

**Reasons for a basic income program: poverty, economic crisis or end-of-work?
A literature review**

*Razões para um programa de renda básica: pobreza, crise econômica ou fim do trabalho?
Uma revisão de literatura*

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.26694/3746>

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Abstract: Interest in basic income tends to grow in times of crisis, especially with current high rates of unemployment, poverty and the impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This article aims to evaluate the characteristics of the debate on basic income for every citizen in the last twelve years. There are three main reasons for basic income: 1) problems caused by poverty; 2) constant crises of the capitalist system; 3) massive destruction of jobs by automation. It is concluded that there is no consensus on the design of such a program, neither on its relationship with social welfare policies nor on its population coverage.

Keywords: Automation; Basic income program; Economic crisis; Poverty; Work.

Resumo: O interesse acerca da renda básica costuma crescer em períodos de crise, especialmente com as atuais elevadas taxas de desemprego, pobreza e o impacto causado pela pandemia da COVID-19. O presente artigo objetiva avaliar as principais características do debate sobre renda básica para todo cidadão nos últimos doze anos. Há três grandes razões para a renda básica: 1) problemas causados pela pobreza; 2) crises constantes do sistema capitalista; 3) destruição massiva de empregos pela automação. Conclui-se que não há consenso no desenho de tal programa, nem de sua relação com políticas de bem-estar social nem de sua abrangência populacional.

Palavras-chave: Automação; Programa de renda básica; Crises econômicas; Pobreza; Trabalho.

Artigo recebido em 8/12/2021. Aceito em 7/11/2022.

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Introduction

The interest in basic income (BI) grows in crisis periods, especially when the levels of unemployment and poverty have been soaring. The increasing precarisation of work and the uncertainty about the development of new technologies – such as artificial intelligence, 5G, the internet of things and the COVID-19 pandemic – have contributed to the return of this theme in recent years. Assuming that, the objective of this paper is to review the academic literature produced between 2008 and 2020 about a basic income for every citizen. After the presentation of the relevant literature, the proposal is to present a classification of the papers into three main argumentative structures.

In the public arena, a universal basic income became the way to inaugurate a new society, freed from both mass unemployment and toil (BENANAV, 2019). Fighting poverty and combating excessive inequalities are also on the radar of academic and public opinions. As this paper shows, there are three main reasons for basic income schemes: 1) problems of poverty; 2) immanent capitalist contradictions; 3) destruction of jobs caused by innovation.

The first scheme interprets basic income as an alternative for ending poverty by providing a guaranteed income as a floor for dignity and freedom. For this scheme advocates, BI is considered a better option for public services, where the market solutions would optimally reduce or eliminate poverty. The second one argues that the malfunction and constant crises of capitalism demand radical alternatives for society. Whether the State acts as an employer of last resort or in a scenario of the end-of-work, the option is an economic stabilization beyond the market dynamic. The third scheme, despite aggregating more diverse visions, shares the idea of the inevitability of expanding human labour replacement for robots. Then, BI would be a sharing of wealth and prosperity, being a solution for generalized unemployment caused by automation.

The proposers share, generally, the potential stabilizer of the capitalist economy by basic income via a universal policy. But they seem to mislead the capitalist endogenous instability and the social relations that surpass the relation employer-employee. Furthermore, there is an overestimation of basic income capacity to fix identified problems as well as the opportunities to deepen neoliberal reforms like further deregulation of the labour market (RUBERY *et al.*, 2018) and reduction of welfare policies. These frameworks are detailed in this literature review.

The remainder of this paper, after this introduction, proceeds as follows. In section 1, we present the method to select the relevant reference according to bibliometric criteria. In section 2, the three dominant visions about BI are detailed, highlighting their arguments. The last section presents some concluding remarks.

1 Methods

The main objective is to analyze the prominent literature about basic income. The literature was selected using the Theory of the Consolidated Meta-Analytic Approach. The goal is to apply bibliometric criteria to identify the relevant works and authors of any area (MARIANO *et al.*, 2019), especially under the growing number of publications. The research was run in *Web of Science*, *Scopus* and *Google Scholar* databases² on September 25th, 2020. The keywords “basic income”, “employment”, “automation” and “job guarantee” were used. The objective was to identify papers that gather debates about basic income and employment questions. The period covered was from 2008 to 2020. The initial period coincides with the year of the “Great Recession”, a crisis that put the theme in evidence once again. The final period was stated as the time of the empirical data collection.

We refined the initial findings through the closest areas in the databases that were related to our interest in research. The English language is dominant in the databases and it is a limitation of this review but there was no restriction of country or journal applied. At the *Web of Science* database we found 99 papers³ and at *Scopus* we found 262 results⁴, both directly from their websites. Finally, to extract works from *Google Scholar* we used the free for personal non-profit use software “Publish or Perish 7”⁵: the results were 998 papers found.

² These databases were chosen due to the wide range of available material and full access available through institutional channels.

³ The areas were Economics, Industrial Relations Labor, Sociology, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, Philosophy, Political Science, Social Work, Business Finance, Development Studies, Law, Management, Social Issues, Ethics, International Relations, Public Administration, Cultural Studies, Anthropology, Area Studies, Business, Computer Science Artificial Intelligence, Engineering Electrical Electronic, Engineering Multidisciplinary, History, History of Social Sciences, History Philosophy of Science, Humanities Multidisciplinary, Multidisciplinary Sciences and Robotics.

⁴ The research areas were Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management and Accounting.

⁵ For information and download, see <https://harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish>. Access on November 27th, 2022.

Aiming to identify the relations between the literature, we analyzed the papers from *Web of Science* and *Scopus*⁶ according to co-citation clustering and bibliographic coupling analyses, both with the help of VOSviewer⁷ (version 1.6.15). Furthermore, from the three databases, we counted the direct citations listed in tables 1-3.

Co-citation clustering scrutinizes the references that are pairwise cited in a paper under evaluation, suggesting thematic congruencies between the papers and indicating seminal papers in the field. In other words, if say papers X and Y were cited by paper A, then a single node (X, Y) will be formed (BOYACK; KLAVANS, 2010). Once the references of the collected papers are under analysis, writings before 2008 are commonly identified as co-cited.

Bibliographic coupling situates two papers that cited a common reference. For example, say papers A and B cited paper X, (A, B) will be selected as a node. Then, the wider the sharing of citations, the closer the indication for the papers belonging to the same field of research (VAN-ECK; WALTMAN, 2014). To identify the most recent coupling, we used the papers from 2017 to 2020 for the bibliographic coupling exploration – reducing *Web of Science*'s findings to 73 and *Scopus*' to 162.

Both co-citation and bibliographic couples are represented in the bibliometric networks below (figures 1-4). The colors represent different clusters, which is a set of closely related nodes, and the numbers of results are constructed by a resolution parameter⁸ (VAN-ECK; WALTMAN, 2014). The size of the balls indicates the relative number of citations of a paper. The quantity of lines illustrates the links between the works.

The step after the identification of the clusters is applying an initial filter to guarantee papers closely related papers about Basic Income questions. The title, abstract and introduction of the papers were manually scrutinized to decide if the paper presents an analysis on the topic⁹.

The co-citation networks from the *Web of Science*'s (WoS) papers are presented in Figure 1 and numbered according to the number of the cluster. This scheme is repeated below. Just the papers with four citations or more¹⁰ were selected for the analysis:

⁶ The metadata accessible from *Google Scholar* is not organized in a way that permit the same analysis.

⁷ VOSviewer is a “software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks”. For more information, see <https://www.vosviewer.com>. Access on November 31st, 2022.

⁸ For more details about the clustering, see Waltman, Van-Eck, and Noyons (2010).

⁹ The complete list can be sent by the author upon request.

¹⁰ Each database uses different criteria to count citations. Therefore, quantities are not comparable between databases. Furthermore, for each database, the minimum number of citations is a researcher's choice that considers an optimized relationship between ensuring academic relevance based on the citation count, while establishing a selection that is not overly restrictive and selects very few papers.

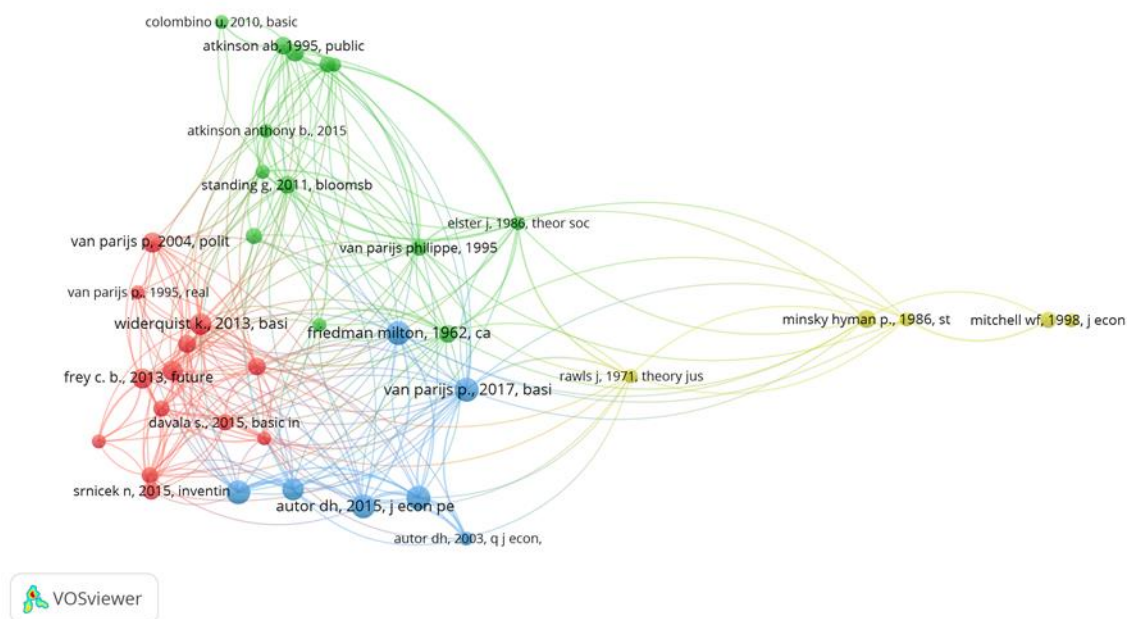
WoS co-citation 1: red lines and bubbles in Figure 1. The papers debate concepts of liberty and justice to support universal basic income designs and reflect on the implications of radical transformations forecasted for work and society. The main references are Atkinson (1996), Davala *et al.* (2015), Frey and Osborne (2017), Gorz (1999), Srnicek and Williams (2015), Standing (2011) and Van-Parijs (1995, 2004).

WoS cocitation 2: green lines in Figure 1. The papers discuss the current social problems and public benefits from basic income programs. It is formed by Atkinson (1995, 2015), Colombino *et al.* (2010), Forget (2011), Hum and Simpson (1993), Piketty (2014), Raventós (2007), Standing (2011) and Van-Parijs (1992, 1995).

WoS co-citation 3: the blue lines in Figure 1 condensate discussions about automation's effects on employment, poverty and income distribution. The related references from this cluster are Autor (2015), Frey and Osborne (2017), Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), Ford (2015), Friedman (1962) and Van-Parijs and Vanderborcht (2017).

WoS cocitation 4: aggregates seminal works about the State, justice, inflation and economic instabilities. This cluster is represented by the yellow lines in Figure 1. The works identified are Keynes (1936), Mitchell (1998), Rawls (1971), Wray (1998) and Minsky (2008).

Figure 1 – Co-citation networks from the *Web of Science's* papers



Source: elaborated by the author from the Web of Science's database.

The co-citation networks from the *Scopus*' papers are organized in Figure 2. Only the papers with three or more citations were considered:

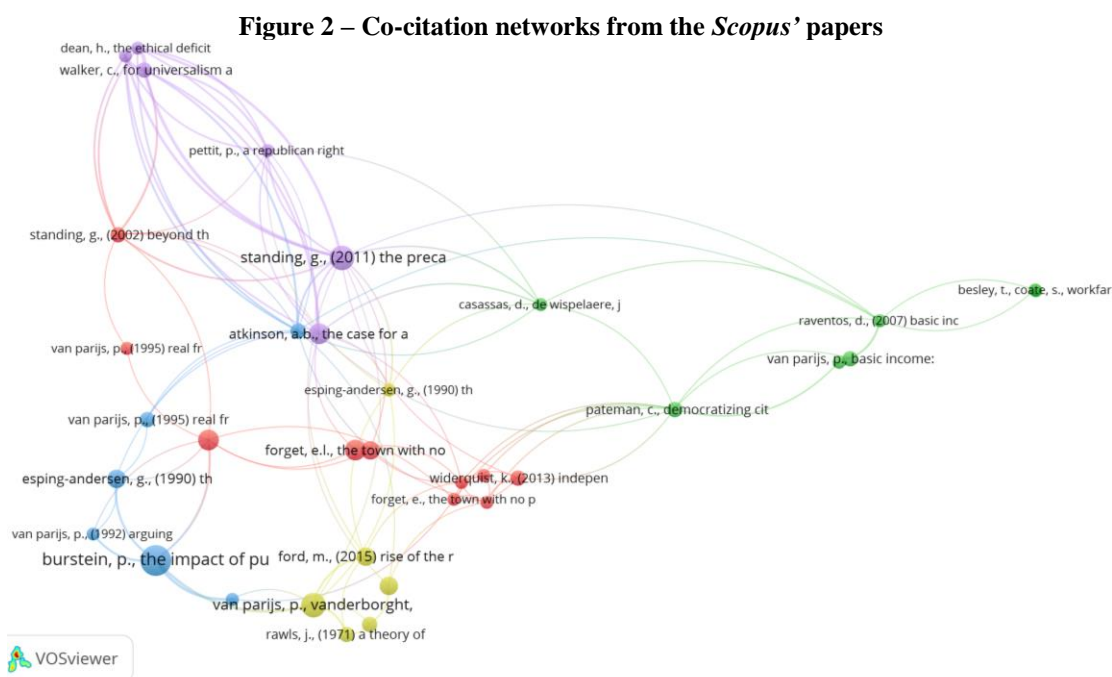
Scopus co-citation 1: showed in the red structures of Figure 2, the articles discuss about the capitalist economy and processes of production. The related works are Forget (2011), Hum and Simpson (1993), Keynes (1936), Standing (2011), Van-Parijs (1992, 1995) and Wright (2006).

Scopus co-citation 2: the green lines in Figure 2 aggregate reflections about basic income, democracy and political freedom. It is formed by Besley and Coate (1992), Casassas and De-Wispelaere (2015), Pateman (2004) and Van-Parijs (2004).

Scopus co-citation 3: the blue bubbles and lines in Figure 2 represent more abstract views about social organization and generalized human welfare made possible through basic income. The references are Atkinson (2015), Esping-Andersen (1990), Van-Parijs (1992, 1995) and Vanderborcht (2006).

Scopus co-citation 4: the yellow cluster in Figure 2 concatenate discussions about justice ideals allied to recent labour market disruptions. The contributions are from Autor (2015), Esping-Andersen (1990), Ford (2015), Frey and Osborne (2017), Rawls (1971), besides Van-Parijs and Vanderborcht (2017).

Scopus co-citation 5: gather practical experiences and means-tested problems. They are represented by the purple lines in Figure 2. The results are Atkinson (1996), Dean (2012), Standing (2011), Walker (2011) and Widerquist (2010).



Source: elaborated by the author from the *Scopus*' database.

The bibliographic networks from the *Web of Science's* papers are presented in Figure 3. Just papers with two or more citations were considered.

WoS bibliographic coupling 1: the red cluster in Figure 3 identifies the main issues to be covered by basic income programs. The papers are Calnitsky and Latner (2017), Jessen, Rostam-Afschar and Steiner (2017), Paul *et al.* (2018), besides Simpson, Mason and Godwin (2017).

WoS bibliographic coupling 2: accounts for a post-work society critic are in the green lines. The papers are Baker (2020), Lombardozi and Pitts (2020), besides Dinerstein and Pitts (2018).

WoS bibliographic coupling 3: dark-blue lines in Figure 3 join the impacts of new technologies on unemployment and health, as well as well-being consequences for human labour. It is formed by Rubery *et al.* (2018) and Sloman (2018).

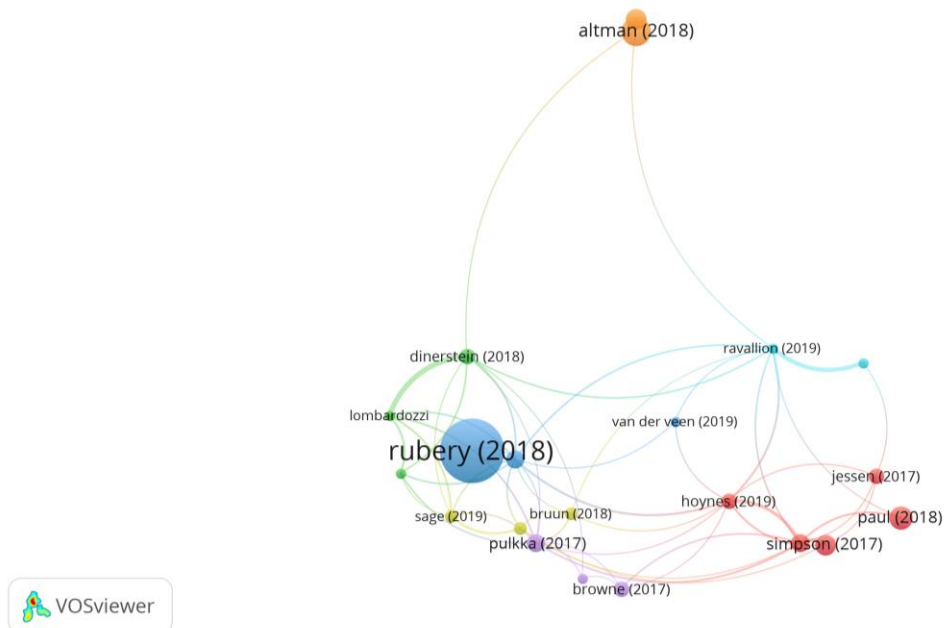
WoS bibliographic coupling 4: yellow lines aggregate papers about unemployment, wellbeing and occupational perspectives of jobs. The references are Sage (2019) and Bruun and Duka (2018).

WoS bibliographic coupling 5: the articles emphasize the worsened social and employment conditions able to justify basic income programs and are represented in the purple lines in Figure 3. It is represented by Pulkka (2017), Browne *et al.* (2017) and Suuronen (2018).

WoS bibliographic coupling 6: the light-blue lines refer to workfare policies and work conditions for basic income. The authors are Alik-Lagrange and Ravallion (2018) and Ravallion (2019).

WoS bibliographic coupling 7: the orange indication in Figure 3 is a study of local relevance for basic income. The unique reference in English is Altman and Klein (2018).

Figure 3 – Bibliographic networks from the *Web of Science's* papers



Source: elaborated by the author from the *Web of Science's* database.

The bibliographic coupling networks from the *Scopus*' papers are organized in Figure 4. Only the papers with two or more citations were considered:

Scopus bibliographic coupling 1: discussions and critical analysis of UBI proposals are represented in the red lines in Figure 4. The papers found are Browne and Immervoll (2017), Frère (2018), Gilbert *et al.* (2018), Haagh (2019) and Piachaud (2018).

Scopus bibliographic coupling 2: green bubbles and lines in Figure 4 indicate studies about artificial intelligence, automation, and unemployment. The works are Bruun and Duka (2018), Furman and Seamans (2018), Paus (2018), Pulkka (2017) and Santens (2017).

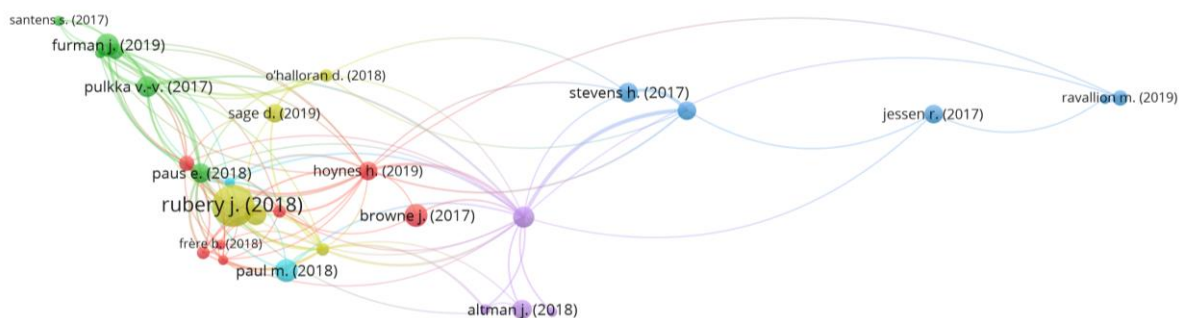
Scopus bibliographic coupling 3: evaluations of tradeoffs between employment and income guarantee schemes, and a study of feasible designs and limitations of concrete experiences to extrapolate to new programs of basic income are represented in the dark blue connections in Figure 4. It is formed by Alik-Lagrange and Ravallion (2018), Jessen, Rostam-Afschar and Ravallion (2019), Simpson, Mason, and Godwin (2017), besides Stevens and Simpson (2017).

Scopus bibliographic coupling 4: the yellow lines in Figure 4 gather articles about the worsening of working conditions, capitalism crisis and basic income prospects. The papers are Chamberlain (2018), Pitts (2018), Rubery *et al.* (2018) and Sage (2019).

Scopus bibliographic coupling 5: the papers in the purple lines in Figure 4 argue that UBI is a means to fight degradant occupations and modern slavery conditions. It is represented in English literature by Altman and Klein (2018), Calnitsky and Latner (2017) and Howard (2018).

Scopus bibliographic coupling 6: presented in the light blue nodes in Figure 4, they collect research about structure, conceptions, and stigmas related to work, basic income and job guarantee programs. It is represented by Paul *et al.* (2018).

Figure 4 - Bibliographic coupling networks from the *Scopus*' papers



Source: elaborated by the author from the *Scopus*' database.

The direct citations also indicate the popularity of the works. For the *Web of Science*, the most cited references are in the Table 1¹¹.

Table 1 - *Web of Science* most cited references

Title	Author(s)	Contributions
Challenges and Contradictions in the Normalizing' of Precarious Work	Rubery, Jill; Grimshaw, Damian; Keizer, Arjan; Johnson, Mathew (2018, 34 cit.)	They argue that a new vision of “Standard Employment Relationship” (SER) can fight the increasing precarisation of jobs by supporting the decommodification of labour.
After Piketty?	Atkinson, Anthony B. (2014, 22 cit.)	The author presents 12 proposals for fighting inequality in economic resources. The last one is for a basic income (“participation income”) to be adopted by the European Union.
Is Workfare Cost-effective against Poverty in a Poor Labor-Surplus Economy?	Murgai, Rinku; Ravallion, Martin; Van-De-Walle, Dominique (2015, 11 cit.)	They argued that the productivity of workfare is crucial to its justification as an antipoverty policy but and basic income schemes should be considered.
Lessons from a basic income program for Indigenous Australians	Altman, Jon; Klein, Elise (2018, 10 cit.)	They defend basic income as an important policy for indigenous communities' welfare.
The Future of Work in the Twenty-First Century	Hodgson, Geoffrey M. (2016, 8 cit.)	The author argues that employment will continue changing such as Marx and Keynes predictions were wrong. Basic income remains a compensatory policy for radical changes in employment and inequality.

Source: elaborated by the author from the *Web of Science's* database.

For the *Scopus*, the most cited references are in the Table 2.

Table 2 – *Scopus* most cited references

Title	Author(s)	Contributions
Centering labor in the land grab debate	Li T. M. (2011, 394 cit.)	The author asserts that a global basic income may be necessary if not enough employments would be created in rural areas.
Full employment abandoned: Shifting Sands and Policy Failures	Mitchell W., Muysken J. (2008, 52 cit.)	They argue that unemployment as a waste of resources is no longer the main macroeconomic concern. A Job Guarantee program would achieve full employment, without compromising price stability.
The PASS panel survey after six waves	Trappmann M., Beste J., Bethmann A., Müller G. (2013, 52 cit.)	Describes the panel study “Labour Market and Social Security” about the introduction of the Unemployment Benefits II in Germany (2005).
The precariat: From denizens to citizens?	Standing G. (2012, 49 cit.)	He develops more of his “politics of paradise” in response to increasing flexibility and insecurity in labour.
Labor republicanism and the transformation of work	Gourevitch A. (2013, 33 cit.)	Argues that the republican theory of liberty can support democratic control over work and freedom from economic domination, which cannot be provided by the basic income.

Source: elaborated by the author from the *Scopus'* database.

¹¹ Once again, only selected papers strictly related to BI were selected.

For *Google Scholar*, the most cited references that were not found in *Scopus* or *Web of Science* are in the Table 3.

Table 3 – *Google Scholar* most cited references that were not found in *Scopus* or *Web of Science*

Title	Author(s)	Contributions
Basic income: And how we can make it happen	Standing G. (2017, 214 cit.)	The author details questions and features of basic income towards a more egalitarian and emancipatory society.
Revisiting the risk of automation	Arntz M., Gregory T., Zierahn U. (2017, 202 cit.)	They criticize the previsions about automation in the next years because they may overestimate the replacement effects.
How Computer Automation Affects Occupations: Technology, Jobs, and Skills	Bessen, J. (2016, 150 cit.)	Bessen studies the relations between computer automation and occupations since 1980, using US occupational data and a partial equilibrium model.
Workfare as an effective way to fight poverty: The case of India's NREGS	Ravi S., Engler M. (2015, 129 cit.)	They evaluate the impacts of India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and the consequences of workfare schemes.
Structural transformation in the OECD: Digitalisation, deindustrialisation and the future of work	Berger T., Frey C. (2016, 124 cit.)	They review the literature about the future of the work in face of the digitalization of OECD labour markets.

Source: elaborated by the author from the *Google Scholar* database.

2 Results and discussions

As argued by Van-Parijs (2004), the universal basic income authors – regardless of the several income transfer designs that they advocate – perform a common hypothesis that this idea is getting stronger and soon will become a broad reality. Furthermore, the spectrum of BI supporters is wide, for example, gathering republicans, liberals and revolutionaries (RAVENTÓS, 2007). This shows that the basic income proposals identified in this review are varied. The most recent economic, social and health problems seem to enforce it. Therefore, from the papers identified in the previous section, we identified three broader groups of arguments and concerns about basic income policies:

- 1) An economic mainstream vision of basic income prospects, focusing on combating poverty;
- 2) Heterodox economic visions about dynamic problems of capitalism and alternative solutions through basic income or job guarantee schemes;
- 3) Analyses of the general automation and technological unemployment caused by the current technological improvements.

We describe below the main features and the limitations of the visions that has gained space in the academic and public arena in developed countries (MARTINELLI; PEARCE, 2019). Furthermore, this matter has become even more eminent in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has spread these debates to several developing economies. The papers are briefly presented and connected below and are identified by the references in parentheses as their main ideas are described.

2.1 Economic mainstream vision for basic income: fighting poverty

Basic income has presented considerable popular and academic debates, and there is a common sense that public opinion is an important element establish policies. The papers related to this topic pursue, explicit or not, a convincing argumentation behind the feasibility of basic income designs. In this vein, poverty is the main concern of a set of basic income proposals. Inequality and unemployment appear as a secondary concern.

Some works developed a defense on basic income considering it synonymous with both freedom and equality. Even in a more abstract framework, both of them can be combined in a capitalist society asserted in a basic income structure (VAN-PARIJS, 1995). This is a necessary condition to guarantee “real-freedom-for-all” – characterized by the absence of interference for all but not just for the rich people (VAN-PARIJS; VANDERBORGHT, 2017) – where everyone can choose “among the various lives one might wish to lead” (VAN-PARIJS, 1995, p. 33). This design can reduce, for example, exposure to lousy jobs and enhance the perspective of real freedom as a matter of social justice (VAN-PARIJS, 2004, pp. 17-18).

In a wider consideration, the basic income would guarantee the more fundamental right: freedom from poverty (RAVALLION, 2019). Or, based on a different concept of freedom as nondomination, universal basic income may be argued as a republican right, where the republican political theory is reclaimed as a “political economy of democracy” that promotes “broad economic sovereignty and individuals’ capacities to govern their own lives” (CASASSAS; DE-WISPELAERE, 2015, p. 284).

In a more concrete approach, poverty alleviation is a central matter for basic income and boomed after Milton Friedman (1962) suggested a negative tax income, not necessarily as a complement to traditional welfare policies (HUM; SIMPSON, 1993). According to Friedman (1962), government action should guarantee an income floor for every people. The negative income tax would provide such ground without market distortions and independent of personal conditions. As a consequence, the existing social programs that have habitually tackled poverty would be replaced by that basic income scheme.

Therefore, the fragilities of the social protection net (BROWNE; IMMERVOLL, 2017) are also argued as a target to be fixed by a basic income. This structure, if functioning efficiently, could reduce the social stigma of such assistance policies (BROWNE; IMMERVOLL, 2017) like means-tested benefits, which create two categories of citizens and ignores universalism (WALKER, 2011). On the other hand, a basic income can support a “right to have rights” condition (SUURONEN, 2018). In Australia, for example, basic income could be a guarantee of social and economic justice goals for indigenous communities (ALTMAN; KLEIN, 2018).

Altogether, poverty aggravates inequality, which threatens to leave mass people behind (ATKINSON, 2014) and matters for basic income policies. The areas of technology, employment, social security, sharing of capital and taxation are part of necessary new policies to fight them (ATKINSON, 1995, 2015). Furthermore, despite only social transfers being insufficient to tackle poverty, a kind of basic income – the “participation income” – would be more useful than means-tested benefits, as suggested by Atkinson (1996). The condition to receive the income is by social “reciprocity” as full or part-time employment, education, and home care for infant children among others (ATKINSON, 2015, p. 221).

Poverty and inequality alleviation are at the center of the economic mainstream defenses of BI. Complementarily, some authors argue employment conditions can be improved by BI.

2.2 Employment conditions as poverty alleviation

Once commonly based on a universal structure, such visions of liberty demand that neither means-tested benefits nor work tests should be necessary (DAVALA *et al.*, 2015; VAN-PARIJS, 2004) to access public support. Therefore, it would overcome the “workfare”¹² conditions on welfare recipients, where the net gains are small (MURGAI; RAVALLION; VAN-DE-WALLE, 2015) even though has presented significant impacts on extreme poverty in India (RAVI; ENGLER, 2015). Furthermore, workfare schemes seem to be less efficient in tackling poverty than basic income or other uniform transfers for all identified as poor (MURGAI; RAVALLION; VAN-DE-WALLE, 2015). As a general conclusion in the papers presented in this subsection, harmful employment conditions would not be surpassed if employment remains at the center of requirements for social programs.

At the same time, precarious work is expanding and forming a new class of people: the “precariat”. The rising inequality, insecurity, and exclusion throw these workers at social vulnerability and the dangers of political extremism. A modest basic income for all age legal residents could reduce these risks and facilitate the called “politics of paradise” – Standing’s (2011) concept – while means-tested cash-payment proposals like “Universal Credit” in the United Kingdom would not reduce the injustices of the precarious labour market (DEAN, 2012). Hence, basic income could respond to insufficient consumer demand by offering income support for unemployed, underemployed, and precarious workers in the called “digital economy” (PULKKA, 2017) and recent fragilities in the labour market (BROWNE; IMMERVOLL, 2017), reducing toil (CALNITSKY; LATNER, 2017), for example.

Furthermore, basic income can help to assure a “dignified work” society raised in an equalitarian view (STANDING, 2017) and response to conceptions of justice (RAWLS, 1971) in public policies. This occurs because employment policies do not offer an adequate metric for welfare conditions once the income does not consider that jobs often involve heavy and unpleasant physical demands (ALIK-LAGRANGE; RAVALLION, 2018). With all these arguments in mind, some experiments and simulation exercises were done to justify basic income schemes.

¹² “Workfare” conditions are related to work requirements, such as training or work programs, in poverty-alleviation programs (BESLEY; COATE, 1992).

2.3 Empirical/simulations argumentations

In addition to a conceptual treatment, simulations are used to support basic income policies in optimized designs. The main conclusion states a program that serves all citizens. For example, for Denmark, Italy, Portugal, and the United Kingdom, universal policies tend to be more efficient for basic income policies (COLOMBINO *et al.*, 2010). For Canada, a modest universal basic income program could be implemented within the existing tax schemes at reduced costs (STEVENS; SIMPSON, 2017). Such wider application enforces political strength once it builds a “large constituency that will protect the program from political attack” (WIDERQUIST, 2010, p. 4) more than recipients of targeted programs.

Incentives for work are another concern and are a further matter for simulations. For Germany, for example, the design of taxation to basic income suggests an increase in the labour supply for low-income households and aggregate welfare despite reducing the overall labour supply (JESSEN; ROSTAM-AFCHAR; STEINER, 2017). Therefore, the arguments need to be carefully analyzed about labour supply, unemployment and income guarantees. Furthermore, policymakers may be open to more universal program designs, which could be more cost-effective to alleviate material deprivation (RAVALLION, 2019).

Besides, concrete experiences suggest that basic income improves well-being conditions such as health, nutrition and schooling and, if well-designed, it can develop individual self-reliance and social-economic growth without replacing public services (DAVALA *et al.*, 2015). As an example, the Alaska Dividend (WIDERQUIST, 2010) and the Canadian concrete experience in Manitoba have demonstrated benefits, *e.g.*, for population health, reducing hospitalization, and, hence, public expenditures (FORGET, 2011). On the other hand, the effects on labour supply are not clear. The Canadian experiment consequences on the labour force are probably biased once the covered period was short for long-term analysis as required (SIMPSON; MASON; GODWIN, 2017) and their restricted evaluations ignore not measurable spillovers on well-being due to this reduction such as care work and education to the community (CALNITSKY; LATNER, 2017).

Despite the wider range of opinions, universality and non-necessity of means-tests seem to be a consensus in the economic mainstream field. Moreover, for them, employment and welfare policies are not the exclusive solutions for poverty, inequality and precarious work. On the other hand, basic income is a common response to stabilize and solve recent capitalism problems of reduced growth and unemployment. However, for the following views presented, the global economic evolution presents some hard-to-solve problems.

2.4 Capitalism contradictions and work ethic

The capitalism troubles and the ethics of the work are contested by many researches. “Job guarantee” and post-work schemes are appointed as solutions. The foreground of such problems is in the endogenous instability of economies, which turns a “totally free market modern capitalist economy [...] economically and politically impossible, for in such an economy financial disasters and economic depressions will frequently occur” (MINSKY, 2008, p. 4). Furthermore, inherent market uncertainties (KEYNES, 1936) contribute to the question of the current economic structures.

However, macroeconomic stabilization may not be enough for economic challenges. The rising inequality, especially in labour income and capital ownership, enhances problems for jobs and welfare for the majority of people (PIKETTY, 2014). Basic income may be instrumental feature to fight poverty, erosion of freedom caused by increasing disparities of income and wealth, and putting an end to neoliberal policies as well as represents a value *per se* as a source of the rights of justice and dignity (RAVENTÓS, 2007, pp. 19-20). Even these proposals are subject to academic critics.

2.5 Job Guarantee

For some theorists, the work remains central to the Economy. In this vein, the welfare policies must present a de-commodifying character, *e.g.*, they should permit the social reproduction of any citizenship without market dependence through the labour contract (ESPING-ANDERSEN, 1990). However, today, unemployment seems no longer to be considered a waste of resources by mainstream economists, which is an intellectual failure (MITCHELL; MUYSKEN, 2008). Then, one of the solutions proposed for macroeconomic stabilization is the “Buffer Stock Employment”, in which the government hires displaced workers from the private sector, providing employment and price balance (MITCHELL, 1998). In other words, this means that a sovereign government can apply a fiscal policy with more amplitude to ensure full employment and price stabilization (MITCHELL; MUYSKEN, 2008; WRAY, 1998) through a job guarantee program.

As a first-best option, according to Paul *et al.* (2018), a federal job guarantee (FJG) program could, for example, to reduce poverty by assuring employment for all Americans. Although it has not been a substitute for UBI, FJG offers many advantages, such as promoting useful social

services, and smaller inflationary risk and costs, among others (PAUL; DARITY JR.; HAMILTON, 2018). Furthermore, for Piachaud (2018), the government as an employer of last resort would be the more consistent means of guaranteeing full employment and social support, whereas basic income, as commonly proposed, is a mere tool for redistribution, which does not mean a demand for work.

One point of the logic under job guarantee programs is that the “[...] absence of paid work that explains the negative effects [in health and wellbeing] of unemployment and, as such, policies should promote work” (SAGE, 2019, p. 206). This occurs in part due to social interaction and basic needs covered by the wage. However, “job guarantee” proposals preserve the work ethic, which imposes a social norm (*social status*) that worsens such negative effects. Then, some argue that “it makes the case that the most effective way of dealing with the health and social fallout from unemployment is to weaken the social and moral value of paid work” (SAGE, 2019, p. 207).

2.6 Post-work

Considering the work ethic, Srnicek and Williams (2015) have talked about the limits of neoliberalism and the need to change this system towards a society liberated from work and whose technologies enhance freedom. For the authors, a universal basic income could be a tool for a post-work society, allowing an equilibrium in power relations between capital and labour, where the work would be, in fact, voluntary. In a similar approach, Mason (2015) considered capitalism unable to fight the current economic problems and catastrophic climate change. So, a post-capitalist society must be an alternative. In this new society, a basic income should definitively separate work and wages, and support other working time structures.

The economic imperative of work as a necessary condition for a regular income is understood as social domination as Gorz (1999, p. 73) stated. For the author, a guaranteed income must enable people to refuse work and “inhuman” working conditions and surpass a wage-based society. In this context, modern slavery is also read as part of capitalism structures and, to surpass it, unconditional basic income could offer the “power to say no”, struggling with economic vulnerability caused by propertylessness (HOWARD, 2018).

Furthermore, the reconstruction of social relations is not only related to sources of income. It is worth noting that the demand for a basic income evokes not only a question between work ethics and income but also about gender oppression. Then, it would be a step further for the democratization of society, potentially “in advancing women’s freedom” (PATEMAN, 2004, p. 90). Moreover, a post-work project must consider patriarchal oppressions in its design (BAKER, 2020).

Finally, basic income is also interpreted as a part of a socialist project (WRIGHT, 2006), once can offer elements for empowering workers (RAVENTÓS, 2007), decommodifying labour, and developing social non-market productive processes. However, most of these prospects are criticized as unreal or unfeasible.

2.7 Post-work critics

In the first place, the work ethic remains structural for the capitalist economy and proposals like basic income structures may be taboo for trade unions. For example, in Belgium, Canada, and the Netherlands, it occurs due to possible conflicts with the welfare system and unclear feasible benefits for unionized (VANDERBORGHT, 2006). On the other hand, even countries that have maintained a solid welfare state like Denmark are encountering barriers to a universalist policy of basic income (HAAGH, 2019). However, in some countries, basic income proposals have been getting stronger. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) – a federation of trade unions representing nearly 5.5 million workers – passed a motion for basic income at its 2016 Congress (MARTINELLI; PEARCE, 2019).

Secondly, post-work theories ignore the intrinsic structure between social relations of production and work (DINERSTEIN; PITTS, 2018). Therefore, the end-of-work “need not open the path to post-capitalism, and indeed may even prevent it” (DINERSTEIN; PITTS, 2018, p. 3). Similarly, universal basic income “mistakes the pervasive crisis of social reproduction as a temporary or contingent crisis of work, wage or social democracy” (LOMBARDOZZI; PITTS, 2020, p. 4). Analogous critics are directed to a post-operatism defense of basic income grounded in a fragile analysis of immaterial labour, according to Pitts (2018). In other words, if, on one hand, the work condition segregates and hierarchizes by varieties of works and, a step further, between those who work and those who do not, constituting an “individualist social ontology”, on the other hand, basic income does not show significant challenges for this (CHAMBERLAIN, 2018).

Lastly, the misinterpretation of work relations is also argued. The qualification of work merely as exploitation and submission that underpins the idea of basic income is contested, in a Proudhonian approach, by “autonomous labor” in Frère (2018). Furthermore, a defense of a progressive formal employment relationship would be more effective against precarisation than a basic income, once this “plays into the hands of those keen simply to deregulate the employment system” (RUBERY *et al.*, 2018, p. 524). This is consistent with the view of the job as a human right (MITCHELL; MUYSKEN, 2008) but finds barriers in the end-of-employment theses and the generalized automation path.

2.8 New technologies and unemployment

Automation and technological innovations cause substantial changes in employment conditions. As an example, the past three decades are characterized by rising inequality in the labour market, called “polarization” (AUTOR, 2015), where middle-income occupations have been reduced in comparison to low and high-income jobs. Besides, a significant part of current jobs is subject to full automation in the following one or two decades (FREY; OSBORNE, 2017), including those performed by “repetitive” and “predictive” tasks (FORD, 2015). These scenarios are the third part of the background for basic income debates.

Furthermore, the thesis of “polarization” of jobs indicates a concentration, in the last decades, of wages and jobs in the bottom and top employment positions to detriment of middle occupations and wages. Information technologies and computerization are the main cause. Therefore, the polarization of jobs enhances wages and job inequalities (AUTOR, 2015). How long this path will remain is unknown and what will occur in the future of employment is unclear.

The fear of a catastrophic future in the job market is correlated with high interest in basic income proposals, at least in the United Kingdom (SLOMAN, 2018). Such concern is amplified even more now that precarious work is growing as the norm of employment (RUBERY *et al.*, 2018), with low growth rates of the economy (FURMAN; SEAMANS, 2018) and productivity (BERGER; BENEDIKT-FREY, 2016), and the high risks of automation (BRUUN; DUKA, 2018; FREY; OSBORNE, 2017; GILBERT *et al.*, 2018) increase the instabilities and social conflicts (PAUS, 2018). Furthermore, job creation in response to technological change has slowed down since the 1980s (BERGER; BENEDIKT-FREY, 2016).

Robotization should amplify social prosperity as long as can amplify almost all cognitive human capacities and allow significant productivity increases, in the called “Second Machine Age” (BRYNJOLFSSON; MCAFEE, 2014). Nevertheless, wages may stop tracking productivity gains and we can see an even further wealth concentration if machines replace human labour (BRYNJOLFSSON; MCAFEE, 2014). There is a consensus about the labour-saving character of innovations, but if, on one hand, “the past two centuries of automation and technological progress have not made human labor obsolete” (AUTOR, 2015, p. 4), on the other hand, the recent innovations like artificial intelligence, machine learning, computing power and robotics demonstrated an unobserved possibility of replacing labour (AUTOR, 2015, p. 4).

Once a forward-looking analysis is adopted, the prospectus for automation is alarming according to some authors. In the United States, for example, 47% of total employment is at high risk of computerization in the next decade or two and the current technology developments present real chances that the new automated jobs – especially the low-skilled and waged occupations – will not be compensated in other economic sectors (FREY; OSBORNE, 2017)¹³. Computer use is associated with substantial reallocation of jobs, increasing well-paid jobs and decreasing low-paid ones (BESSEN, 2016).

The low cost and facility of replication of new technologies like machines and software also can make several jobs obsolete. Joined to it, there are recent declines in labour-share, labour force participation, job creation, and increases in inequality. These possible social troubles demand political choices to assuage negative consequences (FORD, 2015).

If the predicted effects of automation materialize, problems of inequality, unemployment, and work conditions will get worse (VAN-PARIJS and VANDERBORGHT, 2017). The consensus between political right and left that continuous innovations guarantee economic growth and low rates of unemployment has ended and the rising of debates about basic income is a signal. Therefore, the basic income constitutes a possible structure to mitigate poverty and unemployment (FURMAN; SEAMANS, 2018; VAN-PARIJS; VANDERBORGHT, 2017), accompanying the decoupling between work and income (SANTENS, 2017).

¹³ Otherwise, some authors have contested such high risks of automation as an overestimation, especially when the tasks in occupations are analyzed (ARNTZ; GREGORY; ZIERAHN, 2017).

2.9 Basic income as an alternative to the end-of-work

Basic income is considered an alternative response to the dramatically potential change in the economy by Artificial Intelligence (FURMAN; SEAMANS, 2018) – chiefly technological unemployment (GILBERT *et al.*, 2018; VAN-PARIJS; VANDERBORGHT, 2017) – and to provide basic human wellbeing (PAUS, 2018). The higher the considered disruptive potential of innovations, the greater the warning for alternative sources of income.

Furthermore, as this process unfolds, more state support for citizens will be needed and less tax revenue will be generated to finance such programs (BRUUN; DUKA, 2018). Then, the unconditional basic income could help both the negative effects of technological developments and the adaptation to a changing economy. Additionally, retraining programs would maintain the human in “[...] race with the machines and remain relevant in the labor market” (BRUUN; DUKA, 2018, p. 18) once the workers have developed new skills demanded by the new employments (FURMAN; SEAMANS, 2018).

In this vein, basic income could keep incentives to work once it can be complemented by wages, savings, public pensions, *etc.*, without penalty but compatible taxation over the excess of the established floor to income. For example, Gilbert *et al.* (2018) found no evidence of a significant reduction in hours of work or labour participation rates in basic income programs across twelve nations in the developed or developing world. Therefore, in common, the basic income proposals to tackle the reduced number of jobs forecasts a dramatic future for employment as the basis of income. The current unemployment problems may increase this area of debate.

Conclusion

For almost all the analyzed literature, basic income can reduce exploitation. To do so, it is necessary to come with the development – and not the replacement – of universal public services for the development of the common interest, generating material conditions for a freer and fairer society. Not necessarily based on such premises, the recent economic and public health troubles have fueled basic income debates spread in three main groups: 1) economic mainstream income prospects focused on poverty alleviation; 2) alternative policies for chronic capitalism deficiencies; 3) substitute source of income to face general automation.

On the other hand, by definition, basic income acts at the individual level. Therefore, some authors see its potential small to change radically the social relations of production in capitalism. Not even BI can reshape the work hierarchies that build layers of individuals according to occupations or employed status (CHAMBERLAIN, 2018).

The universal feature of the basic income is not likewise guaranteed. It demands a choice of who is eligible to receive the permanent payment and who is not. The increasing episodes of racism and xenophobia favor selection criteria in consonance with excluding practices. In other words, the decision of those who deserve to get out of poverty and those who not will fall to the current policymakers. Finally, there is no clarity about who will pay the bill.

Furthermore, the end-of-work is even more unclear. The projections of the considerable workforce replacement are not linear nor seem to be reliable. Technological development no longer seems to guarantee sustainable economic growth. The chronic small rates of growth and the continuous deregulation of the labour market have been presenting more negative effects on the labour force and poverty. On the other hand, the austerity policies have been depressing the remainder of the welfare state policies.

In summary, social and economic crises commonly resurrect great debates on basic income. The great recession in 2007/9 and the COVID-19 crisis, as well as recent geopolitical conflicts and the rise of autocratic leaders, turn basic income proposals for some as an essential solution and others as a reason for skepticism. However, the paradigm of austerity policies does not seem weakened in the academic and political arenas to believe in a pacific route to accept basic income peacefully. Moreover, it is perceived that there is no consensus on the design of such a program, its relationship with social welfare policies or its population scope.

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