

Economic Transformations in Capitalist Society

EXPANDING THE COMMONS

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Activity

Think of an item of clothing that you wear regularly.

- What is the meaning of the clothing item...to you? In general?
- What is the value of the item?
- What do you feel when you wear it?
- What did you feel when you bought it?
- Does it help define your fashion trend?
 - What style of fashion would you ascribe to yourself?

Discussion Questions

Where was the clothing item made?

Who produced the clothing item?

What labour conditions went into making the clothing item?

What materials make up the clothing item?

How is the item of clothing valued compared to other items of clothing? Compared to other commodities in general?

What is the price of the item (now and when it was bought)?

Does the meaning you reported in the last discussion represent the labour conditions, materials used or use value of the item?

What do you use the item for? How does that relate to its value?

Value of a Commodity



What is a Commodity?

Commodity:

An item of value produced for market exchange.

Cambridge English Dictionary

- A substance or product that can be traded, bought, or sold.
- A valuable quality

Oxford Dictionary

- A raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold, such as copper or coffee.
- A useful or valuable thing.

Myriam-Webster Dictionary

- An economic good: such as
 - A product of agriculture
 - An article of commerce especially when delivered for shipment
 - A mass-produced unspecialized product commodity chemicals
- Something useful or valued
- Convenience, advantage
- A good or service whose wide availability typically leads to smaller profit margins and diminishes the importance of factors (such as brand name) other than price
- One that is subject to ready exchange or exploitation within a market

Fictitious Commodities

(Karl Polanyi (1944) The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time)

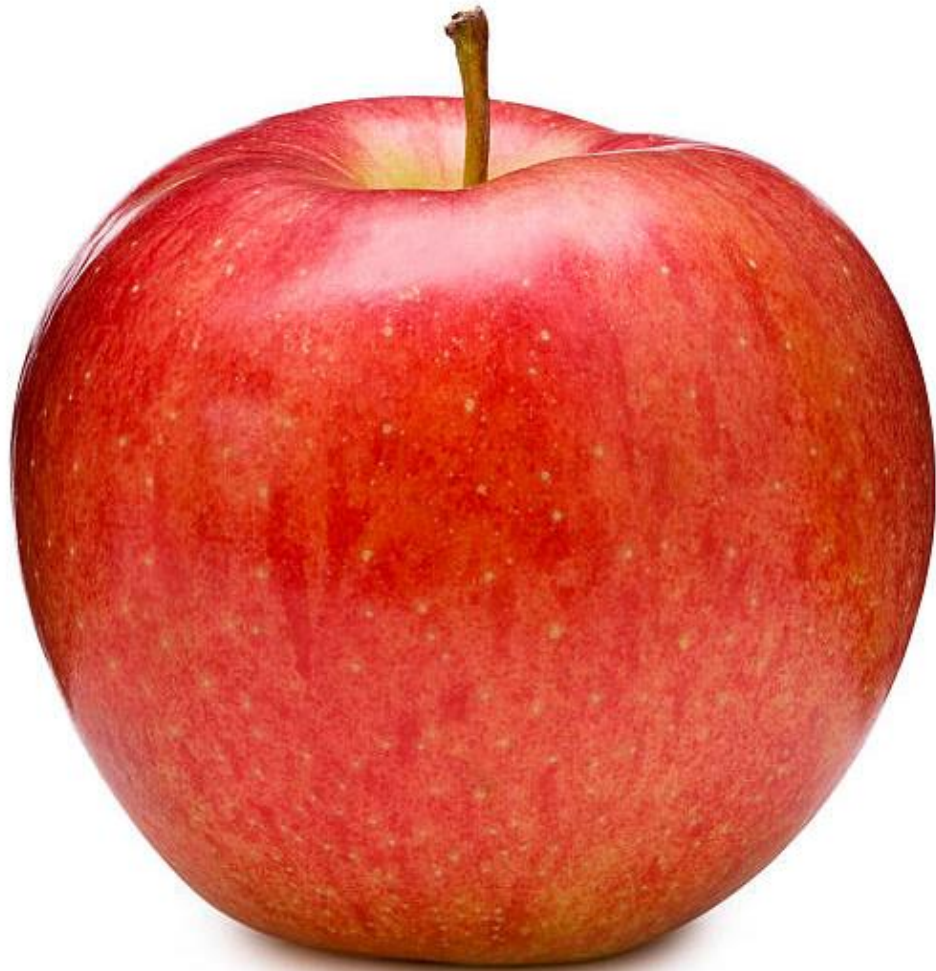
Land

Labour

Money

What else?

Food?



What is an Apple?

What is the Value
of an Apple?



What is KFC?

What is the
Value of KFC?

MEAT OF THE FUTURE: KFC AND 3D BIOPRINTING SOLUTIONS TO USE A BIOPRINTER TO PRODUCE KFC NUGGETS

July 16, 2020

July 16, 2020, Moscow, Russia –KFC is taking the next step in its innovative concept of creating a "restaurant of the future" by launching the development of innovative 3D bioprinting technology to create chicken meat in cooperation with the 3D Bioprinting Solutions research laboratory. The idea of crafting the "meat of the future" arose among partners in response to the growing popularity of a healthy lifestyle and nutrition, the annual increase in demand for alternatives to traditional meat and the need to develop more environmentally friendly methods of food production. The project aims to create the world's first laboratory-produced chicken nuggets. They will be as close as possible in both taste and appearance to the original KFC product, while being more environmentally friendly to produce than ordinary meat. Receiving a final product for testing is already planned for the fall of 2020 in Moscow.

3D Bioprinting Solutions is developing additive bioprinting technology using chicken cells and plant material, allowing it to reproduce the taste and texture of chicken meat almost without involving animals in the process. KFC will provide its partner with all of the necessary ingredients, such as breading and spices, to achieve the signature KFC taste. At the moment, there are no other methods available on the market that could allow the creation of such complex products from animal cells.

Top Releases

KFC CANADA MAKES BAMBOO A PERMANENT PACKAGING SOLUTION

July 20, 2020

MEAT OF THE FUTURE: KFC AND 3D BIOPRINTING SOLUTIONS TO USE A BIOPRINTER TO PRODUCE KFC NUGGETS

July 16, 2020





What is Apple – the Company?

What is Apple?

What do they manufacture?

What does Apple represent to
you?

What does Apple represent to
others?

[The Crazy Ones](#)

What about Apple?

Although Apple is the company who sells popular brands like iPhones and iPads, the majority of their products are made by **Foxconn, Pegatron, Wistron Compal Electronics**.

Apple is not the only company to subcontract other companies to manufacture products overseas.

Commodity Fetishism in Social Justice!

Dove

[Dove Evolution Video](#)

[Dove Onslaught Video](#)

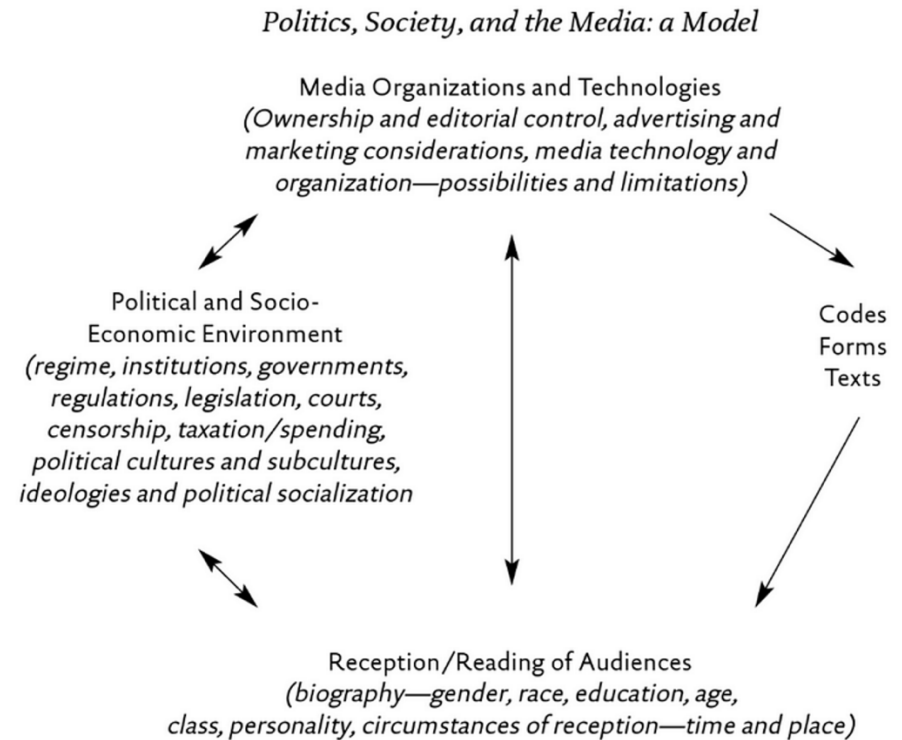
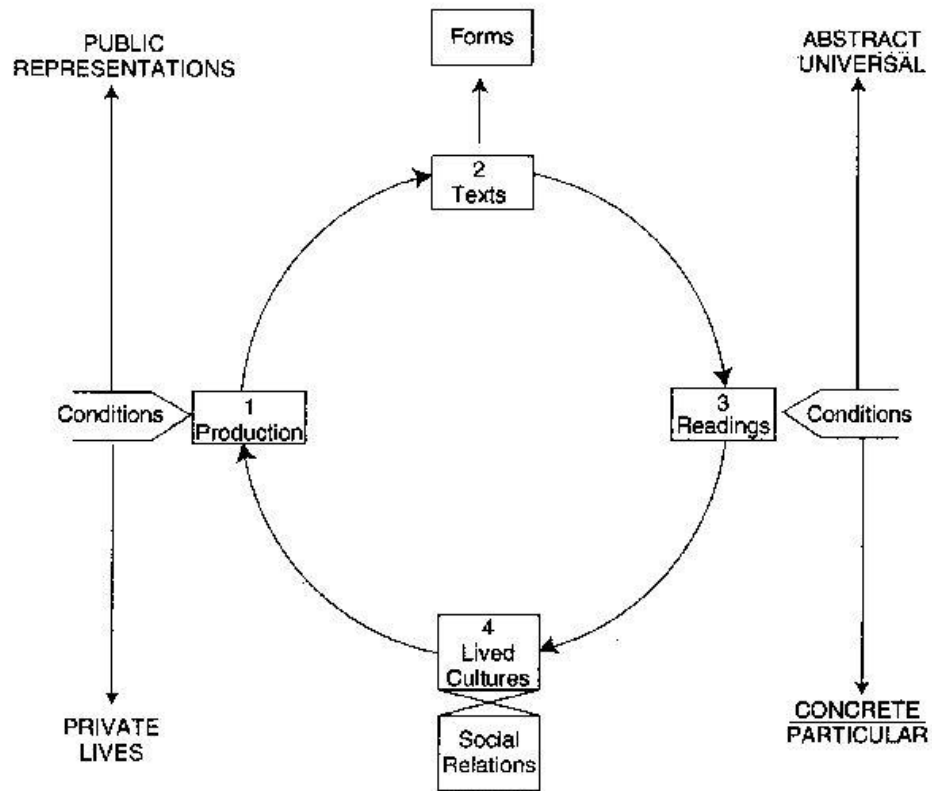
Axe

[Axe Music Video](#)

[Axe Television Ad Diner Party](#)

[Axe Television Ad Dentist](#)

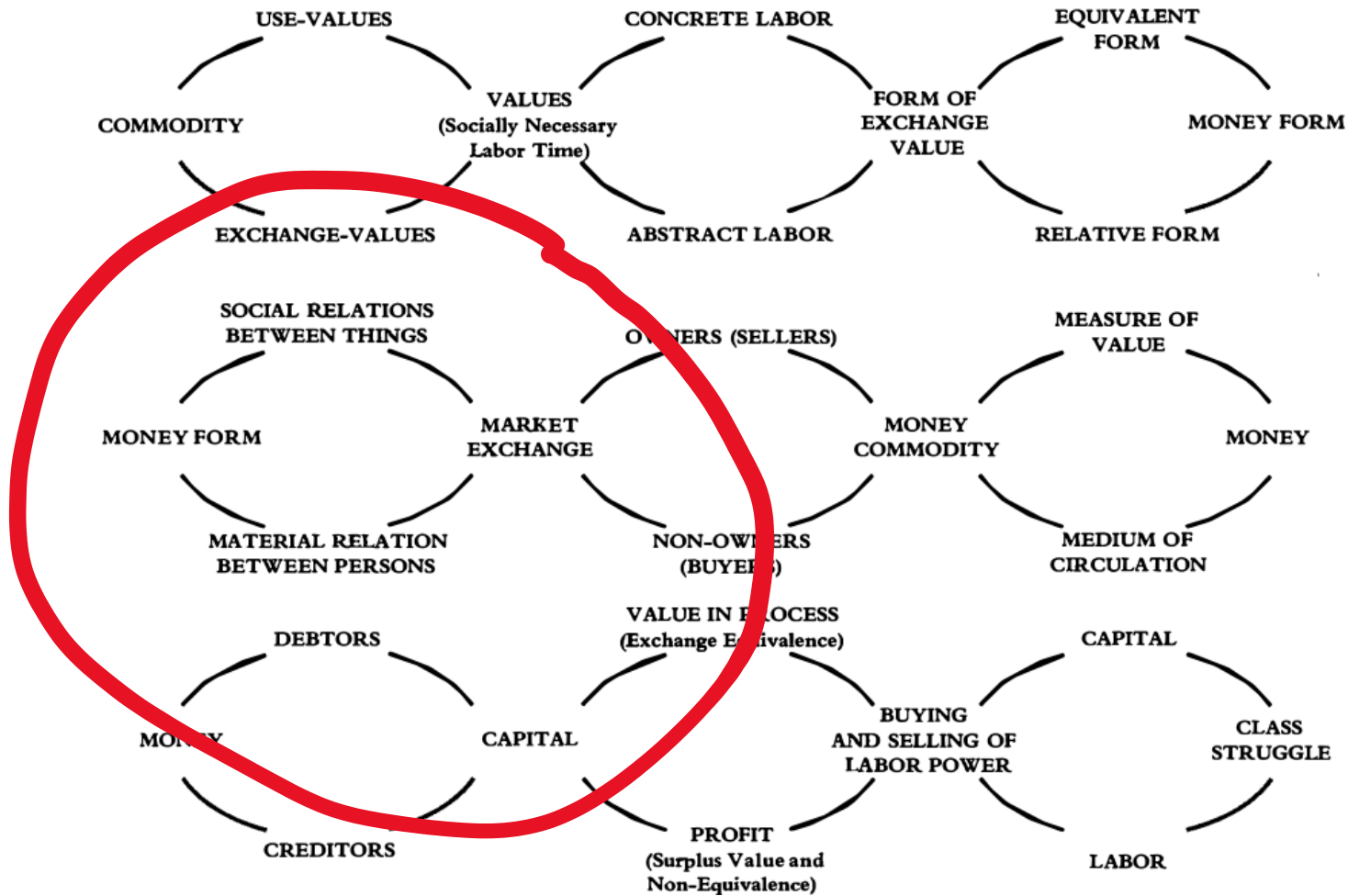
Ways to Understand Commodity-Signs



The Value of a Commodity and Commodity Fetishism



THE PATH OF ARGUMENT IN VOLUME I OF MARX'S CAPITAL



Commodity Fetishism

Commodity Fetishism

Inanimate objects acquire human qualities or supernatural powers – that they do not possess.

These qualities and/or powers are not dependent on their use value and nor with the materials that make them up.

Social relations appear to arise from an object rather than from people.

Exchange value is where commodity meaning is created over and above use value.

Commodities seem to possess agency.

Objects do not possess the ability to enter into relations with each other, they can only do so through the interaction of people.

Modern advertising produces commodity meaning.

Commodity Fetishism and Advertising

Advertising hides the actual conditions of production because the commodity disguises its own origin and the secret of its birth, namely the production of specific human interrelations.

The price of the commodity stems from the obscured and misrecognized relations of production and thus objects appear as if they sprung out of nowhere.

Advertising fills the void in meaning with its own symbols.

Commodity-sign – Commodities no longer refer to their material composition, productive qualities, or use value – they refer to commodity meanings or commodity-signs. Advertising is the main driver of producing commodity signs.

Two meanings of commodities:

- Meaning that arise out of the actual material conditions of production
- Meanings that arise out of the promotion and circulation of a product in a market – advertising!
- Goods that lack a clear, distinct use-value or where use-value is difficult to differentiate between different versions of the same product are particularly prone to fetishism – i.e. Coke!

Audiences for Sale

Videos provided in the first class:

- [We Deliver Young People](#)
- [YUL-LAB](#)

People are bought and sold to advertisers. People are considered consumers in a market economy. The audience is a commodity.

Eyeballs and clicks(click-bait) – advertisers pay for your attention.

Advertisers (influencers) deliver (sell) audiences to companies via media.

Advertising is actually the reason why most media and infrastructure exist.

Take Back the Economy – Commons Toolkit

Gibson-Graham, J.K., Cameron, J., Healy, S. (2013) Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Communities, University of Minnesota Press

Commons vs open access

Types of commons:

- **Biophysical** – Exist naturally – i.e. rocks, soil, air, etc.
- **Cultural** – Things shared by members of the same culture – i.e. language, musical heritage, symbols
- **Social** – Things shared between members of a social system – i.e. education, health, political systems
- **Knowledge** – Things people know – i.e. Indigenous ecological knowledge, scientific achievements

Ways to assess commons. To be a commons:

- **Access** – Must be shared widely
- **Use** – Must be negotiated by a community
- **Benefit** – Must be distributed to the community and possibly beyond
- **Care** – Must be performed by community members
- **Responsibility** – Must be assumed by the community
- **Property** – Must be collectively owned private property, state owned property and/or open access property

Examples

Community Organizations

- [Bâtiment 7](#)
- [Park Slope Food Cooperative](#)
- [Les Fruits Defendus](#)

Activities

- Foraging
- Community gatherings/festivals (potluck style)
- Community care

Discussion

How can we expand the commons?

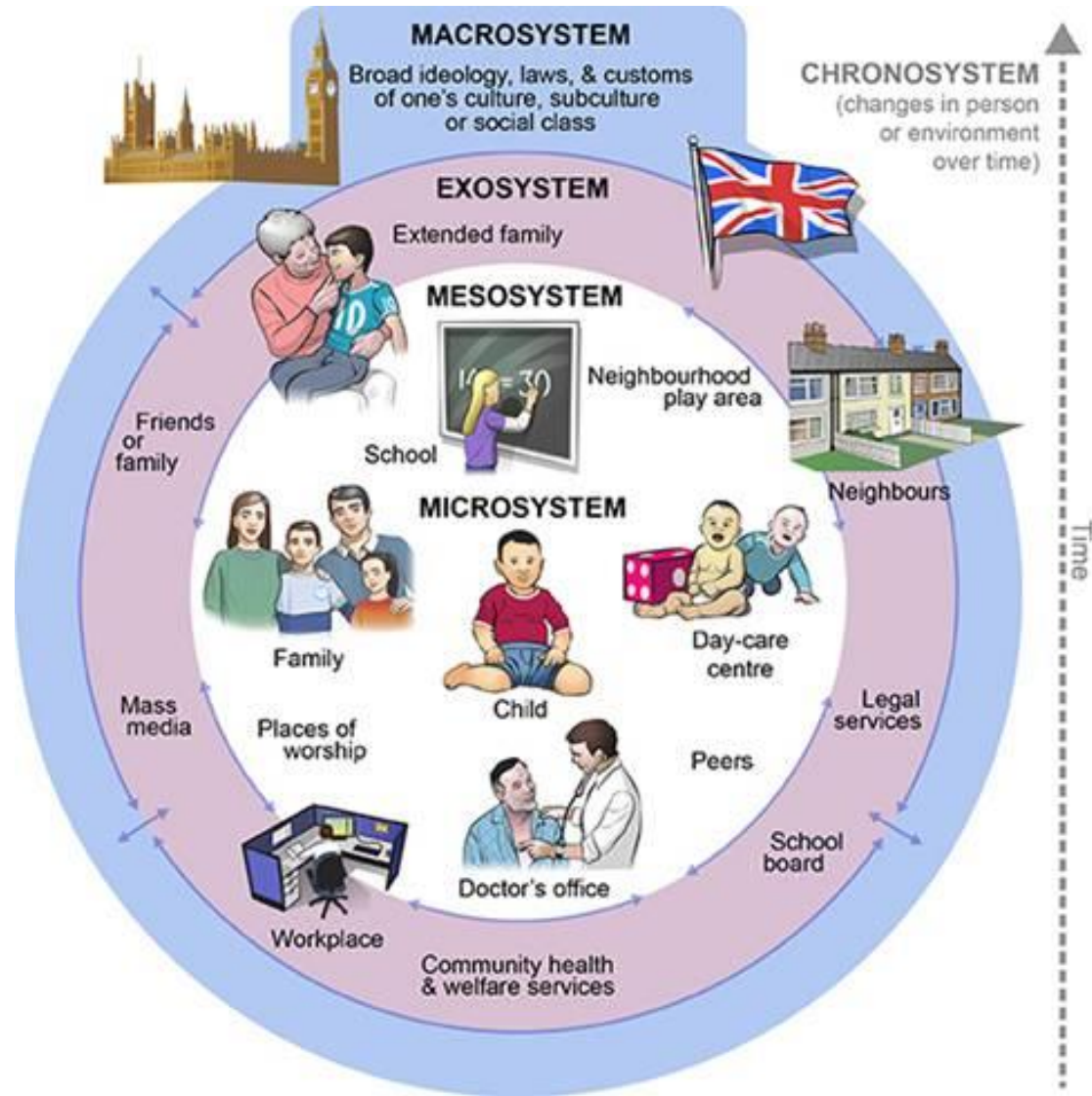
- Food
- Housing
- Transportation
- Land access
- Technology
- Care – elderly, child, mental health
- Education
- Finance
- Knowledge
- Culture

Borrowing from Degrowth

(Schmelzer, Vetter, Vansinjan, 2022)

Real Ways to Implement Degrowth

- Nowtopias
- Non-reformist reforms (change institutions)
- Counter-hegemony (build a counter movement)
- Confronting crises (by design or disaster?)



Borrowing from Olin Wright

Desirable

Viable

Achievable as a larger system

Borrowing from Diverse Economies Frameworks

Gibson-Graham, J.K., Cameron, J., Healy, S. (2013) *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Communities*, University of Minnesota Press

LABOR	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	ENTERPRISE	FINANCE
Wage	Market	Private	Capitalist	Mainstream Markets
ALTERNATIVE PAID Self-employed Reciprocal labor In-kind Work for welfare	ALTERNATIVE MARKET Fair trade Alternative currencies Underground market Barter	ALTERNATIVE PRIVATE State-managed assets Customary (clan) land Community land trusts Indigenous knowledge (Intellectual Property)	ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST State owned Environmentally responsible Socially responsible Non-profit	ALTERNATIVE MARKET Cooperative Banks Credit unions Community-based financial institutions Micro-finance
UNPAID Housework Volunteer Self-provisioning Slave labor	NON-MARKET Household sharing Gift giving Hunting, fishing, gathering Theft, piracy, poaching	OPEN ACCESS Atmosphere International Waters Open source IP Outer Space	NON-CAPITALIST Worker cooperatives Sole proprietorships Community enterprise Feudal Slave	NON-MARKET Sweat equity Family lending Donations Interest-free loans

Market Farm Practices

Direct sales

- CSA
- Farmers market
- Other markets

Wholesale

- Distributers
- Restaurants

Other sales

- Transformed goods
- Compost and other values
- Education

Contradictions

- Labour vs food price
- Soil regeneration time vs market readiness
- Growing time vs productivity
- Food donations vs sales
- Farmers markets vs increased labour
- Food waste!

Market Secrets

- Cash crops
- Reduce inputs
- Reduce labour necessities
- Holistic approach

Non-Market Farm Practices

Volunteer labour

Community involvement

Foraging

Soil building

Incorporating animals

Funding sources

Contradictions

- Free labour vs viability
- Free food vs revenue
- Community involvement vs community interest
- Soil building vs time
- Animals vs care
- Funding sources vs stability

Non-Market Secrets

- Sweat equity
- Stable funding
- Improved community space
- Building a sense of community

Alternative Market Farm Practices

Cooperative ownership

Different types of membership

Hybrid of markets and non markets

Ethical principles (social economy)

Fair treatment of employees

Rooted in community

Market viability and non-market advantages

Contradictions

- Community value vs profit
- Volunteers and paid workers
- Markets vs donations
- Internal conflicts

Alternative Market Secrets

- Community support
- Can take positive elements of both
- More resilient to market failures
- Provides community benefits

Borrowing from Theories of Social Reproduction



Videos By Vandana Shiva

[Vandana Shiva – Ted Talk](#)

[Hero's Sanctuary](#)

[Vandana Shiva on Food Sovereignty at Concordia](#)

Thank you!

Questions, Concerns?