects of Basic Incomes funded by single revenue streams.

Funding a Basic Income with consumption taxes

- More use should be made of the new microsimulation capacity to evaluate illustrative Basic Income schemes that part-fund Basic Incomes by increasing consumption tax rates, in particular to discover whether schemes can be discovered that would not impose household disposable income losses on low-income households.
- Research is required on the public acceptability and political feasibility of increases in consumption tax rates that would be sufficient to fund a Basic Income, or that would contribute to such funding.
- Because an increase in consumption tax rates would automatically increase prices and therefore inflation, the dynamic effects of changes caused by an increase in consumption tax rates used to fund a Basic Income would be important to research if the required research methods were to be available.
- An increase in consumption taxes has been suggested as a means of funding a Eurodividend. This possibility should be submitted to all three of the research projects just described.

Sovereign wealth funds

- In relation to existing sovereign wealth funds, the financial and political feasibility of

- employing the dividends to fund Basic Incomes should be researched.
- In relation to countries that do not currently possess sovereign wealth funds, research should be applied to the political feasibility of such funds being established, to the lengths of time by which they are likely to have grown sufficiently large for their dividends to provide realistic funding levels for Basic Incomes, and to the political and financial feasibilities of employing the dividends to fund Basic Incomes.

Funding a Basic Income in other ways

- Research is needed into the extent to which a financial transaction tax would be able to fund a useful Basic Income without driving currency exchange transactions out of the country.
- Research is needed into the institutional and political feasibilities of an international financial transaction tax that would be sufficiently comprehensive to prevent financial transactions from escaping the tax.
- Research is needed into the feasibility of a data tax, and on the amount of revenue that it might be able to contribute to funding a Basic Income. Research would also be needed into the extent to which companies that harvest data would pass the cost of the tax on to the users of their platforms, into whether a single country would be able to establish a data tax that could capture every instance of data capture in that country, and into whether an international data tax would be institutionally and politically feasible.
- Research is required into whether a robot tax would be feasible and would be likely to be spent on a Basic Income.
- Research is required on the feasibility and usefulness of a cryptocurrency Basic Income, and on the feasibility of administering it.
- Research is also required to discover yet more funding options for Basic Income. New options can emerge at any time, and it will be important for Basic Income researchers and others to engage with new options and to research them as thoroughly as possible.
- Early in the Basic Income debate both a Land Value Tax and inheritance taxes were proposed as funding mechanisms. Research on the feasibility of new kinds of inheritance tax to fund a Basic Income might be useful.

Combinations

- Microsimulation and other relevant research that can handle different combinations of funding mechanisms would be particularly helpful and might enable a feasible Basic Income scheme to be found in each context that would provide larger Basic Incomes than a single funding source could generate while at the same time fulfilling the usual financial feasibility criteria.

Generally

- Potential funding methods should be tested for the ways in which they would distort markets.
- Research will always have to be understood to be context specific, and results achieved in one context should not be assumed to be relevant to another.

Chapter 4: Employment market effects of a Basic Income

- To provide a basis for discussion of the employment market effects of Basic Income we need research on the research available on short, medium and longer term employment market scenarios in a wide variety of contexts, and on the reliability of

such research.

- Robustly social scientific Basic Income pilot projects are required in a wide variety of contexts. Pilot communities must be matched with control communities, and as far as possible the Basic Income scheme tested in a pilot community must be one that could be rolled out in every detail across the entire country. If possible, a variety of experiments with different feasible levels of Basic Income should be carried out in each context.
- We are particularly in need of genuine Basic Income pilot projects in countries with more developed economies.
- Whenever possible, pilot projects should be longer than two years, and wherever possible compulsory participation should be required in order to avoid selection bias in the results.
- Minimum Income Guarantee experiments and Basic Income pilot project should always be carefully distinguished from each other; research is needed on the applicability of Minimum Income Guarantee experimental results to Basic Income research; and on that basis research results relating to employment market behaviour obtained from Minimum Income Guarantee experiments should be carefully evaluated for their applicability to the Basic Income debate.
- Results from different experiments need to be well shared across territorial and disciplinary boundaries.
- As already mentioned in Chapter 3 of *A Research Agenda for Basic Income*, researchers should follow closely the development of employment market models and should learn how to employ them in connection with dynamic microsimulation research on a wide variety of Basic Income schemes, and in relation to other research on possible future employment market scenarios.
- Laboratory experiments might usefully be employed alongside pilot project and theoretical research methods, and where possible the results of the different methods should be compared with each other.
- Additional natural experiments should be sought, such as the policy accident in Iran, and they should be subjected to rigorous detailed research. The Iranian cash subsidies might usefully be researched using the Iranian Household Expenditure and Income Survey (IRHEIS), social surveys, and focus groups.
- Basic Income researchers and psychology and social psychology academics could usefully collaborate over research on motivation.
- Microsimulation research, whether static or dynamic, might usefully include careful studies of the marginal deduction rates that would be experienced by workers in different circumstances, with those marginal deduction rates calculated in relation to the current tax and benefits system and in relation to the systems that would follow the implementation of feasible Basic Income schemes.
- We need as many methods as possible. There is no hierarchy

Chapter 5: Economic effects of a Basic Income

- Further research on Basic Income from within the subdiscipline of classical economics will always be useful, as long as the limitations of that subdiscipline are always recognised.
- Welfare economics will be a particularly important research subfield for the Basic Income debate, and further research in that subdiscipline is essential.
- A wide variety of economics subdisciplines should be plundered for research methods, including those regarded as heterodox.
- The division of material between chapters 4 and 5 of *A Research Agenda for Basic Income* is indicative of a more general silo mentality that keeps separate the sociological methods applied to pilot projects and the classical and welfare economics methods represented here. Interdisciplinary research would be

particularly helpful to the Basic Income debate. For instance, longer pilot projects in a variety of contexts might be able to test the theoretical predictions that a Basic Income would enable workers to leave lousy jobs for better ones, that low wages might rise, and that poor employment conditions might improve.

- In general, as many economic science methods as possible, and as many relationships between them as possible, should be applied to Basic Income research.

Chapter 6: Social effects of a Basic Income

- Robustly social scientific Basic Income pilot projects are required in a wide variety of contexts. In particular, pilot communities must be matched with control communities, and as far as possible the Basic Income scheme tested in a pilot community must be one that could be rolled out in every detail across the entire country. If possible, a variety of experiments with different feasible levels of Basic Income should be carried out in each context.
- We are particularly in need of genuine Basic Income pilot projects in countries with more developed economies.
- Whenever possible, pilot projects should be longer than two years, and wherever possible compulsory participation should be required in order to avoid selection bias in the results.
- Minimum Income Guarantee experiments and Basic Income pilot projects should always be carefully distinguished from each other; research is needed on the applicability of Minimum Income Guarantee experimental results to Basic Income research; and on that basis research results relating to the social effects of the tested incomes obtained from Minimum Income Guarantee experiments should be carefully evaluated for their applicability to the Basic Income debate.
- A wide variety of natural experiments should be researched to discover whether and how research into them might offer insights applicable to the Basic Income debate.
- Experiments with shorter working weeks should be researched, and in particular we need research on how a feasible Basic Income scheme might facilitate or otherwise a trend towards shorter working hours.
- There are now numerous Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers around the world, and they all need to be thoroughly researched to discover research results that might apply to Basic Income, and in particular to our understanding of the different effects of different Basic Income schemes.
- Laboratory experiments might usefully be employed alongside pilot project and theoretical research methods. (For instance, groups of individuals in laboratory conditions provided with choices, for instance whether to accept a country's current benefits scheme or a financially feasible Basic Income scheme instead).
- Additional natural experiments should be sought, such as the policy accident in Iran, and they should be subjected to rigorous detailed research.
- Basic Income researchers could usefully collaborate with sociologists, psychologists, social psychologists, and other social scientists, and also with thinktanks and other research and advocacy organizations, particularly in relation to the social effects of a Basic Income relevant to people with disabilities, younger people, older people, and so on, and also in relation to the gender effects of different Basic Income scheme configurations.
- An urgent need is increased research effort on the relationship between climate change and Basic Income.
- Basic Income's ability to promote social cohesion, peace, reconstruction and development in post-disaster and post-conflict contexts should be thoroughly researched by establishing pilot projects and studying natural experiments.
- Where possible, the results of different research methods should be compared with each other.

- Again, we need as many methods as possible. There is no hierarchy

Chapter 7: What do people think of Basic Income?

- Continual study of how various different media are framing Basic Income will .
- Continual study of how such other players as academics, policymakers, and thinktanks, are framing Basic Income will also be important.
- Focus group research, although expensive, could be rather more important than opinion polls in understanding how different groups—the general public, journalists, thinktank staff, civil servants, and so on—understand Basic Income, the arguments for and against it, its different feasibilities, and various other issues relating to the global Basic Income debate.
- On the basis of such research on Basic Income framing and on focus group understandings and opinions, a substantial global educational project is required to improve recognition of the Basic Income concept, and to increase understanding of its definition, its variants and alternatives, its different feasibilities, the arguments for and against it, and so on.
- Only then should further opinion poll research be attempted; and when it is attempted, thorough educational explanations of all of the issues related to each question should be offered before the questions are put.
- Focus groups and opinion polls among government ministers, members of parliaments, and civil servants, would be particularly useful.
- Further study of social norms, and in particular of how they might be changing, would assist Basic Income advocates to frame Basic Income according to useful directions of travel: for instance, if a ‘fairness’ norm were to extend its influence, then the unfairness of tax allowances and the greater fairness of turning them into cash payments might be a useful way to frame an advantage of Basic Income. Appropriate terminology for Basic Income might both reflect and assist useful social norms.
- Such an approach applied to policymakers might be usefully understood as a ‘nudge’, and might be studied as such.
- Research might be carried out about when and how social policy change has been understood as steps along the way to a Basic Income, whether the tone of each such discussion has changed over time, and how such discussions have affected public and policymaker attitudes towards Basic Income.
- Study of occasions on which publics have changed their minds about significant issues might help us to understand how a widespread conversion to approval for Basic Income might take place.
- Policy feedback mechanisms should be studied in order to understand how the implementation of a Basic Income might change other aspects of a polity, and whether such changes would or would not embed the Basic Income.

Chapter 8: Can we justify paying everyone a Basic Income?

- Further study of a wide variety of ethical theories and of their relevance to the Basic Income debate.
- Further study of a wide variety of political and other ideologies and of their relationships with the Basic Income debate.
- A study of a wide variety of religious traditions and of their potential relationships with Basic Income and the global Basic Income debate.
- Further research on the concept of reciprocity, in particular in relation to a variety of social scientific disciplines such as psychology, social psychology, economics, and so on.
- Twentieth century continental philosophy, and particularly its debate about ‘the gift’ could provide a useful starting point for an exploration of Titmuss’s ‘gift relationship’.

- Research into the different meanings of freedom and of fairness could enhance the Basic Income debate.
- Further exploration of the question as to whether a Basic Income should now be regarded as a human right would be a useful contribution to the global Basic Income debate.

Chapter 9: Is a Basic Income politically feasible?

- Further historical research on the history of political engagement with Basic Income by governments and other political organizations.
- Constant research on the political ideologies prevalent in a wide variety of countries; on the relationships between those ideologies and political parties, thinktanks, and so on; and on the arguments both for and against Basic Income that might be coherent with the ideologies, and arguments for and against propounded by adherents to different ideologies and members of different political parties.
- Research on the histories of thinktank engagement with Basic Income, and of Basic Income organizations' educational, campaigning and research activities, and the influence of all of that activity on such organizations as political parties, governments, parliaments, and trades unions; and research on how those organizations might better relate to each other in the future in relation to the Basic Income debate.
- Research on attitudes towards Basic Income among trade union members, and separate research among elected and employed trade union officers.
- Research on how politicians have changed their minds, and particularly on how they have changed their minds over Basic Income.
- Research into legislative possibilities for Basic Income implementation and the constitutional barriers that might be encountered.

Chapter 10: How would we implement a Basic Income?

- In each country it will be essential to research a wide variety of illustrative Basic Income schemes to find out which of them might have some chance of passing all of the feasibility tests listed in this chapter.
- Research will constantly be required on the administrative detail of Basic Income schemes that can pass the feasibility tests.
- Particularly important will be research in each context to discover how the database required for Basic Income administration might be constructed.
- Research will be needed on the levels of financial inclusion in different contexts, particularly in relation to bank account coverage and to future possibilities for extending individual access to bank accounts.
- In each context research will be required about precisely who should receive a Basic Income.
- Up to date research on legislative considerations will be required in each different context.
- Potential implementation pathways should be researched in each context, particularly in relation to whether it would be viable to implement a Basic Income for one age group at a time.
- The policy process should be researched in each context to discover the constraints that implementation of a Basic Income scheme might encounter, and whether it might be possible to alleviate the constraints.
- In every different context, a wide range of research will be required in relation to every aspect of research discussed in this book. The assumption should never be made that because a feasibility test has been passed in one context, the same feasibility test could necessarily be passed in the same way in another.
- Up to date research on the administrative differences between Basic Income and

such alternatives as a Minimum Income Guarantee, a Negative Income Tax, and a Participation Income, will always be required, and it would also be useful to research how Basic Income and a job guarantee might or might not be administratively and otherwise compatible.

- Complexity theory is relatively under-researched in relation to tax and social security systems, and this deficit should be remedied.
- Research should be applied to the possibility of what we might call a ‘Mont Pelerin strategy’: that is, would it be possible to establish a global network of thinktanks with the aim of establishing an unconditionality paradigm able to step in when the neoliberal paradigm hits a crisis from which it is unable to recover: a paradigm in which a Basic Income would be very much at home?

Conclusions

The increasing extent and depth of the global Basic Income debate makes a significantly enhanced research effort essential, which means that those institutions currently involved in research, and particularly the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) and its affiliated organisations, along with academic institutions with significant current interest in Basic Income—the Institute for Public Policy Research at the University of Bath, the Freiburg Institute for Basic Income Studies at Freiburg University, and the Basic Income Lab at Stanford University—and also various UBI Labs and thinktanks with a significant interest, such as Compass, need to be far better resourced and also need to work closely with each other so that all of the future research listed in this book can be divided up and then undertaken in a coordinated manner. BIEN’s annual congresses and its website and also the journal *Basic Income Studies* already contribute to the dissemination of research on Basic Income, but also useful would be a central archive to which all of the organisations involved in Basic Income research could submit their research results. One aspect of such a central research hub would be a register of academics interested in Basic Income so that multidisciplinary teams could be constructed to tackle the particular issues that emerge from the now widespread debate. Consideration might also be given to the establishment of a Mont Pelerin strategy as described above: that is, a network of thinktanks able to work together on a new unconditionality paradigm that will encompass Basic Income research but will also give attention to researching how an unconditionality paradigm might relate to other social policy fields.

If the Basic Income debate is to be intelligent and useful, it requires clear definitions constantly adhered to, and it requires research that employs the best available methods and the results of which are competently communicated.