

# Allowing for the projective in analysing alternative food networks

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## Introduction

### The projective ? !?

'The projective dimension of agency' (Emirbayer & Mische, 'What is agency?')

Projects as plans for the future, not projects as planned sets of tasks

## Introduction

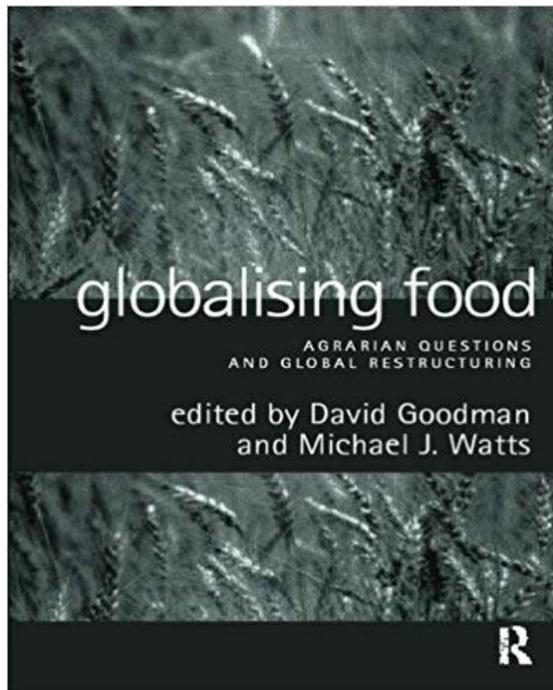
### Content of the presentation

- The 'alternative problem' in alternative food networks research
- Including a notion of project can solve this problem and reinforce analysis of phenomena of 'hybridisation' and 'conventionalisation'
- The project: the reasons and ends that a collective adopts to turn its action toward a desired future
- How projects and rules are connected in the inception of AFNs
- Case study 1. The Amap Poisson 'agencement': hybridisation of alternative and conventional rules
- Case study 2. Artisans du Monde: rules that result from arbitrating amongst the components of the fair trade project
- Conclusion regarding some of the TSI questions

## 1. The 'alternative problem' in alternative food networks research

### The emergence of AFNs research

- A new research field in rural sociology identifying a set of initiatives that share a common opposition to the dominant 'conventional' system
- Normative goals: 'where we want to go', 're-embedding' agriculture and food, 'a new rural development paradigm'



### Coming in to the Foodshed

*Jack Kloppenburg, Jr., John Hendrickson, and G. W. Stevenson*

### Rural Development: From Practices and Policies towards Theory

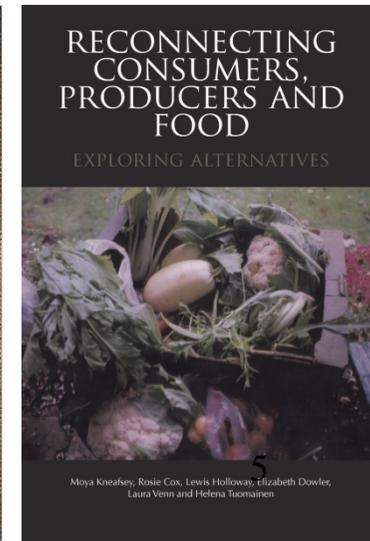
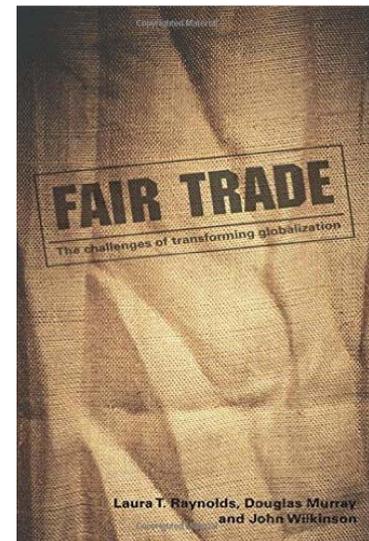
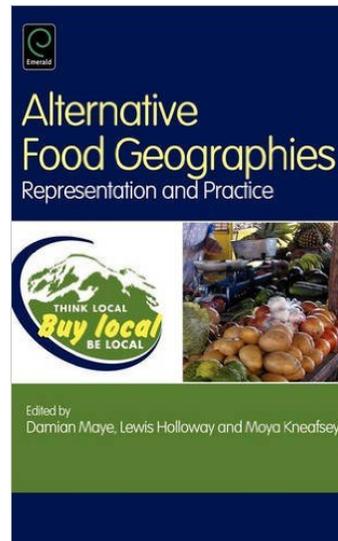
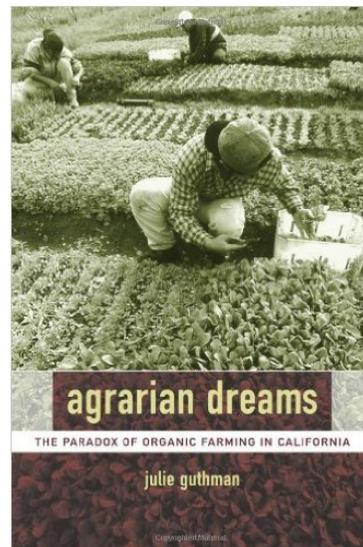
Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Henk Renting, Gianluca Brunori, Karlheinz Knickel, Joe Mannion, Terry Marsden, Kees de Roest, Eduardo Sevilla-Guzmán, Flaminia Ventura<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The 'alternative problem' in alternative food networks research

A risk of 'binary' or 'dualistic' thinking that tends to postulate a great divide between alternative and conventional food networks

- Alternative and conventional food networks are not separate worlds; alternative food systems are 'hybrid spaces' (Ilbery & Maye)
- Tensions: 'conventionalisation' of organic farming, 'mainstreaming' of fair trade
- A wide diversity of organisations ; 'avoiding the local trap' (Born & Purcell)

Should we stop using the alternative/conventional dichotomy? More than a 'useful shorthand' (Kneafsey et al.)?



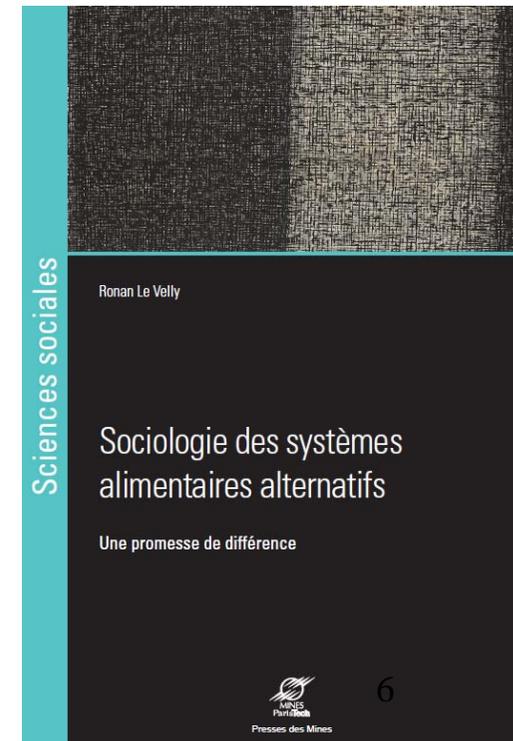
## 2. Introducing a notion of project in AFNs research

Should we stop using the alternative/conventional dichotomy?

No! This terms reflect a central characteristic of AFNs: the 'promise of difference' of their actors' projects

- Promise of difference: promise of other ways of organising + promise of benefits of these changes
- When researchers (and other actors) express reservations on the realisation of the promise, they reassert its importance

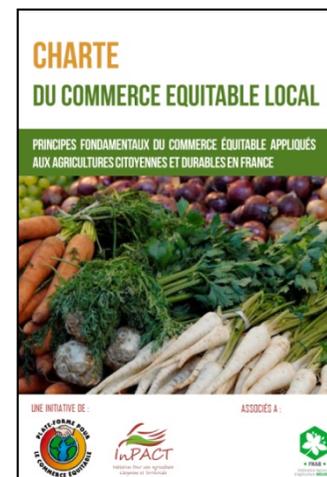
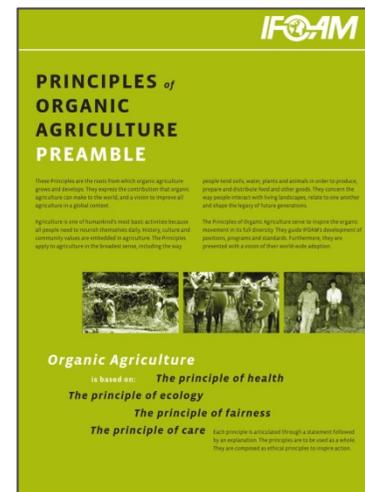
This promise of difference is situated in what I call the project, 'the reasons and ends that a collective adopts to turn its action toward a desired future'



## 2. Introducing a notion of project in AFNs research

### How can we observe projects' promises of difference?

- General documents that express grand purposes and broad line of actions



## 2. Introducing a notion of project in AFNs research

### How can we observe projects' promise of difference?

- General documents that express grand purposes and broad line of actions
- Promotional documents

COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE  
18 février 2013

**VOUS AVEZ FAIM ?**

**Solution 1**  
« Pour 1 plat de lasagnes : 2 traders, 4 entreprises, 5 pays »  
Source: Y. BENOIST

**Solution 2**  
Pour 1 plat de lasagnes :  
2 producteurs bio locaux,  
1 environnement préservé et VOUS

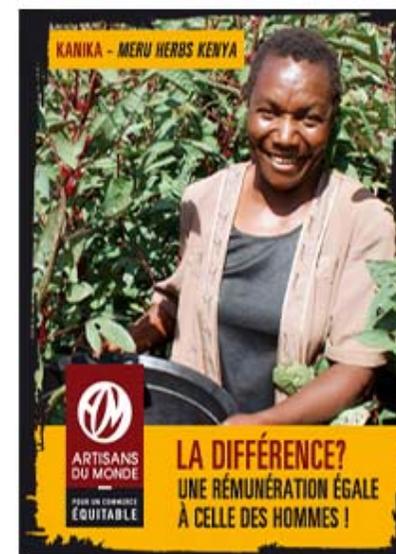
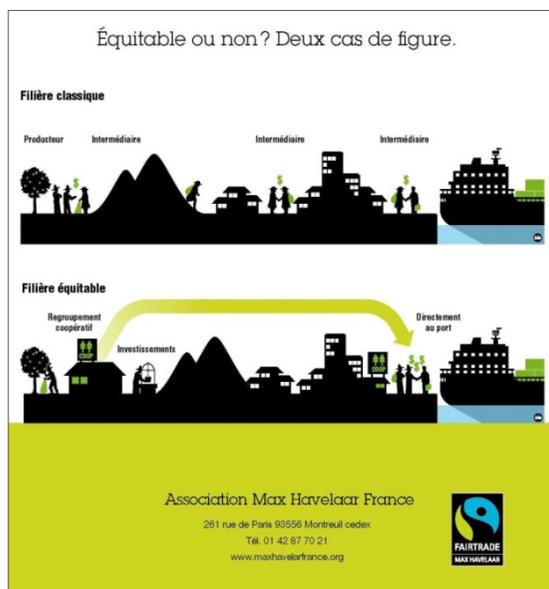
**Bio et local, c'est l'idéal !®**

**BIO LOCAL C'EST L'IDÉAL®**

Pour trouver des producteurs bio près de chez vous :  
[www.corabio.org](http://www.corabio.org)

CONTACT PRESSE  
CORABIO :  
Claire Lecouteux  
au 04 75 61 19 36

À propos de Corabio :  
Corabio est la Coordination Rhône-Alpes de l'Agriculture Biologique. Elle regroupe les agriculteurs bio des 7 départements du Rhône-Alpes et fédère les associations départementales AgriBio Rhône, AgBio et AgBio42. Elle œuvre au développement de l'agriculture biologique, en lien avec les acteurs partenaires locaux, régionaux, nationaux et internationaux.



ESTUDIO

**« Grâce au commerce équitable, je peux poursuivre mes études. »**  
BOLEA DE LA COOPÉRATIVE DE PYRÉNÉES, BELGIUM

Le prix minimum garanti permet aux producteurs de recevoir un meilleur revenu pour leur café, cacao & cacao, les investissant dans l'avenir de leurs enfants.

**NOS ACHATS ICI CHANGENT LEUR VIE LA-SAS**

www.maxhavelaarfrance.org Max Havelaar Association de 1981

FAIRTRADE  
MAX HAVELAAR

## 2. Introducing a notion of project in AFNs research

### How can we observe projects' promise of difference?

- General documents that express grand purposes and broad line of actions
- Promotional documents
- Field observations and interviews with AFNs' participants



## 2. Introducing a notion of project in AFNs research

### Hybridisation and conventionalisation are relative to projects

AFNs are 'hybrid spaces' (Ilbery & Maye). Yes but...

- Concretely, what is hybridised? Alternative and conventional rules
- How shall we establish the boundary between these two sets?

'Alternative rules' are rules aimed specifically at implementing the projects' promise of difference

'Conventional rules' are pre-existing rules, some of which are replaced by the new rules and others of which remain in the new organisation

## 2. Introducing a notion of project in AFNs research

### Hybridisation and conventionalisation are relative to projects

Conventionalisation is a degradation of the 'alternativeness' of the AFNs. Yes but...

- If the project is not made explicit, analysis tends to refer to alternative and conventional categories as if they were universal-incontestable references (or tends to refer to the researchers' projects ?)
- Conventionalisation refers to the actor's projects ; it's a failed promise of difference

### 3. The project: 'the reasons and ends that a collective adopts to turn its action toward a desired future'

**'a collective'** : a general questioning about the inception of collective action

- **Sociology of 'organised action' (Friedberg, Reynaud): organisations and markets face common coordination issues. Projects and rules make collective action possible**
- **ANT: agency is distributed over its human and non-human components. Who acts? 'Hybrid collectives', 'agencements' (Callon), made of social beings, material devices (rules) and natural entities**
- **CSAs, fair trade networks, relocalised supply chains... are 'hybrid collectives', 'agencements' informed by their actors' projects**

### 3. The project: 'the reasons and ends that a collective adopts to turn its action toward a desired future'

'reasons and ends': simultaneously interpretive, cognitive, and normative frameworks underlying the inception of collective action

- Why should we move? What are the problems to be solved? What are the causes of the situation? What should we change? (TSI 'narratives of change')
- Project is a reference that orients action, a guide for establishing the 'alternative rules' that will set the promise of difference in motion

**LE COMMERCE EN QUESTION**

L'idée selon laquelle le commerce international permet la croissance économique des pays et donc la hausse du niveau de vie de leur population, ne se vérifie pas pour une grande majorité des habitants de notre planète !

**LES DYSFONCTIONNEMENTS DU COMMERCE MONDIAL**

**LE LIBRE-ÉCHANGE**  
Politique et pratique commerciale fondée sur la liberté du commerce entre les nations et la suppression de toutes formes d'entraves aux échanges. De fait, les droits du commerce priment sur les droits fondamentaux des peuples.

**LA FACE CACHÉE DU SYSTÈME**

Le système de libre-échange est basé sur la RECHERCHE DE PROFIT. N'étant pas régulé, il concentre le pouvoir économique et financier aux mains de quelques acteurs multinationaux et met en concurrence les travailleurs et producteurs du monde. Ce système a pour conséquences :

- La destruction de l'agriculture paysanne et vivrière et l'exode des populations rurales vers les villes.
- L'accaparement des terres et les monocultures d'exportation au détriment de la souveraineté alimentaire.
  - Subventions aux agriculteurs du Nord → 1 milliard de \$ / jour.
  - Aide publique au développement du Sud → 1 milliard de \$ / an.
  - 1,2 milliard de personnes souffrent de la faim et de la malnutrition, alors que les 3/4 d'entre eux sont des paysans.
- Des conditions de travail indécentes, des rémunérations insuffisantes.
  - La moitié de l'humanité vit avec moins de 2 \$ / jour.
  - Environ 250 millions d'enfants sont obligés de travailler.
- Dégradation de l'environnement, perte de fertilité des terres, destruction de la biodiversité.
  - Chaque seconde, l'équivalent de 21 terrains de foot de forêt tropicale disparaît.
- Surconsommation des pays "riches" encouragée par les médias dominants.
  - Budget mondial de la publicité → 1000 milliards de \$ / an.
  - Il est supérieur à celui de l'éducation !

→ Le libre échange est-il vraiment source de bien-être pour tous ?

**UN COMMERCE ÉQUITABLE**

Face à ces constats, des producteurs, des associations, des militants construisent en France depuis les années 70 un autre commerce fondé sur les principes suivants :

- Un prix rémunérateur
- Transparence dans le circuit commercial & Réduction des intermédiaires
- Relation de Partenariat & Engagement durable
- Respect des Droits Économiques, Sociaux, Culturels & Environnementaux

**LE COMMERCE ÉQUITABLE**  
Son objectif est de parvenir à plus de justice dans le commerce mondial, en soutenant les producteurs, en sensibilisant l'opinion et en plaçant pour en changement des règles et pratiques du commerce conventionnel.

→ Préservation de l'Environnement  
→ Fonctionnement démocratique des organisations & participation des producteurs aux décisions.

**UNE ÉCONOMIE AU SERVICE DES DROITS HUMAINS**

Il existe deux stratégies complémentaires de filières de commerce équitable :

**LA FILIÈRE INTÉGRÉE**  
pour créer un modèle alternatif d'économie solidaire avec des organisations 100% équitables au Sud et au Nord.

**LA FILIÈRE LABELISÉE**  
pour intégrer une offre de produits équitables dans les circuits commerciaux dominants.

→ Et ça marche ?

**L'IMPACT DU COMMERCE ÉQUITABLE**  
UNE CONTRIBUTION CONCRÈTE AU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE

**SOCIAL**

- Respect des droits du travail et amélioration des conditions de travail
- Meilleur accès à l'éducation, à la formation, aux services de santé
- Emancipation des femmes, scolarisation des enfants
- Réinsertion des personnes exclues du travail

**ÉCONOMIQUE**

- Accès au marché local et international
- Sécurité des débouchés grâce à des partenariats à long terme
- Transformation locale pour plus de valeur ajoutée au Sud
- Prix juste permettant de subvenir à ses besoins et à ceux de sa famille, de sa communauté
- Capacité d'épargner, d'investir dans son activité
- Projets collectifs type micro-crédit, tourisme solidaire...
- Renforcement des organisations de producteurs

**ENVIRONNEMENTAL**

- Agriculture paysanne sans produits chimiques, sans OGM
- Récupération, recyclage, utilisation de matériaux locaux
- Valorisation et protection des ressources naturelles locales
- Préservation des écosystèmes et de la biodiversité

**POLITIQUE**

- Participation des producteurs aux décisions de leurs organisations
- Plaidoyer national et international auprès des décideurs politiques et économiques, pour la défense des droits des peuples et le changement des règles injustes du commerce international

**CULTUREL**

- Valorisation et préservation des savoir-faire
- Respect des traditions locales
- Préservation de l'identité culturelle, linguistique
- Le monde bouge ! Et moi ?

### **3. The project: 'the reasons and ends that a collective adopts to turn its action toward a desired future'**

**'towards a desired future'** : the 'projective dimension of agency' (Emirbayer & Mische)

- The ability of human beings to imagine alternative possibilities and to launch their construction
- The collective's ability to initiate its own transformation through its projects for the future

## 4. Projects and rules

### How rules and projects are connected in the inception of AFNs

- The constitution of innovative collectives involves both project and rules: without a project, rules have no meaning, but without rules, projects cannot be implemented
- Projects are fuzzy references, they do not mechanically determine rules and actions

*Project must no be understood as “well-determined objectives and a plan to achieve them” but rather as “a social adventure with a horizon that remains vague” (Reynaud)*

*“A fuzzy operative expectation of a desired future” (Bréchet)*

*“an often vague and indeterminate future horizon” (Emirbayer and Mische)*

- Consequently, setting the project in motion can only be the result of arbitration and negotiation

## 4. Case study 1: The 'AMAP Poisson' agencement

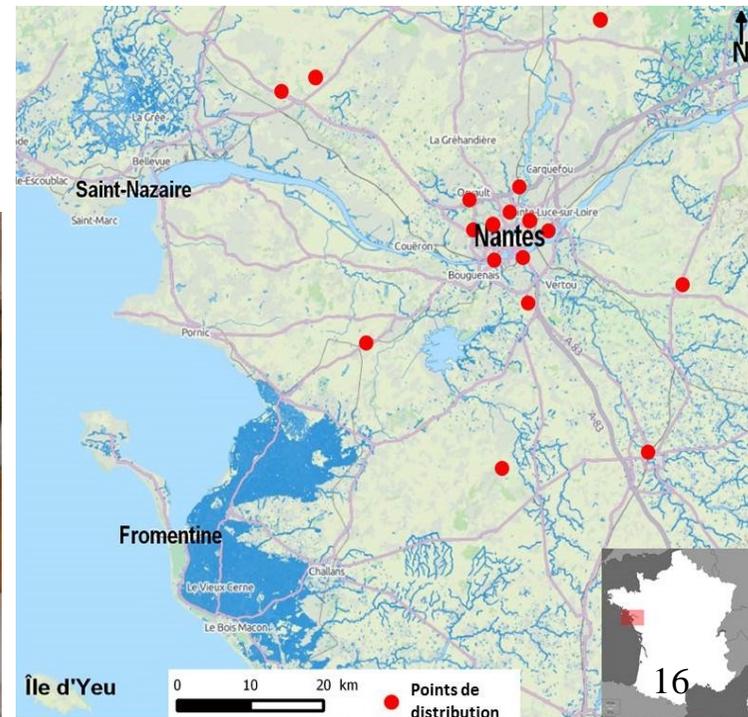
### A brief history

2009-2010: discussions between a local representative of the Yeu Island, a few AMAPs' consumers and 5 fishermen => Progressive definition of a project: could we imagine a direct contracting scheme to defend an endangered local small-scale ecological fishing?

2010: two working groups set up to draft a charter and draw up a logistic plan

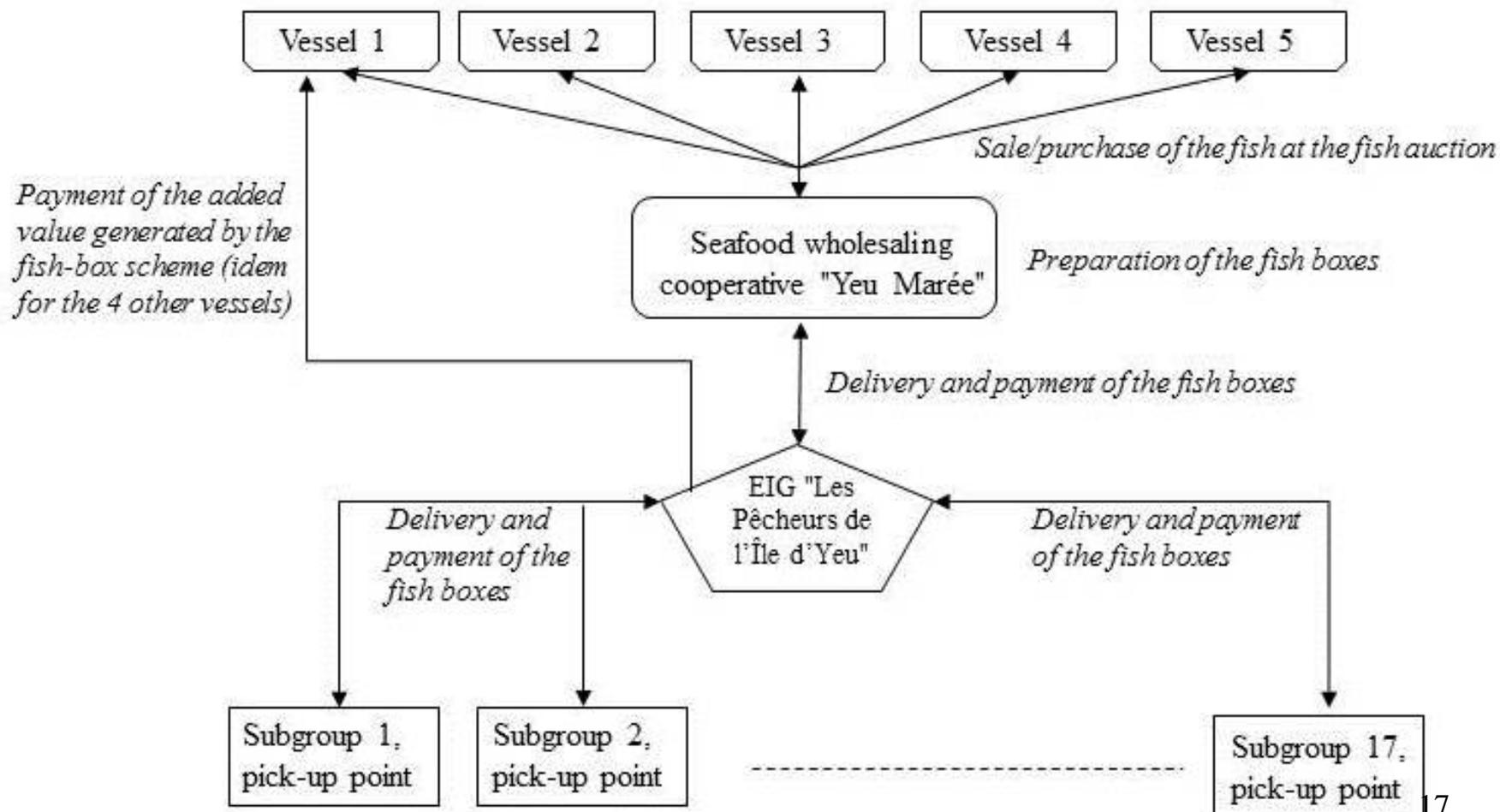
2011: starting with 500 contracts

2015: more than 1500 contracts divided into 17 subgroups – delivery points



#### 4. Case study 1: The 'AMAP Poisson' agencement

##### An hybridisation of alternative rules and conventional rules



## 4. Case study 1: The 'AMAP Poisson' agencement

### An hybridisation of alternative rules and conventional rules

How prices are set and value is shared in the AMAP?

**The AMAP includes at its core a first transaction that is built on preexisting-conventional rules**

- (i) At the fish auction, fish is sold at the usual "market price" of the day
- (ii) The value of this sale is shared among the fishing boat's boss and employees according to the rules in effect in the region - for a 3 persons crew, 80 % goes to the owner-captain and 10 % goes to each sailor

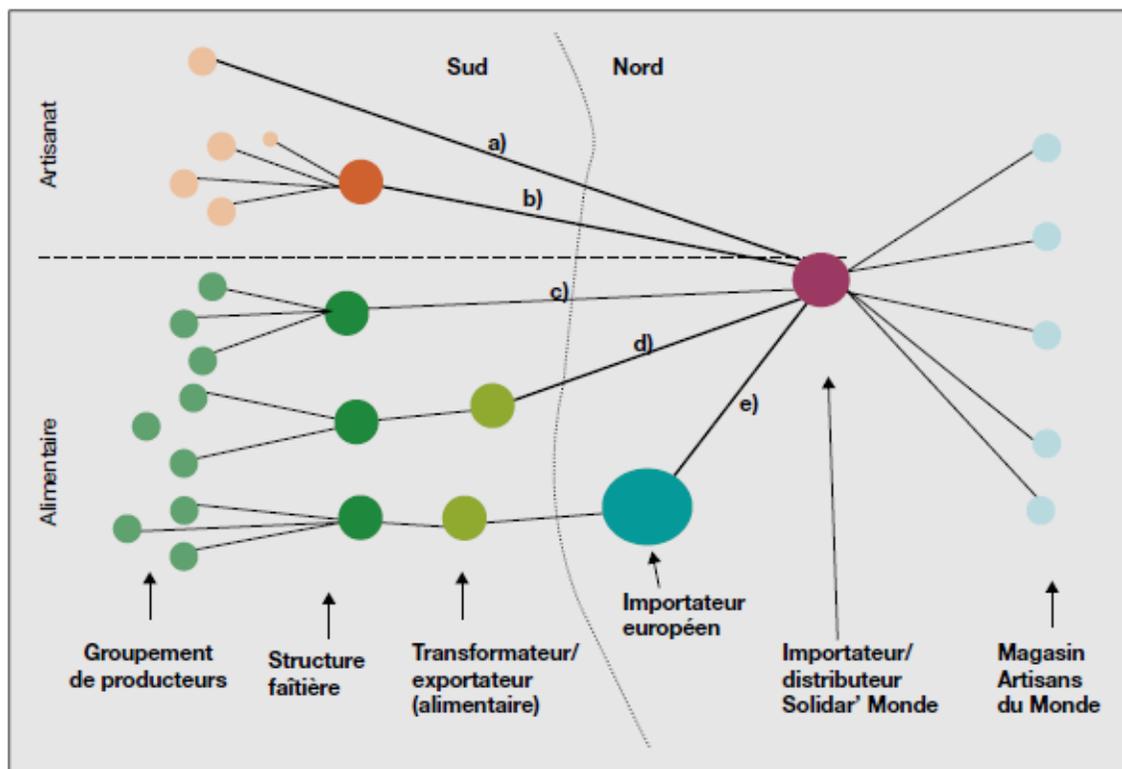
**These conventional rules are hybridized with a series of alternative rules that strive to set in motion the project's promise of difference**

- (i) Rules written in the contracts: subscription, lack of choice regarding the fish-boxes' contents, setting a price for the fish-boxes that allows for production costs
- (ii) rule of sharing the added value equally among all the crewmembers. Each member of the crew gets the same amount, even the simple sailors (33 % of the margin, in our case)

## 4. Case study 2: Artisans du Monde

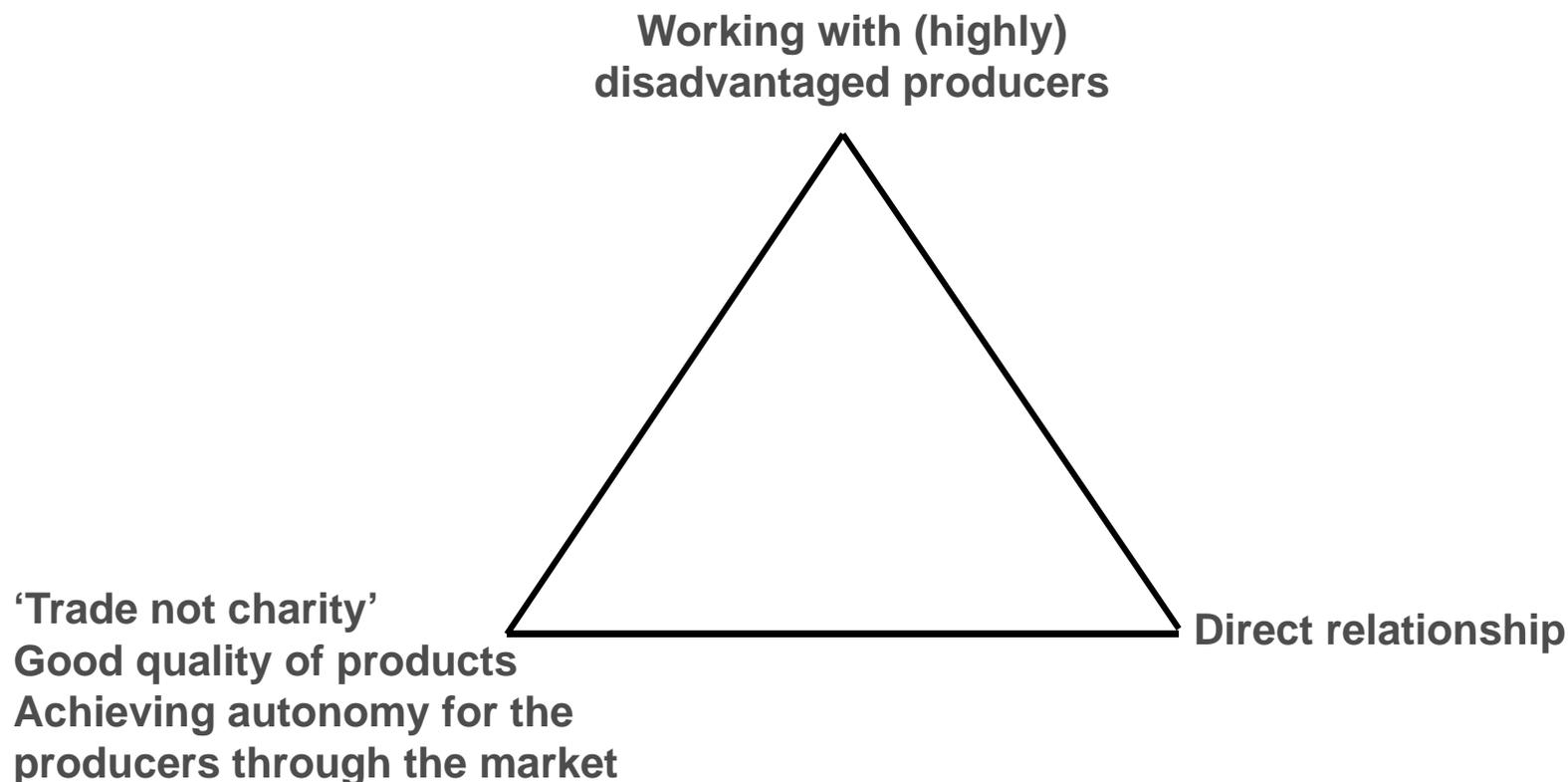
A study ('*Etude d'impact*') carried out in the first half of the 2000s

- A strong diversity of the supply chains established with the producers groups
- Debates on the relevance of these various chains: feeling that it is impossible to comply with all the principles and aims of fair trade's project simultaneously



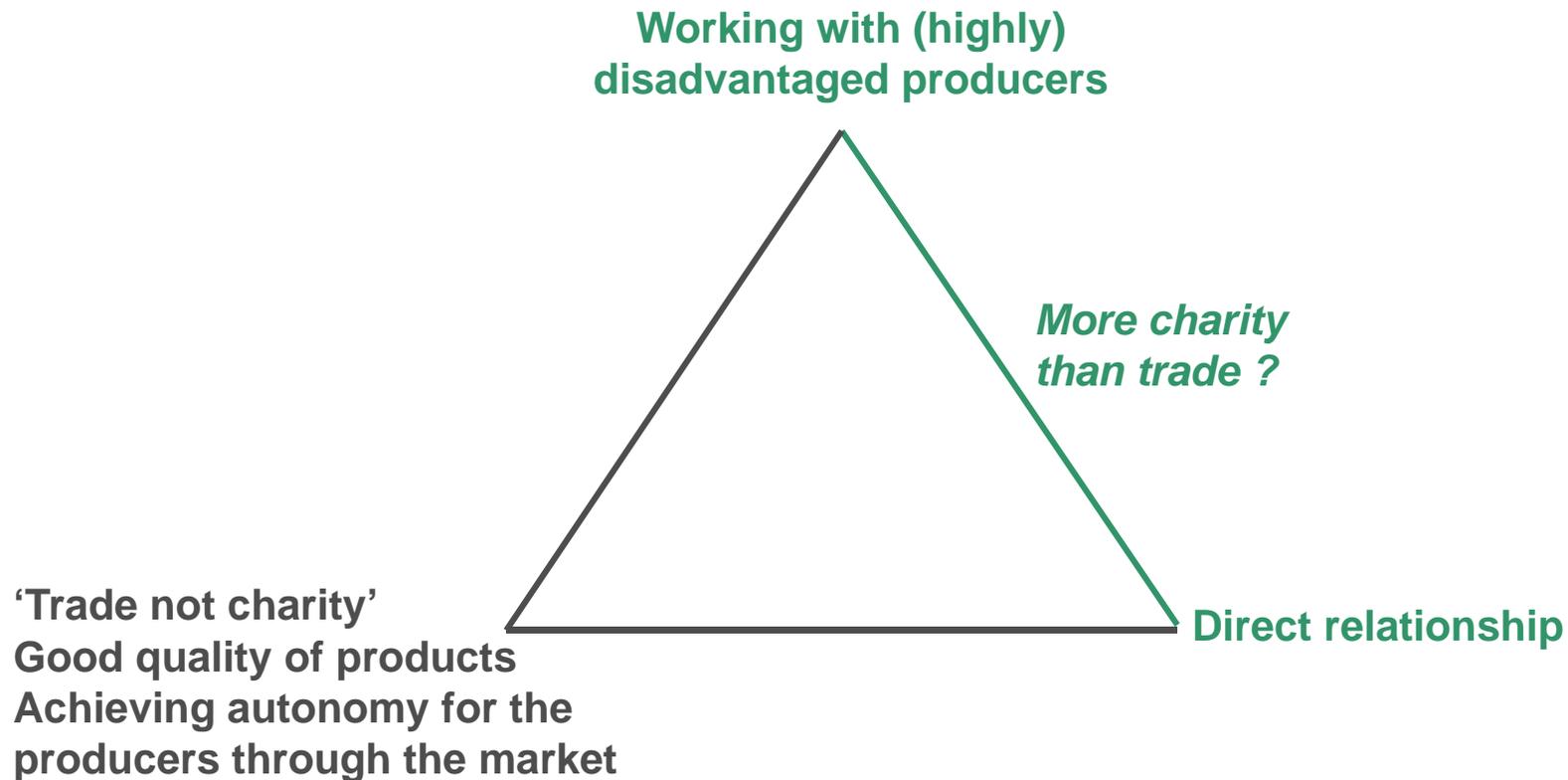
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Rules are results of arbitration amongst the components of the project



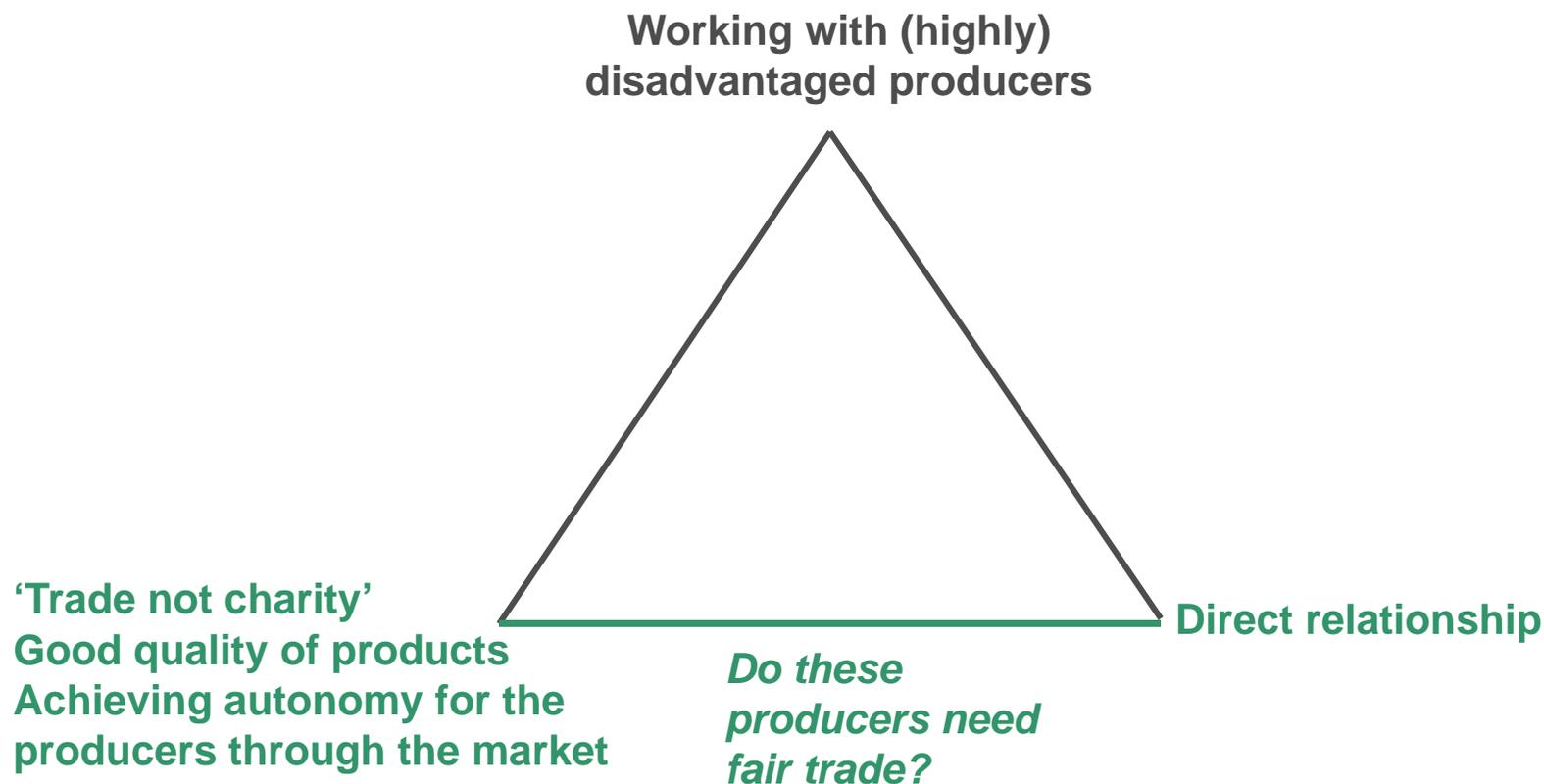
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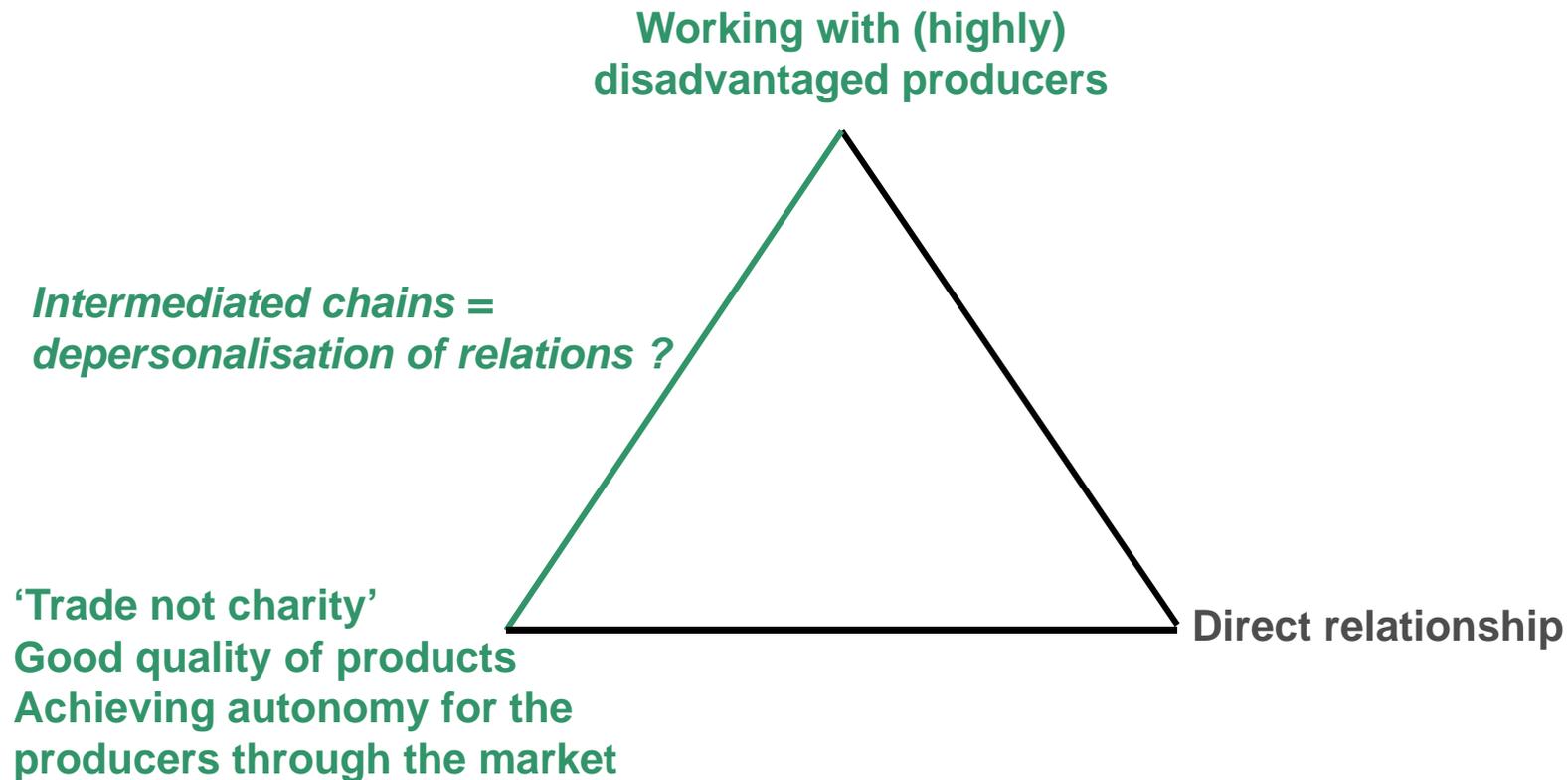
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##### Rules are results of arbitration amongst the components of the project

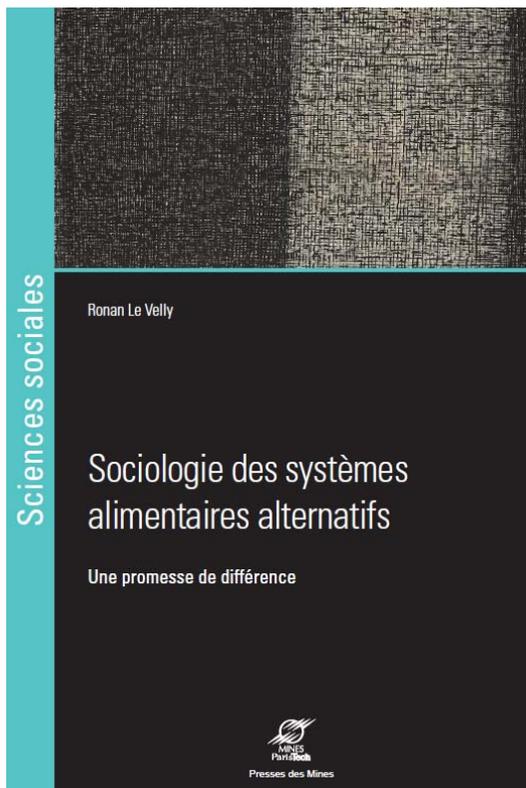
- The fair trade project is “fuzzy”, “vague”: implementing it through specific rules entails negotiation
- Showing this does not mean denying the importance of the project: all the arbitration that is done continues to be guided by the project

## Conclusion regarding some of the TSI questions

*How can social innovation be **transformative**, and what kinds of transformations are we talking about? In what ways does it rather yield **reproduction of dominant** institutions and hegemonic structures? What new kinds of political **agency** do we see emerging with the 'social innovation initiatives' described? What are the promising **theoretical lenses** and tools available to gain understanding of the sketched TSI paradoxes?*

- AFNs are social innovations that aim to be transformative: one promise of their project is to change the existing rules
- Social innovations are expressions of the projective dimension of agency, of the capacity to imagine and conceive of possible alternatives
- To be transformative, AFNs' promoters establish specific 'alternative' rules. These rules are usually hybridized with existing 'conventional' rules
- AFNs are new agencements, new 'hybrid collectives' combining human and non-humans, local and global... but also alternative and conventional rules
- Conventiennalisation of AFNs happens when theses collectives don't act anymore in a manner consistent with the project's promise of difference

# Thank you for your attention



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Alternative food networks as “market *agencements*”: Exploring their multiple hybridities



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