

## Direct food chains: examples of new commons in an era of transitions?<sup>1</sup>

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### Summary

After applying Ostrom's design principles, three cases of direct trade in Amsterdam show that they can be considered as (new) commons. Two cases -FoodCoopNoord and the Czaar Peterstraat- are locally embedded, while a third case -the *Chocoladekaravaan*- includes the transport of chocolate from Grenada to Amsterdam. They are all examples of transition economy. Because of their ethic character new challenges arise on aspects such as inclusiveness, quality of life and sustainability. Taking into account their uniqueness, complexity and innovative character, blueprints will not work. Bottom-up initiatives are crucial. Furthermore, the studied commons show the importance of structure and trust. Although in two of the three cases authorities do not support the commons, it is suggested that a promotional role of authorities is essential for the increase of new commons.

### Direct food chains

As a response to alarming forecasts for the future, such as climate change, new initiatives arise that opt for livelihood strategies that focus on the quality of life instead of merely economic growth, give importance to collective action, and possibly can be considered as "new commons".

Food plays a leading role in many of these initiatives. "Good food" is essential for a healthy and pleasant life and there is a huge challenge to decrease the ecological footprint of food production. Global food movements such as Slow Food, regional movements such as the Nordic Food movement, and national and local initiatives are spreading rapidly over the entire world. This development influences international and national policies, and the public opinion.

My study on direct food chains relates to the idea of transition economy, and goes therefore beyond mere economic and social goals, but also takes into account environmental questions. It is an economy that, citing Serres, does not relate itself to our "social contract", but an economy that wants to contribute to a "natural contract" in which we do not exploit the world, but strive towards a reciprocal relation with the world, in which we take and give back. Such a natural contract also means that we have to question the concept of property itself, or, as Serres writes: "the natural world will never again be our property, either private or common, but our symbiont<sup>3</sup>".

In the paradigm of modernization and industrialization, food chains follow Hardin's (erratic) reasoning of the "tragedy of the commons" and consider collective action as a non-efficient way of production, and mostly they do not consider human contact as one of the major values of the value chain. However, since a few decades, a percentage of the consumers appreciate or demand

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<sup>3</sup> Serres, M (1990). *The Natural Contract*. The University of Michigan Press. pp 44.

sustainable food and/or food that has been elaborated under fair labor circumstances. This resulted in some countries in policies that promote sustainable and fair food, and produced a “certification industry” that determines whether food is sustainable and “fair”. However, also in this trend the opportunities of collective action often have not been addressed.

More recently, there is a growing trend of producers, other entrepreneurs and consumers who want more drastic changes in all parts of the food chain which resulted in new “direct” food chains in which the human relationships and factors such as trust, reciprocity and transparency determine the success. Furthermore, the direct food chains strive to be sustainable. In the social sphere direct food chains relates with the concepts of sharing economy and peer-to-peer economy, while regarding sustainability direct food chains link with the concepts of circular economy and cradle-to-cradle.

Direct chains refer in most cases to regional products, in which the consumers know (in person) who are the producers and other actors of the food chain. In this paper we also include direct food chains of exotic products. European consumers will continue consuming their tea, coffee, chocolate and exotic spices, but also wish to know the origin and destination of these products. This creates a need to make long-distance food chains more direct, sustainable and transparent too.

In this process of transition of economy, I agree with Socrates Schouten and Michiel Bauwens who state that commons should play a key factor: to prevent that new concepts such as circular economy maintain its focus on economism and competition, while there should occur more drastic changes focusing on complementarity, collective action and a harmonious relation with nature (Mother Earth).

However, in my opinion, for example Michiel Bauwens does not make a clear distinction between commons and open access resources. Therefore his proposal for “new commons” becomes academically questionable. I believe that there is an urgent need for researchers specialized in commons to apply the findings of their studies about “old commons” on current societal problems and specifically on the study and design of “new commons”.

### Commons

From 1996-2000, I studied several commons in Nepal and Peru<sup>4</sup> and they all appeared not to be “pure” commons. There is always a mixture among private, public, common and open access property, and -referring to the statement of Serres- there were many examples that went beyond the logics of property. I also came to the same conclusion as Elinor Ostrom: “We have found that government, private and community-based mechanisms all work in some settings”<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, I analyze the commons of this paper as common pool resources<sup>6</sup> that include common property

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<sup>4</sup> Laats, H.J. (1998). *Collective Action, Property Relations and Natural Resource Management: Comparative Study between Two Peruvian and Nepalese Villages*. Paper for Crossing Boundaries, 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of IASCP, Vancouver, Canada.

<sup>5</sup> Ostrom, Elinor (2012), *The Future of the Commons*, The Institute of Economic Affairs, London. (pp 70)

<sup>6</sup> A type of good consisting of a natural or human-made resource system (e.g. an irrigation system or fishing grounds), whose size or characteristics makes it costly, but not impossible, to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use. Unlike pure public goods, common pool resources face problems of congestion or overuse, because they are subtractable. A common-pool resource typically consists of a core resource (e.g. water or fish), which defines the stock variable, while providing a limited quantity of extractable fringe units, which defines the flow variable. While the core resource is to be protected or nurtured in order to allow for its continuous exploitation, the fringe units can be harvested or consumed (Ostrom, Elinor (1990), *Governing the Commons*)

relations, but possibly also private, public and open access property relations. Furthermore -within these units- I study alternatives that question the concept of property, and I study examples of collective action.

I fully understand Elinor Ostrom, when she stated "People want to make me argue that community systems of governance are always the best: I will not fall in that trap". However, I have to admit that I write this paper with a hope and a hypothesis. Being a "commoner" and "direct trader"<sup>7</sup> myself, I want explore the possibilities of using the underused potentialities of commons to promote and strengthen direct trade. In this process, I'll describe from a Latourian perspective<sup>8</sup>, in which I'll try to convince the reader, being as objective as possible, but also from the perspective that single truths do not exist. Even so, I consider commons as "actor-networks": as unique products of relations among human and non-human actors. I shall scrutinize myself, and admit my "error" if my research does not prove that new commons and direct trade do connect, or if arguments of a possible criticizer are stronger than mine.

With the application of the eight design principles of Elinor Ostrom, enriched with more recent literature, three cases will be analyzed: Bioromeo-FoodCoopNoord in Amsterdam, the *Chocoladekaravaan* (Grenada – Amsterdam), and the Czaar Peterstraat/quarter (Amsterdam). The 8 Principles for Managing Commons are<sup>9</sup>: 1. Define clear group boundaries. 2. Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions. 3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules. 4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities. 5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behavior. 6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators. 7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution. 8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.

The common pool resources that will receive most attention are the food chains as such. I analyze whether local "direct" food chains are "collectively owned" by its stakeholders, and whether they have boundaries, rules, and governance systems. Furthermore I study whether the food chains include subsystems that can be considered as commons.

#### Case 1: The foodchain Bioromeo-FoodCoopNoord

FoodCoopNoord<sup>10</sup> has about hundred members, who weekly order organic food, and manage the cooperative voluntarily, every member is obliged to participate. There is a direct link with Bioromeo<sup>11</sup> the supplier of the organic food. Activities are organized in order to promote the relation, transparency and information among the members of the food cooperative and its suppliers.

The precedents of the Foodcoops started in 2012<sup>12</sup> with an action called Power to the Pieper<sup>13</sup> of a farmer called Krispijn van den Dries from the North East Polder who on the Dam Place in Amsterdam dumped 7 tons of organic potatoes that he could not sell because of the import of potatoes from foreign countries. With other farmers from his region he wanted to sell fruit, vegetables and potatoes to consumers in a direct way. Barbara Bolt from Bussum was triggered by this news item, she contacted Krispijn and he went to her house and sold her the potatoes for 0,70 Euros/kg (incl. 20

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<sup>7</sup>Member of the FoodCoopNoord and owner of the Cacaomuseum in the Czaar Peterstraat, Amsterdam.

<sup>8</sup> Latour B. (2005). Reassembling the social. An introduction to actor-network theory. Oxford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commons>

<sup>10</sup> <http://foodcoopnoord.nl/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bioromeo.nl/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.groenteclub.nl/over-groenteclub/geschiedenis/>

<sup>13</sup> Dutch slang for potato

cents for the gasoline). The farmers united themselves in Bioromeo, and in Bussum Barbara Bolt started the *Groenteclub* (vegetable club).

A year later, in 2013, Cor-Jan Tolkamp started with some other people Foodcoop Amsterdam. They had previous experience with food cooperatives that did not function well, because a lack of structure. They developed a software called Foodsoft that allows consumers to order and pay their food, in a format that is compatible with the needs of the food providers. The development, server, operation and maintenance was managed by a foundation. Initially the costs for this software were 3% of the expenses spent on the food. The foundation ceased to exist, and Foodsoft is now free open source software. It is possible to buy technical service (25 Euros/trimester). Compared with other software systems, Foodsoft is much cheaper and more sophisticated.

In 2014, FoodCoopNoord started following the examples of the *Groenteclub* and Foodcoop Amsterdam with Bioromeo as their major provider, using Foodsoft as their software. FoodCoopNoord's core theme is direct trade and payable prices for food that is preferably organic. Their first blog states: "We try to avoid intermediate trade. The prices are lower, and our food is fresher than fresh – in some cases harvested the same day. The short line shows us the way that the food follows, and allows us to call the providers to account". Bioromeo is the main provider, responsible for most vegetables, fruit and potatoes. Products such as fish, meat, bread and packed products are provided by other providers. FoodCoopNoord works with a limited number of providers, because too many providers cause logistic hassles. All products are local except for the mandarins, oranges and avocados provided by Luigi Pucciano who works with organic cooperatives in Sicily.

FoodCoopNoord is a cooperative with about 100 members who all are obliged to provide voluntary labor, in order to keep the organization functioning, especially during the weekly distribution on Wednesday afternoon. The cooperative has clear rules written in their webpage. Its main organizational problems are some rare cases of "disobeying" members who receive a red card and have to leave the cooperative, sometimes after minor conflicts, and the problem of unequal workload among the members, which has been managed by assigning distinct recognized roles for circa 10 members, rewarded by a small shopping discount.

There is a frequent communication between Bioromeo and FoodCoopNoord for the weekly distribution of the food, furthermore each year members of FoodCoopNoord visit some farms in the North East Polder, and write a report on these visits for their fellow members, and Bioromeo visits Amsterdam to meet the members of FoodCoopNoord during shared dinners.

FoodCoopNoord and Bioromeo are interesting examples of direct trade and transition economy, although I consider them rather as "traditional" cooperative organizations than as "new commons". However, I perceive that the food chain as a whole can be considered as a new common in which the farmers, Bioromeo, other providers, Foodsoft, and FoodCoopNoord work together in order to facilitate the production, distribution and consumption of the food.

It is new because it is the consequence of a recent or renewed tendency of farmers and consumers to have an insight and control on the food and its origin, and because of the Foodsoft software: a new technology that is crucial for the well-functioning of the chain. Furthermore, the communication between Bioromeo and FoodCoopNoord, and their communication towards its members and the general public uses new technologies such as blogs, webpages, facebook, etc.

I consider the foodchain in question as a common, because it functions according to Ostrom's design principles. Although the food is private property -first of the farmers and finally of the consumers-

the chain as such can be considered as a common pool, or a common property. The groups boundaries are crucial: “spoiler” farmers who do not produce organic or fresh and “spoiler” consumers who do not participate in the voluntary labor do not fit in the common and are the bottlenecks of its well-functioning. In the chain there are rules and low-cost conflict mechanisms (designed and agreed upon by its stakeholders) to correct or exclude the spoilers and to monitor and adapt the system (chain) and subsystems (cooperatives, software, transport, etc.). The foodchain functions without any support from authorities, but also without any opposition.

### Case 2: The Grenada *chocoladekaravaan*

The foodchain of the previous case is an example of a local food chain, in which the consumers have a rather direct contact with the producers and distributors. The citric fruits and avocados from Sicily are the only non-local exception. The latter products have a more “luxurious” character. The Foodcoop members are able to receive the local products for payable prices (cheaper than supermarkets) and are willing to pay higher prices for the organic products of Luigi Pucciano, in change for a guaranteed quality and a transparency on its origin.

The Grenada *Chocoladekaravaan*<sup>14</sup> (chocolate caravan) deals with chocolate, a product that is even more exotic than the Sicilian fruits. From a direct trade perspective local products should be relatively cheap, however respecting sustainability and good incomes for the producers. Products from other nearby countries are more special (in the Netherlands an orange should be more special than an apple, and rice more special than potatoes), this should be reflected in the prices. Exotic products from other continents, such as coffee, tea and cacao are even more exclusive and therefore more expensive. These “transition economy” logics contrast with the “business as usual” reality, in which cheap soy for fodder massively is exported to Europe, and we buy most of our cloths and gadgets from cheap labor countries in Asia.

The *Chocoladekaravaan* is an initiative based on this fair and sustainable perspective. It starts with the production of organic cacao on the island of Grenada. Its production takes place according to cooperative concepts such as equal incomes and collective action. The transport from Grenada to the Netherlands is by vessel, and about 50 voluntary cyclists carry the chocolate to shops in the Netherlands and Belgium. Therefore the chocolate is sold as “fair transport” chocolate, guaranteeing a minimum emission of CO2.

The key actors of the *Chocoladekaravaan* are El Sauco<sup>15</sup>, a Dutch company that imports “bean to bar” chocolate, the sailing company Fair Transport<sup>16</sup>, and the Grenada Chocolate Company<sup>17</sup>. Both El Sauco and the Grenada Chocolate Company<sup>18</sup> promote the idea of direct trade. It started when the brother of Erik Sauer -the owner of El Sauco- met an old schoolfriend, who worked closely with the captains of Tres Hombres, the vessel of Fair Transport. During their conversation arose the idea of

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.chocoladekaravaan.nl/en/>

<sup>15</sup> [www.elsauco.biz](http://www.elsauco.biz)

<sup>16</sup> [www.fairtransport.eu](http://www.fairtransport.eu)

<sup>17</sup> [www.grenadachocolate.com](http://www.grenadachocolate.com)

<sup>18</sup> “The Grenada Chocolate Company was founded in 1999 by Mott Green (born David Friedman), Doug Browne and Edmond Brown who had the idea of creating an Organic Cocoa Farmers’ and Chocolate-Makers’ Cooperative. This radical new business model created the first “Tree to Bar” chocolate this century, adding all the value to the local economy in the village of Hermitage, St Patricks. Mott Green often said “*It takes a whole village to make a bar of our chocolate*””.

transporting “bean to bar” chocolate with Tres Hombres. Erik Sauer liked the idea and contacted Fair Transport, at first with the idea to transport chocolate from Ecuador. The idea became concrete when Mott Green -the principal founder and day to day manager of the Grenada Chocolate Company- visited Amsterdam in 2010. He liked the idea, and the next day they went to Den Helder, the homeport of the Tres Hombres. There was an immediate “click” among Mott Green and the captains of the Tres Hombres, because of shared interests and visions. They soon came to a deal - based on mutual trust- to transport chocolate bars and couverture to Amsterdam (El Sauco) and England. This included logistic and technical details such as the construction of a cooler in the Tres Hombres. Mott Green and a friend of him were part of the crew of the first transatlantic journey.

Meanwhile, El Sauco contacted shops in the Netherlands and Belgium to buy the fair transport chocolate bars. In this process, the idea was born to carry the chocolate bars by bike to the shops in Amsterdam, in order to be even more CO2 neutral. This idea was told to the people of Lazuur -an ecological supermarket in Wageningen at 100 kilometers from Amsterdam and a major retailer of El Sauco’s chocolate-, and they decided to participate with several members of their personnel, in order to carry the chocolate to their store and to the warehouse of El Sauco, which is also in Wageningen. Seven years later, in 2017, Froukje Fruithof -who lead this initiative- is still the coordinator of the cyclists who participate in the *Chocoladekaravaan*. The idea of transport by bicycles rapidly spread to other shops and cyclists, and soon almost all chocolate was transported by bicycles to the participating shops in the Netherlands and Belgium. One of the advantages of the active participation of the shops and their personnel is that they are able to tell with enthusiasm and from their own experience the story of the *chocoladekaravaan* which contributes to a better sale. A bar of Grenada chocolate costs about 5,50 Euros, including an additional costs for the fair transport of about 30 cents.

Tragically, in 2013 Mott Green died in an electrical accident. Until his death, Mott Green was a central person in the *Chocoladekaravaan* and he was the main manager of the Grenada Chocolate Company. His networks were mostly based on trust and -possibly because of his anarchistic background- there were few written rules. After his death, the coordination for the *Chocoladekaravaan* and the management of the Grenada Chocolate Company faced serious problems. In both cases rules have been established to improve these situations.

Another problem is that three years in a row the cargo of the vessel suffered damage, although the cooling system seemed to work correctly. Possibly, less chocolate bars would have suffered damage, if the crew from Tres Hombres would have felt more responsibility or co-ownership for the chocolate. Anyhow, the sailing transport is the weakest part of the *Chocoladekaravaan* chain, possibly -considering the chocolate chain as a common-, because the sailors are the actors in the chain who do not feel themselves as being co-owners or “commoners”.

On the whole, I consider the food chain of the *Chocoladekaravaan* as a common, for the same reasons as the Bioromeo – FoodCoopNoord chain. Although the actors are companies and a cooperative and the chocolate is private property, the chain can be regarded as a common, because it has borders -defined by the origin, transport and destination of the chocolate and the involved actors-, (participatory) rules and conflict mechanisms. Distance complicates the communication, coordination and organization, but -thanks to modern communication technology-: it is still possible. Foodcoops -I refer especially to Foodcoop Amsterdam- and the *Chocoladekaravaan* function well thanks to rules, however trust and interhuman relations (empathy) are evenly important. The charismatic and energetic role of Mott Green was very important for the initiation and functioning of the *Chocoladekaravaan*, and even allowed the food chain to function with a minimum of rules,

however for the institutional *sustainability* -after Mott Green's death- structure appeared to be a key factor for the sustainability of the common.

The Tres Hombres also transports chocolate beans from the cooperative Conacado in the Dominican Republic to the Chocolate Factory of the Chocolatemakers<sup>19</sup> in Amsterdam. The Chocolatemakers and Conacado -in cooperation with the organization *Waternet*- transport with the Tres Hombres nutrients from the Dutch Groundwater to the Dominican Republic as a fertilizer for cacao trees. In the Netherlands there is a surplus and in the Dominican Republic a scarcity of these nutrients. This is an example of a cyclical food and nutrient chain with "common" characteristics that are similar to the ones of the *Chocoladekaravaan*.

Unlike the foodcoops in the Netherlands, the Grenada Chocolate Company faced serious problems with authorities. The national cacao board protested when they introduced the concept of direct trade and bean to bar chocolate. Thanks to interference of the ex-president of Grenada -who lives in the same street as the Grenada Chocolate Company- these problems have been solved. In the Netherlands, the authorities do not oppose nor support the *Chocoladekaravaan*, in 2016 a request to subsidize the promotion of direct trade and the *Chocoladekaravaan* has been rejected.

The actors of the *Chocoladekaravaan* are companies, a cooperative and volunteers. I already stated that I consider the food chain of the *Chocoladekaravaan* as a common, within this chain we can consider the organization of the cyclists as a "sub-common", with its own borders and rules.

### Case 3: The Czaar Peterstraat

In the previous cases, I argued that we can consider the studied food chains as new commons. However, I did not deal with the issue how direct trade can compete with "usual business", in which commodities increasingly get monopolized and chain stores drive away small independent shops.

The Czaar Peterstraat (street) or Czaar Peterbuurt (neighborhood) is an example in which about 30 small shops, in coordination with a housing association, inhabitants and the municipality try to create an alternative commercial area, in which direct trade flourishes.

Originally the Czaar Peterstraat connected the Eastern harbor area of Amsterdam with the center of town. It was a commercial street with a lot of shops, bars, restaurants and hotels. About 50 years ago the Czaar Peterstraat went downhill: the harbor activities moved to the western part of Amsterdam; prostitution, drug abuse and criminality increased; and shops closed down. Around 2004, this downward spiral came to an end when a new tramline was constructed. In this same period, the municipality of Amsterdam started to promote the restoration of old neighborhoods and its houses. In this context, the Czaar Peterstraat received some national recognition, because it was taken as an example by a TV program.

The restoration activities have been coordinated by the housing association Eigen Haard. They decided not only to improve the apartments in the street, but also to restore most first floor apartments into their former function as small shops. About eight years ago, the first new shopkeepers united themselves in a shopkeepers association, three years ago the shopkeepers became obligatorily members of a BIZ (Businesses Investment Zone), which replaced the former association. A BIZ is a requisite of the municipality of Amsterdam, which allows businesses to receive support from the municipality to improve their area. Until now, Eigen Haard selects in coordination with the BIZ small shops with an unique character, many of them sell personalized services or direct trade. Furthermore BIZ coordinates with the area manager of the municipality of Amsterdam and

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<sup>19</sup> [www.chocolatemakers.nl](http://www.chocolatemakers.nl)

with individual active inhabitants and associations of house owners and tenant organizations on activities for the neighborhood.

In 2015 the Czaar Peterstraat got a boost when it was elected as the nicest shopping street of the Netherlands. Currently, the restoration of the shops have been finished, and BIZ is busy improve the street physically (lights, flowers, etc.), to improve its branding and publicity and to give the street or neighborhood a common identity.

The Czaar Peterstraat or Czaar Peterbuurt can be considered as a common because it is an area with boundaries with a rather unique economical function, and a combination of actors who manage the area collectively according to established rules, applying low-cost conflict mechanisms. Furthermore, there are many “details”: shopkeepers and inhabitants together take care of the flower boxes, that have been installed collectively, there are many informal meetings and mutual cooperation among shopkeepers, and there are several collective activities/festivals. Contrary to the former two cases it receives active support from (local) authorities. It is new because the participating actors -the municipality, Eigen Haard, the shops and the customers- shifted paradigms towards other logics of business and cooperation.

I include this case of a shopping area, because it is a crucial part of a food chain. I connect with the case of the *Chocoladekaravaan*, because I have a shop myself in the Czaar Peterstraat, called the Cacaomuseum, which sells “bean to bar” chocolate”, including the Grenada chocolate and the Chocolatemakers’ bar. The aforementioned food chains depend on alternative distributors and retailers, to link the producers with the consumers. These distributors and retailers cannot compete alone with shops who sell cheap bulk products. They only can survive if they sell unique products, with an outstanding quality and a history, in which sustainability and labor conditions form an essential part. Most of these distributors and retailers have not chosen their occupation because of mere economic motives, but as a “way of life” in which financial, social, ethical and environmental roles play a role. Often it is a struggle to get sufficient income, and part of a livelihood strategy with multiple income sources.

#### Challenges, opportunities and doubts

Most direct food chains have as a consequence that producers, transporters, distributors and retailers have to take risk and reduce their income, in exchange for a way of life that is appealing to them: as a person, but above all as a collective. Respectively, consumers often have to pay more for their food, so the quality and the ethic, social and environmental narrative should convince them.

Notwithstanding all these challenges and hardship, direct trade is an increasing trend. Collective action and commons are crucial factors in this context. The three cases of this paper show that collective action is necessary in order to “compete” with quantity oriented, wealthy companies. In order to construct a feasible common or common pool resource, actors should agree upon common goals, communication lines and cooperation. The *Chocoladekaravaan* shows that a weak link in the food chain has an impact on the food chain as a whole. In the three cases actions have been taken to avoid open access and free-riding. The Foodcoops in Amsterdam became more structured – more common and less open access-, after previous food cooperatives got problems because of their loose unstructured functioning.

The case of the Czaar Peterstraat shows the importance of support by authorities. Although direct ethic trade offers a lot of advantages for individual and collective well-being, opting for direct trade, also implies a lot of financial sacrifices compared with traditional trade. However, -notwithstanding its environmental and social advantages- most national and local governments continue subsidizing



traditional trade, and putting barriers to direct trade. The case studies of this papers show that the actors of direct trade food chains would beneficiate by the support of authorities, and also that governments might support actively the construction of new commons. This a complex task, taking into account that a common is an unique actor network, which becomes sustainable if it is constructed carefully from bottom-up.

Studying the three cases, I also detected many other aspects of transition economy -such as crowd-funding- that I did not mention in this paper. I did not include these aspects, because I did not want to distract the reader too much, however it strengthens my conclusion that transition economy is complex and embedded, and has multiple facades.

A main conclusion of this paper is that the three cases do show that the logics of commons, common pool resources and collective action offer a lot of opportunities to transition economy and direct trade. Notwithstanding -quoting Elinor Ostrom- : “I will not fall in the trap of giving a preference for one particular property or management system”, because the three cases also show that commons, common pool resources and collective action go well together with private, public and open access mechanisms.

Notwithstanding the uniqueness and complexity of new commons, there exist a challenge and demand for design principles. This paper shows that the design principles of Elinor Ostrom can be applied in the aforementioned cases of new commons. However, for the particular case of new commons new questions arise such as:

- How do we guarantee and show our sustainability, and: -more specific- our ecological footprint and CO2 emission?
- Do we want new commons to remain a niche, or do we want it to become mainstream?
- And if so: how do we achieve inclusiveness, and can we achieve that new commons become an integral part of society with the participation of a major part of the people?
- How do we guarantee and show quality of life, of man and nature?
- How can we create synergy and coordination among minor, medium and large scale commons?
- How will authorities know about, and support new commons, including policy making and laws?
- Is social media a danger or an opportunity for new commons? And how can we use it properly?
- How can existing (economist) paradigms be changed, in order to understand and value the feasibility of new commons, and other “transition mechanisms”?

I conclude this paper with the following phrase: the construction of new commons is a complex but gratifying process that requires structuring, rule-making and conflict management, ánd creativity, perseverance, mutual trust and empathy.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commmons>