

**Abstract**

Last March the UK government produced a list of 'essential occupations' with special privileges during pandemic-related restrictions. Yet many on this list are low paid. The gap between how the market values things and jobs and how they are valued normatively was dramatically revealed. This research will develop a clear alternative concept of value based on universal human needs. It will then apply this theory to distinguish essential from inessential labour, necessities from luxuries, and to identify a riches line. To this end collective decision-making processes such as Citizen Assemblies bringing together expert and lay knowledge are scrutinised.

**Places where you will carry out the proposed research**

This research will be undertaken at the LSE, where I share a room, and at home in London. It is entirely desk research.

**Details of your established field of research**

My research career can be divided into four parts, each culminating in a major book: 1. *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* (1979), 2. *A Theory of Human Need* (co-authored with Len Doyal, 1991), 3. *Wellbeing in Developing Countries* (2007), 4. *Heat, Greed and Human Need: Climate Change, Capitalism and Human Need* (2017). My research has always been interdisciplinary, embracing social policy, political economy, political philosophy and institutional sociology. I see this research project as building on these stages, by trying to rethink a theory of value capable of addressing sustainable wellbeing in an era of ecological crisis.

**Plans for publishing the results of this research**

The research would be published as a short book; Edward Elgar Ltd have already expressed great interest. In addition there would be a) academic articles, b) addresses to workshops and conferences, c) the production of blogs which I have now started to do, and d) populating my website ([iangough.com](http://iangough.com)) with this and other relevant material.

**Research and Publications****Detailed statement of proposed research**

Last March the UK government produced a list of 'essential occupations' with special privileges during pandemic-related restrictions. Yet many on this list are low paid. The gap between how the market values things and jobs and how they are valued normatively was dramatically revealed. Prices cannot do the work of morals or social valuations.

This research will develop a theory of value that counterposes human needs to wants or preferences. It has both conceptual and empirical components. Conceptually I intend to forge a new synthetic theory of value. Empirically I will explore, together with a research assistant under my supervision, a wide interdisciplinary set of findings detailed below

**Conceptual research**

The aim is to integrate my conceptual thinking so far and to engage with cognate non-subjectivist approaches such as capabilities (Holland 2006), sufficientarianism (Frankfurt 1987) and limitarianism (Robeyns 2019; cf Gough 2014, 2015, 2017b). My thinking so far comprises:

1. In *A Theory of Human Need* (1991) I contend that basic human needs are universal and objective. In order to avoid serious harm and to enable effective *social participation*, all people require certain levels of *health* and *autonomy*. Drawing on evolving scientific understanding, we can identify a set of universal intermediate needs such as food, shelter, affiliation and security.

2. This needs-based approach resurrects but reinterprets the classical distinction between *productive and unproductive labour*. Rather than price determining value, we can distinguish activities (paid and unpaid) that produce use-values that satisfy collectively agreed human needs.

3. The concept of *sufficiency* or ‘*enough*’ has no meaning in orthodox economic theory, but is central to this approach. By identifying objective ways to achieve optimum satisfaction of basic needs, it provides a measure of *necessities*. If generalised globally and across generations, we can envisage what ‘sufficiency’ means today and for future generations (Gough 2017a,b).

4. The same approach makes it possible to conceive and identify a ‘riches line’ where excessive consumption undermines universal needs satisfaction. Ecological arguments are paramount here: luxury consumption by the rich empirically threatens planetary boundaries (Gough 2020b).

### **Proposed empirical research**

The empirical research would be focused on (a) three domains: labour, consumption, and income and wealth, and (b) decision-making.

**Three domains.** I suggested we distinguish sufficient lower limits (*floors*) and sustainable upper limits (*ceilings*) within the domains of labour, consumption and income (Gough 2020b). This framework requires filling out with findings and evidence:

<b>Labour</b>	<b>Consumption</b>	<b>Income and wealth</b>
Inessential labour	Luxuries	Riches
<b>CEILING</b>		
Conventional labour	Flourishing, plenitude	Prosperity
<b>FLOOR requires:</b>		
Essential labour	Necessities	Minimum incomes

**Labour.** I will review and compare emerging lists of essential labour, including unpaid labour, across countries. To determine inessential labour will require investigating a wide variety of ideas, including ‘destructive labour’, labour contributing negative net social value, ‘guard labour’, ‘bullshit labour’ and labour producing non-generalisable luxuries (Gough 2020b, 2019a). Once ‘essential’ and ‘inessential’ labour is defined, what remains occupies the middle space as ‘conventional’ labour.

**Consumption.** Alongside established studies of deprivation and necessities, potential identifiers of ‘luxuries’ and harmful consumption include income elasticities, focus group discussions, discussion networks such as SCORAI’s ‘Sustainable Consumption Corridors’, Citizens’ Assemblies and estimates of luxury greenhouse gas emissions (O’Neill et al 2018).

**Income and wealth.** We will explore methods to operationalise Robeyns’ riches line including technical approaches (Medeiros 2006) and focus groups (Davis et al 2020).

**Dialogue and decision-making.** In each domain it is necessary to identify context-specific *need satisfiers*. This requires a distinct methodology that combines both expert and lay knowledge in fora that are as open, democratic and disinterested as possible. Examples include Citizens’ Assemblies in Ireland, France and the UK. We will review these emerging methods of achieving consensus and assess their role in developing alternative systems of value.

### **Research methods.**

The research assistant will conduct inter-disciplinary desk research to:

- Discover, collate and synthesise the wide range of sources indicated above.
- Track emerging patterns of citizen dialogue across the world to distil understanding of routes to consensus on these issues.

### **Outputs.**

I will then bring together the wider conceptual engagement with related theories and the empirical findings to produce, firstly, a clear statement of a new theory of use value based on human needs and, secondly, guidance for policymakers and citizen movements to define and measure ‘sufficiency’ in a carbon constrained world.

### **Highly selective references to other authors**

- Frankfurt, H. 1987. ‘Equality as a moral ideal’. *Ethics*, 98, 21–43.  
 Holland, B. 2008. ‘Ecology and the Limits of Justice: Establishing capability ceilings’. *J.Hum.Dev.* 9(3): 401-425.  
 Kramm, M. and Robeyns, I. 2018. ‘Limits to wealth in the history of Western philosophy’. *Euro.J.Phil.* 1-16.  
 Medeiros, M. 2006. ‘The rich and the poor’. *Soc.Inds.Res.*, 78, 1–18.  
 O’Neill, D. et al 2018. ‘A Good Life for All within Planetary Boundaries.’ *Nature Sustainability* 1(2): 88–95.  
 Robeyns, I. 2019. ‘What, if Anything, is Wrong with Extreme Wealth?’ *J.Human.Dev.&Capabilities* 20 (3): 251–266

## Major publications

\*\* relevant to this application

\*\*Gough, Ian (2020c) *The case for Universal Basic Services*. LSE Public Policy Review, 1 (2). ISSN 2633-4046

\*\*Gough, Ian (2020b) *Defining floors and ceilings: the contribution of human needs theory*. Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 16 (1). 208 - 219. ISSN 1548-7733

\*\*Gough, Ian (2020a) *In times of climate breakdown, how do we value what matters?* openDemocracy, 28 April 2020.

\*\*Davis, Abigail, Hecht, Katharina, Burchardt, Tania, Gough, Ian, Hirsch, Donald, Rowlingson, Karen and Summers, Kate (2020) *Living on different incomes in London: can public consensus identify a 'riches line'?* . Trust for London, London.

\*\*Gough, Ian (2019a) *Necessities and luxuries: how to combine redistribution with sustainable consumption*. In: Meadowcroft, James, Banister, David, Holden, Erling, Langhelle, Oluf, Linnerud, Kristin and Gilpin, Geoffrey, (eds.) *What Next for Sustainable Development?: Our Common Future at Thirty*. 2019. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 138-158. ISBN 9781788975193

\*\*Gough, Ian (2019b) *Universal Basic Services: a theoretical and moral framework*. Political Quarterly, 90 (3). 534 - 542. ISSN 0032-3179

\*\*Gough, Ian (2017b) *Heat, greed and human need: climate change, capitalism and sustainable wellbeing*. Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK. ISBN 9781785365102

\*\*Gough, Ian (2017a) *Recomposing consumption: defining necessities for sustainable and equitable well-being*. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences, 375 (2095). p. 20160379. ISSN 1364-503X

\*\*Gough, Ian (2015) *Climate change and sustainable welfare: the centrality of human needs*. Cambridge Journal of Economics, 39 (5). pp. 1191-1214. ISSN 0309-166X

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Gough, Ian (2013) *Carbon mitigation policies, distributional dilemmas and social policies*. Journal of Social Policy, 42 (2). pp. 191-213. ISSN 0047-2794

Gough, Ian and Meadowcroft, James (2011) *Decarbonizing the welfare state*. In: Dryzek, John S., Norgaard, Richard B. and Schlosberg, David, (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, pp. 490-503. ISBN 9780199566600

Gough, Ian (2011) *Climate change and public policy futures*. New paradigms in public policy. The British Academy, London, UK. ISBN 9780856725937

Gough, Ian, Abdallah, Saamah, Johnson, Viki, Ryan-Collins, Josh and Smith, Cindy (2011) *The distribution of total embodied greenhouse gas emissions by households in the UK, and some implications for social policy*. CASEpapers (CASE/152). Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

Gough, Ian and Therborn, Göran (2010) *The global future of welfare states*. In: Castles, Francis G., Leibfried, Stephan, Lewis, Jane and Obinger, Herbert, (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*. Oxford University Press, New York, USA, pp. 703-876. ISBN 9780199579396

Gough, Ian, Meadowcroft, James, Dryzek, John, Gerhards, Jurgen, Lengfeld, Holger, Markandya, Anil and Ortiz, Ramon (2008) *JESP symposium: climate change and social policy*. Journal of European Social Policy, 18 (4). pp. 325-344. ISSN 0958-9287

Gough, Ian and McGregor, J. Allister, (eds.) (2007) *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: From Theory to Research*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 3-44. ISBN 9780521857512

Wood, Geof and Gough, Ian (2006) *A comparative welfare regime approach to global social policy*. World Development, 34 (10). pp. 1696-1712. ISSN 0305-750X

Gough, Ian, with G.Wood, A.Barrientos, P.Bevan, P.Davis and G.Room (2004). Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America: Social Policy in Development Contexts (2004), Cambridge University Press.

\*\*Gough, Ian (2004) *Human well-being and social structures: relating the universal and the local*. Global Social Policy, 4 (3). pp. 289-311. ISSN 1468-0181

Gough, Ian (2003) *Lists and thresholds: comparing our theory of human need with Nussbaum's capabilities approach*. WeD Working Paper 01. The Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Group, University of Bath, Bath, UK. (Submitted)

Gough, Ian (2000) *Global capital, human needs and social policies: selected essays 1994-99*. (Spanish translation available). Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA. ISBN 9780333802397

Gough, Ian (1999) *Capitalism and social cohesion: essays on exclusion and integration*. Macmillan, New York, USA. ISBN 9780312223113

Gough, Ian (1994) *Economic institutions and the satisfaction of human needs*. Journal of Economic Issues, 28 (1). pp. 25-66. ISSN 0021-3624

\*\*Doyal, Len and Gough, Ian (1991) *A theory of human need*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA. ISBN 9780333383254. Winner of the Deutscher prize 1992 and the Myrdal prize 1992. Translated into Spanish, Italian and Chinese.

Gough, Ian, with A.Pfaller and G.Therborn (1991). Can the Welfare State Compete?: A Comparative Study of Five Advanced Capitalist Countries (London: Macmillan). Translated into Spanish.

\*\*Gough, Ian (1979) *The political economy of the welfare state*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, UK. ISBN 9780333215999. Reprinted 14 times. Also available in Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Korean, Chinese and Japanese.

Gough, Ian (1975) *State expenditure in advanced capitalism*. New Left Review, 1/92. pp. 53-92. ISSN 0028-6060

\*\*Gough, Ian (1972) *Marx's theory of productive and unproductive labour*. New Left Review, 1/76. pp. 47-72. ISSN 0028-6060

### Other matters you wish to bring to the attention of the Committee

I was awarded an ESRC Small Grant for 2009-11 to research 'Climate change and social policy: rethinking the political economy of the welfare state'. The final report and impact statement were both very highly commended.

### Duration and Timing

<b>Duration of Fellowship (3-24 months)</b>	18
<b>Proposed start date</b>	September 2021
<b>Percentage of time to be spent on the project during the fellowship</b>	50

### Details of other research projects and commitments during the Fellowship

Requests to speak to workshops and conferences always keep me busy, but I have no other substantive research commitments during this period.

### Referees

<b>Referee 1</b>	Professor John O'Neill
<b>Department : Institution</b>	School of Social Sciences : University of Manchester