

JOHANNA PERKIÖ

Framing Basic Income in Finnish Politics

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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For Aava.

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Helsinki, March 2021

Johanna Perkiö

ABSTRACT

This thesis employs an ideational institutionalist perspective to examine the debate on basic income in Finnish politics. Basic income is an income transfer paid universally and unconditionally at regular intervals to every individual member of a political community. The idea of basic income has been discussed in Finnish politics for four decades as a proposal to reform the minimum social protection system. This dissertation draws on political documents in which the basic income proposal is discussed to examine the evolution of the idea in the Finnish political discourse and the attempts to place the proposal on the political agenda.

The basic income idea is attracting growing global scholarly and political attention. This attention stems from concerns about the increasing inequality and precarization, and from the need to restructure societies on more ecological bases. However, the political conditions for implementing new path-departing policies such as basic income are less well-known. A growing number of studies have focused on institutional and political constraints on basic income. However, most studies have paid only marginal attention to the role of ideational factors – such as political ideologies or policy paradigms, values, beliefs or moral sentiments, and political discourses and frames – as determinants of the political feasibility of basic income.

The present study sheds light on the ideational dimension of the political feasibility of basic income. Examining the role of framing and the proposed policy design in the Finnish political basic income debate, the study demonstrates how integrating an ideational perspective into the analysis enables a more nuanced understanding of the political challenges related to basic income. A systematic empirical analysis of the content of the basic income debate and the specific proposals put forward by its proponents helps clarify the roles of different political actors in the debate on basic income. Furthermore, this analysis enables the identification of constraints on the policy that relate to cognitive and normative categories through which we understand society.

The study of the political documents discussing basic income covers the period 1980-2018 and provides a comprehensive overview of the context-specific features of the basic income debate in Finnish politics.

The study finds that the rationale of the basic income proposal evolved over time alongside ideological shifts in Finnish politics and to incorporate new issues that appeared on the political agenda. The early period of the debate was characterized by a variety of concepts, proposals, and frames used in communicating proposals. Justification for the early proposals was based on social rights and egalitarian principles, and the discussion often evoked visionary ideas for the future. The study observed a radical shift in the rationale of the basic income debate in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the early 1990s. The crisis dramatically changed the political climate in Finland. The basic income proposal was reframed as compatible with the emerging labor activation paradigm and the new era of financial austerity of the welfare state. Over time, the framing of basic income narrowed to emphasize pragmatic labor market-related aspects of the policy. The frames that evoked alternative visions of the future or challenged the status quo were rarely used in the latter part of the debate.

The study shows that political actors played different roles in shaping the collective understanding of basic income. Individual actors played a role in putting the proposal on parties' agendas and bringing it up in parliamentary debates. The Green Party was a key player in keeping the basic income proposal alive during the periods of silence in the general discussion and in communicating the proposal in a way that made it acceptable to a wide range of political actors. The other supportive parties – the Left Alliance, the Centre Party, and two small liberal parties in the 1990s – placed more emphasis on their own ideological perspectives on basic income. However, the study also finds that the most frequent frames used in communicating the proposal were widely shared among the parties, which suggests that there are no strong ideological conflicts among the Finnish parties endorsing basic income in terms of the key aims of the policy.

The study observes that the framing that portrayed basic income as a moderate reform in line with the mainstream economic rationales and the deep-rooted normative values in society was widely resonant among the Finnish parties. This framing particularly emphasized the activation potential of basic income. Toward the end of the examined period, the basic income proposal was increasingly discussed in the framework of the activation paradigm. This framing narrowed the communication on the policy to the technical issues concerning welfare bureaucracy and work incentives and did not enable alternative diagnoses on the nature of societal problems or a more principled discussion of a good society.

The study illustrates the difficulties of translating a new transformative policy alternative into the language of everyday policymaking. The established categories of

understanding the nature of the social problems constrained the communication on basic income, a policy that would fundamentally shift the logic of providing welfare. A moderate framing in line with the prevailing paradigm of welfare helped win positive attention for the policy among mainstream political actors, but it did not provide a robust justification for an unconditional benefit. The findings of the study underline the importance of empirically studying ideational processes to develop a fuller understanding of the prospects of new policies, such as basic income.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöskirja tarkastelee poliittista perustulokeskustelua Suomessa ideoiden tutkimuksen näkökulmasta. Perustulo on universaali, jokaiselle poliittisen yhteisön jäsenelle henkilökohtaisesti tasaisin väliajoin maksettava vastikkeeton tulonsiirto. Perustulosta ja sitä lähellä olevista ideoista on Suomessa keskusteltu neljä vuosikymmentä keinona uudistaa vähimmäissosiaaliturvaa. Väitöskirja tutkii poliittisten dokumenttien pohjalta perustuloidean kehystystä Suomen poliittisessa diskurssissa ja yrityksiä tuoda perustuloehdotusta poliittiselle agendalle.

Perustuloehdotus on saanut viime aikoina lisääntyvää kansainvälistä akateemista ja poliittista huomiota. Huomio liittyy yhtäältä huoleen eriarvoisuuden ja epävarmuuden kasvusta, ja toisaalta tarpeeseen uudistaa yhteiskuntia ekologisesti kestävämmälle pohjalle. Perustulon kaltaisten uusien politiikkaehdotusten toteuttamisen poliittisia ehtoja tunnetaan kuitenkin huonosti. Viime aikoina useat tutkimukset ovat kiinnittäneet huomiota perustulon toteuttamisen institutionaalsiin ja poliittisiin ehtoihin. Kuitenkin ideoiden, kuten poliittisten ideologioiden, politiikkaparadigmojen, sekä arvojen, uskomusten ja moraalisten käsitysten, poliittisten diskurssien ja kehystyksen rooli on useimmissa tutkimuksissa saanut ainoastaan marginaalista huomiota.

Tämä tutkimus valottaa ideoiden roolia perustulon poliittisten mahdollisuuksien ymmärtämisessä. Se tutkii kehystyksen ja ehdotetun perustulon toteutustavan roolia siinä, miten perustulon idea on ymmärretty Suomen poliittisessa perustulokeskustelussa. Tutkimus osoittaa, kuinka ideoiden tutkimuksen näkökulman kytkeminen perustulon poliittisten ehtojen tutkimukseen auttaa rakentamaan parempaa ymmärrystä perustulon toteutukseen liittyvistä haasteista. Systemaattinen empiirinen analyysi perustuloidean kehystyksestä ja kannattajien laatimien perustulomallien sisällöistä auttaa ymmärtämään poliittisten toimijoiden erilaisia rooleja suhteessa perustulokysymykseen. Se auttaa myös tunnistamaan sellaisia perustulon toteutukseen liittyviä esteitä, jotka liittyvät yhteiskunnallisen todellisuuden ymmärtämistä jäsentäviin kognitiivisiin ja normatiivisiin kategorioihin.

Tutkimus hyödyntää poliittisista dokumenteista koostuvaa aineistoa, joka kattaa aikavälin 1980-2018. Aineisto mahdollistaa Suomen poliittisen perustulokeskustelun kontekstisidonnaisten piirteiden kattavan tarkastelun.

Tutkimus havaitsee, että perustulokeskustelun rationaliteetti muuttui ajan myötä. Perustulon kehystys seuraili yhteiskunnan ideologisia muutoksia sekä uusia politiikan asialistalle nousevia kysymyksiä. Keskustelun varhaiselle vaiheelle oli ominaista termien, ehdotusten ja keskustelussa käytettyjen kehysten kirjo. Varhaisia perustuloa muistuttavia ehdotuksia kehystettiin usein sosiaalisten oikeuksien ja tasa-arvon näkökulmista, ja keskustelussa esiintyi visionäärisiä tulevaisuuskuvia. Tutkimus havaitsi radikaalin muutoksen perustuloidean kehystyksessä Suomen poliittista ilmapiiriä syvällisesti muuttaneen 1990-luvun laman jälkimainingeissa. Perustuloehdotus kehystettiin yhteensopivaksi uuden työvoiman aktivointiparadigman ja julkisten varojen niukkuutta korostavan ajattelun kanssa. Myöhempiä perustulokeskustelua leimasi näkökulmien kaventuminen käytännöllisiin, perustulon työmarkkina vaikutuksia korostaviin näkemyksiin. Vaihtoehtoisia tulevaisuuskuvia herätteleviä tai vallitsevaa politiikkaparadigmaa kyseenalaistavia kehystyksiä esiintyi myöhemmässä keskustelussa harvoin.

Tutkimus valottaa poliittisten toimijoiden erilaisia rooleja perustuloehdotusta koskevan kollektiivisen ymmärryksen muovaamisessa. Yksittäiset toimijat toivat ehdotuksen puolueiden agendalle sekä nostivat aihetta esiin eduskuntakeskusteluissa. Puolueista vihreillä oli keskeinen rooli perustuloa koskevan ymmärryksen luomisessa. Puolue piti ideaa hengissä aikoina, jolloin yleinen keskustelu siitä oli vähäistä. Se myös kehysti perustuloehdotuksen tavalla, joka lisäsi sen laajempaa hyväksyttävyyttä poliittisten toimijoiden keskuudessa. Muut perustuloa kannattavat puolueet – vasemmistoliitto, keskusta, sekä 1990-luvulla Suomen liberaalipuolue ja nuorsuomalaiset – korostivat enemmän omia ideologisia näkökulmiaan perustuloon. Perustulokeskustelussa yleisimmin käytettyjä kehyksiä käyttivät kuitenkin kaikki puolueet ja poliitikot, jotka käyttivät perustuloa puoltavia puheenvuoroja. Tämä viittaa siihen, ettei kannattajien välillä ollut voimakkaita ideologisia konflikteja liittyen perustulouudistuksen keskeisiin tavoitteisiin.

Tutkimus havaitsi, että kehystys, joka esitti perustulon maltillisena, valtavirtaiseen talousajatteluun ja vallitseviin normatiivisiin käsityksiin sopivana uudistuksena resonoi laajasti Suomen poliittisessa keskustelussa. Tämä kehystys korosti erityisesti perustulon potentiaalia aktivointipolitiikan välineenä. Tarkastelujakson loppua kohden perustulosta keskusteltiin yhä enemmän kannustuspolitiikan viitekehyksessä. Tässä kehyksessä perustulokeskustelu kaventui koskemaan sosiaaliturvabyrokraatiaan ja työmarkkina vaikutuksiin liittyviä teknisiä kysymyksiä. Se ei jättänyt tilaa vaihtoehtoisille yhteiskunnallisten ongelmien luonnetta koskeville pohdinnoille tai periaatteellisemmalle keskustelulle.

Tutkimus valottaa uudenlaisen politiikkaehdotuksen kehystämiseen liittyviä rajoitteita vallitsevan sosiaalipoliittisen ymmärryksen puitteissa. Vallitsevat yhteiskunnallisten ongelmien luonnetta määrittävät kategoriat rajoittivat keskustelua uudistuksesta, joka toteutuessaan muuttaisi olennaisesti hyvinvointipolitiikan logiikkaa. Vallitsevaa politiikkaparadigmaa mukaileva maltillinen kehystys auttoi saamaan positiivista huomiota perustuloehdotukselle poliittisten toimijoiden keskuudessa. Se ei kuitenkaan tarjonnut vankkaa perustelua vastikkeettoman etuuden käyttöönotolle. Tutkimuksen löydökset alleviivaavat ideoiden ja niihin liittyvien prosessien empiirisen tutkimuksen tärkeyttä perustulon kaltaisten uusien politiikkaehdotusten mahdollisuuksien ymmärtämiseksi.

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ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- Publication I P. Koistinen and J. Perkiö (2014) Good and Bad Times of Social Innovations: The Case of Universal Basic Income in Finland. *Basic Income Studies*, 9(1–2), 25–57. DOI: 10.1515/bis-2014-0009.
- Publication II J. Perkiö (2020) From Rights to Activation: The Evolution of the Idea of Basic Income in the Finnish Political Debate, 1980–2016. *Journal of Social Policy*, 49(1), 103–124. DOI: 10.1017/S0047279418000867.
- Publication III J. Perkiö (2020) Legitimising a radical policy idea: framing basic income as a boost to labour market activity. *Policy & Politics*, 48(2), 277–293. DOI: 10.1332/030557319X15734252781048.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is not charity but a right, not bounty but justice, that I am pleading for. (Thomas Paine, *Agrarian Justice*, 1797)

The idea of a universal grant has long circulated in the texts of academics and societal thinkers. Today known as universal unconditional basic income¹, the proposal has appeared in the campaigns of social movements, agendas of political parties and reports of global organizations. Formerly often dismissed as a 'philosophical pipe dream' (Van Parijs, 2013), the basic income proposal has recently begun to be included in the political agenda in various countries.

Alongside the escalating global economic inequality (Piketty, 2014; Oxfam, 2019) and the growing precariousness of labor (Standing, 2011), ecological threats are prompting policymakers to think 'outside the box' and consider new policy alternatives that look beyond the imminent political and economic realities. Amid the growing likelihood of extreme weather, food shortages and pandemics, the welfare institutions should be reshaped to tackle new kinds of distributional conflicts and insecurities (Johansson & Koch, 2020) and to promote a 'virtuous circle of sustainable welfare' (Hirvilammi, 2020).

Basic income is one of the widely-discussed solutions to reorganize economic distribution and social welfare. In brief, basic income is defined as 'a regular cash income paid to all, on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement' (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 1). There are many ways of implementing such a policy (De Wispelaere, 2015). The basic income models may vary, for instance, in terms of the benefit level, funding sources, and their relation to existing benefit schemes. However, a cash transfer paid unconditionally to a whole population would constitute a significant path-departure in the context of any present-day welfare state. This type of cash transfer would radically alter not only the institutional design but

¹ Currently, the acronym UBI is often used for a universal unconditional basic income. In this thesis, I will use 'basic income', which is a direct translation of the Finnish 'perustulo'.

also the fundamental principles at the heart of today's social policies – especially those related to the link between social security and employment. Despite its apparent radicalness, the policy is still gaining traction across the political spectrum (see Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019). Yet, apart from a few experiments and cognate schemes (see De Wispelaere, 2016a), basic income has never been implemented at a large scale². Therefore, the political conditions for implementing basic income are unclear.

Examining how new policies, such as basic income, could become reality is an important mission for social scientists. A growing number of studies have focused on questions related to the political feasibility of basic income. Studies have identified challenges related to political support, institutional constraints, and social legitimacy. De Wispelaere (2016a) finds that whenever basic income has entered the political agenda, the advocacy coalitions have been too narrow and failed to win adequate support for the policy among key stakeholders. The actors supporting the policy have either been politically weak or have lacked the commitment to push for implementation of the policy (De Wispelaere, 2016b). Furthermore, it has been noted that the proponents of basic income are not a unanimous front. As the policy gains support from both the left and right sides of the political spectrum (Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019), its implementation will entail unavoidable trade-offs or even a permanent division among its proponents (De Wispelaere, 2016b; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019). According to De Wispelaere (2015), the tendency to think about basic income as a general idea has obscured the variation in potential policy design that is likely to cause internal disagreement among its advocates. Although some of today's benefit schemes could provide institutional stepping stones for an implementation of basic income, the strong commitment to conditionality is a major obstacle for the policy (Jordan, 2012; Halmetoja et al., 2018). It has also been noted that public opinion is not strongly in favor of the principle of unconditionality (Andersson & Kangas, 2002; Roosma & van Oorschot, 2019; Pulkka, 2020).

² There are some examples of policies that can be counted as variants of a basic income scheme. The best-known example is the social dividend scheme of Alaska paid out of oil revenues (see Widerquist & Howard, 2012). The Iranian government implemented a *de facto* basic income in 2010 by transforming price subsidies into direct cash payments to which all citizens were entitled (Karshenas & Tabatabai, 2019). In May 2019, the small Brazilian city of Maricá implemented a modest partial basic income scheme paid in the local electronic currency (Basic Income News, May 31, 2019). Additionally, after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, many countries have implemented new cash transfer policies with some resemblance to basic income.

To participate in this debate, this thesis examines the Finnish political discussion on basic income schemes. Drawing on the analysis of the basic income debate, the broader aim of the thesis is to further explore the political feasibility of basic income in the context of the Finnish welfare state by utilizing a theoretical perspective of ideational institutionalism (e.g., Béland & Cox, 2010). Acknowledging the variation in basic income schemes (De Wispelaere, 2015), the thesis focuses on how the idea and implementation of basic income has been understood in the Finnish debate.

Ideational factors – such as discourses, frames, ideologies, policy paradigms, values, norms and beliefs – as determinants of the political feasibility of basic income have received minor attention among scholars studying the feasibility of basic income schemes. A few studies have explored these areas. There have been descriptive case studies mapping the political landscape of the basic income debate in different countries, but most lack systematic empirical evidence (e.g., van der Veen & Groot, 2000; Caputo, 2012; Murray & Pateman, 2012). In the context of the 1960s and 1970s US, Steensland (2008a) has identified cultural constraints on a basic income-type policy, Guaranteed Minimum Income. He finds that the normative categories of ‘deservingness’ deeply embedded in US welfare policy and the inability of proponents to shift the dominant understanding of the causes of poverty were key reasons for the failure of the proposals. He also finds that the framing of the proposals narrowed over time to emphasize the fiscal and work-related aspects of the policy in a way that conferred greater legitimacy on the opposing arguments (Steensland, 2008b). In a similar vein, Christensen (2008) notes that Danish proponents failed to find a convincing discourse on basic income in the context of emerging workfare policies. In a comparative analysis of the media framing of basic income in Canada, Finland and Spain, we (Perkiö et al., 2019) found that the media discussion focused on pragmatic context-specific issues. However, some arguments for and against basic income were common to all three countries. In all three countries, basic income was frequently framed as a policy needed because of the increased automation of work and as a tool to reform the complex benefit structures and reduce poverty and inequality. The strongest oppositional frame in all three countries concerned the alleged negative effects of basic income on work motivation and incentives.

The present study is the first to perform a systematic analysis of a large dataset of political documents that covers a long historical period of the documented political debate on basic income. The ideational institutionalist approach employed builds on the legacy of historical institutionalism (e.g., Pierson, 1994; Skocpol, 1992), with an attempt to complement the institutionalist analysis by examining how ideas interact

with interests and institutions in producing political stability or change (Béland, 2005; 2019). The ideational institutionalist approach considers ideas as key drivers in politics and institutional change. Ideas can be both cognitive and normative in nature (Schmidt, 2008) and impact policymaking as underlying assumptions of reality or as explicit arguments or programs in political debates (Campbell, 1998; 2002).

With this line of thinking, I argue that without incorporating the ideational dimension into the analysis of the politics of basic income, important aspects related to its political feasibility cannot be grasped. Ideational factors play a crucial role in the positioning of different actors on the issue and in generating broader support for the policy. Ideational perceptions of reality also operate as important constraints on new policies such as basic income that would essentially transform the inherent characteristics of welfare policy.

The aim of the thesis is to explore how the shared understanding of the policy affects its political feasibility. How the idea of basic income is framed and communicated in the political discourse and the policy design that has been proposed plays a role in the possibilities of finding coalition partners and in winning broader legitimacy for the policy. Apart from contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the political feasibility of basic income, this study aims to set a research agenda to incorporate the ideational factors into this growing field of research.

This thesis studies the political feasibility of basic income with a focus on the frames, policy designs and adaptation of the idea to the prevailing policy paradigm. The thesis sets out to answer the following question: *How the idea of basic income has been framed in the Finnish political discourse and what roles different political actors have played in putting the proposal on the agenda?*

The study draws on basic income models, policy programs of parties and parliamentary debates to analyze the political discussion on basic income and related policies in Finland between 1980 and 2018. The actors studied are parties, politicians, and ‘policy entrepreneurs’, such as experts or societal thinkers (see Kingdon, 2010) who have participated in the Finnish basic income debate.

Finnish welfare policy has historically been a mixture of a strong egalitarian and universalist ethos and the pursuit of high-quality full employment (see Kangas, 2006; Anttonen et al., 2012; Kettunen, 2012). Since the 1990s, Finland has embarked on neoliberal activation policies, which have led to a weakening of social rights and more conditional social security (see Kuivalainen & Niemelä, 2010; Kananen, 2012; Kantola & Kananen, 2013). Although the political climate has shifted over the decades, the idea of basic income has persisted in political debates since the 1980s.

In 2017-2018, the center-right coalition government of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä carried out a national-level experiment of basic income covering 2,000 former recipients of minimum unemployment benefits³. The rest of the unemployed in Finland, who continued receiving the minimum flat-rate unemployment benefits, formed the control group.

The study consists of three independent articles providing a comprehensive overview of the history of the Finnish political debate on basic income. The empirical findings of those articles help analyze the role of ideational factors in the parliamentary politics of basic income. The analysis focuses on how the idea of basic income has historically been understood in the Finnish political discourse and what roles different political actors have played in putting the proposal on the agenda. Drawing on the findings of the three articles, this summary of the thesis further discusses the role of framing and policy design in understanding political agency and the constraints on basic income that relate to the prevalent categories of thinking. The basic income debate among the Finnish parties and policy entrepreneurs illustrates how an ideational institutionalist analysis could help build a more nuanced understanding of the political challenges related to basic income.

This summary of the thesis is structured as follows. In the second section, I will briefly discuss the idea of basic income, its relationship to the existing social protection systems, and the academic justifications for the policy. In the third section, I will present an overview of the Finnish political system, the welfare state, the history of the Finnish basic income debate, and the suitability of basic income to the Finnish institutional context. In the fourth section, I will give an overview of the existing studies on the politics of basic income that are relevant to this dissertation. In the fifth section, I will present the theoretical perspectives and concepts used in the dissertation, and in the sixth section, I will present the data and methods. In the seventh and eighth sections, I will first present and then analyze the empirical findings of the dissertation. In the ninth section, I will draw on the previous analysis to discuss the agency and constraints in the Finnish basic income discussion from the ideational institutionalist perspective. In the tenth section, I will conclude and discuss the contributions of this dissertation to understanding the political feasibility of basic income.

³ More information on the Finnish basic income experiment can be found on the website of Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland: <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/basic-income-experiment>.

2 BASIC INCOME AND CONTEMPORARY WELFARE STATES

I will start with a brief introduction to the key features of basic income as a policy idea and discuss its relationship to the contemporary forms of social protection. This constitutes the background for understanding the challenges of basic income in the context of the present-day welfare states. I will show that although basic income resembles some of today's social policy programs, it also differs from them in some important respects. As a policy idea, basic income has very different historical roots from the main forms of today's social security. Basic income would take the principle of universalism much further than any cash benefit program known today. The proposal is often justified with arguments that reach far beyond everyday social policy debates in terms of shifting the principles of economic distribution or pursuing higher ideals of a better society and individual freedom.

2.1 What is basic income?

According to a definition shared by most academics and advocacy organizations, basic income is a universal cash payment unconditionally delivered to each individual member of society at regular intervals (e.g., Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017; Standing, 2017). Thus, basic income is a universal, individual, unconditional, nonwithdrawable, and periodic cash benefit paid without a means-test or work requirement. In most proposals, basic income is also tax-free (see Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 10). However, the delivery and financing of the payments can be organized in many ways, and the level of the benefit may vary from very modest to high enough to cover what can be considered basic needs (De Wispelaere, 2015).

Thus, a basic income would provide each individual member of a political community (be it local, national or cross-national) with a certain amount of cash as a matter of right, regardless of their socioeconomic position or life choices. The potential models for implementing basic income may differ, for instance, in terms of the benefit level, eligibility criteria, funding mechanisms, extent of substitution for existing benefit programs, frequency of the payments, or administration (De

Wispelaere, 2015; Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019). This variety in potential implementation designs complicates the analysis of basic income, as many aspects of political feasibility depend on the design features of a particular basic income scheme. There may also be different social values or political ideologies underpinning the models. Both the motivations behind the scheme and the program design affect the expected outcomes of basic income. (De Wispelaere, 2015; Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019.)

The question that often divides proponents of basic income concerns the level of payment: some proponents accept only a benefit paid at ‘subsistence level’ to qualify as a proper basic income, while others see that any benefit that meets the criteria of being universal, individual and unconditional should be accepted as a basic income (see Torry, 2019b, 23). In this regard, proponents usually make a distinction between *partial* and *full* basic income schemes (e.g., Widerquist et al., 2013a, xiv). There are two ways to make this distinction. One is based on whether the level of the basic income is high enough to cover all of an individual’s ‘basic needs’ (full basic income) or only some of their needs (partial basic income). Another way to make the distinction is to focus on the extent to which the basic income scheme replaces existing benefit programs. This perspective has been more common in Finland (e.g., Kangas et al., 2016). A partial basic income would replace only part of the existing benefit system, while a full basic income would replace the system to the extent that very few additional benefits would be needed. An important question regarding ‘full’ basic income schemes concerns the earnings-related social insurance and its relationship to basic income. Social insurance plays a major role in developed welfare states such as Finland, and replacing social insurance by basic income would radically shift the fundamentals of providing welfare. Meanwhile, a ‘partial’ basic income replacing the flat-rate minimum income schemes would maintain the basic structures of the welfare state.

In addition to genuine basic income models, there is a family of ‘cognate’ proposals, such as negative income tax (NIT), which is paid only to those individuals whose income falls below a specified threshold, or participation income, which incorporates some behavioral conditions. Additionally, apart from ‘basic income’ (or UBI), there have been other names for the same proposal, such as ‘citizen’s income’ or ‘basic income guarantee’ (Torry, 2019a, 5). As one purpose of this study is to examine the historical evolution of the basic income idea in the Finnish political discourse, it also covers the discussion of proposals that can be considered part of the same family of ideas. This family of similar proposals is referred to with expressions such as ‘basic income-type policies’ or ‘basic income-related models’

throughout the study. These kinds of related concepts or cognate ideas discussed in the Finnish context are, for instance, citizen's wage, guaranteed minimum income, negative income tax, citizen's money or citizen's income.

In addition to the design features, such as the benefit level and funding mechanisms, the key attributes of universality, individuality and unconditionality must be defined when discussing implementation of the basic income policy (see De Wispelaere, 2015).

First, universality in principle means that all members of a given political community should be eligible for the benefit. Eligibility for basic income might be based, for instance, on citizenship, permanent residency, or fiscal residence in a political community, usually determined on a territorial basis (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 9). Although basic income in principle is universal, there may still be 'targeting within universalism' (see Skocpol, 1991), that is, variation in the level of payment to different categories of recipients. For instance, elderly people or those with disabilities could be favored by granting them a more generous basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015, 54-55; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 9). Furthermore, the level of basic income may fluctuate in line with regional variations in the cost of living or economic indicators, such as GDP per capita, for the scheme to still be universal (De Wispelaere, 2015, 55; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 9).

In basic income models, more indirect targeting to less-advantaged groups may also exist in the form of taxation, provided that the better-off segments of the population contribute more to financing the scheme through taxation and the less well-off groups benefit relatively more from it. It has also been proposed that in the first stage of implementation, basic income should cover only certain age groups or other segments of the population and that the degree of universalism should be extended by gradually expanding coverage. (De Wispelaere, 2015, 50-51.)

Second, individuality in a basic income scheme means that the grant should be allocated directly to each individual recipient, instead of a family or household (De Wispelaere, 2015, 51-52). In principle, individuality also means that the level of the grant is independent of the household situation (Van Parijs, 2004). However, there have been some deviations from this principle in actual proposals to implement the scheme. In some proposals, the level of the individual grant would be adjusted to the household situation, or basic income would be granted on a household basis (Perkiö, 2013a). A strictly individual scheme would avoid questions concerning the appropriate definition of a household and arbitrary discrimination against some lifestyle choices, but the individuals sharing housing expenses would end up better-off than those living alone (De Wispelaere, 2015, 51-52).

The third and perhaps most complex issue regarding basic income is that of unconditionality. Conditionality refers to the conditions that may restrict a person's eligibility to the benefit (De Wispelaere, 2015, 52). Those conditions may relate to a recipient's economic situation (means-tested benefits), membership in a certain category (for instance, unemployed or disabled individuals), or conduct (behavioral requirements for recipients) (Clasen & Clegg, 2007).

Basic income is claimed to be an unconditional benefit in the sense that it would be paid to all individuals irrespective of their income or property (without means-testing), without any conditions on how to use the money and without any behavioral (labor market) conditions (see Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017; Standing, 2017). The unconditionality aspect often raises normative questions on reciprocity (e.g., Birnbaum, 2012) and whether the societal contributions of the recipients should still be somehow controlled. There is a common fear that people would quit their jobs and 'surf all day off Malibu' with their basic incomes (Van Parijs, 1991). Another question is whether the right to basic income should (temporarily) be withheld from some individuals, for instance, those serving prison sentences (see Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 9). Some scholars have seen a mildly conditional participation income as a more legitimate option than a fully unconditional scheme (Atkinson, 1996; Hiilamo & Komp, 2018).

2.2 Basic income and the current forms of social protection

The present-day welfare states offer various kinds of social protection programs to their citizens. The major welfare programs of today took their shape in the postwar era (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This era of the emergence of modern welfare states (1945-1975) was characterized by progressing market capitalism and industrialization, rapid economic growth, (male) full employment, development of progressive taxation, strong regulation of the financial sector, and dominance of Keynesian macroeconomics (e.g., Esping-Andersen, 1990; Piketty, 2014). This era was also the time of the development of modern citizenship and civil rights (Marshall, 2014).

Of today's social protection schemes, social assistance has the longest historical roots, reaching back to ancient poor aid and charity. Those were based on voluntary contributions by the better-off members of societies to mitigate the hardships of the poorest – often with strong behavioral control. (Béland & Mahon, 2016, 16; Van

Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 52-61.) The social assistance programs of today provide means-tested last-resort income security to the poorest.

Social insurance programs, in turn, are based on very different principles. The early social insurance programs emerged alongside industrialization to protect workers and their families from the occurrence of conditions such as disability, sickness, unemployment, or old age (Béland & Mahon, 2016, 9-10; Esping-Andersen, 1990). Nationwide programs grew from the first initiatives based on workers' mutual aid and contributions to the common pool. Social insurance plays a major role in all advanced welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990). As opposed to old poor-aid programs, the emergence of social insurance made the right to welfare a benefit of full citizenship (Pierson, 2006, 109). Everyone who had paid their contribution to the pool was entitled to a benefit whenever facing a risk covered by social insurance.

In addition to social assistance and social insurance schemes, various universal welfare programs emerged in the postwar era, particularly in the United Kingdom and Nordic countries (Anttonen et al., 2012; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005). The universal programs provide access to services or benefits to all without discretion or a previous contribution. Titmuss (2014, 38) describes universal programs as 'available and accessible to the whole population in such ways as would not involve users in any humiliating loss of status, dignity or self-respect' or a 'sense of inferiority, pauperism, shame or stigma'. However, universalism has historically taken many context-specific forms (Anttonen, 2002; Anttonen et al., 2012), and a variety of programs with different eligibility criteria have been labeled 'universal' (Cox, 2004, 209). Most typical universal programs are public services, child and family allowances, and state pensions. Additionally, some of the social-insurance-type programs, such as the minimum sickness allowance in Finland, are universal in the sense that they are funded by mandatory income-related payments and cover the entire population. In many ways, the universal welfare programs come close to the idea of basic income.

However, as a policy idea, basic income has different historical roots from any of the current forms of social protection. The historical views are still echoed in the contemporary basic income debate. The origin of the basic income idea is often traced back to a pamphlet by Thomas Paine (1737-1809), a prominent figure in the American and French revolutionary movements⁴. In his *Agrarian Justice* (1797), Paine

⁴ However, connections between the early 'basic income-like' proposals and the contemporary basic income discussion have been made more recently, as many of today's academics draw their justification for basic income from arguments similar to what Paine and other early advocates put forward (see Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017).

proposed one-time payments of fifteen pounds sterling to all individuals, rich and poor, reaching the age of 21, and from the age of 50 onward, an annual sum amounting to ten pounds. Paine justified his proposal based on the view that the earth was the common property of humankind and that the privatization of land withdrew from some people their natural right to enjoy this shared inheritance. In Paine's view, the landowner was entitled only to the value of improvements made by cultivation of the land, but as for the value of the land in its natural, uncultivated state, he or she was obliged to pay compensation to others for the loss of their share of the common inheritance. The grant was to be paid out of a national fund based on 'ground-rents' paid by landowners for the value of unimproved land. (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 70-71.)

After Paine, similar ideas of a universal grant paid as a share of the natural or social inheritance of humankind surfaced in the writings of various nineteenth-century thinkers across Europe (see Cunliffe & Erreygers, 2004; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 72-78). The idea of a universal grant became a subject of short-lived public debate in the United Kingdom shortly after World War I under the names 'state bonus', 'social credit', and 'social dividend'. Those proposals were commonly understood as a share of the national product to each citizen and a stimulus to domestic consumption in the context of a stagnating economy. (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 78-82.) A key difference from the rationales for contemporary welfare programs was that in the early justifications, the universal grant was perceived as a fair share of the kind of resources to which every human being should have an equal entitlement. Above anything else, a universal grant appeared as an imprescriptible economic right of every human being.

In the context of the present-day welfare states, basic income would represent a truly path-departing policy. Through the dominance of social insurance, social rights have historically been strongly tied to employment (Standing, 2009). Unemployment is a product of industrial societies, and more than any other social contingency, it has shaped modern welfare-state institutions (Briggs, 2014, 15). Most welfare programs covering the working-age population are by design geared toward maximizing labor-market participation (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 22). A 'full' version of basic income would fundamentally shift the logic of providing welfare. However, even more modest 'partial' basic income schemes would shift the key principles of today's welfare policies, namely those related to needs assessment and labor market conditions. As a benefit paid to the whole population with no employment-related conditions, basic income has been regarded as 'fundamentally opposing the foundations of the common welfare systems that are in place nowadays' (Roosma &

van Oorschot, 2019, 2). Not only would basic income take the principle of universalism significantly further than any known cash benefit program before, but (even in its ‘partial’ form) it would also by default provide a legitimate exit option from employment (see Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017). Unlike most of today’s welfare programs, basic income would not entail any mechanism to steer people’s choices toward what is considered good for themselves and for society.

2.3 Justifications for basic income

The academic literature presents a variety of justifications for basic income. While some concern more pragmatic aspects of social policy, others reach far beyond everyday social policy debates. The justifications address more fundamental questions related to the fair distribution of economic resources, a good society and individual freedom. Many advocates believe that basic income would profoundly alter socioeconomic relations and enable pursuing higher social ideals and alternative futures.

Obviously the first to use the concept of basic income was the British political economist George D. H. Cole in the 1930s (Van Parijs & Vanderborght 2017, 80). Cole defended basic income as part of a fair economy, in which incomes would be ‘distributed partly as rewards for work, and partly as direct payments from the State to every citizen as ‘social dividends’ – a recognition of each citizen’s claim as a consumer to share the common heritage of productive power’ (Cole, 1935, 235). At approximately the same time, another Oxford economist, James Meade, advocated a social dividend as a central ingredient of a just and efficient economy (Van Parijs & Vanderborght 2017, 81). In the 1960s and 1970s, proposals for guaranteed income were widely debated in North America as a new antipoverty measure and advocated by many of the leading economists of the time, such as James Tobin and Milton Friedman (Steensland, 2008a; 2008b). However, the rationale for the guaranteed income proposals differed from the ‘social dividend’ perspective present in earlier writings. The proposals were discussed in terms of poverty reduction rather than just allocation of economic resources.

Starting from the 1970s, the idea of basic income surfaced in academic and political debates in various European countries (Van Parijs & Vanderborght 2017, 95-98). In this early period of the contemporary debate, basic income was often considered an alternative to the growth-based full-employment society that was believed to be coming to an end. Perhaps the most influential academic work on the

topic was Van Parijs's (1995) Rawlsian justification for a 'highest sustainable basic income' as a measure of 'real freedom for all'. The liberal-egalitarian case for basic income made by Van Parijs considered the policy in terms of distributive justice and maximizing the economic prospects of the least advantaged. This justification for basic income has been widespread in social philosophical debates (e.g., Birnbaum, 2012; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017). According to the liberal-egalitarian reasoning, mere formal libertarian freedom is not enough for those who lack economic resources to make free decisions. With a basic income, people would have genuine prospects to lead the kind of lives they wanted⁵. However, it has been noted that the liberating effects of basic income are bound to context and that the policy can only become a source of equal freedom as a part of wider struggle to democratize societies (Haagh, 2019).

Alongside the growing political attention over the past two decades (e.g., Caputo, 2012; Downes & Steward, 2018), academic attention to basic income has increased. The liberal-egalitarian reasoning has been accompanied by the Republican perspective, which considers the freedom provided by basic income as an absence of domination by others. According to the Republican argument, the socioeconomic independence provided by basic income would balance the asymmetrical power relations that enable some individuals to interfere in the lives of others (Casassas, 2007; Pettit, 2007). Thus, the unconditional economic floor would allow individuals to gain more economic sovereignty and capacity to govern their own lives (Casassas & De Wispelaere, 2015). Providing an exit option from social relations – be they employment or marital relations – basic income would grant more bargaining power to those in weaker socioeconomic positions (Casassas, 2007; Pettit, 2007). Only with adequate material resources can individuals make reasonable choices, free from unreasoned control by others (Standing, 2017, 58-59).

Some scholars have argued that basic income has the capacity to further transform societal power relations. They have even argued that it will plant the seeds of communism (van der Veen & Van Parijs, 1986) or socialism (Wright, 2006) within the capitalist system. For Wright (2010), basic income serves as a tool for emancipatory social change toward democratic egalitarian goals, a 'real utopia'. According to Pateman (2006, 109), providing people with more autonomy and self-government, basic income would serve as a cornerstone of any attempt to democratize societies. Basic income would 'help break the long-standing link

⁵ Van Parijs's argument for basic income has been contested by many, especially from the perspective of reciprocity (e.g. White, 1997). However, as this study is focused on the political feasibility of basic income, it does not go deeply into the philosophical debates.

between income and employment and end the mutual reinforcement of the institutions of marriage, employment and citizenship' (Pateman, 2006, 102). Postgrowth scholars, instead, have considered basic income in terms of an ecological transition. Linked with green taxes, basic income would help make production and consumption patterns more sustainable in a socially just way (e.g., Howard et al., 2019). Furthermore, by disentangling economic security from employment and enabling a greater variety of (more sustainable) lifestyle choices, it could help end economies' growth-dependency (e.g., Andersson, 2010; Pinto, 2020).

A large part of the argumentation for basic income concerns just allocation of economic resources in the monetary economy. Building on the early proposals of Paine (1797) and others, basic income has been regarded as a 'fair share' (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017) or a 'social dividend' (Standing, 2017) of certain resources that can be considered common property of the nation or humankind. Such collectively owned resources may range from natural resources to the intellectual heritage of humankind. Rather than merely a new model for social security, this perspective proposes an elementary shift in how economic resources are distributed. Standing (2017, 284) characterizes basic income as 'the anchor of a new income distribution system' that would give each individual member of a political community a certain sum of money as their rightful share. This perspective is represented in the Alaskan annual dividend scheme, financed through the citizens' wealth fund based on oil revenues (Widerquist & Howard, 2012), and in the proposals of financing basic income out of national wealth funds or as a carbon tax dividend (Hansen, 2015; Howard, 2017).

However, whenever basic income has entered political debates, the principled justifications have played a minor role. For instance, recent reports by the ILO (Ortiz et al., 2018), World Bank (Gentilini et al., 2020) and OECD (2017) consider basic income in terms of how it could help overcome the current problems of social security systems. Additionally, the media debate has focused on pragmatic questions related to social security and labor-market change (Perkiö et al., 2019).

The 'pragmatic' justifications for basic income presented in the academic literature have considered it more as a tool to achieve specific political goals than in terms of social justice or societal transformation. The problems at the center of the basic income debate have included poverty and the incomplete coverage of welfare systems. Basic income has been considered as an economic floor below which no individual can fall (De Wispelaere, 2015, 15), a social security that would avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and stigmatizing of recipients (Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019, 480), and a tool to allow more flexibility in organizing work and care responsibilities

across the life cycle (Martinelli, 2017, 4; De Wispelaere, 2015, 17). Basic income has also been championed as reducing the economic dependency of women on their partners and providing economic conditions for a more gender-equal distribution of care work and paid labor (Zelleke, 2008; Miller et al., 2019). Questions related to the precarization of work and automation have been a focus of the basic income debate. Basic income has been considered to reduce the so-called poverty or unemployment traps by enabling individuals to accept short-term jobs without fear of losing their benefits (e.g., De Wispelaere, 2015, 28; Martinelli, 2017, 4). In the era of digitalization, basic income has been discussed as a means of providing economic security to the increasing number of displaced workers (Pulkka, 2017; Martinelli, 2017). Basic income has also been argued to improve the bargaining power of employees in the precarious labor market (e.g., Standing, 2011; 2017). Yet it remains disputed how likely an exit option from employment provided by basic income would be (Birnbaum & De Wispelaere, 2020).

3 BASIC INCOME IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FINNISH WELFARE STATE

The political feasibility of basic income cannot be understood without knowing the context in which the debate is taking place. During the examined period (1980-2018), there have been many political, economic and ideological changes in Finnish society. The context of the early debate (1980s) was a time of the economic affluence and maturation of the Finnish welfare state. From the 1990s onward, the welfare state entered the era of retrenchment and financial austerity. To contextualize the findings of the thesis, I will next give an overview of the key features of the Finnish welfare state and political system. Drawing on previous studies, I will also briefly describe the key features of the Finnish basic income debate. Then, I will discuss the basic income proposal in the Finnish institutional context.

3.1 The Finnish welfare state and political system

The Finnish welfare state is usually considered part of the Nordic ‘Social Democratic’ family (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Some core characteristics of the Nordic (or Scandinavian) ‘model’ have historically been generous and comprehensive welfare systems, organized labor markets, high female labor-force participation, and comprehensive and high-quality public services (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013). According to Cox (2004), more than any specific policies, three fundamental values – universalism, solidarity and labor de-commodification – have historically defined the Scandinavian welfare model. Also, gender equality has been an important political principle in the Nordic countries (Anttonen, 2002). However, in addition to similarities, there are some crucial differences among the Nordic countries (Kettunen, 2012, 23), and the development of the Nordic states has diversified over time (Kvist, 1999; Kananen, 2012).

The Nordic welfare states have been described as universal – as opposed to selective or residual – because many welfare programs have covered the entire population (Anttonen, 2002; Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005). However, the principle of universalism has historically taken many context-specific forms across countries

(Anttonen et al., 2012). In Cox's view (2004), the values of universalism, solidarity and labor decommodification have been flexible enough to adapt to the changing political climate, although in terms of actual policies, the Scandinavian model has been hollowed out. At least in practice, many social security reforms of the past decades have weakened the universalist and egalitarian principles (e.g., Kuivalainen & Niemelä, 2010; Kantola & Kananen, 2013). The universalist principles have mingled with the dominance of laborist values in the Nordic societies (Kettunen, 2012). According to Kettunen (2012, 23), the notion of social citizenship that has prevailed in the Nordic countries has strongly emphasized the centrality of wage work. In Kettunen's (2012) view, a high degree of decommodification has never existed in the Nordic countries because the aim of increasing labor-market participation has been central to welfare policies.

Finland was a poor agrarian society with an undeveloped welfare state until relatively late. Until the late 1950s, most Finns were living off agriculture and forestry (Alestalo & Uusitalo, 1986). The rapid industrialization and expansion of the welfare state from the early 1960s onward made Finland a country with one of the highest standards of living in the world (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013, 8-9). In the 1950s and 1960s, the welfare-state idea broke through in Finnish politics, and the political hegemony rapidly shifted from an 'antiwelfare state' to a 'prowelfare state' (Kangas, 2006; Bergholm & Saari, 2009; Uljas, 2012). The period of enlargement of the welfare sector represents a paradigm shift in Finnish social policy, in which the welfare attitudes of the political elites shifted in a very short period of time (Kangas, 2006; Uljas, 2012). This shift in the political hegemony was accelerated on the one hand by an organized labor movement that led to the first left-wing majority in the Finnish parliament (Uljas, 2012) and on the other by a powerful scholarly blueprint by Pekka Kuusi (1961), which deployed social policy as a necessary part of a well-functioning economy (Alestalo & Uusitalo, 1986; Bergholm & Saari, 2009). However, due to various political trade-offs, full implementation of many welfare programs still took decades to materialize (Kangas, 2006).

Finland is a multiparty democracy whose political history has been dominated by three large parties (the Social Democratic Party representing the labor interests, the Center Party representing the agrarian interests, and the National Coalition Party representing the bourgeois interests). These three parties have been accompanied by a varying number of small or medium-sized parties. After 2011, the populist party (the Finns) has gained significantly more political influence. Finland has a unicameral parliament of two hundred members, elected every four years. The Finnish voting system is based on proportional representation, and the voters are allowed to choose

one candidate from a party list. Ordinarily it takes more than two parties to form a majority government, but hardly ever has a government included all three (or more recently, four) of the largest parties. (Pesonen & Riihinen, 2002, 137-140.) Parliament can enact legislation on the basis of a government proposal, a Member of Parliament's (MP) motion, or since 2012, a citizens' initiative. The parliament has 16 permanent special committees that handle government bills and other matters that fall under the competence of their corresponding ministries, and the Grand Committee, which focuses mainly on EU affairs. The composition of each committee reflects the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups. (Ibid., 156-159.) The party discipline is relatively strong, but different parties exercise different degrees of discipline (Ibid., 162). Table 1. shows the power relations among the Finnish parties represented in parliament during the examined period.

Table 1. Parties and their seats in the national parliament during the examined period (1980-2018); government parties marked with **bold**⁶

Party	Election period	'79	'83	'87	'91	'95	'99	'03	'07	'11	'15
		'83	'87	'91	'95	'99	'03	'07	'11	'15	'19
Social Democratic Party (SDP)		52	57	56	48	63	51	53	45	42	34
Centre Party (Kesk.)		36	38	40	55	44	48	55	51	35	49
National Coalition Party (Kok.)		47	44	53	40	39	46	40	50	44	37
Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) / Left Alliance (Vas.)		35	26	16	19	22	20	19	17	14	12
Swedish People's Party (RKP)		9	10	12	11	11	11	8	9	9	9
Greens (Vihr.)			2	4	10	9	11	14	15	10	15
Finnish Rural Party (SMP) / Finns (PS)		7	17	9	7	1	1	3	5	39	38
Christian Democratic Party (KD)		9	3	5	8	7	10	7	7	6	5
Liberal People's Party (LKP)		4			1						
Young Finns						2					
Other		1	3	5	1	2	2	1	1	1	1

⁶ Sources: Finnish Government: Finnish Governments and Ministers since 1917 (<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/governments-and-ministers>) and Statistics Finland: election data (<https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/67154>).

One peculiarity of Finland is the historical strength of the Agrarian Party (since 1966 the Centre Party) in the welfare state formation. From the postwar period until the late 1980s, the Social Democrats (SDP) and the Agrarian/Centre Party (KESK) were of approximately equal strength. As a consequence of the shared leadership of the Agrarian/Centre Party and the SDP during the period of enlargement, the Finnish welfare state is a mixture of labor and agrarian interests (Alestalo & Uusitalo, 1986, 203). Those two parties were closely followed by the conservative National Coalition Party (KOK), which has gained significantly more political influence since the late 1980s. There has also been a relatively strong party to the left of the Social Democrats (Finnish People's Democratic League, since 1990, the Left Alliance, VAS), which has frequently participated in coalition governments. The Finnish electoral system has also enabled a varying number of minor parties to enter the parliament. The Greens (VIHR) won their first seats in the late 1980s and grew over time into a medium-sized party and a partner in both left- and right-wing coalitions. In 2011, the far-right populist Finns Party (PS, formerly known as True Finns), a descendant of the old Rural Party (SMP), entered the forefront of Finnish politics (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013, 13-14). After the 2015 elections, the party became a coalition partner of PM Juha Sipilä's center-right government but split while in office in 2017. From May 2019, Finland has been governed by the center-left coalition led by the SDP, consisting of the Centre Party, the Greens, the Left Alliance and the minor Swedish People's Party.

Finnish social policy comprises both universal and corporatist elements. Historically, the Social Democrats (often supported by the National Coalition) have been proponents of employment-related social security, and the Agrarian/Centre Party (often supported by the communists) has defended universal flat-rate benefits that would also cover the rural population (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013, 20, 43). Universalism has existed in the form of universal child allowances and state pensions (from 2012 onward a guaranteed pension), and in social services. Additionally, the Finnish medical insurance is universal in nature (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013, 25-26). The unemployment benefit system is relatively universal in the sense that it offers a last-resort benefit with an unlimited duration to job-seekers who do not qualify for programs related to work history. For this reason, the Finnish unemployment benefit system can be regarded as institutionally close to a partial basic income model (Halmetoja et al., 2018). However, to qualify for an unemployment benefit, a recipient needs to register as a jobseeker, be available for full-time employment and

take part in active labor-market policy measures (such as trainings) prescribed to them (Kela, 2019).

Finnish political history has been characterized on the one hand by the multiparty system with three leading parties of almost equal strength, which has forced parties to make compromises and seek consensus. On the other hand, Finnish political history has been characterized by the strong influence of labor-market organizations on social and employment policies. (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013, 13-15.) The Nordic welfare model has been based on the tripartite collaboration between social partners and the state, and employers' and employees' federations have veto power in social policy reforms (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013, 15-19). The tripartite system has been a challenge to reforming social policy. The corporatist bargaining power has been mentioned as one of the greatest obstacles to basic income in Finland, as the employers' and employees' federations have usually opposed the policy (Julkunen, 2009). However, the tripartite model has weakened in the past decades. Furthermore, the political landscape has changed as the populist party has grown, while the positions of the old leading parties have weakened.

Expansion of the Finnish welfare state took place until the 1990-1993 economic crisis, which was, at that point, the most severe crisis in the OECD countries since World War II (Kantola & Kananen, 2013). The 1990s recession dramatically changed the Finnish political landscape. The unemployment rate skyrocketed from 3.2 percent in 1990 to 16.6 percent in 1994 and remained above 10 percent until the end of the decade (Statistics Finland). The rise of unemployment led to increased social expenditure, while the GDP simultaneously fell. The government introduced a series of cutbacks in social benefits, which, however, could not prevent the public expenditure from increasing and the state running into debt (Kangas & Saloniemi 2013, 36). Despite the growing budget deficit, there was a persistent tendency to reduce taxation. The Finnish economy started recovering in 1994, but long-term unemployment and widening income inequality persisted (Kuivalainen & Niemelä, 2010). Also, the structural conditions of the welfare state had changed. While in the 1980s Finland was a country with a fairly young population and high participation rates, the later decades were overshadowed not only by high rates of unemployment, but also by an aging population (Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013).

The 1990s crisis served as a window of opportunity for neoliberal⁷ ideas and reforms to break through (Niemelä & Saarinen 2012; Kantola & Kananen, 2013). In

⁷ I use the expression 'neoliberal' throughout the thesis to refer to the political ideology emphasizing the primacy of 'free' markets over the state. This ideology became dominant in the western countries from the 1980s onwards. It has been manifested as privatization, financialization, marketization, de-

the aftermath of the recession, the discourse concerning the financial unsustainability of the welfare state became widely shared among the political elites, and the political climate grew favorable to welfare state retrenchment (Kantola, 2002). Scholars have observed a paradigm shift that occurred soon after the recession in economic and labor-market policy (Kananen, 2012; Kantola & Kananen, 2013), public administration (Niemelä & Saarinen, 2012), and social policy (Kantola & Kananen, 2013; Kuivalainen & Niemelä 2010). The ideas of competitiveness, economic efficiency, market-orientation, activation, and residual social policy started gaining ground in Finnish politics. These ideas pushed aside the old Keynesian welfare paradigm that was based on the active role of the state in regulating the economy and providing employment and the egalitarian ideals of generous public services and social welfare. The diffusion of workfare reforms across the Nordic countries in the 1990s (Cox, 1998; Kananen 2012, 559), and Finland's accession to the European Union in 1995 (Niemelä & Saarinen, 2012) paved the way for reforms by which the welfare-state institutions were 'modified to serve new competition-state functions' (Kettunen, 2012, 23).

Since the 1990s, financial austerity and the aim of 'activation' have guided the social policy reforms (Kantola & Kananen, 2017, 13-14; Saarinen et al., 2014). Alongside tax reductions and mitigation of tax progression, social security benefits have been weakened (Kantola & Kananen, 2017, 17). A series of reforms to improve work incentives have been carried out, ranging from increased benefit conditionality and sanctions to tax reforms and a heightened possibility of combining labor income with social security benefits. The reduction of incentive traps has also been a key target of various social security reform committees (e.g., the SATA Committee, 2007-2009). The tax reforms and weakening social security have contributed to the growing inequality (Kantola & Kananen, 2017, 17-18). The financial crash of 2008 was followed by a period of economic stagnation that lasted until 2015 (Kiander, 2018). However, compared to the 1990s recession, the subsequent growth of unemployment was rather modest (Statistics Finland). However, the increase in long-term unemployment was one of the main motivations behind the basic income experiment of Juha Sipilä's government that took office in 2015 (De Wispelaere et al., 2019).

The structural transformation of the Finnish economy from a Fordist industrial economy to a post-Fordist knowledge and service economy since the 1990s has

regulation, and austerity in public spending. In Finland, the shift from Keynesian to neoliberal economic policy happened after the 1990s recession. (see Sulkunen, 2015.) This ideological shift profoundly changed the context for the basic income discussion.

radically changed the labor markets (Koistinen, 2014). This development has increased attention to the social security of those in nonstandard employment (see Jokinen, 2018). Although there are competing views on how much the labor markets have changed, the growth in self-employment, zero-hour contracts, work performed through agencies, and trainings without pay is clear (Jakonen, 2018). These labor-market changes have increased the number of people outside the categories of social security, which were created for a society dominated by permanent full-time employment (Honkanen, 2018). The gaps in social protection keep those in most precarious employment situations in constant insecurity (Jokinen, 2018).

Social security reform has been a persistent part of government programs and strategy papers since the 1990s (Kuivalainen & Niemelä 2010, 270). However, all attempts to effect substantial change to the welfare system have eventually failed. Before the 2019 general elections, a welfare reform appeared on the agenda of all the parties that won seats in the national parliament. The reform proposals of the parties shared the aim of streamlining the benefit systems and making the benefits more compatible with occasional employment, but the parties had very different stances related to the conditionality of welfare benefits. In February 2020, the center-left government of Sanna Marin appointed a parliamentary committee to formulate a proposal for social security reform during two parliamentary terms (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 14.2.2020). The aims of the reform are to make the social security system fairer and better functioning for users and to incentivize work and education.

3.2 The Finnish basic income debate

The origin of the Finnish basic income debate is often traced back to the 1970s or early 1980s (Andersson, 2000; Ikkala, 2012; Julkunen, 2009), when concepts such as *citizen's wage* (in Finnish *kansalaispalkka*) and *negative income tax* (in Finnish *negatiivinen tulovero*) appeared in public and political debates. The early discussion was linked to a notion that poverty still existed in one of the most developed welfare states and to concerns about the future of the growth-based full-employment economy (e.g., Lampinen & Soininvaara, 1980). Additionally, during the 1980s, proposals of 'guaranteed income' gained momentum in Finnish politics. Two reports published by the National Board of Social Welfare in 1986 proposed an 'income guarantee' that was defined as something between basic income and social assistance (Ikkala, 2012, 67). Before the 1987 general elections, the debate on various basic income-

related concepts peaked, and variants of guaranteed income were endorsed by nearly all parties across the political spectrum. However, the economic boom of the late 1980s and the following financial crash in the early 1990s pushed the income guarantee proposals off of the political agenda. (Ikkala, 2012, 67.) However, the concept of basic income was still discussed by a ‘Finnish Basic Income Group’ founded by young politicians in the late 1980s (Lahtinen, 1992).

The next wave of the basic income debate emerged in the aftermath of the early 1990s recession and lasted until the end of the decade. In 1993, Jorma Huuhtanen, Minister of Social Affairs of the Centre Party, appointed a committee to plan a social security reform. He commissioned Osmo Soininvaara, Member of Parliament of the Greens, to create a model of basic income to be used as an inspiration for the reform. However, basic income was abandoned by the committee, and only minor reforms were carried out. During the 1990s, the Centre Party, the Greens, the Left Alliance, and two small liberal parties – the Liberal People’s Party and the Young Finns – nurtured variants of the basic income proposal. Instead, the trade unions and employers’ federation voiced strong opposition to the policy, considering it incompatible with a work-based society (Julkunen, 2009, 273). The trade union federation (SAK) viewed the proposal as a neoliberal plot to increase low-paid employment by supplementing low salaries and to dismantle the earnings-related social security (Julkunen, 2009, 273; see also Kopra, 2007).

The early 2000s was a more silent period in the basic income debate. In 2006, public attention was captured by the EuroMayDay demonstration of the ‘precarity movement’, which asserted that a high basic income would increase the bargaining power of precarious labor (Perkiö, 2013b). This demonstration was the emergence of a new wave of debate, in which the Greens took a leading role by publishing a model of partial basic income that was argued to be neutral for public financing (Honkanen et al., 2007). After promoting basic income in the 2007 general elections, the Greens entered the government led by Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen of the Centre Party (2007-2011), which made social security reform a centerpiece of its agenda. The government appointed the SATA Committee (2007-2009) to plan welfare reform that would improve benefit coverage, streamline the benefit systems and improve incentives to work. Although the assignment of the committee had some resemblance to basic income, it did not include the principles of universality and unconditionality, which are usually considered key features of basic income (SATA-komitea, 2009). However, after no consensus was reached on the shape of the reform, only minor modifications of the benefit systems were carried out.

The basic income debate accelerated anew in the early 2010s. In 2011, the Left Alliance published its own model of partial basic income combined with progressive taxation of labor and capital income. Starting in 2012, the advocacy group BIEN Finland ran a citizens' initiative campaign on basic income. While the campaign eventually failed to collect the required number of signatures, it still drew media attention to the issue as it was one of the first citizens' initiatives in Finland. In 2014, the think-tanks Tänk (Forss & Kanninen, 2014) and Sitra (The Finnish Innovation Fund) proposed a basic income experiment based on randomization. The idea was endorsed by the Centre Party, at the time the largest opposition party (see Lehto, 2018; De Wispelaere et al., 2019). The Centre Party won the general elections of 2015, and its leader Juha Sipilä became the prime minister. Sipilä formed a coalition government with the conservative National Coalition Party and the populist Finns Party – parties that have historically opposed basic income (Stirton et al., 2017). However, in 2015, the concept of basic income surfaced for the first time on the government's platform as a commitment to conduct an experiment on basic income. Despite their disagreements on the policy, all the government parties accepted the trial. The only party that openly opposed it was the Christian Democrats, a small opposition party, although there was also skepticism toward it among the coalition partners.

The main purpose of the two-year trial, which ran from January 2017 to December 2018, was to explore the employment effects of a partial basic income paid to recipients of basic unemployment security (labor-market subsidy or basic unemployment allowance). The experiment consisted of paying a monthly tax-exempt basic income of 560 euros to 2,000 randomly-selected unemployed individuals between ages 25 and 58 across the country. The basic income was paid regardless of any other income the recipients may have had or whether they were actively looking for work. The amount of basic income was approximately the same as the net level of the unemployment benefit it replaced (Kela, 6.5.2020). The experiment was widely criticized for covering only a narrow segment of the population, failing to incorporate reform to recipients' income taxation, and leaving out young people and the self-employed (see Lehto, 2018; De Wispelaere et al., 2019). However, the experiment design was unique in that it was the first in the world to adopt nationwide randomization in the selection of participants and being statutory for the participants (De Wispelaere et al., 2019, 396-397; Kela, 6.5.2020).

The employment rate of the basic income recipients improved slightly more during the period of experiment than that of the control group, which consisted of recipients of the minimum unemployment benefits (Hämäläinen et al., 2020).

However, the employment effects were diverse and obviously depended on the life situation of the recipient. For instance, the employment effects were more positive for families with children than for others, and some of the interviewed recipients reported great improvements in their employment situation, while others reported no effects at all. (Hämäläinen et al., 2020; Blomberg et al., 2020.) The basic income recipients reported higher trust in other people and institutions in society, greater well-being and health, less mental stress and depression, more economic security, and more life satisfaction than the control group. The recipients also had more confidence in their own future, and a more positive perception of their cognitive abilities and their capacity to influence things than the control group. (Tuulio-Henriksson & Simanainen, 2020; Lassander & Jauhiainen, 2020; Kangas et al., 2020.) The basic income experiment provided some of the recipients with new opportunities to participate in society, such as through voluntary work or informal care. Also, many interviewees said that the basic income strengthened their feeling of autonomy. (Blomberg et al., 2020.) However, the introduction of the so-called ‘activation model’ in January 2018, which imposed stricter participation requirements for the recipients of unemployment benefits, complicated the evaluation of the experiment’s findings (see De Wispelaere et al., 2019).

In 2015, prior to the experiment, the election compass of the national broadcast company YLE showed that 52.5 percent of the elected members of parliament fully or partially agreed with the statement ‘Finland should implement a basic income scheme that would replace the current minimum level of social security’ (see Ruottinen & Perkiö, 25.4.2015). Before the 2019 elections, with a slightly different formulation of the question (‘Social security should be developed so that part of the current benefits will be replaced by an unconditional basic income paid to all working age people’), support dropped to 30 percent of the elected members of parliament⁸. Although there are individual supporters of basic income in nearly all parties, the Greens, the Left Alliance, and – to a lesser extent – the Centre Party stand out as proponents of the idea (Stirton et al., 2017). While the relatively small green and left-wing parties are typical of basic income advocates worldwide, the Finnish peculiarity is that the Centre Party, historically one of the leading parties, has consistently showed support for the idea. The history of the party as the voice of the agrarian population and a supporter of universal flat-rate benefits (Kangas et al., 2013) could

⁸ The data of the election compass with the identification of respondents elected to the parliament in 2019 were requested from YLE for the research purpose. The data without identification of the respondents are available to all with a Creative Commons license. <https://vaalikone.yle.fi/eduskuntavaali2019?lang=fi-FI>.

be one explanation for the party's interest in basic income. At the onset of the experiment, the most committed advocates of basic income, the Greens and the Left Alliance, paradoxically found themselves in opposition.

Few previous studies have focused on the discursive aspects of the Finnish basic income debate. Julkunen (2009, 279-282) identifies six discourses used by proponents of basic income in the Finnish discussion: (1) supplementing low-paid employment; (2) broadening the concept of work; (3) reducing the categorization of people; (4) supporting small-scale entrepreneurship; (5) enabling antiproductivism and work-time reduction; and (6) reducing bureaucratic control of people and giving people the power to say no to unsatisfying employment. In my own analysis (Perkiö, 2013b)⁹ of the basic income discussion in 2006-2012 in the mainstream print media and the party media, I found that many of the pro-basic income statements were framed in terms of incentivizing labor-market activity. This framing was combined with a framing that emphasized the need to provide better coverage and economic security for those in nonstandard employment. Another framing, used mainly by left-wing actors and precarity activists,¹⁰ emphasized the potential of basic income to increase the autonomy and bargaining power of precarious employees and redistribute financial resources. The oppositional framing regarded basic income as unsuitable to an employment-based society, financially unsustainable and a reform that would increase inequality and social exclusion. Examining the framing of basic income and citizen's wage in the leading daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat in 1980-2015 (Perkiö, 2020), I observed a radical shift in the framing in the early 1990s. While in the 1980s the frames emphasized activities outside of paid employment, after the 1990s recession, the proposals were increasingly framed in terms of labor-market incentives. I also found that since the late 1990s, there was increasing attention to the economic security of those in nonstandard employment, and basic income was portrayed as an investment in entrepreneurial activities.

Comparative studies have observed differences in the framing of basic income between countries. Comparing the framing of basic income in the year 2017 in the Canadian, Finnish and Spanish mainstream print media, we (Perkiö et al., 2019) found that the specific feature of the Finnish debate was the strength of the labor

⁹ My analyses of the media debate on basic income discussed here are not included in this dissertation.

¹⁰ The Finnish precarity movement (2004-2009) was part of the Europe-wide youth mobilization that drew from autonomous Marxism to make claims about workers' autonomy and economic redistribution. The movement was known for its provocative EuroMayDay demonstrations (see Monti & Purokuru, 2018).

activation perspective in justifying basic income. In all three countries, basic income was frequently framed as a policy needed because of the increased automation of work and as a tool to reform the complex benefit structures and reduce poverty and inequality. The strongest oppositional frame in all three countries concerned the alleged negative effects of basic income on work motivation and incentives. Comparing the basic income debate in the Finnish and Spanish parliaments in the periods 2005-2007 and 2015-2017, Eriksson (2019) made similar observations. According to Eriksson, both countries used a discourse concerning the need to fix the social security safety net as one of the main justifications for basic income, but in Finland, the activation perspective was emphasized, while the Spanish parliamentarians predominantly argued for basic income as a tool for greater individual autonomy.

Public opinion surveys have shown varying support for basic income among Finns. The support has ranged from 20 percent to 79 percent depending on the formulation of the question and the given details related to program design (Pulkka, 2018; 2020). The highest support rate (79%) was reported by the Centre Party think-tank e2 in 2015, which was most likely due to framing basic income in very positive terms as incentivizing work and entrepreneurship (Pulkka, 2018; 2020). A support rate of 39 percent was found by a survey conducted by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA in 2017 (Haavisto & Heikkinen, 2017), which framed basic income in terms of its potential problems, suggesting that if implemented at the level of minimum income, it would involve tightening income taxation. Studies by the research section of the Finnish Social Insurance Institution (Kela) found support of 69 percent with the only specification that the benefit is 'guaranteed automatically to everyone' (Airio et al., 2015). Yet, the support collapsed to between 29 and 35 percent when various levels of basic income were combined with speculative flat-rate taxes (Airio et al., 2016). The European Social Survey (2016) found 59-percent support for basic income in Finland with a definition of the policy as an unconditional benefit (Pulkka, 2018; 2020). Pulkka (2020) found that approximately half of Finns (51 percent) would support a partial basic income paid at the level of current minimum unemployment benefits (€560/month), while support for a full basic income of €1000 was only 20 percent. The highest support was for conditional participation income, at 78 percent of the respondents. A similar observation was made by Andersson and Kangas (2002), who found that Finns in general were in favor of generous minimum benefits but conditioned on participation.

3.3 Basic income in the institutional context of Finland

Some institutional features make a social security system more favorable to a policy such as basic income, while others make it more resistant to the policy. In the context of the Nordic countries, their strong legacies of universalist and egalitarian policies have been mentioned as principles on which a basic income model could build (Kildal and Kuhnle, 2005; Julkunen, 2009). Thus, there could only be a small step to basic income from universal child benefits, state pensions, and noncontributory and non-means-tested ‘basic social security’ that covers the working-age population (Julkunen, 2009, 262). However, diversification of identities and lifestyles has been a challenge to the old universalist policies (Anttonen et al., 2012). Basic income could be a cornerstone of the ‘new universalism’ (Mokka & Rantanen, 2019) that would increase people’s capacity to participate in society as it would liberate them from the strict categories of the old welfare policies.

Alongside universalism, the laborist ideology has strongly shaped the Finnish welfare institutions (Kettunen, 2012). In a society strongly committed to the idea of high-quality full-time employment with decent pay to all citizens, there is not much space for a policy such as basic income (Julkunen, 2009). As opposed to the flat-rate universalism more typical of liberal welfare regimes, the Nordic version of universalism has been grounded on labor solidarity and earnings-related schemes (Halmetoja et al., 2018). Although the Finnish unemployment benefit system is relatively universal, the principle of reciprocity and the duty of employment are strongly established at the institutional level (see Halmetoja et al., 2018). Additionally, the legacy of social corporatism in social policy decision-making will make the Nordic welfare model particularly resistant to basic income (Julkunen, 2009). However, Julkunen (2009) suggests that basic income could be more in line with the newer activation and flexibility paradigm than with the traditional Nordic model.

In the Finnish debate, basic income has often been understood as a partial basic income model that would replace some of the minimum benefit schemes. The contemporary basic income models that have been seriously discussed in Finland include the models of the Greens (first published in 2007, updated in 2014 and 2019) and the Left Alliance (two models published in 2011 and 2019). Those models aim to replace all benefits below the level of basic income with an unconditional benefit amounting to between €440 and €800, depending on the model (see e.g., Honkanen et al., 2017; Kannas & Kärkkäinen, 2014; Honkanen & Kajanoja, 2012). The schemes replaced would include the basic unemployment allowances, the minimum medical and rehabilitation allowances, the minimum parental and home care allowances, the

student benefits, and the ‘basic part’ of social assistance. The proposals would leave intact the housing benefits and earnings-related schemes for the portion exceeding the level of basic income. The partial basic income model tested by the government of Juha Sipilä took the level of the minimum unemployment benefit or job-seekers allowance (both of which amount to approximately €560 after taxes) as a point of reference. This amount of basic income was also proposed by the Greens before the 2015 general elections. The main source of financing the programs would be a reform of income taxation. Depending on the model, income taxation would be complemented by additional taxes, such as an increase in capital income taxation or environmental taxes. The aim of the models has generally been to finance the program with the proposed tax reform so that the income distribution and net incomes of individuals would not radically change from what they were before basic income.

Some reforms made to the Finnish unemployment benefit system since the 1990s have brought it institutionally close to a partial basic income (Halmetoja et al. 2018). Such reforms have included the 1993 legislation for a labor-market subsidy to cover unemployed individuals who are not eligible for the schemes related to work-history or earnings, individualization of the labor-market subsidy in 2012 (removal of the means-test against partner’s income) and the 2014 reform to facilitate the combination of low earnings with unemployment benefits (making it possible to earn up to 300 euros per month without that affecting the benefit). In its present shape, the labor-market subsidy offers minimum income security to all unemployed individuals for an unlimited duration¹¹ (Halmetoja et al. 2018). Additionally, the basic portion of the earnings-related unemployment benefit, basic unemployment benefit and labor-market subsidy are of equal amount. Some characteristics of the administration and funding of the Finnish social security system can also be regarded as supportive of a move toward a partial basic income (Halmetoja et al., 2018). These characteristics include the major role of general taxation in funding not only the flat-rate unemployment benefits, but also in the ‘basic part’ of the earnings-related unemployment benefit, and the role of Kela (the Finnish Social Insurance Institution) in centrally administering all flat-rate tax-funded benefits, including the

¹¹ Before the early 1990s, all long-term unemployed were entitled to a place in subsidized employment where they could renew their right to earnings-related unemployment benefits. This policy was gradually removed and replaced with the labor-market subsidy and sanctioning policies after the 1990s recession. At first, the receipt of the labor-market subsidy was to be limited to 300 days, but because of constitutional barriers, the program was eventually implemented with an unlimited duration, which made it institutionally close to a partial basic income (see Halmetoja et al., 2018, 5-6).

‘basic part’ of social assistance. However, all unemployment benefits are strictly conditional on availability for full-time employment and showing job-search efforts.

Some additional features of the Finnish legislation and social security institutions resemble basic income. The Section 19 “The right to social security” in The Constitution of Finland, which entered into force on 1 March 2000, states that “those who cannot obtain the means necessary for a life of dignity have the right to receive indispensable subsistence and care” (Finlex, 2018). In practice, this means that every legal resident is entitled to a basic amount of means-tested social assistance, supplemented by assistance for housing and health care costs. The basic amount of social assistance (in 2021, €504,06 for a person living alone) can be temporarily reduced by 20 or 40 percent for the duration of maximum two months if a non-disabled person refuses to participate in active labor market policy measures¹². This means that there is already a subjective right to a minimum level of income that every legal resident passing the means-test is entitled to without labor market-related conditions.

Apart from the unemployment benefit schemes, there are flat-rate non-contributory benefits for social risks such as illness, disability, old age, birth of a child, or the loss of a provider that are not subject to behavioral conditions¹³. All persons in the mentioned risk categories have a right to a basic benefit without means-test, and there are behavioral conditions only for the recipients of the unemployment benefits. From the institutional point of view, a partial basic income replacing these flat-rate benefits, the minimum unemployment benefits, the ‘basic part’ of the earnings-related unemployment benefits, and the ‘basic part’ of the social assistance would not be a very radical step. This kind of basic income would still leave the contribution principle of the earnings-related schemes intact. From the institutional point of view, the key barriers for such a partial basic income scheme would be the strict means-test of the social assistance and housing subsidies on one hand, and the behavioral conditions and sanctions of the unemployment benefit schemes on the other.

In the preparation of the basic income experiment, microsimulations were run with various levels of basic income combined with different (flat-rate or progressive) income taxation levels (Kangas et al. 2016; Kangas et al., 2017). Those microsimulations estimated the budgetary and distributional impacts of different basic income models and their effects on economic work incentives. This work provides valuable information on integrating a basic income model in the Finnish

¹² Kela: Social assistance: <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/social-assistance>.

¹³ Kela: Kela benefits: <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/operations-kela-benefits>.

social security and taxation systems. Those analyses found that the partial basic income models generally did not lead to any major improvements in terms of the costs to the public economy, work incentives, poverty reduction, or income distribution (Kangas et al., 2016; Kangas et al., 2017). However, different models led to different outcomes. Although the partial basic income models could somewhat reduce the welfare bureaucracy and incentive traps and improve the income security of those working on an irregular basis, they did not unanimously improve the incentive to work or reduce poverty (Kangas et al., 2017). This is because the basic income scheme would interact with both taxation and those benefits that were left intact – some of them strictly means-tested. If implemented at a level corresponding to the current ‘minimum’ social security (housing allowances, earnings-related schemes and parts of social assistance left untouched), then many of the problems basic income was expected to solve would persist. Similar observations related to the difficulty of incorporating a partial basic income model into the existing benefit and taxation systems have been made elsewhere (see Martinelli & Pearce, 2019).

4 EXAMINING THE POLITICS OF BASIC INCOME

Lately, an increasing number of studies have focused on the politics of basic income (e.g., Chrisp, 2017; De Wispelaere, 2015; 2016a, 2016b; Halmetoja et al., 2018; Jordan, 2011; 2012; Torry, 2016; Martinelli, 2017; Noguera, 2001; 2019; Parolin & Siöland, 2020). De Wispelaere (2015, 18-19) describes this scholarship ‘as the examination of actors, processes and institutions that determine the enactment and implementation of a basic income policy’. However, many areas of the politics of basic income remain understudied. In particular, the ideational factors as determinants of the political feasibility of basic income have received only marginal attention.

This study draws on a two-dimensional matrix created by De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012) to be used in examining the political feasibility of basic income. According to them (2012, 17), ‘a policy is politically feasible when the background conditions are such that there is a reasonable probability of the policy becoming actualized in the foreseeable future’. In their view, ‘feasibility’ covers the domain in which a policy is between immediately realizable and impossible-to-realize, and studies on political feasibility should investigate the factors that hamper the realization of policies.

The typology created by De Wispelaere and Noguera is constructed around two political dimensions: agency and constraints. According to De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012, 19), political agency can be discrete or diffuse; the actors might be easily identifiable with distinctive interests, roles, capacities and intentions, or the agency might be based on an amorphous set of actors (such as the general public) with little coordination or collective intention. In turn, the constraints on a policy can be either prospective or retrospective in nature; they may affect the probability of a policy being instituted or the policy’s functioning and resilience once instituted (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012, 19-20). Based on these two dimensions, the matrix created by De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012, 21) features four types of political feasibility: a) *strategic feasibility* (discrete agency, prospective constraints); b) *institutional feasibility* (discrete agency, retrospective constraints); c) *psychological feasibility* (diffuse agency, prospective constraints); and d) *behavioral feasibility* (diffuse agency, retrospective constraints).

Table 2. Types of political feasibility (based on De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012)

	Prospective constraints	Retrospective constraints
Discrete agency	Strategic feasibility	Institutional feasibility
Diffuse agency	Psychological feasibility	Behavioral feasibility

Most existing studies on the politics of basic income can be placed in the categories of strategic or institutional feasibility. For instance, the studies on political support (e.g., Chrisp, 2017; Vanderborcht, 2006; Parolin & Siöland, 2020), coalition-building (De Wispelaere, 2016b), policy learning and diffusion (De Wispelaere 2016a), and policy design and implementation (De Wispelaere, 2015; Jordan, 2012; Martinelli, 2017) concern strategic feasibility. The works of De Wispelaere and Stirton (2011; 2012; 2013) on administrative challenges and De Wispelaere and Morales (2016) on political stability can be regarded as examples of studies on institutional feasibility. In addition, studies on framing and public opinion can be regarded as examples of studies on psychological feasibility (Andersson & Kangas, 2002; Legein et al., 2018; Linnanvirta et al., 2018; Roosma & van Oorschot, 2019; Pulkka, 2020).

In this study, I focus on the political processes that fall into the category of strategic feasibility. According to De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012, 19), agents such as politicians, policymakers, social movement elites, and bureaucrats, and clearly identifiable corporate actors, such as organizations or distinctive formal institutions, can be identified as discrete agents. Prospective kinds of constraints feature in the process of agenda-setting that is at the focus of this study, and they affect policy advocacy, coalition building, political negotiation and legislation (Ibid.). Two of the three articles constituting this dissertation are focused on the activities of political parties or individual parliamentarians and one of the articles on the activities of a broader category of ‘policy entrepreneurs’ (see Kingdon, 2010). In addition to politicians and parties, this category encompasses individual experts and academics. The study focuses particularly on those processes and constraints that are of ideational nature – that is, related to our shared cognitive and normative categories of understanding reality. Although the actors studied are clearly identifiable (discrete), the ideational processes are more diffuse than, for instance, legislative processes.

In the following two subsections, I will present an overview of previous studies touching on issues related to the political feasibility of basic income. I will focus on the studies that are most relevant from the perspective of this thesis. Drawing on the

matrix of De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012), I will first discuss the questions related to political agency, and second, prospective constraints on basic income identified by previous studies. The analysis section (Section 8) will be based on the same two categories. Drawing on the case study on the basic income debate in Finnish politics that constitutes the empirical part of this dissertation, I will examine how the ideational institutionalist approach can contribute to a better understanding of the agency and constraints in the politics of basic income.

4.1 Agency in the politics of basic income: the challenges of coalition-building

Agents in the politics of basic income – as in all politics – may be discrete (organized and identifiable) or diffuse (nonorganized and not easily identifiable) (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012). Discrete agents (such as policymakers) are those capable of delivering the policy, while both discrete and diffuse agents (such as organized interest groups or the general public) may create ‘demand’ for the policy (see Yemtsov & De Wispelaere, 2020).

One way to approach the question of political agency is to look at how widespread the support (or opposition) for basic income is and what positions different groups or organizations take on the issue. It has been observed that there are supporters – as well as opponents – across the ideological spectrum from such diverse entities as civil society groups, think-tanks, socialists, trade unions, entrepreneurs, the liberal right, and religious organizations (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017, 174-210; Standing, 2017, 281-288; Martinelli and Pearce, 2018, 2). This kind of broad political interest in basic income can be found in many countries (Chrisp, 2017; Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019). Opinion polls have shown relatively high but varying levels of popular support for basic income in different countries. The European Social Survey of 2016 showed support of 56 percent in all European countries, while 44 percent of the respondents were against basic income (see Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019). Generally, the poorer and the more aligned to the political left the respondents were, the more likely they were to support basic income (Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019). However, in countries with a less-developed welfare state, the population was more inclined to support basic income, while in countries with high social spending, the support was generally lower and more susceptible to ideological divides (Parolin & Siöland, 2020).

However, a list of potential supporters (or opponents) does not tell us anything about their commitment to the policy or their capacity to influence the politics. Nor does it reveal ideological tensions among the supporters. Ultimately, the success or failure of basic income depends on what kinds of coalitions can be built to take the idea forward in the policy process (De Wispelaere, 2016b). In De Wispelaere's (2016b) view, a key challenge to building a 'robust coalition' to take basic income further is that the expressed support for it is often 'cheap'. The support might be cheap either because the actors lack commitment or because they lack capacity to further the cause. Lack of commitment by the actors means they are unwilling to invest scarce political resources such as time, money or political capital to further the cause or to compromise their other political goals to achieve it. Alternatively, the actors may be committed to the cause but lack political capacity. The most committed supporters of basic income have often been rather marginally positioned in terms of political power, such as the relatively small green and left-wing parties (De Wispelaere, 2016b; Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019; 479). According to De Wispelaere (2016b), the support from organizations that are very marginally positioned may even be counterproductive for the cause because it might prevent more powerful actors from endorsing the same policy.

Another challenge identified by De Wispelaere (2016b, 133) is the 'persistent political division' among the advocates of basic income. It has been noted that basic income is not clearly a left-wing or a right-wing idea (Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019) but that proponents come from different ideological backgrounds. This situation is bound to cause tensions and require trade-offs among supporters, especially when moving from abstract discussion to policy design and implementation (De Wispelaere, 2016b, 133). It might prove impossible to achieve a scheme that would simultaneously satisfy the interests of right-wing market liberals and the political left (Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019, 482). Questions related to financing the program are particularly likely to cause disagreements among the proponents (Martinelli, 2017, 70-71) and thus hamper the building of a 'robust enabling basic income coalition' (De Wispelaere, 2016b). Because any basic income scheme will produce winners and losers (Kangas et al., 2017), the policy design and financing will necessarily be subject to ideological and distributional conflicts (Chrisp, 2017, 267-268; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019, 203). However, as long as the policy is discussed on an abstract level without reference to specific models or their financing, the political groups may not be confronted with ideological and normative choices related to its implementation (De Wispelaere, 2015, 7; Chrisp, 2017, 267-268).

Not only political parties but also organized stakeholders such as trade unions, business organizations, and civil society associations, ‘social influencers’ such as academics and experts, journalists, and consultants, and more ‘diffuse’ agents such as social movements or public opinion play a role in the agenda-setting (see Kingdon, 2010). Some studies have identified potential ‘constituencies’ that could apply political pressure for implementation of basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015, 68-71; Martinelli, 2017, 69). A constituency is a concept associated with perceived economic interests in a policy. To be a constituency, the members of a group should be subjectively aware of their shared interest, and they should have the willingness and capacity to influence the politics. (De Wispelaere, 2015, 68; Yemtsov & De Wispelaere, 2020, 184-185.) People in a precarious labor-market position (the precariat) have often been mentioned as a key constituency for basic income (e.g., Standing, 2011). However, unlike traditional labor movements, those considered the precariat are a very diverse group, which may lack not only a sense of shared interests and capacity to mobilize but also necessary financial and human resources (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 185). There is no guaranteed support for basic income even among the groups that are often identified as net beneficiaries (Martinelli & Pearce, 2019, 183-189). For instance, Finnish food-aid recipients did not unanimously support the idea (Linnanvirta et al., 2018). Additionally, while basic income might serve the interests of labor-market ‘outsiders’, labor-market insiders (those in stable employment and the trade unions representing them) may fear losing some of their current privileges (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, 176-179; Martinelli, 2017, 69).

De Wispelaere and Noguera’s (2012, 27-29) category of ‘psychological feasibility’ encompasses the questions of popular support and social legitimacy. Public perceptions regarding both its normative and pragmatic aspects are key to understanding the social legitimacy of a policy such as basic income. The proposal of unconditional cash goes against some widespread normative perceptions of what kind of people deserve public support from the state, which are embedded in most of today’s welfare programs (Roosma & van Oorschot, 2019). However, how an issue is framed plays a key role in opinion formation (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 104). Especially in the field of social policy, opinions have been found to be susceptible to framing (Kangas, 1997; Kangas et al., 2014). In the case of a new policy such as basic income, with which people have no previous lived experience, framing is likely to matter even more than in the case of more conventional welfare policies. It has been observed that how questions are formulated engenders variation in the level of support for basic income in opinion surveys (Pulkka, 2018; 2020; Martinelli

& Pearce, 2019; Perkiö et al., 2019). Framing that positively emphasizes the work-related aspects of the policy seems to gain more supporters than framing that conflicts with the work-related values (Pulkka, 2020; Perkiö et al., 2019).

Whenever basic income has entered legislative debates, it has not garnered broad support among policymakers and key stakeholders. De Wispelaere (2016a, 618–620) mentions Ireland, the US, and Brazil as countries where basic income (or a very similar idea) has seriously entered the policy arena but failed to gain a proper foothold in legislation. According to De Wispelaere (2016a, 628), ‘one critical problem besetting each of these cases is that policy entrepreneurs have typically attempted to push for basic income in a policy context without broad political support amongst the general public or crucial stakeholders’.

Because of the lack of political support and the institutional constraints, different ‘backdoor strategies’ and ‘piecemeal approaches’ have been proposed to gradually shift welfare systems toward a basic income model. This kind of incremental strategy could be effected, for instance, by covering some segments of the population (such as specific age groups) at first (Vanderborght, 2005; Martinelli, 2017, 74-80; Torry, 2016) or starting with a mildly conditional model – such as the participatory income proposed by Atkinson (1996) – that over time could drift toward a proper basic income scheme (see De Wispelaere, 2016b, 136; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017, 210-215). One possible strategy would be to start with a lower level of basic income to be increased later to introduce the principle of an unconditional benefit to the political system (Martinelli, 2017, 74-80). Another ‘backdoor strategy’ could be to transform existing cognate schemes gradually into basic income by relaxing the conditions for recipients and expanding the scope of programs (Jordan, 2012; De Wispelaere, 2016a; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019; Noguera, 2019). According to Jordan (2012, 1), the reformists should take the opportunity for ‘more dubious’ reforms such as the Universal Credit in the UK because they could help establish the institutional structure needed for subsequent implementation of basic income. In a similar vein, Noguera (2019) argues that proponents should accept implementation of new means-tested guaranteed income programs as stepping-stones to basic income.

4.2 Constraints on basic income: institutional rigidities and cultural values

In addition to the challenges related to political support and coalition-building discussed above, there are institutional constraints on a policy reform such as basic income. Institutional path dependence is a mechanism that reinforces institutional trajectories once established (Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000). Path dependence influences all politics, but for a policy such as basic income, which radically departs from the established institutional paths, it may constitute a major obstacle (De Wispelaere & Yemtsov, 2019, 184).

However, different welfare regimes impose different design and implementation constraints on policies such as basic income (Noguera, 2001; De Wispelaere, 2015, 20). For instance, the degree of universalism and benefit conditionality and the degree to which social security is based on the contribution principle can make the regime more or less suited to basic income (Noguera, 2001, 86-88; De Wispelaere, 2015, 18-19). The contribution principle is enshrined in today's major social insurance systems. This principle compensates for loss of income to individuals who have paid their contributions and lost their ability to work for reasons beyond their control (Kangas, 2003, 732). In Noguera's view (2001, 88), the liberal Anglo-Saxon and Nordic Social Democratic regimes are better prepared for basic income than the continental and Mediterranean ones because the contribution principle is hegemonic in the latter. The broad coverage of tax-financed social security (or statutory social insurance) makes those welfare systems institutionally closer to a basic income (Noguera, 2001, 86). However, integrating a basic income model into the institutional structures of any developed welfare state is a challenge (see e.g., Martinelli, 2017; Kangas et al., 2016). Due to their generous and comprehensive benefits systems, the Nordic countries, as variants of the Social Democratic regime, may exhibit less demand for basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015, 21-22). Additionally, the laborist values are strong in the Nordic countries (see Kettunen, 2012). The Nordic notions of universalism and social citizenship have been strongly based on the centrality of paid work (Kettunen, 2012) and grounded on labor solidarity and earnings-related schemes (Halmetoja et al., 2018).

Microsimulations have revealed many difficulties when adjusting basic income schemes to the institutional structures of welfare states. The microsimulations performed in the preparation of the Finnish basic income experiment showed that the basic income models did not effectively solve the problems they were supposed to solve (Kangas et al., 2016). A model that would simultaneously eliminate incentive

traps, reduce poverty and be neutral for public financing might be impossible to achieve because the scheme would need to interact with many remaining parts of the existing benefit systems and taxation (Kangas et al., 2017; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019). The kind of (partial) basic income models that are considered economically feasible within the current economic structures may have distributional effects that are unfavorable to the poor. Additionally, the remaining parts of the (means-tested) benefits will interfere with the potential positive effects of basic income on work incentives (Kangas et al., 2017; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019). According to Martinelli (2019), the trade-offs between affordability and adequacy for meeting need can be overcome by partial basic income models, but compromises will still need to be made on some of the advantages of basic income related to radical simplification of the welfare policy.

Thus, even if the idea of basic income itself may be ‘simple’ (Van Parijs, 2004), coordinating it with the complex structures of taxation and social security in any developed welfare state is complicated. The effects of basic income depend on the chosen model, the level of basic income, replacement of the existing benefits and taxation (Kangas et al., 2017). The institutional challenges will engender necessary political trade-offs (see Kangas et al., 2017) that are likely to cause divisions among those who endorse the policy as such. The same model of basic income is not likely to satisfy the interests of both the political right and left (see De Wispelaere, 2016b; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019; Chrisp & Martinelli, 2019). Polls performed in Finland and in the UK show that the support for basic income drops when taxes (and in the UK alternatively benefit cuts) are included in the design (Pulkka, 2020; Martinelli & Pearce, 2019) and that different constituencies are likely to favor different schemes (Martinelli & Pearce, 2019).

In addition to the institutional and political constraints, studies have identified constraints that relate to cultural values and social legitimacy of the policy. Some of the key normative considerations that affect any social policy, including basic income, concern the perceived characteristics of different social groups (Schneider & Ingram, 1993) and the notions of ‘deservingness’ attached to them (van Oorschot, 2000; 2006). The public is generally more willing to give benefits to those who are not able to work for reasons beyond their control (such as illness or disability) or who have already made their contribution (such as old people) than to those who are able but potentially unwilling to work (such as the unemployed) (van Oorschot, 2000; 2006; Kangas, 2003). The norm of reciprocity has been mentioned by social philosophers as the greatest ethical obstacle to basic income (e.g., Elster, 1986; Van Parijs, 1995; White, 1997; 2006; Van Donselaar, 2009; Birnbaum, 2012). The

principle of ‘he who does not work, neither shall he eat’ is one of the deepest-seated moral primitives in the (post-) Judeo-Christian world (Goodin, 2002). This principle can be found in sources as diverse as the New Testament, Soviet Constitution and first English-speaking settlement in the United States (Widerquist, 1999, 387)¹⁴. As unconditional cash paid to all irrespective of their contributions, basic income runs counter to some key normative assumptions at the heart of today’s welfare systems (Roosma & van Oorschot, 2019).

The normative perceptions related to deservingness and reciprocity have also been reflected in the findings of many opinion surveys assessing the social legitimacy of basic income. Drawing on the European Social Survey of 2016, Roosma and Van Oorschot (2019) suggest that the relatively high support for basic income in Europe (56 percent) may reflect a willingness to improve the conditions of the poor by any benefit rather than support for basic income for its universal and unconditional nature. Andersson and Kangas (2002) observed that while Finns favor relatively generous minimum social benefits, they want them to be conditioned on participation. Pulkka (2020) found that 51 percent of Finns support a partial basic income of €560 (which would maintain the current level of minimum social security), while the highest support was for a conditional participation income, which was supported by 78 percent of the respondents. The highest rate of support for basic income in Finland (79 percent) was reported by the Centre Party think-tank e2 in 2015, when the policy was framed in very positive terms as incentivizing work and entrepreneurship (Pulkka, 2018; 2020). Normative beliefs and perceptions of deservingness were found to be the main reasons for opposition to basic income by Finnish food-aid recipients, who would be most likely to economically benefit from the program (Linnanvirta et al., 2018). Additionally, the most common objection to basic income in the mainstream media debate in 2017 in Finland, Canada and Spain drew on concerns of how the policy would affect people’s willingness to contribute through work (Perkiö et al., 2019).

The study of Steensland (2008a) on the debate over Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) plans¹⁵ in the US in the 1960s and 1970s illustrates cultural constraints on a basic income-like scheme. At that time, the GAI proposal became the ‘dominant

¹⁴ However, Widerquist (1999) argues that in modern industrial economies such a principle should be abandoned because it is not treating all citizens equally. Those who have sufficient resources do not face the fear of going hungry if they do not work.

¹⁵ The GAI plans did not fully correspond to the definition of basic income, but they are often referred to in the basic income discussion.

welfare reform strategy' in the US (Steensland, 2008a). The proposals enjoyed widespread support across the ideological spectrum, ranging from liberals to conservatives and from business leaders to the civil rights movement. Three presidential administrations considered the proposals. Between 1968 and 1980, the US and Canadian governments ran five experiments with a Negative Income Tax (NIT) model (Widerquist, 2019). However, the proposals were buried after they failed to reach the Congress floor during the Carter era.

According to Steensland (2008a), the main reason for the failure of the GAI plans was that while they challenged the deep-rooted cultural logic of the American welfare policy, they failed to introduce a new 'conceptual template' for understanding the new kind of policy. The debate was flavored by the old moral distinctions that treated the 'working poor' as more deserving than the 'nonworking poor' (Ibid., 16-17). Within this framework, the proponents did not find a robust justification for a policy that considered all poor as 'deserving'. Thus, Steensland argues, 'there was frequently a contradiction between the substance and the symbolism of the plans' (2008a, 17). A new 'conceptual template' would have been available in an early report commissioned by President Johnson, published in 1969. This report approached poverty as an outcome of structural factors of society and emphasized that the economy could not provide good jobs at adequate wages to all able-bodied people (Ibid., 3, 21). In Steensland's view (2008a, 13), adopting this problem definition in the common language would have increased the legitimacy of the plans. Since it was not adopted, the proponents 'lacked a critical *symbolic* resource' that would have enabled them to frame the proposals in culturally resonant ways (Steensland, 2008a, 5, 10, italics in original). Toward the end of the debate, the initially heterogeneous political discourse narrowed 'to emphasize the fiscal and work-related aspects of the plans in ways that conferred greater legitimacy on the views of the plans' opponents' (Steensland, 2008a, 19), which paved the way for the new antipoverty programs that reinforced the existing categories of worth (Steensland, 2008a, 4-5, 21).

In the context of Denmark, Christensen (2008) has analyzed how proponents of basic income failed to adapt their discourse to the new political climate that emerged in the 1990s. According to Christensen, the basic income discourse emerged in the context of growing unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s, when the dominant political discourse placed strong emphasis on social rights. Together with the unemployment benefit system that was institutionally close to a basic income model, this political climate enabled advocates to frame the proposal in a way that resonated widely in Danish society (Christensen 2008, 9-10). However, with the arrival of the workfare paradigm in the 1990s, basic income was soon considered a 'heretical' idea

(Christensen, 2008, 12-13). According to Christensen (2008, 25), the basic income movement failed to effectively link the idea to a wider range of social problems and specify its relevance for resolution of the problems confronting the unemployed. In the changed political climate, maintaining the 'old' discourse made basic income appear an unsuitable tool to address the problems that arose in the context of globalization and neoliberal policies.

5 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: IDEAS AND FRAMING

In this section, I will introduce my theoretical approach to the political feasibility of basic income. I will first introduce the ideational institutionalist perspective on the political change. Then, I will focus on the role of framing in agenda-setting and winning support for policies. Last, I will discuss ideas as a set of hegemonic views and beliefs that constrain the policymaking from the background as underlying assumptions of reality.

5.1 Ideas as drivers in politics

There are many theories explaining the emergence of and changes to social policy systems. The structuralist theories have explained the emergence of modern welfare states in the postwar era as an outcome of a set of economic, social and political developments, such as industrialization, urbanization, political modernization, and demographic and labor-market changes (see Béland & Mahon, 2016, 17-18; Parsons, 2007, 13). The power resource theories (e.g., Korpi, 1983), in turn, have asserted that the emergence of welfare states resulted from class-mobilization, the power of labor movements and the political left. Yet, according to Esping-Andersen (1993), the formation of political coalitions has been a more decisive aspect of welfare-state development than power resources as such. In addition, scholars have emphasized the role of feminist movements and maternalism in welfare-state formation (e.g., Skocpol, 1992, 30-32; Anttonen, 2002).

From the beginning of the 1980s, historical institutionalism (e.g., Pierson, 1994; Skocpol, 1992) has emerged as an influential theoretical perspective in political science. Historical institutionalism focuses on how historically constructed institutional constraints structure the behavior of political actors in the policy-making process (see Béland, 2005). Through policy feedback and path-dependence mechanisms, welfare-state institutions protect themselves against reformers (Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000). Building on the legacy of historical institutionalism, a growing number of scholars have emphasized the importance of studying the role

of ideas in policymaking for a fuller understanding of policy change (e.g., Hall, 1993; Campbell, 1998; 2002; Cox, 2001; Béland, 2005, 2009a; Béland & Cox, 2011; Schmidt 2008; 2010). This ideational institutionalist scholarship has focused on ideas as embedded in the design of social institutions and in the perceptions of world events or interests.

According to ideational (or discursive) institutionalism, ideas provide us with cognitive and normative mental maps, concepts and frameworks that guide policymaking (Campbell 2002; Schmidt, 2008; Béland & Cox, 2011). Ideas may operate both as underlying assumptions in the background of policymaking that shape our understanding of reality and at the forefront of policymaking as explicit arguments or programs (Campbell 1998; 2002). While ideas provide diagnoses of policy problems and solutions to them, they also constrain the perception of problems and the range of solutions that policymakers are willing to consider (Campbell, 1998, 398).

However, there has been much ambiguity in the definition of the concept of an 'idea'. According to Béland (2019, 4), the term 'simply refers to the historically constructed beliefs and perceptions of both individual and collective actors'. At their simplest, ideas may be regarded as specific policy alternatives or blueprints (programmatic ideas) (e.g., Campbell, 1998; Mehta, 2011). Ideas may also be as broad and diffuse as ideologies and policy paradigms, values and beliefs, cultural categories and worldviews, or 'public sentiments' (Béland & Mahon 2016, 43-46; Campbell, 1998). Some scholars treat frames that are used in communication as one type of idea (Béland 2005; Campbell, 1998). However, although frames are obviously constructed of ideas, frames and discourses can perhaps be better understood as 'the interactive process of conveying ideas', while ideas (at their simplest) are 'the substantive content of discourse' (Schmidt, 2008, 305).

In this thesis, I understand ideas as mental constructs shared by a political community and communicated through language. Those mental constructs may affect policymaking from the background as hidden normative and cognitive beliefs of reality or from the foreground as explicit reform blueprints, arguments and frames (see Campbell, 1998; 2002). Ideas also constitute symbols and concepts that are used by political actors in legitimizing their proposals by argumentation and framing.

The political feasibility of basic income can be approached from many perspectives. For instance, structural changes in society, such as the emergence of 'new risks' (Bonoli, 2005) and increase in precarious employment (see Standing, 2011), or external shocks, such as the global Covid-19 pandemic, could create more 'demand' for a policy such as basic income (see Yemtsov & De Wispelaere, 2020).

The political feasibility of any policy is also a question of political power; demand for a policy can materialize only if there is a robust coalition of decision makers able to deliver it (De Wispelaere, 2016b; Yemtsov & De Wispelaere, 2020). The existing institutional structures may constrain or facilitate a move toward the policy (see Halmetoja et al., 2018; Jordan, 2012). Thus, the political feasibility of basic income, like any other policy, is an outcome of a complex interplay of factors related to political power, institutional realities and public perceptions.

In this study, I adopt an ideational institutionalist approach in examining the political feasibility of basic income in the context of Finland, which means that I take ideas as important to understanding the political agency related to basic income and the constraints the policy faces. Basic income would constitute a significant path-departure in the context of any present-day welfare state. Without studying how ideas interact with institutional legacies and how they shape public and political perceptions, the challenges of basic income cannot be adequately understood. However, the ideational factors have not received much attention among scholars of the politics of basic income. For instance, in their two-dimensional matrix (see Section 4), De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012) briefly touch on framing as part of the ‘psychological feasibility’ of basic income. However, they do not discuss the role of framing as a strategic tool used in policymaking.

The study focuses on the agenda-setting part of policymaking. According to Kingdon (2010, 3), the governmental agenda is ‘the list of subjects to which governmental officials and those around them are paying serious attention’. However, Kingdon (2010, 4, 18) makes a distinction between an agenda and alternatives: ‘agenda’ refers to the process of problem recognition and ‘alternatives’ to the policy generation. Apart from experiments and cognate schemes (De Wispelaere, 2016a), basic income has never proceeded further in the policy process than the stage of agenda-setting. In agenda-setting, ideational processes, such as framing and construction of policy issues, play a crucial role (e.g., Hiilamo & Kangas, 2009; Kangas et al., 2014). Framing can be used as a strategic tool to increase the legitimacy of policies and portray them as normatively attractive (Béland, 2007a; 2009b). Framing is a necessary tool for the proponents of basic income in their attempts to build coalitions and generate more support for the policy.

5.2 Framing as a tool for agenda-setting

Framing is a necessary part of all human communication. Any issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives (Chong & Druckman 2007, 104). To frame is to set a 'lens' through which an issue is viewed by highlighting some aspects of it while omitting others (Entman, 1993, 52–54). Frame analysis, originally developed by Erving Goffman (1974), has been employed in various disciplines and research areas, such as communication studies (e.g., Entman, 1993; Gamson et al., 1992) and social movement studies (e.g., Benford & Snow, & 2000; Snow et al., 1986; Snow, 2004; Johnston & Noakes, 2005). Framing has also been a key concept in the ideational institutionalist scholarship (e.g., Béland, 2007a, 2009a+b; Campbell, 1998; 2002; Schmidt 2002; 2008).

However, there are multiple definitions of framing. In this study, I follow the definitions of Entman (1993, 52-54) and Gamson et al. (1992, 384) of a frame as a 'lens' or perspective on the social reality that is constructed around a central organizing idea or principle that holds together different facts, normative views and symbols. Frames are used in communication to diagnose problems (problem definitions), find causalities between events and issues (causal interpretations), assess normative aspects of issues (moral evaluations), and suggest remedies (treatment recommendations) (Entman, 1993, 52). Rather than static entities, I understand frames as dynamic and constantly changing (Snow, 2004, 403). Frames draw on and manipulate elements of the existing 'cultural fabric' of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths and narratives (Benford & Snow, 2000, 629; Noakes & Johnston, 2005, 7; Béland 2005, 9-12).

Framing in politics is distinctive from everyday communication as it often has real consequences for policy outcomes (Daviter, 2007; Hiilamo & Kangas, 2009). Policymakers use framing as a tool to draw attention to issues, shape public perceptions of them, and convince the audience on the superiority of certain policies while undermining support for others (Béland 2005, 9-12). Framing plays an important role in agenda-setting: the capacity of 'policy entrepreneurs' to frame their pet proposals can determine a policy's success or failure (Kingdon, 2010; Béland, 2005). The historical battle over 'cash for care' policies (a policy of paying parents with children of under three years of age cash for caring for them at home) in Finland and Sweden (Hiilamo & Kangas, 2009) illustrates the role of framing in producing different policy outcomes. In Sweden, opponents of the policy successfully launched an influential 'trap for women' slogan. Meanwhile in Finland, proponents won adequate support for the policy to be implemented with a 'freedom to choose' frame.

In a policy process, one can find many competing frames. The one that succeeds in defining a policy issue dominates the discussion (Chong & Druckman 2007, 120-121; Kangas et al. 2014, 15). Policymakers, as well as organized interest groups and social movements, employ different strategies to persuade voters and influence the collective understanding of issues (Béland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Daviter, 2007). The scholars of framing speak about 'frame resonance' when referring to frames that are particularly compelling and popular among audiences. These kinds of persuasive frames may emerge as 'the best rationales' for the relevant policy (Chong and Druckman, 2007, 116). Resonant frames are often put forward by credible and trustworthy actors (Berman, 2012, 12), are positively linked to dominant beliefs and values (Chong & Druckman, 2007, 116; Campbell 1998, 394-400), and give meaning to the audience's own experience (Snow & Benford 1992; Noakes & Johnston 2005, 11-13). It has also been noted that most effective frames shape opinions through heuristics rather than direct information on the issue (Chong and Druckman, 2007, 111) and appeal to deep-rooted values and moral sentiments (Snow et al., 1986; Béland, 2007a, 2009a+b).

Framing may concern not only policy issues but also the target populations of policies. According to Schneider and Ingram (1993), the social construction of target populations affects the legitimacy of policies aimed at specific groups. Positively constructed target groups are likely to receive more generous treatment, while groups that are constructed in negative terms are likely to be treated with more punitive policies (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 334). The legitimacy of social benefits has been found to be highly susceptible to how the target groups and their need for benefits are portrayed (van Oorschot, 2000; 2006; Kangas, 1997; 2002). In general, people are more willing to give benefits to groups that are considered most 'deserving' (most often old or disabled individuals) and leave 'undeserving' groups (most often the unemployed or immigrants) to survive without support or with very modest support (Kangas, 2003). However, how the claimants' personal situation is framed also affects people's willingness to give them benefits. If they are portrayed as victims of structural factors beyond their control, their plea for benefits is treated as more legitimate than when they are presented as responsible for their situation (Kangas, 2003).

5.3 Ideas as constraints: paradigmatic beliefs

Ideas operate at many levels. Basic income itself can be considered a programmatic policy idea that is discussed through various frames and discourses in a context constrained by prevailing ideologies and worldviews, policy paradigms, norms and values. According to Campbell (1998), ‘policy paradigms’ and ‘public sentiments’ are the kinds of ideas that affect policymaking from the background as a set of underlying assumptions about reality.

Peter Hall (1993, 279) defines a policy paradigm as ‘a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing’. Paradigms constitute the pragmatic ‘world view’ of policymakers with both technical and ideological content (Béland 2005, 5-6). The dominant policy paradigms provide a set of background assumptions that are rarely contested (Hall, 1993). However, these background assumptions critically limit the terrain of political discourse and the scope of issues that can be addressed through policies, as well as the range of alternatives policymakers are prepared to consider (Campbell; 1998; 2002; Schmidt 2008). According to Blyth (2001; 2002), policy paradigms operate as ‘cognitive locks’ that impede actors from seeing alternatives. As such, they create intellectual path dependence that helps reproduce existing institutions and policies over time.

Policy paradigms are often understood as economic paradigms, such as ‘Keynesianism’ or ‘neo-liberalism’. However, ideas such as ‘social exclusion’ or ‘activation’ can also be considered paradigmatic ideas (see Béland, 2007b). According to Béland (2007b), these kinds of ideas draw attention to certain problem definitions and hinder alternative ways of perceiving the issue. For instance, social exclusion ‘is not only a term that refers to a set of social and economic problems; it also constitutes a powerful political and normative discourse about the welfare state and the reforms necessary to adapt it’ (Béland, 2007b, 130). In Béland’s (2007b) view, the social exclusion discourse has shifted political attention away from problems such as income inequality. This concept has also been used to justify reforms that have moved welfare states away from unconditional social rights to conditional entitlements related to ‘activation’. As I mentioned in Section 3.1, in Finland activation has been the guiding idea in social policy since the mid-1990s, and ‘incentive trap’ has been identified as a key problem to be solved by social security reform (Kangas & Saloniemi 2013, 37-45; Saarinen et al., 2014). The emergence of the activation paradigm has transformed the egalitarian Nordic welfare model

toward stricter benefit conditionality and residual social policy (Kantola & Kananen, 2013).

Thus, the nature of problems to be addressed by politics is perceived differently within different policy paradigms. How problems are diagnosed has a crucial effect on what kinds of policy alternatives are considered legitimate. Problem definitions play an important role particularly in agenda-setting (Kingdon, 2010). According to Kingdon (2010, 111), people perceive a problem differently depending on the category in which they put it. For instance, unemployment can be perceived as a problem caused by labor-market structures or by lack of personal motivation caused by too-generous social security (Steensland, 2008a, 21). Depending on the problem definition, different policy alternatives may be justified (Mehta, 2011, 27). Once a particular problem definition becomes dominant, it excludes policy solutions that are not consistent with its way of diagnosing the issue (Mehta, 2011, 33). Thus, 'getting people to see new problems, or to see old problems in one way rather than another, is a major conceptual and political accomplishment' (Kingdon, 2010, 115). Problem definitions usually occur in the background of discussion about policy alternatives and enter into the discussion as arguments for or against policies that implicitly favor certain problem definitions (Mehta, 2011, 34-35).

The terrain of policymaking is constrained by not only policy paradigms as a set of cognitive background assumptions but also cultural values, beliefs, and normative perceptions. These normative constraints can be grasped by Campbell's (1998; 2002) concept of 'public sentiments'. These kinds of implicit and unspoken normative meta-ideas affect the social legitimacy of policies and the perceptions of fairness as tacit assumptions of reality. According to Béland (2019, 19), these kinds of public perceptions can be measured in part by using polling techniques, but they also point to more stable cultural categories of understanding reality. In the field of social policy, perceptions of 'deservingness' particularly affect the legitimacy of policies (van Oorschot, 2000; 2006; Kangas, 1997; 2002). Normative beliefs concerning work and reciprocity (e.g., Elster, 1986; Van Parijs, 1995; White, 2006; Birnbaum, 2012; Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2019), as well as popular images of welfare recipients (see Schneider & Ingram, 1993), affect the feasibility of policies such as basic income.

5.4 The ideational institutionalist approach in this study

In this thesis, I employ an ideational institutionalist approach to examine the evolution of the idea of basic income in Finnish political discourse and the political feasibility of basic income in the context of Finland. This means that I consider the role of ideas as fundamental to understanding political change. As Béland and Cox (2011, 3) write: ‘ideas shape how we understand political problems, give definition to our goals and strategies and are the currency we use to communicate about politics’. Thus, I understand politics as not only a battle among parties and stakeholders on ‘who gets what, when and how’ (Lasswell, 1950) but also a discursive battle on how the issues are perceived and defined (Béland & Cox, 2011). Ideas are embedded at the foundation of social institutions and give shape to institutional reforms.

The focus of this study is on the framing of basic income and the generation of basic income proposals by political parties and so-called policy entrepreneurs in the agenda-setting process. According to John W. Kingdon (2010, 3-4), a governmental agenda is a set of subjects or problems that are at a certain point in time seriously considered by government officials and those around them. The concept of a *policy entrepreneur* refers to advocates for a policy proposal in or outside government who are willing to invest their resources to advance a given policy (Kingdon, 2010, 122-123). In this study, this concept covers individual politicians and academics or experts who have published models of implementing a basic income-related scheme.

The study approaches basic income as a *programmatic idea* (see Campbell, 1998; 2002; Mehta, 2011) whose implementation could take various forms (see De Wispelaere, 2015). This programmatic idea is discussed through *frames*. A frame is understood as a lens that portrays a policy issue from a certain perspective, highlighting some features of reality while omitting others (see Entman, 1993, 52-54). In the agenda-setting process, political agents may employ different framing strategies to put issues on the agenda and win support for them. This study employs the concept of *value amplification* (Béland, 2007a, 2009a, 2009b; Snow et al., 1986) to examine a framing strategy of mobilizing a popular value in favor of a policy. Value amplification occurs by constantly referring to, idealizing, and elevating a value central to a society’s cultural repertoire (Béland 2007a; 2009a; 2009b), and it is often aligned with the construction of perceived economic interests or rationales (Béland 2007a, 94-104). Last, policy proposals are put forward in a specific context, which consists of not only the economic and institutional realities or political power but also hegemonic ideas and assumptions about reality. The concept of *policy paradigm*

is used to refer to the ideational context that sets the background for framing of specific policy proposals. This concept refers to a wider 'world view' of policymakers: cognitive and normative assumptions of reality that constrain both communication on specific policy proposals and their implementation (see Hall, 1993; Béland 2005; Campbell, 1998).

6 AIMS, DATA AND METHODS

The three articles forming this thesis aim to understand different aspects of the Finnish political debate on basic income. *Article I* analyzes the models of basic income or a related scheme put forward by individual policy entrepreneurs or parties from 1984 to 2011. It aims at understanding the role of policy design and policy entrepreneurs in the politics of basic income by examining what kinds of models for implementing a basic income-type reform have been proposed in Finland, by whom and in what contexts. *Article II* examines the shifts in the framing of basic income and related ideas in the political documents dating from 1980 to 2016, and the positions of the parties with seats in the national parliament on the issue. It aims at understanding how the idea of basic income has evolved in the framing of Finnish political parties and what role different parties have played in shaping the framing of the policy. *Article III* examines the framing strategy of value amplification used by the proponents of basic income to win legitimacy for the policy. It aims at understanding how Finnish parties and politicians used the frame that depicted basic income as a tool for activation to legitimize the idea. The third article covers the period 1987-2018 of the discussion on basic income in the Finnish parliament and the campaigning of the parties.

This study draws on three datasets, two of which partially overlap (see Table 3). The datasets cover slightly different periods between 1980 and 2018. The dataset of *Article I* consists of basic income models put forward by individual policy entrepreneurs (experts, academics, politicians) or parties in the period 1984-2011. The basic income models were studied as books (models published by experts or academics) or policy programs (models published by parties). For the early part of the examined period, selection of the examined models followed the selection of basic income-related models by Anita Mattila (2001) in her dissertation. Mattila's selection included proposals of citizen's income, citizen's wage and basic income. Some of the examined models did not correspond to the definition of basic income as a universal and unconditional benefit but were close enough to be included in the analysis. In addition to the basic income-related models, statistical and political background information regarding macroeconomic indicators and political context (election results and government compositions) was utilized. The sources of these

background data were Statistics Finland (http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html) and the website of the Finnish Government (<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/frontpage>).

Article II utilizes a dataset of political documents: parliamentary motions, written questions to ministers, transcripts of the plenary session debates of the Finnish parliament, and policy programs and election manifestos of parties with seats in the national parliament. The period covered by this article is 1980-2016. The data were systematically collected from publicly available reliable databases. The total number of the documents included into the analysis was 376, but for most documents, only a brief section discussed basic income. The political programs and election platforms were obtained from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive POHTIVA (<https://www.fsd.uta.fi/pohtiva/>), maintained by Tampere University, by conducting keyword searches with 'basic income' and related concepts (see Table 3 for the keywords). Because election manifestos before 2000 were not available in POHTIVA, they were obtained by searches in and inquiries to the National Archive (Kansallisarkisto), the Labour Archive (Työväen Arkisto), and the archive of the Centre Party (Keskustan ja maaseudun arkisto). The digitalized transcripts of the parliament's plenary session debates, motions, and written questions to ministers were all obtained from the Archive of Parliament (<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tietoeduskunnasta/kirjasto/aineistot/eduskunta/Pages/default.aspx>) using 'basic income' and the related keywords (see Table 3).

Article III utilizes partially the same dataset as *Article II*. The dataset used for the third article covers policy programs, election manifestos and the parliament's plenary session transcripts for the period 1987-2018, but only those documents in which the concept of 'basic income' appears. The total number of included documents was 166, but only a brief section of most individual documents discussed basic income. The data were collected from the same sources as for *Article II*.

The three datasets provide a comprehensive view of the history of the basic income discussion among Finnish political parties in their electoral and parliamentary activities. In the majority of the examined documents, particularly plenary speeches, basic income or a related concept was brought up only in one or a few individual statements related to a discussion on another topic. A minority of documents contained longer discussions on basic income. The analyzed documents communicated to both the electorate or a broader audience and to (other) policymakers on the aims and goals of an individual policymaker, policy entrepreneur, or party. The documents served the purpose of designing policy blueprints, promoting the policy in the electoral campaigns and the parliamentary process, and raising awareness of the issue. The documents can thus be regarded as

Table 3. Data and methods used for the study

Article	Data	Methods	Sources
I	13 models of basic income (N=9), citizen's wage (N=1), citizen's income (N=2), or participation income (N=1), published in 1984-2011	We develop an analytical framework to examine the contents of the models, actors and contextual factors. We analyze the models according to the following dimensions: the contents and design of the model and its relation to the current welfare system, the position of the actor(s) proposing the model, the political and socioeconomic context, and the public interpretations and (possible) outcomes.	Books (models published by academics or experts) and policy programs (models published by parties)
II	Policy programs or election manifestos of the parties with seats in the national parliament (N=58), parliament's plenary session debates (N=285), motions (N=28), and written questions to ministers (N=5), dating from 1980 to 2016	I identify frames based on Entman's (1993) definition of framing and qualitatively examine their contents (with Atlas.ti), linking the frames with speakers and tracing their evolution over time (with Excel).	Finnish Social Science Data Archive, Archive of Parliament, National Archive, Labour Archive, and archive of the Centre Party. Searched with the keywords 'perustulo' (basic income), 'kansalaispalkka' (citizen's wage), 'kansalaistulo' (citizen's income), 'kansalaisraha' (citizen's money), 'negatiivinen tulovero' (negative income tax), and 'perustoimeentuloturva', 'kattava perusturva', or 'vähimmäistulo' (guaranteed minimum income)
III	Policy programs and election manifestos of the parties with seats in the national parliament (N=34), transcripts of the parliament's plenary session debates (N=132), dating from 1987 to 2018	I identify the excerpts in which the <i>Activity</i> -frame is used (with Atlas.ti) and observe the evolution of the fact- and value-based reasoning using this frame and different ways of value amplification, linking framing to the parties using it (with Excel).	Finnish Social Science Data Archive, Archive of Parliament, National Archive, Labour Archive, and archive of the Centre Party. Searched with the keyword 'perustulo' (basic income)

strategic attempts to bring the issue onto the political agenda. A minor part of the examined data (mainly the plenary sessions) contained framing that objected to basic income. This framing can be regarded as an attempt to raise negative perceptions of the issue and impede it from moving toward the political agenda.

Qualitative and quantitative content analysis were employed for the empirical analysis of the study. For Article I (co-authored), we analyzed basic income models according to their design (e.g., level, financing, integration with the existing benefits, aims and arguments), actors and the contextual factors at the time of their publication (e.g., macroeconomic indicators, government composition, political cycle). We used an analytical framework we developed for the study. For Article II, I inductively identified the frames used in the basic income debate (see Chong & Druckman, 2007, 107). I coded and qualitatively analyzed their contents with Atlas.ti software. The identification of the frames was based on Entman's (1993, 52) definition of a frame as composed of problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations. I systematically traced the evolution of the frames over time and the positions of the parties by coding each document separately in Excel in terms of the frames they contained and the parties using the frames. I used similar methods for Article III, which focused only on the usage of the so-called Activity-frame that was identified by Article II as the dominant frame in the Finnish political basic income debate since the mid-1990s. For Article III, I observed different ways of using the Activity-frame by coding each document in which the frame was used separately with Atlas.ti for the qualitative analysis and with Excel for systematically observing how much different framing techniques were used, how they evolved over time, and which parties were using them.

Each of the three articles sheds light on different aspects of the political feasibility of basic income. *Article I* helps understand the features of basic income as a programmatic idea in the Finnish context and the role of concrete proposals in the politics of basic income. *Article II* shows how the understanding of basic income and related ideas has evolved over time in the Finnish political discourse and what positions the parties have taken on the issue. *Article III* demonstrates how a specific framing strategy, value amplification, helped a less powerful party, the Greens, win attention for the policy and keep the idea alive during downturns in the general discussion. This summary of the thesis draws on the findings of these articles to further analyze the political feasibility of basic income in the Finnish context by utilizing the conceptual tools provided by the ideational institutionalist scholarship and the previous studies on the politics of basic income.

The main reason for focusing on parties and policy entrepreneurs was that they play direct roles in agenda-setting (see Kingdon, 2010). Parties are also the agents who hold legislative power and those that will ultimately be able to deliver the policy. Compared to their roles in many countries, parties and politicians have been peculiarly active in the Finnish basic income debate. Reports from other countries show that social movements and NGO's have often played a more active role in the basic income debate than parties (see Caputo, 2012). Focusing on the political discussion on basic income (instead of the public discussion) enabled thorough use of the rich and comprehensive dataset of the political documents available in public databanks that covers most of the history of the basic income-related discussion in Finnish politics.

7 OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS

In this section, I will overview the key findings of the three articles constituting the empirical part of the thesis. I will first discuss the findings of each article. Then, I will synthesize the findings to provide an overview of the basic income debate among Finnish parties and policy entrepreneurs. This will lay the groundwork for the further analysis through an ideational institutionalist lens in the next section.

7.1 Article I: Good and Bad Times of Social Innovations: The Case of Universal Basic Income in Finland

The first article of this thesis draws on a dataset of 13 proposed models of basic income or a related policy. The first examined model was published in 1984 and the last in 2011. The basic income-related proposals were analyzed according to their aims and design, their relationship to the existing welfare system, the position of the actors proposing them, and the political and socioeconomic contexts in which the proposals were made. The analysis also paid attention to the public interpretations and potential outcomes.

The analysis shows variety in the designs of the basic income-related models. It also shows that the models evolved over time in both their aims and contents. Generally, the models evolved from more idealistic and visionary to more moderate and pragmatic. The models also became more elaborate in their design. The early models often proposed an entirely new welfare system, while the models published later usually proposed a partial basic income to be integrated with the structures of the existing welfare system. Many of the early models embraced postproductivist visions of reduced working time and a more sustainable way of living. They also proposed alternative sources of taxation for financing the scheme, while many of the latter models relied on a reform of income taxation. From the 1990s onward, the models became increasingly concerned with the feasibility aspect. The models were focused on the pragmatic questions related to unemployment and the capacity of the existing benefit systems to provide economic security to all. Additionally, the

question of work incentives started gaining much attention in the design of basic income schemes.

The study also observed a shift in the reasoning for basic income-related schemes. In the 1980s, the reasoning reflected the Keynesian understanding of macroeconomic policy and the egalitarian values of the Nordic welfare state. The aim of the early models was generally to reduce the supply of labor by introducing new policies such as job-sharing, reduction of working time, or alternative ways of participation. This discourse emerged in the context of a modest increase in unemployment and an anticipated decline in the demand for labor due to automation of manufacturing industries. After the early 1990s recession, basic income proposals were formulated in line with neoliberal views on macroeconomic and employment policies. Labor activation was adopted as one of the key motivations for the basic income proposals. Most of the models published in the 1990s promoted basic income as a tool to improve the employment rate in the context of mass unemployment. This improvement was to occur by reducing the labor-market regulation and complementing low salaries with basic income. However, there was also a proposal that came close to the idea of participation income. Reforming the structures of social security to be more compatible with the postindustrial labor market was a common motivation behind the basic income proposals.

The early policy entrepreneurs proposing basic income-related schemes were academics, experts and societal thinkers, most of whom had political affiliations. From the 1990s onward, most actors proposing basic income-related schemes were politicians or parties. The models were published in all kinds of economic and political contexts, and they reflected the political climate at the time of their publication. All the models of political parties were published before elections, when the given party was in opposition.

Different agents played different roles in pushing the basic income proposal further within their own networks or in society as whole. Some of the individual policy entrepreneurs were successful in putting the basic income proposal on the agenda of their own party: the model of the Green politician Osmo Soininvaara (1994) was later adopted by his party with some modifications, and the economist Jan Otto Andersson (1988) introduced the concept of citizen's income to the Left Alliance. However, economist Pekka Korpinen did not win support for his proposal (1989) from his Social Democratic party. Before the 1999 elections, basic income models were published by the Centre Party (1998) and the small liberal party Young Finns (1998). Two of the latest examined basic income models were published by medium-sized parties, the Greens (2007) and the Left Alliance (2011). Both

presented microsimulation analyses¹⁶ on the integration of the proposed partial basic income scheme into the structures of the existing benefit system and its implications for public finances and income distribution. While the model of the Greens did not aim to shift the income distribution, the model of the Left Alliance put more emphasis on progressive distribution of income.

However, the parties proposing basic income in their programs did not take the proposal further when they were in power. There was no attempt to form a coalition among the basic income parties to implement the proposal, which reflects the problem of the low commitment of the proponents of basic income identified by De Wispelaere (2016b). Although the basic income models had little effect on legislation, they still boosted public discussion on the topic. The models were referred to when potential implementation of basic income was discussed. In that sense, they shaped the collective understanding of the basic income reform in Finland. Over time, the proposals grew more similar to each other. Obviously, the latter models borrowed elements from earlier ones and developed some aspects further. While this policy learning enabled the proponents to create more elaborate models, it also created intellectual path dependence in the construction of basic income models.

7.2 Article II: From Rights to Activation: The Evolution of the Idea of Basic Income in the Finnish Political Debate, 1980-2016

The second article examines the historical evolution of the basic income idea in Finnish political discussion from the framing perspective. It draws on a dataset of political documents in which basic income or a related idea are discussed dating from 1980 to 2016. The data consist of policy programs and election manifestos, motions, written questions to ministers and transcripts of the parliament's plenary session debates.

¹⁶ Microsimulation models are tools for modeling the effects of legislation on the national economy or on subgroups of the population. The models are used to estimate tax revenues in the public sector, to examine the financial positions of individual persons and households, and to study income differentials and incentive effects. In Finland, the SISU microsimulation model is used in planning, monitoring and assessing the effects of legislative amendments in personal taxation and social security benefits on different types of households and the whole population. See Statistics Finland: Microsimulation. http://tilastokeskus.fi/tup/mikrosimulointi/index_en.html.

The article traces the origin of the basic income-related debate to the early 1980s discussion on two ideas: guaranteed minimum income and citizen's wage. Guaranteed minimum income was a proposal to streamline the social protection system and aimed to guarantee a decent standard of living as a right of all citizens in all life situations. The policy enjoyed wide support among the parties during the 1980s. The concept of basic income was first used in 1987, and it became the most frequently used concept from 1994 onward. The article finds that in the 1980s and 1990s, a variety of concepts referring to a basic income-like scheme was used. Additionally, the concept of basic income itself was sometimes understood in different ways. Most often it was understood as a universal unconditional payment to all citizens or residents. Yet it was sometimes presented as conditional to some activity or targeted only to a specific group of people. From the 2000s onward, there was less variation in the concepts, and basic income, whenever discussed in more detail, was depicted as a universal and unconditional benefit.

The article identifies 12 frequently used frames in the basic income debate among the Finnish parties. Those frames portrayed the basic income proposal from different perspectives. Some of the frames were used throughout the examined period, while other frames were frequent only in certain periods. In the 1980s, basic income-related proposals were most often framed in terms of universal social rights (*Rights-frame*) and egalitarian principles (*Equality-frame*). They were also discussed in terms of economic distribution (*Distribution-frame*). A guaranteed minimum income was framed by the left-wing parties and the Rural Party¹⁷ in terms of traditional redistribution from the well-off population to those left behind by economic progress. Meanwhile, the framing of citizen's income had a different logic: it was promoted by individual left-wing and green politicians as a new tool for economic distribution in a future with increasingly automated work. Both concepts were also discussed as to fix the systemic flaws of social protection (*Systemic reform-frame*) and improve the subsistence of deprived groups (*Subsistence-frame*). However, there was more variation in the framing of citizen's wage. This framing was strongly linked to concerns about the breakdown of the full-employment society (*Transformation of work-frame*), and the alleged need to find ways to reconceptualize work and employment (*Work alternatives-frame*). Citizen's wage was also often discussed as a tool for greater individual autonomy (*Autonomy-frame*) and dignified treatment of welfare recipients (*Dignity-frame*).

¹⁷ The Finnish Rural Party (in Finnish Suomen maaseudun puolue, SMP) was an agrarian and populist party that existed from 1959 to 2003. In the period of 1979-1995 the party had 1,3-9,7% share of the votes in the parliamentary elections.

The article observed a radical shift in the framing of basic income-type ideas in the aftermath of the economic recession of the early 1990s. This shift in framing was in line with the shift in the rationale of basic income proposals observed in *Article I*. In the political debate, the basic income proposal was reframed in terms of labor activation policy (*Activity*-frame). This new framing made the idea compatible with the activation paradigm that emerged in the aftermath of the 1990s crisis (see Kananen, 2012; Kantola & Kananen, 2013). Before this shift in framing, the *Activity*-frame was used only in few examined documents in the late 1980s. However, from 1994 onward, it became the dominant frame. This framing emphasized the positive effects of basic income on work incentives and all kinds of individual activity. It was often used alongside the *Systemic reform*- and *Subsistence*-frames, which were the second- and third-most often used frames throughout the period. These three most frequent frames were used by (members of parliament of) all parties making positive statements on basic income. With these frames, basic income was depicted as a tool to reform the bureaucratic structures of social security, improve the coverage, and eliminate the incentive traps. However, proponents of basic income also embraced the ideal of individual autonomy in personal work-related decisions. Additionally, they sometimes proposed that basic income could be used for forms of activity outside of traditional employment.

Toward the end of the examined period, the basic income discourse grew more narrowly focused on the questions of activity and work incentives. In turn, opponents emphasized negative effects of basic income on work incentives and work ethic and the alleged financial unsustainability of the scheme. Since the 2000s, the basic income discourse was focused on activity as paid work or entrepreneurship, and the alternative forms of activity were less often mentioned. However, the most eager advocates, the Greens and the Left Alliance, used a greater variety of frames in the late period than the politicians of more hesitant parties making supportive statements on basic income. The Green Party was the one that most often made positive statements on basic income, and it kept the basic income discourse alive during periods when it was mostly absent from the general discussion.

7.3 Article III: Legitimising a radical policy idea: framing basic income as a boost to labour market activity

The third article examines how the Finnish parties and politicians used the *Activity*-frame (see *Article II*) to legitimize the idea of basic income. The article utilizes

political documents dating from 1987 to 2018, focusing on those parts of the discussion in which the *Activity*-frame was used to support or oppose basic income. The data consist of policy programs, election manifestos and transcripts of the parliament's plenary session debates.

The proposal of unconditional cash runs counter to some key normative assumptions in current societies, namely those concerning 'deservingness' of different kinds of people and the norm of reciprocity (for a more detailed discussion on this, see Section 5.2). To depict their proposal as a legitimate alternative, the advocates of basic income should address these normative issues through their framing. The article employs the concept of *value amplification* (Béland, 2007a, 2009a, 2009b; Snow et al., 1986) to analyze the normative reasoning using the *Activity*-frame to portray basic income as a legitimate policy alternative. Value amplification occurs, briefly, by constantly referring to, idealizing and elevating a value central to a society's cultural repertoire (see the description of this concept in Section 6).

The article finds that the amount of reasoning for basic income that referred to activity as a value or principle greatly surpassed the amount of reasoning that referred only to facts concerning the economy, labor market or social policy. However, the fact- and value-related reasoning was often intertwined. The article identifies five different types of value-related reasoning: (1) presenting increased activity or work as a principle or goal to be pursued by the basic income reform; (2) using attributes such as 'activating' in front of 'basic income' to describe the reform; (3) appealing to shared values or moral sentiments concerning work and activity (4) using metaphors or narratives to describe the basic income reform or its target groups; and (5) idealizing and elevating the values of activity and work.

The analysis shows that the Green Party was a key player in shaping the Finnish basic income discourse to embrace the idea of activation. The Greens also kept the idea of basic income alive during periods when it largely faded from the general discussion. The Green Party Member of Parliament Osmo Soitinvaara introduced the *Activity*-frame in the Finnish basic income debate in 1987 and used it repeatedly in the following years. During the 2000s, when most parties were silent on the issue, the Greens persistently maintained the basic income discourse emphasizing the activation potential of the policy. This framing was adopted by a larger number of politicians and parties whenever basic income started gaining more attention after the silent periods. The *Activity*-frame was most often used by the Greens, followed by the Centre Party, and in the 1990s two small liberal parties (Liberal People's Party and Young Finns) that lost their seats before the end of the decade. Meanwhile the Left Alliance – though committed to basic income (or citizen's income) as such –

used this kind of framing less often. Before the basic income experiment (2017-2018), most parties adopted this framing as the key rationale of basic income. The experiment was both supported and opposed from the activation perspective.

In the examined basic income discussion, activity appeared both as a political goal and a sacred value or virtue not questioned by any participants in the discussion. However, this value was more often implicit and taken for granted than actively idealized or elevated. Increased work-related activity among welfare recipients appeared a self-evident goal of the basic income reform. This framing aligned the basic income idea with mainstream economic rationales, as well as with widely shared moral sentiments concerning work, activity and reciprocity. Increased activity was presented by the proponents of basic income as a personal gain to individuals themselves as well as to the welfare state and the national economy. The target population of basic income (mainly unemployed individuals and those in nonstandard employment) was portrayed as active citizens willing to work and contribute but oppressed by the traps of the benefit system. With the help of basic income, they could lift themselves out of poverty by their own active effort and start contributing to society. Meanwhile, this frame effectively addressed the most common opposing argument that concerned the alleged negative effects of basic income on work incentives or the moral wrongness of handing out money without conditions. This oppositional framing in the examined data was most often used by the right-wing National Coalition, the Social Democrats, and the Christian Democrats.

8 ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

The three articles presented above examined the Finnish basic income debate among the political parties and policy entrepreneurs over a long time frame. These articles reveal how the understanding of the idea of basic income has evolved historically in the Finnish political debate. In this section, I will analyze the key findings of the articles (see Table 4). I focus on the framing of basic income, and on the role of the basic income models and different political actors in shaping the basic income debate. After that, I will draw on this analysis to further discuss the agency and constraints in the Finnish basic income debate through an ideational institutionalist lens.

Table 4. Findings of the articles

Article	Research questions/interests	Findings
I Good and Bad Times of Social Innovations: The Case of Universal Basic Income in Finland	What kinds of models for implementing a basic income-type reform have been proposed in Finland, by whom and in what contexts?	The basic income-related models varied over time in their design and aims. Toward the end of the examined period, the models grew more modest and pragmatic and more similar to each other. The basic income-related models were proposed by academics and societal thinkers, politicians and parties in different economic and political contexts. The models had little effect on legislation, but they shaped the public discourse on basic income.
II From Rights to Activation: The Evolution of the Idea of Basic Income in the Finnish Political Debate, 1980-2016	How has the idea of basic income evolved in the framing of Finnish political parties?	The article observed a variety of frames in the Finnish political basic income discussion. In the early part of the period, a greater variety of frames and concepts were used to refer to a basic income-type reform. The early framing emphasized social rights and egalitarian principles. In the mid-1990s, the framing shifted to embrace the idea of activation. Since then, the activation perspective has dominated the basic income debate. The most frequent frames were shared by parties and politicians making positive statements on basic income.

III Legitimising a radical policy idea: framing basic income as a boost to labour market activity	How did Finnish parties and politicians use the frame that depicted basic income as a tool for activation to legitimize the idea?	The article found that proponents often defended basic income with framing that appealed to activity as a value. Increased work-related activity was presented as a principle to be pursued by the reform. The Green Party was a key agent in introducing this framing and keeping it alive during the periods when general discussion on basic income had largely faded. This framing aligned basic income with mainstream economic rationales and normative values. It effectively addressed the most common opposing argument that concerned the alleged negative effects of basic income on work motivation.
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The empirical analysis found that in the early part of the examined period, there were many different concepts representing the idea of basic income. The two concepts most often used in the 1980s were guaranteed minimum income and citizen's wage (*Article II*). Those two proposals had very different rationales. The purpose of guaranteed minimum income was to reform the existing structures of welfare benefits to make the system more uniform and comprehensive, without essentially changing the principles on which it was built. Meanwhile, citizen's wage was depicted as a radical altering of the existing models of welfare, economic distribution and work. While guaranteed minimum income was proposed to alleviate poverty among the economically 'inactive' population, citizen's wage usually appeared as part of alternative employment policy considerations in the context of an anticipated crisis of full employment. In addition to those two concepts, concepts such as citizen's income and citizen's money were circulated. The concept of basic income emerged in the data in the late 1980s, and it was often depicted as a synonym of citizen's wage. During the 1990s, basic income became the most frequently used concept, but a few other concepts still appeared occasionally. Basic income was usually depicted as a universal and unconditional benefit, but during the 1990s and early 2000s, it still sometimes appeared as conditional to some activity (such as civil work) or limited to certain categories of people (such as the unemployed).

The analysis observed greater variety in the design of the basic income-related models (*Article I*) and in the frames used in communicating them (*Article II*) in the early part of the examined period. Toward the end, the basic income discourse narrowed to particularly emphasize the questions related to work incentives. Basic income was depicted as a tool to boost employment-related activity among welfare

recipients (*Article III*). Meanwhile, it would reduce the welfare bureaucracy and provide more economic security for those in nonstandard employment (*Article II*). During the 1980s and 1990s, proposals such as job-sharing and civil work were often discussed alongside the basic income-related proposals. Additionally, questions regarding individual freedom and new ways of distributing income were emphasized particularly in relation to the concept of citizen's wage. The early discussion on citizen's wage or citizen's income reflected the increasing environmental concerns of the time and the postproductivist visions of a more relaxed and sustainable lifestyle. The Greens in particular portrayed the reform as a centerpiece of the new economy, in which various activities could count as meaningful work and people could receive income from many different sources. According to them, liberating people from the anxieties of daily survival and the bureaucracy of the welfare system could make both civil society and entrepreneurial activities flourish.

The study observed a radical shift in the framing of the basic income proposal (*Article II*) and in the design of the basic income models (*Article I*) in the aftermath of the early 1990s economic crisis. The shift occurred alongside a conceptual shift in which basic income became the dominant concept and gradually displaced the other concepts in the discussion. This shift in the framing and policy design made basic income compatible with the activation paradigm that emerged in the 1990s. In the 1990s context of an indebted welfare state and mass unemployment, the basic income proposal was reframed to incentivize economic activity and a 'softer' way to carry out neoliberal reforms in the labor market and social policy. According to proponents, basic income would modernize the Finnish welfare state for the postindustrial economy, in which an increasing amount of work was outside traditional full-time employment. From the 2000s onward, alternative perspectives on work and economic distribution nearly vanished from the basic income-related discussion, and the proposal was mainly portrayed as streamlining the welfare bureaucracy to boost employment and entrepreneurship and improving the welfare coverage of those in nonstandard employment (*Articles II & III*).

This study shows how the rationale of basic income-related proposals evolved over time. The framing of the proposals followed the ideological shifts in Finnish society, and basic income was attached to new issues that emerged on the political agenda. The early framing built on the Keynesian understanding of macroeconomics and labor-market dynamics, and appealed to values such as universalism and equality, that have been central to the Nordic welfare tradition. The early framing also often evoked alternative visions of the future. After the early 1990s economic crisis, basic income was reframed to embrace the idea of activation, which became a dominant

perspective in Finnish politics (see Kangas & Saloniemi, 2013; Saarinen et al., 2014). Advocates of basic income adopted new diagnoses of the problems of the welfare state. Those diagnoses emerged as a result of mass unemployment, financial austerity, and the shift in the macroeconomic paradigm. Since the 1990s, higher employment was portrayed by proponents as a key target of the basic income reform. Toward the end of the period, the basic income discourse was increasingly focused on pragmatic problems related to work incentives and welfare bureaucracy.

The empirical analysis (*Article III*) observed how the Greens in particular used the value amplification strategy (see e.g., Béland, 2007a; 2009a+b) to link the basic income proposal positively to the value of activity. Emphasizing the activation potential of basic income made the idea compatible with not only the dominant political ideology but also deep-rooted moral sentiments concerning work, activity and reciprocity. However, while this framing celebrated the importance of activity and work, it contested the prevalent means of pursuing these ideals. Some of the proponents of basic income strongly positioned themselves against the compulsive activation policies and portrayed basic income as a more effective and nonhumiliating way to boost activity: it would provide economic incentives for activity but allow people to make their own decisions.

In addition to framing the policy itself as compatible with mainstream economic perspectives and normative values, the framing portrayed the target populations in positive terms as ‘deserving’ targets of the policy. The notion of ‘deservingness’ attached to different categories of recipients affects the social legitimacy of policies (for further discussion, see Section 5.2). How target populations are constructed in the political discourse affects people’s willingness to give them benefits (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The target populations evoked in the basic income debate were most often the unemployed and from the late 1990s onward increasingly those in nonstandard employment (e.g., self-employed or temporary workers). Those target populations were portrayed by proponents of basic income as active and hardworking people, willing to contribute to society but trapped by the unjust benefit structures. The framing emphasized structural injustices, such as insurmountable welfare bureaucracy and poverty traps, as the source of these individuals’ inactivity and distress. Appealing to deep-rooted moral sentiments and perceptions of justice, this framing constructed the target populations as legitimate and deserving targets of the policy.

The framing that portrayed the basic income reform as compatible with mainstream economic rationales and deep-rooted normative values drew positive attention to the policy across the political spectrum, which can be observed from the

number of positive statements on the issue that echoed the arguments related to the need for pragmatic reform of the social security system and the positive effects on labor-market activity. In turn, frames that more directly challenged the status quo or evoked alternative visions of the future were not usually echoed in subsequent positive statements. This kind of framing was more typical in the early discussion on citizen's wage, but it was later occasionally used regarding basic income.

In addition to the frames used in communication, the proposed basic income models had a role in shaping the Finnish political discourse on basic income. Models are programmatic policy ideas (see Campbell, 1998; Mehta, 2011), and without concrete and 'realizable' models, the discussion would have remained more abstract. The empirical analysis shows that the basic income models evolved over time: they grew more similar to one another on the one hand and more moderate and elaborate in design on the other. The partial basic income model of the Greens (first published in 2007) was often referred to as a potential way to implement a basic income. The Greens' model was designed to be moderate and to make the fewest possible changes to income distribution or priorities of public financing. Thus, it could be acceptable to a wide range of political actors. This model, among others that became known in the Finnish discussion, depicted basic income as a technically feasible reform (see Kingdon, 2010, 131) and left less ground to the opposing arguments concerning the unworkability of the idea.

Different parties and policy entrepreneurs played different roles in shaping the basic income debate. Some individual policy entrepreneurs were successful in putting the basic income proposal onto the agenda of their own party or in initiating frames that were echoed in the subsequent discussion. Member of Parliament Osmo Soininvaara of the Greens and economist Jan Otto Andersson of the Left Alliance both successfully introduced the idea of basic income to their own parties (*Article I*). However, the proposal of Social Democrat economist Pekka Korpinen (1989), which strongly conflicted with the Nordic welfare ideology, was not adopted by his party. Additionally, individual politicians from all parties played different roles in the basic income debate. Some were more active, while others remained silent. Osmo Soininvaara of the Greens was the first to introduce the activation perspective to the basic income debate (*Article III*). This perspective was later adopted as a key rationale of basic income (*Article II*). Furthermore, parties are not unanimous entities; rather, they may contain conflicting opinions on a highly controversial issue, such as basic income. Divergent opinions within parties were observed from the parliament's plenary discussions, where individual MPs of the same party sometimes gave

conflicting statements on the issue. Sometimes individual agents expressed support for the policy even when the party as a whole did not support it.

The parties that most often made positive statements on basic income throughout the period were the Greens, the Left Alliance, the Centre Party, and in the 1990s, two small liberal parties that lost their seats by the end of the decade (*Article II*). The remaining parties more often made opposing than supportive statements. However, the supportive parties played different roles in shaping the basic income debate. The role of the Greens was peculiar in that the party communicated the proposal in a way that could make it acceptable to the widest possible range of political actors (*Article III*). The Greens made positive statements more often than any other party and kept the idea persistently alive during periods when basic income more or less disappeared from the general discussion. Meanwhile, the Left Alliance, the Centre Party and the small liberal parties emphasized their own ideological perspectives on the issue.

9 DISCUSSION

In this section, I will further explore the findings of the analysis using the theoretical perspectives provided by ideational institutionalist scholarship and the previous studies on the politics of basic income. I will discuss the role of framing and proposed policy design in understanding the positions of different agents on the basic income issue and the prospects for coalition-building. I will also discuss the constraints on basic income that are related to the dominant ideological and paradigmatic views and the intellectual path dependence in framing.

Previous studies (see Section 5.1) have identified challenges to basic income, such as inadequate political support, lack of organized constituencies, ‘cheap’ support in terms of low commitment or low capacity of proponents to further the proposal, and potential ideological conflicts among those committed to the policy (e.g., De Wispelaere, 2016a; 2016b; Martinelli & Pearce, 2018). I attempt to show how paying attention to the framing of the proposal and the proposed policy design can contribute to a better understanding of those challenges. Based on the studies on the roles of ideas and framing in politics (see Section 4) and the findings of this thesis, I consider (1) the capacity of proponents of basic income to address issues that are considered important; (2) how the framing relates to hegemonic political views; (3) how the framing touches on people’s values and moral sentiments; (4) how target populations are portrayed; and (5) the proposed policy design as important determinants of the prospects of basic income.

The framing of basic income in Finnish politics contained many elements that have been identified by scholars as ingredients of successful framing (for further discussion, see Section 4). The framing made the idea compatible with the mainstream economic paradigm and hegemonic values in society and evolved over time to incorporate ideological shifts and new issues appearing on the political agenda. The framing of basic income touched people’s moral sentiments in a positive way and portrayed the recipients as ‘deserving’ targets of the policy. The proponents generated models of implementation that depicted basic income as a technically feasible reform that would be neutral for public financing.

It has been noted that framing that appeals to shared values and moral sentiments is often more effective than framing that relies only on facts (e.g., Chong and

Druckman, 2007; Kangas et al., 2014). Additionally, proposals surviving serious consideration are often compatible with dominant values (Kindon, 2011, 132-133). The value amplification strategy used especially by the Greens that highlighted the positive effects of basic income on activity enabled overcoming the normative resistance to basic income as ‘free cash for the idle’ in advance (for a more detailed discussion on this, see Section 5.2). Framing the proposal in a way that resonated with mainstream political views and deep-rooted moral values, as well as the flexibility to incorporate new issues and perspectives, are possible reasons why basic income maintained political appeal even when the economic and ideological context was shifting. This makes a contrast with Denmark (Christensen, 2008), where advocates maintained the old framing that emphasized the postgrowth visions, which made the idea of basic income inconsistent with the neoliberalist activation paradigm that emerged in the 1990s. Without the shift in framing to embrace the new political perspectives that grew dominant after the economic crisis of the early 1990s, the idea of basic income would probably have been marginalized in Finland, as it was in Denmark¹⁸.

The findings of this study suggest that there were no strong ideological conflicts regarding basic income among the parties that expressed support for the policy. Although the parties emphasized different aspects of basic income in their framing, all who made positive statements shared the most frequent frames. Frames that would strongly conflict with the dominant perspectives in the basic income debate were not used. However, more conflicting frames were found in the media debate (see Perkiö, 2013; 2020). Additionally, ideological conflicts could still emerge whenever the parties move from abstract discussion toward addressing necessary trade-offs related to implementation (see De Wispelaere, 2016b). The analysis reveals that parties played different roles in the basic income debate. The Greens showed the strongest commitment to the policy as the party made most positive statements on it, and used different strategies to make the idea appealing to other parties and policymakers. The role of the Centre Party was contradictory in the sense that this powerful party never seriously advanced the basic income proposal when in power. In this sense, it appears a classic example of ‘cheap support’ in terms of low commitment to the policy (see De Wispelaere, 2016b). The party even carried out reforms with obvious contradictions to basic income, such as the punitive ‘activation

¹⁸ Another potential reason for the marginalization of basic income in Denmark was that a thorough reform of the social security system (the ‘flexicurity’ reform) was carried out in the early 2000s. After that, discussion of social security reform was no longer relevant. In Finland, such a large reform has not been done.

model' introduced by the government of Juha Sipilä (2015-2019) alongside the ongoing basic income experiment.

This study is focused on the agency of political parties and policy entrepreneurs, such as politicians, experts, or academics, putting forward basic income proposals. Individual political agents played a key role in shaping the basic income discourse and bringing up the topic time and again in any suitable context. However, due to their legislative power, parties play a crucial role in the success or failure of any policy proposal. In a political system such as Finland's (see Section 3.1), broad coalitions are needed for any policy to become reality. It has been noted that political divisions among the proponents of basic income may emerge when the actors move from abstract discussion to coalition-building and implementation (De Wispelaere, 2015; 2016b; Crisp & Martinelli, 2019). However, there has been less empirical attention to what kinds of models of implementation have been proposed in a specific context and how different stakeholders view these models. This study finds that the Greens played a key role in formulating a proposal and communicating it in a way that made it acceptable to a wide range of political actors. This finding suggests that framing can provide a powerful symbolic tool for agents with less political power to win legitimacy for the policy and build a coalition of support. However, in light of the findings of this study, only very moderate policy design and conformist framing could enable proponents to overcome the ideological divisions.

Previous studies have identified constraints on basic income that relate to institutional rigidities and to the social legitimacy or cultural suitability of the policy (see Section 5.2). The findings of the present study enable discussion on the constraints that stem from the dominant political worldviews, that is, policy paradigms and related cognitive and normative assumptions about reality.

I noted above how in the examined political debate, basic income was often framed in a way that made it compatible with the dominant economic policy paradigm. Furthermore, this framing made it resonate with deep-rooted normative values in society. In the following, I will discuss how the dominance of the neoliberal activation paradigm in Finnish politics (see Section 3.1.) and the adoption of its logic by the proponents of basic income constrained the politics of basic income. I will use the concept of policy paradigm to refer to a broad set of ideational assumptions and beliefs that constrain policymaking from the background (see Section 4.1). As a pragmatic 'worldview' of policymakers, the prevailing policy paradigm limits the terrain of political discourse and the range of solutions policymakers are willing to consider (see Hall, 1993). The policy paradigm sets the most fundamental cognitive and normative categories for understanding the political reality. I consider the role

of problem definitions – the way problems are perceived and diagnosed in the political discourse – as crucial to understanding the political challenges to basic income (Mehta, 2011).

I observed that since the 1990s, the proponents of basic income increasingly adopted the dominant problem definitions based on mainstream macroeconomic views as their justification for the policy. Those problem definitions concerned the functioning of the national economy and labor market and the role of social policy in providing economic security and promoting employment. Basic income was defended by the rationale that a nonretractable economic floor would provide better incentives for economic activity than the ‘old’ social benefits, as the money would never be withdrawn if the recipients earned income from other sources. However, the analysis also observed framing that more directly contested the dominant problem diagnoses and offered alternative ways of conceptualizing the problems. This kind of framing was more typical of the early period of the discussion, especially related to the concept of citizen’s wage. Later, it was, on rare occasions, used by the Greens and the Left Alliance. The problem definitions used in the early period were focused on the demand for labor and availability of jobs with sufficient pay to all citizens. A basic income-type transfer appeared as a rightful share of the growing productivity for all citizens and compensation to those to whom society was not able to provide decent employment. After the financial crash of the early 1990s, new problem definitions focusing on the supply of labor and economic incentives to work emerged in the political discourse and were adopted as a key rationale of basic income.

Although some features of the Finnish welfare state could provide institutional stepping-stones to a modest basic income scheme (see Halmetoja et al., 2018), in terms of political principles, the gap between conditional and unconditional scheme is large. The current welfare institutions are built on the primacy of paid employment, and employment is boosted by all means in politics (e.g., Kettunen, 2012). Basic income, even in its partial form, would alter not only the institutional design but also the fundamental principles at the heart of today’s social policy – especially those related to the link between social security and employment. From an ideational perspective, an unconditional cash transfer paid to the whole population would constitute a significant path-departure in the context of the Finnish welfare state. An unconditional benefit would provide by default a legitimate exit option from employment.

In justifying an unconditional benefit, the proponents of basic income highlighted the moral value of work and depicted employment as a goal above all

others. The proponents of basic income also adopted the dominant diagnosis of the reasons for unemployment, which concerned inadequate economic incentives to work. Although this framing drew positive attention to basic income, it also created a ‘cognitive lock’ (see Blyth, 2001, 4) that enabled communication on the proposal only within the terrain constrained by financial austerity and the primacy of work incentives. This ‘cognitive lock’ made the discussion increasingly focused on a narrow set of issues mainly related to social security bureaucracy and work incentives. By this framing, basic income was depicted as a mere technical reform comparable to any other social security reform. However, although the employment-related arguments were resonant, they did not provide a robust justification for an unconditional benefit. In fact, it has been observed that a partial basic income amounting to the current level of minimum social benefits would not significantly improve the economic work incentives in the Finnish institutional context (Kangas et al., 2016). After the basic income experiment found only mild effects on employment (see Hämäläinen et al., 2020), the activation argument lost its credibility. As the argumentation centered around the employment effects of the policy, there was no room for communication on the more transformative aspects.

Framing basic income with alternative logics imposed a different kind of constraint: those frames did not resonate widely among policymakers. However, there was no systematic attempt to shift the dominant understanding of basic income or introduce a coherent alternative frame. Thus, the proponents of basic income were not able to communicate the proposal in a way that would both be resonant and provide a robust justification for an unconditional benefit. According to Steensland (2008a, 5-17), one of the key reasons for the failure of the Guaranteed Income policies in the US was that the proponents failed to shift the dominant problem definitions and introduce a new ‘conceptual template’ to understand the new kind of policy. Thus, Steensland (2008a) notes, there was a conflict between the ‘substance and symbolism’ of the policy. In the Finnish debate, there was an obvious contradiction between the personal autonomy promised by an unconditional benefit and the employment-related goals pursued in the political discourse. Since the 1990s, whenever the question of autonomy arose in the basic income discourse, it concerned free decisions related to employment or flexibility to move from one life situation to another. The proponents avoided the question of autonomy as the possibility to opt out of work. As the proponents of basic income did not address more fundamental questions related to the role of employment in societies or causes of unemployment, they lacked a strong argument for an unconditional benefit.

A new conceptual template could have shifted both the cognitive reasoning and normative evaluations of the policy. As observed, the principle of reciprocity is a strong ethical obstacle to basic income (see Section 4.2). According to questionnaire studies, Finns favor conditional participation income more than an unconditional basic income (Andersson & Kangas, 2002; Pulkka, 2020). A coherent analysis of labor-market developments, production growth, and income distribution could have provided an alternative conceptual template in the arguments for basic income. This kind of conceptual template could have enabled raising more fundamental questions concerning personal autonomy, the role of employment in society, ecological sustainability, and economic policies. However, focusing on more fundamental questions might have brought the ideological divisions among advocates of basic income to the fore and made the idea unappealing to those more inclined toward mainstream political thinking. Framing the policy in a way that strongly challenged the premises of the dominant welfare paradigm might have marginalized it.

Basic income is a policy idea that challenges some of the foundational principles of current welfare institutions. The policy has long been discussed but has never been implemented at a large scale. Basic income is also a peculiar idea in that it is not clearly linked to the political left or right. Despite its apparent radicalness, basic income is gaining traction across the political spectrum in various countries. However, the policy can be justified with many different logics. The principled justifications that have been typical in the academic discussion do not easily translate to the political language. This study demonstrates the difficulty of communicating a new policy alternative that radically departs from the established path of welfare in a resonant way in everyday policymaking. The study shows that a very conformist framing may help win more legitimacy for the policy but simultaneously hinder communicating the policy's more transformative aspects. In turn, using alternative problem definitions or frames that challenge the status quo is likely to marginalize the proposal from mainstream politics.

One way to overcome this dilemma could be adopting the social dividend perspective on basic income (see more detailed discussion on this perspective in Section 2.3). This perspective was prevalent in the early basic income-related proposals (e.g., Paine, 1797) and has appeared in many academic texts (e.g., Van Parijs, 1995; Birnbaum, 2012; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017; Standing, 2017). The social dividend perspective also appeared in the data utilized for this dissertation, especially in the early framing of citizen's wage. The idea of a social dividend is to pay everyone a rightful share of the societal wealth that originates from collectively owned assets such as natural resources, or the scientific, technological and cultural

inheritance from past generations. Such a scheme could be implemented outside of existing social security institutions (at a national or cross-national level), starting with an initially low level of social dividend. This would enable starting with a modest scheme of a new distribution mechanism. A modest social dividend scheme could establish a new principle (see Kingdon, 2010, 191) of distributing some of the economic resources outside of traditional labor-capital relations. As a policy that would not necessarily entail any changes in the current welfare institutions, it could have the capacity to overcome some of the intellectual and institutional path dependencies that constrain the politics of basic income and enable new kinds of coalitions.

10 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis set out to examine how basic income has been framed in Finnish politics, what kind of policy design has been proposed, and what role different agents have played in the basic income debate. Furthermore, it aimed to explore how an ideational institutionalist approach can contribute to understanding the political feasibility of basic income. The basic income debate among Finnish parties and policy entrepreneurs has been used as a case study. This dissertation draws on the empirical analysis of the models of implementing a basic income proposed in Finland and the framing of the idea in the programs of political parties, motions and parliamentary debates. The findings of the three articles constituting the empirical part of the dissertation were analyzed using the concepts of ideational institutionalist scholarship, and they were reflected to previous studies on the theoretical and empirical perspectives on the politics of basic income.

The study found that there were a variety of concepts, frames and proposals in the Finnish basic income debate and that the discussion evolved over time from a more heterogeneous to a more uniform understanding of the policy. Additionally, the early period of the examined discussion was characterized by framing that more directly contested the prevailing paradigm of welfare, while toward the end of the period, both basic income proposals and the frames used in communicating them became more moderate and in line with the present policy paradigm. The rationale of the basic income debate evolved over time alongside the shifts in the political climate and to embrace new issues appearing on the political agenda. A radical shift in the rationale of the basic income-related discussion occurred after the early 1990s recession, when the framing that emphasized universal social rights gave way to a new framing that reconciled the idea of basic income with the emerging activation paradigm. Toward the end of the examined period, the basic income discourse became increasingly focused on pragmatic issues concerning the welfare bureaucracy and activation, leaving aside alternative perspectives to basic income. The dissertation found that the Green Party was a key player in shaping the Finnish basic income discourse and keeping the idea alive during periods when the issue was mostly absent from general discussion. The Greens framed the idea in a way that

resonated with both mainstream economic rationales and widely shared normative values.

This study observed that the framing and policy design that portrayed basic income as a moderate reform in line with mainstream economic rationales and deep-rooted normative values drew positive attention to the policy across the ideological spectrum. The Green Party was a key player in communicating the proposal in a way that made it acceptable to a wide range of political actors. The findings suggest potential for a political consensus on a moderate basic income model in the event that the proposal garners sufficient political support. However, I also identified the dominance of the activation perspective in Finnish politics and in the basic income debate as a key constraint on the policy. Although the framing that emphasized the activation potential of basic income was widely resonant, it made the argumentation focused on a rather narrow set of issues related to the functioning of social security and employment effects. The primacy of employment as a political goal and financial austerity defined the territory for the argumentation on basic income. This framing left no space for communicating the more transformative aspects of the policy. Furthermore, it did not provide a robust justification for an unconditional benefit that by breaking the link between social security and employment radically departs from the established model of welfare.

Based on the findings of this study, I argue that an adequate understanding of the politics of basic income requires incorporating the ideational dimension into the analysis. Without paying attention to the ideational dimension, some important aspects related to the feasibility of the policy cannot be grasped. The prospects of basic income result from a complex interplay of political and institutional factors, in which shared perceptions of reality play a crucial role. I argue that both framing and proposed policy design play key roles in broadening the legitimacy of the policy and building a coalition of support. However, this aspect has received only marginal attention in most previous studies. Below I will demonstrate, based on the findings of this study, how the ideational scholarship can enrich our understanding of the politics of basic income.

This case study on the Finnish political basic income debate demonstrates that both the framing of the proposal and the proposed implementation design play key roles in shaping the collective understanding of the issue and the positions taken by different agents. The study also illustrates the role of individual and collective agents in depicting the issue to appeal to a broad range of political agents. The analysis showed that the dominant frames describing basic income were widely echoed in supportive statements on the policy. Understanding what kind of problem diagnoses

and normative standpoints have been adopted in the framing of basic income and what kind of implementation is proposed is crucial for understanding the prospects of basic income in a specific context. A policy idea such as basic income may take a distinctive shape and rationale depending on its context. Thus, without paying attention to the ideational factors, the political challenges cannot be fully understood. The prospects for basic income appear different if it is conceived, for instance, as part of a radical discourse challenging all the premises of the current welfare model or, as in the Finnish case, as a rather moderate reform roughly in line with the dominant political views. How the proposal is framed and communicated in public and political discourses plays an essential role in what kind of agents may find the policy suitable to their ends and what kind of coalitions can be built. Without knowing the centrality of the activation perspective in the Finnish basic income debate, the positions of Finnish parties and the enthusiasm of the center-right government for carrying out a basic income experiment cannot be adequately understood. Empirical attention to the features of the basic income discussion may also help identify the potential sources of disagreement (or agreement) among basic income advocates. To understand the prospects of basic income, it is important to know whether advocates share the same frame in communicating the proposal or whether there are many (conflicting) frames or models of implementation to be discussed. These factors crucially affect the political feasibility of basic income.

This thesis gives a comprehensive overview of the history of the basic income discussion in Finnish parliamentary politics. However, it also has some limitations related to the selection of data and methodology. First, the empirical analysis was more focused on the supportive framing and argumentation on basic income than on the oppositional framing. This was mainly because the focus was on the attempts to put the idea on the political agenda through positive framing but also because the amount of oppositional framing was relatively small in the examined data. A different kind of dataset may have enabled a closer focus on the arguments used by the opponents of basic income. Second, because of the long time period covered and the large amount of data, some nuances of the discussion may be hidden. For instance, some frames that rarely featured in the discussion, such as the one related to gender equality, were not captured by this analysis. Focusing more closely on a shorter period of time may have enabled grasping nuances of the discussion that are not reached by this analysis. Third, it is worth noting that this study does not cover the discussion after the basic income experiment of the Sipilä government, and only

Article III covers the discussion during the experiment¹⁹. This is because most of the empirical analysis was conducted before the experiment ended.

The fourth limitation concerns the actors covered by the study. The items are brought onto the political agenda by not only policymakers but also forces outside of the government, such as the media, interest groups, academics and specialists, and the general public (Kingdon, 2010, 15-17). Focusing on parties and individual policy entrepreneurs, this study does not cover *all* basic income discussion in Finland. Analysis on the framing of basic income in the media or among stakeholder organizations or social movements could have provided different results. However, I have analyzed the media framing on basic income outside of this thesis (see Perkiö, 2012; 2020; Perkiö et al., 2019). My findings on the media framing were in line with the findings of this thesis, but I observed a greater variety of frames that were used in the media. Additionally, social movements and NGOs, such as the precarity movement of the mid-2000s, the Finnish Basic Income Network (BIEN Finland), and ‘the work refusers’ union’ (Työstäkieltäytyjäläitto) in the late 2010s had a voice in the media framing, as did labor-market organizations, different specialists and societal thinkers. Especially in the framing by some of the social movements, the hegemonic views concerning basic income were directly contested, and the policy was portrayed with more radical framing.

This thesis set out to introduce an ideational institutionalist perspective to the scholarship on the politics of basic income. However, there is still much to be done with ideational analysis on the political challenges related to basic income. For instance, there has not been much empirical attention on the oppositional framing of basic income. Additionally, basic income debates are always context-specific: different framings may appeal in different contexts, and the design of basic income models should always be adapted to the local institutional context. A comparative analysis of the basic income discussion and proposals in different countries could help build a better understanding of the roles of framing and policy design in the politics of basic income. Furthermore, there are other agents than those at the focus of this dissertation that may shape the public interpretations of basic income and win attention to the idea. For instance, examining the framing by social movements or different stakeholder organizations could provide a different perspective on the politics of basic income. In the context of Finland, it would be interesting to examine whether and how the basic income experiment has shaped the framing of basic income. Moreover, closer attention to specific rhetorical strategies used by the

¹⁹ This article focuses only on the parts of discussion in which the *Activity*-frame is used for supportive or oppositional statements on basic income.

proponents of basic income could inform both scholars and policy advocates on the potential of framing to win support for the policy. More studies are also needed on the impact of framing on public support for basic income (on this, see Andersson & Kangas, 2002; Pulkka, 2018; 2020).

Social security reform is on the agenda in Finland as the center-left coalition government of Prime Minister Sanna Marin has appointed a committee to formulate a thorough welfare reform. Although Finnish parties agree on the need to streamline the social security system, improve coverage and provide better incentives to work, apart from the Greens and Left Alliance, the parties see conditionality as a necessary component of income transfer policies (Ylen tuki- ja turvakysely, 2018). The findings of the two-year experiment are likely to flavor the discussion on basic income for a long time, even though the experiment involved only a narrow group of people – recipients of the minimum unemployment benefit. However, the growing awareness of the environmental unsustainability of the current model of welfare and the increased socioeconomic instability caused by the Covid-19 pandemic could bring a new wave of interest in basic income. The findings of this study will serve to advance understanding of the prospect of such a new policy alternative in the context of an advanced welfare state.

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Good and Bad Times of Social Innovations: The Case of Universal Basic Income in Finland

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Good and Bad Times of Social Innovations: The Case of Universal Basic Income in Finland

Abstract: This article draws on innovation and agenda-setting theories to identify critical points in the realization of basic income in Finland. Our empirical data comprise 13 models of either unconditional basic income or social security reform proposals with some similarity to basic income. The models examined were published in Finland between 1984 and 2011. Using these data, we build a conceptual framework that enables us to discuss the role of the content, players, political and macro-economic context, and public interpretations in the successes and failures of the basic income initiatives.

Keywords: basic income, innovation theories, agenda-setting theories, social security reform

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1 Introduction

Since the maturity of Western welfare states in the 1980s, there has been no new implementation of innovative social programmes. Despite rapid changes in the economy and labour market, social protection systems have mostly experienced only minor modification. In the context of the recent economic crisis, the dominant policy line has been to retrench prevailing social policy systems, cut public expenditure, and narrow the eligibility criteria for existing benefit systems.

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Despite this mainstream tendency of cutbacks, there have been initiatives to introduce fundamental social security reforms. A persistent idea in European and global discussions is universal basic income (BI): an income granted to all members of society as a right without means testing or conditions. Several initiatives for BI in its various forms have been made in different political and socio-economic contexts, but the reform has nowhere succeeded in becoming reality. In the past few years, the idea of BI has spread rapidly to countries where it was previously unknown, and it has gained increasing attention in countries where the debate was already established.

Using the BI debate in Finland as a case study, we attempt to build a conceptual framework to identify the reasons for the failure of BI's realization. We draw on innovation and agenda-setting theories to analyse the 13 models of universal unconditional BI or related reform proposals that were published in Finland from 1984 to 2011.¹ When analysing these initiatives, we pay close attention to the following dimensions: (1) the content of the initiative and its "degree of innovation" in relation to the present welfare system, (2) the political position of the initiators and adherents, (3) the political and socio-economic context for undertaking the initiative, and (4) public interpretations of the initiative and the outcomes that followed.

Finland represents an interesting case for an analysis of BI's non-realization for several reasons. Finland belongs to the family of Nordic countries, which have a long tradition and commitment to Universalism in social and welfare policies. Those ideas have been especially reflected in education and social and health services, but there are also some elements of Universalism in the other areas of society, such as pension schemes. The idea of BI, in one form or another, has featured regularly in Finnish academic and political discourse since the 1970s. What makes Finland's case especially interesting is that the idea of BI has always received support, not only from academics and social movements but also from some influential politicians and parties.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: In Section 2, we present our theoretical framework, which is used to identify the main reasons for the failure of the BI proposal. In Section 3, we describe our data and

¹ In December 2013 (after this research was conducted), the liberal think tank Libera published a proposal for a "Life Account", which has some features of BI. The proposal (in English) can be downloaded at: http://libera.fi/libera-uusi/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Perustili_EN_131210b.pdf.

research methods. In Section 4, we analyse the examples of BI models or related reform proposals made in Finland. The first part of the empirical analysis consists of a descriptive analysis of the actors and discourses, and the second part applies the perspective of innovation and agenda-setting theories to identify internal and contextual factors that may be relevant in explaining the reasons for the substantial or gradual failure of BI initiatives. In Section 5, we discuss the results in the light of the previous studies, and Section 6 concludes our article.

2 Theoretical approach

Innovation theories have been developed for various purposes in the fields of the technology research, political studies, sociology, human geography, and the economic sciences. They seek to explain how, why, and at what rate ideas and concepts, technical information, and practices spread through cultures and are adopted by individuals, organizations, and political communities (Berry & Berry, 2007; Rogers, 1962; Wejnert, 2002).

In the political and social sciences, innovation theories have been used, for instance, to analyse the spread of mass education, social security systems, and nation-state models among the world's political states (Thomas, Meyer, Ramirez, & Boli, 1987). They have also been used to analyse welfare policies and land reform models (Thomas & Lauerdale, 1987), educational models (Boli-Bennett & Meyer, 1978; Boli-Bennett & Ramirez, 1987; Inkeles & Sirowy, 1983), state lottery and innovative tax policies (Berry & Berry, 1990, 1992), and the role of policy entrepreneurs in approval of an education reform (Mintrom, 1997). The concept of social innovation has been used to refer to innovations which aim “to produce long lasting outcomes that are relevant for (parts of) society, given the needs and challenges with which (groups in) society wrestling ... [to] ... create and add to public values that are considered important”, and to “change the social relationships and the ‘playing rules’ between the involved stakeholders” (Bekkers, Tummers, & Voorberg, 2013, pp. 2–3).

The innovation theory perspective is supplemented by agenda-setting theories, especially John W. Kingdon's (2011) theory on how issues make their way onto public policy agendas and gain the attention of governments. Agenda-setting theories help to identify the processes – within the press, civil society, parties, and interest groups – that eventually lead to some issues and innovations becoming the concerns of policymakers.

The conditions for innovation in the fields of technology and social policy are not the same. It has been noted that social policy institutions – due to various mutually intertwined vested interests and complex path dependencies – are often reluctant to implement large-scale reforms (Pierson, 2000, 2004). Therefore, public policymaking is often reactive and incremental (Greener, 2005; Pierson, 2000, 2004; Thelen, 1999). However, at certain critical times institutions may change rapidly (Hall, 1993; Kingdon, 2011). The possibility for change often arises from a large-scale crisis in prevalent practices and continuous failures to overcome problems with the existing means (Hall, 1993).

In history, we can find examples of times when social policy was the subject of active development and enlargement, and social innovations received large acceptance. However, in almost all cases it has taken decades to develop an idea into a true and well-functioning institution (Kangas, 2006; Titmuss, 1974, p. 131). For instance, it took more than 20 years to institutionalize programmes in the Finnish child benefit and child care systems, and unemployment insurance was debated in the Finnish parliament for decades (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2006; Hiilamo & Kangas, 2009; Kangas, 2006; Kuivalainen, 2012). The principle of equal pay for equal work took almost 50 years to become internationally accepted, institutionalized, and ratified as a social right (Määttä, 2008).

The processes that lead some innovations to be finally accepted and implemented and others discarded are not well known. Ideas with seemingly few prospects may receive attention when the “political winds” or paradigms shift as a result of an economic crisis, a shift in political power relations or the influence of strong social movements. For Kingdon (2011), the key to understanding change is the coupling of three largely independent streams: problems, policies, and politics. He argues, at certain critical times, “(s)olutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favourable political forces” (Kingdon, 2011, 20). The situation where a long-considered idea suddenly finds its invitation is called a “policy window” (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 128–130). However, in order to be regarded as realistic alternatives, new ideas need to be well known and sufficiently cogent. Kingdon presents the following criteria for proposals to receive serious consideration: their “technical feasibility, their fit with dominant values and the current national mood, their budgetary workability, and the political support or opposition they might experience” (Kingdon, 2011, pp. 19–20).

When political conditions change, the discursive battle over interpretations plays a crucial role (Hall, 1993). Besides being technically feasible and capable of addressing the most pressing problems of the day, the innovation must also

be attractive to the public and decision-makers (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Kangas, Niemelä, & Varjonen, 2013; Noakes & Johnston, 2005, pp. 11–13). The interpretation of an idea in public discussion often seems to be a decisive element for the idea's further success (Hiilamo & Kangas, 2009; Kangas et al., 2013). Researchers have noted that the familiarity associated with a new idea and its compatibility with the local norms, values, and ideologies relates to the rate of adoption (Dewar & Dutton, 1986; Rogers, 1962; Wejnert, 2002, p. 303). Ideas that appear too unfamiliar or radical often find support from low-status and marginal groups, whereas high-status actors adopt innovations that are mainly non-controversial and consistent with established norms (Rogers, 1962; Wejnert, 2002, p. 305).

In order to be self-sustainable, the innovation must be widely adopted among individuals, groups, organizations, or national polities. Within the rate of adoption, there is a point at which an innovation reaches critical mass. From this tipping point, the number of individual adopters ensures that continued adoption of the innovation is self-sustaining (Rogers, 1962; Wejnert, 2002). However, some actors have more political, cultural, and material resources than others, and better access to decision-makers and the media (see Kingdon, 2011; Korpi, 2001; Korpi & Palme, 2003; Mintrom, 1997). They can thus play a more crucial role in spreading the idea throughout society.

When explaining the failure of BI's realization, authors have emphasized factors such as its weak and divided political support (Andersson & Kangas, 2002; De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012; Vanderborght, 2006) and its unsuitability for the prevailing social security systems and ideologies (Andersson, 2000; Julkunen, 2009). De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012, pp. 22–23) argue that one significant reason for the failure of the BI proposal is that it has often been supported by groups and individuals that are politically weak; thus, it has not been able to move up the policy agenda. In some instances, support from a particular marginalized group or political faction has prevented other, more powerful agents from offering valuable support. In the Finnish context, Julkunen (2009) and Andersson and Kangas (2002) note that although there is a high degree of support for generous social protection among Finns, BI's unconditionality principle is in contradiction with the strong work ethic of the Nordic welfare model. Furthermore, political support for BI is scattered in the sense that adherents from different ideological backgrounds do not work together to advance the idea.

Based on our reading of innovation and agenda-setting theories, we distinguish the following four dimensions as central in identifying the drivers and barriers of social innovations such as BI:

- *The qualities of the innovation itself*: its economic viability and empirical credibility, its alleged problem-solving capacity, its attractiveness to the public, and its “degree of innovation”, i.e. the magnitude of change it will introduce to the existing system;
- *The actors (initiators and adherents)*: the credibility of adherents, their social position and power resources, channels for communicating the idea, and the presence of advocacy coalitions;
- *Culture*: the extent to which the proposed idea is compatible with the prevalent norms, values, and sensibilities;
- *The economic and political context*: the economic cycle, the parties present in the government, the objectives expressed in the government platform, the dominant theories and paradigms concerning the economic and public policy, and the previous policy choices and institutional path dependencies.

3 Data and methods

Our empirical data comprise 13 models that are either a model for unconditional BI or a social security reform proposal that is somewhat similar to BI. These models were published between 1984 and 2011 (for detailed information on all of the models, see Appendix). The models have been created by academics, individual activists, and political parties. Six of the models represent a *partial* BI, which means that the benefit is granted unconditionally to all citizens/residents, but the sum is not sufficient to provide a livelihood without income from other sources.² In two models from the 1980s, the amount of BI is considered to be rather high, which means that they could be classified as models of *full* BI (i.e. a payment sufficiently high to account for all living expenses). In addition, there are models that propose a BI-like social security that would be either conditional or targeted at some particular groups or specific situations.

All proposals except for one (the Young Finns 1998) have been studied as original versions. Other relevant information describing the socio-economic and political context and the reception of the proposals has been collected systematically from various sources (newspapers, government platforms, government

² In recent discussions, the proposed amount for a partial BI in Finland has varied between €440 and €620.

compositions, statistics). In addition, we used research reports, dissertations, and other relevant secondary sources.

The analysis of the successes and failures of the Finnish BI proposals is based on a systematic literature and document survey. In order to qualify the analysis, we cross-checked various information sources. Methodologically, this means that we followed the rules of critical source analysis (Haapala, 1989; Hyytiäinen & Tähtinen, 2008; Kalela, 2002) and the ideas of conceptual analysis (Furner, 2006; Levering, 2002).

In order to make our analysis more systematic and transparent, we developed an analytical frame based on the assumptions of previous studies and innovation theories. Using these dimensions, we aimed to identify the preconditions for the successes and failures of the BI proposals. The dimensions of analysis are as follows:

- *What*: What was proposed exactly? What were the objectives of the proposal? What was its relation to the existing social security system?
- *Who*: Who was proposing what to whom, and who was the carrier of this message? What were the means of distributing this information?
- *Macro-economic context*: What was the macro-economic context (main features and cycles, level of welfare, unemployment rate) at the time of the proposal? How was this macro-economic context reflected in the proposal?
- *Political context*: What were the political power relations and objectives of the government? Did the proposal have a special political motive, such as a local crisis, an election campaign or a policy programme, etc.?
- *Reception*: What was the reception of the proposal? How it was considered by the other actors? Which groups supported it and which groups opposed it? What were the arguments for and against it as expressed by individuals, parties, and interest groups? How was the proposal seen to change the prevailing systems of social security? Was it viewed as a positive input, a competitor, or as a threat to the system?
- *Outcomes*: Did the proposal trigger some minor reforms or other measures? What were the reasons for the death of the proposal? Did the proposal re-emerge later?

Applying these dimensions and collecting available information on each proposal, we constructed a table summarizing the characteristics of BI and related proposals in Finland in from 1984 to 2011 (see Appendix). In the following two sections, we first provide a descriptive analysis and then analyse each proposal using the analytical frame.

4 Basic income initiatives in Finland

4.1 Actors and discourses

There has been some discussion regarding the idea BI or *negative income tax* (NIT)³ among Finnish academics and policymakers since the 1970s, but the debate became more topical in the early 1980s.

The first concrete proposal was made in 1984 by two academics, Professors Jaakko Uotila and Paavo Uusitalo. In their book, they proposed sabbatical leave combined with a citizen's wage⁴ as a voluntary option for each citizen. The sabbatical leave would be available every ten years and it was assumed that it would produce mild work redistribution.

The second model was published in 1987 by sociologist Matti Virtanen. It was the first actual universal BI model designed to support the transformation from an industrial to an information society and the green restructuring of production. Virtanen's model was soon followed by left-wing economist Jan Otto Andersson's model (1988) and Social Democrat economist Pekka Korpinen's (1989) model. Both aimed to reduce working time in order to allow more space for free time activities.

In 1988, Olli Rehn (then a Centre Party MP) and David Pemberton (the Green League) took the initiative to create a group that would discuss and promote the idea of BI. The group included representatives from most political parties. Its secretary, Ilpo Lahtinen (1992), wrote a book that reflected the ideas discussed by the group and proposed the introduction of a partial BI (see the definition of partial BI in Section 3). The book appeared in 1992, in the midst of the deep economic recession (Andersson, 2000; Ikkala, 2012, p. 67).

Throughout the 1990s, Lahtinen's model was followed by a series of other proposals for a partial BI or related reform. In 1994, after the worst of the recession, Osmo Soininvaara (a Green League MP), released a model first in a report ordered by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and later in his award-winning book (Soininvaara, 1994). He introduced a detailed proposal for a partial BI scheme with an analysis of its implications for public finances. His main objective was to increase the attractiveness of irregular and low-paid

³ Negative income tax (NIT) is a model for implementing a guaranteed minimum income system where people earning below a certain amount receive supplemental pay from the government instead of paying taxes. It produces similar outcomes as BI.

⁴ The term "citizen's wage" has sometimes been used in Finland to refer to a conditional participatory income and sometimes to refer to BI.

employment. A slightly modified version of the model was later approved by his party.

In 1997, Kati Peltola (a social policy expert and a left-wing politician) released a model of “ground income and civil work”. It was a proposal for a voluntary participatory income combined with extensive tax reform.

Soon after, in 1998, the first models by political parties were released. In its parliamentary election campaign, the Young Finns (a small liberal party with two seats in the parliament at the time) made a detailed proposal for a partial BI with a reduced rate for minors and a higher rate for pensioners (Mattila, 2001, p. 227). The Centre Party (at the time the second largest party) also included the idea of a conditional BI in its “work reform” proposal (The Centre Party, 1998a, 1998b). In the 1999 parliamentary elections, the Young Finns lost both its seats and the Centre Party remained in opposition (Andersson, 2000; Ikkala, 2012, p. 69; Julkunen, 2009).

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was virtually no discussion of BI despite the publication of Anita Mattila’s doctoral dissertation (2001) in which she compared previously published models and developed two of her own. The models represented an idea of an “adjusted BI”, which proposed only a minor reform in the existing framework of social protection.

From 2006 onwards, after some years of silence, the discussion on BI arose swiftly in civil society and in the media. In 2006–2007 and again in 2012–2013, public debate was widespread. New models were released before the parliamentary elections in 2007 by the Green League and before the parliamentary elections 2011 by the Left Alliance. In both models, a micro-simulation analysis was made on the required tax-rates and BI’s budgetary implications. Both models were intended to replace the existing income-transfer schemes, excluding housing benefits, social assistance and earnings-related benefits. The Green League claimed their model was neutral for public financing, whereas the Left Alliance’s model aimed at progressive income distribution.

Besides discussions on these concrete models, in recent years there has also been a range of civil society activities and campaigns that has kept the BI discourse alive.

4.2 Successes, failures and continuities

4.2.1 Content and degree of innovation

Eight of the thirteen proposals can be categorized as models of partial or full unconditional BI. They often include an unconditional BI integrated with other

benefit systems like housing benefits, social insurance, and social assistance. One of the proposals considers BI itself to be conditional (Peltola, 1997), three target it only at particular groups (the Centre Party 1998; Mattila, 2001 I & II), and one limits the eligibility to some specific situations (Uotila & Uusitalo, 1984). All proposals include tax-reform of some kind.

During the period analysed, the BI models have become more elaborate in their technical features and cost–benefit calculations. The earliest proposals are rather rough estimates of the potential components of the model, whereas the two most recent models (the Green League 2007; see also Ylikahri 2012 and the Left Alliance 2011) have a detailed design and use micro-simulation analysis with real tax and benefit data to estimate the effects of the models on public finances and different types of household.

All models discuss BI in the framework of their contemporary social and labour market policies. They reflect upon the gaps and failures of the prevailing system and allege to solve problems such as structural unemployment, benefit non-take-up or incentive traps. BI is presented rather as a partial renewal of the existing systems rather than a radically new principle. In general, the earlier models (e.g. Matti Virtanen, Jan Otto Andersson, and Pekka Korpinen in the late 1980s) are more visionary and the latter ones more pragmatic (e.g. Soininvaara, 1994; the Centre Party 1998 a & b; Anita Mattila, 2001; the Green League 2007). The general objectives of all proposals are to increase flexibility in working time and support activity and new forms of work.

All models largely focus on the problem of unemployment. However, there is a difference between the earlier and latter models; whereas the models of the 1980s aim at solving the problem of unemployment by reducing the labour supply (by introducing sabbatical leave, job-sharing, and new civil society activities), the latter BI models in most cases aim to increase the labour supply by improving work incentives.

The models vary in their “degree of innovation”, i.e. the magnitude of change they intend to introduce to the social protection system. This may concern either the technical qualities of the model, or the values and principles on which the model was built. Most of the proposals from the 1980s represent a more radical departure from the principles of the existing welfare model than those published from the 1990s onwards. They embrace rather post-productivist visions with less material consumption and a more relaxed way of living. However, the technical components of the early models are not as elaborate as those that came later.

The sabbatical leave proposal (1984), the proposal of the Centre Party (1998), and the two models of researcher Anita Mattila (2001) aim only at a slight modification of the existing system. The models of Ilpo Lahtinen (1992),

Osmo Soininvaara (1994), the Young Finns (1998), and the Green League (2007) aim at establishing a new social security scheme, but do not challenge the objectives or the principles of the contemporary social and labour market policies. The same applies to Kati Peltola's (1997) model, which has an innovative design, but it leans heavily on the protestant work ethic. The model of the Left Alliance (2011) aims to change not only the system of social protection but also income distribution. It draws its justification more from the Nordic welfare tradition than from current political discourse.

4.2.2 Initiators and promoters

The initiators ranged from individual activists and academics (nine models) to political parties (four models). The earliest models were published by academics and the most recent by parties. All individual models were published in books that discussed a wide range of contemporary social problems, whereas the models of the political parties were published as reports or policy papers. With the exception of Uotila and Uusitalo (1984), all initiators had some kind link to party politics. The political background of the initiators ranges from the left to the right.

Other than the Centre Party's 1998 model, all the models were proposed by small- or medium-sized parties or individuals in fairly powerful positions, but not by those at the top of the political hierarchy. Most of the proposals were made as individual attempts without larger and systematic promotion or the backing of powerful coalitions. The BI initiators did not often act jointly or seek shared values and objectives.

By the same token, we find that many of the active promoters of BI either forgot or gave up their previous ideas and efforts when they achieved a political position that could allow them to act to implement the programme. This happened to Osmo Soininvaara in 2000 when he became the Minister of Social Affairs in the government led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and again in 2007 when he was elected one of the leaders of the committee for reforming social protection (the SATA committee). The same happened with Olli Rehn, who, when he became a successful politician and European Commissioner, seemed to forget his support for BI as one of the founding members of Ilpo Lahtinen's BI working group (1988–1991). This tendency also applies to Pekka Korpinen, who later as a Deputy Mayor of Helsinki never resurrected his BI proposal from 1989. The medium-sized parties, the Green League and the Left Alliance, maintained their support for BI in public statements while in

government, but they did not show any serious attempts to push for its implementation.

4.2.3 Macro-economic context

BI proposals have been made both in times of economic growth and during recessions. However, common to all is that they reflected a certain crisis of consciousness related to economic restructuring and high levels of unemployment.

Finland experienced rapid economic growth throughout the 1980s. Towards the end of the decade, the country began the large-scale liberalization of its economy and foreign credits; this led to the economy overheating and the economic collapse of the early 1990s. In this deep recession, unemployment skyrocketed from 3.2% in 1990 to 11.2% in 1992, peaking at 16.6% in 1994. Although the economic recovery began in late 1993, unemployment remained persistently high until the end of the decade.

The 1980s and 1990s also witnessed a large-scale restructuring of the Finnish economy, the increasing automatization of production, and a shift from the industrial model towards information and service-based production. Following the 1990s recession, the economic policy paradigm shifted from a Keynesian demand-based economy to neoclassical theory. This was reflected in the BI proposals: in the 1980s, the proposals searched for solutions to unemployment, from job sharing and third sector civil work. In the 1990s, on the other hand, the main concern was to increase the labour supply by improving work incentives for the unemployed.

Except for the slight downturn at the beginning of the 2000s, the economy generally grew and the unemployment rate decreased until the financial crisis of 2008. However, compared to other OECD countries, income inequality increased rapidly in Finland during the 2000s. As a result of the global financial crisis, the unemployment rate rose from 6.4% in 2008 to 8.2% in 2009 and has remained relatively stable in the years since. Although Finland was not hit hard by the post-2008 crises, the government has continuously introduced austerity measures, and since 2013, a more serious crisis has postponed and started to erode the precondition of employment and welfare. In this context, the latest BI proposals of the Green League (2007) and the Left Alliance (2011) have been rejected due to the objectives of balancing the budget and the need to curtail public expenditure. This occurred when both parties were members of the grand coalition government led by the National Coalition Party and the SDP.

4.2.4 Political context

Most of the BI models were released in three main waves. The first was in the late 1980s in the context of the restructuring of the economy and labour markets, the second was during the 1990s in the aftermath of the great economic recession, and latest occurred from 2006 onwards. The political timing of the proposals varied from crisis-ridden public debate to parliamentary elections and the renewal of political parties' policy programmes. All four BI models proposed by the political parties were published before parliamentary elections while the parties were in opposition. There was a period of silence lasting from the discursive boom of the mid- and late 1990s until the parliamentary elections of 2007.

Most of the BI proposals reflect their contemporary political climate and the alleged needs of society: they were, to a greater or lesser extent, made compatible with the paradigms and explicit objectives of public policy. However, different BI proposals appeal to different values; some might emphasize the equality and universality that have been the core values of the Nordic welfare tradition, while others aim for flexibility, reduction of bureaucracy, and the removal of the incentive-traps central to current policy-making.

The 1980s was still a time of a strong welfare state that nurtured the ideals of equality and Universalism. Parties of the left, especially the SDP, were strong. However, the decade also witnessed the emergence of criticism of the large public sector and the expansion of the welfare state. Those ideas found a fertile soil in the 1990s recession, which led to the triumph of neo-liberal ideas, privatization, and continuous cutbacks to the welfare state. The objectives of equality and the citizens' well-being were subjected to efficiency and market competitiveness. After the collapse of Soviet-style socialism in the early 1990s, the hegemony of the right-wing parties and ideologies grew stronger. The 1980s also experienced an emerging concern over the ecological sustainability of the prevailing economic model, which is reflected in some of the BI proposals.

The politics of the twenty-first century has been dominated by the idea of scarce economic resources and the weakened legitimacy of the welfare state among the political elites. Since 2003, governments have been led by the Centre Party or the National Coalition Party, both of which have a favourable stance on neo-liberal ideas. In party politics, BI has been advanced by actors from the Green League and the Left Alliance, especially by their youth organizations. However, there has also been a growing interest in the idea of BI from the right of the political spectrum.

4.2.5 Reception and outcomes

Most proposals were noticed by the media, but only a few of them received greater attention. The models of Osmo Soininvaara (1994), the Centre Party (1998), the Young Finns (1998, cit. Mattila 2001) and the Green League (2007) became well known in public debate. Soininvaara's model appeared immediately after the deep recession of the early 1990s. It brought the BI discourse, which had been already established in the 1980s, to the new context of unprecedentedly high employment and the search for new solutions. The models of the Centre Party and the Young Finns appeared before parliamentary elections at a time when the high unemployment seemed to persist despite the government's various efforts to tackle it; this created an atmosphere that was open to unusual solutions. The Green League's model played an important role in reopening the BI debate after the years of silence in the early 2000s. It received mostly positive reactions in the print media, and it brought the issue of BI into the pre-election debates of the 2007 parliamentary elections.

Some individual activists like Andersson (1988) and Soininvaara (1994) were successful in pushing their ideas onto the agendas of their own parties. Due to Andersson's activity, the Left Alliance endorsed the idea of BI in its first programme in 1990, and the Green League adopted Soininvaara's model with slight modifications. Nevertheless, the political position did not guarantee success even within actor's own reference group, especially when the proposal conflicted the long-established values of the group. For example, Pekka Korpinen (1989), one of the leading leftist economists at the time, never received support for his proposal from his own reference group, the SDP. The party has always been ideologically resistant to BI due to its strong commitment to the ideal of full employment and work-based social security.⁵ Despite the fact that BI has been a part of the party policy programmes when parties have been present in the government (the Green League in 1995–2003 and 2007–2014, and the Left Alliance in 1995–2003 and 2011–2014),⁶ it has never become a part of the

5 Some of the BI models (Soininvaara, 1994, the Centre Party 1998, the Young Finns 1998) have openly attacked trade unions, labour market regulations and the minimum wage; this has made the SDP even more resistant to the idea of BI.

6 The proposal of the Left Alliance was formally approved by the party council in November 2012 when the party was in government, but it was first published as a discussion paper before the 2011 parliamentary elections when the party was in opposition.

government platform. Though members of parliament have spoken publicly in favour of BI, the parties have shown no real efforts to push for the implementation of BI. However, they have successfully introduced minor reforms that have developed the social security system somewhat in the direction of BI, such as the guaranteed minimum pension (2011), an increase in minimum unemployment benefits (2012), the removal of the means-test from the labour market subsidy (2013), and the right for the unemployed to earn a monthly income of €300 without a cut in benefits (2013).

Some proposals have been discussed in parliament or the ministries. The sabbatical leave proposal (1984) found its realization in government platforms and legislation as the “job alternation leave”. However, the idea of BI was omitted from the model that was eventually implemented. Political parties and ministries also showed interest to Kati Peltola’s (1997) model of ground income and civil work. After Anita Mattila’s two models of “adjusted BI” (2001) were published, the Green League made a (unsuccessful) legislative initiative for a municipal experiment of BI. The pre-election debate in 2007 was an important factor behind the new government’s decision to set up a committee for reforming social protection (2007–2009). However, the committee’s mandate did not include BI and it largely failed in its mission to introduce substantial reforms in social protection to tackle poverty traps and provide sufficient basic social security for all.

5 Discussion

The history of social policies reveals that it is very rare for social innovations to become reality without compromise and the consent of the larger political spheres. One of the Achilles heels of social security reform seems to concern the relationship between work and the right to income (i.e. the labour contract). The proposed disentanglement of the right to a (minimum) income from labour market participation or an active search of employment has often been confronted with moral indignation. This seems to limit the scope for social innovations, despite the fact that various labour market and social policy experts have suggested either a disengagement of work and social security (Bercusson et al., 1996; Ekstrand, 1996; Sipilä, 1979; Vobruba, 2006) or a wider concept of work including new forms of paid and non-paid work (Beck, 1998; Koistinen, 2011; Peltola, 1997).

Innovations that are regarded as too radical by the majority often gain support from marginal political groups, but not from those in power (Rogers,

1962; Wejnert, 2002, p. 305). The initiators of BI models tried to tackle this challenge by presenting their models as a partial renewal of the existing systems, rather than as introducing a new, radically different principle. Rather than promoting a Universalist concept of social justice, they oriented their proposals to solving pragmatic problems (see Halmetoja, 2012). Instead of proposing a real freedom of choice and the voluntariness of work, as advocated by most theorists of BI (Birnbbaum, 2012; Van Parijs, 1995, 2006; White, 2006) most of the models were justified by certain preconditions – work, social activity, or education. When freedom was spoken of, it was often limited to certain socially acceptable activities.

Although BI gained support from parties and individuals in fairly powerful positions that support proved to be rather fluid. Apart from academics and free writers outside the political elites, actors did not show a strong commitment to the idea of BI, and many of them seemed to be ready to swallow their previous ideals when moving into the positions where they could really act. This phenomenon has been noted by De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012, pp. 22–23), who argue that often when actors climb the political ladder, they become unwilling to invest their political resources (money, time, effort, and political capital) or compromise their other goals to further the highly controversial proposals such as BI. De Wispelaere and Noguera also argue that in this sense, support for BI is “cheap” – it is often subjugated to issues that are perceived to be more urgent and non-controversial.

One of the paradoxes of BI is that it seems to find its “policy window” in times of crisis and high unemployment (Julkunen, 2009), but during those periods, politicians are rarely willing to introduce new, potentially costly reforms. This seems to be true especially in the context of current financial crisis, despite the fact that the Green League (2007) and the Left Alliance (2011) have produced more elaborate models and cost–benefit calculations. On the other hand, during times of economic prosperity and low unemployment, reform is often considered less topical. Another paradox is that there is no model that would at the same time provide adequate social security and be cost-neutral. Proposals that might be acceptable for the political right are not for the left and vice versa. The proposal of the Green League (2007) seemed to gather most support across the political spectrum, since it was formulated in very neutral terms.

The adherents of BI were not successful in the implementation of the system, but they have been successful enough to keep the discourse alive for over 25 years. This seems to verify once again that social ideas are not realized

overnight: they may come true over time if the actors are strong and the ideas are mature. Studies on social policy reforms verify the importance of institutional constraints, power resources, the socio-economic context, and the long gestation of ideas before they become a reality. We can repeat once again the argument of Richard Titmuss, who in the latter stage of his life and creativity concluded that “decades of accumulated rights, contributions, expectations, anomalies and inequities are inherited. They cannot be corrected overnight but they can be resolved over time; thus two of the issues are: how quickly and for whom?” (Titmuss, 1974, p. 131).

6 Conclusions

Despite the relatively widespread interest in BI in the context of the Nordic welfare system, the Finnish case demonstrates the difficulties and repeated failures of the implementation of this idea.

The motivations, reasons, and arguments for BI initiatives vary over time, socio-economic context, and political landscape. Most proposals studied here have had a short shelf life, but the concept never really went away. Instead, it always re-emerged in a slightly different form. The idea of BI has spread across society, first from a few academics to political activists, and through them to political parties. The authors of the BI models also learned on the way; the latter BI models were in many ways more developed than the earlier ones.

However, all of the proposals were more or less individual attempts by one activist or political party with no real effort to mobilize a strong consensus to drive the model. It seems that BI was not a high priority on the actors' agendas, and they lacked the commitment and effort to advance it, especially when they reached a position in which they could act.

In order to understand the preconditions of the BI proposals and the reasons for their non-realization, a more detailed analysis of each case and comprehensive and systematic information on the context, players, and process of reception is required. The innovation and agenda-setting theories – if applied carefully and systematically, and on adequate data – may help to identify the critical points of the successes and failures of the BI initiatives.

Appendix

Table 1: The characteristics of the basic income models in Finland in 1984–2011

Year, author and title	Content of the proposal	Relation to the existing system	Objectives and alleged effects	Macro-economic context	Political context	Reception and outcomes
1. 1984 Professors Jaakko Outila & Paavo Uusitalo: <i>Sabbatical Leave and Citizens' Wage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recipients:</i> all 15–64-year-olds who would voluntarily take 6 months leave • <i>monthly amount:</i> median income (approx. 3,000 mk/inflation adjusted €1030, taxable) • <i>other specific features:</i> the proposal consisted of a tax-reform and voluntary sabbatical leave that was available to all citizens every 10 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens' wage would be a parallel system to the existing social security • combined with a tax reform that would support small enterprises and promote employment • reform includes reduction of employment costs and facilitating the combination of small incomes with unemployment benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solving the problems of unemployment and avoiding segmentation of the population • equal distribution of the benefits of automatization • decreasing the labour supply and promoting mild work redistribution • providing citizens with opportunities for education, rehabilitation and hobbies • promoting innovation and economic activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing automatization of production • transformation from an industrial towards an information- and service-based economy • economic growth • unemployment was peaking at over 7% in the late 1970s, but stabilized to about 5% during the early 1980s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A government of the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the populist Finnish Rural Party and the Swedish Peoples' Party • the government's main objectives were tackling increasing inflation and lowering unemployment rates • the idea of the 'citizens' wage' was new in Finland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reform was proposed by academics with no political profile • the Ministry of Labour supported the idea and conducted experiments on temporary leave in some municipalities and sectors • later, a system of job alternation leave (temp. law 1996 and perm. law 2003) was established • the initiative promoted discussions on job sharing, which was a popular idea at the time

2. 1987 Sociologist Matti Virtanen: *Basic Income*
- *Recipients*: all adults
 - *monthly amount*: 3000 mk (inflation adjusted €900), tax-free
 - *financing sources*: taxation on raw materials, energy and environment
 - *administration*: employment offices
 - *other specific features*: wage subvention
 - BI would replace most conditional benefits
 - in order to reduce employment costs, wages are reduced by the amount of BI
 - To support the transformation 'from factory to studio' and to reduce the workload in industrial sector
 - BI would enable studying, various self-organized activities and new forms of work
 - the reform would support part-time work and the independence of individuals
 - Economic boom
 - 5% unemployment
 - ongoing transformation from industrial production towards information- and service-based production
 - ongoing liberalization of the financial and capital markets
 - A blue-red government including the National Coalition Party, the Social Democratic Party, the populist Finnish Rural Party and the Swedish Peoples' Party
 - academic and political debate on the crisis of work and welfare society
 - The model was introduced as an overall new alternative vision of the future
 - it was rejected by trade unions but welcomed by younger generations and the well-educated
 - it opened up a new, widespread discourse on the future of work and the welfare society
3. 1988 Left-wing economist Jan Otto Andersson: *Citizens' Income*
- *Recipients*: all citizens
 - *monthly amount*: for children 1000 mk (inflation adjusted €288), for working-aged people 2000 mk (€576), and for the disabled 3000 mk (€864), tax-free
 - *financing sources*: 27% taxation on all incomes except for citizens' income + 25% value-added tax. Increased taxation on the use of natural resources, property and inheritance.
 - *other specific features*: wage subsidy
 - Introduction in four steps (each lasts one electoral term): 1. Recipients of social security benefits. 2. Tax relief for small incomes. 3. Those ineligible for social security benefits due to family member's income. 4. All citizens (+ removal of the tax relief)
 - cutting down the wages by the amount of CI
 - the first model that contains economic calculations
 - The author developed three alternative visions of the citizen's income society: blue-red, blue-green and red-green
 - inspired by the 1986-founded BIEN and global left-green intellectual circles
 - Economic boom and speculation in the financial and real-estate markets
 - the unemployment rate was falling below 5%
 - strengthening of the neo-liberal turn in macro-economic policy
 - A blue-red government including the National Coalition Party, the Social Democratic Party, the populist Finnish Rural Party and the Swedish Peoples' Party
 - left-wing parties were still politically strong
 - the end of the expansion of the welfare state
 - The proposal was published in a book discussing the future of the left
 - Andersson developed a seemingly realistic solution to finance the citizen's income
 - the model was welcomed by the young red-greens, but considered unrealistic by most parties and trade unions
 - Due to Andersson's activism, the citizens' income was adopted in the first party platform of the Left Alliance when it was founded in 1990

(continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

Year, author and title	Content of the proposal	Relation to the existing system	Objectives and alleged effects	Macro-economic context	Political context	Reception and outcomes
4. 1989 Social Democrat economist Pekka Korpinen: <i>Citizens' Income</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recipients</i>: all • <i>monthly amount</i>: rather high • financing sources: 30% income taxation, highly progressive property taxation • <i>other specific features</i>: abolition of free-of-charge public services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High citizens' income would enable citizens to pay for public services • to increase workers' ownership of production • to reduce working time and make work voluntary • taxation and citizens' income would be the only means for income redistribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticism of bloated public sector and high income taxation • vision of freedom without state: transforming nation states into globally integrated autonomous communities • work as a means of self-realization; increase in creativity and working motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic boom • the unemployment rate falling to almost 3% • the crises of Soviet-style socialism and Keynesian state capitalism • critical discourse on the 'endless expansion' of the welfare state among political elites • the summit of the 80s 'casino capitalism' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blue-red government including the National Coalition Party, the Social Democratic Party, the populist Finnish Rural Party and the Swedish Peoples' Party • perestroika and the emerging discourse of the failures of Soviet-style socialism and planned economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model was presented by a Social Democrat and one of the leading leftist economists, but it was neglected by the Social Democratic Party • received some attention in the public debate, but was mostly considered utopian

5.	1992 Ilpo Lahtinen (Secretary of the National Union of University Students): <i>Partial Basic Income</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipients: all citizens and foreigners who have lived in the country over 5 years • monthly amount: 2000 mk (inflation adjusted €477), reduced amount for children • financing sources: 40% flat-rate income tax, removal of tax allowances • administration: a special 'basic security centre' and municipal 'basic security offices' • other specific features: contains means-tested 'basic income supplement' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of social security and income taxation • the model consists of unconditional basic income + means-tested basic income supplement/care allowance (all tax-free) + discretionary housing allowance and subsistence subsidy • BI would replace most tax deductions and a large part of the income transfers • progressive income taxation • removal of labour market regulation, minimum wages and retirement age regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspired by Juliet Rhys-Williams's model in the UK • aimed at creating a model that could no longer be ignored as an irresponsible daydream • to tackle unemployment and poverty, and remove income traps • to reduce social divisions, increase individual freedom and diminish economic dependency between family members • to make working time and salaries flexible • to enhance democracy and citizenship • BI was presented in the continuum with reforms like franchise, public health care and compulsory basic education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic downturn and the deepest recession in Finnish history • unemployment rate skyrocketed from 3.2% in 1990 to 6.7% in 1991, and further to 11.2% in 1992 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A centre-right government including the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model was in many ways more developed than the previous basic income models • it was based on the work of the 1989-founded Basic Income Working Group, which included social policy experts and representatives from almost all the political parties • in the midst of the deep economic crisis, the proposal received relatively little attention
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(continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

Year, author and title	Content of the proposal	Relation to the existing system	Objectives and alleged effects	Macro-economic context	Political context	Reception and outcomes
6. 1994 Green Member of Parliament Osmo Soininvaara: <i>Basic Income</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipients: all citizens monthly amount: 1700 mk (inflation adjusted €393) for a single adult household, 2900 mk (€670) for two-adult households financing sources: 53% flat-rate income taxation, 10% extra tax for the highest income level other specific features: conditional extra benefit for small income households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All existing benefits would be merged into two categories: unconditional BI and conditional extra income BI as a subvention to the low income sector the model was calculated so that it would reduce public expenditure model could also be implemented as a NIT introduction in two steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspired by Milton Friedman to increase economic efficiency and service-based production and to tackle the high unemployment possibility to cut down wages in low productivity sectors slogan: 'rather underemployment than unemployment' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The economic recovery had begun after the deep recession the unemployment rate peaked at 16.6% public sector cuts during the recession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A centre-right government including the Centre Party, the Coalition Party, the Swedish People's Party and the Christian Democrats massive political concern over high structural unemployment emerging discourses on incentive traps and active labour market policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The model was first published in a report ordered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and later in Soininvaara's award-winning book 'The Survival Doctrine of the Welfare State' the model was the first to be adopted (in a slightly modified form) by a political party (the Green League) triggered a widespread media debate and received some interest among social policy experts

7. 1997 Kati Peltola (social policy expert and a left-wing politician): <i>Ground Income and Civil Work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recipients:</i> those without other income • <i>monthly amount:</i> adults 3500 mk (inflation adjusted €786), includes housing benefits + children 1500 mk (€337, conditional) • <i>financing sources:</i> production taxation • <i>administration:</i> taxation and income-transfers administered by a new 'peoples' money institution' • <i>other specific features:</i> 'ground income' only for those whose income is below a certain threshold, has to be earned by civil work transfers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything below the 3500 mk (€786) monthly income is tax-free • job-sharing by cutting down the weekly working time to 30 hours • guaranteed part-time civil work provided by municipalities, unemployment benefit only temporary (max. 4 months), discretionary social security only for those unable to work • progressive income taxation to be used for public services, production tax to be used for all income-transfers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To simplify the taxation and benefit systems • to include all who are able to work in gainful employment • to guarantee all individuals an adequate income and work • critical to the idea of unconditional basic income: 'everyone must contribute to the common well-being' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic boom after the deep recession • unemployment remained high (12.7%) • the shift from Keynesianism to neo-liberal economic policy • the cuts in the public sector made during the recession were not reversed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Social Democratic Party-led 'rainbow government' which included the National Coalition Party, the Swedish Peoples' Party, the Left Alliance and the Green League • widespread discussion on the future of economic policy and the welfare state • throughout society objectives of social policy: 'from social justice to competitiveness' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal was discussed in the printed media • political parties and ministries showed interest in the model • the proposal was made by an individual activist, and it did not earn a notable status within the Left Alliance
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(continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

Year, author and title	Content of the proposal	Relation to the existing system	Objectives and alleged effects	Macro-economic context	Political context	Reception and outcomes
8. 1998 The Young Finns (a small liberal party): <i>Basic Income</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipients: all citizens monthly amount: 0–16-year-olds 325 mk (inflation adjusted €72), 16–60-year-olds 1300 mk (€288), 60+ year-olds 1820 mk (€403) (increases gradually) financing sources: flat-rate income taxation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everything below a 4000 mk (€886) monthly income is tax-free those unable to work entitled to a higher amount of BI and means-tested benefits housing subsidies for those with a low income service vouchers and social loans public sector would provide ‘civil work’ with lower salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BI was not supposed to provide a livelihood, but instead enable one to live on a small income transformation into local and individual bargaining in labour markets the model would reduce public expenditure aimed at increasing work incentives and social justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic boom the unemployment rate was declining gradually (11.4%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal was a part of the parliamentary election campaign of the party sustainability of the welfare state was on the political agenda the Social Democratic Party-led government had introduced cuts to the welfare sector despite the government’s efforts, the unemployment rate was declining slowly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The party activists promoted their model in the media the party lost its two seats in parliament and then decided to dissolve itself the model was buried along with the party

9. 1998 The Centre Party: *Conditional Basic Income and Work Reform*
- *Recipients:* universal social insurance
 - *monthly amount:* -
 - *financing sources:* contributions from the state, employers and employees
 - *administration:* The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela)
 - *other specific features:* a model for statutory universal unemployment insurance, could also be implemented as a NIT
 - Tax relief for small and medium income groups
 - reductions in employers' costs, especially in labour intensive sectors
 - support for use of waged labour in households
 - expanding local bargaining
 - activating 'work reform' was an essential part of the proposal
 - To simplify the social security system, remove incentive traps and create new jobs
 - flexible working time and job sharing
 - to support flexible movement between education, domestic work and employment
 - the party distanced its proposal from unconditional 'social transfer automats'
 - to replace the old corporatist system by a new tripartite of the unemployed, employed and entrepreneurs who all share common interests
 - See above, proposal 8
 - See above, proposal 8
 - the proposal was a part of the party's parliamentary election campaign
 - at the time, the party was in opposition
 - The left-wing parties and trade unions shot down the work reform proposal as neo-liberal and detrimental to workers' rights
 - the Centre Party lost the election and later abolished work reform from its agenda

(continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

Year, author and title	Content of the proposal	Relation to the existing system	Objectives and alleged effects	Macro-economic context	Political context	Reception and outcomes
10. 2001 Researcher Anita Mattila: <i>Adjusted Basic Income I</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipients: unemployed and low-income groups monthly amount: 3600 mk (inflation adjusted €743), taxable administration: The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BI adjusted to the prevailing social security system replaces minimum unemployment benefits and to some extent housing subsidies and social assistance earnings-related benefits remain as they are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes employment and guarantees the continuity of income in irregular work enables withdrawal from the labour market and independent civil work the author proposed an empirical experiment to be conducted in a small, high-unemployment municipality to reduce bureaucracy and the control directed at the poor to increase individuals' control of their own life and the opportunity to make free choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic growth declining unemployment (9.1%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rainbow government of the Social Democratic Party, the National Coalition Party, the Swedish Peoples' Party, the Left Alliance and the Green League 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattila introduced two basic income models in her doctoral dissertation it was published at the time when BI had mostly vanished from the public discussion the Green League made a (unsuccessful) parliamentary proposal on the experiment of Mattila's models, and some small municipalities in the Eastern Finland presented themselves as volunteers for the BI pilot

11. 2001 Researcher Anita Mattila: <i>Adjusted Basic Income</i> II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recipients:</i> those eligible for social security benefits and those who have earned income • <i>monthly amount:</i> max. 3200 mk (inflation adjusted €659) • <i>administration:</i> The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) • <i>other specific features:</i> all income below 1500 mk (€310) tax-free, the amount of BI declines linearly when the income increases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above, proposal 10 • See above, proposal 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above, proposal 10
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(continued)

Table 1: (Continued)

Year, author and title	Content of the proposal	Relation to the existing system	Objectives and alleged effects	Macro-economic context	Political context	Reception and outcomes
12. 2007 The Green League: <i>Basic Income</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recipients: citizens permanently residing in Finland monthly amount: €440 in 2007, raised to €540 in 2011 (tax-free) financing sources: 2-layer income taxation (39% / 49%) + increase in environmental and capital gains taxation administration: The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unconditional BI at the level of current minimum unemployment benefits was intended to replace all income-transfers except for housing benefits, occasional social assistance and earnings-related benefits contains a micro-simulation analysis of its effects on public economy and households claimed to be neutral for public financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce bureaucracy and simplify the system to remove income traps and to always make work beneficial to support micro-entrepreneurship, irregular employment and new forms of work and education to reduce categorization and support people's freedom to define their own lifestyle and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long, ongoing restructuring of the economy and labour markets deepened social divisions and growing income inequality increase in atypical and self-employment an unemployment rate of 6.9% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The model was published before parliamentary elections when the Green Party was in opposition widespread media discussion about the precarity movement including their demand for basic income public discussion on the problems of poverty and irregular jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triggered a major media discussion with mostly positive reactions the leaders of other parties did not support the idea the Green League won one seat and entered the centre-right-green government the new government set up a committee to prepare a major reform to the social security system due to conflicting interests, the committee failed to propose any significant reforms

13. 2011 The Left Alliance: *Reforms Towards Basic Income*
- **Recipients:** all permanent residents
 - **monthly amount:** €620 universal + €130 discretionary supplement (e.g. in the cases of unemployment, illness, children's homecare, etc.)
 - **financing sources:** progressive income and capital taxation on the scale 30–57% (BI costs €3.6 billion)
 - **administration:** The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela)
- The model would replace all income transfers except for housing benefits, occasional social assistance and earnings-related benefits
- contains a micro-simulation analysis of its effects on public economy and households
 - the working group proposes a gradual implementation by firstly merging all minimum benefits and raising their level
- To redistribute income and combat poverty
- to reduce the control and humiliation directed at the welfare beneficiaries
 - to facilitate the combination of social security and small incomes
 - to enhance the bargaining power of those in precarious employment
 - to expand the concept of work and support individual emancipation
 - the model would reduce the poverty rate from 13.2% to 9.1%
 - the Gini coefficient would drop from 0.255 to 0.223
 - all those whose monthly income is below €2980 (60% of the population) would benefit from the model
- Economic downturn and a deepening global financial crisis
- growing budget deficits
 - poverty traps and the working poor as a phenomenon became topical issues
 - an unemployment rate of 7.8%
- The model was first released as a discussion paper by the working group before the 2011 parliamentary elections, when the party was in opposition
- a government of the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party, the Green Party, and the Swedish People's Party
 - pre-election discussion on poverty and the insufficient level of the minimum social security
 - disappointment with the modest outcomes of the social security reform committee
- At the time of its publication as a discussion paper, the model did not receive much attention
- The Left Alliance entered the government led by the National Coalition Party
 - the party council of the Left Alliance approved the model on 17 Nov 2012
 - the approval was noticed, e.g. by the biggest daily newspaper
 - the government raised minimum unemployment benefits, removed the means-test for the labour market subsidy and facilitated the combination of small incomes with social security benefits

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PUBLICATION II

**From Rights to Activation: The Evolution of the Idea of Basic Income in the
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From Rights to Activation: The Evolution of the Idea of Basic Income in the Finnish Political Debate, 1980–2016

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Abstract

The article contributes to the growing body of research on the politics of basic income by analysing the framing of the idea in the context of Finland, a country with a long history of debate and one of the forerunners in experimenting with this policy. Using a comprehensive dataset of political documents covering 36 years, the study shows how contextual factors and shifts in political climate shaped the framing of the idea. It also shows that the key frames describing basic income were widely shared among the politicians and parties discussing the policy. The study enriches our understanding of the politics of basic income by adding an ideational perspective that has for long been a missing element in this field of research.

1. Introduction

The idea of basic income, a regular cash allowance granted to the entire population of a given country or region with no strings attached, has recently become a hot topic in social policy debates. The idea has also risen on the political agenda in countries such as Finland, the Netherlands and Canada, as variants of a basic income model have been tested in local or nation-wide experiments.

The recent surge of attention has given rise to a growing number of studies discussing the political feasibility of basic income. There have been important contributions to understand the policy positions of parties and stakeholders related to the basic income issue (Chrisp, 2017; Sloman, 2018; Vanderborght, 2006; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Stirton *et al.*, 2017), the challenges of coalition-building (De Wispelaere, 2016b), policy learning (De Wispelaere 2016a), and policy design and implementation (De Wispelaere, 2015; De Wispelaere and Stirton, 2012; Jordan, 2012; Martinelli, 2017). However, apart from Steensland's (2008a, 2008b) analyses on the failures of the American guaranteed minimum income policies in the 1960s and 1970s, studies have paid very little attention to the role of ideational factors and framing as determinants of the political feasibility of basic income. However, the positions of parties or stakeholders regarding this issue cannot be fully understood without knowing

how the basic income idea has been framed and communicated in the public and political discourse. Also, the discussion on political challenges remains vague unless we know whether the actors share the same frame concerning the basic income issue, or whether there are some crucial differences in their framing of this idea.

Ideas can be understood as broad political ideologies and policy paradigms, values and attitudes, cultural categories and beliefs, or as specific policy programmes and framing processes (Campbell, 1998; Béland, 2005, 2009; Béland and Cox, 2010; Béland and Mahon, 2016: 43–6). Ideational processes are not distinct from institutional realities or political power, but are intertwined with other factors to produce policy stability or change (Béland and Mahon, 2016: 43–44). Framing is the act of communicating policy issues and ideas; a frame sets a ‘lens’ through which the issue is viewed by ‘highlighting some features of reality while omitting others’ (Entman, 1993: 52–4). Policy framing is a deliberate and rhetorical activity aimed at generating support – or opposition – for given policies by mobilising and manipulating cultural and political symbols available in society’s ideological repertoires (Béland, 2005, 2009; Béland and Mahon, 2016: 47–9; Hiilamo and Kangas, 2009). Just as frames can be used to seek legitimacy for policy ideas, they can also be mobilised to undermine support or to preventively tackle potential objections (Béland, 2005: 11–2). From an ideational perspective, the ability of policymakers to frame their proposals in a culturally resonant and normatively acceptable way is a key factor in explaining the triumph of some policy alternatives over others (Béland, 2005: 12; Hiilamo and Kangas, 2009: 458–9).

Programmatic policy ideas, such as basic income, are discussed in the context of institutional realities, real-world events, and in the discursive context of prevalent political ideologies or policy paradigms; these contextual factors can be expected to shape the framing of the idea. Also, shifts in what Kingdon (2010) calls ‘political mood’ may affect the understanding of a policy idea. For instance, when the political climate shifts, a formerly popular idea might be dismissed as ‘heretical’, as happened for basic income in Denmark in the early 2000s (Christensen, 2008). Alternatively, the idea might be re-framed to resonate with the new ‘moods’ in politics.

Variants of the basic income idea are enjoying support – as well as opposition – from across the political spectrum (e.g. Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 189–206; Standing, 2017: 281–3). However, it has been argued that, when the policy is taken to practice, the perspectives of parties that have formerly expressed support on a general level may prove incompatible (Chrisp, 2017; De Wispelaere, 2016b). De Wispelaere (2016b) argues that when moving from the discussion on the abstract idea towards implementation, insurmountable obstacles may appear causing a ‘persistent political division’ between the basic income proponents. However, in his argumentation those obstacles

mainly concern the questions of policy design, not the discursive disagreement concerning the purposes of the basic income policy.

This article sheds light on this largely understudied area of the discursive politics of basic income by examining how the idea has evolved in the framing of political parties in the context of the Finnish welfare state. Framing can be regarded as a key aspect of the public and political legitimacy of a policy such as basic income (De Wispelaere and Noguera, 2012: 29); yet, there has been almost no empirical attention to this issue. Parties are interesting targets of the research since they, apart from being important sources and promoters of frames, hold direct political power. Finland presents an interesting case for the study because its basic income debate has a long history and a relatively strong involvement of political parties (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2015), and it is also one of the forerunners in experimenting with the policy.

Drawing on a comprehensive dataset of political documents, the article sets out to answer the following questions: how did the idea of basic income emerge in the Finnish political debate? How has the framing of the basic income idea evolved to reflect changes in Finnish society and the political climate? How did different parties orient to the basic income idea in their framing? The study utilises documents generated by parties, both as electoral material and in parliamentary proceedings, starting from the onset of the basic-income-related discussion in 1980 and ending in 2016, just before the government's experiment was launched.

Drawing on Entman's (1993) definition of framing, the article introduces a method for identifying frames, tracing their evolution and linking them with political actors employing them (see also Steensland, 2008b). According to Entman (1993: 52) 'to frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient (. . .), in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*' (italics in original). Operationalising this definition, the article attempts to build a systematic tool to identify and classify frames in the Finnish basic income debate. This method allows the study to quantitatively track the usage of each frame over time linking them with parties, and qualitatively analyse the contents of each frame simultaneously.

The rest of this article is organised as follows. The second section provides a brief overview of the Finnish political system and parties, as well as a short history of the basic income debate in Finland. The third section introduces the data and methods used in the study. The fourth and fifth sections present the findings of the empirical analysis, with the fourth concentrating on the evolution of frames over time linked with the parties using them, and the fifth analysing the contents of the debate with an attempt to contextualise the findings by linking them to economic, political and ideological changes in Finnish society. The sixth section concludes the article and discusses the relevance of the findings.

2. The idea of basic income in the Finnish welfare state context

The Finnish basic income experiment conducted by the present centre-right coalition government – consisting of the centrist-agrarian Centre Party, the centre-right National Coalition Party (NCP), and the right-wing nationalist and populist Finns (from June 2017 Blue Reform) has received worldwide media attention. However, this experiment builds on more than 30 years of debate, where variants of the basic income idea have been discussed in electoral and parliamentary processes.

The origins of the basic-income-related debate in Finland are usually traced back to the 1970s or early 1980s (Andersson, 2000; Ikkala, 2012; Koistinen and Perkiö, 2015). In contrast with many other countries where the idea has been widely debated, in Finland it has been political parties rather than social movements that have been active in the discussion from the beginning (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2015). Although individual supporters can be found in nearly all parties, the Centre Party, the Greens, and the Left Alliance come out as clear supporters of the idea, whereas the remaining parties can be described as falling in the neutral or opposing camps (Stirton *et al.*, 2017). Ironically, the most eager advocates, the Greens and the Left Alliance, are both in opposition as the proposal is being tested.

While, internationally, basic income advocates typically come from the relatively small green and left-wing parties, Finland is distinctive because the country's Centre Party – one of the most popular parties – has consistently expressed interest in the idea. The history of the party as the voice of the agrarian population – and thus an advocate of universal flat-rate benefits over income-related social insurance (Kangas *et al.*, 2013) – could to some extent explain the party's interest in basic income. Another country in which political interest has historically come from the centre-right is Britain (Sloman, 2018).

The Finnish multiparty parliamentary system has historically been characterised by three roughly equally sized major parties – the centre-right National Coalition Party (NCP), the centrist-agrarian Centre Party, and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) – and a varying number of medium-sized and small parties. Consequently, there has been no single ruling party with an overwhelming majority; parties have been forced to form coalitions and seek consensus (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013: 13–5). This has also left its mark on the Finnish social security system: although it is usually labelled social democratic (Esping-Andersen, 1990), it actually reflects a unique mixture of labour and agrarian interests (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013). The Finnish political scene changed in 2011, when the nationalist-populist Finns Party gained a significant share of the vote in elections and joined the former 'big three'. After the 2015 elections, the party entered the coalition government led by Prime Minister Juha Sipilä of the Centre Party.

One of the greatest landmarks in Finnish politics is the deep recession of the early 1990s, which marked a departure from the old egalitarian ideals of the Nordic welfare model and the triumph of ‘neoliberal’ ideas of competitiveness and economic efficiency (Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013). It changed the tone of social policy from the ‘passive’ distribution of benefits towards targeting activation policies (Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013: 817–9). Although a paradigm shift of this kind could be expected to make the political atmosphere less welcoming for ideas such as basic income, as happened in Denmark (Christensen, 2008), basic income was widely discussed in Finland during the mid- and late 1990s, and some of the parties placed the proposal on their agendas (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2015).

A comprehensive social security reform has historically featured on the agendas of various governments, yet widespread agreement on systemic flaws has not easily translated into a consensus on how to put things right. One historical reason for this is the tripartite negotiating system, where no social security reform can take place without the consent of the employers’ and employees’ unions (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013: 15–6). Apart from the genuine basic income models, in recent years there has been a boom of proposals that, while bearing some resemblance to basic income,¹ lack the full universality and unconditionality that are usually considered to be the key features of basic income (De Wispelaere, 2015: 50–4; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 16–23).

The aim of the two-year basic income trial launched in January 2017 is ‘to explore whether basic income could be used to reform the social security system so as to reduce incentive traps relating to working’.² The trial consists of giving – unconditionally and without means-testing – a basic income of €560 a month (that is, the equivalent of the minimum unemployment benefit after taxes) to 2,000 randomly selected individuals across the country who were formerly receiving unemployment benefits. The participants, aged between 25 and 58, are offered training and other employment services on a voluntary basis, and there are no sanctions for declining job offers. The participants’ income taxation is not adjusted to the basic income system.

However, the scope and design of the trial have been considered by many to be insufficient for determining the real impact of basic income. Experimenting with an unconditional policy also contradicts with the main policy line of the government, which has consisted of a series of reforms to increase benefit conditionality and sanctions to incentivise job-seeking activities among the unemployed.

3. Data and methods

The data comprise political documents from 1980 to 2016 in which basic income or a related concept (see the keywords below) appears. These documents include

party programmes and election manifestos (N=58), different types of parliamentary motions (N=28), written questions to ministers (N=5), and transcriptions of the parliament's plenary session debates (N=285). The documents examined represent electoral and parliamentary activities (not, for instance, the activities of ministries or municipal councils).

The data were obtained by making searches with the selected keywords from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (party programmes and election manifestos) and the online archive of the Parliament of Finland (motions, written questions, and plenary session transcripts). Election manifestos from 1980 to 2000 were obtained from the National Archive, the Labour Archive, or the archive of the Centre Party. All parties that had at least one seat in the national parliament during the examined period were involved in the data search. The keywords used were (English equivalents in brackets) *perustulo* (basic income), *kansalaispalkka* (citizen's wage), *kansalaistulo* (citizen's income), *kansalaisraha* (citizen's money), *negatiivinen tulovero* (negative income tax), and *perustoimeentuloturva*, *kattava perusturva*, or *vähimmäistulo* (all translated as guaranteed minimum income).³ The total number of documents yielded by the keyword searches was 506, but the analysis was restricted to only those documents that mentioned a given concept in a substantively meaningful way (not, for instance, as part of a list). This reduced the total number of analysed documents to 376.

All together 12 parties, or their representative members of parliament (MPs), discussed basic income or a related concept in their electoral/parliamentary activities during the examined period. These parties are the Centre Party, the National Coalition (NCP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Greens (seats in parliament from 1983 onwards), the Finnish People's Democratic League (communist), whose successor from 1990 onwards is the Left Alliance (leftist), the Rural Party, whose successor from 1995 onwards is the Finns Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Swedish People's Party, and two minor liberal parties, the Liberal People's Party (four seats in 1980–1983 and one seat in 1991–1995) and the Young Finns (two seats in 1995–1999). In addition, there were some short-lived minor parties that did not take part in the basic income debate. Oppositional framing – that is, the framing of basic income in negative terms – occurs only in 17 per cent of all examined documents. Table 1 shows that there was great variation among the parties in the amount of basic-income-related discussion.

The data used for this study cover nearly all documented political discussion on basic income in the examined period. However, it leaves aside the public debate that occurred in the media; the views of experts, NGOs, and interest groups; and the internal debate within the parties. The data also does not cover the expert and stakeholder hearings concerning the 2017–2018 experiment, nor the statements of the parliamentary committees regarding the experiment law.

TABLE 1. The number of different types of analysed documents per party

Party	Programmes/ Manifestos	Motions/ Questions	Plenary sessions*
Greens	25	2	106
Communist/Left Alliance	14	11	78
Centre	14	6	79
Rural/Finns	0	9	49
Liberal**	3	0	27
NCP	2	1	29
SDP	0	2	50
Christian Democrats	0	2	14

*The sum is higher than the total number of analysed documents because in one plenary session there can be MPs from more than one party speaking.

**Liberal People's Party or Young Finns.

The study does not give an overall picture of all the framing of basic income in Finland, but it does give a comprehensive picture of the framing done by political parties. Yet, given the large amount of data and the long period covered, the analysis may hide some nuances of the debate. The reason for focusing on parties is that they are key actors in policy framing. The parties have also been central in the Finnish basic income debate (Koistinen and Perkiö, 2015); civil society actors, for example, have played a less prominent role.

Figure 1 shows the variation in the amount of basic-income-related political documents over time. It shows that there have been peaks in the basic-income-related political discussions and activities in the late 1980s, the mid-1990s, and from 2015 to 2016, but the peaks do not always correspond to the type of document.

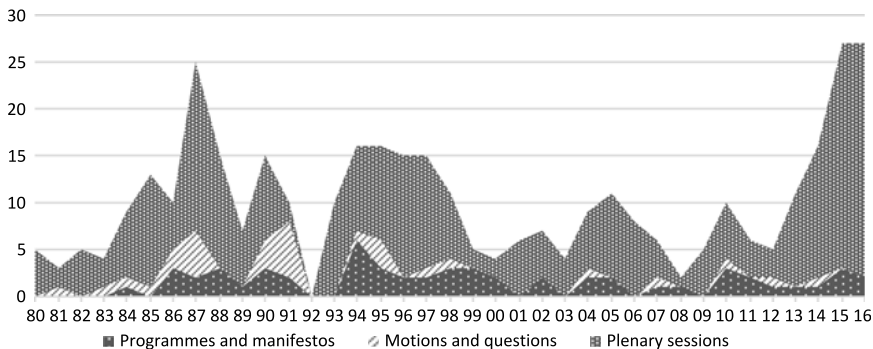


Figure 1 The number of different types of analysed political documents per year

The starting point for the analysis is 1980, because it was in that year that the concept of ‘citizen’s wage’ (which is often considered a synonym of basic income) first appeared in the data. The use of different concepts with somewhat similar meanings posed a challenge in the data selection, especially in the early part of the examined period. In addition, the basic income concept itself was sometimes understood in different ways. Because one purpose of the study was to examine the historical evolution of the idea, those ideas and concepts that bear similarity (though not full correspondence) to basic income (defined as universal and unconditional benefit) were also included. In the analysis section, the concept of basic income will be used, unless there is a reference to another particular concept.

The early idea of a ‘guaranteed minimum income’ has its roots in the debates of the 1970s, and it gained momentum as a part of the 1983–1987 government’s agenda. The debate on the topic had died out by the early 1990s with no significant outcomes. The purpose of this policy was to simplify the social security system and make it more comprehensive by unifying different benefits, raising the levels of the lowest benefits, and guaranteeing a minimum standard of living for all citizens by legislation. The concept of a citizen’s wage first appeared in the parliamentary proceedings in 1980. In use, it had various meanings: as something similar to the guaranteed minimum income, as an unconditional payment to welfare recipients or to all citizens, or as a ‘wage’ for civil work or activities for the ‘common good’. In addition, concepts such as ‘citizen’s money’ and ‘citizen’s income’ were circulated, but less regularly used, during the 1980s and 1990s. The term ‘basic income’ was first introduced by the Greens and the Communists in the second half of the 1980s. It was most often described as an unconditional payment either to all citizens/residents or to all those whose income fell below a certain threshold, yet it occasionally also appeared as being conditional on some activity. From 1994 onwards, basic income was the term most often used. In addition, the concept of ‘negative income tax’ was occasionally used throughout the period, mainly as an alternative way to implement a citizen’s wage or a basic income system.

The purpose of the analysis was to trace the origins of the basic income idea in the Finnish political debate, to identify the key frames used in the debate and examine their contents and evolution over time, linking them to the parties employing them. The first stage of the analysis was to identify the frames.

The analysis process began by coding the relevant data segments where basic income or a related concept was discussed into coding categories representing Entman’s (1993) four elements of framing – that is, diagnosing problems (problem definitions), assessing causes (causal interpretations), linking policy options to social principles or values (moral evaluations), and prescribing solutions (treatment recommendations). A similar methodology for identifying frames was used by Steensland (2008b) in his analysis of the framing of the American guaranteed income plans in the 1960s and 1970s. The data were coded

manually by the author using Atlas.ti software, the coding unit being a meaningful text passage. The frames were identified by inductive methods from the coded data segments by observing linkages between problem definitions, treatment recommendations, causal interpretations, and moral evaluations that were bound together by a central organising idea or principle (Gamson *et al.*, 1992: 384) and by certain metaphors, catchphrases, representations and narratives (Steensland, 2008b: 3).

After identifying the key frames, their evolution over time linked with the parties employing them were examined by coding each document separately in Excel in terms of the frames they contained and the parties using those frames. Each frame, if used, was coded once per document (in the plenary session documents, the framing was linked to all parties whose MPs used it in that discussion). This coding allowed the systematic examination of the variation in framing over time. The unit of analysis at this stage was a policy document that could be a manifesto/programme, a motion or written question, or a plenary session debate.

4. Evolution of frames in the Finnish political basic income debate

Table 2 displays the 12 most frequently used frames in the Finnish political basic income debate.⁴ It shows that the frame *Activity* has been the most prevalent (appearing in 47 per cent of all analysed documents), and the next two frames, which appear with an almost equal frequency, are *Subsistence* and *Systemic reform*. In addition, there are nine frames that were used with varied frequency. The coding process also identified several frames that were used less frequently, but those frames were omitted from the analysis.

TABLE 2. The most frequent frames and the number and percentage of all examined documents in which they appear

Frame	N of documents*	% of documents
Activity	176	47%
Subsistence	157	42%
Systemic reform	153	41%
Rights	89	24%
Transformation of work	69	18%
Work alternatives	69	18%
Justice	57	15%
Equality	52	14%
Autonomy	52	14%
Dignity	43	11%
Distribution	41	11%
Budget balance	31	8%

*Note that multiple frames can appear in one document.

Table 3 shows the contents of each analysed pro-basic income frame using Entman's (1993) categorisation. In brief, the *Activity* frame portrayed basic income as a tool to incentivise work and other activities, *Subsistence* as a way to improve the income level or income security of deprived groups, *Systemic reform* as a policy to correct systemic flaws in social protection, *Rights* as a way to improve the fulfillment of social rights, *Transformation of work* as necessary because of the dearth of traditional forms of employment, *Work alternatives* as a search for alternatives to existing policies and forms of employment, *Justice* as a tool to increase justice, *Equality* as a way to increase equality, *Autonomy* as a policy to increase individual autonomy, *Dignity* as a way to provide a decent life in dignity for all, *Distribution* as a tool to change the wealth or income distribution, and *Budget balance* as a way to save public expenditures.

In many cases, frames did not stand as sole entities, but overlapped in their contents. For instance, the *Activity*, *Systemic reform*, and *Subsistence* frames were often intertwined as the reduction of welfare bureaucracy was argued to improve incentives to work, and thereby enable deprived people to improve their standard of living. Similarly, *Rights*, *Equality* and *Subsistence* often overlapped in their arguments that guaranteeing a sufficient income as a right for all would increase equality among people and reduce poverty. However, it makes sense to treat them as separate frames, as each of them focuses on a different issue as a central organising idea at the core of a frame (Gamson *et al.*, 1992: 384).

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the frames over time linked to the parties employing them (the unit of analysis being one document where the 'speaker' can either be a party or an individual MP). All opposing framing is placed in the category 'opposition'.

Figure 2 shows, firstly, the very different development of the *Activity* frame on the one hand, and the *Rights*, *Justice*, and *Equality* frames on the other. It shows that *Activity* was almost non-existent during the 1980s and the early 1990s, but suddenly grew in prominence in 1994, being the strongest individual frame during the 1990s, and particularly in the 2014–2016 period, when the plans for the current experiment were discussed. In turn, *Rights* was the strongest individual frame during the 1980s,⁵ but it declined in the 1990s and was almost non-existent from the early 2000s onwards. A similar, yet milder, development can be observed in the *Justice* and *Equality* frames. The *Subsistence* and *Systemic reform* frames, instead, remained strong throughout the period. The figure also shows how the economic frames *Distribution* and *Budget balance* evolved in contrary patterns, *Distribution* being frequently used in the 1980s and 1990s, but no longer from 2000s onwards, and *Budget balance*, in turn, being non-existent in the early part of the 1980s but becoming somewhat frequent from 1987 onwards. In addition, *Work alternatives* was frequently used from the 1980s to early 2000s, but it became rare from 2003 onwards. The figure also shows that in the first two decades there was more variation in framing but, from

TABLE 3. Contents of the frames in the Finnish basic income debate

Frame	Problem definition	Causal interpretation	Moral evaluation	Treatment recommendation
<i>Activity</i>	Incentive traps, incompatibility of work and benefits	Complexity of the benefits system	Virtue of diligence, activity should be rewarded	Incentivise work and activity with basic income
<i>Systemic reform</i>	Old-fashioned, complex, rigid, bureaucratic benefits system	Multiplicity of benefits, complexity of the welfare legislation	Values of simplicity and flexibility	Streamline the benefits system with basic income
<i>Subsistence</i>	Poverty and/or income insecurity among deprived groups	Incomplete coverage, low level of benefits, poverty traps	The need to fight poverty	Provide better coverage and/or income level with basic income
<i>Rights</i>	Shortages in the fulfillment of social rights	The flaws of the benefit system	Emphasis on social rights	Guarantee a right to an adequate income for all in all life situations
<i>Transformation of work</i>	Unsuitability of the benefits system to present day labour market	New technology, globalisation, increase in non-standard forms of employment	Social security should be aligned with labour market changes	Modernise the social security system with basic income
<i>Work alternatives</i>	Too narrow understanding of work	End of full employment, labour market change	Value to alternative forms of activity	Enable alternative policies and forms of activity with basic income
<i>Justice</i>	Injustices among people or in the treatment of welfare recipients	Existing social and taxation policies	Just treatment for all	More justice with basic income
<i>Equality</i>	Social/economic inequality	Existing economic and social policies	The value of equality	More equality with a social security reform
<i>Autonomy</i>	Compulsive and paternalistic welfare practices	Compulsive elements of the benefits system	Individual freedom and independence as values	More personal autonomy with basic income
<i>Distribution</i>	Unequal or unfair distribution of wealth or income	Policies that are benefitting the well-off and neglecting the poor	Justice in distribution	Fairer distribution with basic income, fair share
<i>Dignity</i>	Stigmatising benefits system and humiliating treatment of recipients	Welfare paternalism, bureaucracy	Human dignity	Decent life in dignity for all with basic income
<i>Budget balance</i>	Budget deficits, unaffordable welfare system	Inefficiencies of the benefits system, lack of work incentives	Virtues of financial discipline and frugality	Rationalisation and budget savings with basic income

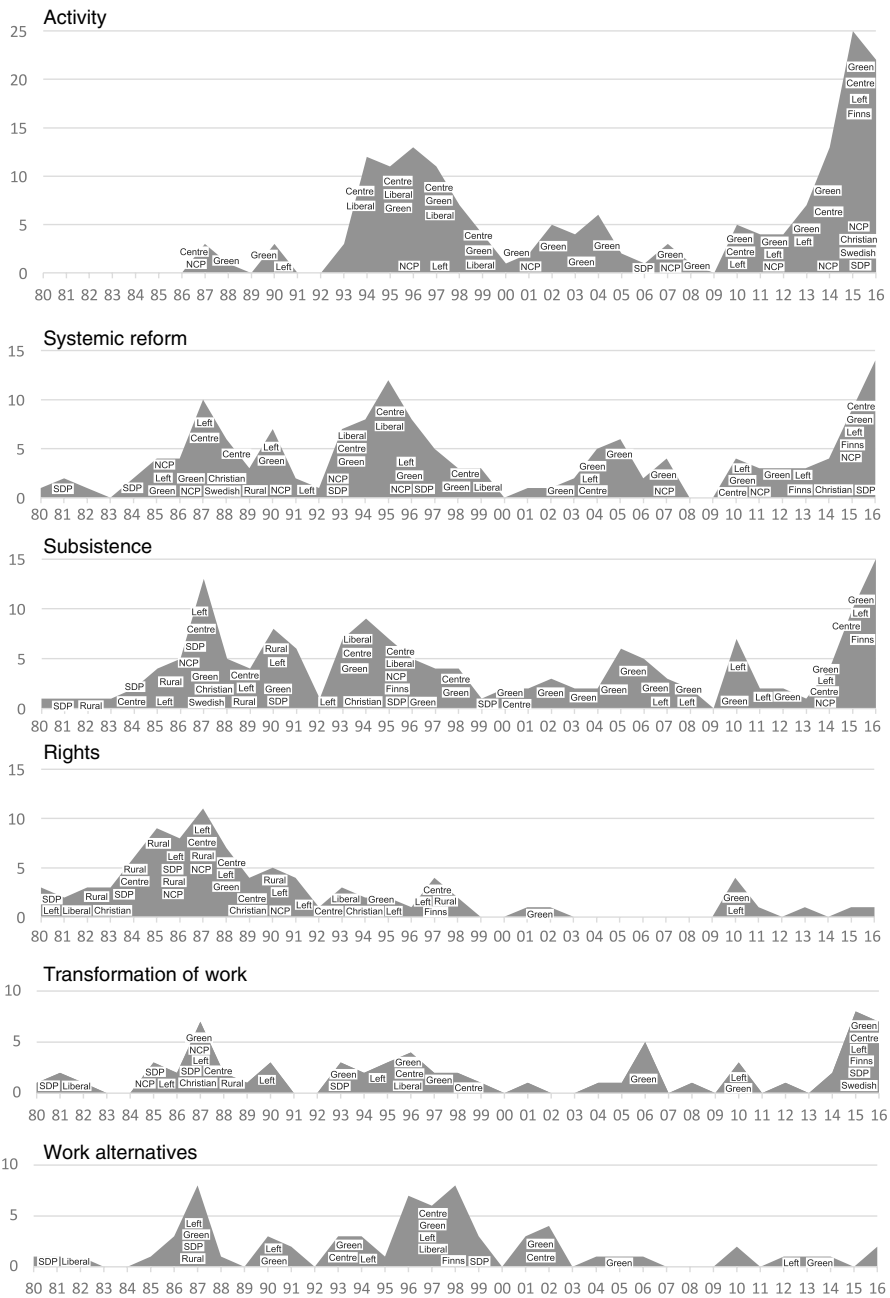


Figure 2 Evolution of frames over time linked to the parties using them

the early 2000s onwards, the discussion was largely dominated by the three strongest frames.

Figure 2 shows that the most frequent frames were used by (MPs of) all those parties that made positive statements regarding basic income or a related

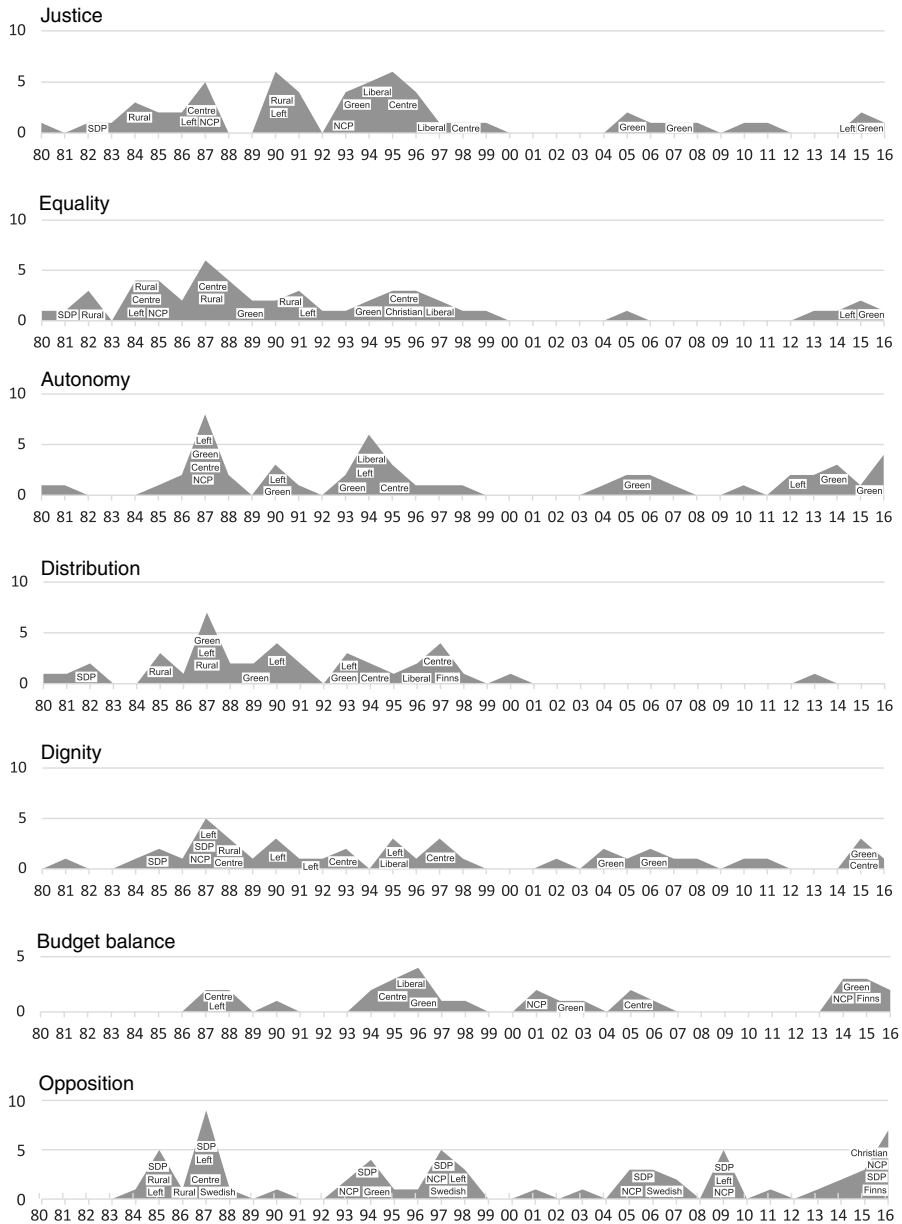


Figure 2 (Continued)

idea. It shows that the three major frames were shared, but the Left and the Green parties were using also some of the weaker frames more often, especially at the end of the examined period. Consistent with Steensland’s (2008b) analysis on the framing of the American guaranteed income plans, the graph shows that ideational diffusion rather than a change of actors in the debate was responsible for the shift in framing. In other words, the shift of dominance from the *Rights* to

the *Activity* frame was a result of actors adopting a new frame – and a new concept⁶ – rather than a shift in the composition of actors. However, the usage of the same frame does not necessarily mean that all parties shared the same policy positions (see Steensland, 2008b: 19); rather, they debated the merits of basic income on the same grounds.

Throughout the entire period, most advocacy framing was done by the Greens, followed by the Centre and the Communist/Left parties. In the first years analysed, the SDP appears as the most active in advocacy framing, which was mostly due to the activity of one individual MP. Figure 2 shows that particularly during the peak years, the dominant frames were shared by MPs from various parties. It shows that during the 1990s, when the debate was peaking, the Centre, the Greens, and the Liberal parties were the most active in advocacy framing, particularly in the usage of the *Activity* frame. During the relatively quiet period of the 2000s, the Greens were nearly alone in keeping the basic income discourse alive. The figure also shows that *Rights*, *Work alternatives*, *Justice*, *Equality*, *Autonomy* and *Dignity* frames were shared among many parties in the 1980s and 1990s but, from 2000 onwards, only by the Greens and the Left Alliance. *Transformation of work* deviates from those frames, as in the last years it grew in strength and was employed by most parties in the pre-experiment debate. Furthermore, the figure shows that in 2014–2016, when the experiment plans were discussed, the *Activity* and *Systemic reform* frames in particular were widely shared among the MPs.

Figure 2 also shows the amount of oppositional framing over time. Oppositional framing occurred in 63 documents in total, which is 17 per cent of all analysed documents (in most of those documents advocacy framing also occurred). Most of the oppositional framing was done by the SDP (in 31 documents), followed by the NCP (in 12 documents) and the Communist/Left Alliance (in 11 documents). The Rural/Finns, Centre, Swedish, Christian, and Green parties' MPs used oppositional framing in fewer than ten documents each. The opposition was most often targeted at the concept of a citizen's wage, whereas a guaranteed minimum income received no opposition. There was no single dominating frame used by those opposing the concept. Generally, the normative resistance to the idea of 'free money' was intertwined with concerns about the negative impacts on the motivation to work and the economy.

5. The contents and context of the debate

The early 1980s, the period when the basic-income-related debate began, was an era of economic affluence overshadowed by a modest but consistent rise in the unemployment rate and the persistence of poverty among some segments of the population (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013: 9). It was also a time of the incipient liberalisation of the Finnish economy and the widespread arrival of new

technologies (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013). Nevertheless, the principles of Keynesian economics, as well as the ideals of equality, solidarity and universalism, were still dominant political ideas (Kantola and Kananen, 2013).

The two early policy ideas, the guaranteed minimum income and the citizen's wage, were talked about in terms of streamlining the social protection system and guaranteeing a decent standard of living as a right of all citizens in all life situations (the *Systemic reform*, *Rights*, *Subsistence* and *Equality* frames).

However, there were some substantial differences between the two policies. The concept of a guaranteed minimum income enjoyed widespread support among the parties during the mid- to late- 1980s, whereas the citizen's wage was a rather radical proposal initially advanced by only a few individual politicians from the SDP, Communist and Green parties. Although the parties favoured their own slightly different versions of the guaranteed minimum income, there is no full correspondence between it and the idea of basic income that emerged later. Nonetheless, it can certainly be identified as one of the main roots of the basic income debate in Finland.

The guaranteed minimum income policy was strongly framed in terms of social rights and equality: 'Every citizen should be guaranteed a minimum income security in case of unemployment, sickness, or old age, regardless of their occupation and place of living' (Centre Party MP, plenary session 29 September 1982). This goal was to be achieved by reforming the complex and scattered benefits system towards one universal minimum income scheme. The left-wing and Rural parties' advocates also emphasised the redistribution perspective in their reasoning for the reform (the *Distribution* frame). Unlike the other basic-income-related concepts, this policy was discussed separately from employment policy issues, with the target group being the economically 'inactive' part of the population.

There was more variation in the framing of the citizen's wage. The concept was particularly linked to concerns regarding the breakdown of the traditional, full-employment society due to technological progress (the *Transformation of work* frame), and the alleged necessity to search for alternative employment policies (such as job-sharing) and ways to reconceptualise work (the *Work alternatives* frame). The citizen's wage was also often discussed from the perspectives of individual autonomy (the *Autonomy* frame) and human dignity (the *Dignity* frame), and as a new measure of income distribution in a future where an increasing amount of work will be done by robots (the *Distribution* frame). While a guaranteed minimum income strongly appeared as an amendment to the existing policies, the citizen's wage offered a whole new perspective on the questions of work, income distribution, and citizens' autonomy. This perspective was, in brief, to reduce the supply of labour and give more space to life choices and activities outside employment.

In 1987, basic income emerged as a new concept in parliamentary debates. Alongside basic income was the idea that instead of paying people for staying out of work, social security could be combined with small wages to make temporary employment more attractive. This thinking was introduced and promoted by the Green Party MP Osmo Soininvaara: ‘Basic income or a citizen’s wage means that everyone will receive a certain sum of money to form the basis of their earnings, and this will be topped up with labour income’ (plenary session 5 October 1988). This new thinking possibly paved the way for the discursive shift in the basic income debate that happened in 1994, and it enabled basic income to be reframed in a way that resonated better with the changing political climate.

From 1991 to 1993, Finland experienced a severe financial crisis. The recession played a major role in a social policy paradigm shift that marked a departure from the traditional model of the Nordic welfare state and its core values, such as universalism and equality (Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013; Kuivalainen and Niemelä, 2010). It opened a policy window for a series of reforms in social and employment policies (Kuivalainen and Niemelä, 2010; Kananen, 2012) and public administration (Niemelä and Saarinen, 2012) that were, following the international trends, guided by ideas such as productivity, competitiveness, and economic efficiency. The aftermath of the early 1990s recession brought about a new paradigm in which budget austerity defined the scope of social policy, and universal entitlements were replaced by compulsive measures of activation and selective anti-poverty policies (Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013: 817–9; Kuivalainen and Niemelä, 2010). The recession also led to mass unemployment, a problem that was brought to the fore of all policy debates for years to come.⁷

The aftermath of the early 1990s recession also marked a discursive shift in the debate over basic income (which, from then on, was the most frequently used term), whereby the idea was reframed by its political advocates in terms of individual activity and activation policy. The new framing corresponded with the new reality of mass unemployment and budget deficits, as well as the new political climate and ideas of how to tackle these problems. The most active proponents of the new framing were the Centre and the Green parties, along with the two minor liberal parties, whereas the Left Alliance relied more on the framings of the 1980s. In this reframing process, basic income became understood increasingly as an employment policy instrument whose purpose was to ‘incentivise work and activities’ (Centre Party Programme, 1994) and ‘create new jobs’ (Green Party Programme, 1994). In the following two decades, *Activity* was the strongest frame in the Finnish political basic income debate, and the other frames were, with some minor exceptions, used in correspondence with this leading frame.

The new framing argued for basic income using the rationale of supply-side economics, where its purpose would be, on the one hand, to provide a low but unconditional minimum that ‘will not let anyone in real destitution fall outside support’ (Liberal Party MP, plenary session 13 September 1994), and, on the other, to ‘supplement small labour and entrepreneurial income’ (Centre Party MP, plenary session 22 February 1996). It would function as ‘a trampoline, helping people to make the jump to independent survival’ (Green Party Programme, 2002). Basic income was presented as a part of plans for labour market deregulation and reducing welfare expenses, the logic being that instead of keeping people fully unemployed within a system that penalised all activity by benefit cuts, it would enable every able-bodied individual to enter the job market, perhaps at first only partially or with lower salaries, but still ending up better-off than before. Together with deregulation, it was believed that basic income would increase the number of open vacancies and incentivise recipients to start new entrepreneurial activities.

The centrality of the activation idea in Finnish politics from the mid-1990s onwards can be observed, for instance, in the governments’ programmes, where the concept of ‘activation’, which had seldom been used before, became a key concept from 1995 onwards (Saarinen *et al.*, 2014: 613). The advocates of basic income used this new popular idea as a framing tool by underlining the value of work and individual activity: ‘we shall give everyone the opportunity to be active’ (Green Party MP, plenary session 3 September 1998). Describing the demoralising effects of the existing welfare system (punishing the active and rewarding the idle) and emphasising the activating power of basic income helped the advocates to justify it as a normatively and ideologically legitimate alternative and to preventively undermine the common objection that ‘free money’ would lead to free-riding and idleness.

While from 1994 onwards, basic income was predominantly framed in terms of activation, its rationale was different from that of conventional activation policies. The basic income discourse questioned the industrial model of employment and the possibility of achieving full-employment as it had traditionally been understood (the *Transformation of work* frame). The solution was to overcome the rigid categories of (full-time) employment and (full-time) unemployment, to make partial employment a legitimate alternative, and to make the term ‘work’ understood more broadly than solely in terms of employment. Some proposals from the 1990s and early 2000s combined basic income with policies such as job-sharing and civil work (the *Work alternatives* frame). However, those proposals did not challenge the *Activity* frame; they were used complementarily. Although the value of activity and the targets of activation were widely endorsed by basic income advocates, the rationale of basic income as an activation policy was based on the autonomy to pursue a better standard

of living driven by people's own personal interests and motivations, free from compulsion and oppressive welfare paternalism (the *Autonomy* frame).

During the 2000s, there was growing political attention on non-standard forms of employment, and the framing of basic income shifted to emphasise the need for economic security for those working on a self-employed basis or otherwise on an occasional basis (the *Subsistence* frame). However, the *Activity* frame remained strong and, towards the end of the examined period, the basic income debate became more narrowly focused on activity as employment, entrepreneurship, or active job-seeking, leaving aside alternative forms of activity. The context for the discussion of the government's trial plans was the post-2008 economic stagnation and the increased rates of (long-term) unemployment. This is also reflected in the design of the experiment, the main objective of which is to test the basic income model's capacity to incentivise employment among the recipients of unemployment benefits.

6. Conclusions

This article shows how the framing of the basic income idea was shaped by contextual factors and how the framing evolved following issues rising on the political agenda and shifts in the dominant discourse. It adds to our understanding of the politics of basic income in the Finnish context by showing that there have been certain dominating frames and those frames have been widely shared among the politicians and parties discussing the merits of this policy.

Policy framing occurs in a context that is constrained by institutional, economic and political realities on the one hand, and by dominant ideas and discourses on the other; thus, frames are formed in accordance with what is considered politically possible. Steensland (2008b: 2) calls this a discursive field, which 'establishes the limits of policy discourse by defining the range of relevant problems to be addressed and by providing the fundamental categories that shape decision making'. In the affluent 1980s, when the ideas of universalism, solidarity and equality were still strong, the frames emphasising equal rights to benefits were resonant and widely embraced by parties. The recession of the 1990s created a new rationale, whereby the 'passive' distribution of benefits was replaced by an activation paradigm. In this radically changed economic and political climate, continuing with the 1980s framing would soon have made the basic income idea politically unthinkable, as happened in Denmark (Christensen, 2008). Nevertheless, the Finnish advocates found a frame that resonated widely with the new climate of the time.

The strength of the *Activity* frame from the early 1990s onwards makes the Finnish political discourse on basic income distinct from most of the international debate among scholars and social activists, which generally put emphasis on fairer distribution of income and individual liberties (De Wispelaere,

2015: 28–9, 2016b: 31). However, though adopting the *Activity* frame as the key logic of reasoning, the advocates from the Left and the Green parties underlined the importance of positive incentives and personal motivation as drivers of activity, as opposed to sanctions. The advocates from those two parties also used a wider variety of frames, whereas the representatives of more hesitant parties more often relied on the dominating frames, especially at the end of the examined period. As the usage of some less frequent frames shows, the basic income discourse was not only about a technocratic solution to incentives problems but parties, especially the most eager advocate parties, were also looking for solutions to alternative futures in terms of widening the concept of work and increasing individual autonomy.

This analysis of policy documents suggests that – as the key frames were widely shared – there has been a widespread consensus on the purpose of basic income among the Finnish politicians and parties. In this overall analysis, the ideological differences among the parties did not feature clearly in their reasoning for basic income, but a more elaborate qualitative analysis could reveal more differences among them. However, most of the analysed discussion concerned the general aims of the basic income reform, not the policy design. A stronger division among the parties may appear if the basic income policy is put into practice, as the questions of financing, benefit level and replacement of existing benefits will come to the fore (De Wispelaere, 2016b).

Without understanding the centrality of the *Activity* frame – that is, reasoning for basic income using the logic of activation policy and supply side economics – the Finnish party positions regarding the issue – and, for instance, the enthusiasm of the centre-right coalition government to experiment with the policy – cannot be adequately understood. Framing the radical policy proposal in terms of mainstream values and ideologies and the readiness of the advocates to embrace new policy issues in their framing may be among the reasons why the idea has lived so long in the Finnish policy debates, being discussed at times by politicians and parties across the political spectrum.

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Notes

- 1 Proposals made by parties, think tanks and stakeholder organisations.
- 2 The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland (<http://stm.fi/en/basic-income-pilot-study>).

- 3 There was a variety of concepts with similar enough meaning to be all translated as ‘guaranteed minimum income’.
- 4 There is some correspondence with the frames found by Steensland (2008b) concerning the US debate over the guaranteed income policy.
- 5 This frame was strongly connected to the idea of guaranteed minimum income.
- 6 About the same time, basic income became the concept most often used.
- 7 The unemployment rate was 3.2 per cent in 1990 and 16.7 per cent in 1994, remaining above 10 per cent until the end of the decade (Statistics Finland: <http://www.stat.fi>).

Data sources

Election manifestos and policy programmes: Finnish Social Sciences Data Archive FSD (<http://www.fsd.uta.fi/pohtiva/>)

Election manifestos of the Greens from 1987 to 2000: National Archive of Finland (<https://www.arkisto.fi/en/frontpage>)

Election manifestos of the Centre Party from 1980 to 2000: Archive of the Centre Party and the Countryside (<http://www.keskusta.fi/Suomeksi/KMA/Etusivu>)

Election manifestos of the Communist Party SKDL/the Left Alliance from 1980 to 2000: Labor Archive (<http://www.tyark.fi/uk/index.html>)

Motions, written questions and plenary session transcripts: Archive of the Finnish Parliament (<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tietoaeduskunnasta/kirjasto/aineistot/eduskunta/Pages/default.aspx>)

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PUBLICATION
III

**Legitimising a radical policy idea: framing basic income as a boost to labour
market activity**

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Legitimising a radical policy idea: framing basic income as a boost to labour market activity

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Abstract

The idea of universal and unconditional basic income is gaining increasing traction worldwide. Yet the proposal of unconditional cash seems to run counter to some key normative assumptions in society. This article contributes to an understanding of the political feasibility of basic income from the perspective of framing strategies to legitimise the policy. It examines a framing commonly used by Finnish parties and politicians advocating basic income, that emphasised basic income's capacity to boost activity and labour market participation. The article finds that basic income was often defended with framing that appealed to activity as a value, and that this framing was most actively pushed by the Greens, and adopted by other parties during the upturns of the debate. The article provides an insight into a strategy of legitimising a politically controversial idea by framing it in a normatively and ideologically resonant way.

Keywords: basic income, framing, ideas, ideology, agenda setting, value amplification, legitimacy, Finland

Introduction

The idea of universal and unconditional basic income, a cash-benefit granted at regular intervals to each individual member of a political community, has gathered increasing attention worldwide. The boom of basic-income-related experiments around the world¹ (De Wispelaere and Forget, 2019) indicate that the idea, formerly often dismissed as utopian thinking, is being transformed from a 'philosophical pipe dream' (Van Parijs, 2013) into a real policy alternative.

Basic income presents a radical alternative to the current ‘means-tested and work-dependent perspective on income maintenance in the traditional welfare state’ (De Wispelaere, 2015: 7). Though there are many pragmatic arguments for universalising the benefit systems (De Wispelaere, 2015: 16-18), a large part of the interest to basic income draws from its alleged capacity to profoundly alter the social and economic relations (e.g. Standing, 2017; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Wright, 2010), and provide greater freedom in life decisions to each individual (e.g. Birnbaum, 2012; Van Parijs, 1995; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). However, the proposal of an unconditional benefit for all experiences deep-rooted resistance among most political elites. The common objections to ‘free cash’ concern its alleged financial unsustainability and negative effects on work motivation (Standing, 2017: 117-120; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017: 99-103; Perkiö et al., 2019).

Though basic income is by its proponents presented as a tool for greater social justice (e.g. Birnbaum, 2012; Standing, 2017; Van Parijs, 1995; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017), the proposal obviously runs counter to some popular conceptions of justice. The idea of ‘free cash for all’ clashes with the common notions of ‘deservingness’ (e.g. Kangas, 2003; van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Especially the norm of reciprocity is often mentioned as something that basic income could potentially violate, since if basic income were sufficiently high, it would enable some to live off the labour of others (Birnbaum, 2012: 78–82; De Wispelaere and Noguera, 2012: 28–29; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017: 99–100; White, 2003, 2006). De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012: 27–29) mention the reciprocity norm as one of the key questions regarding the ‘psychological feasibility’ of basic income – that is, the popular legitimacy and normative attractiveness of the policy.

Framing – that is, presenting an issue from a certain angle by highlighting some features of it while omitting others (see Entman, 1993: 52–54) – is a key instrument to boost the legitimacy of different policies. However, there is little research on the framing of basic income (see Legein et al., 2018; Steensland, 2008b; Perkiö, 2019; Perkiö et al., 2019), especially analysing the capacity of different frames to ‘sell’ this idea to the wider population and policymakers. Yet if basic income were to be perceived as a normatively acceptable policy, it should be framed in a way that resonates with the popular notions of justice. That is, the proponents should be able to tackle the common objection that basic income would demoralise society and enable the ‘undeserving’ groups (those who are

capable, but not willing to work) to live off the labour of decent hard-working citizens. Different framing technics can be deployed for portraying the policy itself as normatively and politically attractive (e.g. Béland, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Chong and Druckman, 2007; Snow et al., 1986), and the target population as legitimate targets of the policy (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). It has been noted that framing that appeals to shared values or normative beliefs is often more effective than framing that relies only on facts (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Kangas et al., 2014). A specific framing strategy to mobilise a widely-shared value for making a policy alternative to be perceived as more attractive is called value amplification (Béland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Snow et al., 1986).

In Finland, basic income has received much attention among policymakers, and the proposal was recently tested in a two-year nation-wide experiment (2017-2018) conducted by PM Juha Sipilä's centre-right coalition government. Examining a specific framing that has been dominant in the Finnish basic income discussion among political parties (Perkiö, 2019), this article argues that value amplification technics were successfully employed by the proponents of basic income to push the issue on to the political agenda. The examined *Activity*-frame (Perkiö, 2019) portrayed basic income as a tool to boost individual activity and labour market participation among welfare recipients. Drawing on a dataset of political documents dating from 1987 to 2018 (policy programmes and election manifestos of the parties and transcripts of the parliament's plenary session debates) discussing the basic income idea in the context of the Finnish welfare state, the article finds that basic income was often defended with framing that appealed to activity as a value, and that the Green Party was a key agent pushing for this framing, which was during the upturns of the debate adopted by a larger number of politicians and parties. The study shows how amplifying a popular value can allow even a smaller and politically weaker party to build a coalition of support and successfully push a controversial issue on to the agenda.

Legitimising a radical idea through framing

The idea of unconditional cash for all seems to run counter to many deservingness criteria people apply when asked which groups should receive what kind of benefits (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Generally, people consider groups whose need for support is beyond their own control as the most legitimate targets of social policy, whereas the those capable to make living by their own are

considered as the most ‘undeserving’ (Kangas, 2003; van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Though the notions of deservingness vary slightly across time and cultures, there is a consistent pattern across countries that elderly people are considered as most deserving, closely followed by the sick and disabled, whereas the unemployed and immigrants are considered as most undeserving (Kangas, 2003; van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). The norm of reciprocity – that is, willingness and capacity to ‘give something in return’ – is one dimension of the deservingness criteria (van Oorschot, 2000). The support for the unemployed is often subject to various ‘reciprocal’ obligations ranging from active job-search to unpaid work, which have been harshened over the decades of neoliberal policies (Goodin, 2002). Steensland (2008a) mentions the cultural categories of deservingness as the main reason for the eventual failure of once popular guaranteed minimum income plans – that had resemblance to basic income – in the 1960s and 1970s US. The programmes did not gain enough legitimacy because they would have treated all poor as deserving, regardless of their reason for support or willingness to work.

Framing is a key factor when it comes to legitimacy of different policies (Béland, 2005; Hiilamo and Kangas, 2009; Kangas et al., 2014). Framing can be understood, briefly, as setting a ‘lens’ through which a policy issue is viewed in discussion by highlighting some features of reality while omitting others (Entman, 1993: 52–54). Frames ‘*promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*’ for the issue at stake (Entman, 1993: 52, italics in original). Framing may concern policy instruments, or the target populations of policy instruments. Not only the way of portraying the impacts of policies, but also the characteristics of their ‘target populations’ affect the policy outcomes (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Positively constructed groups are likely to be treated as more legitimate targets of benefits than the groups that are characterized in negative terms (Schneider and Ingram, 1993; van Oorschot, 2006). Also, if the claimants’ need for benefits is presented as an outcome of structural factors beyond their own control, their claim for benefits is treated as more legitimate than when they are presented as responsible for their own situation (Kangas, 2003).

The framing activities borrow from cultural and political symbols available in society’s ideological repertoires (Béland, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Hiilamo and Kangas, 2009; Snow et al., 1986). Framing in policymaking often contains rhetorical and persuasive elements (Béland, 2009a: 706), as its key purpose is to convince the audience on the superiority of certain ideas while undermining the

support of others, and tackle potential counter-arguments in advance (Béland, 2005: 9-12). It has been noted that framing that appeals to popular values or moral sentiments is often more efficient than framing based only on factual statements (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Kangas et al., 2014). References to shared values or beliefs amplify the frame (Béland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Snow et al., 1986). The strategical use of a popular value to strengthen the effects of framing is called value amplification (Béland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Snow et al., 1986). According to Béland (2007, 2009a, 2009b), value amplification occurs by constantly referring to, idealising, and elevating a value central in a society's cultural repertoire, and it is likely to increase the effectiveness of framing.

Activity is a strong, rarely contested value that the proposal of 'free cash' seemingly runs counter to. 'Activation' has also been a key target in the Finnish social policy since the recession of the early 1990s (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013; Saarinen et al., 2014), that radically shifted the political landscape of the country, giving way to neoliberal reforms (see Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013). The most common objection to basic income in the mainstream media debate of 2017 in Finland, Canada and Spain concerned its alleged negative effects on work ethics and work incentives (Perkiö et al., 2019). Normative beliefs related to work and perceptions of deservingness were also found to be the main reasons to oppose basic income among the Finnish food aid recipients, a group that would most likely benefit from the program (Linnanvirta et al., 2019). To present basic income as a legitimate alternative, the advocates of the policy need to address these common objections in their framing.

The concept of value amplification originates from social movement scholars (Snow et al., 1986), and it has been used by Béland (2007, 2009a, 2009b) to analyse framing strategies of political leaders. In Béland's definition, value amplification means, briefly, using some culturally resonant value as a framing tool to seek legitimacy to a policy reform (Béland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). It happens 'by constantly referring to – and celebrating – old values present in a society's cultural repertoire' (Béland, 2007: 93-94). Value amplification may also elevate, broaden or shift the meaning of a certain value or principle (Béland 2009a: 706-707). However, Béland (2007: 94-104) notes that this process is not distinct from the construction of perceived economic interests or rationales, but on the contrary, 'the discourse about values and moral imperatives can merge with the one on the economic rationale for reform, both from a collective and from a personal standpoint'.

Béland (2007) shows that amplification of the value of personal ownership was used as a framing strategy by Margaret Thatcher in her push for privatisation reforms in housing policy, and afterwards, by George W. Bush with an attempt to construct a need to reform the social policy for his neo-liberal ‘ownership society’ blueprint. Béland (2007: 94) argues that private ownership, a value deeply rooted to the old liberal tradition and the cultural repertoires of both societies, was constructed ‘as a sacred value, a source of economic prosperity, and the most legitimate form of security available to workers and their families within capitalist societies’. In a similar vein, the old value of solidarity embedded in the French cultural repertoire was used by the French political leaders to legitimise the path-departing welfare reforms of the late 1980s and 1990s (Béland 2009b: 446).

In Béland’s (2007, 2009a, 2009b) analyses, value amplification technics were used by political leaders to persuade the electorate on the necessity and desirability of potentially unpopular reforms. Basic income is a policy not favoured by political elites, but more often by parties in a rather marginal position in terms of political power (De Wispelaere, 2015). In Finland, the Greens and the Left Alliance – both medium-sized parties – are the most committed supporters of basic income (Perkiö, 2019; Stirton et al., 2017). The Centre Party – one of the leading parties – has nurtured the idea, but often taken forward reforms with obvious contradictions to basic income policy (Perkiö, 2019). The rest of the Finnish parties have – apart from few supportive individual politicians – usually taken a neutral or oppositional position regarding the issue.

The challenge for the advocates of basic income – in case they want to enhance its prospects to be implemented – is not only to ‘sell’ the idea to the constituents, but also to seek enabling coalitions with parties that are more powerful (De Wispelaere and Noguera, 2012). The potential coalition partners need to be convinced that the policy suits their ends and may enhance those values they deem important. In this case, value amplification strategies should be employed ‘bottom up’, by politically weaker supporters of a controversial policy to ‘sell’ the idea as suitable with the dominant political ideologies and values.

Data and methods

The data used for this study comprise political documents in which the concept of basic income appears from year 1987 to 2018: election manifestos and policy programmes of the parties having seats in the national parliament and transcripts of the parliament's plenary session debates. Year 1987 was chosen as the starting point for the analysis because that year both the concept of basic income² and the *Activity*-frame first appear on the data (Perkiö, 2019). Most of the data were obtained by doing keyword searches with 'perustulo' (the Finnish equivalent of basic income) from the database of the Finnish Social Sciences Data Archive (FSD) and the database of the Parliament of Finland. The election manifestos prior to year 2000 were obtained from the Finnish National Archive, the Labour Archive, or the Centre Party's archive.

The data sources

- Parliament's plenary session transcripts: Archive of the Finnish Parliament (<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tietoeduskunnasta/kirjasto/aineistot/eduskunta/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Election manifestos and policy programmes: Finnish Social Sciences Data Archive FSD (<http://www.fsd.uta.fi/pohtiva/>)
- Election manifestos of the Green Party from 1987 to 2000: National Archive of Finland (<https://www.arkisto.fi/en/frontpage>)
- Election manifestos of the Centre Party from 1987 to 2000: Archive of the Centre Party and the Countryside (<http://www.keskusta.fi/Suomeksi/KMA/Etusivu>)
- Election manifestos of the Communist Party SKDL/the Left Alliance from 1987 to 2000: Labor Archive (<http://www.tyark.fi/uk/index.html>)

The history of the basic-income-related debate in the Finnish politics extends to the early 1980s (Andersson, 2000; Koistinen & Perkiö, 2014; Perkiö, 2019), but the early period of the discussion was thematically very different from the later discussion, and there was much variety in the concepts and proposals (Perkiö, 2019). The concept of basic income was first used in 1987, and it became the most frequently used concept from 1994 onwards. The concept of basic income appeared with a framing that discussed a possibility to combine small labour income with social benefits, and thus motivate the welfare recipients to take part in occasional work (the *Activity*-

frame) (Perkiö, 2019). In the aftermaths of the early 1990s recession, that widely changed the political landscape in Finland giving way to the neoliberal ideas (Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013), basic income was strongly framed in terms of activation policy (Perkiö, 2019). Since then, this frame has been dominant in the Finnish basic income debate (see table 1), and the other frames have mainly been used in correspondence with this leading frame (Perkiö, 2019). The dominance of the activation perspective in the basic income debate makes the Finnish debate peculiar compared to many countries, for instance Canada and Spain (Perkiö et al., 2019).

Table 1. Six most frequent frames in the basic-income-related discussion among the Finnish parties from 1980 to 2016 (source: Perkiö, 2019)

Frame	N of documents *	% of documents
Activity	176	47%
Subsistence	157	42%
Systemic reform	153	41%
Rights	89	24%
Transformation of work	69	18%
Work alternatives	69	18%

* Multiple frames can appear in one document

The keyword searches yielded in total 288 documents, but the analysis was restricted to only those documents in which the *Activity*-frame was used to support or oppose basic income. Those documents in which only some other frame (N=97) was used, and the documents that only mentioned the concept but did not include any further discussion on the substance of basic income policy (N=15), or could not be identified as supportive or opposing (N=10), were excluded from the analysis.

After these restrictions, the total number of the analysed documents was 166. Of those documents, 34 were policy programmes or election manifestos and 132 parliament's plenary session transcripts.

The data used for this study covers a major part of the documented discussion on basic income in the national politics in the examined period. However, it leaves aside the public debate that occurred in the media, the views of experts, NGOs, and interest groups, and the internal debate

within the parties. Thus, the data does not give a comprehensive picture of all framing of basic income in Finland, but of the framing done by parties in their electoral and/or parliamentary activities. Parties have been key actors in the Finnish basic income debate (Perkiö & Koistinen, 2014; Perkiö, 2019); civil society actors, for example, have played a less prominent role. Focusing on one frame only may also give a biased picture of the Finnish basic income debate. However, the variety of frames has been previously examined (Perkiö, 2019).

The analysis began by identifying those data segments in which the *Activity*-frame was used and linking them to the ‘speaker’ (politician/party). The identification of the frame was based on the previous work (Perkiö, 2019), in which the *Activity*-frame was recognised from problem definitions concerning the problematic incentive structures of the welfare systems, arguments and narratives concerning basic income’s positive effects on individual activity and work incentives, statements emphasising the value of work and virtues of activity (see Steensland 2008b: 9), and the usage of keywords such as activation, traps or incentives. The identification of relevant data segments was done with Atlas.ti software.

The next step was to distinguish the supportive framing from oppositional framing, and the data segments that were discussing basic income relying on facts from those that referred to activity or work as principles or values. Apart from identifying those different data segments with Atlas.ti software, each document was coded with Excel in terms of whether they contained fact- or value-references, linking the fact- and value-references to the ‘speaker’ (politician/party). If both fact- and value-related reasoning was used in the same document, the document was coded into both categories. At the same time, the value-related reasoning was coded into five subcategories that were formed based on the literature on value amplification (Snow et al., 1986; Béland, 2007, 2009a, 2009b) and by examining the selected data segments with an attempt to identify different ways of making value-references.

The reasoning that referred only to facts concerning the economy, labour market or social policy (such as incentive traps, welfare bureaucracy, or shifts in the economy or labour market) were coded into ‘Fact’ category. The normative reasoning was coded into following five subcategories: (1) *Principle* (reasoning that presents increased activity or work as a principle or political goal to be pursued by the basic income reform); (2) *Reference* (reasoning using attributes such as ‘activating

basic income' to describe the reform); (3) *Moral appeal* (reasoning that appeals to shared values, moral sentiments or principles concerning activity); (4) *Metaphors/narratives* (normative reasoning that uses metaphors or narratives concerning activity); and (5) *Idealisation/elevation of value* (reasoning that celebrates and highlights the values of activity and work). If one document contained more than one different ways of value-related reasoning or if they overlapped in a data segment, it was coded into all relevant subcategories.

Analysis

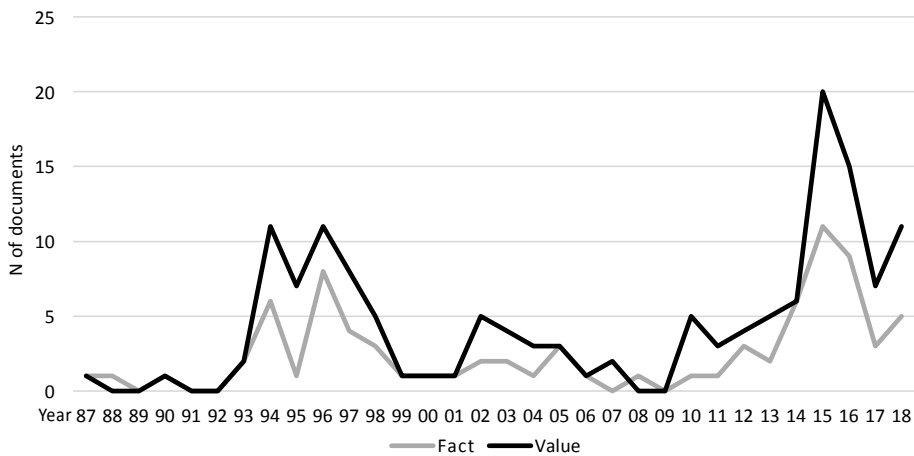
Fact-references and value-references in the pro-basic income reasoning

Distinguishing the value-related statements from the fact-related statements was challenging, as fact- and value-related reasoning often overlapped in the data. Also, selection of certain facts (for instance, labour market incentives) instead of others (for instance, unequal income distribution) is, as such, a normative choice. However, those statements that did not contain normative evaluation on 'how things ought to be' were treated as fact-statements and those that expressed goals or principles to be pursued by the basic income reform were treated as value-statements.

Categorised in this way, the amount of value-references greatly outnumbers the amount of fact-references in the data. Fact-references were used in 81 analysed documents in total, whereas value-references were used in 143 documents (note that the same documents may contain both fact- and value-references).

Figure 1. shows the trajectory of fact-related and value-related reasoning for basic income using the *Activity*-frame over the studied period. Figure 1. shows that during the upturns of the debate, the amount of value-related reasoning is noticeably higher than the amount of fact-related reasoning. This is especially true for the years preceding the experiment by the government of PM Juha Sipilä. During the experiment (2017-2018) the *Activity*-frame is less often used in support of basic income than in the preceding years, but the value-references still outnumber the fact-references.

Figure 1. The trajectory of the fact-references and value-references over time



The usage of the *Activity*-frame generally follows the trends in the basic income discussion in the Finnish parliamentary politics (see Perkiö, 2019). Those trends relate to the shifts in the economic cycle: basic income gained much attention in the aftermaths of the early 1990s recession, and some attention related to the ‘dot-com crash’ of the early 2000s and the increased discussion on non-standard forms of employment during the 2000s. The last trend upwards begins in the aftermaths of the post-2008 financial crisis, that resulted in an increase in unemployment, especially in the long-term unemployment. However, in the late 1980s the *Activity*-frame was not much used even though the general amount of the basic income-related discussion was relatively high during that period. This is because the *Activity*-frame was not yet dominant in the Finnish discussion, and there were other concepts such as citizen’s wage or guaranteed minimum income that were used more often than basic income (see Perkiö, 2019).

Figure 2. Fact- and value-related reasoning using *Activity*-frame sorted by party

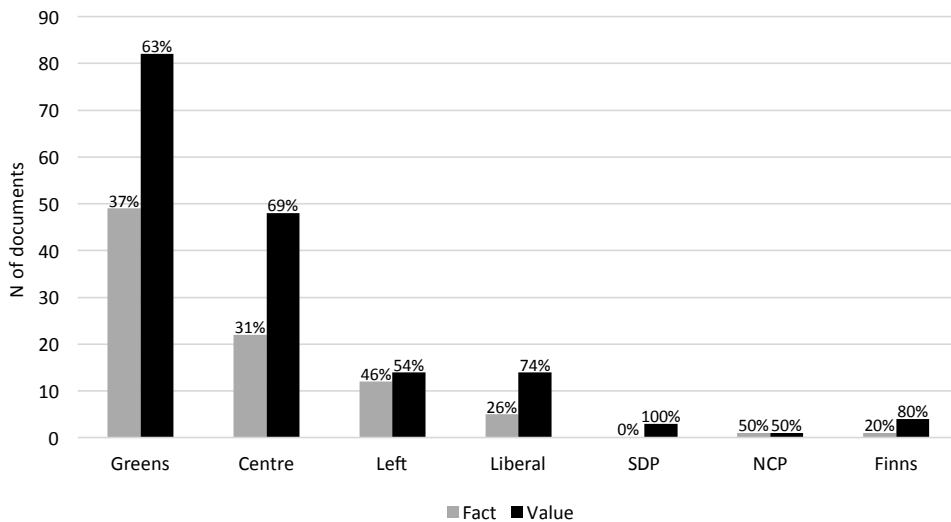


Figure 2. shows that both fact- and value-related reasoning using the *Activity*-frame was most often done by (MPs of) the Green Party, followed by the Centre Party. Both parties have advocated basic income, but the commitment of the Greens has been higher than that of the Centre Party (Stirton et al., 2017). Apart from the Greens, the Left Alliance has been identified as a committed advocate of basic income (see Perkiö, 2019; Stirton et al., 2017). However, Figure 2. shows that the Left Alliance used the *Activity*-frame less often than the Greens and the Centre Party. This is mainly because the party favoured other frames in its reasoning for basic income, such as those related to everyday subsistence of low income people. Two small liberal parties (both in the category ‘Liberal’), Liberal People’s Party (one seat in the national parliament 1991-1995) and Young Finns (two seats in the national parliament 1995-1999) were both active users of the *Activity*-frame for fact-and value-related reasoning in the 1990s, but had no seats in the parliament after year 1999. Figure 2. also shows that rest of the parties used this kind of reasoning rarely³. This does not fully correspond to the extent of participation in the basic income debate by (representatives of) those parties (for this, see Perkiö, 2019), as the figure covers only the expressions of support using the *Activity*-frame. However, apart from the Greens, the Centre Party, the Left Alliance and the Liberal parties, the Finnish parties have held a neutral or critical stance towards basic income (Stirton et al., 2017).

Figure 3. Parties using the *Activity*-frame (both fact- and value-references included) to support basic income from 1987 to 2018 and the unemployment rate

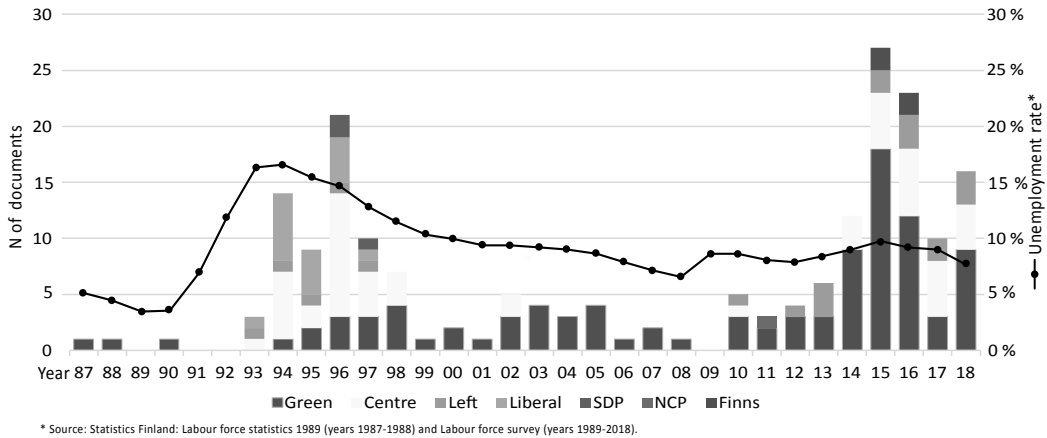


Figure 3. shows that the Green Party was the first using the *Activity*-frame in the late 1980s. The Green Party MP Osmo Soininvaara introduced this frame in the Finnish basic income debate, and he used it repeatedly in the late 1980s and during the 1990s. During the 2000s, when most parties were silent about basic income (see Perkiö, 2019), the Greens were alone arguing for it using the *Activity*-frame.

Figure 3. also shows that the *Activity*-frame was adopted by other parties during the periods of more active discussion on basic income. Those upturns in discussion relate to an increase in the unemployment rate. In the period of active discussion of the 1990s, the Centre Party and the Liberals (the Liberal Party/Young Finns) were using this frame more often than the Greens. In turn, when the debate peaked again from 2014 to 2016, a variety of parties or their MP’s used the *Activity*-frame for supportive statements on basic income, but the Greens were still the most active users of the frame. The usage of the *Activity*-frame had no relation to whether a given party was in government or opposition.

Oppositional framing

Frames are dialogical in nature and they anticipate what the opponents are likely to say (Béland, 2005: 11-12). The amount of oppositional framing in the basic income discussion among the Finnish parties was relatively low. Oppositional framing occurred in total in 28 (17%) of the analysed documents (note that only the documents in which the *Activity*-frame was used to support or oppose basic income are included this number). In most of these documents, also supportive framing occurred. Of those documents, 24 contained references to basic income's likely negative effects on work incentives or work motivation, or moral wrongness of giving income without any activity as a condition. Those can be considered as examples of using the *Activity*-frame in the oppositional framing of basic income.

Of those 24 documents in which the *Activity*-frame was used to oppose basic income, eight contained only fact-related reasoning, ten contained only value-related reasoning and five contained both. Most oppositional framing using the *Activity*-frame was done by MP's of the National Coalition (NCP), the Social Democrats (SDP), and the Christian Democrats. Almost a third of the documents in which oppositional framing occurred were from year 2016 (the year preceding the government's experiment), and a large part of it was done by the Christian Democrats, a small opposition party. This was done with the aim of promoting the 'active social security' model of the party and dismissing the basic income models as inefficient in eliminating incentive traps. Also, individual MP's of all three government parties did oppositional framing using the *Activity*-frame before and during the experiment.

The reasoning against basic income from the fact-perspective usually revolved around the alleged low capacity of basic income models to solve the incentive problems and doubts that the unconditional benefit may turn out not to be activating. The value-related reasoning, instead, opposed the idea of an unconditional benefit on the normative grounds: it was regarded as opposed to work ethic and demoralising to society as the money would be paid without any requirements of a contribution.

However, the small amount of oppositional framing means that based on this data, no solid conclusions on the oppositional framing of basic income in the Finnish context can be made. The reason for the small amount of opposition might be that by most parties, basic income was considered such a marginal issue that it deserves no attention. The finding that a large part of the oppositional framing occurred the year preceding the government's experiment – that is, basic income was really about to get onto agenda – supports this claim. Another explanation might be that most of the Finnish MP's did not have a clear stance either for or against the policy.

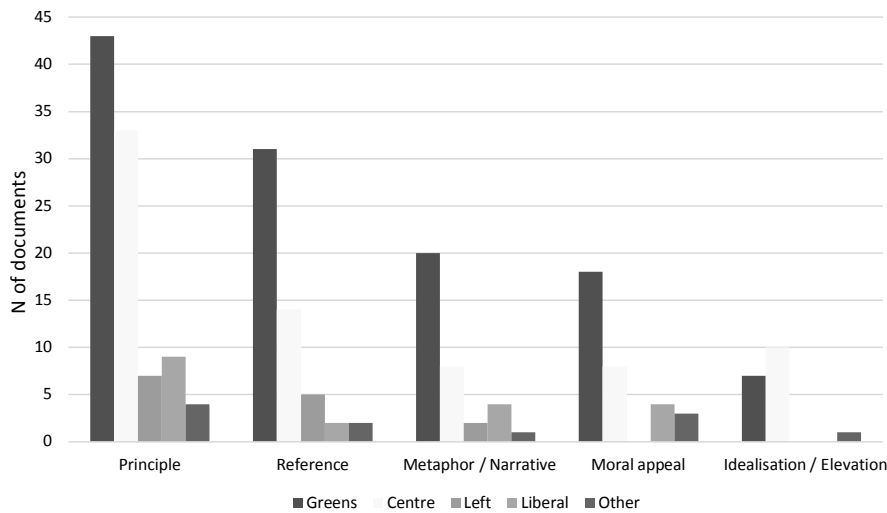
Value amplification as a framing strategy in the reasoning for basic income

Figure 4. shows the five different ways of doing value-related reasoning for basic income identified by this study, and the parties using such reasoning. It shows that the reasoning coded as 'principle' was the most often used technique of arguing for basic income by making normative statements regarding increased activity among welfare recipients. This category refers to the kind of reasoning that presented increased activity or work as a principle or political goal to be pursued by the basic income reform. This kind of reasoning appeared altogether in 91 documents, that is 64% of all documents that contained value-related statements (note that one document may contain more than one type of value-related reasoning).

Normative reasoning coded as 'reference' was used in 51 (36%), 'moral appeal' in 32 (22%), 'metaphor or narrative' in 34 (24%) and 'idealisation/elevation of the value' in 18 (13%) of all 143 documents that contained value-related statements. 'Reference' refers to the reasoning that used attributes such as 'activating' to describe the basic income reform (e.g. 'we need to introduce an activating basic income'); 'metaphor/narrative' refers to the reasoning that used metaphors (such as 'trampoline') or narratives (most often stories about benefit recipients whose activity was constrained by the traps of the current benefit system) to emphasise the activating effects of basic income; 'moral appeal' refers to the reasoning that appealed to common sense of justice or shared values (such as describing the distorted benefit structures that unjustly penalise activity); and finally, 'idealisation/elevation' refers to the statements that actively celebrated the importance of work and activity.

Figure 4. shows that all other ways of doing value-related reasoning were most often done by the Greens, but the idealisation/elevation of the value of activity/work was most often done by the Centre Party.

Figure 4. Different ways of making normative statements regarding basic income using the *Activity*-frame, sorted by party



The *Activity*-frame was first introduced in the Finnish basic income debate by the Green Party MP Osmo Soininvaara in the late 1980s. This framing shifted the former rationale of the basic income idea: whereby ideas related to basic income were earlier discussed as to reduce working hours or provide alternatives for paid work, with the new rationale the idea was made compatible with work. With this logic, even less productive or occasional work with a low salary would always pay if one had a basic income as a non-withdrawable basis of their subsistence. This framing made basic income compatible with the neoliberal activation paradigm, that was gaining root in the Finnish politics in the late 1980s, and made a breakthrough after the early 1990s recession. Soininvaara persistently promoted basic income with the *Activity*-frame during the late 1980s and 1990s: ‘Basic income strongly encourages, even compels to work’ (28/11/1995).

In the aftermaths of the early 1990s recession, basic income gained attention among the Finnish parties, and it was promoted with the activation logic by the Centre Party, the Greens and the

Liberals. The post-recession mass unemployment and increasing budget deficits urged a shift in the welfare state thinking, and opened a policy window for activation reforms to enter the Finnish politics (see Kananen, 2012; Kantola and Kananen, 2013). Basic income was discussed as a necessary reform to eliminate all incentive traps in social security, save the welfare expenses and activate the unemployed workforce, while still providing them financial security. In these proposals, a relatively modest basic income was often connected with labour market reforms to increase flexibility. In the context of mass unemployment, advocates of basic income celebrated the values of activity and work, and underlined the importance of getting the unemployed population back to work: ‘Diligence should be raised as a societal value, and the social security system must support this aim, raising diligence and entrepreneurship as values to be pursued in society’ (Centre Party MP, 29/9/1994).

However, most of the value-related reasoning concerning basic income did not specifically highlight the value of activity, but rather presented increased activity as a self-evident goal to be pursued by the reform: ‘we shall give everyone a possibility to be active’ (Green Party MP, 3/9/1998). Increased activity was presented as a personal gain for individuals themselves, and as that for the welfare state and the national economy. Though the reasoning for basic income was based on facts concerning the bureaucracy traps of the benefits system, the discussion often had a moral undertone, and it appealed to the ‘common sense’ of morality and justice concerning work and activity. The distorted incentive structures of the benefit system that penalised activity and rewarded inaction were described as unfair and morally alarming. By reforming the distorted benefit structures that ‘passivate and penalise individual endeavour’ (Liberal Party Programme, 1994), the benefit system would change ‘from passive to active’ (Green Party MP, 8/9/1998) and ‘reward activity’ (Centre Party Programme, 1994). This framing was shared by the proponents of basic income of all parties, yet it was less often used by the Left Alliance.

During the 2000s, when the employment recovered, most parties were silent about basic income. Throughout this period, the Greens maintained the basic income discourse with the activation logic: ‘our proposal was to promote employment with the activating basic income reform’ (Green Party MP, 5/11/2003). From 2010 onwards, the *Activity*-framing was increasingly picked up by other parties, but the Green Party was still the one that most often talked about basic income using this frame.

One aspect of the reasoning for basic income concerned the recipients, the target population of the reform. Framing of target populations is important for the legitimacy of benefits: giving benefits to groups that are positively portrayed by framing is considered more acceptable than giving benefits to groups that are constructed negatively in the public discourse (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Most of the framing concerning target populations appeared through narratives describing individuals actively trying to improve their own situation, being trapped by the benefit system: ‘...if you try to start some kind of enterprise, even a small-scale enterprise, knit three pairs of woollen socks per year, this already risks your unemployment security’ (Left Alliance MP, 6/9/2016). By the narratives, those benefitting from basic income were portrayed as responsible and active citizens, willing to conform to the social norms of work and activity (instead of being passive recipients of benefits and immoral free-riders), but being victims of unjust circumstances (benefit traps): ‘one can, for instance, be a single parent in fear of losing the housing benefit and so on, and because of that cannot take up a job’ (Green Party MP, 9/10/2015). With the help of basic income, it was argued, they could lift themselves out of poverty by their own active effort and become – at least to some extent – independent and active contributors to society, ‘deserving’ poor. Basic income was also described with metaphors such as a ‘trampoline’ or ‘springboard’, that frees people from the ‘spidernet’, or ‘jungle’ of the existing benefit system and helps them to ‘jump to independent survival’ (Green Party Programme, 2002) and ‘take control of their life’ (Centre Party MP, 5/11/1996).

However, though basic income was discussed with the rationale of activation policy, it is important to note that the activation perspective in the basic income discourse was different from that of the conventional activation policies. Firstly, though the importance of employment was emphasised, the basic income discourse encompassed activity as broader than mere labour market activity; for instance, third sector activities were sometimes mentioned as alternative forms of activity. Secondly, the basic income discourse underlined the importance of personal motivation as the driver of activity, and emphasised the autonomy of individuals in making their own life decisions, as opposed to compulsive activation (see Perkiö, 2019).

In the discussion preceding the basic income experiment conducted by PM Juha Sipilä’s centre-right coalition government in 2017-2018, most parties adopted the *Activity*-framing as the key

rationale of basic income. The need for a basic income experiment was reasoned with the activation logic: 'There seems to be a consensus here in the hall that we should push up the employment. One key way to increase the employment rate is to simplify the social security system. So, now the government will implement the long-awaited basic income experiment, that I have also been waiting for a long time myself.' (Centre Party MP, 21/9/2016). The experiment was also opposed from the activation perspective (see the section on oppositional framing). For the government parties – the Centre Party, the NCP (conservative) and the Finns/Blue Reform (populist)⁴– the potential for activation was the main motivation to test basic income, and potential activation effects also a condition for it to be eligible for further consideration: 'So, if with this we can bring down the unemployment, incentivise the unemployed to work, demolish incentive traps, of course this is welcomed.' (Finns MP, 25/10/2016). However, the preliminary results of the first year of the basic income experiment showed no effect on employment. Instead, the research found positive effects on experienced health and well-being.⁵

Conclusions

It has been argued that framing that appeals to moral values or sentiments is often more efficient than framing that relies only on factual arguments (Béland 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Chong and Druckman, 2007; Kangas et al., 2014). The concept of value amplification has been used to refer to strategical use of a popular (but sometimes dormant) value as a framing tool to strengthen the message (Béland, 2007; 2009a, 2009b; Snow et al., 1986). According to Béland (2007; 2009a, 2009b), value amplification can happen both by constant references to a shared value, as well as by 'idealisation and elevation' of the value. The value amplification process is often aligned with the construction of perceived economic interests or rationales (Béland, 2007: 94-104).

This article has analysed a framing that emphasised the activation potential of basic income (the *Activity*-frame). The analysis shows that the value-related reasoning greatly outnumbered the fact-related reasoning for basic income using the *Activity*-frame by the Finnish politicians and parties. The framing of basic income done by its supporters emphasised the values of work and activity by the selection of vocabulary, by emphasising the goals of higher employment and activity, by appealing to moral sentiments, by using metaphors and narratives highlighting the value of activity

and the activation capacity of basic income, and, in some occasions, by idealising and elevating the values of work and activity. Activity appeared as a sacred value and virtue not questioned by anyone participating the basic income debate. However, this value was more often implicit and taken-for-granted than actively idealised or elevated. Increased activity among welfare recipients appeared as a self-evident goal for a social policy reform, and basic income was portrayed as the best tool to attain this goal.

Though the value-related reasoning was more frequently done, it was often intertwined with the fact-related framing. The *Activity*-frame aligned the basic income proposal with the mainstream economic rationales – where ‘activation’ was a key idea guiding all social policy reforms from the mid-1990s onwards (Kangas and Saloniemi, 2013; Saarinen et al., 2014: 613) – and with the shared values and moral sentiments concerning work, activity and reciprocity. At the same time, this frame preventively tackled the most common oppositional argument that concerned the alleged negative effects of basic income on work incentives or work motivation.

The proposal of unconditional cash seems to run counter to some key normative assumptions in society. Some key objections to basic income concern the rightfulness of giving social benefits to those healthy and capable individuals who are (willingly) not taking part in in any kind of productive labour (Standing, 2017: 117-120; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017: 99-103). However, the way of portraying the ‘target population’ influences the legitimacy of the policy (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). If portrayed as victims of unjust circumstances beyond their control, the recipients are treated as more deserving (Kangas, 2003). The *Activity*-frame portrayed those potentially benefitting from basic income not as idle claimants of social benefits but as active citizens, willing to work but repressed by the traps of the benefit system – a factor beyond their own control. Thus, apart from offering a solution to the ‘pressing problems of the time’ (Kingdon, 2010) – along with the existing welfare paradigm – the *Activity*-frame was likely to increase the normative legitimacy of basic income by presenting the policy as a tool towards desirable goals (increased activity) and by portraying the recipients as active, ‘deserving poor’.

The data used for this study does not allow making causal explanations on the role of the *Activity*-frame in putting basic income onto agenda in Finland. However, possibly one reason for the relative popularity of basic income in the Finnish politics, that eventually materialised as an experiment,

was the framing that made it compatible with the dominant political agendas and values. The fact that the experiment itself was strongly framed in terms of activation policy supports this claim⁶. However, the *Activity*-frame also narrowed the perspective of the basic income debate and made the idea appear as a rather technical solution to incentive problems. After the preliminary findings of the experiment, that did not give any support to the activation argument, it is likely to be impossible to take basic income forward with this framing.

The analysis done for this article shows that the Green Party was a key player in introducing the *Activity*-frame in the late 1980s. Without a framing that made the idea compatible with the neoliberal agendas that gained strength in the 1990s, the interest to basic income would possibly have dried up. However, in the 1990s economic crisis politicians were open for exceptional solutions (see Kingdon, 2010), and the framing that emphasised basic income's capacity to promote employment and activity resonated widely. Also, the Greens persistently maintained the basic income discourse with the activation perspective during the downturn of the general basic income debate of the 2000s. This possibly paved the way for a new wave of attention from 2010 onwards, when the economy stagnated and the unemployment was on rise. This new wave of attention ended up with the government's experiment – with the Greens, paradoxically, being in opposition.

Béland (2007; 2009a, 2009b) shows how value amplification techniques were used by political elites to justify potentially unpopular reforms to the citizens. In the case of the Finnish basic income discussion, value amplification was most often done by a politically weaker party (the Greens) to push a controversial policy proposal up onto the political agenda. The analysis shows that the idea with this framing was picked up by other parties at times when there was increased interest to new social policy solutions, mainly due to increasing unemployment rates. Thus, the findings of this analysis suggest that a party with not much political power can push a radical policy solution onto agenda by framing it in a way that resonates with the mainstream political rationales and moral sentiments. Yet, in the case of basic income in Finland, it seems that this framing was not enough to keep the idea on the agenda, especially after the preliminary findings of the experiment showed no increase in labour market activity.

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¹ Experiments in Finland, the Netherlands municipalities, Barcelona, Ontario (cancelled), Kenya, and the past experiments in Namibia and India.

² In the 1980s, concepts such as citizen's wage or guaranteed minimum income were used to refer basic-income-type policies (Perkiö, 2019).

³ The Christian Democratic Party and the Swedish People's Party are missing from the figure, because they did not use the *Activity*-frame for pro-basic income reasoning during the examined period.

⁴ The Finns party split in June 2017.

⁵ <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/basic-income-experiment>

⁶ According to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, the principal aim of the experiment was ‘to explore whether basic income could be used to reform the social security system so as to reduce incentive traps relating to working’ (<http://stm.fi/en/basic-income-pilot-study>).

