







De-Growth: A Cultural Paradigm for a Possible Renaissance


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- Growth: super-ideology that is common to all currents of thought and to all political parties in advanced industrial societies.

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- Even verbally the word de-growth has been exorcised.
 - When GDP does not grow, the oxymoron of *negative growth* is utilized.
 - Like saying that a ninety-year-old has a negative youth.

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- In recent years currents of thought have developed which state the need for de-growth.


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- This concept is often mistaken with sobriety, the reduction of consumerism for fundamentally ethical reasons:
 - - the unequal distribution of resources in the world;
 - - the environmental impact of growth in terms of both resource input and waste output;
 - - the need to not merely limit mankind to materialistic aspects
 - - the advisability of replacing certain individual assets and services with collective assets and services



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- These interpretations do not reach the root of the problem. To understand the meaning of the concept of de-growth we need to define first the concept of growth.




Difference between the concepts of

- - assets: items or services that meet a need or satisfy a desire
- - commodities: items or services that are purchased

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- Not everything that is purchased fulfils needs or desires.
 - Not everything that fulfils needs or desires can or has to be purchased.

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- GDP does not measure assets produced and services provided in a year, but the monetary value of purchased commodities.

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- There are commodities that are not assets and assets that are not commodities.
 - This confusion is wanted.
 - An unveiling action is fundamental.




Examples of commodities that are not assets


- The excess fuel consumed to heat a building that dissipates heat.
- The excess fuel consumed in a traffic jam. If we believe that GDP measures well-being, every time we are stuck in a traffic jam we must feel happy.




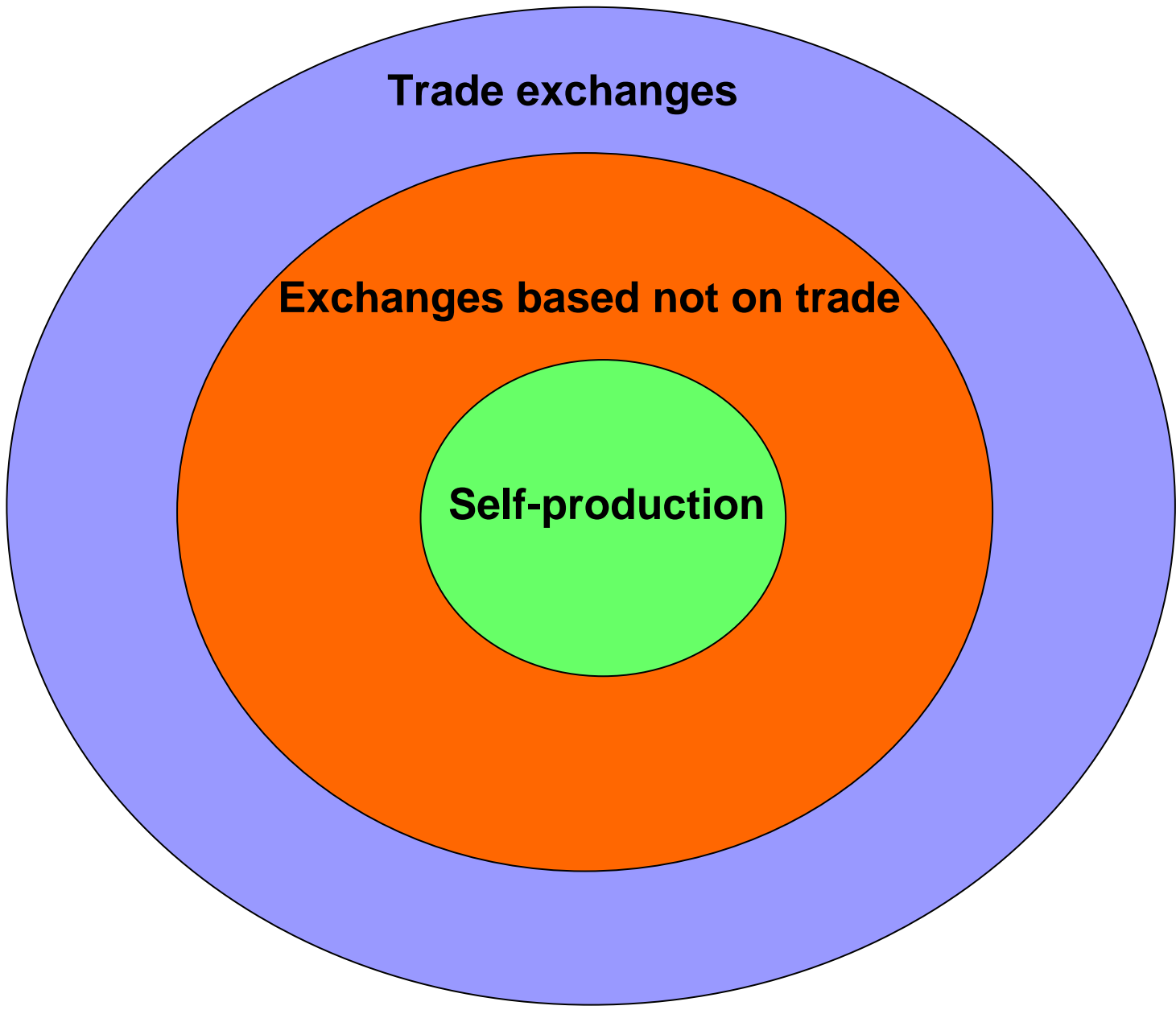
Examples of assets that are not commodities

- The self-production of a family garden.
- Services to persons exchanged for love in a family

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- Reducing the consumption of commodities that are not assets makes the economy de-grow and improves the quality of life and of the environments.
 - More well-being in a well insulated house. Lower CO₂ emissions with the same level of well-being. Lower costs, need to work less and the chance to spend more time on interpersonal relations. Happy de-growth.

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- Increasing production and the consumption of assets that are not commodities leads to de-growth in GDP and improves the quality of life and of the environments.
 - Homemade yoghurt: this makes the demand for the commodity yoghurt diminish and leads to de-growth in GDP:
 - - zero kilometres
 - - zero waste
 - - higher nutritional features
 - - 75 per cent cost reduction


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- Not everything can be self-produced.
 - Each economic system is like a dartboard with three concentric rings





Trade exchanges


Exchanges based not on trade


Self-production


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- The economy of growth is widening the third sphere, constantly eroding the other two spaces. The economy of de-growth widens the space of the two inner rings reducing the third to its natural size.

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- De-growth does not imply forfeit or sacrifice. It revalues restraint in a positive sense:
 - - reduction of the ecological footprint
 - - more time for relationships and spirituality

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- A powerful tool for criticising and revising the paradigm of growth and to draw up a different cultural paradigm.

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- Example: the concept of poverty and richness:
 - is only measured through money in an economy founded on GDP growth since everything is traded. When the importance of assets is rediscovered, money is no longer everything in the calculation of poverty and richness.

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- Example: the concept of work acquires a broader meaning than just the concept of employment

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- Example: innovation as such is no longer a value (it is a value functional to growth). Rediscovery of conservation. Choices are assessed based on their capacity in terms of the future.


Practising de-growth:

- - lifestyles
- - technology
- - politics



Lifestyles:

- - restraint
- - self-production
- - non trade exchanges



Technology: reduction, by unit of product or service, in the quantity of

- - energy
- - raw materials
- - waste



Politics: own choices inspired by de-growth

- - building regulations
- - stop to land consumption
- - zero waste

De-growth is not an option.

- There will be de-growth because it will be enforced by the limits of nature: in this case, de-growth will be disastrous.
- If it is chosen and progresses as a carefully gauged recession (Elémire Zolla), it can be happy
- Human beings will no longer be instruments of economic growth since the economy will return to being a means for improving the living conditions of mankind, but not to the detriment of other living creatures.
- A new Renaissance is still, for a short time, possible.