



Material freedom, citizenship and democracy: the case for Universal Basic Income in post-political societies

Mario García Roche¹

Abstract. Under neoliberalism, the political relevance of citizens has been eroded according to a managerial conception of the state and society. As Jacques Rancière mentions, this is a condition of the current “post-political” time. In this context, UBI has appeared as a means to regain the political signification of individual attending to their material necessities and looking forward to avoiding an increasing level of precarity. However, UBI poses some processual and intrinsic problematizations affecting its emancipatory character resulting in exclusionary social, economic and political attitudes. Thus, this article will analyze the role of UBI in recovering the categories of citizen and democracy and the main problems its implementation would face. This research wants to show that, paradoxically, UBI can provide a substantial improvement for those social groups in risk of exclusion such as immigrants, women or precarious workers.

Keywords: Universal Basic Income, post-politics, neoliberalism, political rationality, democracy.

¹ mario.garcia@opendeusto.es

1. INTRODUCTION

When elaborating a comprehensive definition and characterization of neoliberalism, it is necessary to consider multiple overlapping layers and divergent research standpoints.

First, there is the problem of the geographical disparity in which neoliberal policies are implemented. Since the 1980s, neoliberalism can be understood as a relatively unitarian political and economic doctrine, has developed in different guises throughout developed and developing countries. Briefly, such policies were characterized by the economization of all areas of life, the privatization of public services or the establishment of an institutional framework according to the economic principle of competence (Harvey, 2007: 6). Furthermore, such division between developed and developing countries is far from being a static one, as, even inside these two parts, neoliberalism presented divergent forms, economic policies and political causes and effects. This is the case, for example, of Central and Southern American countries. However, due to the global spill-over effects of nationally localized crises, the measures taken to palliate them in these countries can be related to a unitarian doctrine set by a number of international institutions –International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) –and the influence that Western countries such as Great Britain and the US had in them² (Harvey, 2007: 103).

Second, there is the issue of the historical development of neoliberalism. It is true that genuine neoliberal policies started to be implemented from the 1980s onwards according to the British and North American leadership and the influence they had in the reconceptualization of international institutions. Nevertheless, the gestation of neoliberal ideas and institutions had already been present since the end of the 19th century in what Quinn Slobodian has called the “Geneve School”, which was under the intellectual leadership of economists and intellectuals such as Ludwig von Mises, Wilhem Röpke or Friedrich Hayek. Prior to the best known Chicago or Virginia Schools and even before the Colloque Walter Lippman in 1938 in which the term neoliberal was conceived (Slobodian, 2020), these intellectuals started to shape a reconceptualization of a new globalized world beneficial for the free movement of capital after

² Even neoliberalism developed in different forms inside developing countries. A typical example is how neoliberal policies developed in countries with a more liberal tradition such as US and Great Britain, where the implementation was quicker (Hopkin, 2020); and how they did in countries with a more social democrat tradition such as Scandinavian countries, where the resistance to these policies maintained a large part of the social security system (Harvey, 2007: 123; 126)

the First World War and the development and constitution of global and international institutions that maintained an *equilibrium* between divergent political interests.

Nonetheless, an alternative to these lines of inquiry has tried to define the specificity of neoliberalism beyond the most common historical and political economic assessments. Influenced by the studies of Michel Foucault on the technologies of governmentality, processes of subjectivation and neoliberalism, scholars such as Wendy Brown or Mitchell Dean have tried to update the research foundations and standpoints of the French philosopher as well as solve those uncovered aspects not addressed by him. According to this standpoint, neoliberalism should be understood as a political rationality, a form of government “aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (Gordon, 1991: 2), rather than as a set of political and economic policies.

The specific feature of such technology of government has spread a market-oriented conception of the human being, society and the state, which has resulted in the erosion of the principles and foundations of democracy, citizenship and welfare institutions created throughout the second half of the 20th century. Under such a view, democracy and its political character have been translated to managerial terms, a context in which every governmental action and its objects are treated in profitable terms for the sake of economic growth. Thus, politics and the economy have been conjoined in terms of the second. As a consequence, as Guy Standing indicates (Standing, 2016), the category of “denizen” –those that are not able to enjoy one or more basic rights– represents an increasing reality for immigrants, precarious workers or women, which are the most injured groups inside global neoliberalism.

Nevertheless, recently the Universal Basic Income (UBI) has appeared as a partial solution for the mentioned problems in the public and political debates. Through a monthly, non-conditional, in cash payment, this policy intends to provide a real basis for increasing the material freedom of individuals as well as increase the possibility of recovering the civic component of democracy. However, the process for implementing such a measure faces a number of obstacles and inconveniences at political and social levels. Thus, the task of this article is to recognize which those issues and challenges are and see how they relate with neoliberalism as a political rationality and the form of politics they enforce, the so-called by Jacques Rancière post-politics.

To do so, the research question will be posed as follows: *how could UBI contribute to the restoration of democracy and the form of politics characteristic of it?* The answer and main hypothesis of the article is that UBI is situated between emancipatory and conservative positions inside democracy in which, using Jacques Rancière terminology, UBI could be both understood as a tool that supports the strong role of the state government inside democracy; or as emancipatory mean for achieving a democratic form of life. The strong conclusion will be that UBI can be a determinant mean for ending up the precarious situation of a large segment of national populations. However, it is also necessary to acknowledge and understand the difficulties that its implementation implies, not only throughout the process of its discussion and bargaining between divergent parties, but also the medium and long-termed ones.

Mentioned this, the structure of the article will be as follows. First, the research will deepen into what it means to characterize neoliberalism as a political rationality in the terms that Foucault and Brown do. At the same time, this chapter will focus on the explanation of democracy given by Jacques Rancière from which it will be possible to envision how it is affected by the political rationality of neoliberalism. Secondly, the research will continue by pointing out the contributions that UBI delivers for palliating the negative consequences of neoliberalism. In this sense, the chapter will explore the republican literature on the UBI for providing how this proposal could aid to recover the category of citizenship inside a democracy. However, the research will also emphasize the divergent issues coming from the UBI implementation at political and social levels. On the one hand, it will be stressed the difficulty to reach a comprehensive consensus on the UBI and its strategic instrumentalization. On the other hand, the chapter will question the emancipatory character of UBI attending to the Marxist literature on the proposal. Such a view will provide a critical note on UBI as well as an overview of the possible exclusionary dangers it could bring. Finally, a final conclusion will be provided.

2. NEOLIBERALISM, DEMOCRACY AND THE POST-POLITICAL MOMENT

For Brown, the characterization of neoliberalism as political rationality needs to be regarded as a reformulation of the liberal governmental rationality of the 18th and 19th centuries (Brown, 2016: 60). Under such a view, the state set an internal limit to the “art of government” that would define the specificity of modern governmental reason (Foucault, 2016: 23). Briefly, such a specific character is defined by the separation of the spheres of economy and politics. Here, the expansive and comprehensive nature of the state needed to be limited under a reflection of the proper mechanisms of government that would not intervene in the natural developments of the market. Thus, the state developed the political economic rationality that would, on one hand, set a threshold between what can be done and what cannot, and, on the other hand, allow the state to calculate those profitable actions that do not surpass those limits—the case of monopolies, for example (Foucault, 2016: 26-27).³ As a consequence, freedom inside liberalism is not envisioned as a natural and pre-political space that needs to be preserved, but as an area constructed and consumed by the proper nation-states (Foucault, 2016: 72).

Set this, neoliberalism is envisioned as at the same time differentiated and related phenomenon to 18th century’s liberalism. First, in a similar way to liberalism, neoliberalism also produces a space of liberty needed for the correct functioning of the market and economy. However, its particularity is that the state is not the only actor setting it. Now, the production of such area of liberty is transferred to the proper individuals due to a reconceptualization of the *homo oeconomicus* from a subject of exchange to a company himself (Foucault, 2016: 228) or, as Gary Becker named it, as a “human capital” guided by its own interests. It is true that self-interest was also an important part of liberalism, however, inside neoliberal rationality, such self-interest is exacerbated and coupled with the objective of markets and nation-states of economic growth. Under such a logic, the enterprise model and its proliferation is situated as the main motivator of the neoliberal rationality. In this regard, as Wendy Brown indicates, every aspect of human life is contextualized in economic terms (Brown, 2016: 79).

³ However, the threshold between what the state can and cannot do is also defined by a historic evolution of the previous state reason. For example, the principle of competences needed for a functional and operative economic sphere in the 18th century responded to the balance of powers and interests between states set under the Westphalian order (Foucault, 2016: 19). In this light, Foucault states a continuity between this acceptance of plural states and their interests in Europe and the development of governmental technologies that tried to maximize the welfare of the state (Foucault, 2016: 27).

Second, a more interesting fact for a characterization of current consensual politics is the coupling between politics and economy. Along the 20th century, the borders between politics and economics blurred in detriment of the first (Brown, 2016: 78). Moreover, such economization was not limited to the state action and nature, but it was extended to the whole society in areas such as education, healthcare, working conditions and interpersonal relations. Inside this context, both politics, state action and the democratic system started to be conceived in the form of a company that needed to be managed according to the objectives of economic growth. Together with this, a related phenomenon is the de-politization of the economy, the market and their objectives (Zizek, 2015: 110) which entails two key issues.

First, there is the exclusionary nature of neoliberalism. Such nature works under the measure of subjects and overall actions under a logic of economic profitability that excludes those not able to participate in the maximization of economic benefits. This aspect has been developed by the sociologist Saskia Sassen as a logic of expulsion that localizes the extractive character of the market and current economic interactions that could end up in the moment when those subjects or companies are not able to provide economic benefits anymore (Sassen, 2014: 10). In a similar guise but with an emphasis on the subaltern groups, Boaventura Sousa Santos has stressed that the promotion of economic interests through the trivialization of democratic processes had adverse consequences over the distribution and condition of civic society (Santos, 2012: 84). Here, Santos recognizes a threefold polarization between those able to enjoy all the set of political, economic and social rights (intimate civic society), those with a variable degree of access to such rights and with a moderate danger of falling into a permanent precarious and exclusionary situation (strange civic society); and those completely excluded from any kind of right or social provision (uncivil civic society) (Santos, 2012: 88-89).

Second, such exclusionary character of neoliberalism is not a definitive and static feature. In this regard, Foucault localizes the deep entanglement between the welfare state and neoliberal rationality. Nevertheless, this separation is not a definitive one. Concerning this, Foucault claims that the role of social services such as the negative income tax is to allow that any “player” inside the “economic game” could, in the future, participate again when the market mechanisms demand it, but also to be disposable when crises force workers to live again in a state of necessity (Foucault, 2016: 207; 212-213).

3. CONSENSUAL POLITICS AND POST-POLITICS

Having set some of the main features of neoliberalism and start to sketch some of the aspects of consensual politics it is time now to deepen into the specific character of these last ones. To do so, the article will focus on the works of Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek in which a vision of democracy in the light of neoliberal consensual politics. In order to start such characterization, it is necessary to briefly explain the relation between democracy and these kind of consensual politics and how they affect democratic form of government.

According to Rancière, there is a paradox in the intrinsic structure of democracy. Such paradox is defined, on the one hand, by the proper form of democratic government represented by the “good” policies implemented for the sake of reducing the excesses of political activity threats (Rancière, 2010: 47). However, on the other hand, the problem is that this political excess embodied in the political category of the *demos* as a form of life that constantly challenges and undermines political authority. (Rancière, 2010: 47)

From this standpoint, the democratic paradox is characterized by this agonistic conflict between democracy as a form of government and democracy as self-government. Nevertheless, Rancière does not negatively describe this contradiction localized in the heart of the democratic system. Moreover, he understands that such contradiction is the intrinsic feature of democracy that allows the appearance of a rather more paradoxical category: politics (Rancière, 2010: 50). In other words, democracy is defined by this paradoxical condition that allows the appearance and resolution of constant political struggle.

But why are politics also paradoxical in nature? The answer to this question Rancière states that democracy is based on an additional basis not present in other forms of government (Rancière, 2010: 51). That additional feature the government is precisely the qualification of those not qualified to rule related to the proper etymology and definition of democracy –the government of the *demos*, the ability to rule of those unqualified to do so. On this basis, the *demos* functions as “the inner difference that both legitimizes and de-legitimizes state institutions and practices of ruling” (Rancière, 2010: 54). In this light, it is possible to grasp that politics in democracy is inherently “dissensual” in nature, an aspect that opens the space of politics to the appearance of otherness. As Jacques Rancière puts it, “democracy is this principle of otherness” (Rancière, 2010: 51).

These days neoliberal governance has brought a number of issues to this understanding of democracy, which Rancière interprets in a rather positive way. For him, as Slavoj Žižek indicates, we have arrived to a period beyond the political government of democracy which may be called the “post-political” moment. The post-political is characterized by two aspects already sketched by Foucault and later developed by Brown: the managerial conception of politics and the reach of strategic agreement or consensus (Žižek, 2015: 30). For Žižek, post-politics appears as the solution for the antagonistic ideological struggles based on the prescriptions of a group of expertise that reach a more or less acceptable consensus without questioning the comprehensive capitalist global relations. In this regard, governmental action adopts a pragmatic stance over every societal conflict in which these problems are “managed” according to a set of “good practices” that delimit the range of state actions (Žižek, 2015: 32). But which is the model that functions as the benchmark of state actions? It is precisely the form of the company, a model that is intrinsically de-politized and emptied of any ideological content, because, for neoliberalism, the market and the economy are not a space of politics (Žižek, 2015: 110). However, such entanglement does not eliminate the importance and sovereignty of national governments or international organizations but provides a new understanding of the state and its institutions from a managerial and economic standpoint (Brown, 2016: 165).⁴

The negative consequences of such form of government are multiple. Among them, there is the perpetuation, with the benevolence of the state and market economy, of precarity not only in the case of traditional workers, but also of misrecognized work such as care and voluntary work, mostly performed by women; or migrants whose situation as “denizens” (Standing, 2016) does not allow them to enjoy their basic human rights. Here, such workers are trapped inside temporary work contracts, low salaries and constant violation of human rights for the sake of economic profitability on the part of companies; and politics of austerity that privatized basic social provisions in the one of the State. This has been named by Philippe van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght as the “unemployment/employment trap”, a situation in which workers are trapped between such low-standard works and means-tested and badly remunerated social provisions (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017).

⁴ Indeed, as both Foucault and Brown indicate, contrary to classical liberalism, neoliberal policies cannot be sustained without the aid of the state and a constant intervention to maintain it (Brown, 2016: 79-80).

Second, the post-political managerial conception of society also has huge implications for some of the basic institutional pillars of democracy in areas such as education and healthcare. As an example, Wendy Brown stresses how the vision of the student as “human capital” has become dominant inside American universities (Brown, 2016: 235-278). Such conception envisions the student as a subject of self-investment that could be seized in economic terms with the objective of being an optimal worker inside the labour market, a market oriented vision of educational institutions.

Concerning this, it is possible to grasp a convergence between Rancière’s ideas on democracy; and the studies on neoliberalism pursued by Foucault. While Rancière and Žižek stress how democracy is threatened by the appearance of the post-political moment featured by the managerial conception of the state and politics, Foucault addresses the displacements and shifts inside the governmental reasons from liberalism to neoliberalism. Such shift, according to the French philosopher, is understood as a deep entanglement between the state and the market economy in which the former and its actions is envisioned according to the logic of the second. Indeed, contrary to the classical liberal separation between the market and the state, neoliberalism puts the state as the formalizer and guarantor of the formal aspects of the market from which the economy can function correctly (Foucault, 2016: 137).

Having set this contextualization of neoliberalism and how it relates to democracy as a form of government, it is time to refer to the other side of the democratic paradox explained by Rancière. How would it be possible to resist to disappearance of the political inside democratic countries due to the managerial and consensual character of the post-political moment? In order to answer such questions, this article will address how a Universal Basic Income (UBI) could provide a successful solution to these problems and what are the main obstacles for implementing such a policy.

4. UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME: POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS, OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

Since the 1970s and especially in the beginning of the 21st century, Universal Basic Income (UBI) proposal has gained increasing attention at political, economic, and public levels (Widerquist, 2017). More concretely, populist parties such as Podemos in Spain (Navas, 2014)

and Five Star Movement in Italy (Hopkin, 2020: 233) have incorporated material redistributive schemes quite similar to the most orthodox UBI proposal in their political programmes. Nevertheless, an aspect worth considering is the polyhedric and heterogeneous character of the UBI inside the diverse positions of the political *spectrum*. Regarding this, as Juan Ramón Rallo illustrates, UBI can be incorporated in the majority of both conservative and progressive political parties (Rallo, 2020). As a consequence, UBI can be envisioned as a double-edged economic, political and social policy as it can be supported by both progressive –case of Podemos, for example– or conservative parties –for example, in 2021, under a conservative government, Germany has launched a UBI pilot project lasting for 3 years.⁵ But, what does UBI exactly propose, especially for political and democratic participation? Which would be the obstacles for its implementation? And, finally, which are the intrinsic issues coming from the proposal itself? In order to answer such questions, this chapter will deepen into the republican case for UBI and analyze which are the procedural difficulties and medium and long-term problems raised by this policy.

a) UBI and citizenship: the republican standpoint on Universal Basic Income

Various scholars, especially from the republican and socialist environments, have stressed the leading benefits for implementing a UBI in democratic countries. First, UBI would suppose an increase of the material freedom of individuals in order to regain republican freedom. Such freedom is characterized by the avoidance of situations of domination from groups and states based on a material independence that would let individuals self-govern themselves; and be able to participate on equal basis with other citizens in the public political affairs (Raventós, 2007: 202). In this light, the republican case for UBI is not only attached to a selfish concept of society and human beings, but to a participatory and collective dimension in which equal citizens could participate in the democratic process. From this, republican UBI advocates give a significant importance to the emancipatory struggles of social and collective groups such as women and trade unions.

However, it is necessary to recall that such social commitment is a result of the individual material security provided by the UBI, something that could function as a double-edge tool.

⁵ The exact information on the project can be found in *Basic Income Pilot Project*. (2021). Pilotprojekt Grundeinkommen. Retrieved 12 June 2021, from <https://www.pilotprojekt-grundeinkommen.de/english>

On one hand, UBI works as a backstop for the divergent forms of domination, mainly the ones of *dominium* –situation of domination of one individual or group over other individual (Raventós, 2007: 64)– and *imperium* –situation of domination of the state over individuals (Rallo, 2020: 147). UBI thus relates to a private interest of being free of any sort of interference and arbitrariness from other agents. But how does this republican justification distance itself from liberal proponents? For republicans, individual material independence was a *conditio sine qua non* for the acquisition of a certain moral character indispensable for the social and political life: virtuosity. For republicanism, virtue is a psychological moral feature that complements individual self-government due to material independence and the possibility of attending public matters (Raventós, 2007: 65-66).

On the other hand, as Alex Gourevitch has indicated, the claim on the social emancipatory aspect of UBI needs to be seized with caution. Putting the example of the consequences that the implementation of the UBI would have in the workplace, he states that the UBI could perfectly undermine the power of trade unions –and, by extension, of class power– in favor of a more individual treatment of labor issues (Gourevitch, 2016: 23-25). Furthermore, as also Michel Foucault recognized in the case of negative income tax (Foucault, 2016: 210), it is possible that UBI could coexist with severe economic and social inequalities as it does not challenge the background causes of them such as the “background structure of labor and property law” (Gourevitch, 2016: 23).⁶

Nevertheless, such argument does not confront the real dimension and conception of the UBI. As Raventós argues, UBI is not a sort of miraculous policy that would palliate all social and economic inequalities inside a society or at global level (Raventós, 2021: 165). Contrary to a right-libertarian vision, UBI cannot be conceived as a substitute of the whole frame of the welfare state for the sake of decreasing the bureaucratic volume of it (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 197). Thus, a sustainable UBI project needs to be conceived as a complement for the already existing health, education and juridical provisions of the state and only work as a substitute of those means-tested benefits.

⁶ However, as authors such as Daniel Raventós have stressed, this does not mean that a proposal such as UBI would not aid to challenge a number of relevant inequalities inside capitalist system and improve the situation of vast segments of people. For example, in the case of labor force, a UBI would significantly improve the welfare and the collective and individual bargaining powers of workers during medium and long-term strikes (Raventós, 2021: 123-124).

Furthermore, Gourevitch's and Foucault's arguments also need to face the real improvement of the quality of life that a UBI would provide to large segments of the population. In this regard, the argument that UBI could work as a barrier for collective vindication not only in the labor sector, but also in those areas where inequalities and situations of domination happen; does not have to annul the individual emancipatory character of the UBI. Indeed, as Raventós indicates, UBI could work as a collective safety net when labor strikes are unavoidable because of deplorable working conditions or the violation of workers' rights (Raventós, 2021: 123-124). Thus, UBI could work as a first step towards a reconceptualization of collective social struggle and the strategies to solve them.

b) Obstacles, solutions and challenges to the implementation of UBI

But, which would be the political and social consequences of implementing the UBI in our democratic countries? Which would be the main obstacles in this process?

Concerning the more political dimension of these questions, Jurgen de Wispelaere has pointed out that the use of the UBI in the political arena has acquired a strategic character typical of the democratic post-political moment. Approaching this issue from a Marxist perspective, Ana Dinerstein and Harry Pitts have stressed the dangers of a political consensus around the UBI.

Inside the political parties' area, de Wispelaere has pointed out that UBI would face important obstacles in its process of implementation due to parties' strategic and instrumental use of the policy (De Wispelaere, 2016). A UBI proposal can gain a "cheap" political support that limits its process of implementation to the early stages. Furthermore, those political parties persistently supporting the policy –for example, green parties– do not enjoy yet the needed political and social support to push it through the various processes until its implementation. In addition, pushing the UBI forward as a potential policy may produce "counterproductive" consequences. In this light, the fact that one party endorses the implementation of the UBI may prevent others with divergent ideologies, despite possibly agreeing (De Wispelaere, 2016: 134). In this regard, a second problem is the persistent political division inside the UBI debate. This aspect shows that UBI still needs to tackle a problem of "persistent political division" on its more detailed features (De Wispelaere, 2016: 135-137).

Regarding this, the consensus that the UBI may deliver at a basic level may be overturned when the focus is put in more concrete and controversial aspects. Furthermore, deepening in UBI politics demonstrates that the concept of consensus can be analyzed attending to different benchmarks. Two of them have already been explained: the neoliberal consensus and the political parties' consensus, which, overall, have been framed in negative terms.

However, an additional sense of consensus has been elaborated attending to a rights perspective (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2016; Lenczewska & Schwartz, 2020). From this perspective, there has been an effort to apply the Rawlsian concept of overlapping consensus to the UBI case (Lenczewska & Schwartz, 2020). Briefly, such a concept tries to conform a social consensus on key political, social and value matters despite the divergent and plural moral views of citizens (Lenczewska & Schwartz, 2020: 15). From this agreement, UBI could be introduced in the political debate without comprising the foundational ideological components of political parties and social movements. In this sense, such a conception of consensus can be interpreted in a weak sense, as the policy is endorsed not attending to the specific ideological plans and standpoints, but to the more general normative provisions of it (Lenczewska & Schwartz, 2020: 17), something that would avoid the issues de Wispelaere indicated.

Indeed, such a vision on consensus has strong ties with the mentioned vision of UBI as a right. According to de Wispelaere, UBI can be conceived beyond a mere policy in order to gain a rights status. Such status will not be reached attending to moral provisions because of the plural moral conceptions social individuals. To do this, de Wispelaere claims, it should be added that UBI is not a moral end in itself. On the contrary, UBI, as other social provisions, needs to be understood as mean for achieving “an adequate standard of living” (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2016: 926). In other words, there are multiple ways to achieve such minimum standard which do not imply implementing a UBI. In this sense, appealing to a moral basis on a right to UBI does not offer a sufficient ground for implementing it, because, empirically, other combinations of social service such as work guarantee or minimum income could achieve the same effects (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2016: 927-928).

An explored option has been to ground the UBI rights claim in its legal superiority over other means-tested policies and social provisions. Briefly, such a position indicates that the UBI would have more positive effects over multiple social domains than other social policies.

In other words, a comparative approach with other social provisions outside a means-ends frame could demonstrate the empirical superiority over other policies (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2016: 931).

From a Marxist perspective, UBI proposal has been approached by Ana Dinerstein and Harry Pitts attending to two aspects. On the one hand, they focus on the Marxist social reproduction concept, which attends to the reproductive effects of labor beyond this concrete sphere (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2018: 472). Through it, the authors try to expand the Marxist approach beyond social and economic conditions to other realities in which oppressive relations are present. On the other hand, the two scholars also support their argumentation attending to the divergent social forms that are result of the capitalist mode of production (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2018: 473). From this, social forms such as the state, money or commodities are historically determined realities that emerge from capitalist society.

Attending to these two concepts, Dinerstein and Pitts argue that UBI would represent a continuation of the already oppressive reality of capitalist society at economic, social, and political levels (Dinerstein and Pitts, 2018: 473).⁷

More concretely, this Marxist standpoint stresses that the UBI will perpetuate, mainly, two social forms: money and the state. Regarding money, UBI will not represent a step towards a “post-capitalist society”. The problem with capitalist society and the possible implementation of UBI is not the work itself, which could represent an individual and social component of recognition (Angella, 2016); but the reproduction of historical social struggles and oppression. Moreover, with the aid of state institutions, such social struggles have transformed the recognitive and ethical character work to a continuous social, economic, and existential struggle for workers and non-workers (Santos, 2012: 82).

In this sense, neither money nor the state are socially “neutral” forces. They are representative of concrete “capitalist social relations” (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2018: 477). Moreover, money needs to be envisioned beyond a mere mean of exchange between two or

⁷ Here it is also possible to grasp the reminiscences of such approach in the Foucauldian views on neoliberalism. For them, the UBI and other redistributive scheme such as the negative income tax would perpetuate the structural causes and sources of oppression present nationally and globally. Nevertheless, the Marxist perspective delivered by Dinerstein and Pitts represent a more straight example of the consequences that the implementation of the UBI would have. For the purpose of this research, the consequences for the political and democracy in general will represent the most interesting ones.

more agents. In this light, money is a mean of subjection of workers to wage labor. As Dinerstein and Pitts argue, “(...) the wage is not a reward for expended labor but a payment to keep workers in the condition that they can and must labor” (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2018: 476).

Thus, what UBI may do is to shift the origin of this subjection from the enterprises and companies to the state, which would be the main supplier of income for citizens. Concerning this, there is another convergence between Foucauldian studies and the Marxist ones, the one showing the managerial and entrepreneurial nature of state in neoliberalism. In this sense, the state becomes a company that provides income to national citizens in the same way as big companies did in the past, while, at the same time, they maintain the structures of domination present in them.

Additionally, another point of coincidence can be found in the different class and political struggles traditionally addressed inside Marxist studies and the claims made by Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek on post-political societies. Concerning this, if we stick to the paradoxical character of politics inside democracy, there are several reasons for emphasizing a number of negative outcomes coming from the implementation of the UBI. It is true that, as it has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, UBI would aid to increase citizens' participation in the political and public sphere by providing a material income that would permit them to cultivate civic virtue. Nevertheless, the current UBI models and proposals deliver divergent problems. First, despite being conceived as a universally applicable policy, UBI has the danger of becoming a deeply reactionary and exclusionary policy against non-national subjects such as immigrants and stateless people (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2016: 479). Although main scholars on UBI have tried to show that the implementation of the policy will not result in mass migration from poor to richer countries (Boso & Vancea, 2012; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017), the instrumentalization of the proposal by divergent political parties and movements has hindered the foundational aims of the proposal. Moreover, together with this “strategic” use of the UBI described before, to this day the reality is that UBI is still conceived as a policy for nation-states. With this, UBI could work as a potential supporter of nationalistic and reactionary attitudes. From this, if the UBI is implemented at a national level, it runs the danger of annulling its inherent emancipatory character in order to become a tool for authoritarian regimes (Dinerstein & Pitts, 2017: 479).

However, as it has been analyzed throughout this chapter, UBI can be an important dissensus tool against social, and individual constraints coming not only from the managerial behavior of the state, but also from the more abstract relations of power resulting from neoliberal political rationality. But, set this twofold character of UBI, it is possible to argue that it has an intrinsic paradoxical nature coming from its theoretical conceptualization and its pragmatic treatment. Furthermore, what we have here is also the bigger paradox of democracy and politics, the paradox between the formalization of democratic institutions and policies and the democratic form of life that constantly challenges them. In this sense, the UBI runs the constant danger of being a policy instrumentalized for maintaining a social and political consensus that invalidates any kind of critical voice for the sake of good management of the state under the economic rationality. In fact, as David Harvey has detected, there is a deep entanglement between neoliberalism and recent neoconservative attitudes, something that may help to explain the use of the UBI in recent populist movements in Europe and US (Harvey, 2007: 95). On the other hand, UBI also presents a proper emancipatory character that suits perfectly with the democratic form of life expressed by Rancière. More concretely, UBI would represent a sort of instrumental tool for enforcing the vindications not only at subjective level, but also at the collective one. Such an argument is strongly present in the republican case for UBI and in those advocates of a transition to a post-work society (Srnicek & Williams, 2017).

It is thus possible to conclude that UBI can be envisioned together with democratic politics. However, in the same way as Rancière states on the evaluation of democratic politics, this paradoxical aspect of UBI does not imply a negative conception of it. On the contrary, UBI should be envisioned as a policy sustaining the constant confrontation with the otherness not only coming from outside in the form of immigrants or denizens; but also from within the limits of nation-states in the case of precarious workers or the care work done generally by women. In this sense, a sustainable and all-encompassing version of the UBI should maximize this aspect inside the political arena; and not the exclusionary and nationalistic one conceived by populist parties; or the strategic one for electoral yields.

5. CONCLUSION. BUILDING CONSENSUS THROUGH DISSENSUS: THE RESISTANCE POWER OF UBI

This article has evaluated the role that UBI would play inside democratic nation-states attending to the definition and characterization of democracy offered by Jacques Rancière. The French philosopher understands democracy as a constant dissensual struggle between democracy as a formal and institutional form of government; and as a form of life that always extends and changes the limits of the political. Despite the positive connotation of such conception of democracy based on continuous configuration of the political arena and discussion, the article has pointed out that current consensual post-political moment has eroded this basis of democracy as political participation of citizens. Understood as a managerial governance, the state and its institutional manifestations have incorporated a political rationality focused on the economic growth and profit. Furthermore, such “economization” has also extended to other areas of life such as interpersonal relations, education, or the proper area of politics.

This research has tried to indicate how could the UBI contribute to the political and participatory aspect of democracy. Conceived in republican terms, it has been stated that UBI could be seized as a potential mean for achieving material independence thus allowing citizens to attend their political duties in the public sphere. However, this solution offered by UBI also poses a few obstacles stemming from the intrinsic contradictions of the policy and the context on which it would be implemented in.

The conclusion has been that, indeed, the paradox of democratic politics is strongly related to the both instrumental and emancipatory character of UBI. On one hand, it is evident that UBI is able to provide a sort of material safety net for the most precarious segments of society. This is why it is possible to give a pragmatic reading on UBI, one that stresses its intrinsic emancipatory and democratic features. Such a view will correspond to the establishing of an economic rights that will counter the exclusionary effects of global neoliberalism (Santos, 2012: 140).

On the other hand, the political instrumentalization of UBI provides some skepticism on the possibilities of implementing a sustainable and comprehensive version of it and some of its emancipatory features. In this sense, UBI needs to face the constant struggle between political parties in democratic nation-states and the difficulty to reach a viable version of UBI. In addition to this, some Marxist scholars have pointed out that UBI is unable to provide an alternative *status quo* beyond the current capitalist mode of production. Such a reading has also

been present in the Foucauldian inquiries on neoliberalism and the role of social policies, in which the later, rather than tackling the causes of inequality and precarity, try to palliate the effects of them resulting in the perpetuation of an unjust society. Indeed, they understand that UBI could be envisioned as a rather conservative and reactionary tool.

Nevertheless, which are the future prospects of a possible implementation of a UBI? An answer that has been briefly sketched in this article has been the possibility of understanding UBI as a human right. Despite the intrinsic difficulties for that foundation from a moral standpoint, the fact is that such a framework could provide a fruitful perspective on how to understand the future of the UBI. Such an understanding is deeply related to the republican view on UBI, a vision that is not only concerned about the negative duties and rights of individuals; but also, in its positive ones related to the political and civic participation. Therefore, UBI can be incorporated inside the democratic form of life described by Rancière that tries to go beyond the neoliberal managerial state, the erosion of the political arena and the extension of the area of politics beyond the limits of the nation-states.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Angella, M. (2016). Work, Recognition and Subjectivity: Relocating the Connection between Work and Social Pathologies. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 19(3), 340–354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431015594443>
- *Basic Income Pilot Project*. (2020). Pilotprojekt Grundeinkommen. <https://www.pilotprojekt-grundeinkommen.de/english>
- Boso, À., & Vancea, M. (2012). Basic Income for Immigrants? The Pull Effect of Social Benefits on Migration. *Basic Income Studies*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/1932-0183.1234>
- Brown, W. (2016). *El pueblos sin atributos. La secreta revolución del neoliberalismo* (V. Altamirano, Trans.). Barcelona: Malpaso.
- Burchell, G., Gordon, C., & Miller, P. (Eds.). (1991). *The Foucault effect. Studies in governmentality with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- De Wispelaere, J. (2016). The Struggle for Strategy: On the Politics of the Basic Income Proposal. *Politics (Manchester, England)*, 36(2), 131–141. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12102>
- De Wispelaere, J., & Morales, L. (2016). Is there (or should there be) a right to basic income? *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 42(9), 920–936. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453715625439>
- Dinerstein, A. C., & Pitts, F. H. (2018). From post-work to post-capitalism? Discussing the basic income and struggles for alternative forms of social reproduction. *Journal of Labor and Society*, 21(4), 471–491. <https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12359>
- Foucault, M. (2016). *Nacimiento de la biopolítica. Curso del Collège de France (1978-1979)* (F. Ewald, A. Fontana, & M. Senellart, Eds.; H. Pons, Trans.). Madrid: Akal.
- Gourevitch, A. (2016). The Limits of a Basic Income: Means and Ends of Workplace Democracy. *Basic Income Studies*, 11(1), 17–28. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bis-2016-0008>
- Harvey, D. (2007). *Breve historia del neoliberalismo* (A. Varela Mateos, Trans.). Madrid: Akal.
- Hopkin, J. (2020). *Anti-system politics. The crisis of market liberalism in rich democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lenczewska, O., & Schwartz, A. M. (2020). Disagree to agree: Forming consensus around basic income in times of political divisiveness. In R. K. Caputo & L. Liu (Eds.), *Political activism and Basic Income Guarantee. International experiences and perspectives past, present and near future* (pp. 13–32). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Navas, J. A. (2014, May 26). Elecciones Europeas: Las propuestas de Podemos: Crear un salario máximo, renta básica universal y jubilación a los 60 años. *El Mundo*.
- Rallo, J. R. (2020). *Contra la Renta Básica. Por qué la Redistribución de la Renta Restringe Nuestras Libertades y nos Empobrece a Todos*. (2nd ed.). Barcelona: Ediciones Deusto.
- Rancière, J. (2010). *Dissensus. On Politics and Aesthetics* (S. Corcoran, Ed. & Trans.). London & New York: Continuum International Publishing Books.
- Raventós, Daniel. (2007). *Basic Income: The Material Conditions of Freedom* (J. Wark, Trans.). London: Pluto Press.
- Raventós, Daniel. (2021). *La Renta Básica. ¿Por Qué y Para Qué?* Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata.

- Santos, B. de S., & Montaña Pino, J. (2012). *Derecho y emancipación*. Quito: Corte Constitucional para el Período de Transición.
- Sassen, S. (2014). *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Slobodian, Q. (2021). *Globalistas. El fin de los imperios y el nacimiento del neoliberalismo* (P. Zumalacarregui, Trans.). Madrid: Capitan Swing.
- Srnicek, N., & Williams, A. (2017). *Inventar el futuro. Poscapitalismo y un mundo sin trabajo* (A. Santoveña, Trans.). Barcelona: Malpaso.
- Standing, G. (2016). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- van Parijs, P., & Vanderborght, Y. (2017). *Basic Income: A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Widerquist, K. (2017, October 18). *Basic income's third wave*. OpenDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/basic-income-s-third-wave/>
- Zizek, S. (2015). *En defensa de la intolerancia* (J. Eraso Ceballos & A. J. Antón Fernández, Trans.). Madrid: Sequitur.