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THE DANISH UBI FROM 1978 AND ITS RELATION TO PRESENT UBIs

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I shall use my allotted 20 minutes to describe the **special features of the Danish UBI** from 1978 and to **compare the Danish UBI with the UBIs** in focus today.

My background for this paper is that I am the inventor of the Danish UBI. It is described in a book with three co-authors published in Danish in 1978 and in English in 1981 under the title “REVOLT FROM THE CENTER”.

A special feature of the Danish UBI is its strong coupling to a reformed labor market and a reformed (utopian) society. In the book we named the reformed society “a humane sustainable society”. This coupling distinguishes the Danish UBI from other somewhat related UBI versions before 1978.

Among the important **features of our visionary society** were that forced unemployment was eliminated by sharing of available work. In general this would mean less working hours per week. The details may be studied in our book.

Why a Danish UBI in a reformed society?

There will always be creative and imaginative people that do not fit into the ordinary labor market, e.g. among artists, authors, idealistic ngo’s etc. A wealthy nation like Denmark can afford special and **GENEROUS** care for these groups in the population.

The original Danish UBI was not regarded as a goal in itself but as a **supplementary extra prize** in a radically reformed labor market.

Heated Danish discussion

The proposal of a Danish UBI gave rise to heated discussions in the Danish media for more than four years with arguments pro et contra that this audience know very well. However, by the end of the 1980's **the neo-liberalistic tsunami** washed away most of the interest in UBIs in the large Danish media. But the **UBI concept was kept alive** by efficient national and international UBI-organizations with meetings and conferences like the present one.

I want to stress that the proposed **Danish UBI does not fit into in the present capitalistic system**. Unfortunately, the capitalistic system is allowed to continue its undermining of democracy, creating absurd economic and social inequalities and delaying the mitigation of global warming. On that background I shall finish with some words about UBI versions in a capitalistic world.

UBIs in a capitalistic world

It is expected that the technological development based on **advanced computers and robots** will radically reduce the need for traditional human labor. This trend may already be increasing the number of people belonging to the so-called **precariat** and has brought in **new industrial and commercial actors** on the UBI scene. They see a UBI as a **convenient and cheap possibility for passivating a rebellious precariat**. If these economic interest groups succeed to edit the conditions for a future precariat-UBI, this **UBI will be neither generous nor humanistic**. I fear that this development may be a **dangerous trap for the original UBI-idea**.

Conclusions:

- 1) A **generous UBI version** like the original Danish UBI **does not fit politically** into a society dominated by the **present capitalistic system**. The Danish UBI is closely coupled to radical societal reforms that break the influence of capitalism.

- 2) The fast development of **advanced robots and computers** is expected to create increasing problems for the precariat. This may be hidden “under the carpet” by introducing a cheap and non-generous precariat-UBI.
- 3) **Realistic and meaningful pilot experiments** with different versions of UBIs will be complicated and expensive in any case. This includes meaningful experiments based on Precariat-UBIs.
- 4) The **small-scale UBI pilot projects** in preparation will hopefully clarify at least some concrete aspects of the UBI concept. But they will not be able to disclose the important overall political problems connected to present UBI concepts focusing on the precariat problem..
- 5) **UBI-Denmark** is publishing important information material on the perspectives of the UBI concept. I hope that UBI-Denmark will include in their analyses the controversial elements illustrated in my talk.