CHAPTER 5

The Welfare State: Will It Stay or Will It Go?

Abstract In our final chapter, we summarize the results of our study, beginning with the two main foci in the interviewee responses we collected: reflections on (1) the material basis for financing the future welfare state, and (2) the new trends—e-health, robotization, and basic income—that may influence the future of the welfare state. We also include opinions of various writers and commentators on how the COVID-19 pandemic may stimulate and influence future welfare state developments, particularly basic income.

Keywords Finances • workforce • E-health • robotization • JobSeeker • JobKeeper • BI • UBI • UBS • COVID-19

There were two clearly visible foci in the material we collected. The first one concerned the material basis for the finances and workforce of the future welfare system. The other focus was on trends that may or may not dominate the future welfare models: e-health, robotization, and basic income. Although these trends did not take much place in the interviews—which is not surprising, considering that their status is still

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uncertain—they have been mentioned by respondents in all three countries. But before we present the two topics, a few words about the reasons we asked our interlocutors to imagine the future.

We chose to ask them what would happen in 20 years, but we could have asked about 30 years as well. The exact number of years is not that important—it is the fact that the questions concerned a distant future. It is therefore not surprising that the answers actually focused on what is now, with variations. People do not seem to be very good at predicting the future, claimed Tetlock and Gardner (2015) in their book *Superforecasting: the art and science of prediction*. The political scientist Philip E. Tetlock (Gardner is a journalist) organized a massive, government-funded forecasting tournament, which included 2800 volunteers. Two percent of them turned out to be better forecasters than the others, and even better than the experts. But even the best forecasters couldn’t make adequate predictions extending for more than two years.

But we were not checking the forecasting talents of our interlocutors. Rather, we wanted them to reflect on the present developments in the welfare states, and we chose questions about the future as a fruitful way of provoking such reflections. As Johan Asplund would have put it (1979), it was not important that their predictions were correct; it was important to evoke interesting reasoning—and we believe that we have succeeded.

**The Basis of the Future Welfare**

The likelihood of encountering a lack of resources seemed to be the main worry in the images of the future welfare; it was practically taken for granted. The predicted scarcities concerned both the finances and the work force.

**The Finances**

In all the three countries, the financing of the welfare system comes mostly from the state. There are some differences: For example, in Sweden, 60 percent of the resources that finance the welfare system come from taxes on wages and salaries. According to the Swedish economist Mårten Blixt (2017), this may cause serious problems. The potential for further tax increases is limited—partly due to Sweden already having one of the highest tax rates in the world, and partly due to Sweden being a small, open economy, vulnerable to trade flows in the world outside, and therefore in need of a competitive tax system. In Blixt’s view, there is a simple solution
to that problem: It is time for a tax reform that will stop requiring working people to face a steep, uphill slope. Such a reform is possible without lowering welfare aspirations as it would consist of increased revenues from other tax bases, for example, taxes on real estate, VAT, and stepped-up interest subsidies.

Our respondents, too, had several suggestions concerning alternative ways of financing the welfare state. Increased fees for certain services and various kinds of insurance were mentioned, but there is no doubt that taxes will continue to constitute the main financial basis of the future welfare system. The question remains, taxes on what? This question will remain unanswered until the economic effects of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic become visible.

The Workforce

Providing care means, as we mentioned before, giving time to those who need it. In an aging society, the number of people who need time continuously grows, while, relatively, the number of those who can give time diminishes. An adequate workforce—both in terms of numbers and competencies—becomes the crucial resource. As the answers from our interlocutors indicate, the problem is perceived as less acute in countries where volunteers are permitted to provide care, as opposed to countries like Sweden, where professional caregiver competence is required. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, opened the doors to volunteers in all three countries.

The workforce situation in all the three countries demands new solutions (in saying this, we assume that the entrance of immigrants into the delivery of welfare services is an old solution). What we describe below as new trends may become institutionalized—or they may turn out to be passing fashions. In addition, their future fate depends to a large extent on whether or not many of the present ways of performing welfare services are permitted to vanish.

The New Trends

E-health

Both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Commission (EC) are interested in this development. Here is the definition used by EC:
Digital health and care refer to tools and services that use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and management of health and lifestyle. Digital health and care have the potential to innovate and improve access to care, quality of care, and to increase the overall efficiency of the health sector.¹

The Swedish politicians seem to be convinced that e-health is the future. Here are fragments of the state investigation from 2016 (SOU 2016: 72):

In recent years, digitalization has created a number of new opportunities for improved efficiency and increased flexibility in health and care. (...) At the same time, there are signs that rigid regulatory systems are an obstacle to introducing new technology and innovations in health and social care. (...) Further development and the dissemination of good examples are needed. (...) The ambition is that the new model should be introduced in 2017/2018. (p. 162)

In the beginning of 2014, a new governmental agency focusing on e-health was created.

Not everybody is as enthusiastic about e-health system as the Swedish government. Jerome Groopman, one of the best-known advocates of narrative medicine, sees e-health as its enemy:

…listening is no longer valued in today’s medicine. The patient’s “history” was once the centerpiece of his medical record, his story written in narrative form. With current electronic templates, information is fragmented into chunks designed to meet so-called quality metrics and maximize revenue from insurers. The patient’s story has been reduced to telegraphed key words that trigger prefigured algorithms, which generate pop-ups on the computer screen for further testing or generic therapies. (2017: 7)

Still, much is being done, and much remains to be done, in Sweden as well as in other countries.² The enthusiasts were a little too optimistic; Erlingsdóttir and Sandberg (2019) rightly pointed out that in order for e-health to succeed, it is necessary to adapt laws and regulations, reduce digital divisions, create confidence, ensure equality and vulnerability, and change power distribution. It is also necessary to ensure that the patient’s

¹https://ec.europa.eu/health/ehealth/overview_en, accessed 2019-07-16.
²For the developments in Australia, see Hambleton and Aloizos (2019).
integrity and security are guaranteed, that the technology is safe, and that
the working environment for healthcare staff does not deteriorate. Health
communication issues following from an increased openness must be ana-
lyzed from the ethical perspective.

Close to the e-health issues is the issue of robotization of healthcare.
“Robots can provide care—even today”, was claimed in an appendix to
Dagens Nyheter under the title “The Future of Welfare” (Wilhelmson
2016). “At the home for the elderly in Hälleborg, technology creates for
people with dementia a freer, if better supervised, life.” Does it?

Before we move to the topic of robotization of care, it must be pointed
out that much depends on how one defines a “robot” (Czarniawska and
Joerges 2020). Much of the healthcare is already automated—there are
lots of diagnostic machines, and surgeries can be done at a distance.
However, the medical staff, from nurses to surgeons, believe that the
machines simply fulfil their orders. Can they become autonomous?

Robotization

While the major part of the discussion about robotization of work con-
cerns potential unemployment problems, a considerable amount of atten-
tion, in media and in social sciences, is paid to the potential use of robots
in healthcare and care for the elderly (Czarniawska and Joerges 2020).
After all, countries other than the three we studied face an aging popula-
tion that lives longer and longer, requiring more care. Additionally, there
are increasingly sophisticated machines (not necessarily robots as such)
that are being used in medicine.

A Swedish researcher, Susanne Frennert (2016), observed elderly per-
sons’ experimental domestic use of three kinds of robots: GiraffPlus (an
e-health monitoring robot), HOBBIT (an assistive robot), and a vacuum
cleaner. Her conclusions were that the designers follow a technological,
deterministic approach, assuming that they know everything there is to
know about the users, and that the robots can be constructed and then
tested according to “fixed criteria and quantitative measurements at base-
line, midway, and post-intervention”, (p. 95), which, among other things,
includes a picture of elderly people as weak, ill, and home-bound.
Interestingly, the older persons who were asked to use the robots were
completely in agreement with that stereotypical picture of the elderly,
although in their opinion it was not an image of themselves, but of people
who are much older, truly weak, ill, and home bound—persons who
would be the final users of the robots. For persons in the study, robots seemed to nourish the desires for freedom, control, and independence.

Frennert’s final conclusion was that the designers of robots should adopt a practice-oriented approach, in the sense of actually trying out their prototypes rather than just asking for opinions about them; as another of her observations was that “there is a difference between what older people say and what they do”. She also tried to explain why Swedish and European people, in contrast to the Japanese, are against the idea of robots taking care of older people (she quoted a Swedish study from 1998 and a Eurobarometer from 2012; Frennert 2016: 45). Answering the survey, the respondents were positive about robots doing “dirty, dull, and dangerous” jobs—but not taking care of people.

In contrast, Japan has been automating its industry sector since the late 1960s, which contributed to the country’s famous economic success (Sone 2017). Both robotization and economic success continued in Japan throughout the 1980s. In the new millennium, a new problem emerged: A labor shortage due to Japan’s rapidly ageing population. The government reacted quickly and strongly, sponsoring research and construction of new robot prototypes, which were to work in hospitals, offices, and homes. This development continues at present.

In his analysis, the Australian-Japanese scientist Yuji Sone (2017) argued that many Japanese find the concept of an artificially created human intriguing rather than frightening, because they do not have the associations with Golems and Frankenstein’s monsters like the Westerners have. Also, the Western robots are made “from dumb matter” (p. 9), whereas the Japanese robots are seen as grandchildren of nature, because humans are children of nature. It is animism (spirit is incarnated in nature and in inanimate objects), Buddhism, and the tradition of manga/anime that contribute to a positive perception of humanoid robots.

Therefore, the Humanoid Robotics Project (1998–2003), financed by the Japanese government, asked roboticists to develop robots that could contribute to the management of an ageing population: Care robots, pet robots, nurse assistant robots, and even dementia prevention robots.

The engagement of dementia patients with therapeutic robots is seen positively by the proponents of those machines. Critics, on the other hand, look at the use of the social robot in aged care in terms of duplicity and control. (Sone 2017: 191)
In defense, Sone described the uses of Paro, a baby seal, and Aibo, Sony’s robot dog. They have been used as “socially assistive robots” in USA, Australia, and Japan.

Assistive robot refers to a robotic machine that “assists people with physical disabilities through physical interaction” for domestic and institutional use (...). The term “socially assistive robot” delineates a subcategory within assistive robots, which refers to robots that provide assistance to humans, through interaction with verbal and/or physical gesture but without physical contact (...). Socially assistive robots have been used as companions or guides for the elderly and children ... (Sone 2017: 193)

Many hopes are connected to such socially assistive robots, but some problems remain unsolved: high cost and technical complexity of implementation, together with lack of agreement on how to measure their effectiveness. In Sone’s opinion, it is time for social scientists and humanists to join the roboticists in their work. At present, “[t]he wide-spread justification (...) for the use of socially assistive robots in aged care is often based on a commonly held view that the Japanese prefer robots over human helpers, especially foreign health workers” (p. 194)

Sone also argued that robots are actually better than pets because animals carry germs, can bite and scratch, and they die, causing sorrow. Furthermore, Paro the seal is supposed to reduce people’s expectations (they know what to expect from cats and dogs and can be disappointed, but they don’t know what to expect from a baby seal). “Paro embodies cuddliness and cuteness” (p. 202). But the ethical problems remain: those enchanted with the dog Aibo (mostly children) could make their own decision to buy the machine; Paro was “forced upon” the elderly.

Sone’s conclusions were as follows:

[Japanese] traditions promote the idea that humans and non-humans are viewed intrinsically as connected. The robot’s radical difference is perceived through what might be termed a functional anthropomorphism; at the same time, by seeing them in such a way, human interactants can develop a certain affection for the non-human and, in this case, for robots. (pp. 204–207)

Perhaps such possibility is open even to people not sharing traditions of Buddhism and animism (see e.g., Baum 2018, on experiments in Australia). Also, the COVID-19 pandemic may change the attitude toward robots to a more positive view in general—after all, the robots are more “hygienic”
than people, and do not spread viruses. Nevertheless, robotization is still seen both as a problem (depriving people of jobs) and as a solution. One kind of support comes from the idea of basic income.

**Basic Income**

Basic income is seen as supporting both robotization and its victims. Here is the opinion of one of the experts on robotization, Martin Ford:

> If we accept the idea that ever more investment in education and training is unlikely to solve our problems, while calls to somehow halt the rise of job automation are unrealistic, then we are ultimately forced to look beyond conventional policy prescriptions. In my view, the most effective solution is likely to be some form of basic income guarantee. (…) A basic income would be efficient and would have relatively low administrative costs. A bureaucratic expansion of the welfare state would be far more expensive on a per capita basis, and far more unequal in its impact. (2015: locations 4166, 4211)

As to how this solution will look in practice, Ford had two suggestions: An unconditional basic income paid to every adult citizen regardless of other income, or a guaranteed minimum income, paid only to people at the bottom of the income distribution and phased out when their situation changes.

In the past five years in Canada, and more than four decades after the 1970 Manitoba Mincome (Minimum Income) pilot project (see Forget 2018), there has been a resurgence of interest in basic income pilot projects. In March 2016, the Liberal government in Ontario, Canada’s largest province, designed a Basic Income Pilot Project that started operating in April 2018. It consisted of a payment to eligible couples or individuals, ensuring a minimum income level, regardless of employment status. It was run as an experiment with a control group. Unfortunately, this experimental project had a short life as it was wound down in March 2019 by Ontario’s recently elected Conservative government, led by Premier Doug Ford.³

³[https://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en2018/08/ontarios-government-for-the-people-announces-compassionate-wind-down-of-basic-income-research-project.html](https://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en2018/08/ontarios-government-for-the-people-announces-compassionate-wind-down-of-basic-income-research-project.html), accessed 2019-07-16.
as: “Why 100 CEOs are asking Doug Ford to bring back basic income”. The main argument of critics pointed out that “axing” the project eliminated the chance to evaluate its results. In 2016, the legislative members of Canada’s smallest population province, Prince Edward Island (PEI), unanimously approved a motion to work toward launching a pilot income project (Tencer 2016). Officials of the PEI government asked the federal Liberal government in Ottawa for funding support for their pilot project, but they were unsuccessful. So, to date, PEI’s basic income experiment has not been launched.

Advocates of the PEI basic income project, however, have not lost hope. They point to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) program, which was implemented by the federal government in early 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CERB provides enhanced supports for individuals, businesses, and industry sectors. Notably, the CERB support includes a direct 2000 CAD payment made every four weeks for up to 16 weeks to eligible workers who have lost income or stopped working due to COVID-19. According to Jillian Kilfoil, a member of the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income:

[CERB] is very close to what we would be advocating for (...) we feel like it’s [the pandemic is] not individual people’s fault (...) and we’re trying to say that happens to people all the time and the way we’re [the federal government is] responding to this pandemic is how we need to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable all the time.

In essence, the PEI advocates seem to take the position that a basic income should be available to citizens all the time, not just during times of crises. And the PEI voices are not alone. Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, the calls for some permanent (universal or targeted) form of basic income program in Canada has grown into a cascade of voices, involving a number of the nation’s major media outlets and high-profile authors and journalists. A former Canadian Senator, Hugh Segal, was an early

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4 https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-thursday-edition-1.4868294/why-100-ceos-are-asking-doug-ford-to-bring-back-basic-income-1.4868298, accessed 2019-07-16.
5 https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html#individuals, accessed 2020-06-10.
6 https://www.basicincomecanada.org/opportunity_in_pandemic_p_e_i_group_sees_the_makings_of_basic_income, accessed 2020-06-10.
proponent of Ontario’s basic income experiment and he authored a report advocating for such plan.\(^7\) In 2020, Segal teamed up with Evelyn Forget, a noted health economist and author of a 2018 book on basic income in Canada, to write an article in Canada’s leading business-oriented national newspaper. Forget and Segal point out that national politicians appear to have set aside their usual partisan squabbles in agreeing to implement CERB in response to the COVID-19-generated crisis. Perhaps such unusual cooperation among politicians of various political stripes can be attributed to the COVID-19-induced stark realization that many components of Canada’s current income security framework are deficient. In stinging prose, Segal and Forget state:

> Employment insurance (EI) has been revealed as a creaky relic of a bygone economy (...) provincial welfare and disability supports are punitive, stigmatizing and offer less than half the income needed to stay above the poverty line. Adult supports are (...) a disorganized patchwork that condemns people to poverty.\(^8\)

Although Canada’s CERB program was hastily launched and is still evolving, Forget and Segal see in it hope for filling some key gaps in Canada’s welfare system: “CERB offers Canada an opportunity to learn how to design better income supports for ordinary times.”

The authors cite the surprisingly similar and positive results that middle- and low-income countries around the world have experienced with basic income experiments. They contend that the hastily designed and implemented CERB program has really been a large experiment in basic income, and they suggest that:

> COVID-19 could create a legacy: an income support system that is efficient, non-stigmatizing, encourages work, and is sufficient to provide better health outcomes and liquidity for people and communities.

In a recent (March 22, 2020) media interview, Forget elaborated on the COVID-19-related income challenges Canadians face, and she concluded: “I think that if we had a basic income in place, it would have been very

\(^7\) https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-basic-income-hugh-segal-1.5224452, accessed 2019-11-01.

\(^8\) https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-cerb-is-an-unintended-experiment-in-basic-income/, accessed 2020-06-10.
easy for the government to increase payments to Canadians and adapt to this particular [COVID-19] crisis.”

It is evident that there is a large and growing chorus of other voices that have joined in calling for government action to fill gaps in Canada’s welfare system, deficiencies that were laid bare by the COVID-19 outbreak. Not surprisingly, gaps in income supports were frequently highlighted and several basic income schemes were suggested as solutions.

In addition to paying for direct financial supports to individuals, Canada’s CERB initiative provides indirect support to individual workers; it pays eligible business employers 75% of an employee’s wages—up to 847 CAD per week for eligible workers. This can be viewed as a job-keeping strategy.

In Australia, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to large and sudden increases in unemployment and underemployment due to government restrictions and consumer fears that curtailed demand and supply in many vital industries, including manufacturing, education, hospitality, and tourism. The Australian Government’s social welfare system was overwhelmed with applications for social benefits as industry shed jobs—a demand which saw the MyGov welfare information system unable to cope with phone calls going unanswered, and large queues of people outside the Centrelink offices (Baskin 2020).

As a response to the pandemic’s economic upheaval, in March 2020 the conservative Australian Government—to the surprise of many commentators and the political opposition—shelved parts of its arguably adversarial and insufficiently funded approach to welfare recipients as previously described. The government initiated two new social welfare benefits: JobSeeker and JobKeeper. This initiative can be described as a temporary experiment (initially for six months) in a nascent form of Universal Basic Income (UBI). In a UBI, citizens are provided with a “liveable” income based on a “rightful” share in ownership of national wealth, so that their economic survival is not solely tied to waged labor (Ferguson 2015). A UBI enables us to reconsider how people’s contributions to society in multiple meaningful ways are recognized and rewarded (other than through regular paid employment). A UBI becomes more relevant where casual, contract or “gig” workers face challenges with income stability and

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9 https://www.healthing.ca/diseases-and-conditions/coronavirus/its-time-to-stop-talking-about-basic-income-and-do-it, accessed 2020-06-10.
sufficiency under the effects of new business models and automation (Décobert 2020).

The JobSeeker payment is an unemployment benefit of 1100 AUD per fortnight for those who have lost their jobs or who have been looking for work. It replaces the previous ‘New Start’ unemployment benefit. And, in recognition of the latter’s controversially low compensation, complexity and barriers to entry, JobSeeker doubles the previous amount paid to the unemployed and reduces wealth-based restrictions on access (Parliament of Australia 2020).

JobKeeper payments provide an income to people who would otherwise have had their employment terminated by employers who have suffered in the economic downturn. In effect the Australian Government subsidizes the wages of employees. The idea is for employees to remain connected with their employers, regardless of whether there is currently work to be done; it keeps employees ready to facilitate productivity in an eventual economic rebound. Employers can keep paying a staff member who was working when the scheme commenced (March 1, 2020) a wage of 1500 AUD a fortnight and be 100 per cent reimbursed by the government. In effect, if an employee was previously earning 1500 AUD, their labor has become effectively free to the company; someone previously earning less than 1500 AUD gets bonus money; and for someone who usually earns more than 1500 AUD, employers can choose to top up the salary if their labor is still actively utilized. Employees being paid under JobKeeper may be working their normal hours, or less hours, or effectively be in standby mode (Treasury 2020).

There are limits to the universality of the new basic income payment system. It does not allow for payments to such cohorts as international students (a huge contributor to the Australian economy), even though many are marooned here and are desperate for funds, because their casual employment has largely dried up. Nor does it apply to other temporary visa holders (such as foreign farm workers), university staff who are casually employed, and employees of wholly overseas-owned companies.

In instituting the JobSeeker and JobKeeper benefits, the Australian Government recognized a range of positive outcomes that a basic income can provide: boosting people’s economic ability to survive; supporting their confidence and emotional wellbeing; stimulating consumption that ‘knocks-on’ improved economic activity; simplifying welfare systems; and, reducing costly overheads through broadening categories of access and reducing requirements like means (wealth) testing. The government has
not formally touted JobSeeker and JobKeeper packages as a UBI system, but it exhibits many of the hallmarks of one—such as attempting to cover basic needs with a standardized amount of money where a person remains either employed (JobKeeper) or not (JobSeeker).

Sweden did not experiment with basic income but commented on such projects. In August 2017, the vice-chair of the students belonging to the Center Party wrote an appeal for basic income in a magazine published by a right-wing think tank; he claimed, “Basic income is effective and just”. And he quoted Fredrich Hayek to support his arguments. The present welfare system, in his opinion, is arbitrary and paternalistic (Rehbinder 2017). One of Sweden’s most popular public intellectuals, political scientist Bo Rothstein, was of the opposite opinion: Basic income cannot be paid without conditions, so that those who finance it—tax payers—could be certain that their money is sensibly spent (Rothstein 2017).

The Swedish left-wing newspaper, ETC, published opinions on Ontario’s basic income program experiment. Reporting from Hamilton, Ontario, the reporter quoted the local newspaper as well as some politicians and social scientists—all were positive (Kjellberg 2018). Writing a year later, a Swedish researcher looked at basic income experiments in Finland and concluded that “it is unlikely that Sweden would introduce basic income, but it is worth looking at such projects” (Bergh 2019). He also quoted Rutger Bregmans’s *Utopia for realists* from 2017. Another positive-minded journalist reviewed Louise Haagh’s *The case for universal basic income* from 2019 (Spross 2019). Yet, to quote another Swedish Journalist (Schultz 2020), “Corona has resurrected the thoughts about citizen wage” (as basic income is called in Sweden). Although the Finnish experiment with UBI led to ambiguous results (happier people with no jobs), the researchers from IVL Swedish Environmental Research analyzed two possible scenarios for introducing UBI in Sweden, treated as an example of a post-growth economy (Malmaeus et al. 2020). The scenarios are called “Local self-sufficiency” and “Automation”, and the authors concluded that a full UBI is a more realistic option in the Automation scenario.

Still another book on basic income that earned attention of many reviewers was Philippe Var Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght’s *Basic income: A radical proposal for a free society and a sane economy* (Friedman 2017). The two Belgian scholars presented arguments that were not economic, but philosophical: Basic income will free people from the necessity of working. Although such an argument may seem shocking, not the least in
the USA, two states have versions of basic income: California has started basic income projects, and both Mark Zuckenberg and Elon Musk are positive about the idea; and, since 1999, Alaska’s Permanent Fund has paid each person living in its state for at least one year and annual basic income of 1680 USD. As Anna Dent suggested in *The Guardian* (2019): “Free money wouldn’t make people lazy—but it could revolutionize work”.

Opinions about basic income programs are mixed, not only in Sweden. Nathan Heller in *The New Yorker* (2018) concluded that Universal Basic Income (UBI), as it is now called, has enthusiasts on both the left and the right, for completely opposite reasons. His opinion, however, based on the speedy end of both Finnish and Canadian (Ontario) experiments, is that, “Thus far, U.B.I. lives entirely in people’s heads—untried at any major scale”. Perhaps several minor scale experiments would prove enough—though there is no doubt that quite a few issues must be solved.

Anna Coote and Andrew Percy (2020), however, are of the view that UBI is not enough. They plead for “Universal Basic Services”, which they define as:

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Services: collectively generated activities that serve the public interest. Basic: services that are essential and sufficient (rather than minimal) to enable people to meet their needs. Universal: everyone is entitled to services that are sufficient to meet their needs, regardless of ability to pay. (loc. 245)
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Their plea extends the traditional definitions of welfare to areas mentioned by some of our respondents: not only healthcare and education, but also child care, adult social care, housing, transport, and information. And they claim that “[w]e need these radical changes now, not just because we want to help make people’s lives better (which we do) but because we are convinced that this is the only way for modern societies to survive and flourish” (loc. 261).

Much as we agree with their plea, the future will show if their hopes will prevail, or if they will be diminished in practice, as our more realistic respondents predicted.

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