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

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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

Nature

Future

Human

Technology
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, cosmopolitanism, 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

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