



Universiteit Utrecht

HOMO COOPERANS

Institutions for collective action and the compassionate society



Tine De Moor

Inaugural lecture, August 30, 2013



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Inaugural lecture

Delivered at the inauguration ceremony of Tine De Moor as Professor of *Institutions for Collective Action in Historical Perspective*, August 30, 2013.

Dear Rector, colleagues, friends, and family,

We live in exciting times, even for historians: the current economic and social crisis beckons many to ask for similarities with precious historical events. However, the current crisis differs from the previous one in our increasing inability – despite the wealth that we amassed over the centuries – to deal with that wealth in a responsible way to ensure that everyone may benefit not just today, but also tomorrow. The current economic crisis is actually a crisis in intergenerational thinking, both between generations today and future generations, in various domains. First and foremost in the field of natural resources, where the finite availability of fresh air, fossil fuels, and oceans, but also of the park around the corner and the North Sea beaches show a growing scarcity where the availability for future generations can no longer be taken for granted. In care, the question of the elasticity of the welfare state is more relevant than ever: how to ensure that the elderly of the future can count on the same level of care that is provided now? How do we keep care affordable, in spite of the aging population? How certain are young people of receiving the pensions that they are saving today? In parallel, issues of solidarity in the workplace form similarly pressing dilemmas: how to create employment opportunities for young people, without compromising the activity of the aging workforce? Are the students that we educate at this university today a doomed ‘lost generation’?

Studies on intergenerational solidarity are extremely topical, that is for sure. The problems we face today are not only serious, but also more complex and more global than in the past, and the solutions of the past, such as the achievements of the welfare state, also appear more finite than expected. Although there are technological solutions available to many problems: we can adopt road pricing, take the train instead of the plane (even though the high speed train technology sometimes fails ...), and with better home automation the elderly can live in their familiar surroundings for much longer. However, the reality is that between technology and solution another step is needed, namely, building solid, resilient institutions to create values which regulate the behaviour of individuals in a way that solves the problems of today and makes the future brighter.

The power of citizens: from ‘collective interests’ to ‘collective action’

The other, more positive news of the day is that parallel to the downward spiral in which the economy and society seem to end up, a very different evolution is going on: new institutions arise constantly, institutions that we can describe as institutions for collective action, where cooperation and self-regulation form the jumping-off point for daily practice. Citizens take matters into their own hands to address local problems. These institutions emerge from the bottom-up, through the efforts of ordinary citizens like you and me. These new partnerships fill needs in the areas of energy, healthcare, food, insurance, infrastructure, etc. with the ambition to survive long term. This sets them apart from previous, temporary citizen initiatives, which can also be set up by individual citizens. Throughout the Netherlands, but also elsewhere in Europe,¹ new partnerships are created by citizens, for citizens, always with a specific economic, environmental, or social goal. This is not a disguised form of communism – through orchestrated government collectivization – but rather new collectives, initiated by and for ordinary citizens – hence the term ‘citizen collectives’ which I like to use hereafter instead of ‘institutions for collective action’.²

Since approximately 2005, over 300 collectives for energy were founded in the Netherlands, aimed both at generating energy and at the collective purchase of energy from companies on the free market. Furthermore, many initiatives were established that provide healthcare – ranging from residential communities for the elderly, elderly care cooperatives, and day care centers, to cooperatives of GPs and physiotherapists.³ Moreover, many new institutions were founded that attempted to reach a common goal through collective action, cooperation, and self-regulation, for instance in the production, distribution, and consumption of food – ranging from farmer cooperatives, to new cooperative supermarkets run

¹ For a list of examples for several countries see the website Collective Action.info, ‘Examples of present-day collective initiatives’, http://www.collective-action.info/_POC_Examples.

² Lenos, Sturm, and Fish also describe this as the third generation of citizen participation, after a first generation in the 1970s when responsible citizens enforced possibilities to participate, and the second generation which citizens have the opportunity to help shape the policy at an early stage through interactive policy management and coproduction. See S. Lenos, P. Sturm, and R. Vis, *Burgerparticipatie in gemeenteland. Quick scan van 34 coalitieakkoorden en raadsprogramma's voor de periode 2006 – 2010* (Amsterdam 2006). See also M. Hurenkamp, E. Tonkens, and J. W. Duyvendak, *Wat burgers bezielt. Een onderzoek naar burgerinitiatieven* (Amsterdam 2010) 13–14.

³ For many examples in care, see Aedes-Actiz Kenniscentrum Wonen-Zorg, ‘InNUvatie: kiezen, durven en ondernemen in wonen en zorg’ (version April 16, 2012), <http://www.kenniscentrumwonzorg.nl/actueel/specials/innuvatie> (visited July 8, 2013).

by employees and/or volunteers⁴ – in the creative sector, and in infrastructure – for instance, in the construction of fiber-optic networks. You cannot begin to imagine how many plan to establish a cooperative; even the prostitutes in Utrecht are seriously considering setting up a cooperative....⁵

These are not one-off initiatives, but ambitious organizations that try to establish a long-term effect. The so-called Bread Funds aptly illustrate this. Over the past several years the huge increase in the number of Dutch freelancers and their struggles to get affordable workers' compensation has led to them joining in collective Bread Funds, which through a monthly contribution offer a buffer to all members for illness, and accidents.⁶ Often these new institutions take the form of a cooperative, or sometimes the form of an association, or foundation. Regularly the goal of the members is quite broad: they do not just generate energy, they produce renewable energy, and it's not just aimed at care for the elderly, but ensures that they can continue to live in their own village until there is no other option. Apart from these kinds of initiatives aimed at providing for new or existing needs, there are many initiatives in which the *sharing* of goods that are already available is paramount, rather than the production of new goods or services. These initiatives also increasingly form institutions for collective action.

The main common feature of institutions for collective action is that they are self-regulating and self-managing: the members of the institution design the rules themselves – sometimes in conjunction with local government. These rules contain guidelines about who can or cannot become a member, how the common goods and services may be used, how the institution should be governed, and what to do in case of violation of these guidelines by an individual member. This differs fundamentally from a governance model where goods and services are offered on the free market, with consumers, and often also the actual producers having no, or very little, direct impact on how a product is made, which quality guidelines must be followed, and how much the product will cost.

Today, the diversity in types of institutions for collective action is enormous. Not only do their domains vary, ranging from care, to energy, and to

⁴ See for instance <http://www.sterksel.nu/ons-dorp/dorpswinkel> and <http://www.boodschappennet.nl/>.

⁵ See De Stad Utrecht.nl, 'Utrecht gaat mogelijk prostituees ondersteunen bij oprichting coöperatie' (version June 13, 2013), <http://www.destadutrecht.nl/politiek/nieuws/5567/utrecht-gaat-mogelijk-prostituees-ondersteunen-bij-oprichting-cooperatie> (visited July 8, 2013).

⁶ For the organization that supports these initiatives and more background information on Bread Funds, see: <http://www.broodfonds.nl/>.

agriculture, but also the way they are organized is very diverse. Some collectives are strongly intertwined with the local government and work closely together; others keep as far away from local government as possible, and aim for complete financial independence. Little is expected from the members in some collectives, while in other cases, active participation is an essential part of the functioning of the institution. Although this large diversity is not easy for governments to come to grips with, it has great added value for our institutional landscape. Maybe we should not consider the enormous diversity as a problem, but rather as a reflection of the many differences in local problems and possible solutions that arise, in addition to the solutions offered by state or market.

Dutch politicians are not blind to what is happening in society. In recent years reports commissioned by the government appeared under headings such as ‘civilian power’, ‘self-organization’, ‘weconomy’, ‘horizontalization’, and ‘decentralization’, all on the features, options, and consequences of these new developments.⁷ Politicians from very diverse backgrounds called for a reactivation of responsibility among citizens – citizens must do more to prop up the welfare state. Some politicians, such as current Secretary of State for Health, Welfare and Sport, Van Rijn, have gone so far as to say that we as citizens should again harbor more "warm feelings" for each other.⁸

This political discourse runs parallel to the development of the many new initiatives described above that indicate that citizens also want to do more themselves. Not in response to the call from the government – the government still does very little to stimulate active citizen participation – but because they signal a real need to take matters into their own hands. Both providers of care – especially those that aim for effective administration of care – and the persons dependent on care desire ‘chain shortening’, fewer intermediate steps between demand and supply, and a limitation of the ‘professionalization’ that took place over the past years. The same applies in the energy sector: citizens want to know where their energy comes from, and have often lost faith in the major suppliers. Solar panels on their own roof and their neighbor’s roof shorten the path to sustainable energy.

The Netherlands is certainly not alone in this strange dichotomy between politicians calling for more commitment among citizens and new institutions being formed from the bottom-up. It is a movement that is currently taking place

⁷ A number of examples can be found in the overview on http://www.collective-action.info/_POC_Literature.

⁸ T. J. Meeus and J. Wester, “Mensen die echt zorg nodig hebben, laten we niet in de steek”, *nrc.next*, April 26, 2013, 5.

throughout Western Europe, and also in Southern Europe. Although, there are also major differences: since 2005, more than 400 energy cooperatives have been established in Germany, which generally began quite small (on average 29 members in the initial phase),⁹ and have grown to a total of over 80,000 shareholders.¹⁰ The United Kingdom has the famous Big Society plans. On the other hand there are also Western countries, including Belgium, where the interest in these initiatives is rising, even though most collectives are still in their infancy. Differences in the extent to which new citizen collectives have been set up is partly due to tax or legal provisions, but especially due to the development of the free market in these regions. I'll return to this point in a moment.

A silent revolution?

The picture I've just sketched suggests something special is going on here. Both the literature and the media speak of a revolution, a change, a shift in the way our society is organized, a break from the rigid dichotomy of market versus state. But how significant is this movement? How many initiatives are we talking about? Measuring the extent of the development while we are in the middle of it is very difficult; nevertheless, there are some figures that can give further insight. Let's look at the evolution of the cooperative, the institutional form that is preferred by these new initiatives. In the end quite a few organizations stick to informal partnerships, associations, or foundation, but the Netherlands is traditionally a country of cooperatives. The tradition to establish cooperatives dates back to long before the late nineteenth century when the first cooperative banks were established – the forerunners of the famous Rabobank. The chart below shows a particular leap forward since 2005, with dozens of new cooperatives formed every year in particular in professional services, industry, energy, transport, and care.¹¹

⁹ See Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband, 'Energy cooperatives. Results of a survey carried out in spring 2012', [http://www.dgrv.de/weben.nsf/272e312c8017e736c1256e31005cedff/41cb30f29102b88dc1257a1a00443010/\\$FILE/Study%20Results%20Energy%20cooperatives%202012.pdf](http://www.dgrv.de/weben.nsf/272e312c8017e736c1256e31005cedff/41cb30f29102b88dc1257a1a00443010/$FILE/Study%20Results%20Energy%20cooperatives%202012.pdf) (visited July 8, 2013). This study showed that 83% of the energy cooperatives surveyed had fewer than 50 members in the initial phase.

¹⁰ A recent survey showed that there were between 2006 and 2011, 430 new energy cooperatives were formed in Germany. See Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband 'Energy Cooperatives', <http://www.dgrv.de/en/cooperatives/newcooperatives/energycooperatives.html> (visited July 8, 2013). For an overview of recent citizen initiatives set up in the Netherlands, see <http://www.hieropgewekt.nl/initiatieven>.

¹¹ Figures based on dataset Cooperatives (thanks to Onno van Bekkum) and O. van Bekkum en C. Griffioen, *Coöperatie+*. *De economische betekenis van de coöperatie* (Utrecht 2012) 6.

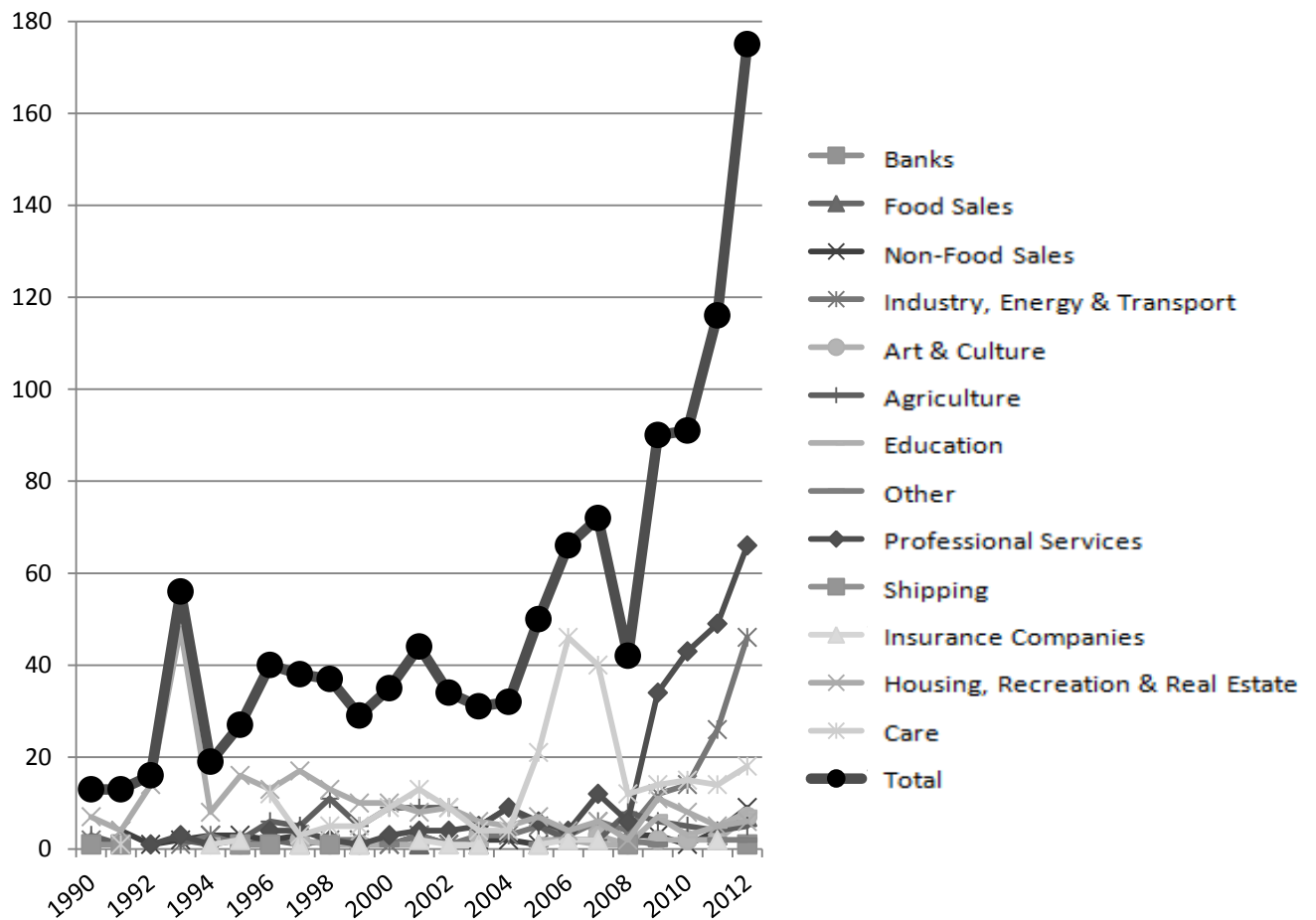


Figure 1: Evolution of the number of new cooperatives per sector from 1990 to 2012¹²

Professor of ‘Active Citizenship’ Evelien Tonkens (University of Amsterdam) describes this evolution as a "silent revolution".¹³ But is this similar to the silent revolution that I described some years ago, one related to the developments in the late Middle Ages?¹⁴ Is this – in light of history – a turning point in our society, and are we at the dawn of a new society? Or is this burst of civic cooperation only a brief response to the current crisis that will pass once this crisis blows over? I will not predict the future, but will look for the answer to these two questions in the very distant past. Allow me to take you back over a thousand years in time...

¹² Source: cooperation database Onno van Bekkum.

¹³ See a.o. M. Goudswaard, ‘Evelien Tonkens; “Stille revolutie in verzorgingsstaat mist samenhang en logica”’, *Het Financieele Dagblad*, July 20, 2013.

¹⁴ T. De Moor, ‘The Silent Revolution: a new perspective on the emergence of commons, guilds, and other forms of corporate collective action in Western Europe’, *The International Review of Social History* 53 (2008) 175–208.

Going back long before the creation of the welfare state, we find plenty of historical forms of institutions for collective action. In the Low Countries, from the late Middle Ages, around the eleventh to thirteenth century, citizens increasingly chose to address individual problems in an institutionalized, collective form that was largely independent of ecclesiastical, and secular authorities. The base for the formation of a collective was not the immediate environment, but rather the profession. Merchants were the first to form a partnership – early in the eleventh century, in Tiel. By joining forces, they could put more pressure on both 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 – whoever invests in trade, always runs the risk of goods being lost or failed to be delivered. Similar issues also formed the basis for the establishment of the first craft guilds – about a century after the formation of merchant guilds.¹⁵ Due to a growing demand for goods at the free market, some craftsmen failed to deliver quality products, or sold goods at lower prices. By uniting, the artisans could develop a reputation for quality and fair prices, by making price agreements, thereby guaranteeing a minimum income for members of the guild, which was very important under the pressure of increasing urbanization.¹⁶

Simultaneous to 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* (East Netherlands)¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ These urban and rural developments should be

¹⁵ See L. van der Vleuten and J. L. van Zanden, ‘Drie golven gilden. Institutionele ontwikkeling van koopliedengilden tot knechtbussen’, *Leidschrift* 25(2) (2010) 59-71.

¹⁶ B. De Munck, P. Lourens, and J. Lucassen, ‘The establishment and distribution of craft guilds in the Low Countries, 1000-1800’, in: M. Prak *et al.* (eds), *Guilds in the early modern low countries. Work, power and representation* (London 2006) 32-73.

¹⁷ 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, among others, J. L. van Zanden, ‘The paradox of the marks. The exploitation of commons in the eastern Netherlands, 1250-1850’, *The Agricultural History Review* 47 (1999) 125-144, 128.

¹⁸ For more background information on the different types of "commons" in Europe, see http://www.collective-action.info/_TYP_COM; also see van Zanden, ‘The paradox of the marks’ and P. C. M. Hoppenbrouwers, ‘The use and management of commons in The Netherlands. An overview’, in: M. De Moor, P. Sharpe, and L. Shaw-Taylor (eds), *The management of common land in north west Europe, c. 1500 - 1850* (Turnhout 2002) 87-112.

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 steady population increase, albeit with 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. Due to 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.¹⁹ Common land offered a number of advantages due to its larger scale, and reduced certain costs, for example when transferring landownership from father to son.

The Dutch water boards also stem from the same period. Through cooperation the members managed the water as efficiently as possible to keep both the land – and their feet – dry.²⁰ A phenomenon of a different nature, but institutionally very similar, was the emergence of beguinages in cities in the Low Countries, also in the late medieval period. Women who wished to lead a semi-religious life united in communities, where they lived relatively independent from ecclesiastical and secular authorities. From the late Middle Ages onwards single women in the Low Countries,²¹ increasingly went to the city for wage labor.²² 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 predictable that sometimes conflicts arose. 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 cases they benefitted from a favorable tax arrangement. Naturally, this was not agreeable to

¹⁹ B. H. Slicher van Bath, *Bijdragen tot de agrarische geschiedenis* (Utrecht 1978).

²⁰ E. Beukers (ed.), *Hollanders en het water. Twintig eeuwen strijd en profijt* (Hilversum 2007); A. Kaijser, 'System building from below: institutional change in Dutch water control systems', *Technology and Culture* 43 (2002) 521–548; T. Soens, *De spade in de dijk? Waterbeheer en rurale samenleving in de Vlaams kustvlakte (1280-1580)* (Antwerpen 2009) 17–72.

²¹ M. Bosker, M., E. Buringh, and J. L. van Zanden, From Baghdad to London: unraveling urban development in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, 800–1800. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* (forthcoming; Early Access-version available online at http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/REST_a_00284, doi: 10.1162/REST_a_00284)

²² D. S. Reher, 'Family ties in Western Europe: a persistent contrast', *Population and Development Review* 24 (1998) 203–234.

the textile guilds and led to the necessary discussions and conflicts.²³ Water boards and common land institutions sometimes encroached on each other's territory too; both groups had a stake in a particular approach, which resulted in discussions regarding user rights. However, each of the common interest groups – be they farmers, artisans, beguines, or other – were more apt in dealing with the challenges of the economy, politics, and society when they stood united.

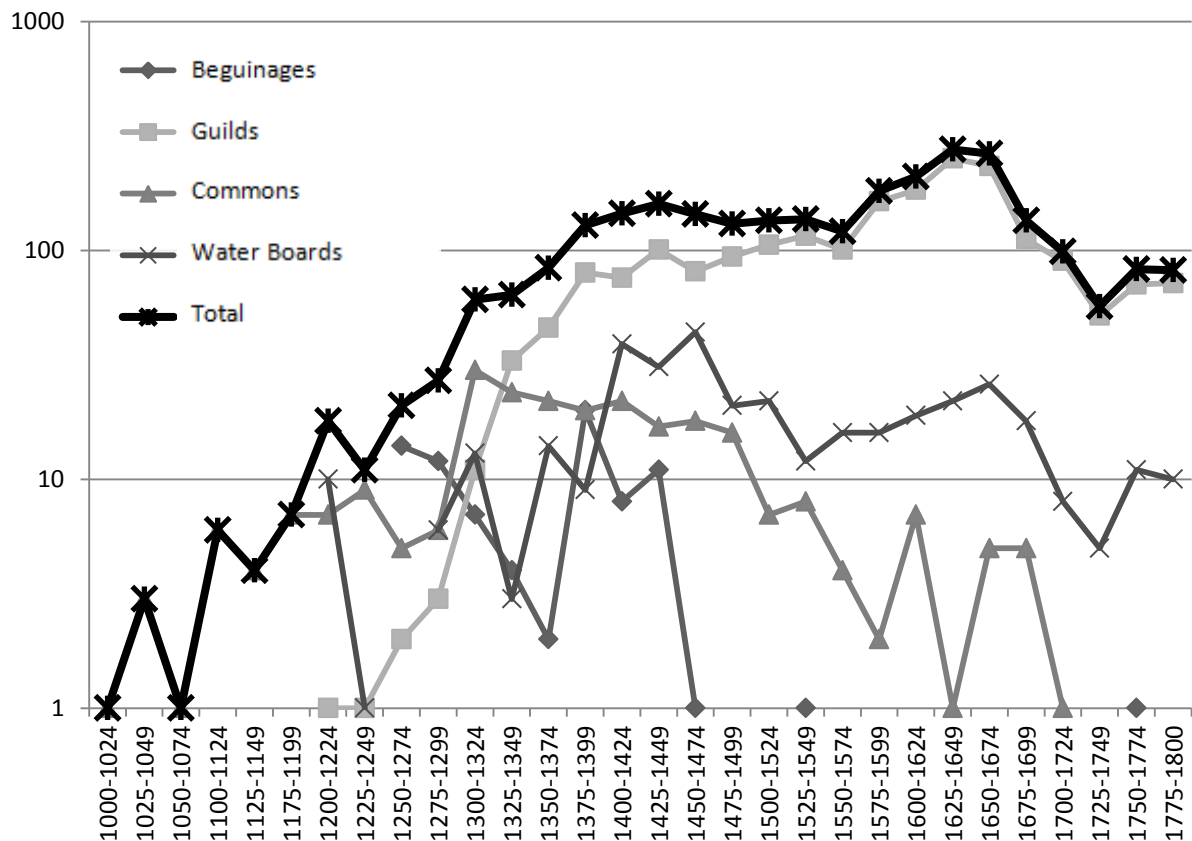


Figure 2: Evolution of the number of new institutions for collective action (beguinages, guilds, commons, and water boards) per quarter century in the Netherlands, 1000-1800 (logarithmic scale)²⁴

²³ 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 number 989).

²⁴ The data for this graph were based on data collected as part of the NWO-Middelgroot project "Data Infrastructures for the Study of Guilds and Other Forms of Collective Action" (2007-2011) in which researchers from the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and the U.S. participated. See http://www.collective-action.info/projects_NWOPROject. In particular I would like to thank Jan Lucassen, Milja van Tielhof, Aart Vos, Lotte van der Vleuten, René

The reason for institutions such as commons having almost entirely disappeared from the Dutch landscape and collective memory, was a 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 upcoming nation states. Meanwhile – partly under the influence of the philosophies of the Enlightenment – private property was promoted as *the* finest way to stimulate economic growth. According to philosophers and politicians of the time, the individual needed to be certain that he would receive the results of his efforts on the land, or at the market, therefore, private ownership of the means of production was a must. Joint ownership of land, or other resources would ensure that none would fully exert themselves. This reasoning led to institutions for collective action, such as guilds, and commons, to be 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:²⁵ 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 on the social level and the – anticipated – effects on agricultural productivity, it is certain that they have had a profound impact on society. The privatization of the Dutch *markegenootschappen* with the 1811 law, and similar measures elsewhere in continental Europe, led to a rapid privatization of common land.²⁶ In the late eighteenth century the guilds were rapidly abolished, motivated by a very similar political rhetoric.²⁷

van Weeren, and Annelies Tukker for their contribution to the datasets on the Dutch institutions for collective action. The data is available via https://www.dataverse.nl/dvn/dv/WebsiteICAGuilds/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?globalId=hdl:10411/10101&studyListingIndex=4_e65c3494de2f199a14193eeac8ec.

²⁵ L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Parliamentary Enclosure and the emergence of an English agricultural proletariat', *The Journal of Economic History* 61 (2001) 640-662; J. M. Neeson, *Commons: Common right, Enclosure, and social change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge 1996); J. Humphries, 'Enclosures, common rights, and women: the proletarianization of families in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *The Journal of Economic History* 50 (1991) 17-42.

²⁶ van Zanden, 'Paradox of the marks', 138; for an overview of the privatization of common land in the nineteenth century continent, see, among others, M. D. Demélas and N. Vivier (eds), *Les propriétés collectives face aux attaques libérales (1750-1914). Europe occidentale et Amérique latine* (Rennes 2003).

²⁷ In 1795 in the Southern Netherlands, in 1798 in the Northern Netherlands. See De Munck *et al.*, 'Establishment and distribution of craft guilds', 63.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century new institutions for collective action were founded – often to replace the older guilds. A prominent example is the *waarborgfonds* founded in 1811 in the Frisian countryside in Achlum, which has become the largest insurance company in the Netherlands today, Achmea. However, a true 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 producers/workers relations in trade unions. In addition, this was also a prosperous period for new – and acknowledged – associations, that were not economic in nature, but rather united by cultural, or sporting goals (see chart below). It is the time when some of the cooperative ‘giants’ of today originated, such as the *Boerenleenbank* (1897/98), one of the forerunners of the current Rabobank, inspired by the initiative of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen a few years earlier.²⁸ This second wave of new institutions for collective action would continue until about 1920.

A clear difference between the first wave of the late Middle Ages and early modern times, and organizations that emerged during this second wave, is that a striking number of smaller organisations from the second wave merged over the course of time, and have sometimes become very large cooperatives. Although there were some mergers of guilds in the early modern period, there was not a distinct shift in size – the number of guild members remained relatively limited. Furthermore, there are no known examples of mergers by *markegenootschappen*, although they did at times cooperate. In contrast, the institutions of the first wave often had a considerably longer lifespan. From the cooperatives that emerged between 1880 and 1920 only a fifth is still active today, while more than 90% of the *markegenootschappen* that we studied in the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland, Drenthe survived much longer, and easily passed the 150 years mark. Regarding the guilds, about 62% survived for more than 150 years, which is considerably more than the cooperatives of the second wave.²⁹ The current, third wave of new cooperatives is still marginal in terms of its contribution to the total turnover of the cooperative sector in the Netherlands, and the number of employees involved. The great number of smaller, recent initiatives are overshadowed by a number of "giants" such as Achmea, Rabobank group, and FrieslandCampina, which together accounted for more than 42 billion in revenue

²⁸ K. Sluyterman e.a. *Het coöperatieve alternatief. Honderd jaar Rabobank, 1898-1998* (Den Haag 1998) 20-25.

²⁹ With thanks to Miguel Laborda Pemán for the calculations based on the files created in the framework of the NWO-Middelgroot project “Infrastructures” (see above).

and nearly 100,000 employees – in 2010–2011 – nearly all of these cooperatives originate from the second wave.³⁰

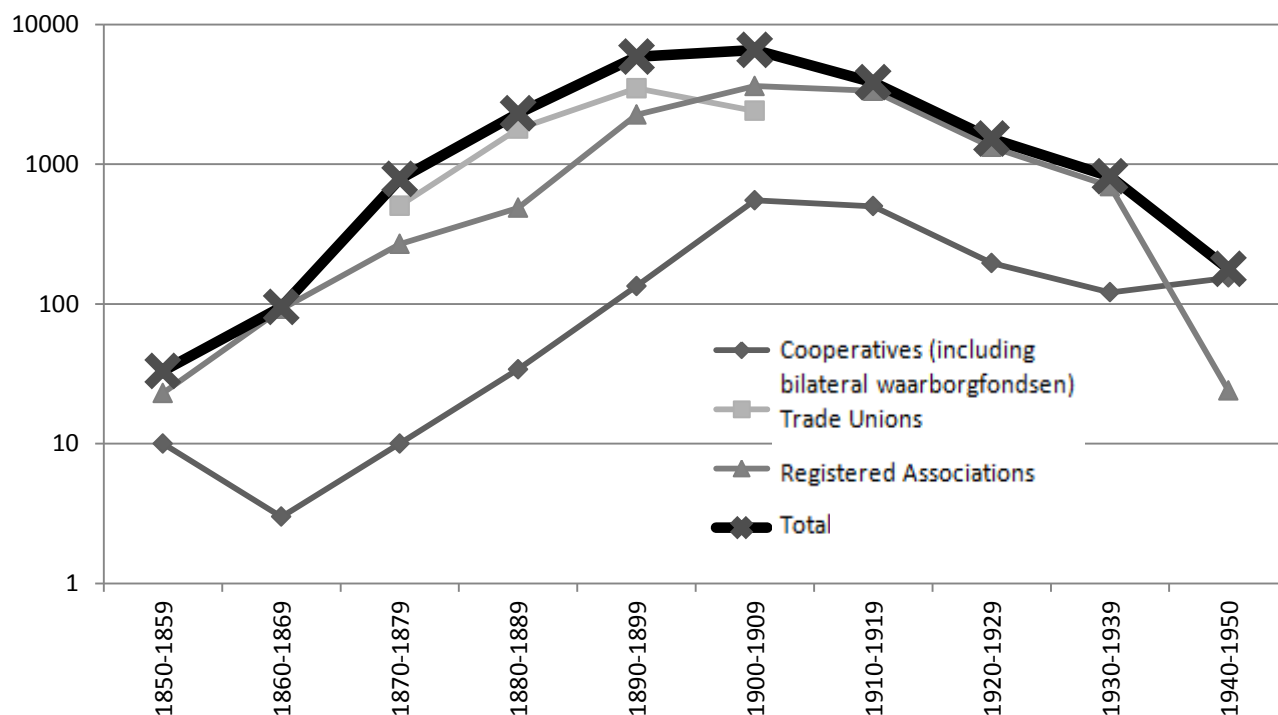


Figure 3: Evolution of the number of new institutions for collective action (cooperatives (including bilateral *waarborgfondsen*), trade unions, and registered associations) per decade in the Netherlands, 1850–1950 (logarithmic scale)³¹

Contemporary initiatives like to promote such historical parallels: in the name of some new citizen collectives the historical ties are even stressed to emphasize the legitimacy of the new organization and the chances of success. References to the past are made to generate trust and recognition. Freelancers united in Bread Funds have many similarities to the early modern guilds, and some also like to emphasize that – for instance, the *ZZP-gilde* (freelancer-guild). *Energiemarke* in Hoenslo combines references to the historical use with generating renewable energy through landscape.³²

³⁰ van Bekkum and Griffioen, *Coöperatie+*, 9.

³¹ The data for this graph were based on databases provided by Onno van Bekkum (Cooperatives and bilateral *waarborgfondsen*), the IISG (HISVAK-database, version 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)).

³² See among others the website of Hier Opgewekt, ‘Energie Marke Haarlose Veld’, <http://www.hieropgewekt.nl/initiatieven/gelderland/energie-marke-haarlose-veld> (visited

Although there is a great caesura between the historic guilds and commons, and their contemporary "successors" the motivations and organizational structure are very similar.

It would be too short-sighted to say that history simply repeats itself – it's not that simple. Current developments differ in several fundamental areas from historical institutions for collective action. Certainly, the context is different – there is a far greater range of options for individual citizens for banking and/or insurance – but this is accompanied by a significantly greater complexity of our society, where there are – too – many steps between producer and consumer of energy, care, food, etc. In comparison to the historical situation, the objectives of the new collectives are often divided. While in the historical context both 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 also 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 on different domains. It is striking that a lot of local energy cooperatives now begin to move towards other domains than just energy. In some cases members deliberately choose to reinvest in the local community, rather than receiving payment of a dividend. For example, *Duurzaam Hoonhorst*, in Hoonhorst, Overijssel, works on saving energy, and on providing care.³³

Another difference is the duration for which one joins a cooperative. Although no precise figures on this subject are available, other studies suggest that in the past people easily made a lifelong commitment while nowadays membership is much shorter.³⁴ Also, the share of society involved in institutions for collective action appears to be different. This is difficult to quantify, but given how wide spread institutions – such as commons in the countryside and guilds in cities – were in the early modern period it can be assumed that the current movement towards collectives is far removed from where it once stood.

July 8, 2013) and the website of De Ommer Marke, <http://www.ommermarke.nl/>. (visited July 8, 2013).

³³ See website Duurzaam Hoonhorst, <http://www.duurzaamhoonhorst.nl> (visited July 8, 2013); for instance see the initiative of the Betuwse Energie Coöperatie (website Holistico, 'Betuwse Energie Coöperatie', <http://www.holistico.nl/projecten+en+mvo/mvo/betuwse+energie+co%3%b6peratie> (visited July 8, 2013) and the website of the cooperative association Energie Dongen. <http://www.energiedongen.nl/> (visited July 8, 2013).

³⁴ E. van den Berg and J. de Hart, *Maatschappelijke organisaties in beeld. Grote ledenorganisaties over actuele ontwikkelingen op het maatschappelijk middenveld* (Den Haag 2008).

Nevertheless, cooperatives that have their origin in the second wave, have a significantly large share in contemporary Dutch economy. The current combined turnover of the Dutch cooperatives, is no less than 111 billion – for comparison: all listed companies put together amount to 253 billion.³⁵ Every Dutch person is on average a member of up to 1.8 cooperatives.

1,000 year – three waves: lessons learned

What is there to learn from the 1,000 year history of institutions for collective action that I just described in a nutshell? There are certainly differences between then and now, but are there also general lessons to be learned? From the story above it can be concluded that in itself there is nothing new under the sun: in the light of long-term history, it is not a revolution. However, it is the historical data that offers the possibility to better frame, understand, and assess opportunities and potential problems for the current developments.

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, in which privatization plays an important role. We have seen this after the first market developments during the Middle Ages, with an accelerated development of the agricultural and urban labor market,³⁶ we have observed it again after a strong wave of liberal thinking and privatization in the nineteenth century, and we have quite recently seen it happening after the privatization of public services – neoliberalism – in the last decades of the twentieth century. Within Europe from the 1980s onwards – partly under pressure from the European Union – there has been a strong emphasis on liberalization of public services and goods, among others by the creation of Public-Private Partnerships. However, it appears that liberalization has not always yielded the desired effect. The privatization of the energy sector, for example, has not generated the expected market effect, and is often an obstacle to the production of sustainable energy.³⁷ The emergence of care cooperatives is a direct response to the lack of affordable and accessible care, suited for specific situations, particularly in sparsely populated area's with a rapidly aging population

³⁵ van den Berg and de Hart, *Maatschappelijke organisaties in beeld*, 77.

³⁶ B. J. P. van Bavel, 'Markets for land, labor, and capital in northern Italy and the Low Countries, twelfth to seventeenth centuries', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41 (2011) 503–531 and idem, 'The transition in the Low Countries. Wage labour as an indicator of the rise of capitalism in the countryside, 1300–1700', *Past & Present* 195 (supplement 2) (2007) 286–303.

³⁷ T. van Velzen, "'Marktwerking in energiesector is overschat". Ir. Maarten van Riet pleit voor lokale coöperaties', *De Ingenieur*, June 29, 2012, 48–50.

– such as the province of North Brabant. The market does not work when there is an absence of sufficient quantities within a viable perimeter. The same principle is also quite clear from an example of the infrastructure sector: an optic-fiber cooperative was recently set up by the citizens of Heeze-Leende, a small village in Brabant, they were considered to be uninteresting by mainstream providers due to the lack of concentrated habitation. In case of the Bread Funds, the inability of freelancers to get a solid disability insurance via the commercial providers, led them to take matters into their own hands. In both cases, collective action provides a viable alternative.³⁸

Current developments of cooperatives have much in common with the previous wave of citizen collectives: at its beginning, around 1880, the whole of Western Europe had gone through a wave of liberalization, although, this did not deliver the desired result for everyone, including many farmers and rural residents. It is from this period that many farmer cooperatives originate, including the previously mentioned *Raiffeisenkasse*. Farmers, both in Germany and elsewhere, encountered great difficulties in getting loans from mainstream banks, due to the unpredictability of their income. So, in spite of the great expectations about the functioning of the free market – both in history and today –, that 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 may be called somewhat ambiguous. On the one side, institutions for collective action had to protect the individual from the market; this much is clear from the relationship between urbanization 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 made by users of common land.³⁹ Commercialization of goods made with raw materials from the common land was often subject to strict regulation. There are regulations, for instance, that state that milk from cows that had grazed on the common pasture could not be sold outside the village. Also, cattle that had not spent a winter in the stables of the farm was not allowed on the common pasture. This way it was prevented that the common pastures were used for commercial milk production or fattening the cattle quickly before sale, instead of guaranteeing the basic necessities to the members. Numerous rules that placed selling the sufficiency over commercialization can be found in the preserved regulations, showing that

³⁸ Website Broodfonds, ‘Begint bij de basis’, <http://www.broodfonds.nl> (visited July 17, 2013).

³⁹ See also the Common Rules project, in cooperation with the universities of Lancaster and Pamplona (see http://www.collective-action.info/_PRO_NWO_CommonRules_Main).

users of common land were well aware of the potential adverse impact of commercialization on their common pastures. Freeriding, for the purpose of personal gain, with the potential of creating a ‘tragedy of the commons’ effect, had to be avoided at any cost.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the 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 individuals to a higher degree of willingness to reciprocate.⁴¹ Perhaps, it is no coincidence that precisely in the region around the North Sea, where markets developed the fastest, there was also a strikingly strong development towards these institutions for collective action. One could argue that institutionalized forms of collective action were a kind of *modus vivendi* developed to allow farmers and artisans to get the most out of the still developing market, while negating its negative effects.⁴² This ‘moral economy’ created a balance between the short-term market demand and the long-term supply from the citizens.⁴³

However, given that institutions for collective action function as a correction to an imperfectly functioning free market, does not necessarily mean that they are instruments "against" the free market. There are plenty examples of institutions, 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 its members. There are also many examples of institutions for collective action that gave rise to new developments in the market economy.⁴⁴ 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 a good product quality.⁴⁵ Historical cooperatives as *Vooruit* in Ghent (Belgium) – that in the past, and again recently, led joint purchase initiatives leading to a significant price advantage for members to purchase otherwise inaccessible products – can be considered the forerunners of

⁴⁰ G. Hardin, ‘The tragedy of the commons’, *Science* (New Series) 162 (1968) 1243–1248.

⁴¹ J. Henrich e.a. (eds.), *Foundations of human sociality: economic experiments and ethnographic evidence from fifteen small-scale societies* (Oxford University Press 2004).

⁴² De Moor, ‘Silent Revolution’.

⁴³ van Zanden, ‘The paradox of the marks’, 129. The term “*moral economy*” originates from the work of E. P. Thompson (see e.g. E. P. Thompson, ‘The moral economy of the English crowd in the 18th century’, *Past & Present* 50 (1971) 76–136).

⁴⁴ T. De Moor, ‘Avoiding tragedies: a Flemish common and its commoners under the pressure of social and economic change during the eighteenth century’, *The Economic History Review* 62 (2008) 1–22.

⁴⁵ B. De Munck, S. L. Kaplan, and H. Soly (eds.), *Learning on the shop floor. Historical perspectives on apprenticeship* (London/New York 2007).

supermarkets, which were rapidly established around the 1950s, albeit within the free market. Today we also see the development of one off joint purchase initiatives, next to the emergence of institutionalized collective action, for example in the energy sector. Institutions for collective action are apparently not only a response to the development of the free market, but also precursors of new developments within that same market.

Contrary to what the media suggest we should not consider many of the current initiatives as a response to the 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 the crisis became noticable. The crisis has certainly increased the discontent among citizens and created space for alternative ideas, and politicians have certainly used the crisis to their advantage. However, with the call for more affective citizenship, for more responsible, active citizens, for more Big Society, politicians seems to respond to an evolving phenomenon, thus somewhat obscuring the real cause, namely the fiasco that is private healthcare and other privatization, and the over-professionalization of the health sector and other areas, such as the energy sector, with a lack of a real commitment to sustainability from major energy suppliers. Citizen collectives develop themselves, rarely initiated by local or other public authorities, but mainly on the initiative of citizens.

While in the Netherlands legislative initiatives such as the Social Support Act (Wmo, 2007) played a role in the evolution of citizen collectives, that same evolution also occurs elsewhere in Europe, both in countries that were hit hard by the economic crisis - e.g. Greece and Spain - and those that were not hit as hard - 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: Belgium does not experience the same "revolution" as the Netherlands, while Belgium is at least as much burdened by the crisis. The difference lies in the welfare state of Belgium remaining firm, and in the slower - but no less threatening - privatization of public services.

In addition to the timing of the new wave of initiatives, and the fact that they can be found throughout Europe, it is also noticeable that the citizen collectives occur both in sectors where one might expect a strong positive effect of the free market - for example, in the energy sector - as in other sectors where one should have been able to realise, with a little common sense, that a free market could have yielded little else than misery, such as in healthcare. Initiatives

for collective action arise both in sectors where achieving profit is possible, and in sectors where realizing profit is either impossible, or irresponsible.

Future opportunities and the need for introspection

However, the question remains: now what? Should we hope for it to simply pass by – as it did before – or are there opportunities? Answering this question relates closely to the quest for preserving the quality of life that we have reached, with its accessibility for all citizens for the – very – long term, even if we are in an economic downturn. The welfare state was a way of spreading risk among all citizens within a relatively short time span. Expanding that period is *the* challenge for the future. The question we, therefore, need to ask is not whether the active citizen – whether or not he or she is involved as a volunteer at a citizen collective – can, or should replace the welfare state. The question we should ask is whether the existence of other governance models within our current system – in which goods and services are created and/or offered by either by the government or the market – could not be complemented by other types of institutions, thus contributing to a greater institutional diversity, and, therefore, a more resilient society.

But how do you do that? To find that answer we can go back to our historical laboratory. Historical research into the different types of institutions for collective action – that I previously highlighted – shows us that, despite the little affinity most of us still feel towards farmers, or craftsmen, there are institutional instruments that transcend the activity to which they relate, but have the potential to mediate cooperation, and avoid unnecessary, and potentially harmful competition.

Over the past few years our international research team – uniting researchers from England, Spain, Italy and Netherlands – has looked at how sustainable institutions for collective action were set up, in particular for common land. With which set of rules can you build a sustainable institution? The investigation of historical examples of institutions for collective action within our research group focuses on a number of aspects, such as the causes of emergence and subsequent life of institutions, how the institution was regulated to ensure cooperation, and the instruments that have safeguarded the long-term survival of many of these historical examples. If we want to address intergenerational issues we need to build institutions that span generations, and that can exist for several decades, perhaps even centuries. History shows that this is not impossible: many of the Dutch *markegenootschappen* effortlessly bridged two centuries. A long life

does not have to stand in contrast with dynamics: regulations were frequently adjusted to changing circumstances. Resilience does not necessarily require constant punitive action to the members of the collective. Our research shows that *markegenootschappen* that lasted for centuries invested more time and energy in involving their members in decision-making than in threatening with sanctions.⁴⁶ Commitment to changing regulation appears vital to keep members engaged, and aware of the need for regulation.

An understanding of the necessary ingredients to create resilient, sustainable institutions out of the current initiatives is an absolute necessity for the future. There are plenty of examples of citizen collectives that perish, cooperatives that don't last or eventually give up the cooperative form. For instance, how could the housing cooperatives become the often dysfunctional corporations that they often are today? We also need to ask whether the effect of business success and the subsequent growth in market share and number of consumers is not detrimental to the cooperative nature of a cooperative. A large scale does not only bring more profit, but also increases risks: some cooperatives – Rabobank in the financial sector, and Achmea in health insurance – are among the largest companies in the Netherlands. A cooperative such as FrieslandCampina has every right to call itself a global contender. The question we must ask ourselves is whether companies of this size – with activities at home and abroad – can continue to maintain their cooperative principles in the longer term. How to deal with scale under the influence of globalization? How to mitigate the impact of globalization on stakeholder participation, and compensate for the declining social capital? These are huge challenges that the "old" cooperatives – formed in the second wave – face today. Will they become victims of their own success? How much success is too much?

A very recent example from Flanders, the Arco-bank, shows that cooperatives are not insensitive to 'the lure of capital', often with devastating consequences. It was not only in this cooperative that the actual associates had no idea of earlier decisions, many of them did not even know they were members of a collective, or what that entails.⁴⁷ Intensive involvement of members in decision-

⁴⁶ T. De Moor and A. Tukker, Participation versus punishment. The relationship between institutional longevity and sanctioning in the early modern times (case studies from the East of the Netherlands) (Unpublished paper for the Rural History Conference 2013, Bern, August 19-22, 2013).

⁴⁷ See among others Website Nieuwsblad.be, "'Arco was misleidend op nooit geziene schaal' Deminor snoeihard voor manier waarop ACW coöperanten bedotte' (version March 15, 2013), http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.aspx?articleid=DMF20130314_00504695 (visited July 17, 2013).

making is one of the original principles of the nineteenth-century cooperative movement, but nowadays, in many cases it is no longer a priority.

At the same time we see that some companies do not honor the principles of the cooperative. Some even abuse the fact that especially in the Dutch context it is an extremely flexible company form. In the Netherlands establishing a cooperative association has a number of advantages that can bypass certain disadvantages of a *bv* (private limited liability company) – such as the inflow of capital, withdrawal of profit from the company for less favorable taxes, or facing the hassle of registering shareholders.⁴⁸ Pseudo-cooperatives that take advantage of these benefits often don't survive very long, but do not do the image of 'the cooperative' any good.

Another concern that is regularly mentioned, is the risk of a new form of inequality in society where participation in citizen collectives is only accessible to very articulate, socially strong, and sufficiently wealthy citizens. Recent data collected by the Dutch *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* (bureau for social and cultural policy analysis) pierce the illusion that public services offered by the government today are accessible to everyone equally, and are used with equal intensity.⁴⁹ However, the demand from citizens is also uneven: some just need more care than others. In more local institutions closer to the supply and demand, it is easier to counter freeriding and the overconsumption of care. Moreover, the current alternative – privatization – is by definition a curtailment of public services, and it is highly questionable whether this can simply be reversed.

Finally,

History teaches us that man is essentially a cooperative being, a *homo cooperans*. We have been building institutions that are focused on long-term cooperation for a long time now, in particular after periods of accelerated market development and privatization. The exercises in our historical laboratory show that the resilience of society becomes limited when one governance model overpowers the others too much. My conclusion is that there is a need for a more balanced

⁴⁸ van Bekkum and Griffioen, *Cooperatie+*, 17.

⁴⁹ The report *Minder voor het midden. Profijt van de overheid 2007* by the *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* (SCP, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research) from 2011 shows that the middle incomes benefit slightly less from public facilities such as child care, public transport, education, housing benefit, or museum visits than can be expected, while the higher incomes clearly benefitted more. See E. Pommer *et al.*, *Minder voor het midden. Profijt van de overheid 2007* (Den Haag 2011).

relationship between market, state, and citizen collectives, and that the latter must be able to operate as a full governance model, albeit with the necessary introspection for the future. More institutional diversity would be an asset, and can provide more resilience in times of crisis. This is an aspect that particularly has not come forward in the current debate on care cooperatives. The current debate in the Netherlands about active and affective citizenship has been very lively, but also rather diffuse. The current trend is still called a response to the crisis. Perhaps the many initiatives on sharing existing goods that are more focused on limiting costs than on production of goods and services can be seen in the light of the crisis. But in my opinion, the basis for the new cooperatives in healthcare, energy etc. was laid a few decades ago with an acceleration of the privatization of these sectors.

Today's debate is confounded by the uncertain status of citizens in this story: what is expected of him or her in "the new model": a role as a volunteer, or as an employee, or employer in, for instance, a cooperative? Does the burden of caring for those dependent on care also lie with "active" citizens – with a job – or only with "available" citizens – without a job? Furthermore, there is confusion about the type of service and production that would qualify for the new model. Because of the plans of the government to pull back from the provision of public services, the debate focuses almost entirely on care. The feasibility of energy collectives, for example, is rarely discussed, while in institutional form these initiatives are very similar. The debate on the role of the citizen is thus greatly reduced to questions about what we are willing to do with our free time, while the variety of sectors where we see citizen collectives indicates that the debate should rather focus on institutional innovation, and how through institutional innovation solidarity can be made less indirect and more palpable. Attention should be directed to the question of how the functioning of such institutions over the very long term can be optimized without affecting the specificity of the approach that varies from collective to collective. As historians we can also show, through examples of institutions for collective action with a long life span, which instruments are suitable to build the institutions that are vital for the future. Historiography is not just about bringing a nice story, but it is a prerequisite to understand what it takes to build resilient institutions that can survive for many generations, and if necessary, even centuries.

We historians can not predict the future. What we can do is sketch a long-term evolution and determine that the current governance model has a limited shelf life, but we do not need to reinvent the wheel to build a new, more resilient governance model. An intergenerational crisis can only be overcome with a

collection of institutions that reconciles the concerns and aspirations of many generations over the long-term.

Acknowledgements

Finally, a few words of gratitude. Interdisciplinarity is essential to the kind of research I do. More than a must, it is a delight to work, and learn from many other researchers from economics, sociology, public administration, anthropology, and biology, while I, immodestly, try to convince them of the importance of historical research. The first time I boldly started coloring outside the lines was when after getting in touch with Elinor Ostrom, who I consider a great inspiration and example, I came into contact with the International Association for the Study of the Commons, where I met very few historians, which quite frankly made me feel pretty cool. The International Journal of the Commons grew from my collaboration with Erling Berge, a realization which I am still very proud of. My dear colleagues Miguel Lana Berasain and Angus Winchester, I thank you for the many years of cooperation on historical research of commons-regulation in Europe.

But despite the importance attached to good international contacts, the immediate research environment is still where "it" happens. Within this university interdisciplinarity is cherished and that is something I have fully appreciated over the past years. My thanks go out to the Executive Board and the Faculty of Humanities of this university for their confidence in my plans for the future. Within the interdisciplinary spearhead of *Institutions* and in particular the *Knowledge centre Institutions for the Open Society* great collaborations with colleagues and organisations from civil society and policy makers have been established. Together with Erik Stam, Vincent Buskens, Evelien De Kezel, and Tanja van der Lippe many beautiful ideas were developed. In particular I would like to thank Bas van Bavel, as the driving force behind this group, and the main link in all of this, not only between disciplines, but also between historians, as current chairman of the *Economic and Social History group*. Thank you for the unwavering commitment to building bridges; bridges I like to walk on.

Today, it is exactly nine years since I joined the department as a stray Belgian. Then we were 16 - I remember it well - now we have a group of more than 40 colleagues. A significant part of that group consists of researchers belonging to the *Institutions for Collective Action* research team, which I coordinate with great pleasure. Team members René van Weeren, Jaco Zijderduijn, Miguel Laborda-

Pemán, Sarah Carmichael, Felix Meier zu Selhausen, Corry Gellatly, Richard Zijdeman, Jacob Weisdorf, Winny Bierman and in the past Annemarie Bouman, Kleoniki Alexopoulou, and Annelies Tukker have played an essential role in realizing our joint research dreams. As they can confirm working together is sometimes difficult, but also increases possibilities, and always makes you crave for more.

The growth that the Economic and Social History Department has experienced in recent years is due to the special synergy between all members, regardless of their position, experience, or training, and more specifically to the unique collaboration between Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden. To me, they both played a very important role towards this position. Maarten Prak as a guide through the academic community, a critical reader of many research applications, and as the reassurance that a surplus of kinetic energy – which troubles both of us – does not have to be an obstacle to becoming a professor.

With Jan Luiten van Zanden I have a collaboration lasting more than ten years now, on many different projects, and debates. Years before that, he put me on the trail of Elinor Ostrom, which very quickly brought me into interdisciplinary waters. In the past decade Jan Luiten was both a sparring partner to try out new, often silly, ideas, and a '*compagnon de route*' with wise advice on all aspects of academia. Without this cooperation, I would certainly have become a very different researcher and academic.

I have been blessed with so many wonderful colleagues. I would not be *here* without them. But my "nomadic existence" in about a 200 kilometer range, between Ghent and Utrecht, would be impossible without the unwavering understanding and support from family and friends. Without them I would be lost. In particular, I am grateful to my parents, especially for their willingness to time and again lovingly take care of Kaat. Arriving and leaving, saying goodbye and being welcomed with open arms has become a part of my existence over the last decade. The main reason that this nomad always knows her way home, is without a doubt due to Hans and Kaat, who often take my wishes more into account than I consider theirs. It needs no scientific argument to know which collective action is dearest to me.

I have spoken.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Tine De Moor (born May 8, 1975 in Ghent, Belgium) studied History at Ghent University and the University of London, and Environmental Studies at the University of Antwerp (1993–1998). From 1998 to 2004 she worked as a researcher at the departments of Medieval and Modern History at Ghent University and wrote a thesis on the use and management of common land in sandy-soiled Flanders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Tot Proffijt van de Ghemeensaemheijt, 2003). In 2004 she started as a postdoctoral associate at the Economic and Social History of the University of Utrecht and worked on various projects on the development of institutions for collective action and the creation, dissemination, and impact of the European Marriage Pattern, amongst others in collaboration with Jan Luiten van Zanden. For many years she has been an active board member of the *International Association for the Study of the Commons*, where she also founded the peer-reviewed Open Access journal *The International Journal of the Commons* in 2007. In 2009 she acquired a *European Research Council Starting Grant* which offered her the opportunity to set up her own research team on the topic of institutions for collective action, and related themes. Since then she has acquired several other research projects, including an NWO-VIDI grant. The research team consists of postdocs and PhD students with different disciplinary backgrounds and investigates the causes, functioning, and effects of both historical and contemporary forms of institutionalized cooperation. Furthermore, they actively collaborate with organizations from civil society and policy makers.

For more background on the topic of this lecture and the projects of the research team *Institutions for Collective Action*, see www.collective-action.info.

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COLOPHON

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For more information about the research on Institutions for Collective Action that occurs within the Economic and Social History Department at the University of Utrecht, see www.collective-action.info.

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Parallel to the current social, economic, and ecological crisis, new institutions for collective action are rapidly developing. In domains where the government withdraws and the market fails, citizen collectives in care, energy, infrastructure, etc. that are set up by the public offer an accessible and affordable alternative at the local level. The media and scientists sometimes speak of a revolution taking place in our society. But is this true? Is this a turning point where the whole society is flipped upside down?

Tine De Moor indicates, through a thousand years of history, in what way the current developments differ from earlier *boosts* in the development of institutions for collective action. Just like today, similar periods of growth for these type of institutions, were preceded by periods of accelerated development of the free market. As such, they constitute a correction mechanism and can play an important role in society, as a third *governance model*, alongside market and state. De Moor calls for institutional diversity, and the use of our knowledge about the functioning of institutions from the past to make the current trend sustainable.