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The Oxford Handbook of Institutions of International Economic Governance and Market Regulation

(In Progress)

Eric Brousseau (ed.) et al.

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190900571.001.0001

Published: 2019 **Online ISBN:** 9780190900601 **Print ISBN:** 9780190900571

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CHAPTER

Three Waves of Cooperation: A Millennium of Institutions for Collective Action in Historical Perspective (Case Study: The Netherlands)

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https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190900571.013.8

Published: 08 September 2021

Abstract

Parallel to current social, economic, and ecological crises, new institutions for collective action are rapidly developing. In domains where the government withdraws and the market fails, citizen collectives in care, energy, infrastructure, and other areas offer accessible and affordable alternatives at the local level. This chapter explains, through a thousand years of history, what institutions for collective action are, and which factors influence how they function. It analyzes how current developments differ from earlier waves in the development of institutions for collective action. Just like today, periods of growth for this type of institutions were preceded by periods of accelerated development of the free market. These institutions constitute a correction mechanism and can play an important role in society as a third governance model, alongside market and state, although the potential of the commons as a governance model for global resources remains disputed.

Keywords: institutions for collective action, commons, cooperatives, self-governance, historical development of institutions

Subject: International Economics, Financial Markets, Economics

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

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1. Commons on the Rise as an Alternative Governance Model

Parallel to the economic and social crises we have witnessed in the first decades of the twenty-first century, an entirely different evolution seems to be going on in Europe: the emergence of institutions for collective action (ICAs). In these institutions, cooperation and self-regulation form the jumping-off point for citizens taking matters into their own hands to address local problems regarding everyday life. These institutions are emerging in many European countries through the efforts of ordinary citizens responding to needs that government and markets do not meet.[1] Since 2005, for example, hundreds of energy cooperatives have been formed all over Europe (see rescoop.eu). These are bottom-up initiatives, aimed both at generating energy (*collective production*) and at the collective purchase of energy from companies on the free market (*collective consumption*).[2] Many new collectivities have been established that provide healthcare services—for example, residential communities for the elderly, elderly care cooperatives, daycare centers for children, and cooperatives of primary care physicians and physiotherapists.[3] Likewise, in other sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure, citizens are trying to obtain goods and services in a way that ensures a closer connection between production and consumption, often with the intention of shortening the producer-consumer chain for reasons of sustainability, product quality, and price control. Any of these reasons could also be the drivers behind these new institutions that are attempting to reach a common goal through collective action, cooperation, and self-regulation—for instance in the creative sector; in the production, distribution, and consumption of food, ranging from farmer cooperatives to new cooperative supermarkets run by employees and/or volunteers; and in infrastructure, for instance in the construction of fiber-optic networks.[4]

The most recent wave of ICAs is composed of ambitious organizations that are trying to establish a long-term effect, instead of one-off initiatives. In the Netherlands, the "bread fund," a new form of the classic mutual fund, illustrates this aptly. Over the past several years the huge increase in the number of Dutch freelancers and their struggles to get affordable health insurance has led them to joining bread funds, which create, through a monthly contribution, a buffer that all members can rely on in case of illness or accident.[5] Thus, the members of a bread fund set a sum aside collectively. Whenever one of the members reports him- or herself too sick to work, money is transferred to the ill member's bank account. It might well be that a contributor never has to apply for support from fellow members, but as long as the fund exists the contributing member has the assurance that he or she can rely on this buffer. The emergence of new forms of mutual insurance is not solely a Dutch phenomenon; it has been developing worldwide for many other types of goods and services (for an overview of recent developments, see Vriens and De Moor 2019). In this chapter we focus on past and present developments in the Netherlands, long one of the most prosperous regions in Europe (Prak and Van Zanden 2013; Van Zanden 2016; Van Zanden and Van Leeuwen 2012). It is, however, also one of the few countries for which the data collection on ICAs has been done, allowing us to describe the developments in ICAs over the past millennium.

Although most of the new organizations are restricted to one particular sector, their goals tend to be quite broad. Energy ICAs do not just generate energy, for instance, but produce renewable energy; care cooperatives are not solely aimed at care for the elderly, but seek to allow older people to continue living in their homes for as long as medically possible. While many initiatives aim to provide for new or existing needs, numerous others seek to *share* goods that are already available, rather than produce new goods or services. What the new ICAs have in common is a clear focus on what we can refer to as societal value-added goals.

Here it is important to make some distinction among initiatives that are usually considered to be part of the "sharing economy." There are some clear differences between commercial initiatives such as Airbnb and Uber, which have been widely discussed in the media, and the initiatives central to this chapter. The former are initiated by a commercial partner that engages with individual providers of goods (such as a room) and

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services (such as a ride) who have to live up to the conditions and rules set by the commercial partner. Often they use a platform that allows the private company behind the venture to create critical mass on both the producer side and the consumer side. Inasmuch as ventures such as Airbnb mediate between consumers and producers, they are not so very different from intermediaries such as commercial travel agents. The technological developments of the past few decades mean that it is easier for individuals to take steps toward commercializing their goods without setting up their own company. Individuals "share" their property, but not for free. The initiatives we study in this chapter are set up by individuals, and they restrict access to their organizations by setting limits on their own behavior, while allowing new members to participate in the design and application of the rules. These initiatives self-govern the ownership of their collective goods, even in cases where the goods they share are in the hands of one of the participants, as in some car-sharing initiatives. The governance model that these institutions use is thus completely different from other, more commercially driven initiatives, because the ICAs rely on reciprocity. This also has an effect on the initiatives' incentive structure. Airbnb participants, for example, have no incentive to contribute to the collective good—for there is no collective good, only the commercial benefit to the company Airbnb—and thus may be easily lured into free-riding. This is, as we will discuss, quite different in the case of ICAs.

Today, ICAs can be found in a wide range of sectors, stretching from care to energy to agriculture, but these initiatives also differ widely in terms of their governance model. Some collectives are strongly intertwined with local governments and work closely with them; others keep as far away from local government as possible and aim for complete financial independence. Some choose the cooperative as their legal form; others organize as associations or foundations. Little is expected from the members in some collectives (e.g., in many energy cooperatives), while in other cases (e.g., care cooperatives) active participation is pivotal for the good functioning of the institution. Although this diversity is not easy for governments to come to grips with, it is a direct consequence of the nature of these institutions and may even have great value for the institutional landscape, as I will try to demonstrate.

For this chapter, I will focus primarily on the developments within the Netherlands, seeing them as—to some extent—exemplary for developments elsewhere in Europe, and putting them in a wider temporal perspective. By analyzing previous, similar waves of institutionalized collective action, and by determining the driving factors behind these waves, we can establish a better understanding of the current developments, and also build upon this knowledge to design new policies that encourage instead of hamper the spread and growth of such new institutions.

Although there is still a wide gap between what is prescribed in policy documents and how these new institutions function in practice, politicians and civil servants are not blind to what is happening in society. In recent years, reports commissioned by the Dutch government have focused on the features, options, and consequences of these new developments, using such terms as "civilian power," "self-organization," "weconomy," and "horizontalization," and often have explored how these institutions intersect with measures taken to ameliorate current problems.[6] Politicians from very diverse backgrounds have called for a reactivation of responsibility among citizens, urging citizens to do more to prop up the welfare state.[7]

The Netherlands is certainly not alone in this: new institutions are being formed from the bottom up throughout Western Europe and also in Southern Europe. However, there are major differences across regions. For example, since 2005, more than four hundred energy cooperatives have been established in Germany; generally these start out quite small (with twenty-nine members, on average, in the initial phase), but in total they now have more than eighty thousand shareholders.[8] On the other hand, Belgium is one of the places where these collectives are still in their infancy, although interest in such initiatives is rising. As will be explained by comparing previous waves of such institutions in the history of Europe, differences in the scale of institutions for collective action that are created, are partly due to tax or legal

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provisions, but especially due to changes in governance models and the role of the free market in the provision of public goods and services.

After an analysis of previous waves of institutions for collective action, I will point to the differences and similarities between the earlier waves and the present situation, and then draw some general conclusions. The last part of the chapter looks ahead to the future and considers what difficulties may arise as a consequence of the current institutional developments.

2. A Silent Revolution? The Scale of New Institutions for Collective Action

The picture sketched in the preceding section suggests that something special is going on. Both the literature and the media talk of a revolution, change, or shift in the way European society is organized—a break with the rigid dichotomy of market versus state. Measuring the extent of the development is quite difficult while we are in the middle of it, but there are some figures that can provide an insight. The data used in this chapter to sketch developments over the past twenty-five years and the history of these institutions at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth are based on registrations of new cooperatives at chambers of commerce. These data go back to before 1800 and reside in a very large data set constructed in recent decades by a large number of scholars working on preindustrial institutions for collective action.[9]

The data gathered regarding cooperatives established since 1990 in the Netherlands show a clear picture. The graph in Figure 1 reveals a notable leap forward since 2005, with dozens of new cooperatives formed every year, especially in professional services, industry, energy, transport, and care.[10]

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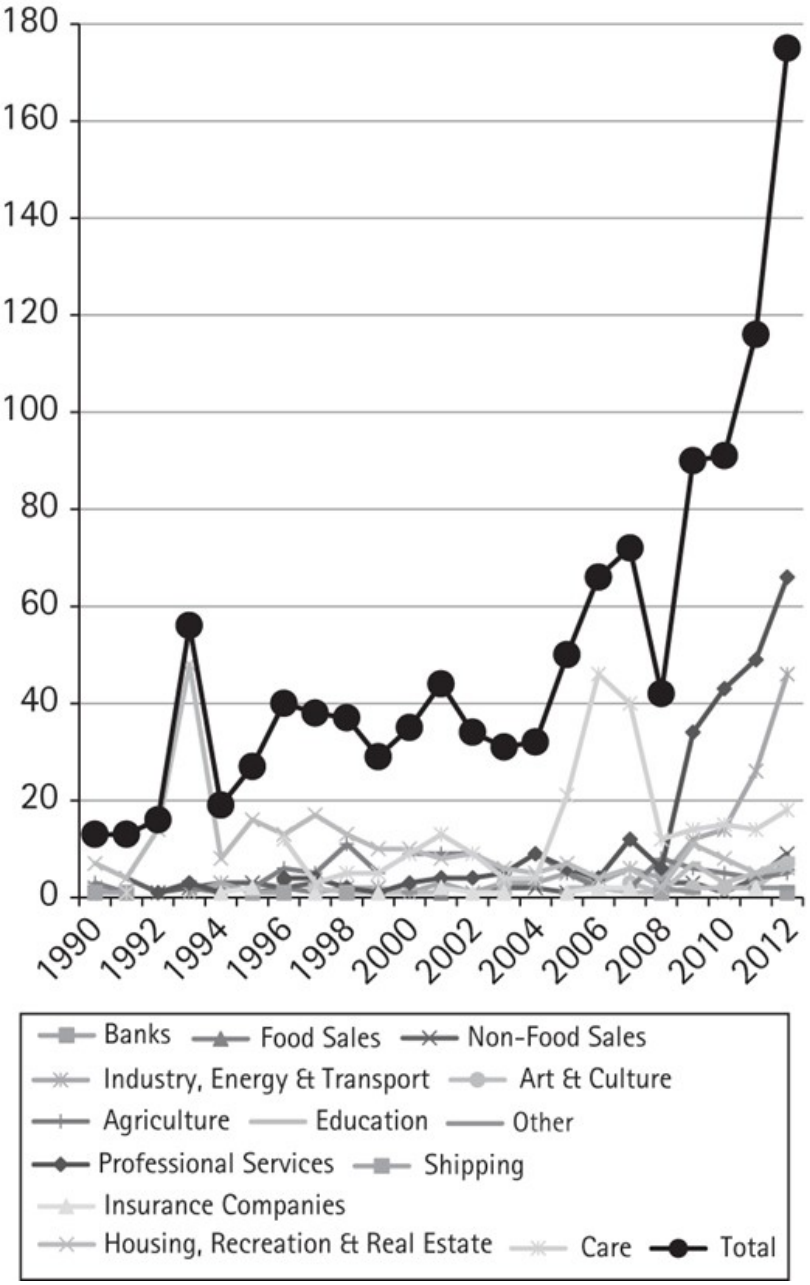

Figure 1 Evolution of the number of new cooperatives per sector from 1990 to 2012.

Source: De Moor 2013, 11.

The tradition of establishing cooperatives dates back to long before the late nineteenth century, when the first cooperative banks were established—the forerunners of the well-known cooperative Rabobank. Given that history, is what we see happening now a turning point in society, and are we at the dawn of a new societal form? Or is this burst of civic cooperation only a brief response to current crises that will pass once these crises blow over? The answers to these two questions lie in the very distant past.

Long before the creation of the welfare state, plenty of historical forms of institutions for collective action can be found all over Europe. Beginning in the late Middle Ages (around the eleventh to thirteenth century), citizens in the Low Countries increasingly chose to address individual problems in an institutionalized, collective form that was largely independent of ecclesiastical and secular authorities. The basis for the formation of a collective was not the immediate environment but rather people's profession. Merchants from Tiel were the first to form a partnership, early in the eleventh century. By joining forces, they could put

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more pressure both on local urban establishments and on more powerful authorities, such as the German emperor, in order to obtain certain privileges. As individual merchants, they were pretty weak—anyone who invests in trade runs the risk of goods being lost or not delivered. Similar issues formed the basis for the establishment of the first craft guilds about a century after the formation of merchant guilds (Van der Vleuten and Van Zanden 2010). Due to a growing demand for goods on the free market, some craftspeople failed to deliver quality products or sold goods at lower prices. By uniting, artisans could develop a reputation for fair prices and quality by making price agreements, thereby guaranteeing a minimum income for members of the guild, which was imperative under the pressure of increasing urbanization (De Munck, Lourens, and Lucassen 2006).

Simultaneously with this mostly urban movement, more and more farmers organized the use of pasture in common. Institutions for common land, or commons—better known in the Netherlands under the terms *markegenootschappen* (eastern Netherlands) and *meenten* (especially in the southern part of the Netherlands)—were set up throughout Western Europe, and continued to play an important role in the organization of agriculture until the end of the eighteenth century.[11] These urban and rural developments should be seen in relation to the growing population in certain regions of Western Europe. From the eleventh century to the middle of the fourteenth century—when the Black Death struck—Western Europe experienced a generally steady population increase (although there were ups and downs), generally accompanied by increasing urbanization and pressure on available natural resources. For farmers, this led to a more intensive use of agricultural land and pasture. Because of the mixed farming system, the necessary balance between the two forms of land use became increasingly delicate. Sufficient availability of pasture was needed for the cattle to produce enough fertilizer to keep the arable land productive (Slicher van Bath 1978). Common land offered a number of advantages, due to its larger scale and reduced costs (for example, when transferring land ownership from father to son).

The Dutch water boards stem from the same period. Through cooperation, the members managed dikes and other water infrastructure as efficiently as possible to keep the land—and their feet—dry (Beukers 2007; Kaijser 2002; Soens 2009, 11–72). A phenomenon of a different nature, but institutionally very similar, was the emergence of beguinages—communities for women who wished to lead a religion-focused life, while earning a living by playing an active part in the urban community.—in cities in the Low Countries, also in the late medieval period. The women in these communities were called beguines, and they lived in relative independence from both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. From the late Middle Ages onward, single women in the Low Countries increasingly migrated to the cities for wage labor (Bosker, Buringh, and Van Zanden 2013; Reher 1998). The security challenges these individual women faced could be reduced by forming such communities.

With the emergence of so many interest groups focused on only one part of society, it is unsurprising that conflicts sometimes arose. For example, the general economic activity of beguines was the manufacture of textiles. In many cases they obtained permission to sell their textiles at the local market, and in some instances they benefited from a favorable tax arrangement. Predictably, this was not agreeable to the textile guilds, and led to discussions and conflicts.[12] Water boards and common land institutions sometimes encroached on each other's territory too; both groups had an interest in a particular approach, which resulted in discussions regarding user rights. However, each of the common interest groups—be they farmers, artisans, beguines, or others (see Figure 2)—were better able to deal with the challenges of the economy, politics, and society when they stood united.

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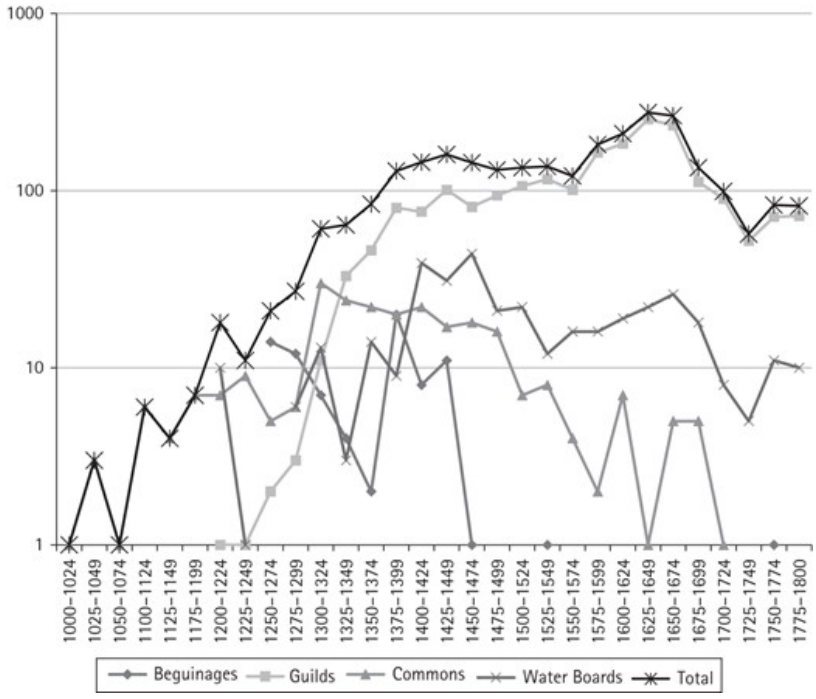

Figure 2 Number of new ICAs per quarter century in the Netherlands, 1000–1800 (logarithmic scale).

Source: De Moor 2013, 15.

The reason institutions such as commons almost entirely disappeared from the physical landscape and collective memory, both in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, was the wave of liberalization starting in the eighteenth century that threatened various forms of common property throughout Western Europe. The space that is necessary for bottom-up institutions for collective action to develop and thrive, disappeared under increasing pressure from the up-and-coming nation-states. Meanwhile, and partly under the influence of the philosophies of the Enlightenment, private property was promoted as *the* way to stimulate economic growth. According to philosophers and politicians of the time, individuals needed to be certain that they would reap the results of their efforts on the land or at the market; therefore, private ownership of the means of production was a must. The consequence of joint ownership of land or other resources, it was thought, would be that no one fully exerted themselves. By this reasoning, institutions for collective action such as guilds and commons got labeled as "relics of the past." Common property and economic cooperation were considered obstacles to further economic growth. The most famous variant of this privatization drive is known as the Enclosures (Humphries 1991; Neeson 1996; Shaw-Taylor 2001): the long and intensive legal campaign of the English government to privatize commons. However, the Continent had its own enclosure movement. Although the final word has not been said about the impact of these enclosures at the social level and their effects on agricultural productivity, it is certain that they had a profound impact on society. The privatization of the Dutch *markegenootschappen* in 1811 and similar measures elsewhere in continental Europe led to a rapid privatization of common land (Van Zanden 1999, 138; for an overview of the privatization of common land on the Continent in the nineteenth century, see, e.g., Demélas and Vivier 2003). In the late eighteenth century, the guilds were rapidly abolished, motivated by a very similar political rhetoric.[13]

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, new institutions for collective action were founded—often to replace the discontinued guilds. A prominent example is the *waarborgfonds* or mutual insurance fund founded in 1811 in the Frisian countryside in Achlum, which has become the largest insurance company in the Netherlands today, Achmea.

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However, a real new wave of institutions for collective action did not occur until the end of the nineteenth century. Around 1880 many new institutions for collective action emerged, aimed at the collective organization of production (in cooperatives), services (in insurance funds), and workers (trade unions). In addition, this period also saw a large number of new associations that were not economic in nature, but rather had cultural or sports-related goals (see Figure 3).

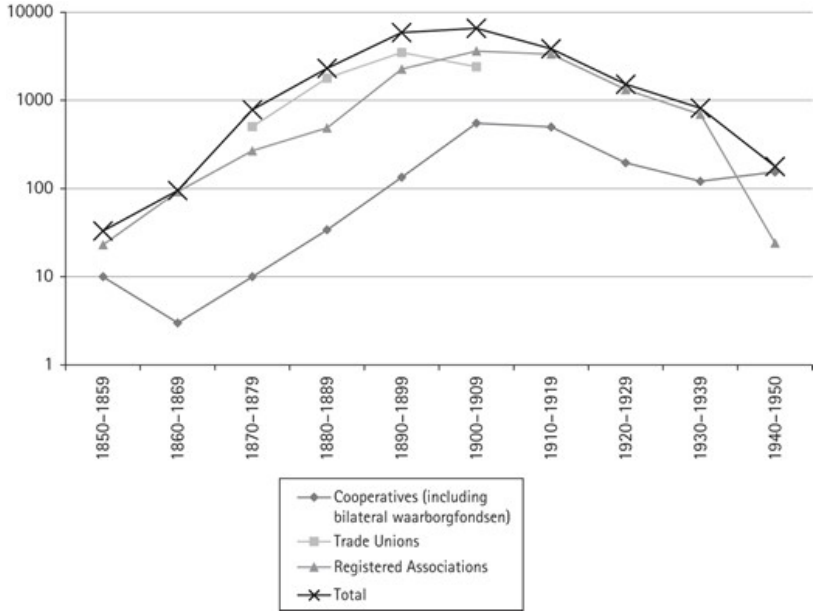

Figure 3 Number of new ICAs per decade in the Netherlands, 1850–1950 (logarithmic scale).

Source: De Moor 2013, 17.

It is also at this time that some of the cooperative "giants" of today originate, such as the Boerenleenbank (established in 1897–1898), a cooperative of local banks that was inspired by Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen's creation of rural credit unions a few years earlier (Sluyterman et al. 1998) and is one of the forerunners of today's Rabobank. This second wave of new institutions for collective action would continue until about 1920. After this period, the number of new cooperatives set up each year diminished greatly, and it would not be until the beginning of the twenty-first century that the movement was revived.

A clear difference between the first wave of organizations, which emerged in the late Middle Ages and early modern times, and the organizations that emerged during the second wave, in the period 1880–1920, is that a striking number of smaller organizations from the second wave merged over the course of time, and have sometimes become very large cooperatives indeed. Although there were some mergers of guilds in the early modern period, there was not a distinct shift in size—the number of members per guild remained relatively limited during the early modern period. Furthermore, there are no known examples of mergers among *markegenootschappen*, although they did at times cooperate. The institutions of the first wave also often had a considerably longer life span than their counterparts during the second wave. Of the cooperatives that emerged between 1880 and 1920, only a fifth of them are still active today; by contrast, more than 62 percent of guilds survived for more than 150 years, and more than 90 percent of the *markegenootschappen* that we studied in the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland, and Drenthe passed the 150-year mark.[14]

Although the number of recent cooperative initiatives is large, they are typically quite small. Moreover, this third wave of cooperatives is still marginal in terms of its contribution to the total cooperative sector in the Netherlands and the number of employees involved. They are overshadowed by a number of giants such as Achmea, Rabobank, and FrieslandCampina, which together account for more than 42 billion euros in

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revenue and nearly 100,000 employees in 2010–2011. Nearly all of these very large cooperatives emerged during the second wave (Van Bekkum and Griffioen 2012, 9).

3. Features of the Governance Model Underlying These Different Institutions

Institutions for collective action, although they differ in many respects, work according to similar mechanisms. We need to identify these mechanisms in order to better understand previous waves of these institutions. And understanding what makes ICAs resilient, or what might undermine their functioning, can help us to predict the future of the current burst in new collectivities.

Determining whether institutions for collective action can once again become a viable alternative governance regime or not, requires us to identify factors affecting the willingness of members to continue contributing to the ICA over substantial periods of time, preferably continuing far beyond the initial member group. This continuation of contribution is not the same as the initial intention to start cooperating. External changes are constantly influencing the ICA. Factors such as demographic change, economic hardship, environmental change, and political turmoil all may influence people's willingness and capacity to cooperate, but they may also influence the common resources directly—for example, through increased prices for agricultural goods (making it more attractive to commercialize the common resources) or by affecting the availability of the resources (e.g., in times of drought).

The specificity of the commons as a governance regime is based on the fact that a group of people hold (individual) usage rights to a common resource (also referred to as a *common pool resource*) and need to decide collectively how to use and manage the resource in order to guarantee that every group member benefits sufficiently from that resource. If done on a continuous basis, this leads to the formation of an institution—a common pool institution or an institution for collective action—in order to develop such rules and adapt them as needed to changes in the environment. The functioning of ICAs may be complex, but internally they are relatively transparent: whereas in private or public property arrangements decisions are made by individuals or the government respectively, in an ICA a group of entitled users may be involved in both the use of the benefits and the design of the institution to regulate use, access, management, and governance of these benefits. They act as "prosumers," rather than simply as producers or consumers. With ICAs relying heavily on group norms and reciprocal behavior between their members, being able to analyze the interactions between users, resources, and the institution is important to understand how ICAs fare during periods of crisis or upon dissolution of the common (Birchall and Simmons 2004; Bruynis et al. 2001; Jussila, Kärkkäinnen and Leino 2012). Figure 4 represents all three dimensions that together constitute the governance regime of ICAs, regulating and providing order in the use and management of a common pool resource, but also preventing its overexploitation and guaranteeing its sustainable provision over time. Bringing together these dimensions and visualizing their interaction is important: the current debate often tends to focus on one aspect in particular, but as this figure shows, there are factors that keep all three dimensions in balance. Without a balance between resources, members, and institution, it will be difficult to keep an ICA going in the long run.

As is evident from the self-governance and collective features, such a governance model differs markedly from a state-driven organization, as well as from market-based appropriation. Among the challenges usually faced by this type of governance regime, two are particularly important. On the one hand, the common pool nature of the resource requires that users regularly assess and redesign specific rules, in order to balance individual incentives and group objectives as circumstances change. Such adaptation to changing circumstances gives ICAs a higher chance of survival in the long run.

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On the other hand, the institutional arrangement itself must adapt to changes in the larger environmental, economic, and political situation in which it is embedded. We especially need to focus on the interplay between internal factors (the incentives embedded in rules, members' motivations, and the behavior resulting from the interaction between rules and motivations) and external factors (e.g., the environmental, political, demographic, economic, and technological forces operating outside the domain of the institutional arrangement). Understanding this interaction can help us explain how ICAs demonstrate resilience in the long term.

If we look at the past, some of the most straightforward external threats to commons were related to climate and weather-related hazards. For example, storms and floods might have had a large effect on the accessibility of common grazing facilities. In terms of the use of the common resource, such events might have resulted in changes to the rules (e.g., a reduction in the number of cattle that each member was allowed to graze on the common, or a later opening date of the common grazing facilities, or changes in the rules on the feeding of cattle during wintertime).

Another example centred on common grazing facilities involves outbreaks of livestock diseases and how they might affect access rules. If members lost many of their cattle to a disease, the common might be opened to outside users. Or, in order to limit the spread of such diseases, members' cattle might be restricted to a particular part of the common to keep them isolated from other cattle populations.

Demographic shifts in the human population may also have led to substantial changes in ICA rules. For example, if the population grew rapidly, supplementary restrictions on access might have been introduced —in particular, rules related to the access granted to heads of household (and also possibly rules related to marriage-based access). Similarly, access rules may have been loosened in case of population decrease due to disease. Population changes also probably affected rules about the maximal number of resource units allowed per user.

Although one might assume that warfare and other forms of political turmoil impacted the rules of ICAs in much the same way as population decreases did, there were in fact other effects, largely because warfare primarily involved heads of households. For example, with many heads of household away at war, meetings of the governors of the common were less easy to organize, and this might have affected governance and management as a whole, making it more important to be flexible about managerial roles and the rotation of those roles among households.

These examples of potential causal relationships between external circumstances and rule changes, while specific to certain types of commons and certain situations, conjure up an image of the multiple effects that external factors can have on common resources, the members of ICAs, and the rules designed to govern the commons.

The challenge for the members of a self-organizing institution such as an ICA is to keep the system in balance, regardless of all these external factors. They must keep the utility sufficiently high, even when the supply of resources is shrinking or when the group of users is growing, to make sure that participating in the ICA is sufficiently attractive to keep people contributing, rather than free-riding. A change in one of the domains may have a clear influence on the other domains. If the size of the user group increases, for instance, this may lead to lower utility (a smaller number of resource units per individual member) and less equity (larger groups offer less room to influence decision-making processes), and this may put pressure on the group to change the institutional design.

Understanding long-term dynamics means taking into account not just acute crises but also changing external contexts, changes in the resources over time, and changes in the size and heterogeneity of the member group over time. The amount of resources available determines how much each individual can take, but not all members need all resources all the time. At times, say, a member may not have enough cattle to

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put on the common, but may be interested in harvesting other resources. Whether or not the common can always accommodate its members and provide them with benefits at all times will influence members' willingness to contribute and to refrain from free-riding. Also, members' characteristics (such as ethnicity, religion, wealth, or occupation) may vary over time, affecting their needs and wishes regarding the use of common resources. In the case of a pasture common, for example, impoverishment may lead to a situation in which some members no longer have cattle, and hence need no access to the common pasture; thus the utility for at least a part of the members will decrease substantially, in particular if there are no other resources to benefit from. A lack of utility may encourage members to free-ride, or at least to refrain from contributing to the collective good. In organizations relying on self-governance, where members can influence the governance of their collective resources, this may eventually lead to a change in governance: the members may collectively decide to dissolve their organization, as they no longer find it useful to invest in it.[15]

Similar developments can take place if members feel they are insufficiently involved in the decision-making process; they may perceive—justly or not—the decisions taken as less fair to them individually. In social science literature it has been amply demonstrated that a governance regime that is perceived as less equitable may lead to defective behavior (though such studies often are only snapshots and limited in time perspective).[16] Historically, ICAs were constantly challenged to involve their members in the decision-making process, but they also saw their member groups change in size and composition. An increasing number of members might have had a positive influence on the total amount of capital available within an ICA, but might also have had a negative effect on social control, as large groups complicated the identification of fellow group members. There is a clear tension between scale and group cohesion. In social science literature it has been observed that cooperative behavior is promoted if other people can observe one's personal-choice behavior (Jorgenson and Papciak 1981), and this social control mechanism may be responsible for the fact that people are more willing to work hard under conditions of high visibility than in more anonymous settings. If groups become larger, the managers of the common will have to organize additional ways to enhance social control in order to avoid free-riding

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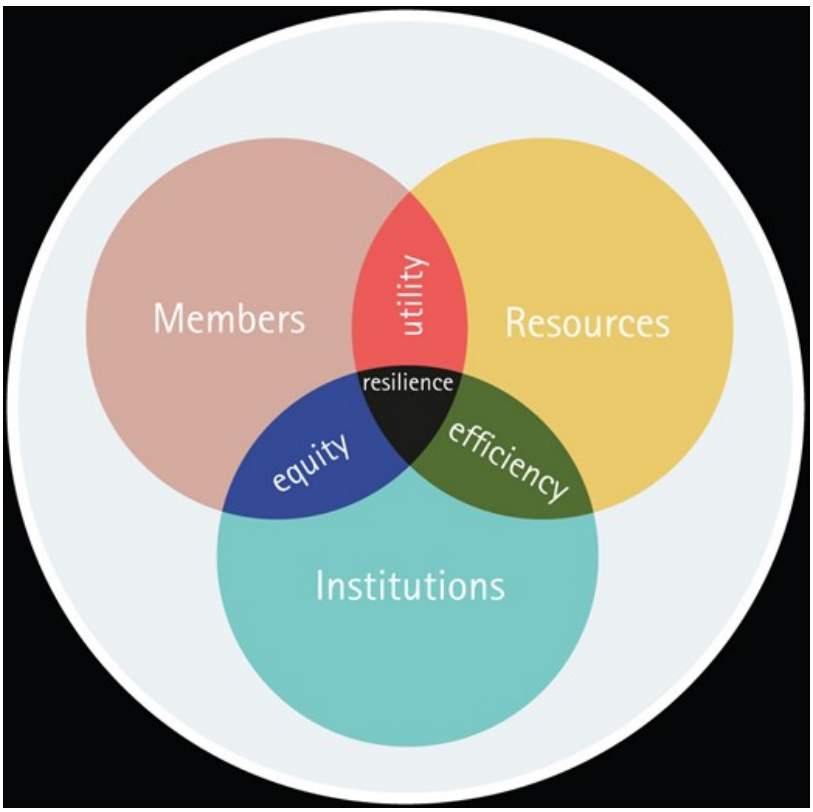

Figure 4 The dynamics of the commons as a governance regime can be captured in three terms: efficiency, equity, and utility.

Source: De Moor 2015, 118.

In the process of seeking a balance between equity, utility, and efficiency, the rules members design play an important role. One of the supposedly most efficient ways to prevent or deal with free-riding is sanctioning. Many experimental studies have tried to establish what an effective and efficient sanctioning system should look like: What is the "right" level for a fine? To what extent are people willing to punish each other? Should fines be imposed on individuals or on groups? Which is more effective, "carrots" or "sticks"? To what extent should external enforcement be used to implement sanctions? Meanwhile, field research has demonstrated that in real life people do indeed impose sanctions in cases of free-riding. And it has been suggested by Elinor Ostrom, among others, that specific types of sanctioning, such as graduated sanctions, can have a preventive effect—for example, serving as a warning to current defectors of "worse to come" (Ostrom 1990).

The option to use tools other than sanctioning to prevent free-riding has hardly ever been seriously considered in the literature, although it is generally acknowledged that sanctioning can be a costly affair. However, some recent insights based on detailed historical analysis give us an entirely different view of the potential effect of sanctioning on the resilience of ICAs. An international team of historians recently presented unprecedented data recording historical regulations for twenty-five European ICAs over seven centuries (De Moor et al. 2016). In total, the database contains more than five thousand detailed rules defining these institutions (e.g., regulating resource use, management, and sanctioning) and records the changes that have been made over the centuries. Studying regulation at the micro level is not new, and in fact forms the basis of work by Ostrom and others (who utilize interviews with current participants as part of their methodology), but the historical approach allows an entirely different spectrum of research possibilities. Historical research exploring the use of sanctioning in a number of very long-lived commons in the Netherlands (with longevity varying from 236 to 695 years of documented existence) produced some rather surprising conclusions (De Moor 2008a).

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Archival sources allow us to retrieve regulations devised to control who the members were (access rules), how the use of their common resources was regulated (use rules), how access and use were managed (management rules), and how the governance of the institution as a whole was arranged (governance rules). Based on the premise that both rule-making and sanctioning were costly affairs, in particular because the rules needed to be discussed and agreed upon by the whole group of members, we considered the complete body of rules found per ICA to be the "total effort" of the group of members. This concept was used as a way to link the rules and accompanying sanctions to the longevity of each of the cases.

All ICAs analyzed in the case study made frequent changes to their regulation system, although some did so more often than others. There was little difference between the groups in terms of the effort they spent on adjusting the rules—on average, 61 percent of the rules were adjustments to previously mentioned rules. This demonstrates that all examined examples were essentially dynamic. Still, their longevity varied substantially. This can be explained by several factors. First of all, it appears that sanctioning was not a decisive factor in longevity. Rather, the contrary seemed to be true: the longer-lasting associations had a lesser need to come up with sanctions to enforce their rules. Secondly, it seems that most of their rule-making effort went into designing the governance structure of the institution. There is also a clear difference in terms of re-issuing of the rules: longer-lasting institutions needed to repeat established legislation less, instead concentrating on adjusting the rules. Taking all these elements together, one might claim that the secret of a long-lived institution does not involve threatening people with sanctions; rather, it lies in ensuring that people meet frequently enough, so that they easily internalize new rules and rule adjustments. Whenever members wanted to change the rules, they had to convene and approve the changes. If this was done frequently, members would be confronted more often with their moral duty to behave well toward others than if they met only once in a while. Consequently, high levels of participation and effective involvement of users in the governance of the institution, may have been more important for the longevity of the institution than sanctioning.

Future historical research on ICA regulation may help us to delineate more clearly the mechanisms behind institutional change in the long run. Using historical data may help us to understand why and how institutions have been modified in response to changes in their social and natural environments and whether there are typical developmental paths that long-lasting institutions take. Such research would adopt a perspective similar to research that looks at the evolutionary process leading to biological adaptations (Ostrom 2014; Boyd & Richerson 2005), though in this case it would focus on the historical relationships between different systems of rules and analyze their development over time.

The three-part framework used here—focusing on equity, utility, and efficiency—can be applied to analyze the dynamics not only of historical ICAs but also of contemporary forms of ICAs. It can even be used to explore current developments in the platform economy, in particular the case of worker-owned platforms (worker cooperatives). Worker-members are the people who collectively share ownership of and govern the organization. Other types of cooperatives can be identified by their respective members as well, such as consumer cooperatives or producer cooperatives (Negri Zamagni 2012). Labor, in the form of jobs, is the central (though not necessarily only) resource that worker-members aggregate and benefit from when they form a worker cooperative. Although platform work is usually performed by individuals (De Stefano 2016), the scale advantages associated with worker cooperativism still apply, because platforms mediate between individuals' labor input and a wider group of consumers (that is, labor is pooled). The cooperative is the institution that stipulates rules and norms to structure collective ownership and governance of the organization by the worker-members. It is a type of organization, often recognized as a juridical person, with both a commercial business role and a member community role (Puusa, Monkkonen, and Varis 2013). Ultimately, a balance between members, resources, and institution results in resilience (De Moor et al. 2016).

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Applied to worker-owned platforms, *utility* refers to the motivation of workers to gain access to a certain quantity and quality of jobs by organizing themselves collectively in a cooperative (instead of opting for a different type of work organization). *Efficiency* refers to the ability of the cooperative to sustain its labor pool through regulations on access (membership) and use (contributions and benefits). And *equity* refers to the degree of democratic involvement of worker-members in governing the cooperative. Finally, the framework takes into account that external factors influence each of the three components and can shake up or solidify balances between them. For example, state actors external to the worker-owned platform may enforce different policies that are more or less favorable to cooperatives.

4. The Scope of Institutions for Collective Action

Contemporary initiatives like to promote historical parallels between their own activities and organization today and those organizations they consider their predecessors, as can be seen in some of the names they choose. References to the past are made to generate trust and recognition. For example, bread funds for freelancers have many similarities to the early modern guilds. And the ZZP-gilde Energiemarke in Hoenslo combines references to historical commons with its function of generating renewable energy through the landscape.[17]

Although there is a great caesura between the historical guilds and commons and their contemporary successors, the motivations and organizational structures are very similar. We could say that over the centuries we have witnessed the emergence of various "archetypes" of institutions for collective action. We can see how some archetypes arose out of others, or at least took over some of their functions (providing insurance, offering a minimum income, buying goods in bulk, etc.) (Figure 5).

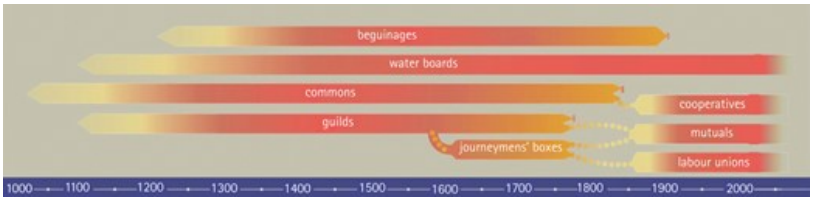

Figure 5 Overview of the emergence and dissolution of some archetypes of ICAs in Western Europe over the past millennium and how their functions were transferred from one to another.

Toward the last quarter of the nineteenth century, after the dissolution of commons in many Western European countries in the middle of that century (Brakensiek 2000; Demélas and Vivier 2003), we see the emergence of agricultural cooperatives in, for instance, dairy products (see, e.g., Frenken 2014). Similarly, in many European countries we can see an evolution from merchant guilds to craft guilds (Lucassen, De Moor, and Van Zanden 2008). In the sixteenth century, however, journeymen choose to set up their own ICAs, called "journeymen's boxes," particularly to provide insurance (Van Vleuten and Van Zanden 2010). In terms of functionality, these later evolved into mutual funds and then into trade unions in the nineteenth century.

On the other hand, some types of ICAs disappeared without their functions being taken over by other ICAs. The beguinages are an example of this, as their original reasons for existing disappeared (De Moor 2014; Simons 2001). Finally, there are archetypes, such as water boards, that changed fairly little over time, and have survived to the present day.

We should be able to go beyond describing the differences between various archetypes, however, and explain why some types emerge and become popular, often only to disappear again. The long-term

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comparison of archetypes reveals two major elements that may contribute to this explanation: heterogeneity in terms of resources and members, and size.

First, in the early modern period archetypical institutions such as guilds managed to accumulate many different purposes, for instance setting minimum standards of quality, setting prices, collectively buying raw materials, and providing insurance. However, their nineteenth- and twentieth-century counterparts often focused on a specific purpose, such as insurance.

Secondly, early modern ICAs, such as commons and guilds, preferred to limit their number of members. One way they did so was by splitting their organization into smaller units when needed. The Guild of Saint Eligius in Amsterdam (set up in the fourteenth century), for example, originally comprised both smiths and carpenters, but soon the latter formed their own guild (Wagenaar 1766). Ship carpenters, however, remained within the Saint Eligius guild until 1517, but then joined the guild of the Amsterdam boatmen sailing abroad (*buitenlandsvaardersgilde*). Shortly after the Reformation of Amsterdam in 1578, they finally formed their own specific guild of ship carpenters and mast makers (Van Dillen 1929). In the twentieth century, we see the opposite development in ICAs: instead of splitting and specializing, small cooperatives within the same sector increasingly merged into larger companies, but subsequently struggled with sticking to their cooperative principles due to their very large number of members. This was, for example, the case with the merger between Boerenleenbank and Rabobank in the Netherlands, although the original members of Boerenleenbank kept their autonomy as individual local cooperatives (Groeneveld 2016; Sluyterman et al. 1998). In the early twenty-first century the local cooperatives were dissolved, resulting in a single, massive cooperative (Hensen 2015).

Although their specialization strategy seemed to work, first-wave ICAs lacked any type of supralocal organization, and so they were especially vulnerable to top-down dissolution measures instituted by governments. Hence the rapid disappearance by the middle of the nineteenth century, at the latest, of most commons (Brakensiek 2000; Demélas and Vivier 2003) and guilds across Europe (Epstein and Prak 2008). Second-wave ICAs could more easily strengthen their movement by creating substantial critical mass both in membership and in resources (e.g., Rabobank, FrieslandCampina). The current, third wave of ICAs seems to be reacting against the decrease in member involvement that accompanied the second-wave ICAs' strategy of growth, limiting the size of individual organizations and instead connecting individual ICAs on a sectoral basis within a network (e.g., Nederland Zorgt Voor Elkaar, a network that links initiatives in welfare, housing, and care in the Netherlands) (Dedeurwaerdere, Polard, and Melindi-Gidhi 2015; Menzani and Zamagni 2010; Monteiro and Stewart 2015).

5. Group Size and Heterogeneity of Members and Resources

From looking at these differences in ICAs over time, it becomes clear that size and heterogeneity of membership and resources must have played an important role, not just in the diversification of archetypes but also in their survival strategies over time. However, these aspects have received less attention among scholars who work on specific types of ICAs so far, as their focus has primarily been on how institutional design can encourage cooperation and prevent free-riding (Ostrom 1990). As a result, our knowledge about the impact of changes in size and heterogeneity is still fairly limited.

That self-governing institutions rely heavily on group norms and reciprocal behavior between their members has been well documented—for example, in studies on cooperatives (Birchall and Simmons 2004; Bruynis et al. 2001; Jussila, Kärkkäinen, and Leino 2012). Game theory and principal-agent theory both emphasize that cooperating for socially optimal outcomes and enforcing mutually agreed-upon rules are actually very difficult to achieve. Research on the production of collective goods or the governance of common pool resources has shown that specific social factors promote cooperation, but sufficient levels of

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cohesion, group identification, and internal communication must also be maintained at all times (Ostrom 2005). Many studies suggest that when the number of members is large, individual participants may assume that their actions will have little effect on the group and its outcomes (Olson 1965). 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 (Tagliapietra 2013). It is often presumed that smaller groups allow for greater interaction and social cohesion, which ensures cooperation and avoids free-riding (Lana Berasaín 2008; Tagliapietra 2013). Generally, it is assumed that as group size increases, (1) the need for leadership to manage operations becomes greater, (2) the amount of resources available for problem-solving may expand, but increasing diversity within the group may makes communication, cooperation, and achieving consensus more difficult, and (3) the tendency toward bureaucracy grows (Michels 1911). Increases in group size can reduce opportunities for frequent interaction, meaning there are fewer opportunities for reputation-building and mutual monitoring, both of which are thought to have a positive impact on cooperation (Poteete and Ostrom 2004; Yang et al. 2013). As demonstrated by some of the larger European cooperatives today (most of which emerged between 1880 and 1920), membership growth may conflict with the principles of member participation in decision-making processes. Vera Negri Zamagni underlines that today the "satisfactory administration of larger cooperatives is an unsolved issue everywhere," and calls for more theoretical elaboration of cooperative managerial practices for large cooperatives (Negri Zamagni 2012).

Most (experimental) studies on the effect of group size on cooperation, however, concentrate on the here and now and neglect changes in group size and composition over longer periods of time. Yet longevity is an objective of many ICAs. And because over time an ICA may be subject to significant change in contextual factors (e.g., members' wealth, occupation, dependency on resources, or religion [Zamagni and Zamagni 2010]), and because these factors could shape individual members' willingness to contribute to the collective effort, we also need to take a closer look at changes in group heterogeneity over time. Evolving economic and social contexts may have a huge impact on the composition of an ICA's membership and how the members perceive the usefulness of the collective resources. As mentioned earlier, if impoverishment means that some members of a commons can no longer keep cattle, the right to pasture cattle on the common becomes less important to those members, and they may no longer be interested in actively contributing to the association, or may even decide to free-ride on the association's other resources (De Moor 2010). This example demonstrates the importance of looking not just at size but also at resource heterogeneity when analyzing ICAs. We can assume that higher resource heterogeneity would allow for pooling resources within an ICA, which could improve both individual members' economic position and the individual utility of participation, and thus create an incentive to cooperate. So resource heterogeneity could advance successful collective action.

At the same time, multipurpose organizations, which offer a wider variety of resources, are institutionally more complex than single-purpose organizations (Ostrom 1990), and require constant monitoring and good leadership to avoid overuse. Moreover, there can be substantial variation between ICAs in how heterogeneity affects institutional design. For example, ICAs dealing with natural resource management would likely benefit from higher resource heterogeneity (allowing the ICA to offer different services to its members), but mutual funds would more likely benefit from member heterogeneity (the variety in ages among members helps to spread the risk). Nevertheless, work by Poteete and Ostrom (2004) has demonstrated that large and/or heterogeneous groups in natural-resource ICAs are not necessarily a problem, and that specific institutional settings can actually moderate size and heterogeneity. Specific changes to institutional design (such as punishing free-riding, enhancing overall and within-group enforcement, and improving access to social capital across groups and among group members) can have a positive effect on cooperation within groups and can also moderate the effects of increasing group heterogeneity (Ruttan 2006, 2008), though it remains unclear whether the impact of changes in group size and heterogeneity can be moderated effectively over longer periods of time.

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Group size and group composition are also closely linked to the development stages an ICA may go through. Young ICAs may require a fundamentally different structuring of members and resources than more established ICAs.

From the previous paragraphs it should be clear that scaling up ICAs simply by enlarging their membership (whether by making access easier or by actively seeking more members) will not necessarily lead to increased resilience. Given that, it is highly questionable whether the commons as a governance model can be a meaningful solution to resource management on a global scale. Clearly, ICAs today offer an attractive means for citizens to change their way of dealing with depletable resources, as can be seen with the many ICAs established in energy and agriculture, where a fair share is the starting point for avoiding overexploitation and overconsumption. Such collectivities can contribute to the governance of global resources and help minimize the effects of overuse, such as the depletion of fresh water stores (Morris and Jungjohann 2016). But the instruments needed to keep ICA members from free-riding demand social contact and collective decision-making, which are already put under a great deal of strain when membership grows, and would certainly prove even more challenging if members were spread across the world.

Attempts are being made to move toward applying the principles of institutions for collective action on a larger geographical scale, using the possibilities of virtual communication. An interesting, fairly recent development in this direction is the platform cooperatives (as discussed earlier in the chapter), which, to some extent, try to mimic the practice and governance of place-based cooperatives. Although still limited in number, platform cooperatives are popping up across the world, attempting to provide an alternative to capitalist platform economies, which often have little respect for the rights of those who engage in exchange via those platforms, such as ride-share drivers, bicycle deliverers, cleaners, and caregivers (Scholz and Schneider 2017). It still remains to be seen, however, whether they can actually overcome the challenges that the virtual approach creates for cooperatives.

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6. A Thousand Years and Three Waves: Lessons Learned

From the story narrated in this chapter, it can be concluded that there is nothing new under the sun: in the light of long-term history, what we are experiencing is not a revolution. However, it is precisely the historical data that offer a way to better frame, understand, and assess the opportunities and potential problems that current developments in ICAs may encounter. The main lesson to be learned from this long-term analysis is that a wave of new institutions for collective action is always preceded by a phase of accelerated development of the free market. We saw this after the first market developments during the Middle Ages, with an accelerated development of the agricultural and urban labor market (Van Bavel 2007, 2011); we observed it again after a strong wave of liberal thinking and privatization in the nineteenth century; and quite recently we have seen it happening after the privatization of public services (and the rise of neoliberalism) in the last decades of the twentieth century. Within Europe from the 1980s onward—partly under pressure from the European Union—there has been a strong emphasis on liberalization and the accompanying privatization of public services and goods, including through the creation of public-private partnerships. However, it appears that this liberalization process has not always yielded the desired effect. The privatization of the energy sector, for example, has not generated the expected market effect, and it is often an obstacle to the production of sustainable energy (Van Velzen 2012). The emergence of care cooperatives is a direct response to the lack of affordable and accessible care, particularly in sparsely populated areas with a rapidly aging population, such as the province of North Brabant in the Netherlands. The market does not work when there is what it deems to be insufficient demand within a viable perimeter. The same principle is also quite clear from an example from the infrastructure sector: a fiber-optic cooperative was set up by the citizens of Heeze-Leende, a small village in Brabant (Sadowski 2017, 91), who had been ignored by mainstream providers because of the village's spread-out population. In the case of the bread funds, the inability of freelancers to get solid disability insurance via commercial providers led them to take matters into their own hands. In both cases, collective action has provided a viable alternative (Broodfonds n.d.).

Today's cooperatives have much in common with the second wave of institutions for collective action. At the beginning of that wave, around 1880, the whole of Western Europe had gone through a period of liberalization, which nevertheless failed to deliver the desired result for everyone, including many farmers and rural residents. It was during this period that many farmer cooperatives originated, including the rural credit unions mentioned earlier—farmers, both in Germany and elsewhere, had encountered great difficulties in getting loans from mainstream banks, due to the unpredictability of their income, and Raiffeisen's rural credit unions were a solution. So, in spite of the great expectations about the functioning of the free market—both historically and today—the market does not always make good on its promise to deliver better goods at more competitive prices.

The relationship between institutions for collective action and market forces can perhaps be characterized as rather ambiguous. On the one hand, institutions for collective action were intended to protect individuals from the market; this much is clear from the relationship between urbanization, the ensuing commercialization, and the rise of institutions such as guilds in the early modern period, and from the explicit references to the possible adverse impact of the market that we find in regulations created by users of common land.[18] The commercialization of goods made with raw materials from the common land was often strictly controlled—for instance, some regulations stated that milk from cows that had grazed on the common pasture could not be sold outside the village. In addition, cattle that had not spent a winter in the stables of a farm were not allowed on the common pasture. These measures prevented the common pastures from being used for commercial milk production or fattening the cattle quickly before sale, instead of guaranteeing that the members' basic necessities would be met. Numerous rules that placed sufficiency over commercialization can be found in the preserved regulations, showing that users of common land were

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well aware of the potential adverse impact of commercialization. Free-riding for the purpose of personal gain, with the potential of creating a "tragedy of the commons" effect, had to be avoided at any cost (Hardin 1968).

On the other hand, increasing market integration also played a positive role at the individual level. The work of anthropologists has shown that a higher degree of contact with markets leads individually to a higher degree of willingness to reciprocate (Henrich et al. 2004). Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the region around the North Sea, where markets developed the fastest, there was also a strikingly strong development toward these institutions for collective action. One could argue that institutionalized forms of collective action were a modus vivendi developed to allow farmers and artisans to get the most out of the still-developing market, while negating its negative effects (De Moor 2008b). This "moral economy" created a balance between short-term market demand and the longer-term cycles of supply from citizens (Van Zanden 1999, 129).[19]

Such moral economy arguments are relevant when trying to understand why people participate in an ICA today, when there are market alternatives that are financially more attractive than the ICA they turn to. In many cases, ICAs today often decide to invest at least part of their revenues in societal goals, such as building a local swimming pool or library, even though reinvesting those revenues in the ICA itself might have been a more logical decision. Although this does not necessarily contrast with regular companies that nurture social entrepreneurship, ICAs' decisions to invest in societal goals are not that straightforward. Members of ICAs are primarily social actors embedded in tightly knit communities that communicate, observe social norms, and judge their fellow members on the basis of their reputation and social actions. This makes them capable of collectively composing sets of binding decisions (rules) that lead to the formation of institutions, in which their individual consumption cannot be separated from long-run collective benefits, including the preservation of collective resources.

With many ICAs, there are even reasons to believe that participants are well aware of the potentially negative financial consequences of their choice, but still choose to be part of a collectivity. A striking example of this is the so-called ROSCAs (rotating saving and credit associations, where people agree to join together to contribute a small sum on a regular basis, with each member being entitled to withdraw the entire amount of collected funds in a regular rotating order) (De Swaan and Van der Linden 2006). ROSCAs have often proven to be highly efficient and effective in developing countries, where loans are difficult to obtain or very costly; they offer participants an alternative way to buy consumer goods or save for housing. In Western societies, where loans are easier to obtain and have lower costs, ROSCAs are often still popular among migrant communities, who make their choice based not on economic motives but on social and community motives. For example, if a member of a ROSCA cannot pay their monthly dues, they may negotiate to pay later; even if they are not able to pay the dues later, they will still not be publicly shamed by a bailiff's visit. Moreover, the bonds that are created among those who participate express the importance of tradition and mutual aid among members of the community vis-à-vis the rather impersonal bond that is created through a loan obtained via the bank.

This ambiguous relationship between ICAs and the market does not necessarily mean that they are "against" the free market, though at present they are sometimes considered as such. There are plenty of examples of ICAs, both past and present—such as the commons—that used market instruments in their daily functioning, such as pricing mechanisms to regulate the conduct of their members. There are also many examples of ICAs that gave rise to new developments in the market economy (De Moor 2008a). For example, guilds are praised for their role in the development of human capital through their widespread apprenticeship system. Furthermore, guilds also developed the concept of a brand, as proof of good product quality (De Munck, Kaplan, and Soly 2007).[20] Each guild master had to have a "mark" so that the origin of a product could always be determined in case there was a complaint about the product quality; all "marks" had to be deposited at the city hall, and in case of complaints, the original mark was used as a reference.

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Historical cooperatives such as Vooruit in Ghent (Belgium), which allowed members to purchase otherwise inaccessible products at a significant price advantage, can be considered the forerunners of supermarkets, which were rapidly established around the 1950s, albeit within the free market. (Similar purchasing cooperatives still exist today, of course.) Today we also see the development of one-off joint purchase initiatives next to the emergence of ICAs—for example, in the energy sector. So ICAs are apparently not only a response to the development of the free market, but also may be precursors of new developments within that same market (Nys 2013).

Contrary to what the media suggest, many of the current initiatives should not be considered as a response to crisis. The new wave of initiatives was indeed already under way in the first years of the twenty-first century, before the first signs of economic crisis became noticeable in 2008. Economic turmoil has certainly increased discontent among citizens and created space for alternative ideas, and politicians have definitely used such turmoil to their advantage. However, with their call for more responsible, active citizens, politicians seem to be reacting to an evolving phenomenon, thus somewhat obscuring the real cause—namely, the fiascos of private healthcare, the commercial energy sector's lack of a real commitment to sustainability, and other market-related issues. Institutions for collective action develop out of citizens' initiatives; they are rarely initiated by local government or other public authorities.

While in the Netherlands legislative initiatives such as the Social Support Act (Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning, introduced in 2007 and renewed in 2015) played a role in the evolution of institutions for collective action (Van Houwelingen, Boele, and Dekker 2014), the same evolution also took place elsewhere in Europe, both in countries that were hit hard by the economic crisis that began in 2008, such as Greece and Spain, and those that proved less vulnerable, such as Germany. Today, Germany, for example, is the uncontested leader in the creation of local energy cooperatives. At the same time, there are countries in Europe where this evolution is much less apparent. The comparison between the Netherlands and Belgium springs to mind: the growth of citizen collectivities started later in Belgium than in the Netherlands and has so far not experienced the same "institutional revolution" (Holemans et al. 2018). One reason is that in Belgium the welfare state remains strong, and another is that in Belgium the privatization of public services, while no less threatening, has been occurring more slowly than in the Netherlands.

The variety in archetypes of ICAs and their functions shows clearly that although we have seen three major waves of ICAs over the past thousand years, and can discern patterns in the contextual factors that affect their rise and functioning, it would be too shortsighted to say that history simply repeats itself. Certainly the context is different today than during either of the two previous waves—there is a far greater range of options for individual citizens with respect to banking and/or insurance, for example, but this is accompanied by significantly greater social complexity, where there are (too) many steps between producer and consumer of energy, care, food, and so on. In comparison to the historical situation, where economic and social objectives were often brought together in a collective, nowadays there are separate collectives for many different objectives: whoever needs energy joins an energy collective, and whoever needs care joins a care collective. This in itself is a missed opportunity: bundling many different objectives creates the possibility for more efficient organization in which both setbacks and windfalls can be shared by different domains, and where reciprocity will be beneficial in different domains. It is striking that a lot of local energy cooperatives are now beginning to move toward other domains beyond just energy. And, as we have seen, in some cases ICA members deliberately choose to reinvest in the local community, rather than receiving payment of a dividend.[21]

Another difference is the duration for which one joins a cooperative. Although no precise figures on this subject are available, other studies have suggested that in the past people easily made a lifelong commitment, while nowadays the duration of membership is much shorter (Van den Berg and De Hart 2008). Also, the share of people who are involved in ICAs appears to be different. This is difficult to quantify, but given how widespread ICAs were in the early modern period, with commons in the countryside and

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guilds in cities, it can be assumed that the current movement toward collectives is far smaller than in centuries past. Nevertheless, cooperatives that have their origin in the second wave have a significantly large share of the contemporary Dutch economy. The current combined yield of the Dutch cooperatives is no less than 111 billion euros; for comparison, all stock-exchange-listed companies put together amount to 253 billion euros (Van den Berg and De Hart 2008, 77). On average, every Dutch person is a member of 1.8 cooperatives (Van Bekkum and Griffioen 2012, 4).

7. Concluding Remarks

In the academic literature of the past thirty years—basically since Elinor Ostrom published her seminal *Governing the Commons* in 1990 and put the ICA back on the map as a viable alternative-governance concept—many studies have shown for many areas of the world how historical commons functioned, and did so pretty well. These studies proved a very wide body of ammunition against the assumption that collective resource governance is bound to lead to a "tragedy of the commons."

However, one does not have to travel to other places to find evidence of successful ICAs. In this chapter, we have chosen to travel through time, to identify periods of intensive growth in the number of institutions for collective action in many different sectors. We have stressed the similarities between past and current waves, but also the differences. The ICAs of today differ from their historical counterparts in two major ways. First, the context in which they develop is fundamentally different, from the new technologies that influence the ways that members interact with one another to members' different needs and desires. Secondly, the resources that are governed by institutions for collective action today are substantially different from the agricultural context we associate with the historical commons in the Western world. However, when it comes down to the behavioral aspects of those setting up ICAs and using and managing resources collectively, not that much seems to have changed, nor does institutionalized collective action differ much from resource to resource. Throughout history we see that through self-governance and collective action, citizens have tried to fulfill their needs and desires.

If we compare the three waves of collective action, we do see some differences that deserve further research. Taking the bird's-eye perspective, and looking at the long-term development of institutions for collective action, we may say that ICAs have increasingly become single-purpose organizations. Whereas citizens today may choose to join an energy cooperative, a care cooperative, or one of many other types of cooperatives in order to fulfill their daily needs in a collective way, the ICAs of the first wave combined many different purposes: occupational, care-related, and even charitable. Though changes in ICAs' purposes over time are partly related to historical changes in production and consumption patterns, combining multiple purposes does allow ICAs to balance different types of demands from their members more easily. Offering multiple services to members may also help to prevent free-riding, as members become dependent on the collectivity for their various needs. Having to participate in several different collectivities reduces the opportunities for using reciprocal behavior as a complementary incentive.

The historical analysis of commons in the European past allows us to offer some thoughts on the future of the commons as a governance regime in the present day. Seen from a historical perspective, the term *commons* refers to many different types of collective resource management on various levels. However, the constant "stretching" of the term that has taken place over the past few decades has led to a number of paradoxes, which keep coming back into the debate without being resolved or even properly acknowledged.

First of all, current-day proponents of developing commons as an alternative governance model often see opportunities in the domain of public-good provision, now that many welfare states are increasingly trusting the market to take over their role. However, the original forms of ICA were not set up to provide public goods. In many cases ICAs engaged in activities that came to benefit the whole local community

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(mainly in the form of poor-relief activities supported by ICA members), but this was not the primary intention of the institutions. Their primary intention was to solve a market failure, in order to secure the livelihoods of their members, who in most cases acted as prosumers.

Second, ICAs are more and more being expected to solve resource-management problems on a much larger, even global scale, but this is problematic. In the process of increasing expectations of ICAs as an alternative governance model, the term *commons* is now frequently being applied to resource management that goes far beyond the local level, with references even to global resources, while the features of the resources managed as commons have been strictly local. Certainly, lessons can be drawn from the research done on the history of ICAs that could give insight into the management of local resources; however, the potential of scaling these lessons up to deal with global resource issues is far less obvious.

Thirdly, in current political-philosophical writings, the commons are often seen as a constant factor throughout history, without much fluctuation in their presence or importance. But this is inaccurate. While there have been periods in which new ICAs emerged more rapidly than before, there have also been periods in which many ICAs dissolved, mostly under external pressure orchestrated by national governments. History is never a linear process, nor are specific forms of resource governance always constantly present. It is exactly this variety over time, in the choices individuals and societies make of one or multiple governance models, that allows us to identify the factors that influence how resources have been governed and what it takes to make institutions for collective action resilient over time. History does show that regardless of governments' attempts to eliminate forms of self-organization among citizens, citizens will keep organizing. The degree to which forms of cooperation are institutionalized, however, is variable over time. What is important to note is although people continue to seek cooperation as the central starting point for the new institutions they set up, these institutions are intended mainly for local resource governance, although their impact can have supralocal effects by, for example, steering their members' consumer behavior toward sustainability. Scaling up the governance model of ICAs for global resource management has yet to be demonstrated to be a valuable and effective way of dealing with the global challenges ahead.

Acknowledgments

This chapter is based, inter alia, on the research results of the project "Modelling Institutional Dynamics in Historical Commons," a project led by Linnaeus University (Sweden) in close cooperation with Utrecht University and Delft University of Technology (both Netherlands), and funded by the Swedish Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

The data for Figure 1 were provided by Onno van Bekkum ("Cooperatives and Bilateral Waarborgfondsen" database). The data for Figure 2 were collected as part of the NWO-Middelgroot project "Data Infrastructures for the Study of Guilds and Other Forms of Collective Action" (2007–2011), http://www.collective-action.info/projects_NWOProject. Thanks to Jan Lucassen, Milja van Tielhof, Aart Vos, Lotte van der Vleuten, René van Weeren, and Annelies Tukker for their contribution to the data sets on the Dutch institutions for collective action; the data are available via https://www.dataverse.nl/dvn/dv/WebsiteICAGuilds/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?globalId=hdl:10411/10101&studyListingIndex=4_e65c3494de2f199a14193eeac8ec. The data for Figure 3 were provided by Onno van Bekkum ("Cooperatives and Bilateral Waarborgfondsen" database), IISG (HISVAK database, version of June 18, 2013, with thanks to Sjaak van der Velden), and Huygens-ING (M. van Tielhof, "Erkende verenigingen, 1855–1903," www.Historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/ErkendeVerenigingen).

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Notes

1 For a list of examples for several countries, see "Examples of Present-Day Collective Initiatives," Institutions for Collective Action, http://www.collective-action.info/_POC_Examples. For examples for the Netherlands, see, e.g., "Examples of ICAs Today," Institutions for Collective Action, http://www.collective-action.info/_ICA_Today_Examples. See also "National and Sector Rankings," International Co-operative Alliance, https://monitor.coop/en/national-and-sector-rankings.

2 Lenos, Sturm, and Fish (2006) also describe this as the third generation of citizen participation, after the first generation, in the 1970s, when responsible citizens created possibilities for participation, and the second generation, in which citizens

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were given the opportunity to help shape policy at an early stage through interactive policy management and co-production. See also Hurenkamp, Tonkens, and Duyvendak 2006, 13–14.

3 For many examples in care, see Aedes-Actiz Kenniscentrum Wonen-Zorg 2012.

4 See, for instance, https://www.dorpswinkelsterksel.nl/service/about/.

5 For the organization that supports these initiatives and more background information on Bread Funds, see http://www.broodfonds.nl/.

6 A number of examples can be found at "Literature on ICAs Today," Institutions for Collective Action, http://www.collective-action.info/_POC_Literature.

7 Some politicians, such as the former Dutch secretary of state for health, welfare and sport Maarten van Rijn, have gone so far as to say that citizens should again harbor more "warm feelings" for each other (Meeus and Wester 2013).

8 A survey by the Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband (2012) showed that between 2006 and 2011 there were 430 new energy cooperatives formed in Germany, and that 83 percent had fewer than fifty members in the initial phase. For an overview of recent energy initiatives in the Netherlands, see "De energie-initiatieven op een rij," Hier Opgewekt, http://www.hieropgewekt.nl/initiatieven.

9 More information on these data sets can be found at www.collective-action.info.

10 See Van Bekkum and Griffioen 2012.

11 The Dutch *markegenootschappen* in the east were able to develop early due to the absence of a strong central power, in contrast to the County of Holland, where the count regularly interfered with the organization of the *meenten.* See, e.g., Van Zanden 1999, 128. For more background information on the different types of commons in Europe, see "Types of Institutions for Collective Action—Commons," Institutions for Collective Action, http://www.collective-action.info/_TYP_COM; also see Van Zanden 1999 and Hoppenbrouwers 2002.

12 See, among others, the 1442 agreement of the Utrecht beguines with the linen weavers' guild to pay 1.5 pounds every year for the right to weave with two or three looms (Het Utrechts Archief, Archieven van de kloosters, access no. 0705, inventory no. 989).

13 In 1795 in the southern Netherlands, in 1798 in the northern Netherlands (De Munck, Lourens, and Lucassen 2006, 63).

14 With thanks to Miguel Laborda Pemán for the calculations based on the files created as part of NWO-Middelgroot project "Infrastructures."

15 On the same Flemish case studied by Tine De Moor, the increasing dominance of the passive users over the active ones led to a substantial change in governance, and nearly to the dissolution of the common (De Moor 2015, 139ff.).

16 For a literature review, see Diekmann 2004.

17 See, among others, "Energie Marke Haarlose Veld," Hier Opgewekt, http://www.hieropgewekt.nl/initiatieven/gelderland/energie-marke-haarlose-veld, and the website of De Ommer Marke, http://www.ommermarke.nl/ (both accessed July 8, 2013).

18 See also the Common Rules project, in cooperation with the universities of Lancaster and Pamplona, http://www.collective-action.info/_PRO_NWO_CommonRules_Main.

19 The term *moral economy* originates form the work of E. P. Thompson (e.g., Thompson 1971).

20 For some examples, see Voet 1912 and Citroen 1975.

21 For example, Duurzaam Hoonhorst, in Hoonhorst, Overijssel, works on saving energy and on providing care (http://www.duurzaamhoonhorst.nl); on the Betuwse Energie Coöperatie, see Holistico 2013; on the cooperative association Energie Dongen, see its website at http://www.energiedongen.nl/.

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