transformative social innovation theory

Just do it! Shifting dimensions of social innovation in Basic Income advocacy and experiments

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About TRANSIT:

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Abstract

Social innovation, understood as change in social relations, is gaining currency as an answer to contemporary societal challenges. In the case of transformative SI, it can challenge, alter and replace the knowings and doings of existing social structures. There is a duality in SI, however, as it unavoidably also draws on and reproduces those structures. This duality does not warrant scepticism, but calls for critical interpretive analysis. Approached critically, social innovation is neither reduced to a magic panacea nor to an ideological ploy. It is just a set of practices in which structure-agency dialectics are particularly intricate and dynamic.

This paper elucidates the aforementioned SI duality through a closer examination of its multiple dimensions. SI can be seen to involve new ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing. Insights from Science and Technology Studies remind us that these dimensions are co-constitutive and co-productive: new doing presupposes a degree of new knowing, for example. Nevertheless, these four dimensions are sufficiently distinct from each other to help untangle empirical cases of innovation-reproduction duality and, at the same time, subject the four-dimensional heuristic to critical testing.

The paper presents a case study on the Basic Income as a social innovation with strong transformative ambitions towards a re-constituted social security system. The principled advocacy for it has evoked somewhat intractable controversies about expected effects. However, there is also a recent trend towards more pragmatic approaches. Whether through crowdfunding or through governmental experimentation, these initiatives seem to bypass the principled debates and aim for concrete demonstrations instead. 'Just do it' seems to be the motto. Mistrusted as watering down by principled Basic Income advocates, eagerly followed by media and attractive for local authorities, the involved protagonists clearly struggle to untangle the innovative and reproductive ramifications of this shift in approach. This debate is clarified and deepened by highlighting how new forms of activism and experiments entail shifting dimensions of social innovation.

Keywords: Basic Income, new knowings, co-production, advocacy, experimentation

Research Highlights

- The Basic Income case is an exemplar for the importance of new knowings and framings as dimensions of transformative social innovation.
- The ways in which Basic Income is being promoted are changing from principled advocacy to more pragmatic approaches.
- These different repertoires of action are intertwined and substantiate the co-production of Transformative Social Innovation.
- The changing ways of promoting the Basic Income bring out the importance of changing communication technologies and knowledge construction for social innovation agency.

1 Introduction: Basic Income experimentation between transformation and reproduction

As dominant market and state institutions are widely perceived as failing to deliver solid solutions to social challenges like social security, sustainable development, social inclusion and democratic decision-making, a wide array of initiatives towards transformative social innovation (TSI) have emerged in the last decades (Moulaert et al. 2013; Klein et al. 2016). Such TSI is often carried by earlier new social movements (Lévèsque 2016), but has a specific orientation beyond critique towards innovation and the active construction of new practices. Social innovation, defined as new social relations comprising new ways of doing, organising, framing or knowing, can be said to have transformative ambitions, potential or impact if it challenges, alters or replaces dominant institutions (Haxeltine et al. 2015).

A much-debated theoretical issue regarding TSI is precisely this transformative ambition. How transformative can it be, considering the evident appeal it has but also the potential threat it poses to the very dominant institutions that TSI initiatives are seeking to challenge, alter and replace? SI comprises a duality by simultaneously drawing on and reproducing as well as questioning and reshaping dominant ways of doing, organising, framing and knowing. Put differently, SI is active along all, yet innovative only along some of these co-producing dimensions (Haxeltine et al. 2015).

This paper engages with this debate (on SI duality) by addressing the particular trend in TSIprocesses towards experimentation and concrete co-created action (Voorberg et al. 2015). This turn towards experimentation and concreteness, next to political advocacy, scientific reflection and activist awareness-raising manifests particularly clearly in the case of the Basic Income (BI). The BI has a vast intellectual history as an alternative institutional model for social security and as a principle for social justice (Van Parijs 1995, Vanderborght & Van Parijs 2005), but recently the political advocacy seems to be complemented by various kinds of experimentation and concrete action: BI-inspired experimentation, civic petitions, initiatives towards referenda, schemes for crowd-funded basic income are all reflections of a disposition of 'Just do it'. This clearly raises considerable public interest in the Basic Income, but is also evoking critical questions, heated debate and a degree of confusion amongst BI advocates. *Is it the breakthrough of bottom-up 'just do it' mentalities after years of ineffective 'mere talk'? Or is it a watering down of transformative principles, silently reproducing the ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing prevailing in society?*

These divergent reactions in the public debate reflect an acute awareness of the discursive intricacy inherent to these experiments. Apart from the aforementioned SI-debates on transformation and reproduction of dominant institutions, the public reactions also acknowledge how these abundantly broadcasted and publicized experiments and demonstrations are bound up with tendencies towards evidence-based policy (Taylor 2013; Cairney 2016), with complex processes of reality co-production (Jasanoff 2004; Voß & Freeman 2015), and ultimately with broader shifts in governmentality i.e. webs of technologies, procedures, rationalities and discourses that together shape behaviours of individuals and groups (Foucault 1998; Swyngedouw 2005; Pel et al. 2016). These themes of STS research seem indispensable for a critical and nuanced appreciation of contemporary Basic Income enactments. Importantly – in addition to their power to scrutinise the optimistic 'just do it' attitude – these STS insights point out that the assessment of transformation and reproduction effects requires first of all a detailed empirical analysis of how the experiments package and re-package, shape and re-shape this TSI

concept. Our empirical account will elicit that the Basic Income is at once both a very simple as well as a highly multi-dimensional concept.

Our empirical analysis is first of all meant to clarify the stated societal debate. The guiding research questions are the following: *How is the promotion of Basic Income changing? Which variations can be distinguished? And how does this change the ways in which the concept is challenging, altering, replacing and reproducing dominant institutions?* Further aims of the paper are to draw out implications of these dynamics for the research on emerging TSI governmentalities and the dimensions through which TSI is co-produced.

The paper is structured as follows. After a historical-systematic exposition on the Basic Income and the (experimenting and principled) variations of promoting it **(section 2)**, we invoke insights on the co-production of social reality to present an analytical framework for the investigation of Basic Income put-into-action **(section 3)**. A brief methodological section accounts for our selection from extensive empirical data and our stylized representations of the Basic Income TSI process **(section 4)**. In the empirical analysis we consider the 'Just do it' approaches along the analytical dimensions of doing, organizing, framing and knowing, highlighting how this reshapes the BI concept **(section 5)**. In the conclusion we develop synthesis observations to answer our research questions, and consider the broader implications of the 'Just do it' attitude for contemporary TSI processes **(section 6)**.

2 Basic Income, principles and practices of a utopian concept

As introduced, the recent ways of promoting the Basic Income provide interesting examples of the governmentalities that arise along with initiatives towards transformative social innovation. This analysis of contemporary developments needs to be preceded by a brief exposition of this transformative concept. This does not only serve systematic clarification, but also situates our analysis in a discursive development that dates back decades or even centuries. Importantly, this historical account is also a matter of being fair to the BI advocates that we studied. Without this background, their criticisms and second thoughts regarding the recent experimental-pragmatic approaches to BI promulgation and implementation are easily ridiculed as politically naïve resistances of 'hardliners' or 'Prinzipienreiter'¹. Substantial efforts have been devoted to the careful elaboration of the concept into a compelling social critique and a scientifically underpinned alternative model for social security.

The Basic Income in its basic form amounts to a state-provided entitlement of all citizens to an income that covers subsistence more or less sufficiently and which is not conditional upon any anterior achievements or present efforts. This leaves individuals free to generate additional income, to devote their time to volunteering, to education or to care activities, and thus provides the security on the basis of which they can shape their lives in accordance with their own ambitions and talents. As has been argued by various politicians ('left' and 'right' wing), political theorists, economists, sociologist and utopian thinkers², this model maximizes individual self-determination whilst being fair and reasonably (cost-)efficient for society as a whole. Early

¹ Advocates rigidly sticking to principles.

² The politically so diverse list of basic income advocates features amongst many others Charles Fourier, John Stuart Mill, Martin Luther King Jr., Bertrand Russell, Eric Olin Wright, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Philippe Van Parijs, Claus Offe, Yanis Varoufakis.

conceptions of state-provided financial or material allocations for the young, the elderly or the poor date back to the 16th century but it was the English-American Thomas Paine³ two centuries later who, in his pamphlet *Agrarian Justice* (1795), developed the idea of unconditional payments as "a right and not a charity" to everyone at two decisive moments: the entering and exiting of work life. Numerous variations based on differing principles have been formulated, tested or even implemented since (e.g. a minimum income, a negative income tax, a 'demo-grant', a social dividend, or conditional social benefits). The Universal Basic Income, a monthly individual, unconditional and universal payment in cash, remains only an idea to date. The grand œuvre '*Real Freedom for All*' by Belgian political theorist Philippe Van Parijs (1997) can be said to provide the most elaborate underpinning – arguing for basic income as an arrangement that considerably fits better with principles of social justice than existing institutional models do.

Together with other researchers, activists and critical thinkers, Van Parijs has been developing the Basic Income concept through the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) since 1986. After several experiments led by national/federal government in North America with different Basic Income variants during the 1970s (Widerquist 2002; Forget 2008), political interest on that side of the Atlantic dwindled – only to re-kindle in Europe less than a decade later when several groups and individuals came together for the first international congress on the topic, organised by Van Parijs. On the final day of the get-together, a group decided to launch what was then called the Basic Income European Network, featuring a regular newsletter and biennial congresses. The BIEN network has grown continuously since and, whilst retaining its acronym, changed its name to the Basic Income Earth Network in 2004, acknowledging the large and continuously growing number of non-European individual members and affiliated networks. Over the years, discussions shifted from ethical underpinnings and the general (dis)advantages of a BI to the implications of a BI for specific groups or in specific contexts and further to implementation strategies, incl. financing models, on a local, national, regional or global scale. In other words, the outlook and activities of the network became more policy-oriented, partially due to advancing research and debate and partially driven by a growing number of people, in- and outside of the network, with an interest in carrying discussions beyond academic and intellectual circles.

The BIEN network has promoted the Basic Income concept as a 'real utopia' (Olin Wright 2010; Bregman 2016), stabilising its meaning through several criteria: The provision of a sufficiently high payment (sufficiency) in cash to every citizen (universality) on an individual basis (individuality), without means-test and work-requirement (unconditionality). Each of the four criteria has been subject of debate: Universality through debates on citizenship, unconditionality through debates on libertarian principles and on social and distributive justice, and sufficiency through debates on democracy and a universal right to basic subsistence and social participation. The latter criterion in particular divides also BI proponents in those asserting practical and ethical reasons for an amount merely supplementary to other income and those who consider a life in poverty undignified and unjustified, especially in wealthy societies.

For centuries and continuing today, there have been vehement discussions on the specific moral principles and rights that should be served through basic income arrangements. Alongside those, it has been discussed how such arrangements should be implemented or advocated for. As advocacy network, BIEN has been particularly active in elaborating and systematizing the various strategies of promoting the basic income that have been brought forward during its existence.

³ During the 1770s, Paine's well-known, crown-critical pamphlet *Common Sense* inspired, and his series *The American Crisis* lashed on, the American Revolution for independence. He later moved to Paris and became deeply involved in the French Revolution.

These strategies each have their particular theories of change and governmentalities. As consecutive and overlapping development waves, they form the current repertoire of action as it has historically developed. Based on Groot & van der Veen (2001) amongst others, three kinds of repertoires of action can be distinguished:

- 1. **Social critiques.** BI has for a long time been promoted in the form of social critique. This involved articulating the flaws and pathologies of dominant institutions, and positing how the counterfactual utopia of a BI would perform better.
- 2. **The 'Royal Way'.** This refers to implementation by governmental decision. As this would crucially have to be preceded by voters and politicians becoming convinced of its merits, the activities along this strategy involved the dissemination of calculations, modelling results and other ways of substantiating the good performance of BI on key welfare indicators and economic performance criteria. It revolved around the mobilization of convincing evidence.
- 3. **Implementation 'through the back door' or 'by stealth'.** These strategies came up as a response to the second, which proved very difficult to fit in with political rationality, incrementalism, and fragmented decision-making. Following this pragmatist line, BI advocates explored, argued and reconstructed how BI principles could be implemented through other sequences of political events than the one-shot, comprehensive and principled 'Royal Way' welfare state revolution).

As indicated upfront, these three lines of approach are increasingly becoming complemented with and challenged by what might be considered a fourth one – the 'just do it' approach, consisting of moves towards experimentation, direct democracy and concrete action. This fourth approach comprises the re-examination of early experiments during the 1970s (USA, Canada), the study of existing policy schemes (Alaska, Brazil) and "win-for-life" lottery winners (Marx & Peeters 2004), as well as research in the context of recent or currently running experiments (Namibia, India) and currently planned BI-inspired experimentation (Netherlands, Finland, Canada). Moreover, it comprises petitions and citizens' initiatives on national and international level (Germany, Netherlands, UBI Europe), crowd-funding initiatives (Germany, Netherlands, USA, globally), referenda (Switzerland) and various forms of online activism (Backhaus & Pel forthcoming).

The interpretation of the Basic Income concept evokes heated discussions, but also the ways through which to propagate it arouse controversy. In the next section we develop an analytical framework for critical-interpretive analysis of BI put into action. Following insights from Science and Technology Studies, this involves sometimes subtle shifts in the new ways of doing, framing, organising and knowing that are brought forward through social innovations.

3 The multiple dimensions of co-produced transformative social innovation

The organized promotion of the Basic Income concept by BIEN and its members can be considered an example of Transformative Social Innovation. Similar to well-known initiatives like Slow Food, Time Banks, Credit Unions, Transitions Towns, Hackerspaces and Living Labs (Jørgensen et al. 2016), they are engaged in efforts towards creating new social relations that are challenging, altering and replacing dominant institutions (Haxeltine et al. 2015; Avelino et al. forthcoming). Referring back to section 2, some BI proponents mainly invoke the BI as a socially critical counterfactual that challenges the There Is No Alternative principle. Others aim for altering them by formulating proposals for adaptations in social security and unemployment benefits administration. Following the 'Royal Way' approach, the aim is even to largely replace the existing social security apparatus by a nationally implemented and universally scoped basic income entitlement. This transformative disposition towards challenging, altering and replacing of dominant institutions sets BIEN apart from regular social innovation, which can very well be innovative whilst largely⁴ reproducing or becoming isomorphic to dominant institutions. The commercialized sharing schemes of Uber and AirBnB and the bureaucratized organizations of the social economy are often-cited examples of this (Cf. Defourny & Nyssens 2008; Jessop et al. 2013; Bauler et al. forthcoming).

Social innovations can be 'social' along various rationales, and that makes SI a highly complex category (Rammert 2011). A still useful distinction to make is that social innovations are innovative in bringing forth new social relations rather than technologies or products (Howaldt et al. 2015). In the case of the BI, this 'bringing forth' is non-trivial, however. Other than the localized, collectives-initiated social enterprises, Ecovillages or maker-spaces, the basic income amounts to a *universal entitlement* that as such tends to presuppose governmental implementation. This particularity of the innovative concept leaves it somewhat difficult to concretise, let alone realise. After all, it is often civil society actors and local collectives that are at the source of social innovations (Smith & Seyfang 2007; Moulaert et al. 2013). This raises the questions of how this particular social innovation is being promoted, how it could spread and eventually be realised.

The action through which the BI is promoted clearly hinges on communication. As described in section 2, BIEN members *argue* for certain moral principles and conceptions of the good life, expose counterfactual social orders, advocate institutional reforms and implementation plans, and *publish* economic analyses and modelling results to substantiate effects of certain basic income scenarios. Lacking the legal, financial and organizational resources to implement basic income social security arrangements out of their own, they seek to empower themselves in pursuing their transformative ambitions through the key resource of knowledge, and through persuasive framings and narratives of social reality (Cf. Wittmayer et al. 2015). Even if actors involved may have this belief about their agency, this kind of social innovation agency should not be reduced to lobbying the public authorities, or to generate an evidence basis to inform public policy. As argued convincingly by Foucault (1991; 1998), the strategic rationale for BIEN's dispersal of alternative knowledge and framing of social reality is that it reaches beyond the politicians who decide over social security arrangements. Crucially, this promotion of social innovation confronts the economic models that shape the feasibility of reforms, the social norms that shape assessments of fairness, the subjectivities that shape voters' and tax payers' ideas on income entitlements and worthy citizenship, and the general ethos about what constitutes a fulfilled life. BIEN's actions impinge on the governmentalities, the webs of technologies, procedures, rationalities and discourses that together shape behaviours of individuals and groups, and through which the social security arrangements are shaped (Rose et al. 2006). Subsequent work in Science and Technology Studies has articulated in more detail how the social order is crucially shaped by technologies, infrastructures, scripts, procedures, categorizations, accounting systems and various other kinds of sedimented knowledge. As indicated by Voß & Freeman (2014:4), an evident scientization of politics has come into effect already that should no longer surprise us. Social ordering "...is now achieved by seeking to establish valid representations of reality and shared acceptance of the factual conditions of collective action, rather than political representations of a collective will. Entry into politics is marked not by the articulation of values and interests but by the acquisition of expertise".

⁴ There is no absolute or clear-cut difference between TSI and SI, as they both reproduce dominant institutions. Still, distinctions in transformative ambitions and impacts can be made.

BIEN's particular forms of socially innovative agency are responding to a social reality in which the proliferation of new ways of knowing and framing are increasingly important ways of changing social relations. Still, the impression should be avoided as if this were the *only* way in which socially innovative action can be waged. The earlier examples of social enterprises, Ecovillages or maker-spaces remind that social innovations are also brought forward through other, more tangible dimensions of socially innovative agency, namely through the demonstration, showcasing and spreading of new ways of organizing and of doing (Cf. Jørgensen et al. 2016). Referring to Foucault, such self-instigated, concrete and material action is a way to intervene in the world that is very complementary to the propagation of new ways of framing and knowing. As described in his account of 'Other spaces' or heterotopias, these concrete and purposively constructed places are challenging and complementing the dominant social relations as inscribed in the regular parts of the built environment (Foucault 1986). Likewise, the aforementioned examples bring forward alternative ways of organizing that establish conspicuous, awareness-raising deviations from the prevalent social order (Pel et al. 2016) – but these ways of organizing materialize new framings and knowings of living and producing together. As described in Chilvers & Longhurst (2015) and Haxeltine et al. (2015:11), the different types of activity that social innovations are engaged with and their relations to the social context can thus be roughly subsumed under new ways of organizing (modes of organisation), knowing (the production of knowledge), doing (practices, activities), and framing (cognitive framings/ models/worldviews).

This DOFK is a shorthand heuristic that elegantly distinguishes the multiple dimensions through which processes of transformative social innovation processes play out. It situates social innovation in a socio-material social order that is co-produced. Co-production "is shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it" (Jasanoff 2004:2). It highlights "...the often invisible role of knowledges, expertise, technical practices and material objects in shaping, sustaining, subverting or transforming relations of authority". (ibid:4). In line with innovation sociologists inspired by actor-network theory, it is acknowledged that social innovation is a deeply social-material process, which could even be considered an activity of re-shaping 'social technologies' (Pinch et al. 1992:266). Beyond the acknowledgement of its social-material character, the crucial implication of a co-production view is that it looks beyond the constitution of entities and focuses on the interacting processes through which social innovation develops (Jasanoff 2004:18/19). The co-production framework brings forward a hyper-dynamic perspective in which the analytic problem of understanding change is resolved by being sensitive to its ubiquitous occurrence (Abbott 2004:8). Social innovation, the bringing forth of new social relations, is considered a multidimensional process in which new ways of doing, organising, framing and knowing are deeply intertwined and mutually constitutive. Moreover, it is acknowledged that these are networked processes of dispersed agents, who can communicate fast but still may operate in parallel, fragmented fashion.

The co-productionist framework thus brings forward a view on processes of TSI that is particularly suitable to help understanding the particularities of the basic income case. First of all, it is sensitive to the discursive approach to engendering transformations that seems characteristic for the BIEN protagonists. Yet secondly, it does not fall into the idealistic fallacy, and theorizes changes in ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing as intertwined changes in a sociomaterial societal order. Third, the framework helps us to understand the relations between the three ways of promoting the BI distinguished earlier. The actions associated with social critique, Royal Way and 'implementation by stealth' are overlapping in time, informing each other, and evoking contestations. Finally, the point of the DOFK heuristic is thus NOT that the apparent fourth wave of the 'just do it' approaches are dedicated exclusively to promoting 'new doings' and have nothing to do with the earlier approaches that rather sought to disseminate new framings and knowings. The difference of recent approaches compared to earlier Basic Income advocacy lies in bringing forward different ways of intervening into the constant and mutually interacting changes in doing, organizing, framing and knowing.

4 Methodology

This study draws on a case study that formed part of a set of 20 case studies, conducted within the framework of the TRANSIT project on Transformative Social Innovation (TSI). Compared with other TRANSIT cases, the BIEN/Basic Income case struck us as an outlier in the population of TSI initiatives: other than the many TSI initiatives undertaking, showcasing and experimenting with new ways of doing and organizing, this initiative seemed to focus entirely on the discursive promotion of new ways of framing and knowing (see section 3). The bet on government-led TSI, in order to materialize a universal basic income, appeared to be quite exceptional as well. This identification of an 'outlier' case merits methodological reflection. It begs the question whether it is accurate to consider the Basic Income as a transformative social innovation (rather than a 'real utopia', an alternative arrangement, a political-philosophical concept, or an option on the menu of social security arrangements). Likewise, it is not self-evident to consider the members of the BIEN network as social innovators (rather than as critical researchers, advocates, or activists). These are non-trivial assumptions with a considerable performative dimension, as the concept of social innovation is imbued with connotations of constructive, creative, socially beneficial and valuable forms of agency (Pel & Bauler under review). In other words, our reflections on the 'Just do it' approaches and their difference with the historically dominant approach of the 'Royal Way' is partly shaped by the accounts of TSI agency developed in the parallel case studies.

Having introduced this caveat, we have studied the case along the generic format developed for the TRANSIT set of 20 cases (Jørgensen et al. 2016). Our case study focused on BIEN as transnational network, and on two 'local initiatives' in Germany and the Netherlands. Part of this approach of embedded units of analysis (Yin 2003), we also investigated other initiatives, actors and institutions as co-producing agents in the spread and translation of basic income. We followed a process approach, seeking to reconstruct how the basic income concept, as well as the actors propagating it, evolved (Pettigrew 1997). We reconstructed in particular how the new ways of doing, organizing, framing and knowing were propagated, which is partly a matter of discourse analysis and partly an application of actor-network theory modes of inquiry that follow the shaping of socio-material networks (Latour 2005). The case study relies on 20-30 semi-structured interviews with key actors, a modest amount of observation of meetings, and selective review of the substantial literature on the basic income concept itself and the development of its politicalsocietal uptake. For the reconstruction of the apparent recent trend towards 'Just do it' approaches, we have relied considerably on communications on Basic Income related websites (Backhaus & Pel forthcoming).

In this paper we use the case study mainly to illustrate our points on co-produced TSI. We will focus on the most recent period of the Basic Income social innovation process. The earlier ways of promoting it, social critique, 'Royal Way' and 'implementation through the back door'/by stealth (see section 2) form contrasting backgrounds to the analysis of how the promotion of Basic Income is transforming. Deploying a conceptual framework of co-produced transformative social innovation, we unpack what is happening to BI promotion as it goes into the 'just do it' mode.

5 Empirical analysis: 'Just do it' approaches towards the Basic Income

In the following we analyse the recent wave of 'Just do it' approaches to realizing the BI transformative potentials. These can be distinguished from the three earlier BI approaches of social critique, Royal Way, and implementation through the back door. We focus on three clusters of activities sharing the 'Just do it' disposition. Deploying the co-production framework and the associated social innovation dimensions we describe initiatives towards crowd-funding **(5.1)**, petitions, calls for referenda and online activism **(5.2)**, and experimentation **(5.3)**.

5.1 Crowd-funding the BI: A utopian concept made real

As indicated earlier, the main strategy of bringing forth the BI as a transformative social innovation has for a long time been to produce authoritative evidence, to articulate persuasive critiques, and to raise awareness. These activities should unsettle the dominant ways of knowing and framing insisting that one should earn one's income. Eventually, the 'Royal Way' approach assumes, these actions should turn the political tide and thus pave the way for the large-scale state reforms that ensure a universal unconditional basic income. This approach has gathered many eminent politicians, political thinkers, sociologists and economists, jointly developing a constellation of arguments and evidence that has been aptly called a 'peat fire' (Groot & van der Veen 2001) – an alternative sub-stream in the political imaginary that may not have surfaced much, but nevertheless continues to smoulder.

As even staunch supporters of the BI admit however, the 'peat fire' has largely remained under the surface and devoid of transformative impact. Several interviewees converged on the analysis that the earlier waves of BI-propagation have been quite innocuous in their repetitive promulgation of alternative knowings and framings. One of the BIEN founders even admitted to having become tired of repeating the same messages. At a distance from the BIEN network and its members, some BI-promoting individuals and collectives in Germany and in the Netherlands are even more outspoken about the need to change strategy, and to make the utopian concept real and tangible:

The small Dutch collective of MIES ('Enterprise for Innovation in Economy & Society', Cf. MIES 2016) can be considered the exemplar for the recent 'Just do it' approaches. As a diverse group of entrepreneurial, activist, curious individuals from various backgrounds they converged on a great enthusiasm about the BI, but also on the conviction that the societal debate on it had hopelessly become stuck. 'Let's just stop talking about that Basic Income', one of them had written in a blog that received considerable attention. They agreed that the Dutch debate had become adversarial, repetitive, and especially entrenched: Proponents kept insisting on the societal and individual gains that would be achieved if a BI were implemented, sceptical adversaries maintained that incentives towards paid labour would erode and overall economic results would be dramatic. Crucially, the debate remained confined to speculative, ideologically coloured conjectures about behavioural and societal effects that could never be observed. The academic, language-only strategies of BIEN and affiliates would never succeed, as far as it did not allow people to see, feel, and experience how life and society would be different.

'Let's just do it', MIES members therefore decided in 2014. As a group of entrepreneurial, creative individuals they considered that the best way to find out about a new concept like BI was to test it. Moreover, they saw little point in further efforts towards influencing national-level politics and seeking to find openings in the inert welfare state bureaucracy – any innovation and change would

have to be realized on the local level anyway. Inspired by a German pioneer whom they found through the internet, they decided for a crowd-funding initiative that would finance one individuals' basic income of 1000 EUR per month for one year. 'You may be against it, or still not convinced – but at least you can see how it is for an individual to receive a basic income'. They also sought to show how these new ways of doing involved new ways of organizing, highlighting how social security and solidarity could be arranged without any bureaucratic intervention. Citizens could contribute directly, seeing what they got for it. The selected recipient of the BI, a local activist and community worker who organizes an urban horticulture, meeting place and social inclusion centre, could be followed through their 'Our Basic Income' website. Through self-recorded video blogs and media appearances he brought out 'what he did with the money, and what the money did with him'. This first BI-receiving individual and MIES' pleas for broader experimentation with the basic income received substantial media attention, as a nationally broadcasted documentary testifies (Tegenlicht 2015).

This cluster of 'Just do it' initiatives expanded the action repertoire used for BI promotion through its insertion of the crowdfunding mechanism, rooted in the cooperative movement and recently successful in the context of arts and media projects. In Germany, it took one tech-savvy individual who had, unintentionally and somewhat by coincidence, generated a basic income for himself based on a well-running online business to make that transfer. Together with a friend and business partner he started the first-of-its-kind BI crowdfunding initiative in 2014, with similar initiatives springing up in the Netherlands, the US and on a global level. Over time, several tools incentivising data provision and online customer sharing have been subverted and added to the original and by now almost conventional crowdfunding contrivance inviting people to donate. Beyond the 'Royal Way' approach and its longstanding bet on authoritative scientific evidence, the crowd-funding initiatives added the authoritative experience of selected BI-recipients. Instead of the 'traditional' articulation of social critique and utopian counterfactuals, reservation, resentment or resistance against the basic income are thus deflated vis-á-vis concrete accounts of individuals who put the money to 'good' use as they remain or become, active, socially engaged and productive. More principled proponents question the authoritativeness of these BI experiences, however. The limited duration and particularism towards lottery winners leaves the crowdfunding remote from 'the real thing', an unconditional and universal basic income. The considerable generation of media attention and exposure for the BI is appreciated across the entire movement, yet principled supporters and scientific 'purists' somewhat dismissively frame these achievements in terms of 'propaganda-effects'.

The crowd-funding initiators are very consciously less principled about the BI than is usual in the BIEN network. Even if BIEN members like to stress that the BI is neither left nor right but rather progressive, they do assume more principled political positions that are identifiably to be found on the 'left' side of the political spectrum. In contrast to this yet similar to MIES' political standing, the German crowdfunding initiators avoid a political appearance to ensure broadest possible support. This apparent consciousness of the advantages of transcending political positions is typical for the crowdfunding initiators. It is partly a reflection of pragmatic, ideologically independent attitudes and aversions to party politics and in that sense authentic. On the other hand, several of the individuals involved are quite strongly in favour of a BI, and basically subscribe to the BIEN ambitions towards the Basic Income as unconditional, individual and universal entitlement.

5.2 Petitions, referenda proposals and online activism: Beyond 'expertocracy'

The social critique and Royal Way approaches are strongly focused on the unsettling of dominant knowings and framings through compelling arguments. As becomes clear through the vast academic literature on the transformative concept, this is work for specialists requiring particular intellectual training and social capital for getting one's message heard. These approaches do not suit all the individuals that actively endorse the BI concept and seek to realize some of its transformative potentials. Within BIEN there have been calls for a less scientific and a more activist approach. And also beyond this network of initiative members (subscribing to certain principles) there is a marked rise of initiatives that express desires to be involved with the shaping of social security – beyond the 'expertocracy' that to a certain extent is prolonged by BIEN's academic mode of social innovation.

Similar to the crowdfunding initiatives, comparable to the first cluster of 'Just do it' initiatives considered above, modern ICT features at the heart of this cluster: the internet, web 2.0 and social media provided new possibilities that opened up political debate and decision-making. This cluster of online petitions, national referenda and the use of online platforms thus comprises new democratic fora to inform, debate and perhaps even decide about alternative social arrangements. Also here, the broadening of the movement's action repertoire to include petitions was done by an initial 'outsider' in Germany who was at first regarded somewhat sceptically by established, well-networked advocates. Quite distinctly, however, petitions were embraced by the movement due to their way-paving potential towards 'Royal Way' implementation and as a tool to promote the BI concept widely. In recent times there have been more petitions on national (Dutch) and international (EU) level. Albeit only possible in some countries, national referenda have also become part of the movement's political agenda. The recent Swiss initiative, despite predictably failing to achieve a majority, was celebrated as a major achievement in social media for bringing it successfully on the way and gathering an undeniable near-quarter support of the electorate. In the tradition of social movements and their global, persistent march for worldwide recognition and 'Royal Way' implementation of measures, the Swiss referendum was applauded for setting off an avalanche of commentary and debate, also internationally, and for forcing prominent figures in Switzerland and abroad to publically argue their position (Van Parijs, 2016a). Online activism, finally, lies at the core of the movement's business. Protruding developments, events, videos or innovative ideas in any way relevant for the concept or its promotion are posted and re-posted, tweeted and re-tweeted, blogged about and referred to, shared and commented for broadest possible reach.

An early wave of activities aimed at informed debate to 'convince the inconvincible' of national implementation. The initially secondary goal to raise general awareness became more central, partially as people joined the BI movement who sought to become active, beyond the often unsuccessful attempts to enter the public debate and party politics. The Dutch Vereniging Basisinkomen (VBI, the Dutch affiliate of BIEN), for example, set up neighbourhood teams to institutionalise local activities in members' immediate surroundings. Also battles seemingly lost, like a European Citizens' Initiative that failed to gather sufficient support or the Swiss referendum won by the opposition, are appreciated for the enormous publicity they yield. *En route* to national implementation, petitions, referenda and online activism were thus quickly embraced by the movement that had initially focused on social critique and 'Royal Way' implementation by providing argumentative ammunition and experimental evidence to political decision-makers.

This cluster of activist rather than engaged-academic initiatives does not pose a fundamental break away from the earlier waves of BI promotion. The transformative ambitions are largely maintained, and the principled approach as well. It does reconfigure the ways in which the attempted BI transformation is co-produced, however. The described actions draft more people to become actively involved with the topic. This move beyond academic circles and formal democratic decision-making towards broader societal engagement involved changes along all socially innovative dimensions: the promotion of new framing and knowing was broadened, and the organization of social security is challenged to become more responsive to the broader public.

5.3 BI-inspired experiments: transformation through labs?

As discussed under section 5.1, the academic, discursive approach of BIEN protagonists to promote new framings and knowings is challenged by relative outsider BI advocates who seek concrete evidence. Their crowd-funding initiatives towards the latter generate considerable exposure for the new ways of (self-determined, free, secure) doing that a basic income could support. The traditional 'Royal Way' proponents generally acknowledge and applaud how this helps to counter ideological dogmas and uninformed clichés about BI recipients' inclinations to 'lapse into passivity'. The earlier waves of BI and especially the Royal Way display a strong scientistic striving towards 'speaking truth to power' and evidence-based policy (reforms). A significant archive of knowledge has been developed on the strategic reasons to experiment with such a radical concept (Groot 2006), on the methodological side-constraints for such experiments (Standing 2012), but also on the fundamental limitations that experiments have in simulating a real-world basic income. After all, the experiment population will know to be involved in a temporary experiment only (Van Parijs 2016b).

Throughout its history and extending until today, there has been experimentation initiated or backed by policy. The Mincome experiments in Canada, similar efforts in the US in the 1970s as well as experimentation efforts in developing countries (Standing 2013; Haarmann et al. 2009) are currently followed up by experimentation initiatives in the Canadian province of Ontario and Finland. In light of groaning social security systems, policy-makers appear more inclined to consider alternatives. Still, our case study findings suggest that the recent developments towards experimentation with (elements of) basic income should not be mistaken for or reduced to experimental corollaries of BIEN's program of scientifically underpinned transformation. The Dutch trajectory towards basic income-inspired experimentation provides a striking example of the more complex ways in which the knowings and framings of basic income are co-produced. It exemplifies a broader phenomenon of social innovation labs.

The aforementioned MIES collective has played an important part in welding a broad and diverse network of actors who seek to experiment with social security arrangements, and especially with the conditionality of welfare benefits. The basic income serves as an important background to these experimentation plans. The plans are informed by its key alternative way of knowing and framing, namely the idea that social security without conditions (means testing, requirement to accept jobs) will empower people towards active, self-determined and fulfilling lives – which in turn will be more fair and efficient, and less bureaucratic. The experimentation network hinges on two groups of actors, with media dynamics as a crucial co-producing factor.

First, there is a group of various civil society actors that have gathered around MIES' ambition to experiment with Basic Income principles. Similar to MIES they seek to create concrete projects, and stimulate societal debate on alternative ways of organizing social security. The shared

attitude is entrepreneurial, socially innovative, experimentation-minded, and especially nonideological. The marked difference with earlier basic income advocates is that they want to see what works, and seek to stimulate an open societal debate in which entrenched positions are left behind. They mobilize the basic income concept as a concept that has already gained a certain public recognition, yet also use this framing with caution – as a radical concept that has long been a hobby-horse of the political left-wing, it evokes strong aversions.

Second, there is a broad group of municipal governments that share concerns over the administration of unemployment benefits. Since a recent devolution operation by national government, they are experiencing difficulties to implement the associated policies of re-deployment programs, controls on the compliance of unemployed individuals with the conditions for welfare entitlements, and more generally the way in which the bureaucratic system is generating side-effects like social exclusion, alienation and frustration. The budgetary implications of the devolution are another cause for the municipal governments' dissatisfaction with the current relations between national and local level government. Administrators and council members in many Dutch municipalities have therefore become particularly interested in experimentation with more lenient regulations in the administration of social benefits. Importantly, this experimentation is often forming part of broader programs in which local governments seek to re-invent their governance – making it more participative, more experimenting, more innovative. The BI-inspired experiments fit well into this broader trend towards co-created 'labs'.

These two groups have come together through important policy entrepreneurship through a dedicated 'experimentation broker' (Backhaus & Pel forthcoming), and through their different but overlapping interests in BI-inspired experimentation. The development of this experimentation network cannot be understood without the media dynamics that developed between 2014 and 2016. A first impulse to the Dutch media hype on the basic income was given by the critical-journalist publication of Bregman (2014). It inspired several of the experimenters, but also revived the public interest in the BI. The crowd-funded basic income of MIES made for another stream of media attention. Moreover, the documentary makers of 'Tegenlicht' broadcasted several episodes dedicated to the BI concept and to the experimentations, and organized meet-up sessions on them across the Netherlands. Mainstream media followed, and continued to bring out news on the 'basic income experiments' as various middle-sized cities announced their experimentation ambitions. This media exposure flared up again once the responsible Secretary of State faced a parliamentary motion in favour of such local-level experimentation: The current stage of the experimentation trajectory is that the administrative details and regulatory scope for it are being elaborated.

The Dutch trajectory towards 'BI-inspired experimentation' can thus be seen to achieve an impact that has arguably been seldom witnessed in BIEN history. It has often been indicated however that some key framings and knowings of the Basic Income are relegated to the background. Similarly it has been argued that the experiments are not real BI experiments, as they are of limited duration, limited to particular target groups, and only quite marginally tinkering with the conditionality of unemployment benefits. Moreover, both proponents and opponents have doubts about the mediatised, politicized environment in which the experiments will be held, casting doubt on what can be learnt from the evidence. The experimentation trajectory shows the quite complex ways in which the knowings and framings of basic income are co-produced: Other than a matter of Basic Income, the crucial issue seems to have become what scope for experimentation and responsibilities for social security should be granted to local-level governments, who have started to challenge the centralized social security system for its inertia.

6 Conclusion: 'Just do it' approaches and the co-production of Basic Income

Based on three clusters of 'just do it' approaches to the promotion of the Basic Income, we draw out some main observations. We have considered these approaches as a new wave in the promotion of the Basic Income, after the social critique, Royal Way and 'implementation through the back door/by stealth' approaches (section 2). The new approaches differ significantly from the earlier more principled approaches, and this gives rise to a certain degree of contestation. In the introduction we therefore raised the following questions: *How is the promotion of Basic Income changing? Which variations can be distinguished? How does this change the ways in which the concept is challenging, altering, replacing and reproducing dominant institutions? Is it the breakthrough of bottom-up 'just do it' mentalities after years of ineffective 'mere talk'? Or is it a watering down of transformative principles, silently reproducing the ways of doing, organising, framing and knowing prevailing in society?*

We have sought to clarify how these questions reflect important concerns of the actors involved, developing an understanding of recent developments that is more nuanced than the discussions about watering down or not. Our framework of co-produced transformative social innovation (section 3) served to unpack in more detail how the 'Just do it' approaches entail subtle changes in a longer history of Basic Income promotion. The co-production perspective helps towards the following observations:

First, the 'Just do it' approaches indicate moves away from the earlier ways of promoting the BI. They largely abandon the idea that persuasively voiced social critique is a key driver of change. Also the development of a scientific evidence basis is considered insufficiently decisive in the face of entrenched political positions and in the context of an altogether abstract debate. For lack of concrete evidence of the new doings that a basic income would enable, associated framings and knowings remain to a certain extent hypothetical guesswork, precluding nuanced discussion. In conjunction with these departures from and disenchantment with the longstanding discursive strategies, the 'Just do it' approaches divert from the 'Royal Way'. Even apart from the scope for successful communication of the new knowings and framings, the new wave of BI promoters seem less inclined to bet on a sufficiently bold parliament to instigate radical reform of the Welfare system. Hence the considerable doubts that arise about this new wave of BI. The crowdfunding initiatives may be seen to breathe life into the somewhat abstract BI concept by letting people see how it is experienced. From a principled perspective however, the crowdfunding turns a fundamental right of all into a lottery for some. Likewise, online activism, petitions and initiatives towards referenda may bring political agenda-setting and decision-making more firmly into the people's hands, yet it can be questioned to what extent this brings the desired transformation of social security any closer. Finally, significant ambiguities remain surrounding the experiments. On the one hand, they are acknowledged as crucial steps towards an open societal debate, and towards generation of an evidence base. On the other hand, they are known to be inherently limited, and as such possible ways of channelling the transformative BI concept into a neutralised, compartmentalised and projectified form. The enthusiasm of principled BI supporters about the experiments' 'propaganda effect' also implies a dismissal: It is not the real thing, and not the ultimate scientific proof.

Second however, it has become evident that these significant breaks with earlier waves of BI promotion are easily exaggerated. The 'Just do it' approaches are not at all moving away from promoting the alternative knowings and framings contained in the BI discourse, such as the reframed understanding of participation in society, the often neglected knowing that paid labour

is becoming ever more scarce, and the carefully developed set of evidence that challenges the efficiency and superiority of the current social security arrangements. The new approaches are *still* very much resting on communication, and on persuasive presentation of new ways of framing and knowing. The pragmatic rather than principled crowd-funding and experimenting initiatives may appear to go along with post-political ideology, but this is mainly following from political awareness. In a way, the 'Just do it' approaches apply the notion of 'by stealth' or 'through the back door' implementation, both of which constitute pragmatic-political adaptations to the principled Royal Way. The 'Just do it' approaches are often just slightly re-inventing, re-packaging and recombining the core transformative contents of the Royal Way. Aware of the decades-long, fruitless knocking on the front door, there is a search for ways of knowing, framing, organising and doing that may be granted the right of access more easily.

Third, there is an unmistakeable intertwinement between the three 'Just do it' approaches mutually, and between these approaches and the three earlier waves of BI promotion. The experimentation initiatives are connected to the crowd-funding initiatives, and can be seen to connect the experimenting of civil society actors with similar ambitions of experimenting governments that seek to re-invent their relationships with citizens. Online activists eagerly communicate about the experimenting activities, and seek to translate 'trending topic' in political agenda-setting. Administrators and political representatives follow these debates and media developments, and refer to them to legitimise initiatives. Meanwhile, the 'Just do it' approaches are clearly relying on the discursive archive created by the social critique, Royal Way and 'implementation by stealth' argumentations. Inversely, the earlier approaches keep being pursued in different combinations, with the BIEN network as the group of actors that sustains the Royal Way. For them, the described trend towards more experimental rather than principled approaches is easily reduced to a matter of evidence-base and propaganda effect, and to knowings and framings that are communicated in a watered-down fashion. Our co-production analysis has shown that this underestimates the intertwinement between the different ways of promoting the BI, and the changing socio-material context of which the communication infrastructure is the most evident one.

The new ways of promoting the BI are clearly bringing forth other ways of working on the different dimensions of transformative social innovation, and connecting the BI with broader change processes. Returning to the description of BI as a peat-fire, it can be said that it has recently ignited, and is fed with fuels of different kinds.

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