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Shakeholder society?

Social enterprises, citizens and collective action in the community economy

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"The most important lesson…derived from the intellectual journey I have outlined…is that humans have a more complex motivational structure and more capability to solve social dilemmas than posited in earlier rational-choice theory…(which) leads me to argue that a core goal of public policy should be to facilitate the development of institutions that bring out the best in humans."

Elinor Ostrom, Nobel Prize Lecture, 2009

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Nearly 20 years ago, I started my public PhD defence with a seemingly simple question: what does it take to make the choice between your own short-term benefit and the long-term collective benefit? Answering that question is not that simple, while the question itself is part of all our daily lives.[1] Especially in the past few years it was part and parcel of our daily life, during the covid period: shall I take that vaccine, shall I wear that mask, can I invite my friends at home? Some of us even went that extra mile and helped others to make that decision more easily, with lots of initiatives. Initiatives to deliver food packages, to sew masks, to arrange for online contact to avert depression and loneliness. All those initiatives helped others to follow the rules needed to tackle the crisis, but most of these initiatives have not survived the covid period.[2] They were temporary, but what we really need are solutions that keep working, also in the long term. Because, whether you like it or not, it is our moral duty as citizens to ask that question now for the challenges ahead of us. Challenges that are grand, complex, wicked, hard to solve. Although the worst effects of climate change are still 25 to 60 years ahead of us,[3] it is important to reduce carbon dioxide emissions now, otherwise irreversible changes on the environment will follow. In addition, there are the challenges of loss of biodiversity, mass migration, inequality, to just name a few, and I will not continue, in order not to depress you.

Rather, I would like to look with you at how we can solve those grand challenges. These challenges that are on all of our plates these days, are central to what our Business-Society Management department at Rotterdam School of Management focusses on. I would like to introduce to you how the "Social Enterprises and Institutions for Collective Action research group" tackles several societal challenges, and how we have contributed over the past years to creating and improving answers to those challenges, as a research group together with colleagues within and outside of the Netherlands. Also, I'd like to outline our future plans to put social enterprises (SEs) in the picture, both within Academia and in society at large. We do our best to fill in the gaps in our knowledge on social enterprises, bring to the footlight what is overlooked, and use other lenses to put present-day phenomena in a wider time perspective. That longitudinal perspective is and remains important to me as a historian and is of immense value to understand and deal with those grand challenges. The capacity to think ahead is intrinsically linked to looking back;

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1 M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Book, Whole (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

2 See the work, focusing on the covid solidarity initiatives in Rotterdam, of colleagues Beitske Boonstra et al., 'Keep Going on: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis on the Durability of Solidarity Initiatives during and after Crisis', *Public Administration*, 16 November 2022, padm.12897, https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12897; Beitske Boonstra, Naomi Rommens, and Sophie Claessens, 'Veerkracht Verbinden: Een Theoretische Uiteenzetting', in *Working Papers Sociale En Institutionele Veerkracht Ten Tijde van COVID-19 in Rotterdam* (Kenniswerkplaats leefbare wijken, 2021), https://www.kenniswerkplaats-leefbarewijken.nl/wp-content/uploads/Veerkracht-Verbinden_Boonstra-et-al-2021-1.pdf.

3 IPCC, 'Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change' (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2022), doi:10.1017/9781009325844.

building resilient organisations is in itself a matter of longitudinal development. While we try to come to the aid of future generations as "good ancestors", we are dealing with problems that originate in the past. How can we ensure that all who have a stake in solving these challenges also become part of the solution? And can we all have a share in that solution? Social dilemmas will continue to be part of our everyday lives, even more so in the future, for all of us. We'll need to come up with answers. Soon.

Social enterprises, an introduction

When looking for a long-term solution for these grand challenges, we tend to point to the responsibilities of governments, through national legislation and supranational agreements that change our way of production and consumption. Instruments such as Corporate Social Response (CSR) policies, but also tradeable emission rights try to regulate negative externalities created by existing companies. While growing into an important element in business and corporate governance since the 1970s, CSR has become an accountability standard focused on minimizing negative impact of corporate practice on society as a whole, but is now merely a box to tick. The role of international businesses is being questioned, and although many businesses do have the intention to change, there are many obstacles on the way. There are many motives at play, there's often a huge discrepancy between short-term and long-term objectives, and often a huge gap in between good intentions and effective realizations. Nevertheless, enterprises can also use their means to create positive impact, not just avoid negative impact, with purposes that extend beyond financial return, as shown by my colleague Rob van Tulder who has recently brought together many possible ways to achieve a further integration of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations in international business.[4]

Amidst the hope that the necessary transition can be achieved through entrepreneurial activity, an increasing number of entrepreneurs have taken up the challenge by setting up "social enterprises" (SE). They have different ambitions, they start from the intention to create positive impact and minimize their negative externalities, and put purpose before profit in their business model. Over the past decennia we have seen many individual entrepreneurs setting up social businesses, developing new products, setting high ethical standards, and thus trying to facilitate your choice for another more sustainable way of consumption. Social enterprises can in general be considered as organisations that pursue a social mission through market-based mechanisms.[5] Their primary objective is to generate positive impact for beneficiaries or stakeholders, and they do so by developing revenue-generating products or services. In this definition, SEs could be an incredibly powerful vehicle for the regenerative economy, an economy that not only uses but also contributes to society.

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4 Rob van Tulder and Eveline van Mil, *Principles of Sustainable Business: Frameworks for Corporate Action on the SDGs*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2022), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003098355.

5 A. Ebrahim, J. Battilana, and J. Mair, 'The Governance of Social Enterprises: Mission Drift and Accountability Challenges in Hybrid Organizations', *Research in Organizational Behavior* 34, no. Journal Article (2014): 81–100.

This type of enterprise is currently experiencing a rapid expansion, but be not mistaken: the social enterprise as a concept is not a modern invention. The phenomenon is often linked to philanthropy, and therefore some claim that the origins of the social enterprise should be found over 6000 years ago, in Ancient Egypt. However, in the definition we use here, we see the entrepreneurial activities themselves as the way to achieve societal change, instead of using – as in philanthropy – the revenues of the enterprise to do good when the entrepreneurial activity has already taken place (whilst the activities of the enterprise might in fact have had a negative effect on society). The idea that the entrepreneurial activities themselves could have positive externalities in various domains, that those activities can be a vehicle for positive change, is much younger. One of the first enlightened entrepreneurs to put this principle into practice was Robert Owen (1771-1858), the ambitious founder of New Lanark (a Scottish spinning mill he remodelled on the principles of Utopian Socialism), and later his New Harmony project in the US. Although the term social enterprise was not used as such yet, these projects bore all the features of what we would consider a social enterprise today.

Since that try-out period in 19th-century UK, the social enterprise has developed. The term "social enterprise" itself was coined in the 1970s in the UK, to counter the traditional commercial enterprise. In 2017, the European Commission estimated that there were around 2.8 million social economy enterprises in Europe.[6] According to the bi-annual European SE monitor (ESEM) of 2021-2022, more than 80% of the active European social enterprises had been founded within the last 20 years. More than a quarter of these are active in more than one sector. The most popular sectors in which social enterprises are active are health/social work (23%), education (22%), other services (12%) and information/communication (11%).[7] Trying to get a better insight in the various types of these social enterprises, which have developed across many sectors, is a difficult task for researchers. As I will show later, it is even difficult to quantify this movement. A recently published overview of SEs in Western Europe, based on an extensive inventory of SEs across 15 European countries by amongst others Belgian colleagues Defourny and Nyssens, divided SEs in three broad types, which also help us to sketch the social enterprise landscape in the Netherlands.[8] The division they made is shown in figure 1. In the Netherlands, most attention has over the past decennia been going to what Nyssens and Defourny described as the social enterprise as a social business (SB), an enterprise that combines a shareholder-driven profit motive with the pursuance of a social mission. Social businesses are often occupied with product innovation and circularity, with Tony's Chocolonely[9],

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6 European Commission, 'Social Economy in the EU: Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs', accessed 13 February 2023, https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy_en.

7 Dupain, W. et al., 'The State of Social Enterprise in Europe – European Social Enterprise Monitor 2021-2022' (Euclid Network, 2022).

8 Defourny, Jacques, Nyssens, Marthe, and Adam, Sophie, 'Documenting, Theorising, Mapping and Testing the Plurality of SE Models in Western Europe', in *Social Enterprise in Western Europe. Theory, Models, and Practice,* ed. Marthe Nyssens and Defourny, Jacques, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2021), 1–17. Ibi p. 12.

9 See https://tonyschocolonely.com/.

Fairphone[10] and Vanhulley[11] as some of the successful examples of social businesses in the Netherlands.[12] These types of SEs received a lot of attention from policy makers, for example in the recent attempts to develop a new legal framework for the BV-maatschappelijk (BVm), but more about that later. The largest category of social enterprises across Europe is however to be found among the SEs of the entrepreneurial non-profit model (ENP), subdivided further in social services and non-profit Work-Integrated SEs (non-profit WISE).

10 See https://www.fairphone.com/.

11 See https://www.vanhulley.com/.

12 Our research group is a member of the EMES-network (see https://emes.net/news/a-new-institutional-member-joins-emes-welcome-to-institutions-for-collective-action/) that was vital in the compilation of these and other works on SEs and will invest in contributing to the inventory of SEs in the Netherlands.

Table 1 Main features of SE clusters for Western Europe. Derived from Defourny, Nyssens and Adam (2021).

SE models	Entrepreneurial non-profit (ENP) model		Social-cooperative (SC) model		Social-business (SB) model
Cluster number and dominant type(s) in the cluster	Cluster 1: Social services ENP	Cluster 2: Non-profit WISE	Cluster 3: Social services cooperative and cooperative WISE	Cluster 4: Citizen cooperative	Cluster 5: mall- and medium-sized SB
No. of observations Creation date (median) Legal Form	44 (27%) 1991 NPOs (64%) Foundations (16%)	32 (19%) 1997 NPOs (41%) Ltd companies (44%)	40 (24%) 2002 Cooperatives (73%) Dedicated SE legal forms (23%)	23 (14%) 2009 Cooperatives (96%)	22 (13%) 2011 Ltd companies (59%) Sole proprietorship (18%)
Goods and services provided	Education, health, social services (50%)	Various	Education, health, social work (57%)	Energy, trade, food, financial services, etc.	Trade, manufacturing, education, etc.
Social mission	Community development, capacity building, equality and empowerment, employment generation	Work integration (71%)	Employment generation (25%). health improvement (20%)	Ecological transition (45%). social finance (14%)	Various social missions
Mission-centric, mission-related or mission-unrelated economic activity	Mission-centric (78%)	Mission-related (88%)	Mission-centric (78%)	Mission-centric (52%) or mission-related (43%)	Mission-centric (64%) or mission-related (36%)

For both the social services NPEs and non-profit WISEs we find plenty of examples in the Netherlands. Think for instance of organisations such as Emma at work[13], JINC[14] and TechMeUp[15], organisations that offer training and better employment perspective to newcomers and youth with physical limitations. What is striking in the present-day social enterprise ecosystem in the Netherlands, is that the second broad type with two clusters linked to the social-cooperative (SC) model – consisting of cooperative WISEs

13 See https://www.emma-at-work.nl/.

14 See https://www.jinc.nl/.

15 See https://www.techmeup.nl/.

and citizen cooperatives – is often overlooked. I would like to argue that there are both historical and contemporary reasons to consider this cluster because of its transformative potential. We need to keep our eyes open for more forms of social enterprises, not just the "traditional" ones. Citizens can play a vital role in creating that translation from grand challenges to local solutions, accessible to every citizen. Not just on their own, as enthusiastic entrepreneurs behind innovative social businesses, but as groups of stakeholders that help to connect daily needs with globally needed changes. We tend to forget about the human capacity to build institutions through collective action, and through cooperation. However, we are conversationalists and negotiators, we are capable of emotional interaction and empathy. It is this part of what defines us as human, where we can explore what is possible to fill in that "how", and more particular explore the alternative forms of governance that might help us with this. The potential for social enterprises to be that necessary linking pin between the grand challenges and social dilemmas that we are dealing with is large, but only if we consider the concept and its practice in its full breadth.

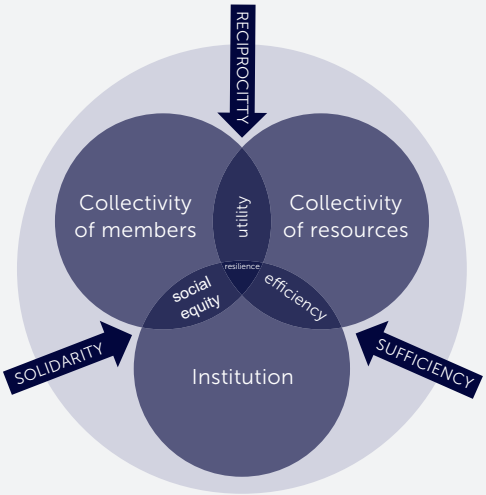
Filling the blind spot in the Dutch social enterprise landscape

So, let us start with the beginning: where does this third, often overlooked, form of SE come from and what explains its existence and rapid development over the past 15 years? A growing group of citizens – in their role of consumers – see a considerable need to change their own consumption patterns, in particular in their very basic needs that do comprise a considerable part of their daily expenditures: energy, care (childcare, elderly care, care for the disabled…), food, mobility. Similarly, they look for other ways to organise their income, through alternative forms of work and related insurances. There are substantial changes going on in the labour market, with growing numbers of self-employed and flexible jobs, such as in the food delivery sector. These often go together with other changes, such as stress on welfare systems, in particular in relation to social security, and the development of new forms of companies, such as platform companies (Uber, Deliveroo and the like). In their search for solutions, citizens seek out other citizens with similar needs, often concentrating on one particular domain (such as energy), and with similar ideas about the quality of the goods and services needed (e.g. renewable energy, organic food), usually within the same geographical area, with the same stakes that relate both to the individual needs and the desire to contribute to another type of good and service that also takes into account the stakes that go beyond their personal lives.

Many members of such groups consider themselves as responsible consumers, with attention for both their own wellbeing but also that of their environment and the planet. By identifying their joint needs and desires they set up a collectivity of members and they define what membership is about, and what the conditions of that membership are. This way, they connect their own stakes with that of others and come up with alternative ways to secure those goods and services: by developing a joint resource, such as a wind turbine, and jointly deciding on who can use that resource individually to what extent. What makes these organisations different from collective action on the level of the state, is their way of dealing with the challenge ahead of them.

Anyone involved in these initiatives will tell you that working together is hard. That is because the attempt to solve those bigger societal problems, by creating renewable energy, by trying to develop organic farms, people are actually creating another social dilemma, which forces people to choose between short-term benefits for themselves and the long-term benefits of the small community they have just created. It raises questions such as who can use the resource, who has rights, and how far do these rights extend? And this is where collective rules, norms and values come in, the actual institution building. When people build such an institution through collective action, self-governance, and self-regulation, we refer to them as institutions for collective action, or ICAs. Thus, whereas problems that in our welfare states are tackled collectively are often social dilemmas that are dealt with for the benefit of the whole population, the groups that we refer to willingly choose to create a social dilemma of their own, they purposely develop a collective resource which on the one hand makes it possible to obtain what they need and want (e.g. renewable energy) by creating the critical mass that is needed, but on the other hand also demands "good behaviour" from each of the members, to avoid e.g. overuse and depletion of the resource. Such institutions enable good efficient management of the resources whilst also providing access to and thus utility of the resource for its members. Usually, in an ICA, members design the rules themselves and do so in a socially equitable way, taking into account the local conditions of the collective resource whilst setting boundaries to access to the resource and use of the resource.[16]

Figure 1 The SICADE model of research group Social Enterprises & Institutions for Collective Action. See De Moor 'Three waves of cooperation' (2021).



16 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action,* Book, Whole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Ibi p. 90.

Some examples in the Netherlands show that there is actually a huge variety possible in what you can manage as a collective resource. From elderly care homes and services as in Austerlitz Zorgt[17], to food from organic food stores such as Gedeelde Weelde[18], that store their groceries locally, to community-supported farms (Voedseltuinen)[19], to energy cooperatives (Sterk op Stroom)[20], collective infrastructure cooperatives for fiberglass networks (Veenglas)[21], and mobility, as in electric car sharing (DEEL).[22] These are but a few examples of these organisations across the Netherlands. These citizens who manage the resources collectively evolve into "prosumers",[23] they become part of the production process while at the same time acting as the primary consumers for their own production. In many cases, they also sell part of the production to third parties, on other conditions than those for members. Thus, they create mini-internal markets for their own consumers, but also participate in "the" market, usually on the same terms as other commercial providers. In many cases, these organisations run, at best, break-even but in case profits are derived from the production these usually go back to the prosumers who also hold a share, often set as a condition for membership. But in quite a few cases a limit is set on profits to be obtained, and residual profits go to a social goal, such as a fund that supports local activities, as in the Omgevingsfonds. Although these institutions for collective action usually have a particular focus on "basic utilities" – elementary goods and services ranging from energy to care, to food, to mobility – they can be highly innovative in their way of production: some energy cooperatives for examples are involved in quite advanced demand-side management, managing a float of electric vehicles which uses the electricity they have produced themselves.

The activities of these institutions, but also a term like "cooperative social enterprise", make an explicit link to the legal form of the cooperative. A cooperative is a private business owned and operated by the same people who use its products and/or services. The purpose of a cooperative is to fulfil the needs of the people running it. The profits are distributed among the people active within the cooperative, also known as user-owners. Typically, there is an elected board that runs the cooperative, but members can also be actively involved in decision-making processes.

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17 See https://www.austerlitzzorgt.nl/.

18 See https://gedeeldeweelde.nl/.

19 See https://www.korteketen.nu/.

20 See https://sterkopstroom.nl/.

21 See https://veenglas.nl/.

22 See https://deel.nl/.

23 The term 'prosumer' originally was not strictly related to collective forms of production but was coined by Toffler: Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow and Company, inc., 1980). As society moves toward the Post-Industrial Age, so will the number of pure consumers decline. They will be replaced by "prosumers," people who produce many of their own goods and services. Although his prosumer theorizing has not attracted much critical comment, has concept is sufficiently provocative to merit the attention of consumer behavior scholars and marketing practitioners. See for a critical review Philip Kotler, 'The Prosumer Movement : A New Challenge For Marketers', in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research,* ed. Richard J. Lutz, vol. 13 (Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research, 1986), 510–13.

As such the cooperative is a legal form that creates favourable conditions for the development of institutions for collective action. It provides the basis for inclusive decision-making, which involves all members, and it strives towards a return on investment (the shares they hold) to those that also have a stake in the actual production and consumption. The social business, in contrast, is more like a BV (private limited company) and does not necessarily require others to engage, as it usually primarily built on investments from external – not internal – shareholders.

Considering that running such an ICA is quite an endeavour one can wonder: why would citizens want to own and manage resources collectively if they can also simply go to the shop? In general, it is not an exaggeration to claim that every cooperative is an attempt to achieve a market correction, and every membership is a contribution to achieving that correction. There are citizens who feel the need to change their behaviour as consumers earlier than others, because they are no longer getting their money's worth. Indeed, it is an attempt at market correction as a reaction to market failure even before it is actually visible. Worker-owned firms, for example, start more often during economic downturn, often in an attempt to take over failing capitalist firms.[24] Similar to cooperatives in the care sector, worker cooperatives have in the past been formed as part of wider activist movements as a response to government failure. A typical example of this are the new platform cooperatives that are in fact novel, digital forms of worker cooperatives that react against the dominance of capitalist platforms in the gig economy.[25] As an alternative to dominant investor-owned platforms, like Uber or Deliveroo, platform cooperatives combine the digital marketplaces of platforms with the ownership and governance model of cooperatives. Examples include The Drivers Cooperative, which has over 7.000 members among taxi drivers in New York City, or CoopCycle, which consists of bicycle delivery cooperatives in 71 cities worldwide. So far, there are few examples of extensive forms of platform cooperatives in the Netherlands.

The general economic context may thus be an enabling environment for forms of ICAs to develop, but historical studies tell us a bit more about the reasons for individual members to set up and/or join an ICA. Joining forces within an ICA creates economies of scale, in particular for individual citizens in their search for alternative forms of basic goods and services (utilities such as energy, care, housing, food, mobility). Besides, it also offers opportunities for better collective bargaining positions towards authorities, it allows members to share risks and resources, it creates lower search and information costs, and

24 Avner Ben-Ner, 'The Life Cycle of Worker-Owned Firms in Market Economies', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 10, no. 3 (October 1988): 287–313, https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-2681(88)90052-2.

25 Clare Gupta, 'The Co-Operative Model as a "Living Experiment in Democracy"', *Journal of Co-Operative Organization and Management* 2, no. 2 (December 2014): 98–107, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcom.2014.09.002; Damion Jonathan Bunders et al., 'The Feasibility of Platform Cooperatives in the Gig Economy', *Journal of Co-Operative Organization and Management* 10, no. 1 (June 2022): 100167, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcom.2022.100167.

may reduce transaction costs.[26] Moreover, there are community economy reasons. Community building is often equally important or sometimes even more important for many of these organisations. For some it is even the prime objective and is often "embodied" in a physical building as a central collective resource, as is for example the case in the Wijkpaleis in Rotterdam. The Wijkpaleis was a few months ago officially bought by the neighbourhood and is now a hub for both entrepreneurial activities and community activities.[27] Now, whilst doing so, citizens support the local economy and take part in the decision-making process in their environment, thereby taking back control over daily resource provision. Taking back control is thereby a matter of choosing for specific resources, not any resource. People choose deliberately for e.g. renewable energy or organic food, not just any type of energy or food.

But all these elements seem to be primarily in the benefit of the members themselves, a critique often heard when discussing the potential of the cooperative as a social enterprise. Based on insights from socio-psychological, environmental and management studies and ideas, a study together with Fijnanda van Klingeren[28] investigated the preferences and motivations of prosumers in a large energy cooperative in Belgium by using revealed preference data in combination with self-reported motives.[29] Despite the significant presence of prosumer preferences for participation and democratic voting rights, financial and especially ecological motives seem to be most important for being a member of an energy cooperative. In addition, a three-way classification of members is specified, based on the attribute preferences, which corresponds to a division of financial, ecological, and social-societal motives. Both in terms of effect size, willingness to pay and class probability, ecological motives seem to be the most important factor for prosumers. All in all, we can conclude that among these particular cooperative members, there is a clear choice for a particular product that aligns with their values, and that they are willing to pay a higher price for this. As shown by Thomas Bauwens' work, energy cooperatives attract members with different appeals along their enterprise lifecycle. For example, at an early stage, members tend to focus on noneconomical dimensions, such as social or environmental values. However, as cooperatives scale up, they may attract members who are more interested in financial returns and thereby create internal tensions.

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26 Tine De Moor, 'The Silent Revolution: A New Perspective on the Emergence of Commons, Guilds, and Other Forms of Corporate Collective Action in Western Europe', *International Review of Social History* 53, no. S16 (2008): 179–212, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859008003660.

27 'Wijkpaleis in Rotterdam-West Is Straks Ook Ván de Buurtbewoners', NRC, 11 November 2021. See also https://www.wijkpaleis.nl/.

28 Fijnanda van Klingeren is a quantitative social scientist with an interest in cooperation dilemmas and computational methods. She received her PhD in Sociology at the University of Oxford with a thesis on heterogeneity, trust and cooperation in common-pool resources. As postdoctoral researcher at RSM she studies institutions for collective action on the micro-and meso-level, using quantitative methods. In addition, she is working on implementing scientific tools for the platform CollectieveKracht, enabling citizen collectives to access scientific research methods to investigate member preferences and increase their resilience. See https://www.linkedin.com/in/fijnanda-van-klingeren-499077112/.

29 Fijnanda Van Klingeren and Tine De Moor, 'Research Paper on Motivation of Members in a Belgian Energy Cooperative', in preparation. For the executive summary, see https://www.collectievekracht.eu/collectievenlab/nieuws/2427964.aspx (in Dutch).

The tension is both temporal and spatial because the interests of members can vary different social or geographical locations and can change over time.[30]

Taking back control over your own life and the products you consume, is probably even more significant in the domain of work integration and – what I'd like to refer to as – work facilitation. It is a domain that we most easily connect with social-sector social enterprises or social businesses. However, among the cooperative variant we see a lot of innovative ways to give back voice and power to employees, to increase their wellbeing. From collectives of self-employed, as in the Vrije Uitloop and Smart[31], to a cleaning cooperative like Schoongewoon.[32] This phenomenon can also be seen in the digital forms of worker cooperatives mentioned before, which are based on collective decision-making. Compared to traditional cooperatives, the use of digital technology might lower the costs of participation in decision-making,[33] for instance, by simplifying the process of voting in larger and remote groups, but also by spreading information on decision options more evenly across members.[34]

Social cooperatives: a third wave of cooperation?

In the world of those citizens working collectively to make their world a bit better, starting from their own daily needs and choices, there are a lot of different terms circulating. "Commons" is probably the most popular term, especially since Elinor Ostrom got the Nobel Prize in 2009. And it does sound good, appealing to an antidote to individualism and giving us a stimulus to look for what binds us, but the term is being used in a variety of ways these days, and has become very much – as I have argued

30 Thomas Bauwens, Taneli Vaskelainen, and Koen Frenken, 'Conceptualising Institutional Complexity in the Upscaling of Community Enterprises: Lessons from Renewable Energy and Carsharing', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 42 (March 2022): 138–51, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2021.12.007; European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies., *The Future of Renewable Energy Communities in the EU: An Investigation at the Time of the Clean Energy Package*. (LU: Publications Office, 2020), https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2870/754736; Thomas Bauwens, 'Explaining the Diversity of Motivations behind Community Renewable Energy', *Energy Policy* 93 (June 2016): 278–90, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2016.03.017.

31 Cooperatives of self-employed artists and other creative entrepreneurs, see https://devrijeuitloop.nl/ and https://smartbe.be/.

32 A group of local workers' cooperatives, see https://www.schoongewoon.nl/.

33 Damion Jonathan Bunders, 'Gigs of Their Own: Reinventing Worker Cooperativism in the Platform Economy and Its Implications for Collective Action', in *Platform Economy Puzzles*, by Jeroen Meijerink, Giedo Jansen, and Victoria Daskalova (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), 188–208, https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839100284.00019.

34 Damion Jonathan Bunders et al., 'The Feasibility of Platform Cooperatives in the Gig Economy', *Journal of Co-Operative Organization and Management* 10, no. 1 (June 2022): 100167, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcom.2022.100167; Damion Bunders is a PhD-candidate in the SCOOP program and member of the research group Social Enterprise & Institutions for Collective Action at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. In his PhD project, he investigates the conditions under which platform cooperatives owned and governed by gig workers can become resilient alternatives to the big investor-owned platforms. See https://linktr.ee/damionbunders.

elsewhere[35] – a pars pro toto for various forms of, what Ostrom also coined, institutions for collective action, as a more academic, neutral version of "commons".[36] But in fact, the term commons goes back quite a way in history. It refers to historical forms of such institutions and in particular to groups of farmers who decided, from the late medieval period onwards, to use wasteland together as pastureland. They did so for all those economic reasons I mentioned earlier: it was cheaper, it was easier, it was in many economic ways better. In the Netherlands, we've had quite a few of these, in the form of "meenten" and "markegenootschappen". And now, centuries later, we see new forms of citizen collectives that call themselves for instance the Nieuwe Meent, which is a direct reference to history, and in this case is a co-housing initiative in Amsterdam.[37] But there were more forms of such institutions, not just on the countryside. The fact that in the perception of the social enterprise in the Netherlands is often overlooked is particularly strange given that we know the Netherlands historically as a very fertile breeding ground for collective action. Some would refer to the Poldermodel as the ultimate form of cooperation[38], which might have originated in the negotiation culture dating back to the medieval period.

In my previous inaugural lecture, I already explained that in the past we've seen several waves of growth of such institutions.[39] First, in the medieval and early modern period, until a top-down movement from the eighteenth- and early nineteenth century led to their dissolution and their disappearance in the wake of the development of the nation states. A second large wave took place between 1880-1920, when large cooperatives known today as the Rabobank, Achmea and FrieslandCampina, but also the labour unions, emerged. The broader development of which these now well-established companies were part of has contributed to a number of important changes in our society. Mutual insurance funds created an insurance culture that prepared the way to the development of the welfare state, by showing how the collectivity could be a working form of insurance in case of sickness and unemployment, building also on the experience of the insurances set up by guilds in the centuries before.[40] The collectivity

35 Tine De Moor, 'From Historical Institution to Pars pro Toto', 1st ed., Routledge Handbook of the Study of the Commons (London: Routledge, 2019), 319–33, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315162782-24.

36 This in contrast to the often more politicized use of the term commons these days, as in its most recent expression in the work of philosopher Thijs Lijster: Thijs Lijster, *Wat We Gemeen Hebben: Een Filosofie van de Meenten* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2022).

37 See https://nieuwemeent.nl/.

38 Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Nederland en het poldermodel: sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Nederland*, 1000 - 2000, De geschiedenis van Nederland 10 (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2013).

39 Tine De Moor, *Homo Cooperans: Institutions for Collective Action and the Compassionate Society*, Book, Whole (Utrecht: Utrecht University, Faculty of Humanities, 2013). See for a further developed overview of the long-term development of ICAs in De Moor Tine, 'Thee Waves of Cooperation: A Millennium of Institutions for Collective Action in Historical Perspective (Case Study: The Netherlands)', in *Oxford Handbook of Transnational Economic Governance*, ed. Eric Brousseau, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 4–30.

40 See the work of colleagues Marco H. D. Van Leeuwen, *Mutual Insurance 1550-2015* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53110-0; Ton Duffhues, J. Korsten, and Robert Vonk, eds., *Van Achlum Naar Achmea: De Historische Route Naar Een Coöperatieve Verzekeringsgroep, 1811-2011* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2011).

went from the occupational group to the state as a whole, and replaced occupation by citizenship. With it came rights and duties which are still applicable in today's welfare state.

The examples of the numerous social cooperatives currently appearing in various sectors could be part of a third wave of institutions for collective action. Maybe we're in the midst of it. In particular from 2005 onward, we see this development taking off, way before the economic crisis of 2008-2009, particularly in energy and care, but also in many other sectors. And ever since, the growth has not stopped. Are we seeing a repetition of what happened in the 19th century: collectivities going to redraft the welfare state? Or in a broader sense, what is their impact on society at large, and can they be effective vehicles for transition? Before I go into that matter, first some words on the scope and scale of this movement.

Cooperative social enterprises in numbers

We know now that the landscape of SEs is in fact much richer than we originally thought, but how rich exactly is the Netherlands in terms of such organisations? How many SEs are there across the Netherlands? The honest answer is: we don't know, not in absolute terms – the number of new forms of ICAs – nor in relative terms – how important this is vis-à-vis the total number of SEs. There is no reliable inventory of social enterprises in general, nor is there one of the particular type of the cooperative form of SEs. There are however some data, per sector, that give us some idea. A recently published monitor by HierOpgewekt, an organisation that unites these energy cooperatives, shows that hundreds of energy cooperatives across the Netherlands have developed over the past few years.[41] In 2022, there were 705 energy cooperatives in the Netherlands, representing approximately 120.000 members. In almost 86% of the Dutch municipalities there was least one energy cooperative active. About 68% of the initiatives are engaged in solar energy and 12% in wind energy projects. Together they provide 272 MW (solar) and 316 MW (wind) of power. At least 78 energy cooperatives across the country participate in local heat networks. In addition, cooperatives are involved in the promotion of energy saving measures, the construction of charging stations for electric cars, car sharing plans and innovative solutions for energy storage, hydropower, and hydrogen power.[42]

Based on the figures of the Dutch national network for citizen initiatives in housing, welfare and healthcare it is estimated that the number of citizen collectives for care in The Netherlands is between 300 and 1.500, using a combined inventory of their network members and estimates from their governmental and social partners.[43] PhD student Kevin Wittenberg (Utrecht University) studies the social network of care

41 Anne Marieke Schwencke et al., 'Lokale Energie Monitor 2022' (Klimaatstichting HIER; Energie Samen, 2023).

42 Schwencke et al.

43 Nederland Zorgt voor Elkaar, 'Monitor Zorgzame Gemeenschappen', n.d.

cooperatives, as part of the larger SCOOP-gravity research program.[44] While citizen collectives for care are spread throughout the Netherlands, they appear to occur in geographic clusters,[45] with a particularly high density in the province of Limburg, which also houses some of the longest-standing collectives that are known in The Netherlands.[46] Evidence suggests that the emergence of these collectives is not trivial, and that it may depend on an interplay of various factors at the individual and community level, such as the extent to which inhabitants of a neighbourhood feel attached to their area of residence, the extent to which citizens have necessity for care services and the extent to which they can provide them[47], and the spread of knowledge about self-organisation practices.[48]

Numbers of the National Cooperative Council (NCR) show that the growth of registration of new cooperatives, as a specific legal form that may be adopted by cooperative social enterprises, has accelerated over the past few years. A growth of more than 30% in the registration of new coops was seen since 2016, in particular in

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44 Since many of these collectives are locally and informally organised (to illustrate, only 9% of these initiatives has been estimated to take the judicial form of a cooperative), relatively little is known about their activities, members and obstacles. A recent survey, conducted among 323 collectives for care in The Netherlands suggests that most collectives fulfill a variety of functions, primarily geared towards improving social cohesion, reducing loneliness, and improving quality of living for citizens. See Nederland Zorgt voor Elkaar, Vilans, and Movisie, 'Monitor Zorgzame Gemeenschappen', 12 January 2021, https://www.nlzorgtvoorelkaar.nl/monitor+zorgzame+gemeenschappen/default.aspx. Their main target audiences are elderly residents (42%), followed by residents with physical disabilities (22%). More formal collective practices, such as the collective buy-in of professional care or the funding of assisted living residences are much less common (<20%). Many collectives work together closely with the municipality and are dependent on subsidies and external funding for their financial means. While both researchers and collectives themselves see many benefits of their activities for their local communities, many foresee issues for the future with regard to funding (47%) and maintaining a sufficient number of volunteers (32%). In relation to that, almost all collectives in the survey indicate a desire to grow in members and to branch out the services they can offer, but they feel that they lack the information and resources to do so, which can potentially endanger their longevity. See the work by Kevin Wittenberg, PhD-candidate at the Sociology department of Utrecht University and part of the SCOOP-program, who researches on collective action by citizens in the care domain. He studies why some neighbourhoods have the capacity to set up collective services among themselves while others do not, and he studies how health care collectives can overcome classical problems of cooperation to improve their longevity. To study these phenomena, he works closely with societal partners and leverages novel computational techniques to work with the scarce availability of data in this field. Email: k.wittenberg@uu.nl; Web: https://www.uu.nl/medewerkers/KWittenberg/Profile

45 Thijs van der Knaap et al., 'Citizens' Initiatives for Care and Welfare in the Netherlands: An Ecological Analysis', *BMC Public Health* 19, no. 1 (December 2019): 1334, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7599-y; Kevin Wittenberg, 'The Emergence of Citizen Collectives for Care: The Role of Social Cohesion', in *Working Paper*, forthcoming.

46 Wittenberg, 'The Emergence of Citizen Collectives for Care: The Role of Social Cohesion'. Figure 1.

47 Meike Bokhorst and Jurian Edelenbos, 'De Opkomst van Wooncoöperaties in Nederland?', Bestuurskunde 24, no. 2 (May 2015), https://doi.org/10.5553/Bk/092733872015024002005; van der Knaap et al., 'Citizens' Initiatives for Care and Welfare in the Netherlands'; Wittenberg, 'The Emergence of Citizen Collectives for Care: The Role of Social Cohesion'.

48 van der Knaap et al., 'Citizens' Initiatives for Care and Welfare in the Netherlands'; Kevin Wittenberg, 'The Contagion of Collective Action: The Spread of Citizen Care Collectives in The Netherlands', in *Working Paper*, forthcoming.

services, energy and care.[49] If we use the European estimates by Cooperatives Europe, there were nearly 180.000 European cooperative enterprises in 2015, an increase of 12% since 2009. Together, they represented 140 million members, employing more than 4,5 million people.[50] However, not all of the ICAs that we would consider to be cooperative SEs would also effectively choose for the cooperative format. Many organisations that eventually choose for the cooperative form are not coops in the beginning. And some organisations don't become cooperatives at all: neighbourhood organisations that aim at organising events in a local neighbourhood centre (also referred to as bewonersbedrijven or wijkbedrijven, see e.g. het Wijkpaleis in Rotterdam, or Ru Paré in Amsterdam), are not necessarily also coops. They might be better off as foundations, given that foundations often have easier access to subsidies and external financing.

Although we cannot rely on a good inventory of the cooperative social enterprise, there are however indirect indicators that show that the movement has both grown and matured over the past 10 years indeed. After a lot of experimentation across the Netherlands, there are parties around that consider themselves ready to start new collectivities on the basis of a standardised format, to spread a specific model that has been designed by a group of people, often after a considerable period of trial and error. They distribute this model, and they help people to adapt the model to the local conditions across the Netherlands. We see this for example in the case of the Knarrenhof,[51] a care model that has spread over the Netherlands and is very popular as a form of elderly care housing. A similar franchising model is to be found in the food sector, see for example the very popular model of the Herenboeren.[52] One of the somewhat older examples is that of the Broodfondsen (bread funds), a form of mutual for the self-employed. Started in 2011, the model has spread over the Netherlands, with currently 30.000 self-employed as their members.[53]

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49 NCR, lecture "The Role of Cooperatives in practice. The Dutch situation" by Martijn den Ouden at Rotterdam School of Management, on 23 november 2022.

50 Carmen Quintana Cocolina, 'The Power of Cooperation. Cooperatives Europe Key Figures 2015' (Brussel: Cooperatives Europe, 2016).

51 See https://knarrenhof.nl/.

52 See https://www.herenboeren.nl/.

53 See https://www.broodfonds.nl/.

Scaling up – a feasible option?

But what would be needed to have these organisations play a significant role in providing solutions for the grand challenges we are facing? Scaling is an issue that is coming up often, for instance in the form of questions by journalists and civil servants. Can social enterprises in general, and the collective action type in particular, grow across the country and what is the fastest way to do so? Some coops have a resource that allows for quite a lot of users, with a technology which leaves little chance of free riding, and thus allow for substantial scaling in their number of members. But in most cases having larger membership numbers can be quite problematic. There are good reasons for such organisations to be careful about too many members per organisation. To start with, many of those institutions for collective action build on trust to avoid free riding. This means that frequent meetings and social control are key elements to keep going in the long term. With membership growth, there's also a risk of growing bureaucracy, and diverging expectations between the original members and those who joined later on. How can such organisations, regardless of their new form of governance, scale without losing their identity and jeopardising their internal decision-making processes, which are on the whole mostly quite democratic? These and other questions are central to our NWO VICI-project UNICA, in which we intend to build a unified theory for the development of institutions for collective action in the past millennium.[54]

From the past waves mentioned before we may learn what works and what does not work in terms of scaling strategies. If we go back to that first wave of ICAs, we can say that although that wave managed pretty well, by expanding the number of individual ICAs over time and going on quite for a long time, in the end their way of scaling proved to be not without risk. In those times these institutions, such as commons and guilds, that built on social control to avoid free riding, preferred to stay small. Whenever they became larger and got more members, they often divided in more specialised units. The advantage of this was that they maintained the possibility to stay close to the needs of the members. If you know what the members want, you can act upon that. But you can also diversify your collective services, adapt more easily to a relatively homogenous group of members. At the same time, this scaling strategy made these organisations very vulnerable to external shocks. And eventually, this also led to the end of the first big wave, when the newly developing nation states across Europe decided that this was not an institution for the future development of their countries and abolished these institutions.[55]

In the second wave, we basically see the opposite taking place. See for example the example of FrieslandCampina, an agricultural cooperative which started in 1871 with nine farmers setting up their collective cheese cooperative. Between then and today, they merged several times with other companies, which has by now resulted in a

54 See https://collective-action.info/research-on-icas/_pro_main/our-projects/unica-vici-project/.

55 Tine De Moor, 'Three Waves of Cooperation: A Millennium of Institutions for Collective Action in Historical Perspective (Case Study: The Netherlands)', in *The Oxford Handbook of Institutions of International Economic Governance and Market Regulation*, by Tine De Moor, ed. Eric Brousseau, Jean-Michel Glachant, and Jérôme Sgard (Oxford University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190900571.013.8.

cooperative with over 18.000 shareholders-producers. Such a merger strategy was typical for similar institutions in this second wave.[56] This way they obtained the advantage of strength and critical mass. At the same time the strategy turned out to be problematic for the internal cohesion and decision-making process. Often this goes together with more bureaucracy ("Iron Law of Michels")[57], but it can also lead to the emergence of subgroups or factions with divergent interests and more variation in expectations, whereby the original generation (based on ideology) has other ideas about the organisation than followers (starting from utility).

In general, there is no real consensus yet about what the impact is of growth in membership on the functioning of an ICA, and to what extent the loss of internal cohesion may be countered with institutional arrangements. Many studies suggest that when the number of members is large, participants may assume that their own actions will have little effect on the outcome.[58] Scholars have been trying to determine whether small or large groups are more likely to cooperate successfully within an ICA context, and what the threshold level would be.[59] Smaller groups are often presumed to allow for greater interaction and social cohesion, which ensures cooperation and avoids free riding.[60] Generally, it is assumed that as group size increases, the need for leadership becomes more manifest to manage operations, the amount of resources available for problem solving may increase. At the same time, communication, cooperation, and consensus making may become more difficult due to increasing diversity within the group, and the tendency to develop bureaucratic procedures expands.[61] Increases in group size can reduce opportunities for frequent interaction, leading to fewer opportunities for reputation building and mutual monitoring, both of which are thought to have a positive impact on cooperation.[62] Institutions with decision-making procedures that are internally adapted to the size of membership can contribute to

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56 The way of scaling in the long-run is subject of our VICI-project UNICA on which Fijnanda van Klingeren, Véronique De Herde, Marianne Groep-Foncke, Grant Halliday, and Shreya Paudel are working, also in cooperation with Florian Grisel and Dustin Garrick.

57 Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Hearst's International Library Company, 1915).

58 Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups.*

59 Claudio Tagliapietra, 'Consequences of Social and Resource: Heterogeneity in Endogenous Institutions' (Design and Dynamics of Institutions for Collective Action: A Tribute to Prof. Elinor Ostrom, Second Thematic Conference of the IASC, Utrecht, 2012), https://hdl.handle.net/10535/8623.

60 José Miguel Lana Berasain, 'The Transfiguration of the Community. The Survival of the Commons in the Ebro Basin: Navarra from the 15th to the 20th Centuries', *The International Journal of the Commons 2*, no. 2 (2008); Tagliapietra, 'Consequences of Social and Resource: Heterogeneity in Endogenous Institutions'.

61 Robert Michels and Frank R. Pfetsch, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie: Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig, 1911).

62 Amy R. Poteete and Elinor Ostrom, 'Heterogeneity, Group Size and Collective Action: The Role of Institutions in Forest Management', *Development and Change* 35, no. 3 (2004): 435–61, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2004.00360.x; Wu Yang et al., 'Nonlinear Effects of Group Size on Collective Action and Resource Outcomes', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110, no. 27 (2 July 2013): 10916–21, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1301733110.

tempering the harmful effects of a large size.[63] However, recent research shows that the relationship between members of a coop and the organisation also plays a role. In the past, cooperatives often drew their members from small and homogenous communities with a close-knit network and similar preferences. Today, cooperatives may draw their members from large and heterogenous populations that are less socially connected and who hold diverse preferences. A case in point here are platform cooperatives that are owned and governed by workers in the gig economy, which consists of project-based service jobs organised by intermediaries.[64] While expanding the reach of cooperatives beyond the "usual suspects", Bunders & Akkerman show that members who hold more deviating preferences and less social connections to other members are less committed to staying part of a platform cooperative. In times of membership growth, finding shared interests and community building are therefore crucial to making these new forms of cooperatives resilient.[65] More in general, there is clearly a need for a better understanding of which managerial practices can contribute to solving the challenges of the larger coops today.[66]

Whilst trying to deal with growing membership, we also see among the current cooperatives in specific sectors a new approach that can be considered the best of two worlds. Or maybe we could say: the best of two waves. Instead of staying small and vulnerable for external pressure, ICAs today tend to follow a network strategy. In Academia, that is also known as polycentricity, a complex form of governance with multiple centres of decision-making, each of which operates with some degree of autonomy. Present-day networks such as Nederland Zorgt voor Elkaar, Energie Samen or LANSCO have the advantage that their member organisations can keep focusing on the needs of their members, while their networks are in fact interest groups of similar organisations utilized to exchange knowledge,[67] to identify joint local problems and address these collectively vis-à-vis for example the national government in manifestos

63 Poteete and Ostrom, 'Heterogeneity, Group Size and Collective Action: The Role of Institutions in Forest Management'.

64 Bunders et al., 'The Feasibility of Platform Cooperatives in the Gig Economy'.

65 Damion Jonathan Bunders and Agnes Akkerman, 'Commitment Issues? Analysing the Effect of Preference Deviation and Social Embeddedness on Member Commitment to Worker Cooperatives in the Gig Economy', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 11 June 2022, 0143831X2211014, https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X221101425.

66 Vera Negri Zamagni, 'Interpreting the Roles and Economic Importance of Cooperative Enterprises in a Historical Perspective', *Journal of Entrepreneurial and Organizational Diversity 1*, no. 1 (21 December 2012), https://doi.org/10.5947/jeod.2012.002.

67 Tom Dedeurwaerdere, Audrey Polard, and Paolo Melindi-Ghidi, 'The Role of Network Bridging Organisations in Compensation Payments for Agri-Environmental Services under the EU Common Agricultural Policy', *Ecological Economics* 119, no. Journal Article (2015): 24–38, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2015.07.025; Tito Menzani and Vera Zamagni, 'Cooperative Networks in the Italian Economy', *Enterprise and Society* 11, no. 1 (March 2010): 98–127, https://doi.org/10.1093/es/khp029; Nat 'alia Pimenta Monteiro and Geoff Stewart, 'Scale, Scope and Survival: A Comparison of Cooperative and Capitalist Modes of Production', *Review of Industrial Organization* 47, no. 1 (2015): 91–118, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11151-015-9464-1. See https://nlzorgtvoorelkaar.nl/, https://energiesamen.nu/, and https://lansco.nl/.

and petitions[68], and to form multi-level connections. Moreover, such umbrella organisations can also be critical to manage tensions between different institutional logics, as shown for the case of the European Federation of Renewable Energy Cooperatives, or the German Federation of Community Car Sharing, which were acting as guarantors of community values.[69] In this way, the individual units of organisation manage to stay small, which is often what practitioners prefer, trying to avoid the problems mentioned above. In some cases – such as the bread funds – there are even rules about a maximum number of members. In the model promoted by the Broodfondsen, the maximum number of members is 51.

The disadvantage of such networks that link organisations within a specific sector is that opportunities, such as offering more diverse services to members, are often overlooked, because they very much concentrate on enabling collective action within their own sector. Looking into the opportunities of changing this, is exactly what we intend to do within our part of the Scentiss-project. From historical studies we know that institutions for collective action over time often developed several different services, allowing them to bind their members more closely to the organisation, and gradually they often became what we call multi-purpose organisations. Research by Arthur Feinberg[70] suggests that people do not always join such organisations merely for their primary function (e.g. providing food, energy, or certain services), but also for less tangible purposes such as being outdoors, bonding with other people or having an impact within their neighbourhood.[71] Drawing on the knowledge mentioned above, the Scentiss-project, conducted together with colleagues from the universities of Utrecht and Eindhoven and many different societal partners, aims at strengthening collaborative learning and provide new knowledge, based on multidisciplinary work, that helps local governments in determining viable strategies for achieving their missions on social and sustainable goals via scalable bottom-up initiatives characterized by social and community-building goals. This research project capitalizes on a unique consortium gathered around the Dutch City Deal Impact Entrepreneurship (launched in April 2021). Part of the solution to become more resilient can also be to broaden the range of services offered, by scaling deep, thereby making the organisation more relevant for its

68 See for instance the petition by housing cooperative de Nieuwe Meent (Parool 1 februari 2023: Voortbestaan van de Nieuwe Meent, een van de pionierende wooncoöperaties van Amsterdam, hangt aan een zijden draadje) or the petition aimed at town councils by the organisation Ruimte voor Collectief Wonen (https://www.raadleiderdorp.nl/documenten/nieuws-en-bewonersbrieven/2021-06-28-Manifest-passend-beleid-voor-collectieve-en-andere-woonvormen-inclusief-bijlagen-Geredigeerd.pdf).

69 Thomas Bauwens, Taneli Vaskelainen, and Koen Frenken, 'Conceptualising Institutional Complexity in the Upscaling of Community Enterprises: Lessons from Renewable Energy and Carsharing', *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 42 (March 2022): 138–51, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2021.12.007.

70 Arthur Feinberg is an environmental engineer who has done research on urban commons and community resilience. Within our research team he is a postdoctoral researcher engaged in both the CollectieveKracht platform and the Scentiss-project.

71 Arthur Feinberg, Amineh Ghorbani, and Paulien M. Herder, 'Commoning toward Urban Resilience: The Role of Trust, Social Cohesion, and Involvement in a Simulated Urban Commons Setting', *Journal of Urban Affairs* 45, no. 2 (7 February 2023): 142–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2020.1851139.

members and strengthening the reciprocity that is so vital for coops. Instead of growing in numbers (of members) there are other opportunities to scale up the activities of the organisation, e.g. by becoming multi-purpose organisations. We see this happening across the Netherlands, where some coops decide to not just invest in energy provision, but also in care. One of the advantages of a multipurpose organisation is that it can increase the willingness to act reciprocally in various domains and it can contribute to obtaining a more sustainable business model.

Another development in terms of scaling strategies is the formation of top cooperatives, whereby coops with similar needs work together. Only in the case of sufficient critical mass of cooperative organisations with similar needs can the top coop come into existence. In the energy sector, the example of Samen OM energie, a non-profit which unites 75 energy coops across the Netherlands[72], has taken over some of the administrative duties of their member cooperatives, which then depend less on volunteers for administrative duties and reach a higher organisational efficiency. The main goal of these organisations is to take care of some services that are needed by all their cooperative members, such as membership registration but also lobby work for the whole group of coops. By uniting forces, they create sufficient critical mass and accordingly reduce a.o. transaction and information costs, and increase their bargaining power with other players in the sector.

Another example of a coop that consists of legal instead of natural entities is that of the "gebiedscoöperatie", or, in a somewhat crooked translation an "area cooperative". The Netherlands has seen a fairly rapid development of these over the past 10 years, in particular in areas that required additional attention, e.g. a railway station neighbourhood (such as in Gebiedscoöperatie Stationspark Deurne) or rural areas (Gebiedscoöperatie Rivierenland). Unlike the regular citizen collective, its members are not composed of individuals, but of organisations. Unlike top cooperatives (like Samen OM energie), these organisations are not necessarily cooperatives themselves, but can also be a grouping of various partners, from local governments that see the need for cooperation to develop a particular area in their municipality, schools that see training opportunities for their students, local welfare organisations that get involved to offer space and opportunities for local youth, to commercial partners in e.g. the recreation sector. By bringing these forces together in a cooperative format they align stakes and shares, and make sure that the objectives are formulated in the benefit of various stakeholders. The operating area can be a district, municipality, or a specific geographical area.[73] Although the very first gebiedscoöperatie in the Netherlands, called Westerkwartier, has recently been terminated,[74] the model is gaining momentum in the Netherlands – and to our knowledge only in the Netherlands in this particular format.

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72 https://samenom.nl/.

73 See https://www.duurzaamdoor.nl/projecten/project-rijnlands-gebiedsarrangement.

74 https://www.nieuweoogst.nl/nieuws/2022/09/27/waarom-is-eerste-gebiedscooperatie-in-groningen-failliet.

These present-day solutions differ from earlier scaling strategies, but may in fact prove to be the ideal solution to combine resilience of individual ICAs with the growth of the movement as such, whilst at the same time creating a powerful tool for lobbying for the joint cause. During the first wave, ICAs were especially vulnerable to top-down dissolution measures by governments, as they lacked supra-local organisation.[75] Hence the rapid and ubiquitous disappearance by the middle of the nineteenth century, at the latest, of most commons[76] and guilds across Europe.[77] ICAs of the second wave could more easily strengthen their movement by creating substantial critical mass both in membership and resources (e.g. Rabobank, FrieslandCampina). The current wave of ICAs, in turn, seems to be aiming at combining the positive sides of both strategies in the past.

Bridging the gap between individual interests and grand challenges through collective action

The way to have the most impact on society as a whole, however, is by scaling up the norms and the values behind these organisations, which differ quite substantially from a regular enterprise. Values such as reciprocity, solidarity, sufficiency are absolutely central to these organisations' functioning. And they are necessary to make sure that the organisation runs, that they can focus on what they need to do for their members in terms of utility, of social equity and efficiency.

Are these also beneficial to society at large? When facing such grand challenges, we need to go back to the drawing table and wonder about the "how": which governance models may contribute to creating change that has impact, on both individual and societal level? Which forms of institutions hold the promise of being transformative? Together with colleagues in the UK, we are studying the relationship between cooperatives and the Social Development Goals (SDGs), as part of an Independent Social Research Foundation project.[78] Cooperative principles – from the original Rochdale Principles first set out in 1844 by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers

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75 Anders Forsman et al., 'Eco-Evolutionary Perspectives on Emergence, Dispersion and Dissolution of Historical Dutch Commons', ed. Stephen P. Aldrich, *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 7 (30 July 2020): e0236471, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0236471.

76 S. Brakensiek, *Gemeinheitsteilungen in Europa. Die Privatisierung Der Kollektiven Nutzung Des Bodens Im 18. Und 19. Jahrhundert (Jahrbuch Für Wirtschaftsgeschichte 2)*, Book, Whole (Berlin: Seminar fur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, 2000); M. -D Demélas and N. Vivier, 'Les Propriétés Collectives Face Aux Attaques Libérales (1750-1914). Europe Occidentale et Amérique Latine', no. Generic (2003): 330.

77 S. R. Epstein and Maarten Prak, *Guilds, Innovation and the European Economy, 1400-1800*, Book, Whole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

78 The Cooperatives for Sustainable Development project brings together an interdisciplinary team of researchers for a two-day workshop on the role of cooperative firms in fostering sustainable development in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets a course to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. The project is led by Dr. Francesca Cagliardi and Dr. David Gindis (University of Herefordshire). Other participants include Dr. Chris Colvin (Queen's University Belfast), Dr. Elisavet Mantzani (University of Birmingham) and Prof.dr. Rory Ridley-Duff (Sheffield Hallam University).

– to their current formulation by the International Cooperative Alliance, can in many cases be aligned with the objectives as formulated in the SDGs. Colleague Sonja Novkovic stresses moreover the transformative potential of the cooperative model because of its distributed power (democratic decision-making), fair distribution of income, its promotion of human dignity (impacting workers, consumers, producers, community), decommodification of fictitious commodities (land, labour, money, housing, food, health, enterprise, knowledge), longevity and resilience (purpose to serve future generations) and stress on economic justice.[79] But what exactly does cooperative governance mean for its members and the organisation itself? Does being part of such an organisation really make a difference for those involved now, and in the future? And are there no potential pitfalls to this?

On the individual level: spill-over effects

On the level of individual members, cooperatives have the potential to be a school for democratic citizenship, by involving citizens in democratic processes.[80] Cooperatives can offer multiple insights into business model innovation due to their incorporation of social, environmental, and economic aspects by conception.[81] In Pateman's civic spill-over thesis, it is argued that democratic participation in the workplace spills over into political participation if people are confronted with democratic practices on a daily basis.[82] The potential spill-over effect has so far been studied primarily in the context of worker cooperatives, as these are among the best forms of participatory enterprises, as they radically modify the distribution of power and authority in favour of the workforce.[83] In worker cooperatives, the workers themselves are owners of the company and participate in strategic decision-making on an equal basis, independent of the capital they own, whilst also promoting equality among all workers in terms of wages, formal rights, status, life chances, access to and control of knowledge,

79 Sonja Novkovic, 'Cooperative Identity as a Yardstick for Transformative Change', *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics* 93, no. 2 (June 2022): 313–36, https://doi.org/10.1111/apce.12362.

80 Domenico Dentoni et al., 'Learning "Who We Are" by Doing: Processes of Co-Constructing Prosocial Identities in Community-Based Enterprises', *Journal of Business Venturing* 33, no. 5 (September 2018): 603–22, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2017.12.010.

81 Carles Manera and Eloi Serrano, 'Management, Cooperatives and Sustainability: A New Carles Manera and Eloi Serrano, 'Management, Cooperatives and *Sustainability*: A New Methodological Proposal for a Holistic Analysis', Sustainability 14, no. 12 (20 June 2022): 7489, https://doi.org/10.3390/su14127489.

82 Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

83 See for instance Stéphane Jaumier, 'Preventing Chiefs from Being Chiefs: An Ethnography of a Co-Operative Sheet-Metal Factory', *Organization* 24, no. 2 (March 2017): 218–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508416664144; Robert Alan Dahl, A Preface to Economic Democracy (Berkeley Los Angeles: University of California press, 1985); Tom Malleson, 'Rawls, Property-Owning Democracy, and Democratic Socialism: Property-Owning Democracy and Democratic Socialism', *Journal of Social Philosophy* 45, no. 2 (June 2014): 228–51, https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12061; Stephen Nolan, Eleonore Perrin Massebiaux, and Tomas Gorman, 'Saving Jobs, Promoting Democracy: Worker Co-Operatives', *Irish Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 2 (November 2013): 103–15, https://doi.org/10.7227/IJS.21.2.8.

information and communication, and control over decision-making processes.[84] In a worker coop, employees are socialized to democratic behaviour and learn skills that are useful for taking part in democratic life of society at large. In a recent study, a positive relationship between perceived participation in decision-making on the one hand and active citizenship and participation in representative democracy on the other was shown.[85] It is the experienced participation in decision-making within the cooperative – based on daily work practices and interactions with colleagues – that has a secondary effect on society[86] and this in turn may have an effect on their political efficacy and democratic citizenship, as workplace participation is strongly positively associated with increased interest in politics and wider pro-democracy affect.[87]

The case of the worker coops shows that involvement in the internal decision-making process can have a positive effect on the willingness to participate in society at large, to contribute to the greater good, for example by being politically active outside of the cooperative. Based on this, we may also study whether such a spill-over effect can exist in other domains too, e.g. that of sustainable behaviour. There are studies that show that membership of cooperatives may have an effect on "ethical consumption",[88] suggesting that there might be a positive relationship between the presence of cooperatives in an area on people's preference and willingness to choose fair trade products. There are many examples of member-based, participatory enterprises involving the promotion of environmental protection such as agricultural cooperatives engaged in organic agriculture and farming, fishery and forestry cooperatives achieving a more sustainable management of natural resources, and renewable energy cooperatives providing ecologically-friendly alternatives in the field of energy production and consumption, among others.[89] At the same time, scientific research shows that the consumers' willingness to act sustainably is influenced by the degree to which they have an influence. Linda Steg, expert in the field of sustainable behaviour, warns that there is little point in focusing on doom scenarios without offering people prospects for taking action, they only serve to discourage people. It is important to offer

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84 Marcelo Vieta et al., 'Participation in Worker Cooperatives', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Volunteering, Civic Participation, and Nonprofit Associations*, ed. David Horton Smith, Robert A. Stebbins, and Jurgen Grotz (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 436–53, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-26317-9_21.

85 Wolfgang G. Weber, Christine Unterrainer, and Thomas Höge, 'Psychological Research on Organisational Democracy: A Meta-Analysis of Individual, Organisational, and Societal Outcomes', *Applied Psychology* 69, no. 3 (July 2020): 1009–71, https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12205.

86 David Boud and Heather Middleton, 'Learning from Others at Work: Communities of Practice and Informal Learning', *Journal of Workplace Learning* 15, no. 5 (September 2003): 194–202, https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620310483895.

87 Andrew Timming and Juliette Summers, 'Is Workplace Democracy Associated with Wider Pro-Democracy Affect? A Structural Equation Model', *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 41, no. 3 (August 2020): 709–26, https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X17744028.

88 De Devitiis, B., De Luca, A. I., & Maietta, O. W. (2012). Gender Differences in Pro-Social Behaviour: The Case of Fair Trade Food Consumers. Climate Change and Sustainable Development (pp. 355-360). Springer.

89 Isabelita Manalo Pabuayon, *Agricultural Policy: Perspectives from the Philippines and Other Developing Countries* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2013).

people perspectives to move ahead, and to tell them what they as individuals can do to help remedy the situation.[90]

However, there is also a chance for the opposite, called a rebound effect, or Jevons' Paradox.[91] How much cooperative efforts are we willing to develop as individuals? The rebound effect shows us that the change towards the use of more sustainable energy does not necessarily lead to reduced energy use. An improvement in resource efficiency, such as energy efficiency, may lead to smaller reductions in the consumption of energy and other resources than is expected. Solar panels can reduce households' energy bills in the long term, but as soon as the price goes down, households may end up consuming more energy than before. This may prove, in the end, to be even worse for the system, as a form of moral licensing and/or halo-effect.[92] Could this also appear in relation to other types of resources and prosocial behaviour, as a consequence of being a member of a cooperative? Whether or not such a spill-over effect can be linked to the specific governance regime of the cooperative needs to be studied and is part of a larger research plan together with colleagues from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Utrecht University and Eindhoven University of Technology.

Another risk is that purpose-driven organisations become too dependent on the contribution of volunteers, especially in the start-up phase, but often also throughout the entire lifetime of the organisation. When the need for professionalization becomes greater, the position of the volunteer, but also that of for example the self-employed collaborators is being questioned: what kind of role do they have? Which "power relations" do they have vis-à-vis the other stakeholders in the organisation? Can volunteers decide on the work of employees or should it be the other way around? This issue, together with other questions about roles of for example founders and other internal decision-making issues are really pressing for many new collectives and deserve more attention.[93]

On the organisational level: resilience of cooperative social enterprises

Many parties in the market initially assume – often intuitively – that when a company combines social goals and financial goals, there is a trade-off between these goals, for example with regard to the results to be achieved: financial profit is supposedly traded for social profit. However, there are plenty of examples that show that the opposite

90 Thijs Bouman and Linda Steg, 'A Spiral of (in)Action: Empowering People to Translate Their Values in Climate Action', *One Earth* 5, no. 9 (September 2022): 975–78, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2022.08.009. See also https://www.duurzaam-ondernemen.nl/linda-steg-rug-meer-duurzaam-gedrag-doemscenarios-zonder-handelingsperspectief-motiveren-niet/.

91 Blake Alcott, 'Jevons' Paradox', *Ecological Economics* 54, no. 1 (July 2005): 9–21, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2005.03.020.

92 Yueming Qiu, Matthew E. Kahn, and Bo Xing, 'Quantifying the Rebound Effects of Residential Solar Panel Adoption', *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 96 (July 2019): 310–41, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeem.2019.06.003.

93 Debbie Haski-Leventhal, Lonneke Roza, and Lucas C. P. M. Meijs, 'Congruence in Corporate Social Responsibility: Connecting the Identity and Behavior of Employers and Employees', *Journal of Business Ethics* 143, no. 1 (June 2017): 35–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2793-z.

could be true as well. To put it bluntly, the common assumption is that the more the company focuses on social issues in its business operations, the higher the (financial) risks and the lower the likely profit, if any. But many practitioners see that this is not the case. Or at least not always. Of course, risk and return differ per company (due to stability, growth opportunities, etc.), yet this is not different for social enterprises than for traditional ones. We learn from practitioners – but more research is needed – that social enterprises in general do not necessarily have worse but often even better results. The default risk of social enterprises – which measures the likelihood that they would fail to repay their loans – could very well be lower than in more traditional enterprises. Most companies do not make it to the first five years. Depending on the sector, default rates of start-ups in the first five years are between 40-80%. We do not know for sure, but there are indications from practitioners that although often assumed otherwise, among social enterprises these percentages could very well be substantially lower. We can find some support for this already in the study of resilience of cooperatives, which show that these on the whole survive considerably longer than traditional companies, but it remains unclear what factors this should be attributed to and which phase of development is contributing most to their resilience.[94] Is there a systematically different corporate culture, which, for example, leads to a different design of the business model? Or are there competitive advantages in the market, e.g. because customers consider a sustainable/social product to be better? Or is it the dedication of the employees that contributes to a higher efficiency of the organisation? Within our research team such issues are being dealt with as part of the VICI-project UNICA.[95]

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94 Adrien Billiet et al., 'The Resilience of the Cooperative Model: How Do Cooperatives Deal with the COVID-19 Crisis?', Strategic Change 30, no. 2 (March 2021): 99–108, https://doi.org/10.1002/jsc.2393.

95 At the moment, we are retracing the longitudinal evolution of ICAs over the last two centuries, although this proves to be rather problematic. We have in the past composed several databases and studies on the longevity of early modern types of institutions for collective action such as guilds and commons, see Molood Ale Ebrahim Dehkordi et al., 'Long-Term Dynamics of Institutions: Using ABM as a Complementary Tool to Support Theory Development in Historical Studies', *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 24, no. 4 (2021): 7, https://doi.org/10.18564/jasss.4706; Anders Forsman et al., 'Comparisons of Historical Dutch Commons Inform about the Long-Term Dynamics of Social-Ecological Systems', ed. Jacob Freeman, *PLOS ONE 16*, no. 8 (27 August 2021): e0256803, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256803; Mike Farjam et al., 'Shared Patterns in Long-Term Dynamics of Commons as Institutions for Collective Action', *International Journal of the Commons* 14, no. 1 (2020): 78–90, https://doi.org/10.5334/ijc.959; Tine De Moor, *The Dilemma of the Commoners*, Book, Whole (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Currently, we are exploring the longevity of cooperatives in the 19th and 20th centuries, in several European countries. The main difficulties with this have to do with the availability of the sources, as not all countries keep track of their registration records over time – so retracing the longitudinal evolution of cooperatives requires quite a lot of alternative sources' exploration, mainly from archives of cooperative federations. Véronique De Herde is an interdisciplinary scientist with a background in history and bioengineering. She approaches agri-food cooperatives from an historical and qualitative angle to understand their contribution to sustainable value chain development in prospective agri-food pathways. She focuses, in particular, on the effect of context on the strategic relevance of cooperative models of value chain organisation. As postdoctoral researcher at RSM, she gathers historical evidence on the emergence of cooperatives over the last centuries, and reviews historical work studying cooperatives in their context of evolution. deherde@rsm.nl

Cooperatives on the whole are assumed to have a longer lifespan than regular businesses. Some would probably mockingly claim that is because they have such long meetings, but in fact, in our own historical research, together with amongst others colleague Amineh Ghorbani from TUDelft, we discovered that this indeed might be part of the key to longevity as an organisation. Not the availability of sanctioning instruments was instrumental to create long-living commons in the past, but the meetings commoners had, both to internalize rules or values, and to solve problems.[96] Longevity of an organisation is no indicator for quality, but the lack of an imminent need for sanctioning measures does help to avoid unnecessary costs. Regardless of the reasons, there are clear indications that cooperatives manage to survive longer than average enterprises. In literature it is often stated that the emergence of cooperatives is closely related to economic downturns (see higher) and acute crises.[97] However, based on our previous research,[98] it seems that the beginning of a new wave of institutions for collective action in general often appears before great crises take their full form, and as such may even function as an early warning system of the economic system under stress. It has often been claimed that cooperatives have a better capacity to deal with crises overall because of their long-term perspective and focus on values instead of outcomes.[99] Similar claims have recently also been made in relation to the covid crisis.[100] There are indeed indications, both historical and contemporary, as I already explained in my previous inaugural lecture, that ICAs are very resilient organisations, but we can so far not give a clear explanation of why this would be the case. Within our research program this is and will remain an important point of attention.

Overall, we should not glorify cooperatives, as sometimes happens through the halo-effect, studied by my colleagues Lucas Meijs and Muel Kaptein in their research on NGOs.[101] But there are more reasons why we should not: investing in a cooperative remains a risk for those involved, but this often overlooked and badly communicated. Moreover, things do go wrong, think of the Arco-debacle in Flanders, which is still haunting the current government. And how to get through the value of death, which

96 Tine De Moor et al., 'Taking Sanctioning Seriously: The Impact of Sanctions on the Resilience of Historical Commons in Europe', *Journal of Rural Studies* 87 (October 2021): 181–88, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.08.009. See also Arthur Feinberg et al., 'Sustaining Collective Action in Urban Community Gardens', *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 24, no. 3 (2021): 3, https://doi.org/10.18564/jasss.4506.

97 Billiet et al., 'The Resilience of the Cooperative Model'.

98 De Moor, *Homo Cooperans*: *Institutions for Collective Action and the Compassionate Society*. See also De Moor, 'Three Waves of Cooperation'.

99 Bruno Roelants et al., 'The Resilience of the Cooperative Model. How Worker Cooperatives, Social Cooperatives and Other Worker-Owned Enterprises Respond to the Crisis and Its Consequences' (CECOP-CICOPA, June 2012); Johnston Birchall and Lou Hammond Kettilson, 'Resilience of the Cooperative Business Model in Times of Crisis', *International Labour Office, Sustainable Enterprise Programme* (Geneva: International Labour Office, Sustainable Enterprise Programme, 2009).

100 Billiet et al., 'The Resilience of the Cooperative Model'.

101 Isabel De Bruin Cardoso et al., 'How Moral Goodness Drives Unethical Behavior: Empirical Evidence for the NGO Halo Effect', 2022, https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19940.65921.

did mean the end for NewB, beyond the initial enthusiasm of its founders.[102] But likewise: how to guard the cooperative spirit when the success becomes so large that internal democratic decision-making is suppressed? All these are warnings that the cooperative social enterprise also has its limits and is not immune to what we could frame as "cooperative mission drift": loosening the internal rules on democratic decision-making under the pressure of the size of the organisation.

The role of stakeholders

There are good reasons to involve citizens more explicitly in the management and use of resources, to make them aware of the challenges ahead of us. As explained, it potentially has a multitude of positive effects on creating new opportunities to tackle the current global challenges with the involvement of all stakeholders in society. It may help to form a more solid-based financial basis for social entrepreneurs, when these prosumers actually chip in. By involving citizens in decision-making processes, we may also increase support for new technologies, like windmills or hydrogen power plants, or to bring those grand challenges to local communities. But as mentioned, at the same time, we should not be blind for possible negative side effects, such as what we call rebound effects and moral licensing effects. Neither should we forget that being part of an organisation or a cooperative demands a financial risk of its members, of citizens when they invest in these organisations.

The role of financiers

The financial risk remains an important issue to cover, also from the perspective of the financial organisations that are approached to invest. For the whole sector of social enterprise there is a need for a better understanding of what is needed in terms of financial support. Social enterprises are value-driven organisations, but whether a social enterprise gets the financial support it needs depends on a number of factors, not just the values they pursue. Many social enterprises struggle to become financially sustainable:[103] around 75% of social enterprises currently rely on additional external financing.[104] Yet, receiving sufficient external financing remains one of the biggest self-reported challenges for social enterprises. Challenges with the funding of social enterprises have long been assumed to be the result of a lack of supply, meaning that the amount of financing options is insufficient to cover the existing demand from social

102 https://www.hln.be/economie/newb-stopt-met-bankieren-ceo-zegt-dat-rekeninghouders-worden-vergoed-significant-verlies-dreigt-voor-cooperanten-br~a668c066/.

103 Obey Dzomonda, 'Demystifying the Challenges Faced by Challenges Faced by Social Entrepreneurs in Pursuit of Their Social Mission in South Africa', *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal* 24, no. 4 (2021): 1–17; Paul Umfreville and Christine Bonnin, 'Mind the Gap: Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities for Social Enterprise in Vietnam', *Forum for Development Studies* 48, no. 2 (4 May 2021): 331–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2021.1907785; Xiaoyi Zhang et al., 'Paths out of Poverty: Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development', *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (30 November 2022): 1062669, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1062669.

104 Dupain, W. et al., 'The State of Social Enterprise in Europe – European Social Enterprise Monitor 2021-2022'.

enterprises.[105] Even though the latest figures from the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) estimate that the global impact investing market has grown to more than a trillion USD assets under management,[106] statistics also seem to suggest that social enterprises are more likely to receive financing from banks rather than from impact investors.[107] Do social enterprises prefer bank financing over impact investments, even though impact investors would be expected to offer more favourable return expectations? Do social enterprises miss opportunities to access more favourable financing opportunities from impact investors? Or do impact investors miss opportunities to invest in investment-ready social enterprises? These topics are currently being studied in depth by PhD student Karoline Heitmann within our research team.[108]

The role of governments

Governments, in turn, have the tendency to consider forms of cooperative social enterprises where citizens take the lead as a form of "citizen participation", similar to other forms that we see popping up across Europe, such as citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting or G1000s. ICAs are growing across the country, but in many cases they are still seen as experiments, as ways to involve citizens in the provision of public goods, whereas in fact, they are often used to provide private goods. The debate which considers citizens active in a citizen collective as a form of citizen participation has taken a rapid development in the past 10 years,[109] yet in reality these organisations are often finding it very difficult to work together with (local) governments and are not seldom in conflict with them. Even though there are local governments that manage to develop a productive working relationship with ICAs, there are many examples of the opposite.

I would like to argue that these collectivities of citizens should not be seen as forms of citizen participation. Rather, they should be seen as enterprises in their own right, ran by entrepreneurial citizens who are often providing a service that is no longer provided by the government. It is my firm belief that we have to recognize these ICAs as enterprises, because that is what they are in most cases. Governments can give recognition to these organisations as a form of social enterprise through, to start with, systematic inventory and mapping of all social enterprises, in their entire breadth. They should consider the

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105 Iain Andrew Davies, Helen Haugh, and Liudmila Chambers, 'Barriers to Social Enterprise Growth', *Journal of Small Business Management* 57, no. 4 (October 2019): 1616–36, https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12429; B. Doherty, H. Haugh, and F. Lyon, 'Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations: A Review and Research Agenda', *International Journal of Management Reviews* 16, no. 4 (2014): 417–36; Alex Nicholls, 'The Legitimacy of Social Entrepreneurship: Reflexive Isomorphism in a Pre-Paradigmatic Field', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 34, no. 4 (2010): 611–33, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00397.x.

106 Dean Hand, Ben Ringel, and Alexander Danel, 'Sizing the Impact Investing Market: 2022. The Global Impact Investing Network' (New York: GIIN, 2022).

107 Dupain, W. et al., 'The State of Social Enterprise in Europe – European Social Enterprise Monitor 2021-2022'.

108 See https://www.erim.eur.nl/people/karoline-heitmann/.

109 Tine De Moor, 'Essay "De Prosociale Burger Als Copiloot"', Publiek Denken, 31 March 2020, https://publiekdenken.nl/partners/kennisprogramma-duurzaamdoor/essay-de-prosociale-burger-als-copiloot/.

role of networks of these organisations, because those might have the tools at hand to deal with the historically low trust in the government today. They can be the linking pin, also, between the government and the citizen.

Table 2 Varieties of citizen involvement in policy. Derived from De Moor, 'De prosociale burger als copiloot' (2020).

	REPRESEN-TATION	INVOLVEMENT	PARTICIPATION	CO-CREATION	PARTNERSHIP	Independent COLLECTIVITIES
Examples	City council	Referenda Village boards G1000	Citizen budget	Government facilitates initiatives, via e.g. infra-structure Right to Challenge	Collectivies of citizens, often in the form of coops, in which govern-ments take part	Citizen coops in which governments are not involved
Type of citizen involvement	Limited	Advisory	Participation in decision making	Societal participation	Societal initiatives	Societal initiatives
Role of the citizen	Delegate	Join the discussion, think along	Co-decide	Implement together	Implement	Implement at their descretion
Ownership / decision-making power	Govern-ment	Government	Government, sometimes delegated e.g. to citizen juries	Government The initiative lies with the inhabitants, the government provides the framework	Citizens The govern-ment's role is limited, being a partner with a role equal to other involved parties	Citizens Citizens make arrangements without support or intervention by the government
Remarks	Largely limited to political participation			Predominantly provision of public and private goods and services		Predomi-nantly provi-sion of private services

If there is indeed such potential for these organisations to have impact on the societal level, and to be incubators for change, then it seems logic for governments to pay attention to such developments. So far, that is not always the case. Partly this is due to these organisations themselves: sometimes out of frustration they decide to work independently from governments and, especially in their start-up phase, primarily work to get their organisation running. But there is more to it. The SE Monitor 2019 indicated that of all the obstacles SEs might encounter, working together with the local governments is by far the most important.[110] A similar conclusion was drawn from interviews with ICAs across the Netherlands in 2020. In our report "Krachtiger als collectief", we tried to identify the main challenges for ICAs in the Netherlands at that time. The relationship with the government was a striking one, both in terms of what they reported as problems, but also what they failed to mention regarding the government as a stakeholder. When these ICAs were asked, they didn't mention liability issues for example, whereas local government are very worried about transparency in the division of responsibilities when citizens are taking the lead. ICAs from their side were complaining that governments were not familiar with other forms of governance, showed a lack of confidence and trust in independently functioning ICAs, and that the ICAs found it difficult to find their way in the bureaucratic labyrinth, especially when addressing issues in different domains. One of the most striking realisations from the work we did with collectives and other stakeholders through the CollectieveKracht platform over the past three years was the enormous lack of mutual understanding between the stakeholders we have interviewed and worked with.[111] Local governments have the duty to focus on the accessibility of public services, but citizen collectives that take over these services they see often as a given, which are barely worth a discussion.

At the same time, a more complete view of the social enterprise in all its variants would also mean that the current initiative to give additional legal backing to social enterprises in the form of the BV-maatschappelijk needs to be reconsidered. Building on a more institutionally diverse and a more complete picture of all social enterprises, as we have argued recently in various articles.[112]

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110 Social Enterprise NL, 'De Social Enterprise Monitor 2019. Het Onderzoek Naar de Ontwikkelingen van Sociale Ondernemingen in Nederland', 2019.

111 De Moor, Duffhues Ton, and Veldsink, Carolien, 'Krachtiger Als Collectief. Uitdagingen van Burgercollectieven in Nederland, Anno 2020' (Research team Institutions for Collective Action, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, 2020).

112 Coline Serres and Tine De Moor, 'Social Enterprises in the Netherlands: Towards More Institutional Diversity?', in *The International Handbook of Social Enterprise Law. Benefit Corporations and Other Purpose-Driven Companies*, ed. Henry Peter, Carlos Vargas Vasserot, and Jaime Alcalde Silva (Springer Cham, Forthcoming), 861–80; E.M.M.A. Driessen and T. De Moor, 'De BV-m: Zwevend Tussen Nut En Noodzaak', Nederlands Juristenblad 96, no. 31 (2021): 2595–98.

There are enormous differences in legislation on both social enterprises and cooperatives across Europe.[113] A macro comparison of legislation about coops and SEs across Europe shows that in some cases coops are consistently considered as forms of SEs, whereby in some legal systems the cooperative is the only accepted form for the social enterprise (such as in Belgium, see hereafter). This contrasts with the views, different per country, on the extent cooperatives can be an SE. We argue that this can be attributed to the very loose legislation on coops which also leads to the presence of pseudo-SEs. Interesting connection is that coops have a moral/value basis when it comes to internal organisation (and also towards the community), whereas SEs have a moral basis for their goals, towards society.

The comparison of the Netherlands with Belgium is an interesting example to show how to European countries, so close to each other, can be so different in terms of legal treatment of both cooperatives and social enterprises. Until 1 May 2019 there were two types of cooperatives in Belgium: the CVBA and the CVBA SO (Cooperative met Beperkte Aansprakelijkheid en Sociaal Oogmerk), of which the latter was a form that stipulated the incorporation of societal goals and translated this in practice via, e.g., a limitation on the dividend and on the destination of the assets in case of dissolution. Recent changes have 1) strengthened the social orientation of cooperatives in general, going back more explicitly to the original ICA principles[114] and 2) introduced the form of the social enterprise, which is in fact more or less the CVBA SO that existed before. This is an interesting process, in particular for the Netherlands, where the initiative has been taken to discuss the introduction of the BVm, but also other initiatives are taken to make sure that societal goals and impact become an integral part of businesses and remain so during the lifetime of a business.

In the new Dutch legislation, the BVm is not a legal form but rather a label that is only available for the private limited company (the BV). Social enterprises come in various forms and sizes, but only half of them have the BV as legal form.[115] The other half consists of foundations (up to a quarter), cooperatives and other legal forms. This naturally leads to research questions. Why do some choose the BV and why do others make a different choice? And what is the effect of their choice both on their functioning as a business and on their goal to achieve societal impact? Is their choice linked to the sector or rather to their orientation to work, e.g., with a specific target group such as their employees? Does one form lead to more opportunities to achieve impact or is there no difference? Furthermore: would those enterprises that explicitly not choose for the BV benefit from changing their legal form, and if so, why? And may other forms be undervalued as useful avenues to achieve societal impact?

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113 Antonio Fici, 'Models and Trends of Social Enterprise Regulation in the European Union', in *The International Handbook of Social Enterprise Law*, ed. Henry Peter, Carlos Vargas Vasserot, and Jaime Alcalde Silva (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 153–71, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14216-1_8; Antonio Fici, 'Pan-European Cooperative Law: Where Do We Stand?', SSRN Electronic Journal, 2013, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2198283.

114 See https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity.

115 Social Enterprise NL, 'De Social Enterprise Monitor 2019. Het Onderzoek Naar de Ontwikkelingen van Sociale Ondernemingen in Nederland'.

With the BVm, BVs will be able to choose freely to become a BVm, if they formulate a specific social mission in their company statutes. This mission has to be prioritized when capital or profits are distributed. A BVm has to publish a social report, with details on impact and the distribution of a.o. their profits. The BVm would exist next to the already developed Code Sociale Ondernemingen, which has already received quite come critique. At the moment, nor the BVm nor the code would form a solid legal foundation for the social enterprise.[116]

The role of scientists

The above reasoning about what the potential benefits could be of an alternative governance model are based on evidence brought forward by researchers, in particular those active in the domain of the study of cooperatives, commons, new institutional economics and organisation studies. Interdisciplinarity is absolutely key in the work I focus on and I have had the pleasure of working with colleagues from many different disciplines. Cross-fertilisation of ideas is our only way forward. As researchers, we know that a lot is not studied as yet, but also that there is a massive amount of knowledge about the organisations that we discussed here. And yet, it seems that this knowledge is not reaching society, at least not in an effective and sufficient way. The recent widespread attention for commons and cooperatives in many European countries shows that there is a fertile ground for new forms of governance, but at the same time most citizens active in this field feel that they have to experiment. Although it might seem evident that experimenting is part and parcel of the design and development of new organisations that are formed from the bottom up, the dissemination of scientific knowledge can speed up this process significantly if researchers share more actively their knowledge in an accessible and applicable way.

As a scientist I believe we can also contribute to the visibility of both social enterprises and their results, without losing our neutral position or jeopardising it. I believe we can play a vital role in proving the exchange of the knowledge about the functioning of these organisations between all stakeholders involved. In order to make sure that more evidence-based knowledge about these organisations is brought back to society, to practitioners in the field, and to make sure it is paired with the experiential knowledge of those practitioners, we have set up over the past few years a knowledge exchange platform: CollectieveKracht.eu.[117] The platform provides insights from science in accessible formats to practitioners of collectivities in various sectors, and offers them tools to self-analyse their organisation and take adequate steps in the development of their organisation. Over 70 collectivities across the Netherlands have now joined the platform, and over 100 stakeholders from science, network organisations, government and finance are represented. They work together on related issues that have real impact and relevance for today. After many years of dreaming of such a platform, we could launch it last year. I was very happy we finally had a real result, a platform, and we also

116 Driessen and De Moor, 'De BV-m: Zwevend Tussen Nut En Noodzaak'.

117 Currently registered from different stakeholder-groups: 71 citizen collectives, 14 financial organisations, 17 network organisations, 22 civil servants, 51 scientists (February 2023).

now have a great team put together, led by coordinator Lukas Held, who can take it several steps forward. I personally believe we need such transdisciplinary efforts to more actively bring our knowledge from science to society, and that we as scientists are morally obliged to bring our own knowledge back to where – basically – we got it in the first place, even when the current academic reward system does not fully acknowledge those efforts. If we invest further in feeding scientific knowledge back to society, to citizens that are actively working on alternative governance models, we can offer them the tools to skip much of the experimentation phase.

Conclusion: Towards a shakeholder society and a community economy?

With the challenges ahead of us, we need everyone on board. Behind every consumer hides a citizen that can be actively involved in changing the economy towards one that starts from what the community needs to thrive. In this transition, value-driven governance models should not just get more attention, they could be the driving force behind it. Not only because of their potential effects on their members, on the resilience of the organisation and on society at large, but – very simple – because they involve citizens in search of their most basic needs. Engaging citizens to get involved as actors, active stakeholders, and not just as consuming citizens is essential for different reasons. Getting the general public involved leads to a higher awareness of the problems at stake and the goals to be achieved. Increasingly, citizens understand the root causes of our problems, but it would be unfair not letting citizens also be part of the solution. Secondly, it potentially also makes them into more prosocial citizens, leading to more solidary behaviour and understanding of why they have to chip in and thirdly, it is motivating to give a perspective in which you can be the change, and not just face doom and destruction that cannot be helped anyways. In times when democracy is under pressure, regaining control over essential goods and services whilst at the same time being confronted with the limits of resource use, may also be a way to rethink the rights and duties attached to citizenship. We could consider our role as citizen-consumer as a fiduciary duty to make our consumption behaviour as an instrument for doing good, instead of disregarding the negative externalities, a fiduciary duty being the obligation a party has to act in another party's best interest.

However, as we have claimed, the current developments in the (cooperative) SE world that are driven by citizens as prosumers remain largely invisible for governments, investors, and other stakeholders active in the SE ecosystem. With our research group we focus – and will keep doing so – on:

- Contributing to a better visibility of SEs, of all types and in all sizes and sectors, through inventorying, but also through active self-identification (CollectieveKracht.eu) by the organisations themselves.

- Developing a vision of how the different models can enrich each other. Can social businesses strengthen their relationship with their beneficiaries by involving them in a more durable way in their organisation?
- Understanding what makes such organisations resilient, and to what extent the governance form they choose contributes to that. Why and when do they thrive? Why and when do they fail? What are the enabling factors, both in terms of internal organisation and in terms of the context in which they operate?
- Understanding how SEs can scale, without leading to loss of identity or undesired mission drift.
- Contributing to providing evidence-based input to the SEs as organisations, and to those that can be enablers of SEs, in governments & in finance.

I realise that I may have overwhelmed you a bit with all these approaches, with the complexity of the problems we need to understand, with the methods we apply to get there. But a holistic approach that brings in both past and practice and that sees the breadth of the social enterprise is, in my view, unavoidable to create as many vehicles for change as possible. The covid period showed us a number of things: besides a training in social dilemma solving, it also showed that top-down imposed measures are not necessarily accepted by everyone, even if the common welfare is at stake. It also showed – and we still notice – that global chains of production are vulnerable. With on top of all that the current political crisis, "reshoring" of production is on top of the agenda of companies worldwide.[118]

As researchers, we try to do our bit. To explore the ways in which new governance forms and business models can contribute to societal change. What makes the approach of our research group, in all modesty, unique, I think, is the linking of academic research on social enterprises through the organisational lens of the commons and institutions for collective action, in combination with academic expertise on alternative business models such as the cooperative. It is that combination of insights, I believe, that will bring us further. And we do so by building on longitudinal research that looks at past developments that will not always go back a millennium in time, but also enriched by the knowledge and experience of practitioners. That transdisciplinary research is at the heart of what we do. I think we need to study these social enterprises in their full breadth, in all their variants. We look into what makes these organisations resilient and what makes them more impactful. But we also want to understand in what ways they can be vehicles for change. Change that we all need to endeavour. We need all the types of social enterprises to come up with sufficient solutions for the current challenges that we are facing. And we need to know what makes them more resilient. But above all, I reckon, we researchers, we remain citizens. We too have a stake in creating alternatives. Alternatives to which we can contribute both as stakeholders and shareholders, and create that community economy.

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118 Manufacturing Locally Is Seen as More than a Fill-In Solution for American CEOs: https://www.bloomberglinea.com/english/manufacturing-locally-is-seen-as-more-than-a-fill-in-solution-for-american-ceos/.

We need to give recognition to the role of the entrepreneurial citizen, to the citizen that dares to be different, to the citizen that dares to make difficult choices. Because I do believe that all of us have a choice. Therefore, I would like to quote one of my favourite colleagues, professor Dumbledore: "man is not made by his abilities but by the choices he makes".[119]

119 J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).

A few words of thanks...

And I have made choices indeed, one about 20 years ago, to relocate professionally to the Netherlands, and 2 years ago, from Utrecht to Rotterdam. I have not regretted any of those choices, although both were, and are, not always the easiest ones. Given that, according to my parents' stories, even as a toddler I had a clear preference for orange things, I don't need to dwell on the first move, but the change I made more recently may demand a bit of an explanation. When you're in the middle of a midlife crisis you have a number of options: you can buy a motorbike or join a management school. As always, I decided to go for the riskier option. But the change from a chair (at Utrecht University, since 2012) entitled "Institutions for Collective Action in Historical Perspective" to a chair on "Social Enterprises & Institutions for Collective Action" has in fact nothing to do with my midlife crisis but everything with the many societal crises we are in. The best reason to move to Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) was given, afterwards, by someone from an energy cooperative who said: well, maybe, finally, we will be taken serious as an alternative form of governance. If you have taken note of my lecture so far, you will realise: we are not there yet, we still have a lot of work to do before we understand how to solve these crises, together with those citizens. I would like to start my thank word by thanking exactly them, those active citizens, who were well represented in the Aula during the inaugural lecture, for their continuous inspiration, and for joining me and my colleagues on our quest for the holy grail of cooperation. Similarly, there are many societal organisations that believe in the transformative power of the social enterprise and have decided to support the work of our team in kind or financially. I would like to thank first and foremost Social Impact Fund of ABN AMRO and Social Enterprise NL, and in particular Eric Buckens and Mark Hillen, for their contribution to the establishment of this chair, and hence, their help to put the social enterprise more explicitly on the academic and societal agenda. Furthermore, our research received generous support from Stichting DOEN, Program DuurzaamDoor from the Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland, Stichting Goeie Grutten, The Dutch Science Foundation NWO, the Erasmus Trustfonds and our very own ERIM research school. The formation of the chair benefitted greatly from input from both scientists and practitioners, and in particular Mark Hillen, Eric Buckens, Fred Bos, Adrian de Groot Ruiz, Herman Mulder, Carol Gribnau, Jan Smelik, Annemiek Dresen, Koen Frenken, Irene van Staveren, Lucas Meijs and Rob van Tulder.

From one university to another, from one discipline to another: it is quite a transition, which I luckily did not have to do on my own. The true value of working in a team became clear to me during covid: in a rather individualistic and competitive world as Academia, in a team there are always shoulders to lean on. I should thank many people who joined me on my journey so far, of whom some have in the meanwhile chosen a different path again. I would like to thank Ton Duffhues, Damion Bunders, Pieter Steenbergen, Eline Karlas, Carolien Veldsink, Jan Hornix, Max de Vriend, Marianne Groep-Foncke, Fijnanda van Klingeren, Coline Serres, Karoline Heitmann, George Varthalamis, Grant Halliday, Véronique De Herde, Yifei Ma, Jeroen Boon, and Maaike Smid. I am particularly pleased that we have recently been joined by several colleagues – Thomas Bauwens, Lukas Held, Arthur Feinberg, Benjamin al Salehy and Shreya Paudel – who will definitely contribute to making our knowledge base stronger. I think that as

a research group we try to practice what we preach. Knowing – on the basis of our research – how hard cooperation can be, makes it easier to tackle those challenges ourselves.

Within RSM, I don't think I could have fitted anywhere better – or maybe not even anywhere at all! – than at the Business-Society Department, set up 25 years ago by Rob van Tulder. I wasn't there yet, but with his creativity, enthusiasm, ambition and no doubt also a serious dose of stubbornness he laid the foundations of a great department. We are both rather extravert personalities with a clear mind of our own, but we always seem to meet in the middle. Sort of. I have truly enjoyed our discussions and cooperation, a play of principles and pragmatics, since we started talking about this chair. Thanks for creating an opportunity to engage in such a vibrant, interdisciplinary department with a mission. A mission that we are trying to expand also with societal partners, amongst others in the advisory board, with many visionary societal and academic stakeholders. Thanks also to our head of department Marius van Dijke, for the open discussions. Although I moved universities in the midst of the covid period, I got a most warm welcome at RSM and at Erasmus at large, with many colleagues from across departments and faculties reaching out to meet through virtual coffees.

But then again, I find it very hard to fit into a box without trying to break through the walls. My work would not exist without the inspiration of so many colleagues, across the Netherlands, simply because we think alike, or as part of various projects, such as the science lab of the CollectieveKracht platform. I know that how we try to connect science to society via that platform feels quite uncomfortable for many colleagues, but all the more so, I am grateful for their willingness to go off the beaten path to make our work more meaningful and useful for society.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to those colleagues who as support staff are often overlooked but are absolutely vital to let us as scientists simply do our job. There are too many RSM and ERIM colleagues who create a vibrant academic community to mention, but some deserve special mentioning: Janneke Batenburg-Suijker and Yolanda Jahier for their never-ending support in all things important; Marlies Vreeswijk and Jessica Dekkers-de Leeuw for their unconditional support (apart from the FLAT check, of course!) in bringing in projects and actually getting them done; Daniël Feenstra, Peter Elsing, Mariska van Hooijdonk in making sure we can actually deliver what we promised; Jeroen Melein, the IT team of Erik Kemperman, in offering great support in all things digital and virtual. Ramses Maduro who makes sure that things are in the places they should be. The ERIM team that is of great value, in particular for our PhD students.

What binds you as an academic is however not just the place or the department you belong to, but maybe even more so the academic community you connect to. For many years, I have had many colleagues and friends in the International Association for the Study of the Commons, in the International Cooperative Alliance research community, among members of the EMES network. I'd like to thank SCOOP-colleagues Tanja van der Lippe, Rense Corten, Pearl Dykstra and Agnes Akkerman for the

cooperation in the supervision of our joint PhD students. My cooperation with colleagues from Utrecht of course continues, with new and upcoming projects. Among those just referred to I'd like to thank in particular the late Elinor Ostrom, for still being a continuous, great source of inspiration, both as an academic and as a person, and to Jan Luiten van Zanden, who put me about 25 years ago on her track, and who has supported me for many years in developing my own track. I will let others judge whether that was a success or not. And of course, to all my other friends and family: thanks for not talking to me about commons, cooperatives, social enterprises or any of the like. Let's keep that restricted to occasions such as today.

There are two special people that have made the journey with me, although not always physically by my side. The life I am living is not an easy one for Hans and Kaat, but we manage, and we thrive. Together. I am proud of us, and whenever I arrive at Rotterdam Central station, the great Desiderius Erasmus gives me solace with his words: "Space divides bodies, not minds".

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