

Finitude and Future: human life, basic income and the ecological crisis

Jorge Pinto

BIEN Congress, Seoul, August 2023

A finite human life

- Life, as we know it, is finite.
- As life is finite, humans are, by definition, vulnerable.
- Vulnerability implies fragility.
- Need to acknowledge the shared social vulnerability and fragility.

A finite planet

- Earth, as we know it, is finite – long-term but as well short-term.
- As the planet is finite, ecosphere is, by definition, vulnerable.
- Vulnerability implies fragility.
- Need to acknowledge the shared ecological vulnerability and fragility.

Social and ecological vulnerability

- Acknowledge the shared social and ecological vulnerability and the interaction (mutual feedback) of the different crises.
- Embrace finitude and prepare the future, ensuring life quality for present and future generations.
- Respecting the Social baseline and Planetary Boundaries is essential.



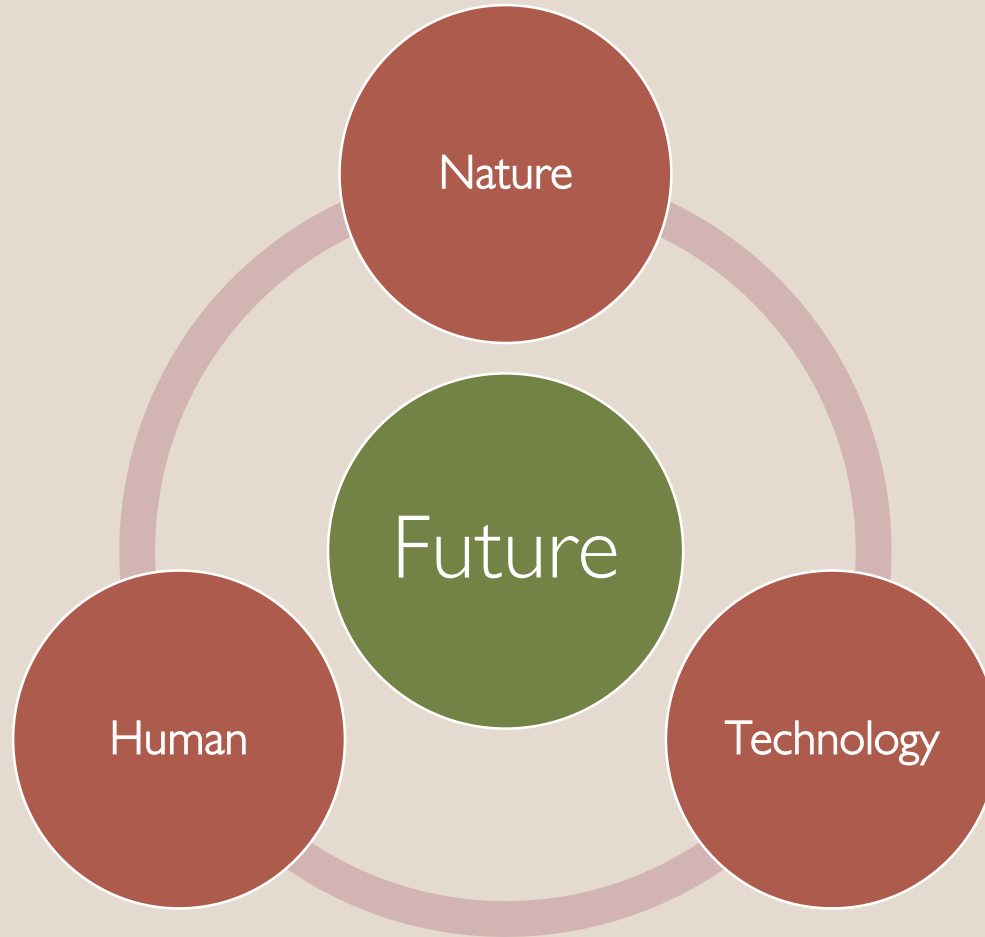
Possible escape strategies (1)

- **Escape by the elites:** concentration of wealth, exclusive places and abandon of public space. Increasing inequality in all senses, including addressing impacts of climate change – movie *Elysium*;
- **Escape internally:** focus on internal/personal problems, politics of mindfulness and “you know you can do it”. Might work for the individual but will hardly serve to have a global impact;

Possible escape strategies (2)

- **Escape by excuse:** “me, as a single individual, have little to no impact – thus, why should I even care? I’d rather continue living my life the best way I can”;
- **Escape by blaming:** “what’s happening to the planet is the Earth protecting itself. Humans are to blame so it is only fair that they pay the price for their actions”.

A new social and ecological deal



Contribution of a UBI (1)

- Reduce wealth inequalities:
 - Intergenerational justice – a wealth heritage distributed as UBI.
 - A progressive UBI: Carbon footprints correlate strongly with income inequality, reducing inequality should reduce the excessive emissions of the wealthy (Chancel et al. 2022).
- Reduce ecological impact:
 - Income security to allow experimenting less ecological harmful activities.
 - Work sharing would become more feasible relative to full employment dependent on growth.
 - (Financial) support in approving ecological policies (e.g. Nature restoration law in the European Union).

Contribution of a UBI (2)

- Labour and UBI:
 - Work could be more labour intensive and less natural-resource intensive (Van Parijs 2013).
 - Labour or capital-intensive economy? (Malmaeus et al. 2020)
 - Local self sufficiency with Basic Income as one possible degrowth scenario could reduce the prices of non-capital intensive commodities and therefore the necessity of economic growth.
 - UBI easier to implement in a “automation” capital-intensive, high-tech economy.
- Could a UBI contribute to reduce the social importance of labour? An accelerator of the “great resignation”?

Contribution of a UBI (3)

- Social innovation: autonomous sphere, cooperatives; what role regarding social security? (risk of unconditionality)
- Political innovation: more income, more disposable time, more political engagement (e.g. unions)?
- Technical innovation: open source, *cosmocalism*, shared knowledge.

Contribution of a UBI (4)

- Build a new imaginary:
 - More and better civic participation.
 - Inspiration from other realities and geographies (*pluriverso*).
 - Conviviality at the heart of human relations.
 - Reject the two forms of domination: Man by Man and Nature by Man.
 - Put an end to the dualism between Humanity and Nature.



thank you

Jorge Pinto

24/08/2023