

Ecological Basic Income – an Acceleration Brake

This article covers the idea of an ecologically financed basic income and thereby a societal utopia. It is an answer to fundamental ecological and social problems of the economy and the culture of contemporary growth societies. As all other former utopias, e.g. the liberation from religious power, the democracy principle, the welfare state, even this idea will probably not be realized in the near future. But should we give up the idea so quickly? The contribution will show us, that this regulation idea braking the permanent growth is not hoping for a far utopia. In fact it is a possible direction of alternative development, based on existing institutions, demands and dead ends of modern society.

The principles of an ecological basic income (EBI) will first be explained, in order to work out how to lead previous environmental policies out of different dead-ends. An EBI could combine ecological taxes with redistribution of income and it could combine sufficiency with different lifestyle norms (I). But it's not about a fancy method to avoid an inaccessibility of environmental policies any more. Rather, it has the tendency to oppose to a productivistic economy (II) as well as to a consumistic culture (III).

Moreover, it can help to switch off the acceleration motors which are responsible for the ongoing social acceleration in modern societies following the theory of Hartmut Rosa. It can develop the Green New Deal, as a mainstream project for the simultaneous solution of ecological and economical crisis, into a post-growth character. It can slow down functional differentiation of society by generating newly communicatively integrated "lifeworlds". And it can give elements of the "good life" a hospitable surrounding (IV).

Finally, it will be shown that an EBI is not only a potential brake for acceleration but is especially well-suited for a step-by-step implementation of the principle basic income itself. This means that there is a realistic way toward this utopia (V).

I Ecological Basic Income as a Libertarian and Redistributive Environmental Policy

An ecological basic income (EBI) is a guaranteed basic income (BI) financed by taxation of both undesired consumption of natural resources and surrounding media. Only some central resources and media should be taxed, of which the problem is not the toxicity or danger of use but the quantity, e.g. the emission of CO² or the usage of limited raw materials. The central idea is that the revenue of these ecological fees will be shared back equally to everyone. In this way every citizen, from infant to the elderly, from rich to poor, will be paid an "eco-bonus", respectively an "ecological basic income".

The tax would not be levied on the end-product but at the beginning and end of the products' life-cycle, in other words when resources are extracted and replaced into the environment. This means a financing of basic income by taxation of a special type of consumption which burdens our environment, depending on our societal point

of view, which runs counter to the goal of sustainable development and a globally just handling of natural resources.

Eco-Tax with Redistribution

Wait – isn't a financing through a cost increase unjust for the poor? Don't they suffer the most under an increase of costs in their daily lives, since the user fees for raw materials or emissions via the series of value-added processes finally flow into the shops? Exactly the opposite occurs: those with higher income consume more and therefore have usually a higher usage of environmental consumption. They pay on average more, while through a per-person distribution they only receive an average profit; they are "net-payers". Those of lower income and those with many children are the beneficiaries.

A number of research results speak for this correlation:

- A comparison of German cities shows a clear connection of the CO₂ emission and per-person income: Frankfurt, with a GDP of 66,800 € per person, emitted 11,8 tons per person and year, Berlin with a GDP of 21,400 € pp, emitted 5,6 tons per person and year (Economist Intelligence Unit 2011:13). The CO₂ emission is a relatively good indicator of the over-all resource usage, since higher material input is also energy-intensive as a rule.
- The Infrac-Institut in Zürich, using econometric simulation models, compared the effect of different forms of eco-tax and came to the conclusion that an "eco-bonus solution" (i.e. the equal distribution of revenue) is the one which leads to a redistribution of income to the poorer (Infrac o.J.).
- A survey from the German Economy Institut (DIW) shows that the cost increase induced by the ecological tax reform in Germany 1999-2003 is growing in constant relationship to the income: the higher the income, the more the consumption of electricity and fossil fuels (DIW 2009).

Naturally there is always a counter example. There are those of lower income who have a wasteful attitude toward consumption and therefore have to pay more. And there are those of higher income who value frugality in their consumption. But this is exactly part of the underlying principle of the eco basic income, the "Tax and Share". To consume products with less environmental impact is appealing for everyone. And for everyone there is an incentive to end certain harmful forms of consumption.

Thus the EBI leads out of the dilemma of economic instruments being used for environmental policies without social compensation: if it's too small, there will be no impact; if it's too big, it becomes unsocial. Here it's the opposite: the higher the eco tax rate, the bigger the redistribution effect, internationally as well as nationally. This procedure can be used at every regional level. Even though there is no globally binding agreement, a single nation can begin to confine its allowable environmental usage through taxes or through auctioning of allowances, and also to achieve the effect of redistribution by sharing the revenues.

One component of a resource-light lifestyle is consuming "different", i.e. the consumption of less environmentally-burdening alternative products. For this the ecological financing of a basic income is not only fitting, but a necessary requirement. One criticism against the general idea of a basic income from an ecological point of view is known to be that with the larger mass purchasing-power more environmentally damaging things will be bought. That is just what will be avoided through the change of relative costs because of the ecological tax: products with a

greater ecological footprint will be more expensive than environmentally-friendly alternatives.

Sufficiency without Defining Lifestyle Norms

The other component of a resource-light lifestyle is consuming “less”. The EBI promotes an ecological sufficiency, but without imposing certain lifestyle norms. As a socially just alternative to economical instruments of environmental policy, generally from the left wing, stronger regulatory policies are called for that go beyond setting of boundary values for production. The government should, plain and simple, forbid environmentally destructive, unnecessary consumption.

First and foremost those products would be concentrated on that have a symbolically high luxury-, unisexual, and/or damaging factor, such as SUVs, tropical fruits, air travel, etc. But tendentially all ecologically questionable consumption, from unnecessary car travel to colored toilet paper, should be forbidden for all. This is social, since it affects everyone in the same way, and possibly also leads to positive ecological goals, but it improperly limits individual freedoms. We cannot dictate which vehicle can be used for different situations, which furniture in an apartment with so-and-so many children may be set up, which foods from which countries I may enjoy to whatever occasion, etc. All of this – and much more – needs to be determined.

But from which standpoint can certain lifestyles be prohibited or allowed? How shall this happen in an even halfway democratic procedure? Out of the acceptance of the diversity of lifestyle in modern society it follows in fact that rules must become more abstract. When we can't or won't regulate everything in detail, this can only happen through the costs of environmental usage.

Only this allows the individual one of the freedoms of activity appropriate to modern society while simultaneously establishing a limit for his overall environmental usage. Through an EBI the acceptance of different life-styles within the framework of ecological-monetarian constraints will be conserved. Certain forms of consumption will become less attractive, but can continue to be performed singly or in moderation. The redistribution effect of the EBI will make sure that these individual freedoms will not be limited to the affluent, but rather be available to the whole population.

Thus the libertarian and redistributive effects of an EBI could lead out of the dilemma of some environmental policies. It would stimulate alternative forms of consumption and, importantly, less consumption than before. But is this reduced consumption compatible with basic growth-promoting structures, particularly with the productivistic economy and the consumer-oriented culture of contemporary growth societies?

II Enabling an Anti-Productivistic Economy

Green New Deal without Growth

As an answer to both economical and ecological crisis the idea of a “Green New Deal“ in the last five years has become hegemonic. The basic thought consists of reaching a state-supported impulse in innovation and investment in green technologies in a green market. The raised economic growth thereby should concurrently bring ecological progress because of new technologies with less usage

of resources and less deterioration of environment. This idea was first introduced into the debate by green parties, think tanks and NGOs. But it is becoming more and more hegemonic in the whole political class, even if there are other descriptions, e.g. “Green Economy”.

Even if this would lead to a certain green progress, this idea remains within the frame of productivism. That is, when the generation of new work is seen as an advantage by itself: when e.g. new technologies, like the “intelligent house” (which can adjust the consumption of electricity to changing offers of renewable sources) are being promoted with the argument, this would bring new handicraft jobs and open up “future markets”. Even if many of the promoters do not intend this, the production of goods and services as much as possible remains the outcome even of the green economy. The difference in relation to the current economy is that we should produce and consume technical and organizational alternatives.

But there are also ideas for a Green New Deal or a Green Economy beyond growth. A version is outlined in the study of the Wuppertal Institut „Sustainable Germany in a Globalized World”. Within the framework of a “new social contract” the citizens in their role as businessmen, as well as consumers, should give off capital and comfort both to nature and to those less well off (BUND/EED 2008: 607). People in the north, respectively the global group of consumers, should change their life style towards frugality, instead of extending the previous welfare model with green technologies. In opposition to the versions with growth the question of redistribution is posed because the authors have a different thesis concerning the consistency of sustainability and economic growth. This could be described as a „Social Green New Deal without growth”.¹

An EBI could be a central element of the new social contract proposed for this conception. Through taxation of environmental usage the citizens would give up a part of their “comfort power” to nature (by reducing certain types of consumption), and to the poorer (by sharing the revenues). But an EBI is more than a redistribution model. With an EBI the Green New Deal could gain a libertarian character, because the space for creating an individual lifestyle for all citizens, not only the well situated, will grow (see above).

Opposed to Productivism

But most important for an economy beyond growth is.: With an EBI the Green New Deal will be opposed to productivism, because it is fostering the reduction of economic activity in general – besides supporting those technological activities with less resource usage.

Firstly it makes consumption more expensive. With an EBI this is possible, because it combines ecological taxation with redistribution of income. Secondly every production, every economic activity becomes less attractive because of the heightened social security given by the basic grant and because of the higher prices of resources.

Thirdly an EBI allows for more financial security in the ecological transition of the economy. How many products long known to be ecologically damaging or socially disputable are accepted without question, if not actually stipulated, while the capitalistic economic regulation focused on employment is linked to an elementary existence? For an acceptance of the ecological transition of economy which is linked to a far-reaching change of workplace and careers, the social-psychological situation

needed is “change without fear”. While in the hegemonial conceptions toward better adaptation of the ecological and economical crises like the Green New Deal the worries of those with expectations of new employment should be calmed, the concept of the EBI consists of the guarantee of social security – a social security independent of economic growth! The increased liberty of activity for the individual achieved by the EBI is not only an emancipatory progress, but an ecological advantage: the coercion to ecologically problematic economical activity will decrease.

While this argument that targets security during a social ecological transition apply generally for an basic income (BI), the other factors can only be achieved with a basic income financed by eco-taxes. It can make the eco-tax social, can open room for sufficient lifestyle orientation beyond small fringe groups, and can preserve the freedom of lifestyle in spite of ecological restraints.

Degrowth without Eliminating Financial Sources

With an EBI, besides the technological strategies of efficiency and consistency, i.e. the compatibility of anthropogenic and naturalistic substance cycles, the non-technical way of sufficiency will be supported. However the relationship between a technical and non-technical path can not be estimated in advance. Anyway, the EBI has an anti-productivistic component and is therefore part of an economy beyond growth.

But this anti-productivistic effect does not undermine the financing function of the EBI. If less goods or services were produced the revenue could nevertheless remain stable or even grow, because the tax rates could be raised. To sustain a certain level of revenue it is not necessary to accept a certain level of undesirable environmentally unfriendly production, as some critics argue.

In summation we can say that an EBI as a core of a libertarian and anti-productivistic Green New Deal would not only constitute a higher level of welfare state but also a higher level of environmental state. It is a higher level, because the structural problems of work as well as the structural problems of environmental usage would be solved according to the “basic idea of equal liberties” – following the ideas of Claus Offe (Offe 2009). It is a higher level, because the domination of the anonymous systems market and state over the social integrated area of discourse called “lifeworld” from Jürgen Habermas will be diminished. These higher levels of both welfare state and environmental state will function as a growth brake.

III Enabling an Anti-consumistic Culture

The consumistic cultural orientation to „always more“ and “always more various” is a ongoing tendency. Indeed the attempt to fill the limited human life with a maximum of consumistic events has come into criticism in the past few years. A culture of deceleration becomes more and more an issue of discourse, not only motivated by seeking a “good life”. Even in the ecological debate a long time a lifestyle of the “less” has been propagated. But obviously most appellations produced in the past 20 years - partially with much media work - failed, with the exception of small avantgardistic groups.

BI Changes the Psychology of Deficiency

A BI, with its basic economical security, can overcome this problem. It offers everyone the space to test alternative life styles. It would foster life with more – freely chosen – communities, with more individual space, but less consumption and acquisition pressure. The BI makes it easier for all to leave the treadmill of “work - consume – work”, at least tentatively. New lifestyles of „less“, of “affluence of leisure time” (“Zeitwohlstand”), with a stronger orientation towards non-monetary work, singly or communally, instead of gainful employment, would have a chance to be tried out and appreciated, and not only by fringe groups

An BI generates the social-psychological conditions for an anti-consumistic consciousness, for a feeling of abundance instead of scarcity and striving after material gain. The psychoanalyst Erich Fromm wrote: „A psychology of scarcity produces anxiety, envy, egoism [...] A psychology of abundance produces initiative, faith in life and solidarity” (Fromm 1966). Not until this fear of failure is conquered will questions of life quality be answered without accelerated consumption of goods, holidays, contacts etc. : “ Until now man has been too occupied with work (or has been too tired after work) to be too seriously concerned with such problems as ‘What is the meaning of life?’ ‘What do I believe in?’ ‘What are my values?’ ‘Who am I?’ etc. If he ceases to be mainly occupied by work, he will either be free to confront these problems seriously, or he will become half mad from direct or compensated boredom“ (ibid). A BI gives people an economical and psychological basic security. Even thus it can make an ecological-cultural change more attractive for broader levels of society.

The feeling of abundance needed for a less consumistic attitude is not only dependent on a material basic security. The feeling of contentment of each individual depends on his position in the societal hierarchy, respectively of the extension of hierarchy itself. The more unequal a society is the less a feeling of abundance is possible regardless of where the individual is placed in the hierarchy.

More economic inequality causes more status-oriented consumption. The economic history researcher Richard Wilkinson and the healthcare scientist Kate Pickett compared industrial societies with different wealth distribution patterns with regard to saving activities. The result: the more unequal the societies are, the lower the savings rate. (Wilkinson/Pickett 2010) The authors give us a lucid explanation. With consumer goods people are able to show their status. Those who were at the bottom can raise themselves with demonstrative consumption even if they can't afford it. Even middle class people try to show this by using goods and services which demonstrate this. To keep up with the majority or with the better situated they are willing to get into debt. The psychoanalyst Alfred Adler wrote: “Being a human means to have a feeling of inferiority which people constantly want to overcome.”² This is not only theory. Wilkinson/Pickett for example argue with a survey made by Solnick/Hemenway: 50% of the respondents would forgo up to 50% of their income in order to reach a higher societal position. They also found relationships between economical inequality and the increase of anxieties, psychological diseases, depressions etc.

In this context inequality is not only to be understood in an economical way. Whoever feels himself suppressed in his family, his work, in politics, will try to compensate this through consumption (“now its time to treat myself”). People who feel well-accepted need this less. It is not only the modern promise of maximizing life, that makes

people strive for a maximum consumption of goods and events, but even the inequality and the extension of hierarchy of a society.

BI: More Equality and less Domination

The conclusion: If the „less“ should be attractive not only for marginal groups, then society on the whole must be less hierarchic. A lifestyle of sufficiency, an „Elegant Simplicity“, can only develop on the basis of a liberal daily routine. Those at the bottom or those who in some way feel repressed, or constantly sense a feeling of scarceness, who perceive alienation toward their job, will not be convinced of more prudence. To compensate for this they need more demonstrative consumption, occasions used as reimbursement, keeping up with the status quo, etc.

A BI brings more equality and less domination into society. With a BI everybody can say „No“ to work offers which are problematic in an ecological, social or economical way. We can expect more working relationships becoming less hierarchical. With a BI everybody can even say „No“ to problematic social affairs. A woman could more easily divorce her husband, a dependent adult offspring his family. The patriarchal benevolence of a family bread earner will be needed no longer.

Circumstances with less domination will reduce those shares of consumption which are caused only by compensatory motivations. It remains a more authentic consumption, which better equals the original needs. Because of the greater choice on the labor market a BI also provides for more authentic work relations, for a more authentic production. Thus the economy becomes more authentic from both sides which determine it, from the consumption side and the production side. Hence we can name the BI an authentic lump-sum („Authentizitätspauschale“). Instead of non-authentic production and consumption values perceived as „the good life“ will occur. For a good life beyond growth, politics have to provide a hospitable environment, as the growth critics Robert and Edward Skidelsky wrote. They criticise the dogmatism of political liberalism, which allows the state to avoid questions about „the good life“ (Skidelsky 2013). As basic goods for a „good life“ they recognize (among other things): harmony with nature, security (the possibility to calculate relatively the future), respect (reciprocal acceptance), leisure, personality (the ability to frame and execute a plan of life), and friendship (not instrumental or forced relationships). R. and E. Skidelsky advocate a social policy for these basic goods, and this includes a BI. We don't know the authors relationship to the EBI. For the basic good „harmony with nature“, but also for „leisure“ this kind of financing would surely be the best, because it impels the impact of an BI in an anti-productivistic direction.

IV A Contribution against Social Acceleration

An EBI would foster a more authentic production and a more authentic consumption, as I showed above. But society consists of more than economy. In modernity there are obviously acceleration dynamics demonstrated by the sociologist Hartmut Rosa in his theory of social acceleration (Rosa 2010, 2012, 2013).

According to this theory, in modern society a self-propelling “circle of acceleration” is occurring. Technical acceleration (e.g. mobility, communication) is boosting the acceleration of social change (e.g. association patterns in family and economy), which is then causing an acceleration of the “Pace of Life” (adaptation processes are time-intensive, permanently pursuing). The scarcity of time resources again is driving technical acceleration and so on.³ This circle of acceleration is propelled additionally from „external drivers“, from an economic, a cultural and a socio-structural motor. An EBI – this is my concluding thesis – has the potential to slowdown or to switch off these three motors of social acceleration which Rosa recognized, or could even revert them into brakes.

An Antiproduktivistic Green New Deal: Brake for the Economic Motor

As an „economic motor“ of social acceleration Rosa recognizes the capitalistic economic system. With the principle “time is money” it is driving forward the acceleration process faster than every other economic system. Whoever produces faster normally produces cheaper and gains economically important advantages. Whoever invents a new product and brings it faster into market can survive even if he’s not successful within an existing or saturated market. The faster the invested capital is reproducing itself the better the chance within the competition for getting investors. A compulsory correlation to the growth of production is the growth of consumption. The basic problem of capitalistic economy is – following Rosa - not the distribution problem but the maintenance of accelerated circulation. Therefore the political regulation of economy has to be productivistic and to sustain growth: The more that is produced the better it is.

An EBI effects the opposite. It is a central element of an anti-productivistic Green New Deal as I showed above. Therefore it functions as a brake for the acceleration of the motor capitalistic economy. This could happen without abolishing the market- and capital mechanism at all. The market principle enabling innovations, economic complexity and individual freedom, as well as the principle of building capital necessary to realize bigger projects, will be preserved - on a decelerated level.

More Lifeworld: Brake for the Socio-Structural Motor

The second motor for social acceleration Rosa identified is the dynamic of functional differentiation, i.e. the division of societal functions in specialized systems (economy, politics, family etc.) This enables initially a higher speed of processing the daily tasks, because regarding topics beyond the specialized function is no longer necessary. In the economy, for example, you don't have to discuss how a decision is affecting the family or the politics – and vice versa. This makes a faster processing in economics, politics and family possible, which normally saves time. Since in society more complex tasks can be done, options and alternatives for activities increase. That's the reason, however, specialized systems come under acceleration pressure: The surroundings influencing decisions change faster and faster, the processing time for decisions within the systems become shorter (Rosa 2013:186f.).

This has consequences for the participants processing within them and the speed of social change. The systems become more and more “greedy” in regard to the participants and make “total claims” on their time (Rosa 2013:191): The pressure to

eliminate empty times rises, “systemic processes tend to turn around the clock”. On the Internet one could develop products at any time, worship services would be offered at many different times during the week, family affairs managed permanently in between, etc. The “Non-stop Society” leads to the disappearance of collective temporal patterns” therefore accelerating the dissolution of fixed social practises, relation patterns and association structures. They vanish in favour of „more fluid, permanently mobile and shifting” cultural, financial and ideological flows around the globe, which could be combined almost arbitrary (Rosa 2013:109). This constant social change causes even constant adapting actions from the individuals, which leads to an enormous acceleration of the “pace of life” and expedites the acceleration circle.

Even the „functional differentiation“ motor recognized by Rosa as responsible for this acceleration process is opposed to an EBI. With its securities and free spaces it fosters the development of more commonly oriented, communicative structured lifeworlds (“Lebenswelten”⁴) like projects for living and working together, urban gardening etc. They were added to the functional differentiated systems in economy, politics, science etc. which still exist. Thus a more integrated, non-differentiated sphere can evolve again. Within this sphere things happen more slowly, because various requirements (relating e.g. to culture, economy, political norms) have to be made compatible by communication. At first sight this costs time for living and could boost the acceleration of the pace of life. But the acceleration pressure from the functional systems causing adaptation pressure and constant social change will be less effectual.

Thus the functional differentiation motor would be decelerated. Whether this leads in the end to a slowdown of the pace of life depends on the outcomes and requirements within the communicatively integrated spheres. In this way the newly generated time resources could be lost again through too much communication time needed for the participative processes. In either case the price (or the benefit) for a bigger share of “social integration” instead of “system integration” (Habermas) in society is a decelerated economy, is a decelerated social change.

A basic income financed by eco-taxes would feed such a development once again stronger than one financed by income taxes – in two respects: Firstly the micro-economic pressure to take even the zero-option into account brings sufficiency oriented values making a slower daily life more tolerable to the people. Secondly the macro-economic pressure to the economic system to reach the earnings needed to pay the guaranteed income will be omitted. An EBI functions even with a decrease of the GDP, because the eco-taxes could be raised in the case of diminished revenues (see above). Thus when the economic system in a degrowth economy receives less coercion to accelerate its processes, it would apply less pressure to all the other systems: Their surroundings would change more slowly.

More Equality and less Domination: Brake for the Cultural Motor

As the third motor Rosa marks the “promise of acceleration”. This cultural motor contains two aspects of modern ethos which additionally push the ongoing acceleration of the pace of life.

On the one hand an actualized protestant ethic is taking effect even after two centuries of secularization. During the genesis of capitalism the puritan protestants

both as worker and as enterpriser were in fear of losing their salvation when working too little in their inner-worldly life. This was a “perfectly fitting cultural counterpart for the capitalist economies of time” (Rosa 2013: 176). With the modernization process of rolling back religious ethics, fear and promise – so Rosa - only changed their form as “the screens on which they are projected become relocated from the realm of an extrasocial transcendence (eternal salvation or damnation) into a system-immanent realm of social competition” (ibid.178). The new promise would be the success, the new fear would be failure in competition – and Rosa is thinking this not only about economy. The trend is that in all spheres of life such as family, love attachments, friendships, profession (with objectives beyond economic success), culture, civil engagement, fitness etc., people feel the constant pressure to perform well. This becomes more difficult, because the surrounding conditions in these spheres are changing themselves faster and permanently. There is always the danger to lose acceptance, to lag behind the times as a failure. In this way Rosa interprets the growing feeling of standing, “in all realms of existence”, on “slipping slopes” (ibid.)

On the other hand, most people would try to compensate the unavoidable drama of human finiteness by savouring as many worldly possibilities as conceivable. They try to pack a maximum of events, experiences and life goals in their limited lifespans: “She who lives twice as fast can realize twice as many worldly possibilities,…” (ibid. 183) Rosa describes this “secularized conception of happiness and time” with a citation from Gerhard Schulze (“Erlebnisgesellschaft”): “The more means of experience (TV programs, clothes, vacations, partners, etc.) we appropriate (multiplication), and the more we concentrate them in time (compression), the richer our interior life will be – an increase in being through an increase in having.” (ibid.182)

Even this “cultural motor” would be disarmed through an EBI. With its economic basic security, experiments in anti-consumistic lifestyles would become easier. But an EBI leads also to less domination and less inequality. Thereby it generates the social-psychological conditions for replacing the pressure to “keep up” with the feeling of abundance and satisfaction. A BI gives the economic and psychological basic security to people, that they are not on a “slipping slope”. In case of financing it by eco-taxes the framework for the spreading of the feeling of abundance will advance. With an EBI, the choice for leisure over consumption is being fed micro-economically through the increase in price of many economic activities.

V An Introduction to Deceleration is Possible

Rosa emphasizes that the individual could hardly flee the dynamics of social acceleration, even if the wish to deceleration is heard more and more. It would depend on whether we are able to influence the structures of social acceleration on a societal or political level. A BI is a contribution to this.

All of the three motors of social acceleration could be curbed or even switched off. The effect will be reinforced when this BI will be financed through eco-taxes. This is valid especially for the economic motor. The principle of “Tax and Share”, that makes environmental and social policy independent from growth, can enable an antiproductivistic regulation of capitalist economy.⁵ But even the acceleration drivers,

functional differentiation and the culture of maximum consumption, can be repressed better when the free spaces for alternative lifestyles promoted by a BI, as well as the hospitable environment for a “good life”, are amended with the microeconomic pressure to behave oneself more sufficient.

Actually there is no concrete majority for introducing an EBI now. We cannot hope for a transition from our hitherto welfare state to a total change with a guaranteed basic income from one day to the next. The impact of such an abrupt socio-economic large experiment carried out on the living body of society is not calculable. The whole economic structure, prices, labour market, demand and production, would suddenly have to reconstitute themselves under completely new conditions. The fear of politicians and the people themselves of a societal chaos could not be overcome. But usually, only during an existential crisis or after a catastrophe like a war, are such abrupt new beginnings thinkable. We should not place our hopes on this.

Normally, new paradigms can only be established with prototypes and small pilot schemes. An EBI is highly suited for such an incremental implementation. An EBI can be introduced slowly, parallel to the previous social security scheme in order to first introduce the principle in a smaller form. Thus security within the transition will come into existence with enough time for adaptation. We can start the principle of “tax and share” on various scales and with different environmental media. Here are some examples:

- The revenues for Germany from the allowances auctioned within the European emission trade system from 2013 on are estimated to 10 bn. € per year. If we share them equally per capita a family of four will get a 500 € per year eco-bonus as an ecological basic income. Their revenue will rise through a possible reduction of the amount of allowances which is demanded by many environmental organisations.
- In the case of boosting the eco-tax in Germany, with the result that the consumer price rises by 10%, this family would receive an additional 1000 € a year. With a rise of 50% they would earn 4000 €.
- We could start to tax construction materials, metals, or the covering over of land areas for other than farming purposes. This would give a big impulse to the recycling economy.

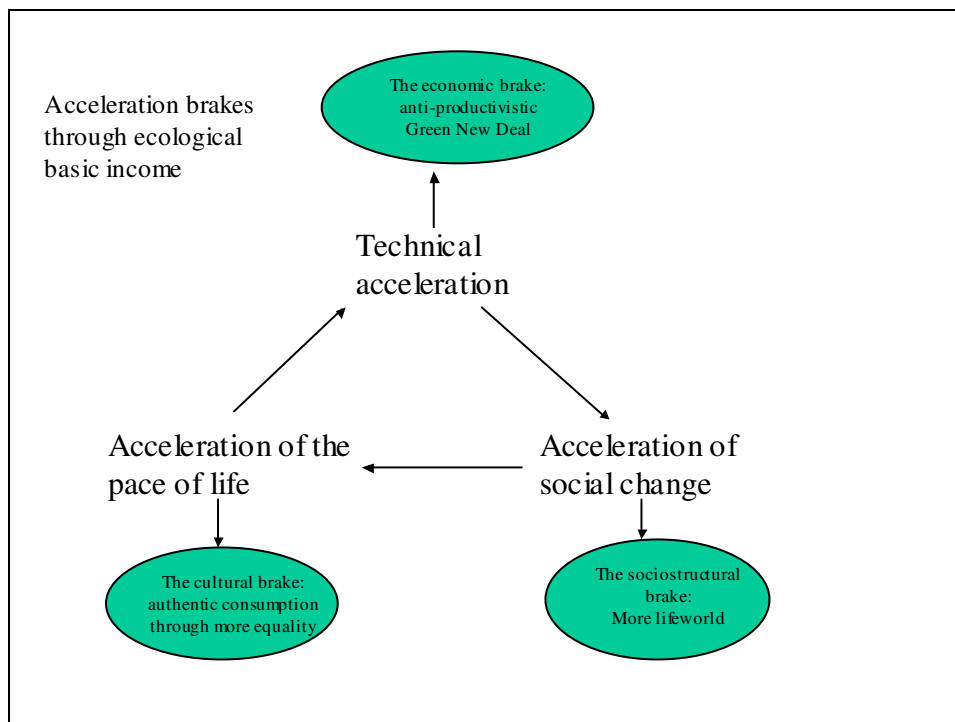
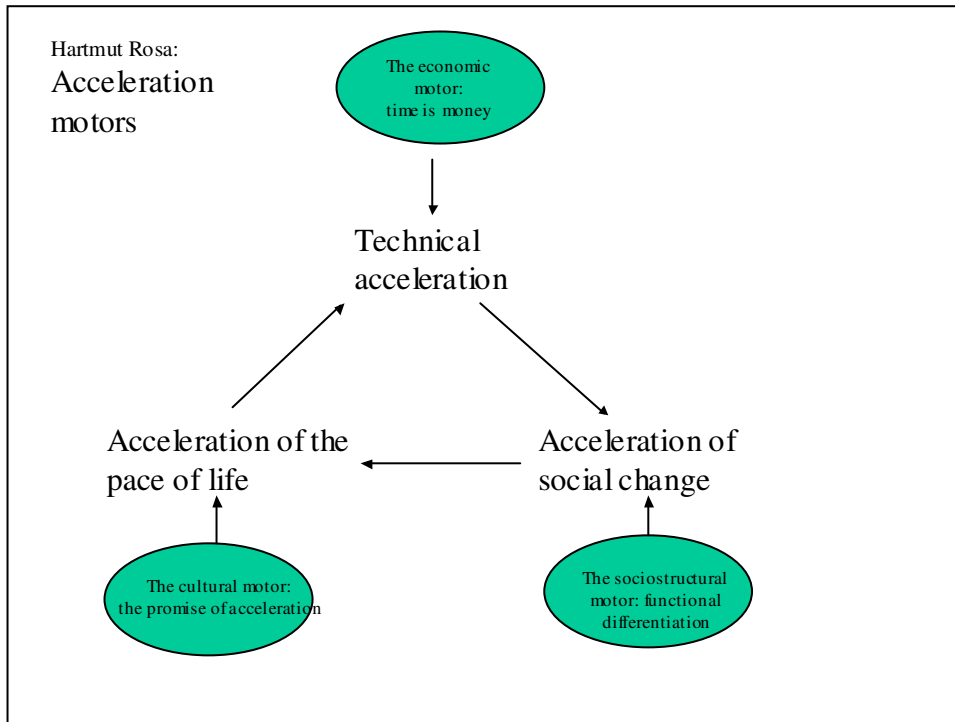
All this isn't enough for a full basic income. But these are steps in the right direction. It's a start. The rest of the money needed for a basic income completely securing a basic existence can be gained in different ways. One possibility is to raise the ecological tax incremental and to extend it to further environmental media until an amount of e.g. 600 € per month securing a basic existence is reached. Another possibility is to add different financial methods

Even small steps to a full ecological basic income can cause changes. Thereby perhaps the acceleration motors would initially slowdown. Probably a critical mass has to be exceeded, i.e. a basic income or an eco-tax beyond a certain amount, to reach any effect. This is based upon a larger basic security, more equality, less domination and more experimental spaces for all. But those qualities could be reached partially, even when a BI is not high enough to secure basic existence. The amount of an EBI which would be needed to switch off the economic, cultural or socio-structural motor in total or even reverse them into brakes can not be quantified by any means. I have tried to illustrate that in principal there are a couple of reasons which show us that the EBI or the “Tax and Share” is able to support not only singular oases but structural deceleration in the society at all.

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Figures



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- ¹ Cf. the different forms of a Green New Deal in: Schachtschneider 2009: Green New Deal, Sackgasse und sonst nichts? RLS Standpunkte 17/2009 www.rosalux.de
- ² Cf. Adler, Alfred 1973 (1933): Der Sinn des Lebens, Frankfurt/M.: S. 55 (citation in Wilkinson/Pickett 2010)
- ³ The complex theoretical approach can be described here only very shortly. Cf. the full description in Rosa 2010, 2012, 2013
- ⁴ Cf. Habermas, Jürgen 1981: Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Frankfurt/M.
- ⁵ Whether we then could name this society still „capitalism“ we shouldn't and cannot debate here. In any case the range of capital interests would be reduced.