

Introduction

While historically there has been recurrent interest in the idea of a guaranteed money transfer by the government to all citizens, proponents in recent debates have suggested that technologic and socio-economic developments in recent decades render implementation of UBI feasible for the first time thanks to growing automation, if not necessary in anticipation of higher levels of unemployment and growing inequalities threatening to unravel the fabric of society. These different notions already introduce a bandwidth of perspectives on UBI where common ground still has to be found. Apart from the fact that it is a central issued money transfer one has to acknowledge that there is no universal definition of basic income as a political program yet. While this ambiguity sparks interests from thinkers of different orientation on the political compass, it can confuse arguments when the innovation of rethinking how to distribute welfare is tightly interwoven with answers to questions like which resources should be (re-)allocated, why a basic income should be considered a right and when different answers to these questions are conflated. In this paper I want to suggest that it can be beneficial to temporarily separate these concerns, undoubtedly admitting their inherent connections.

Therefore, I want to suggest four categories that offer a specific enough answer to the question what level of basic income should be granted and whether it complements or (partially) replaces current welfare programs: First, a UBI replacing current welfare entirely where current spending determines the amount of the transfer. Second, models where the basic income only partially replaces welfare (health care and education are provided to the same extent) and the amount helps to ease situations of hardship but is not enough to sustain a living. Category three builds on the second one but raises the income just above the poverty line, making it possible to sustain a very modest living in areas where the cost of living is below or around the average. The last category marks the end of this spectrum where the level of basic income would be comfortable enough to render work optional.

Within each of these contexts, I try to identify the main concern the UBI models in this category want to address either in comparison or in addition to UBI models in the other categories. I want to show how Data Visualization can illustrate these concerns and the proposed solutions but also allows a unique comparison of these categories by introducing a visual scheme of the (re-)allocation of resources. In extension to a broadcasting paradigm I want to use the possibilities of user interaction as an opportunity to invite the user to reflect on the opinion formation process regarding the presented arguments and (re-)introduce the notion that UBI, when translated into a concrete political implementation is more than a cross-ideological distribution mechanism: like every political program it then also becomes a broader vision of “obligations we have to one another, the origins of property, the ends of human life, the shape of our society” Nevertheless my hope is that the separation of these concerns (and contexts) helps to emphasize in which regards UBI can be regarded a tool of innovating welfare and once clarity over broader visions is established might even offer new compromises in a highly polarized political environment.¹

¹ Battistoni, Alyssa. “The False Promise of Universal Basic Income.” *Dissent Magazine*, Spring 2017. <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/false-promise-universal-basic-income-andy-stern-ruger-bregman>.

- specific -> political program, not a non-ideological pragmatic tool, but offers opportunities beyond polarization

- Current debate with historic predecessors
 - Development in recent decades, from necessary to feasible
- Not a political program, but a innovation of welfare (social innovation)
- Different perspectives, different UBI plans
- Each has a focus on a specific problem that stands out in comparison or in addition to the others
- Data Visualization can not only help re-presenting these problems, but in some cases also why UBI would be an “innovative” solution to it
- Data Visualization can show how resources would be re-allocated, show the difference between data (problems) and speculations (models) and overall comparisons (Budget, re-distribution? – maybe in the future)
- Ask which UBI plan is preferred, user interaction

- Non-ideological introduction, but acknowledging own bias
- Why is this American – belief that the individual knows best, what’s good for them

This paper wants to evaluate the potential of Data Visualization and user interaction to acquaint a broad public with the idea of a universal basic income (UBI) facilitating a nuanced conversation.