

Chapter 1

Introduction



The discussion of universal basic income has come to a deadlock. So far, the questions whether, when, where, and how a universal basic income could eventually be put into political practice have played a minor role in this discussion. However, these questions belong not at the end, but at the beginning of the debate.

This line of inquiry brings the political logic of basic income into focus. This logic carries highly controversial political and scientific implications. It reveals that the politics of basic income must be discussed in a much wider context and over a much longer time horizon than hitherto done.

In the light of this logic, the institutions and rules of conventional democracy are shown to be insuperable barriers to universal basic income—barriers not only to concrete political implementation, but also to large-scale and nationwide basic income experiments.

In the context of present democracies, basic income would neither find sufficient support with voters, nor could it be implemented with the exceptional foresight and competence necessary for such a project.

This book outlines alternative political institutions, rules, and strategies that could eventually make universal basic income politically viable.