

# Realizing the Basic Income: Competing Claims to Expertise in Transformative Social Innovation

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## Abstract

Current social innovation initiatives towards societal transformations bring forward new ways of doing and organizing, but new ways of knowing as well. Their efforts towards realizing those are important sites for the investigation of contemporary tensions of expertise. The promotion of new, transformative ways of knowing typically involves a large bandwidth of claims to expertise. The attendant contestation is unfolded through the exemplar case of the Basic Income in which the historically evolved forms of academic political advocacy are increasingly accompanied by a new wave of activism. Crowd-funding initiatives, internet activists, citizen labs, petitions and referenda seek to realize the BI through different claims to expertise than previous attempts. Observing both the tensions between diverse claims to expertise and the overall co-production process through which the Basic Income is realized, this contribution concludes with reflections on the politics of expertise involved in transformative social innovation.

**Keywords:** expertise, basic income, social innovation, contestation, co-production

## Introduction: Transformative Social Innovation through new ways of knowing

That Basic Income, you see, in the end you just run into people's basic assumptions about human behaviour and about society. And then it's no longer a matter of arguments, but of beliefs: "I don't believe that that'll work out", "I believe that it'll make people lazy"... And you just don't get past that point. People who do not believe in something, you cannot convince them. Then you can only show them, well, we did that, then and there... this is what we saw – now is this still what you're believing? (RM, 4)

As prevailing institutional structures are widely seen to fall short regarding persistent societal challenges such as sustainable development, social inclusion and well-being, a broad variety of initiatives can be witnessed that pursue societal transformations through social innovation (Moulaert et al., 2013; Klein et al. 2016; Avelino et al., 2017). Transformative social innovation (TSI) involves the promotion of radically new ways of

doing, organizing, framing and knowing, thereby challenging, altering or replacing dominant institutions (Haxeltine et al., 2017). Such TSI is often undertaken in the form of concrete and locally-based alternative socio-material practices such as ecovillages, hackerspaces or time banks. However, even though concrete tinkering with alternative doing and organizing is typical for the repertoires of these initiatives, the dissemination of new ways of knowing and counter-hegemonic ideas is a no less important dimension of such transformative agency (Riddell and Moore, 2015; Westley et al., 2017). This becomes evident through the considerable efforts that these collectives invest in the construction of persuasive narratives of change (e.g. 'Slow Food', the 'Sharing Economy') to enroll others into their proposals for new social relations (Wittmayer et al., 2015).

This contribution uses a case study on Basic Income (BI) advocacy to unfold how TSI practices, and the associated promotion of new ways of knowing, are sites of research at which contemporary tensions of expertise manifest particularly strongly. As expressed insightfully by the BI activist in the introductory quote, many arguments and underpinnings can be provided in its favour, yet these run up against deeply entrenched convictions that 'one should earn one's income'. Moreover, for lack of full-fledged implementation, it is as yet not possible to demonstrate the suggested societal and individual benefits of a BI arrangement. Commonly defined as an unconditional, individual, universal and more or less sufficient income entitlement to all citizens (Van Parijs, 1997), the BI has gained some traction as a scientifically elaborated model for social security. BI advocacy exemplifies the difficulty to gain acceptance of alternative ways of knowing, which typically shake the fences between established and 'lay' expertise (Wynne, 1996). As emergent not-yet realities, TSI processes tend to elude truth claims by established expertise (Michael, 2016).

Our analysis of the BI and its various advocates unfolds how TSI involves a large bandwidth of different claims to expertise, changing along with their political discursive contexts. The case is particularly insightful as tensions in expertise construction are becoming more manifest in recent years. Questioning the effectiveness of

abstract argumentation, the introductory quote from a BI experimenter indicates a turn away from the long-sustained attempts at 'speaking truth to power' (Wildavsky, 1979). As will be shown, a strong 'evidence-based activism' tradition has long focused on the solidity and contents of the BI concepts and arguments – on the 'intrinsic', substantive (Evans and Collins, 2008) expertise. Evidence from recent Dutch, German, Swiss, Canadian and transnational BI activism suggests that new approaches are coming up, however, involving new and alternative ways of constructing expertise, communicating and convincing. Whilst largely agreeing with the kinds of welfare system transformations proposed by earlier-generation BI advocates, the various crowd-funding initiatives, internet activists, citizen labs and civic petitions seem to break with earlier understandings of how to realize and gain acceptance for a BI. Our empirical analysis is, therefore, guided by the following questions: *What turns in BI advocacy can be distinguished and how to understand the related shifts in claims to expertise? What is their broader relevance for TSI and utopian politics?*

Our analysis proceeds as follows. After a brief exposition of the BI as a utopian concept, we invoke co-productionist insights on the 'realization' of policy ideals to examine apparent shifts in BI advocacy in terms of expertise constructions. A brief methodological section accounts for the empirical data, case study design and analysis procedures underlying our account of different waves in BI advocacy. The empirical analysis reconstructs shifting claims to expertise along the historical waves of social critique, scientific underpinning and political entrepreneurship, highlighting the newly emerging fourth wave of activism. We conclude by eliciting the tensions, continuities and co-productive feedbacks between these 'realization' waves, also considering broader implications for transformative social innovation.

## **The Basic Income, a counter-intuitive way of knowing 'income'**

As introduced, BI advocacy exemplifies how TSI tends to involve the promotion of alternative ways of knowing. As a rather counter-intuitive way of

understanding 'income', this utopian concept is particularly difficult to propagate. The BI amounts to a state-provided entitlement of all citizens to an unconditional income that more or less covers subsistence. The concept, which counts amongst its eminent advocates Charles Fourier, John Stuart Mill, Martin Luther King Jr., Bertrand Russell, Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, dates back at least to Thomas More's 'Utopia' published in 1516. Two centuries later, the pamphlet 'Agrarian Justice' by Thomas Paine in 1796 further developed the idea of unconditional payments as 'a right and not a charity' to everyone. Numerous variations, including a minimum income, negative income tax, social dividend, 'demo-grants' and conditional social benefits, have been proposed since (Cf. Ackerman et al., 2006; Blaschke, 2012). The most elaborate exposition of the BI concept has been provided by the Belgian political theorist Philippe Van Parijs. In 'Real Freedom for All', he argues in detail how a BI arrangement would outperform existing institutional models on key principles of social justice (Van Parijs, 1997). Crucially, it would afford 'real', substantive freedom, supporting individuals in shaping their lives in accordance with their own ambitions and talents.

Elegantly simply defined as unconditional, universal, individual and sufficient and *prima facie* acceptable as maximizing self-determination, the BI way of knowing 'income' may appear like common sense. Moreover, its promises of a simplified welfare system and of multiple positive societal externalities (income security generally allowing for more responsible, well-considered and altruistic behaviours) do not seem far-fetched. The simplicity of the BI is deceiving, however. The proposal has many forms and implications (de Wispelaere and Stirton, 2004), and each of the four defining features has evoked contestations: the universality induces debates on citizenship and inclusiveness, the individual entitlement meets with communitarian concerns about the family as societal cornerstone, and the notion of a 'sufficient' BI invites clashes between self-determination and social justice considerations. Still, the element that most clearly marks the transformative character of the concept, frontally aiming for a replacement of dominant institutions (Haxeltine et al., 2017), is the principle of *unconditional* income. Ideo-

logically, it is rather counter-intuitive as it violates the well-established moral principle that one should 'earn one's income'. It challenges several well-institutionalized social relations: between benefits claimants and their principals, between unemployed and employed, between employer and employee, and between (breadwinning and care-giving) individuals in households. Furthermore, the counter-intuitive, heterodox nature of this recasting of 'income' also speaks from its conceptual linkages with economic 'de-growth' (Schneider et al., 2010).

Evidently, any reasonably 'universal' implementation of this counter-intuitive understanding of income entitlements would imply wide-ranging administrative reforms. One major challenge alone will be the phasing out of the bureaucratic apparatuses currently devoted to means-testing, employability programs and compliance control. Moreover, the reforms would also have far-reaching ramifications for the various welfare schemes targeting specific social groups and for the taxation system. Meanwhile, the labour market would transform in various ways: The gained income security would empower individuals to reconsider their work-care balance, their needs for additional income, and the kinds of jobs they would be willing to accept. For the above reasons, Elster (1986) saw little future for the BI. Not only would the consequences of the ensuing major transformation process remain impossible to predict - the principled justification of unconditionality would never catch on for its counter-intuitive understanding of income entitlements.

Commonsensical but also counter-intuitive, the BI has been both dismissed and embraced as a utopia. Still, arguing that it is "more than a Pipe Dream", Van Parijs (2013: 175) has pointed to the Alaska Permanent Fund and the Iranian cash benefits based on oil revenues. The Brazilian 'Bolsa Família' is another well-known BI-inspired policy scheme. Furthermore, various BI experiments (Widerquist, 2006; Forget, 2011) and elaborate policy proposals (Groot and van der Veen, 2001; Häni and Kovce, 2015; Standing, 2014) testify to some advances in political agenda-setting. More generally, a dense discursive maze has developed on the viability of the counter-intuitive concept. Other than the TSI initiatives towards of time

banks, ecovillages, seed exchange networks or science shops, BI promoters cannot rely on small-scale experimentation and self-organized action. As their commitment to a *universal* BI entitlement requires state intervention for it to become real, they engage in what they call ‘real utopianism’ (Wright, 2013; Van Parijs, 2013): Next to bringing forth persuasive moral appeals and critical interrogations of hegemonic societal structures, many BI advocates consider *expertise* as the key working substance of their activism.

### **‘Realizing’ the BI: claims to scientific and political authority**

Seeking to promote the BI concept by constructing relevant expertise, BI advocates show the relational and performative dimensions of expertise (Evans and Collins 2008, 609/610). However strong their commitments to sound arguments and however impressive the *substantive* expertise developed, their claims to expertise crucially need acknowledgement from others for their utopian ideas to be appraised as ‘realistic’ policy options. Recent developments suggest that a new generation of BI advocates is wondering how expertise could ever be constructed on such an unknowable social innovation.

A first key to understanding the (contested) claims to expertise at hand resides in the two different kinds of acknowledgement sought. To make the proposed arrangement appear sound and desirable, BI advocates seek both scientific as well as political authority. Their expertise constructions are efforts towards BI ‘realization’, a term coined by Voß (2014: 318-319) to describe how policy concepts can become real through processes of ‘mutually reinforcing scientific and political authority’. This concept clarifies how BI advocacy involves ‘evidence-based activism’, as also found in the case of patient organizations (Epstein, 1995; Rabeharisoa et al., 2014). BI advocates are similarly critical outsiders that aspire to roles as constructive experts who act ‘from within’. In doing so, they may rely on some forms of ‘lay expertise’ (Wynne, 1996). As a ‘real-utopian’ project, BI advocacy mainly bets on the construction of ‘hard’ counter-expertise, however - wholeheartedly joining into the game of exper-

tocracy and perpetuating the associated “over-reliance on science in decision-making” (Evans and Collins, 2008: 611). Yet while ‘evidence-based activism’ may aptly describe the high aspirations towards scientific authority, the ‘realization’ concept highlights that BI advocacy is aimed at gaining *political* authority as well. Other than a natural-scientific phenomenon, the BI is an institutional design. It is what Voß & Freeman (2016: 2) called a ‘knowing of governance’, a set of “representations of desirable social relations and renewed modes of governance”. The key claim to expertise is, thus, not only that an unconditional basic income can work (in the macro-economic sense), but also that it is (ethically-politically) fair. Importantly, the ‘realization’ concept serves as reminder that the authority of a counter-intuitive, anarchistic concept such as BI cannot solely rest on its unavoidably shaky scientific authority. Just like the scientifically well-argued TSI proposals of the anti-psychiatry movement (Crossley, 1999) or the anarchistic approach to traffic of Shared Space (Pel, 2016), this governance proposal for release of control needs not only be ‘proven’ to work but also trusted and believed.

A second useful insight afforded by the ‘realization’ concept is that it situates BI promotion within highly distributed processes of expertise construction. In line with insights on the co-production of science and social order (Jasanoff, 2004) and the reproduction of governmentalities (Rose et al., 2006), the scientific and political authority of the BI is considered to result from continuous interactions between a broad variety of interested parties. Beyond the misleading but still common picture in which expertise is held by ‘incumbents’ to control the lives of subaltern actors (Prince, 2010: 875) such as BI advocates, the ‘realization’ lens highlights how BI discourse is not only a product of researchers and politicians. Instead, the BI is also ‘co-performed’ (Callon, 2009) by other actors like planning bureaus, advisory boards, NGOs and journalists, and through crystallized forms of knowledge such as documents, metaphors, classification systems, metrics, accounting systems and macro-economic calculations (Voß, 2014: 323).

Third, the ‘realization’ framework provides a *dynamic* perspective on BI advocacy. It gives attention to the feedbacks, stepping stones, inter-

mediate results and 'boundary objects' (Star and Griesemer, 1989) through which scientific and political authority inform and possibly reinforce each other. As the typical culmination point in such reinforcing intertwinement of research prioritizations and political agenda-setting, Voß (2014) mentions the currently frequently held 'real-world experiments' as sites for practically relevant research and for prudent and informed policy-making.

Fourth, and following its focus on the dynamics of expertise construction, the 'realization' framework is also attentive to the relevance of changing communication infrastructures. Since the inception of BIEN in 1986, the internet as 'knowledge infrastructure' has become a pervasive shaper of social interactions: re-configuring scientific and transdisciplinary collaboration (Gläser, 2003), blurring the boundaries between knowledge and information (Dagiral and Peerbaye, 2016), empowering the marginalised (Jalbert, 2016) and democratising scientific controversy and knowledge production (Wyatt et al., 2016). As pointed out by Ezrahi (2004), the material-communicative conditions for claims to expertise have undergone a transition from information to 'out-formation'. This rise of fast, de-contextualised and immediate 'out-formation' communications provides a specification of the 'realization' framework that is particularly relevant to the apparent most recent 'turn' in BI advocacy: Whilst the changing information landscape may erode the ground for science-informed, evidence-based activism, it also opens up expert-dominated societal debates for other claims to expertise.

### **Methodology: Reconstructing a 'fourth wave' of Basic Income realization**

Other than presenting an account of the justifications, underpinnings, theorized impacts or other substantive elements of the BI concept itself, this contribution focuses on its advocacy. More specially, we construct an exemplar case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006) on the recently occurring 'turn' in BI advocacy, which is illuminating for the tensions in expertise in TSI processes more generally. Highlighting the 'realization' strategies of BI

advocates whilst downplaying other aspects of their activities, our deliberate 'casing' (Ragin and Becker, 1992) and 'enacting' (Michael, 2016) of BI advocacy is of course not an innocent representation. Our account draws on a study that formed part of a set of 20 case studies, conducted within the framework of a project on Transformative Social Innovation (TRANSIT, 2017; Haxeltine et al., 2017). Approaching the BI as a transformation of social relations, we compared it with TSI cases as diverse as time banks, Slow Food, Ecovillages and Co-housing. The case analysis presented has been informed by two crucial comparative insights: First, the BIEN/BI case diverged from the typical experimenting with and showcasing of new ways of doing and organizing, revolving rather around the construction of persuasive claims to expertise. Second, the apparent 'turn' in BI advocacy displayed tensions in expertise that seemed relevant for TSI practices more generally, even if surfacing less prominently in the parallel case studies.

We have studied BI advocacy along the generic methodological guidelines developed for our case studies (Wittmayer et al., 2015) and for the subsequent study of 'critical turning points' in the history of TSI initiatives (Pel et al., 2017a). This involved empirical investigation of the kinds of socially innovative ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing promoted, of the structure of the social innovation networks promoting them, and of relevant societal context developments. Working with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2003) and a networked understanding of innovation, we have focused on the transnational Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) and some of its 'local manifestations' in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Canada as key protagonists. Reconstructing their interactions with and strategies towards dominant institutions, we relied partly on discourse analysis and partly on actor-network theory modes of inquiry that follow the shaping of innovation networks (Latour, 2005; Pel et al., 2017b). Altogether, the case study relies on 31 semi-structured interviews with various BI advocates, a modest amount of (participant) observation at meetings and congresses, consultation of BI-related websites, and a selective review of the substantial scientific literature and policy documents available on the BI (Cf. Backhaus



and Pel, 2017 for a detailed account). Particularly important for the presented analysis has been the choice to investigate not only BIEN affiliates, but also various individuals and initiatives who promote and translate the BI through different claims to expertise.

Finally, the crucial methodological element of studying TSI is the process approach (Pettigrew, 1997). All cases within the overarching research project investigated the ways in which the social innovation and the initiatives promoting it have changed over time. This approach alerted us early on in our empirical work to the oscillating acceptance of the BI concept – with situations of high unemployment acting temporarily as fertile grounds for its endorsement. Moreover, the process approach has made us attentive to changes in BI advocacy as well. Following earlier analyses as well as various interviewees' remarks about different generations and approaches in BI advocacy, our process understanding has converged on the stated emergence of a recent fourth wave in BI 'realization'. Of course, this stylized scheme merits critical interrogation as such. Remembering Jasanoff (2003), the former three waves are indeed setting the stage for the suggested fourth one. They are neither irrelevant 'straw men' nor artificially constructed preparatory phases. Analyzing whether and in which respects new 'realization' strategies are emerging, we will also address the continuities and co-production between different approaches to BI realization.

### **Three waves of BI realization**

The emphasis of our analysis of BI realization lies on the recent emergence of a 'fourth wave'. Before extensively discussing that fourth wave in the next section, this section describes the three first waves of social critique, scientific underpinning and policy entrepreneurship. As mentioned in our methodology account, the identification of these three waves builds on personal accounts of BI advocates but also on earlier BI scholarship. Crucial is the self-understanding, widely shared amongst BI advocates, of being engaged in a 'real utopia' project:

The idea of real utopias embraces this tension between dreams and practice: 'utopia' implies developing visions of alternatives to dominant institutions that embody our deepest aspirations for a world in which all people have access to the conditions to live flourishing lives; 'real' means proposing alternatives attentive to problems of unintended consequences, self-destructive dynamics, and difficult dilemmas of normative trade-offs. (Wright, 2013: 3)

Importantly, Wright (2013) sketches a 'journey' from imagination to robust claims to expertise that resonates with the logic of our 'realization' waves. Particularly insightful substantiation of this identification of waves has been provided by Groot and van der Veen (2001). In their analysis of the Dutch BI discussion between 1975 and 2001, they identified three largely consecutive phases that can be appreciated as moves from social critique towards more solid constructions of scientific and political authority.

In our account of these three waves in BI advocacy, we focus on the real utopianism as organized through a pivotal collective actor, the Basic Income European Network (BIEN). After several BI experiments in Northern America in the 1960 and 70s, political interest on that side of the Atlantic dwindled – only to re-kindle in Europe less than a decade later in 1986. At the first international BI congress in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium), various researchers and activists decided to consolidate and continue their networking through founding BIEN, featuring a regular newsletter and congresses. In 2004, acknowledging the growing group of supporters in non-European countries, BIEN was renamed into the Basic Income *Earth* Network. Currently, this network-of-networks comprises national BI associations in 23 countries, and has just decided to have yearly rather than biennial conferences. Since 2006, the academic, peer-reviewed journal Basic Income Studies publishes two issues per year. Furthermore, an elaborate website supports BIEN in its operations as an international discussion platform, advocacy network and archive of BI insights (BIEN, 2017; Backhaus and Pel, 2017).

### **First wave: Social critiques**

This first wave of claims to expertise started already with Thomas More's seminal 'Utopia'. This book exemplifies the typical expertise construction through counterfactual reasoning: The imaginary society with income security realized for all individuals is used to challenge prevailing societal structures characterized by social exclusion, inequality, alienation, and lack of freedom. Especially in the context of later 20<sup>th</sup> century Welfare states, BI-inspired critiques typically challenged the broad political consensus on the need for 'workfare' policies, as control-oriented modes of governance to ensure individuals' active participation in society and economic production. In the 1970s and the 1980s, BI advocacy was firmly embedded in radical Left discourses. Their critical claim was that the insistence on full employment, and not the BI, was increasingly becoming unrealistic. According to a founding BIEN member and former MP for the Dutch radical Left, BI advocacy was a very principled matter then, quite different from the nowadays rather pragmatic approach. For example, the critical-principled 'first wave' even involved civic disobedience:

The unemployment was that high and so without prospects in the early eighties, that people started saying, 'I simply consider my unemployment allowance as a basic income – and I will do with it as I please.' (AdR, 3)

Well beyond this resistance against the strongly *conditional* income ('workfare') however, the 'first wave' has brought forward a much broader range of critical claims to expertise. Notable examples of the often very articulate accounts are the critiques of meritocracy (with the claim that BI acknowledges how current productivity accrues largely from common-pool resources and earlier generations' wealth creation), of gender inequality (with the claim that the BI, as individual income entitlement, helps to dissolve the institutional structures favouring the male breadwinner model), and of the 'productivist' imperative towards economic growth (with the claim that the BI empowers individuals to move away from consumerism). Some of these 'first wave' claims may have receded along with the demise of some of the counter-cul-

tural political movements that they were carried by. The following slogan expresses the currently less antagonizing approach: 'the BI is neither Left nor Right, but Forward'. Still, the critical claims of the 'first wave' continue to be an important dimension of BI advocacy. A particularly telling recent example of those is provided by one of the lead initiators of the Swiss BI popular vote in 2017. To him, the BI is not just an institutional arrangement, it is a 'cultural impulse':

The Basic Income raises two questions, namely 'What would I do if there was a Basic Income?' and the other question, which is of course the much more important one and moreover the one that shows why we do not have it yet, is 'Am I ready for this? For abstaining from deciding what others have to do? Am I ready to grant this to others?' And this question has been answered ... also in the popular vote. (DH, 2)

### **Second wave: Scientific underpinning**

Different from the politicians, members of unions or NGOs, and social movement activists that were prominent drivers of the 'first wave', the 'second wave' is driven mainly by experts. The BIEN network was founded by a group consisting mainly of academic philosophers, sociologists and economists, and some individuals with a background in politics. Standard bearer Van Parijs (2013: 173) is particularly outspoken on the need for scientific ammunition, distinguishing their 'real-utopian' project from wishful thinking and moral appeals:

Utopian thinking requires answers to many factual questions about likely effects, about compatibility, about sustainability. It is perfectly legitimate for the choice of these factual questions to be guided by value judgments, but it is essential that the answers to these questions be shielded from the interference of both our interests and our values. (Van Parijs, 2013: 173)

Crucially, this second wave involved a move from general critique by relative outsiders towards the evidence-based activism by academics as relative insiders. Specifying the moral principles, associated evaluation criteria and evidence supporting alternative institutional arrangements for social security and taxation, the experts joining this

wave strengthened the scientific authority of the BI – which they deemed essential for gaining political credibility.

The claims to expertise of the ‘second wave’ were accordingly less directed towards the general public, and more towards the governmental planning bureaus and advisory councils, as crucial gatekeepers in evidence-based policymaking. This commitment to scientific underpinning and expertise has materialized in an academic BI journal, and in various reports providing calculations, scenarios and empirical data on key bones of contention such as labor market effects, macro-economic ramifications, implications for taxation, and safeguarding of the minimum income. Especially in the last two decades towards 2000, BIEN members’ activities towards scientific underpinning resonated well with similar activities of governmental bureaus for economic forecasting and policy analysis. As a Dutch longstanding BIEN member pointed out, the BI discussion in the Netherlands actually received a sudden major impulse through a report by the Scientific Advisory Council in 1985.

So then they suddenly came with that idea that that BI could be achieving what its academic advocates had always been saying it would: the neutralizing of the poverty trap, the simplification of social security, and the inclusion of the people at the lower end of the labour market... Well, all that, but, they also came up with the idea to have that BI only partially, so that it could possibly be acceptable to those who weren’t very enthusiastic about the uncoupling of labour and income. Moreover, they managed to package all of that such that it would allow for an abolishment of the minimum wage, and act as a stimulus for the lowering of labour costs ...which for the politicians was a very prominent theme. (RV, 4)

The report taught this BIEN member valuable lessons. He learnt about the crucial authority conferred by this governmental advisory board, about the scope for developing tailored BI policy packages, about the importance of connecting proposals to highly actual political issues and about the political vulnerability of policy proposals containing a multitude of controversy-evoking elements. The most important lesson of all, however,

was that the report had failed to gain political authority for the BI for lacking calculations. Since then, the Dutch BI advocates focused on developing those, and sought to engage in discussions with the key actor in this regard, the Central Planning Bureau. This proved to be an insurmountable passage point. The prevailing macro-economic models typically did not account well for the long-term system feedbacks on which the BI justifications rest:

Well, it came down to, basically, that we said ‘your models, a number of things that we find important they are not taking into account’, and, ‘your models are most probably not very reliable, because you’re investigating something that is dependent on very large institutional changes – whilst micro-economic models can deal with small changes and their direction, but not with the big ones.’ And that is something they admitted. (RV, 6)

For these apparent limits to their evidence-based activism, the ‘second wave’ has also explored the scope for BI ‘realization’ through experiments. This involved various ‘pilot’ projects as undertaken in countries such as Namibia, Canada, and India, but also reflection on appropriate methodologies (Forget, 2008; Terwitte, 2009; Standing, 2012, 2013). The scientific and political value of the experiments is contested, however. As BI researcher Groot (2006: 2) argued, they are crucial as demonstration: “I think a radical idea such as a BI needs to be shown to work in order to get it on the political agenda”. On the other hand, he also pointed out the still broadly shared objections that they are inherently too bounded, non-representative, and short-lived to testify to the soundness of BI as a policy option (Groot, 2006: 3-4). Contestations over the experimentation byroad are recently gaining in importance, as governments worldwide are announcing further experimentation initiatives. In this regard the ‘second wave’ insistence on solid scientific underpinning was reinstated by BIEN leading figure van Parijs at the 2017 BIEN conference in Lisbon, Portugal:

Sometimes it’s admissible to justify a good idea with bad arguments. However, in general it is better to support a good idea with good arguments.



### **Third wave: Policy entrepreneurship**

This third wave can be considered an antithesis to the prevailing strong emphasis on scientific authority. It was led by the conviction that the force of moral appeal and rational argument should be supported by a sense of political relevance. After all, even scientifically very sophisticated accounts could turn into political shipwrecks. The idealized view of politics in BI advocacy has been criticized from both within and outside of BIEN circles. Elster (1986: 714) reproaches BI proponents for neglecting the political issues arising along the transitional process. Also Wright (2013: 3) indicates that 'real-utopian' projects require a theory of transformation and attention to the fragility of societal acceptance, the intricacies of implementation processes and the erratic dynamics of political decision making. Arguing for a 'mature' and less principled BI debate, De Wispelaere and Stirton (2004: 272) thus sought to attune BI expertise to practices of 'fuzzy' policy design.

BIEN, established to foster informed debate on the BI and to push for its implementation, indeed moved more towards the latter. There was an increase in voices arguing for practical and feasible policy proposals, in particular at the 2002 Congress in Geneva, hosted by the ILO. A BIEN founding member describes his inclination towards reasonable and *realizable* policy proposals as follows:

...there are different systems of thinking about basic income. My own view is that for practical, political reasons we have to think about moving in the direction of basic income. I don't think that the idea that some people have of "overnight we should have a full basic income ..." I don't think that that is practical or politically feasible in the near future. I believe that we should start with a small amount and gradually build it up... I also think it should be done from local to national level and not be a matter for grandiose thinking about regional, international level. I think that it must be built up within countries according to their standard of living, according to their financial capabilities. (GS)

These impulses towards activism and policy entrepreneurship have materialized in various ways. First, the agenda and identity of the BIEN network

became shaped more strongly by the political lobbying of amongst others Guy Standing (at first while heading the ILO's socio-economic security program and later through his engagement in Indian BI experiments) and Brazilian Senator Eduardo Suplicy (helping to introduce the 'Bolsa Família' program for poor families with school-aged children, as part of a series of BI-inspired policies). Second, various individual BI advocates and national BIEN affiliates seem to have oriented their 'realization' efforts more towards actual political developments in their countries. Likewise, the organization of BIEN conferences became a matter of policy entrepreneurship: The hosting of them became allocated to countries where they could give a timely impulse to just emergent political authority for the BI. Third, there have been strategic-theoretical responses to the altogether increased awareness of the political taboos and vulnerabilities surrounding the BI. Notable examples are the exploration of various implementation scenarios (Cf. Groot and van der Veen, 2001), such as stepwise (steadily increasing a partial BI arrangement), or 'by stealth' (implementing institutional changes such as tax reforms that amount to BI arrangements, yet without bearing that controversial heading).

Ironically, a part of the 'third wave' of policy entrepreneurship has been the increased awareness of the limits to BI 'realization'. Several early-hour BI advocates expressed how the requisite 'windows of opportunity' seemed to have closed around the millennium turn - once the unemployment issue ceased to create legitimacy for the proposed drastic transformative measures. Political parties thus dropped the BI project in favour of more 'realizable' proposals, and some individuals reconsidered their activist efforts. Looking back, one of the founders of the BIEN network expressed both his admiration and slight bemusement over staunch BI advocates' sustained repetition of the gospel:

Personally I have to say that I was not really interested in what happened in BIEN because I had the feeling that it was really very repetitive. We have more and more people saying "I am in favour of basic income for this and this reason", but I have already heard this reason a hundred times and I don't want to waste time. I'm very

admiring of Philippe Van Parijs, who has a capacity to repeat himself for 30, 40 years, repeating the same argumentation and convincing people. Really extraordinary. (...) But of course, if you want to be effective you have to be like Philippe Van Parijs. He is really capable to do that and to stay, obstinate, stubborn ... again and again. I really admire it, but I'm totally incapable of doing that myself. I get bored. (PB)

He also explained how the repetitions-of-argument became particularly difficult to sustain as the political interest in the BI collapsed around the millennium turn. By contrast, a brighter account of these modest transformative impacts and the oscillating political relevance is conveyed by a metaphor raised by several respondents. They describe BI realization tellingly as a 'peat fire' – largely remaining below the surface and apparently extinct in certain political episodes, yet never dying out completely and regularly flaring up again in political life. Regarding the 'third wave' it then appears that more of this policy entrepreneurship is needed to ignite political authority, for which the continuously burning torch of scientific authority has proven important but insufficient. As indicated by De Wispelaere and Stirton (2016), the political entrepreneurship has recently become only more important, as the BI is gaining political authority. In the next section we will show how a 'fourth wave' has emerged that can be appreciated as a revitalization of the third.

### **Competing claims to expertise: A fourth wave in BI realization**

Following the 'social critique', 'scientific underpinning' and 'policy entrepreneurship' claims to expertise, a fourth wave in BI realization is emerging. In this fourth wave, the objectivist focus on 'scientific underpinning' by the BIEN network is complemented with an altogether different, rather subjectivist discourse: "What would you do with a BI?" is the typical question raised in this move towards a democratization of BI expertise. In the following it will become clear how some fourth wave initiatives deliberately devise strategies of 'out-formation' (Ezrahi, 2004), as they feel that the information landscape for BI realization has changed. We describe subsequently the

crowd-funding initiatives and their attempts to create experiential knowledge on BI, the internet activism that makes the BI ubiquitous and therewith more real, the petitions and referenda that work on political authority, and finally the experimentation initiatives that reflect commitments to evidence-based policy but also innovation in governance.

### ***Crowd-funding: experiencing the BI***

At a distance from the BIEN network, some initiatives in Germany, the Netherlands and the USA diverge from the traditional realization strategies. Their crowd-funding initiatives aim to develop *experiential* expertise.

The small Dutch collective MIES ('Enterprise for Innovation in Economy & Society') is an example of this. As curious individuals with various entrepreneurial, activist and academic backgrounds they shared a certain enthusiasm about the BI, but also agreed that the societal debate on it had become hopelessly stuck in adversarial, repetitive, and entrenched exchanges of arguments. "Let's just stop talking about that BI", one of them had blogged provocatively. As he explains:

That Basic Income, you see, in the end you just run into people's basic assumptions about human behavior and about society. And then it's no longer a matter of arguments, but of beliefs: "I don't believe that that'll work out", "I believe that it'll make people lazy"... And you just don't get past that point. People who do not believe in something, you cannot convince them. Then you can only show them, well, we did that, then and there... this is what we saw – now is this still what you're believing? (RM, 4)

MIES sought to move beyond traditional BI advocacy. However eloquently formulated, none of the moral arguments and scientific reasoning had allowed the public to see, feel, and experience how a BI would change life and society.

'Let's just do it', MIES therefore decided in 2014. Inspired by the German pioneer 'Mein Grundeinkommen' whom they found through the internet, they started a crowd-funding initiative that would finance one individual's BI of 1000 EUR/month for one year. The first selected recipient was a local activist. His urban horticulture,

meeting place and social inclusion center exemplified the multiple societal benefits that could be created if individuals were released from income-earning pressures. The MIES chairman had no difficulties admitting that this N=1 experiment was remote from meeting any criteria of solid scientific evidence. It was a 'marketing strategy', wholeheartedly taking up the policy entrepreneurship they found lacking in BI advocacy. MIES' key strategy to play into realization feedbacks were the self-recorded video blogs of the BI-receiving individual on their 'Our Basic Income' website. Sharing from the kitchen table "what he did with the money, and what the money did with him", he confronted contributors and other website visitors with the typical 'fourth wave' question: "What would you do with a basic income?" In turn, MIES' calls for broader BI experimentation received substantial media attention, with three nationally broadcasted documentaries as important reinforcements of a carefully fabricated 'hype'.

BI crowd-funding initiatives work with the typical immediacy of 'out-formation' strategies, creating political authority by inviting individuals to take part in BI realization - through financial contribution and through personal reflection. These expertise constructions are also characterized by attitudes of pragmatic inquiry and political independence. The German crowd-funding pioneers, who have spawned over two hundred of such (temporary) BIs, display policy entrepreneurship:

We consciously decided to not appear political with 'My Basic Income' and avoid being put into the 'left corner', because we would not reach the many people that we need to reach if a basic income is ever to be implemented on national level. (JA, 5)

Finally, a similar BI 'lottery' in South Korea and the recent engagement of Silicon Valley CEOs in long-term, large-scale crowd-funded BI initiatives suggest that broader BI 'out-formation' campaigns are emerging beyond the one-off project.

### ***Internet activism: making BI ubiquitous.***

BIEN has always made use of latest technologies to build, share and disperse expertise. Starting with early word-processing software, transition-

ing from printed letters to portable documents and eventually email newsletters, the newsletter as a compilation of recent research, academic publications, media appearances and country-specific or regional developments related to BI realization are regarded the "lifeline of the network, as it kept BIEN alive between congresses" (YV). This characterization captures the relevance of updates between small groups and isolated individuals who sought to collectively advance a common cause, whilst meeting their companions only biennially.

There is a marked difference between a dedicated newsletter by and for networked academics and the sharing of information on-line through websites and social media, where numerous BI networks, initiatives and interested individuals post information, share stories, like and comment, tweet and re-tweet. The latter communications are more effective in making the topic ubiquitous. BIEN's on-line domain [basicincome.org](http://basicincome.org) functions as resource and information hub and features stories on BI-related developments across the globe, opinion pieces, reviews and analyses. With several news stories added to BIEN's web pages every day, the monthly e-mail BIEN newsletter Newsflash alerts its recipients only to a shortlist of highlights. In addition, the number of BI initiatives across the globe has soared, especially since the turn of the millennium. Besides BI initiatives, 'traditional', especially somewhat left-leaning, media have joined the BI choir, thereby popularizing the topic beyond the academic sphere. Collectively, the various BI advocates are thus producing a mixture of information as well as 'out-formation' communications. Each in their own ways, they try to expand the circle of subscribers, followers and possible supporters.

Flagging the importance of broadening the scope of BI realization efforts, the secretary of the Canadian BICN Board recalled that

Around the BIEN congress in 2014 in Montreal, we did a lot of press releases and media appearances. And we had a media and stakeholder guide [...] and it was, you know, our document that said "anytime you talk to the media, these are the key messages that you should hit up, and this is strategically how you should talk about basic income". And in that document we intentionally

discussed basic income as something that we already have in part. ... because we already have a version of it for seniors and for kids in Canada. (JvD, 6)

This framing, portraying the apparently 'counter-intuitive' as something already known and normal, proved to have a great media resonance. BICN therefore built the same line of reasoning into a more informative, interactive and user-friendly website. This new way of making the transformative concept of BI known signifies a different way of creating and communicating expertise, which apparently speaks well to a broad public.

An analysis of Google search and Twitter trends indicates a growing interest in the topic and an overall positive sentiment towards BI in recent years. Calls to action, on the other hand, have been found largely lacking on Twitter (van Draanen, 2017) and Facebook where diagnostic and prognostic assessments of why a BI is or will be needed prevail (Matuschka, in Backhaus and Pel, 2017). Although BIEN offers frequented and trusted information services on its web pages with "60 unique visits per day in June of 2013 to 1,365 unique visits per day in May of 2016" (Widerquist and Haagh, 2016), a long-term editor and now editor-in-chief of the BIEN newsletter explains that BIEN's outreach efforts are only part of the story. People concerned about related issues, such as social inequality, persisting poverty or the future of 'workfare', tend to find the topic by themselves:

So a lot of people who are concerned about automation say: "What are we going to do, when there are less and less jobs to go around?" They are finding basic income. There is a rich literature out there, I don't know if we can take all the credit for it, but they're finding it and they're talking about it. And that's how basic income is taken on. (KW, 5)

The Internet as a social space where news spreads, discussions unfold and judgments are made has aptly been described as a modern 'information agora' (Branscomb, 1994). A very significant implication for the construction of BI expertise is the proliferation of new pockets of BI discourse, well beyond the still important communication channels managed by BIEN and its national and

regional affiliates. As a result, the BI becomes more ubiquitous, whilst the associated constructions of expertise become more diversified.

### ***Petitions & popular initiatives: democratizing the BI debate***

Unlike earlier waves that pursued BI realization and the construction of political authority by 'speaking truth to power' (Wildavsky, 1979) and unlike the occasional BIEN member who sought to assume an office, this fourth wave cluster of realization approaches strives to democratize the debate and political decision-making. One of the heads behind the Swiss popular initiative for a BI suggests that Switzerland, which takes pride in 120-years of direct democracy, allows "asking a question that one usually ought not to ask" (DH, 1), subjecting this question to the broadest discussion possible. After four years of preparations, a citizens' initiative for a popular vote on a BI was officially launched in Switzerland in 2012. For eighteen months, existing and newly formed BI initiatives worked successfully to gain civic support for a popular vote: more than the required 100,000 valid signatures were handed in at the Federal Chancellery in Bern. On June 5<sup>th</sup> 2016, 77% of the electorate rejected, and 23% supported the proposal for a constitutional amendment that would introduce a BI in Switzerland. The 'world society', and not only BI supporters, paid attention as Switzerland voted on a BI. Importantly, the entire process was interspersed with remarkable public performances generating local and global media attention: a truck unloaded 8 million *Fünferlis* (Swiss coins), dancing robots demonstrated for a BI at the World Economic Forum in Davos, notes of 10 Swiss Francs were handed out as flyers, and a Guinness world record was set with a gigantic poster asking 'the BI question' in golden letters: "What would *you* do if your income was taken care of?". Amidst the public debate, political parties, unions, employers' organizations and other institutions were forced to take a stance. Remarkably, the initiators of the popular vote cast the BI realization process as a decidedly ethical discussion. This echoes the social critiques of earlier times, with their appeals to self-realization and solidarity.

Elsewhere, where representative democracy prevails, BI supporters made a lunge at the



political establishment by means of petitions. The first of its kind was an online petition launched in Germany in 2008 by a politically interested person who had, however, no background in political activism and no affiliation with existing BI networks. Many long-term BI supporters started rallying for the petition immediately, but the German BIEN affiliate had second thoughts about the precise BI model that should be proposed for discussion. The initiator herself was more pragmatic about that:

And then I said: "Well, can't we link arms as long as we are all still standing under the same banner 'We want the BI' – because the discussion is not further yet, right? So, let's link arms and march in the same direction! And later, once we're closer to implementation, we can have these [model] discussions, ...that's when they are appropriate." (SW, 6)

Another example of strategic engagement with political and scientific authority was the 2013 European Citizens' Initiative for a BI. The Unconditional Basic Income Europe (UBIE) network emerged in the aftermath of a failure to reach the quorum of one million supportive signatories. It comprised generally rather activist-minded people, who nevertheless sought the connection with the still more academically-oriented BIEN network. A similar citizens' initiative took place in the Netherlands in 2016, achieving the required 40,000 signatures for a parliamentary debate. Eventually, the appeal was dismissed in light of a previous debate initiated by an MP.

Striking about these various recent popular initiatives is the apparent transfer of this democratising realization approach across borders. Part of this is being carried by the recent rise of BI internet activism. It makes not only the concept, but also the associated realization strategies more ubiquitous.

### ***Experiments: between evidence-based policy and citizen labs***

The crowd-funding initiatives are achieving considerable exposure and political authority through their constructions of experiential expertise. Moreover, these pragmatically-inquiring initiatives form part of a much broader movement towards

BI experimentation. At first sight, the governmental commitments for BI experiments in Canada, the Netherlands and in Finland could count as achievements of second-wave 'evidence-based activism'. They evoke mixed feelings within BIEN, however. Somewhat dismissively, BIEN standard bearer Van Parijs underlined the 'propaganda-effect' of these scientifically less than convincing experiments. Fourth wave BI activism casts this 'propaganda-effect' in a more favourable light, however, deliberately aiming for experiments as the fusion point of mutually reinforcing scientific and political authority. Especially the Dutch trajectory towards experiments is instructive in that regard. They were motivated not only by commitments to evidence-based policymaking, but at least as much by ambitions towards 'citizen labs' and governance innovation.

For the aforementioned MIES collective, their crowd-funding initiative served as a springboard for broader programs of real-world experiments. As their chairman underlined, they decidedly moved away from BIEN members' traditional focus on national government. However important for implementing the *universal* BI, he considered national politics the wrong political entrance for a transformation process that should be initiated through small-scale, locally-rooted experimentation.

On the local level, one is of course confronted with the fact that there is increasing numbers of people on the dole and in other welfare schemes as well. Here in Groningen, [...] the local administrators are surely aware that in this particular regional context, whatever one does, this number of people won't be helped into employment. [...] Any action will have to start at the local level. That is what's happening now, which is hugely different from what happened in the 1980s. Back then, the BI was actually an idea that was still largely confined in the heads of researchers [and some others, dispersed over various public sector organizations]. In any case, [the advocacy] wasn't anchored in politics, and surely not in local politics, and that is the great difference. (JR, 7)

MIES therefore published a framework for local-level BI experiments. Together with similarly experimentation-minded individuals they welded



a broad network of civic initiatives, local-level politicians and administrators to support their political calls for citizen labs, participatory governance and experimentation. The experiments played into the tensions between municipal and national-level government tiers over a recent devolution programme. Against the national-level policy doctrines of 'workfare' and toughness on the unemployed, the 'BI-inspired experiments' were to explore the scope for more lenient and less conditional welfare entitlements. Eventually, the responsible Secretary of State has created the requisite exception clauses for experimentation to the otherwise firmly anchored policies of conditional income – giving in to the considerable media exposure, broadly supported parliamentary motions and well-organized political entrepreneurship of social innovation initiatives, aldermen of middle-sized cities and BI researchers.

Along the lobbying process towards these real-world experiments, they have tellingly become reframed as BI-inspired experiments. According to the 'experimentation broker' who crowd-funded himself to weld the experimentation network, the BI label was initially rather an asset in gaining broad public interest.

It is just entering people's minds directly. I think it was just often discussed at the kitchen table, or in the train, or wherever people meet. Anybody can relate to this, and form an opinion about it. So, it is really a topic that could 'go viral' in society, and it did. (SH, 14)

On the other hand, he also found the BI label to be a political liability. As the BI had already become known in the Netherlands as a left-wing hobby-horse, the recently attached 'Money for Free' slogan (Bregman, 2014) from an influential book publication only further increased the risks of winding up in ideological stalemate. The network broker therefore found it crucial to maintain an experimenting attitude. This would add scientific authority to the rather principled activism of the Dutch Basic Income association, for whom the experiments were at best reinstating the already proven points of BI feasibility

...the constituency of the association is generally activist in mindset: 'we want a basic income because it is a human right', or 'because that is

how things should be' – but currently, that [view] represents only a very small minority of society, of course. So, then you're having rather a political movement, whereas the characteristic feature of these experiments is often to be pragmatic, to just see whether it works and not to assume from the beginning [what the outcomes should be]. And that is the role I have tried to fulfill, to move the debate out of the hypothetical sphere and away from the pro and contra positions. Exploring instead 'what can we do with this' – with all political parties together, that is. (SH, 16)

## Conclusion: Competing claims to expertise in Transformative Social Innovation

Synthesizing the above empirical analysis, we can answer our research questions: *What turns in BI advocacy can be distinguished and how to understand the related shifts in claims to expertise? What is their broader relevance for TSI and utopian politics?*

As this counter-intuitive way of knowing remains a largely unrealized utopia yet refuses to become extinguished, BI advocates have tellingly characterized it as a 'peat fire'. Shifting attention from the substantive (Collins and Evans, 2008) expertise about the BI towards the relational *claims to expertise* of BI advocates, the 'realization' concept of Voß (2014) has helped to unpack how this fire is fueled with different claims to scientific and political authority, and incited by multiple and ever-changing winds of co-production. Consequently, the dynamic 'realization' perspective has informed a process analysis to make sense of the recent 'turn' in BI advocacy. Our subsequent empirical analysis has yielded insights on the differences, the continuities and the co-production between the various 'realization strategies':

First, a distinct 'fourth wave' of claims to expertise in BI advocacy has become evident. Albeit diverse in approach, the crowd-funding, internet activism, civic petitions and experiments signify similar patterns of disjuncture from the earlier 'real utopianism'. Relying decidedly less on 'first wave' social critique out of pragmatism, they diverge even further from the 'second wave' of scientific underpinning. Especially the crowd-funding initiatives are frontally challenging the evidence-based activism of BIEN. However

sound and elaborate the reasoning, models and evidence basis, all of this they consider overly abstract and insufficiently decisive in the face of deeply held convictions and entrenched political positions. Rather than constructing expertise towards political decision-makers and specialized experts, the 'fourth wave' initiatives develop 'out-formation' strategies to persuade the broader public. The internet activism and civic petition activities display bypassing of expertocracy: Exploring alternative inroads into parliamentary politics, they revitalize the 'third wave' of policy entrepreneurship. The 'fourth wave' ruptures with traditional claims to expertise are confirmed by the accounts of 'traditional' BI advocates. Whilst the latter often voice admiration for the pragmatic political entrepreneurship, their various second thoughts reveal tensions in expertise: The crowd-funded 'BI lotteries' are seen to lose sight of the radical Welfare system reforms, and the pragmatism is seen to underestimate the need for principled, counter-hegemonic responses to persistent 'earning one's income' governmentalities. The BI-inspired experiments are at the centre of the contestation. Whilst being acknowledged as modest steps towards evidence-based societal debate, they are also mistrusted as confined, transient projects. Praising the experiments for their 'propaganda effects', principled BI advocates subtly underline that these are not the real thing.

Second, these ruptures in expertise construction should not obscure various *continuities*. The crowd-funding and experimenting initiatives may appear to have given in to post-political ideology, but this is also a matter of strategic political awareness. Crucially, the new approaches still draw heavily on the discursive archive and the evidence base created over decades or even centuries of social critique, scientific underpinning and policy analysis. Especially the internet activism and civic petition initiatives are eagerly standing on the shoulders of giants, and the 'fourth wave' is re-packaging the BI more than profoundly adapting it. This leads us to, third, the co-production between expertise constructions. The four waves are successive, but they are also intertwined layers of BI discourse. Other than mutually cancelling out, the associated constructions of expertise rather appear as different fuels that together feed

the BI 'peat fire'. This can be attributed partly to the unmistakable ties and exchanges between the different BI initiatives. More importantly however, recent developments in BI advocacy display some of the feedbacks highlighted by Voß (2014): In some contexts we see indeed the convergence of scientific and political agendas onto real-world experiments. More generally, it has become evident how the various fourth wave 'out-formation' strategies generate public interest, 'hype' and political authority – which in turn prompts journalists, scientific advisory councils, opinion leaders, academic researchers and indeed BIEN members to add scientific authority to a widening discussion.

This brings us to consider the broader implications of the observed shifts and tensions in BI expertise construction for TSI initiatives and utopian politics more generally. A first basic insight is that the substantive (Evans and Collins, 2008) side of expertise should be appreciated as a key asset in the promotion of such new, transformative ways of knowing and doing. The 'evidence-based activism' (Epstein, 1995; Rabe-harisoa et al., 2014) and 'real utopianism' (Wright, 2013) of BIEN members has developed a vast discursive archive on this counter-intuitive way of knowing. Ever since Thomas More's 'Utopia' (1516), BI advocates have been developing elaborate expertise that makes the proposal appear much more 'realistic' than *prima facie* appraisal would suggest. The international BIEN network has kept the fire burning over three decades already. Institutionalizing BI knowledge production through newsletters, studies, a dedicated journal and international conferences, they have helped achieve an important stage in TSI 'realization': The BI has become a common reference in political life worldwide.

Notwithstanding the importance of substantive expertise, our study especially conveys insights on the challenges of having expertise *acknowledged* (relationally). The highlighted tensions in BI expertise reveal paradoxes and dilemmas that are arguably quite inherent to the 'realization' of new and counterintuitive ways of knowing more generally. The consistent repetition of key discursive elements is important, but an awareness of the multiplicity of audiences is crucial: Even once

the feedbacks between political and scientific authority have culminated in ‘real-world experiments’, as theorized by Voß (2014), this does not fully settle the contention – the political and scientific significance of the ‘BI-inspired’ experiments *remains* contested.

Exemplifying the challenges of constructing alternative expertise that holds both scientifically and politically, the case of BI advocacy is particularly revelatory for the politics of expertise that current social innovation initiatives are inevitably engaged in. The described ‘fourth wave’ in BI advocacy is not merely rehearsing the point that the internet age leads to different modes of collective action (Kelly Garrett, 2006). More importantly, the described shifts in BI advocacy provide insight into a paradox that seems to present itself for current initiatives towards transformative social innovation and utopian politics more broadly: Counter-expertise and alternative ways of knowing are developed that break through established doctrines on what is politically realistic, yet aspirations towards epistemic authority keep informing quests for *solid* proposals on ‘adequate’ institutional arrangements. On the one hand, the case of BI advocacy is thus displaying the usual resistance of TSI initiatives against dominant governmentalities and ways of knowing (e.g. Scott-Cato and Hillier, 2010; Smith, 2017). Arguing against the current control-oriented arrangements of income distribution, the underlying macro-economic models are held to be fundamentally flawed for their negligence of ethical issues of entitlement and ‘the good life’. On the other hand, its ‘evidence-based activism’ reflects

the political-strategic tenet of ‘real utopianism’ (Van Parijs, 2013; Wright, 2013) that one cannot afford to stay out of the ‘expertocracy game’ altogether. The commitments to *universal* basic income entitlements inevitably entail activism that ‘sees like a state’ (Scott 1998) and engages in large-scale social engineering. The BI case is arguably not unique in that regard. As pointed out by Stirling (2016: 265-266), this rather reflects the more general difficulty for TSI initiatives to balance their alternative spirit with the temptations of control-oriented, evidence-based imaginaries of societal transformation. The presented case only exhibits these tensions in expertise more strongly: The reality of a fully implemented (unconditional, universal and more or less sufficient) Basic Income can as yet not be known.

## Acknowledgements

This research was conducted within the TRANSIT project, which received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development, and demonstration under grant agreement no. 613169. The content of this publication does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed therein lies entirely with the authors.

The authors wish to thank Noel Longhurst and two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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