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Informal institutional change in De Achterhoek region: from citizen initiatives to participatory governance

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ABSTRACT

As in other European countries, the formal planning task of Dutch governments is subjected to devolution and austerity measures. Not only did these developments lead to outsourcing planning tasks to lower-level governments, also citizens are increasingly 'invited' to take responsibility for providing public facilities and services. In De Achterhoek, a Dutch region, these shifts are amplified due to population change and traditional active citizenship, and led to institutional change. Since a decade local governments stimulate citizen initiatives, under the umbrella of participatory governance. This process of institutional change did not alter formal institutions, but was the result of an informal and dialectic process between local governments and citizen organizations. In this paper, we will demonstrate the process of change and how it affected planning practices in De Achterhoek, building on theories of informal institutional change and its driving forces. The empirical part of this paper draws on the results of three focus group meetings, in which a diverse set of local stakeholders discussed the effects of change they observed and how it shaped planning practices. In the final section, we reflect on the degree of institutionalization, by examining the robustness and resilience of the observed change.

1. Introduction

A general paradigm shift is visible in spatial planning in the Netherlands. The formal planning task of governments is subjected to devolution and since the global financial crises to austerity measures as well. Not only did these developments lead to the decentralization of planning tasks to lower-level governments, also local communities are increasingly 'invited' to take responsibility for providing public facilities and services (Nederhand, Bekkers, & Voorberg, 2016). In the Netherlands, this transition is accompanied by the terms 'participatory society' and 'do-democracy' (van Dam, Duineveld, & During, 2015). In other countries terms like 'big society' and 'DIY-urbanism' gain influence (Deas & Doyle, 2013; Finn, 2014; Gallent, 2013). This transition does not only involve a

reallocation of tasks, but also a transition in responsibilities and a redistribution of planning roles and power positions.

Meanwhile, citizens are becoming more and more active and develop planning initiatives themselves. This movement is not only due to recent retreating governments and promotion of citizen initiatives, but seems to be part of a long-lasting trend (Davoudi & Madanipour, 2015; Healey et al., 2008). Already since the 1960s, many citizen initiatives can be found of citizens developing an active and more critical stance towards formal planning policies and getting involved in planning processes. While the first generations of active citizenship were concerned with consultation and participation, the latest generation concerns self-organization, whereby collectives of citizens develop and implement their own initiatives (Boonstra, 2016). Examples of self-organization and citizen initiatives are visible in a wide variety of contexts. This study builds on insights provided by Boonstra (2016) about self-organization in spatial planning. Where Boonstra focuses on the emergence and development of civic initiatives, we continue by analysing the interplay between governmental and civic stakeholders that result from the emergence of citizen initiatives. We study this interplay from the perspective of institutional change, in combination with empirical research in De Achterhoek (The Netherlands). By doing this, we want to 'measure' the degree of institutional change with regard to self-organization and citizen initiatives. As the main research question, we ask ourselves to what extent this new approach in spatial planning has become institutionalized, be it in a formal or an informal way.

The empirical research presented in this paper has been part of a larger research project, focused at mapping the interplay between informal, community-led and formal, government-led planning practices in diverse institutional settings. This research was performed in three European depopulating regions (Spain, Sweden and The Netherlands) that served as case study areas. Of those regions, especially in The Netherlands government–society interactions are deeply rooted in the planning tradition. Moreover, we argue that in De Achterhoek region – one of the 'shrinking regions' in the Netherlands – the paradigm shift towards devolution and self-organization is amplified, due to population decline. This development had serious implications for spatial policy development and the implementation of them. A number of municipalities chose to directly involve citizens in plan making and to stimulate them to develop initiatives to maintain local public facilities. In their turn, citizens in this region have a long tradition in self-organization and volunteering. Probably more than in other (shrinking) regions, governmental planning efforts and those of citizens have become increasingly intertwined and led to major changes in the institutional setting. These changes did not go unheeded: the Dutch national government recently declared the performance of citizen initiatives in De Achterhoek a prototype for innovative local governance in the Netherlands (Ruimtevolk, 2015).

Institutional changes often are characterized by changes of formal institutions: laws and regulations are changed by higher-level authorities and lead to changes elsewhere in the planning landscape (Buitelaar, Galle, & Sorel, 2011; Tubío-Sánchez, Ónega-López, Timmermans, & Crecente-Maseda, 2013). In De Achterhoek a different process is going on. Regulations were not adjusted and there was no (formal) intervention of higher-level planning authorities. Most of the citizen initiatives still fit within the formal planning system and make use of the discretion offered by that system. The attitude of governments and communities towards informal, bottom-up, planning practices, however, did change.

Nowadays this change is carried and performed by both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. In this article, we analyse how this change came into being and what the effects are of this change in De Achterhoek region. Doing so, we will provide more insight in the processes of informal institutional change in De Achterhoek region.

Referring to our main research question, we aim for three objectives. Firstly, we analyse the institutional change that took place in De Achterhoek and led to an increase of citizen initiatives. Secondly, we examine the driving forces of the informal institutional change that took place in De Achterhoek region? And thirdly, we focus on the results of this change, by questioning how informal institutional changes affected planning practices and thus became 'institutionalized' in De Achterhoek region? With the latter, we aim to find out how such new planning practices based on citizen initiatives gain robustness and resilience.

The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows: first, we will outline the context and content of citizen initiatives in De Achterhoek (Section 2). Then we lay out the theoretical dimensions of the research, drawing on theories concerning informality in planning, informal institutional change and the driving forces of institutional change (Section 3). Section 4 presents the findings of the research, focusing on the three key themes that are raised in our research questions. Section 5 concludes with verifying the robustness and resilience of this change. Doing so, we ask ourselves two questions in this final section: (1) Has this informal institutional change become routine behaviour (indicating a 'high degree' of institutionalization)?, and (2) Has stabilization of this institutional change occurred?

2. Citizen initiatives in De Achterhoek

De Achterhoek region is situated in the Eastern part of the Netherlands. It is a rural region, with many villages, hamlets and a few small towns: Doetinchem and Winterswijk. Since a few years, the number of inhabitants stopped growing, while the regional economy (driven by small, manufacturing industries and agriculture) performs below the national average. For the coming decades, further demographic change is forecasted: depopulation, ageing and selective out-migration of young people (Provincie Gelderland, 2013; Verwest & van Dam, 2010). For local and regional policy-makers, it was clear that an early recognition of the tendency towards demographic decline was the wisest thing to do. As they learned from experiences in other shrinking regions,[1] it is no use to try to turn this trend. As a response, municipalities established new networks in which they try to mitigate the effects of demographic decline together with public and private partners (amongst others housing cooperation's, educational institutions, Achterhoek-based companies and interest groups). Additionally, municipalities experiment with outsourcing some of their tasks to local communities. With these policy measures, municipalities not only strive for increased civic engagement, but also for higher-cost-efficiency and a decrease in annual spending.

In this context, communities have actively engaged in developing and implementing plans to maintain liveability. Decision-making processes within these communities are usually rather informal, but must still comply with formal spatial planning regulation (and other relevant regulation). De Achterhoek is a region where inhabitants traditionally feel closely connected to their communities. They are proud of their capability to solve problems within their community; regionally referred to as 'naoberschap' or neighbour help tradition (Abbas & Commandeur, 2013). This makes that community members

who choose to stay are committed to undertake action for preservation and maintenance of facilities in their community (Melis, 2011).

In our study, we examined citizen initiatives from a spatial planning perspective. Therefore, we studied initiatives that have a spatial impact (for example by adding built structures or by altering the spatial organization in other ways), that involves a shared interest and that was planned and implemented by a collective of non-governmental stakeholders (a community). Citizen initiatives with spatial impact range from preservation of public facilities to the development of village plans. Taking over public facilities (like libraries, play grounds or primary schools) from local governments are a widespread act of active citizenship in De Achterhoek. Another form of citizen initiatives is the development of meeting places (community centres) and other public facilities (like sports centres, community gardens and public transport) for which local community members experienced a need. A third example of citizen initiatives in De Achterhoek can be considered a form of statutory planning: the development of village plans. Here groups of citizens develop an integral plan for the future of their village. These plans can involve a list of desired (DIY) projects or a first step in communicating their interests towards local governments.

3. Informality in western planning traditions

Informality often has a negative connotation in countries with established democracies, in the global North. Informality is associated with illegality, lack of adequate legislation or corruption. However, formal institutions cannot always provide an effective framework that covers everyday interactions between policy-makers, politicians and citizens (Van Assche, Beunen, & Duineveld, 2012). The development and implementation of spatial plans often involves informal interactions as well: new property development initiatives by private developers are often negotiated, developer contributions to public infrastructure costs are negotiated at least to some extent in most jurisdictions and established spatial plans are subject to (informal arranged) modifications (Buitelaar et al., 2011). Azari and Smith (2012) distinguish three functions of informal institutions in established democracies: (1) they fill gaps formal institutions leave, (2) they coordinate overlapping or clashing formal institutions and (3) they operate parallel to formal institutions in regulating political behaviour. Informality is often portrayed as the other (a residue) to formal institutions: what cannot be dealt with via formal regulations is left to informal institutions (Porter, 2011).

This study focuses on informal planning practices performed by non-governmental actors (NGAs): citizens, entrepreneurs or NGO's. In the case of these informal planning practices, informality is not just the opposite of governmental formal planning, but follows a different rational. In this context informality involves planning practices that are unregulated, uncontrolled, spontaneous, ad hoc, based on personal contacts and the (strategic) use of actor networks, and can be performed by any actor (with a large focus on bottom-up initiatives (Altrock, 2012; McFarlane, 2012; Meijer, Diaz-Varela, & Cardín-Pedrosa, 2015). NGA's plan where governments do not provide satisfactory solutions (anymore), or when they find that living or environmental circumstances better can be improved by their own efforts (Nederhand et al., 2016). The addition of informality to planning theories provides insight in how NGA's plan and how that

differs from more formalized government-led planning practices (Mukhija & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2015).

Informality accumulates in the cases of citizen-initiated planning practices. Not only are these practices informal in nature, they also address the informal side of governmental planning practices (Gallent, 2013). Citizens predominantly demand support (financial or procedural) from local governments via personal contacts. Subsidy requests are discussed and shaped through these informal interactions. In other cases, citizens and civil servants explore together ways to navigate through planning procedures for successful execution of citizen initiatives.

4. Understanding institutional change

A considerable amount of literature has been published on institutional change. These studies come up with diverging views on how change is intentionally steered or gradually evolves as a matter of courses (Buitelaar, Lagendijk, & Jacobs, 2007). In this study, we follow a sociological perspective on institutional change (March & Olsen, 1989). From this sociological perspective, institutional change is not led by an economic rationality that regards increasing efficiency (and reducing transaction costs) as a basic principle, but by a social rationality based on interpretation and values. Not the historically evolved external constraints that limit behaviour are leading, but institutions are actively shaped, created and maintained by the actions of individuals. This means that actors have a transformative capacity. Nevertheless, also this transformative capacity is bounded by internalized constraints. These constraints follow a logic of social appropriateness and legitimacy (March & Olsen, 1989). Within this logic, efficiency, preservation of formal institutions and instrumentality can still be highly appropriate and legitimate. Therefore, actions of actors are in principal historically and institutionally contingent (Buitelaar & De Kam, 2012; Van Assche, Beunen, & Duineveld, 2014)

In this paper, we are interested both in the driving forces behind institutional change and in the impact of these driving forces on formal and informal institutions – the extent to which these changes become institutionalized. The present section offers a theoretical perspective for this.

Institutional change involves exogenous and endogenous causes. Our discussion of the driving forces of informal institutional change is divided into two main categories: firstly, we discuss driving forces that are exogenous to the performed planning practice and secondly, we discuss endogenous causes of informal institutional change. Subsequently, we discuss the process of institutionalization. At the end of this section the used concepts, definitions and operationalization are summarized in Table 1.

4.1. Exogenous driving forces

In traditional historical institutionalism shock events like revolutions, economic crises, wars, natural disasters and foreign intervention or occupation provide a noticeable explanatory driving force for major institutional changes (North, 1990). However, shock events resulting in major intuitional changes often consist of both formal and informal change. The results of such events often are new formal institutions that reject the previous regime or are established to deal with or prevent disasters (Tsai, 2006).

Table 1. Theoretical concepts, definitions and operationalization.

Concept	Definition	Operationalization (for this study)
Formal institutions	Laws, procedures, regulations, written rules (North, 1990)	Written planning procedures, policy reports, planning laws
Informal institutions	Norms, values, traditions, unwritten rules, that shape and constraint human interactions (North, 1990)	(Implicit) expectations, shared beliefs, local cultural traditions, social appropriateness
Formal institutional change	Change characterized by formulation and implementation of (new) formal institutions. (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004)	(1) Laws and planning regulations are changed and enforced by higher-level authorities, (2) Demand alteration of planning practices by local governments
Informal institutional change	Change characterized by changes in the shared beliefs and collective expectations (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004)	(1) Changing attitude towards planning challenges and practices (2) Bottom-up initiated change (by local governments and non-governmental stakeholders) (3) Redistribution of power and resources
Exogenous driving forces	External events and general social change that lead to institutional change (Buitelaar & De Kam, 2012; North, 1990)	(1) Occurrence of shock events preceding institutional change (2) General social changes (individualization, increasing interest in self-organization) explanatory for observed change
Endogenous driving forces	Institutional change driven by the agency of individual and collective stakeholders (Tsai, 2006)	Change can be traced as a result of: (1) Path dependency (2) Manifestation of adaptive informal institutions (3) Manifestation of planning cultures
Path dependency	Inheritance of professional, bureaucratic and political institutions that constraint current practices and future developments (Lowndes & McCaughie, 2013)	(1) Persistence of traditional institutions and practices (2) Current practices are traceable as the result of a chain of earlier events
Adaptive informal institutions	Result of deviance between formal and informal institutions, to circumvent unproductive or unwanted formal institutions (Tsai, 2006)	(1) Appropriation of rules to meet (local) interests and goals (2) Complying with alternative rule-sets (for example within other policy domains), to circumvent certain formal institutions (3) Sharing and protecting specific interests in certain policy domains or localities (4) Can be explicit, but is more likely to occur tacit and unintentional
Planning culture	A set of informal institutions that guide and are (re)- produced by decisions by governments, private actors and citizens (Buitelaar et al., 2011)	(1) Set of informal institutions distinguishes a specific municipality or region from others
Degree of institutional change	The rate in which the institutional change has gained robustness and resilience (Buitelaar, Grommen, & Van der Krabben, 2017)	(1) The change has become routine behaviour (2) The scale at which the observed change occurs (number of practices) is increasing

Another, and in De Achterhoek more likely, exogenous driving force is social change: over time norms and values within societies change (Buitelaar & De Kam, 2012). These changes can be due to technological innovation (like the introduction of electronic communication), economic performance or general social developments. In the Netherlands, as in other Western countries, a change can be observed towards more individual lifestyles, but also towards increasing individual responsibilities: the welfare state established after the second war is now on its return. This change seems to be accompanied by an increasing interest among citizens to influence policy-making. In spatial planning, this led to participatory planning procedures (a formal change) and later an increase in citizen initiatives (without formal change) (Healey, 2006). In urban areas, citizen initiatives often represent the individual preferences of organized collectives with a common interest. Examples of

such initiatives are guerrilla gardening, production of renewable energy, transition towns, etc. In rural areas such specific interests are rarely reflected in citizen initiatives: here the withdrawal of government led to citizens taking over public facilities or community broad-supported activities to preserve liveability, economic activity or environment (Woods, 2010).

4.2. Endogenous driving forces

March and Olson (1989) criticize the focus on external events as an explanatory factor for institutional change. According to them, most institutions change gradually, during 'normal' periods. In absence of crises, external intervention or societal demands, institutions change due to the agency of individual and collective stakeholders, as is the case in De Achterhoek region. We distinguish three types of driving forces that explain endogenous institutional change: path dependency, adaptive informal institutions and planning culture.

4.2.1. Path dependency

A bold definition of path dependency is that history matters. The rigid definition of path dependency clarifies how events become self-reinforcing once a particular path is set, since the costs of changing directions are (too) high. In this study, we follow a softer definition of path dependency: it is the inheritance of professional, bureaucratic and political institutions that constraint current practices and perceptions about the future (Lowndes, 2005). The concept of path dependency helps to explain why institutional stability and inertia occurs. Lowndes (2005) argues that informal institutions often dominate decision-making by local governments: 'A common local government history is also overlaid in important ways by the particular traditions and experiences of individual councils – their specific organisational biography'. These traditional institutions persist because chosen paths are often delineated by legally binding rules and, in the absence of competitive markets, risk-taking is often not rewarded (Pierson, 2000).

Following Mahoney and Thelen (2010) and Pierson (2000), Tsai (2006) lists a third consequence of path dependency that does involve trend-breaking reactions to earlier events: so-called reactive sequencing or non-reinforcing event sequencing. This means that, in reaction to earlier events, a change of direction is set that leads to an alternative development trajectory. For local governments events like (1) budget overspending can result in (2) austerity measures that can lead to (3) closing facilities like swimming pools. A swimming pool can be taken over by local entrepreneurs and citizens (4) which (5) demand a financial contribution from local government. This demand is rewarded (6) for electoral reasons and because the swimming pool as a physical object remained. Overall this course of events results in (7) subsidized citizen-powered initiatives as an alternative development trajectory for the preservation of liveability. Events 1 and 7 are underpinned by different institutions and have at first sight little in common; however, it is the chain of events that links them.

4.2.2. Adaptive informal institutions

Formal institutions do not form tight nets of constraints that regulate our behaviour. In some cases, formal institutions form constraints that are not productive or lead to

complications when implementing them. In the worst case, a dead lock is formed (North, 1990). However, in most cases stakeholders adapt and find ways to circumvent these unproductive formal institutions: they form adaptive informal institutions (Tsai, 2006). In the most likely case, local stakeholders interpret formal institutions differently than originally intended: they appropriate rules to meet their interests and needs. In literature, several origins are mentioned for a (local) deviance between formal and informal institutions (Lowndes, 2005; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Tsai, 2006). First, this deviance is found in cases where formal institutions have conflicting mandates, which can be solved by ignoring one set of rules and comply with another set. In local spatial planning, citizen initiatives, for example, cross different policy domains and make conflicting demands: what fits with welfare policy, might be constrained by a land allocation plan. Another deviance occurs in the case of decentralized policies, where local governments have a relatively large authority compared to central governments. This implies that local governments have more room for manoeuvre to adapt and add rule-sets for their own (formal and informal) uses (Lundström, Fredriksson, & Witzel, 2013). A third deviance can be observed in cases where local officials and citizen share specific interests into a certain locality or policy area, to protect or attract local developments (and favour one locality over another), to hide revenues from higher tiers of governments or by bending the rules to attract external investments (Batterbury, 2002; Tsai, 2006). This type of institutional conversion does not have to be intentional or (nearly) illegal; favouring localities or projects can also be the result of more tacit processes of identification. Actors might engage with some ideas or identities more deeply than others, and be induced to support developments they otherwise would not have. On a larger scale, this can lead to processes of coalition formation that underpin institutional change (Hall, 2010).

4.2.3. Planning culture

Every organization has its own traditions in making decisions and dealing with citizens or higher-level enforced institutions. Also for local governments, these traditions matter and differ from municipality to municipality; though regionally bound traditions exist as well. Buitelaar et al. (2007) refer to these institutional traditions as planning cultures: 'we define a planning culture as a set of informal institutions that guide, and are (re)produced by, decisions by government, private actors, and citizens on the ends and means of planning' (p. 930). The concept planning culture explains why institutional change varies per region and per locality, even though formal institutions are similar. Some municipalities, for example, seek for flexibility in rule application, while others strive for a strict enforcement of the land allocation plan. In other words, local governments may find different, but locally contingent, ways of formal adaptive institutions. Not only internal governmental actors (like alderman, board members, policy-makers and street-level bureaucrats) shape or preserve planning cultures, also interactions with citizens and external organizations influence how planning is performed locally.

Whether an endogenous change is driven by adaptive informal institutions, path dependency or planning cultures, several studies have indicated that endogenous change usually is the result of interactions between actors internal and external to governments (Lowndes & McCaughie, 2013; Tsai, 2006). In the words of Lowndes (2005),

external actors (like citizens) are often more motivated to force change than internal actors, who are inclined to stabilize their actions and positions:

> Local government actors learn the rules from one another and have an incentive to work within them – their sense of success or failure, of what is possible and desirable, are all delimited by the institutional framework. It is only those outside the existing institutions -/ like dissatisfied or disorganised citizens, marginalised communities, and independent politicians – who have an incentive to seek change, but at the same time they lack the power to do so. (p. 296)

Tsai (2006) argues that especially a mix of actors leads to new, innovative practices. Interactions between grass root actors (like citizens and civil servants) test the application of formal rule-sets and are more likely to result in adaptive informal institutions and therewith informal institutional change.

4.3. The degree of institutional change

Institutions are usually not designed overnight. They emerge through social interaction and are the result of imitation and repetition of behaviour (Zijderveld, 2000). This is especially the case with informal institutions but to a large extent also applies to formal institutions (Buitelaar et al., 2017). Those are not designed overnight either. Law-making, for instance, is an often cumbersome process. And when rules are finally adopted they often do not instantly become what we consider institutions, as Dembski and Salet (2010, p. 618) explain: 'Legislation, for instance, while formalized through a distinct decree, takes shape gradually, within evolving patterns of social expectations. Moreover, the formal act of commencement must be followed by practices of validation in social interaction'. Without that taking place, without really impacting on the behaviour of those they target, formal rules are not institutions, but just a collection of words on paper (Buitelaar et al., 2017).

In this contribution, we follow Buitelaar et al.'s approach to measure the degree of institutional change or institutionalization in spatial planning practices. We contend that the change and institutionalization can be measured by the extent to which a particular behaviour occurs. Is it widespread or occasional behaviour? Obviously, as Buitelaar et al. (2011) argue, it is matter of degree and it is arbitrary to say when behaviour has exceeded the threshold of institutionalized. Additionally, Buitelaar et al. (2017) argue that institutions must be distinguished from behaviour, where behaviour provides an indication of the presence and influence of institutions:

> (r)epetition of behaviour by one actor, in other words *routine* behaviour, and imitation of it by others can be seen as the result of institutions. One-off behaviour has then become institutionalised. In other words, when rules genuinely affect actors and their behaviour in the sense that it shows repetition and imitation, whether in an intended direction or not, and becomes predictable to some extent, those rules can be said to have become institutions (my emphasis).

We consider the emergence of citizen initiatives in spatial planning as a specific type of collective behaviour and as outcomes of the interaction between actors and institutions. When the scale at which this occurs – in terms of the number of practices – is increasing, we say that community-led planning practices are institutionalizing and that there is an institutional change away from more formal and hierarchical planning practices.

Furthermore, we consider institutional change as set, when stabilization of the new situation occurs. Table 1 summarizes the concepts, definitions and operationalization used in this section.

5. Research strategy

The empirical research for this study was undertaken in De Achterhoek region. De Achterhoek was selected as a case study area as it is subjected to a series of developments that led to an increase in informal planning practices, performed by NGAs. This research forms part of a larger research project that encompasses three research strategies. Firstly, a series of (14) initial interviews were held in De Achterhoek region with both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. These interviews were aimed at identifying the planning strategies of non-governmental stakeholders, and their embeddedness in governmental, statutory planning. Secondly, two mirror case studies were carried out in Spain and Sweden. Also here interviews were held with various stakeholders, concerning abovementioned themes. On the bases of the results from the first two stages, the final stage comprised an intervention with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in De Achterhoek.

This final intervening stage forms the basis of this paper. For this study, three focus group meetings were held in De Achterhoek region. The aim of these focus group meetings was to further map the interaction between a diverse set of stakeholders that are affected by and shape the institutional change in the study region. Focus group meetings are an appropriate method to identify and challenge diverse perspectives emanating from group discussions. In addition, focus group meetings temper extreme views expressed by single actors. Therefore, this method also provides an effective way of identifying community norms, views and behaviour. However, focus group discussions also tend to stimulate consensus-seeking behaviour among participants: critical views are more difficult to extract from such discussion (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011; Macnaghten & Myers, 2004). Nevertheless, based on our previous research experience, we believe that the discussions during the focus groups resemble everyday decision-making processes in De Achterhoek, wherein consensus-seeking is seen as an asset.

In each focus group participated 6 local stakeholders (covering in total 18 stakeholders), the authors and a transcribing assistant. Our sample consisted of board members of citizen initiatives, civil servants from local and provincial governments, governors from local and provincial governments and representatives of NGO's. For each focus group, we tried to establish a mixed balance of the diverse stakeholders. Table A1 provides an overview of the composition of each focus group. All discussions were structured around issues concerning individual and collective experiences with a changing institutional context. Table A2 contains the script and topic list used for all focus groups.

These themes were introduced using examples from previous field work in The Netherlands (de Achterhoek), Spain (Galicia) and Sweden (Östergötland) (Meijer et al., 2015; Meijer & Syssner, 2017). The discussion of these examples consisted of a short description of a specific citizen initiative, its context and an introduction the dilemma's both key initiators and local governments encountered in this specific case. These examples served as discussion starters, to create awareness among participants of their own institutional context and to broaden the scope of the discussion. The introduction of

international examples increased the external validation of the focus groups: participants were challenged to think beyond the horizons of their own particular dilemmas. Afterwards, each participant filled out a short post-discussion questionnaire as an additional personal evaluation.

6. Results

In this section, we will illustrate how informal institutional change has emerged in the context of De Achterhoek and to what extent a new type of community-based planning has already institutionalized. Our analysis is structured by our threefold question: Firstly, what is the institutional change that took place in De Achterhoek and led to an increase in citizen initiatives. Secondly, what are the driving forces of the informal institutional change that took place in De Achterhoek region? And thirdly, how did informal institutional change become institutionalized in De Achterhoek region?

6.1. Informal institutional change: from citizen participation to participatory governance

In the context of depopulation and austerity measures, stakeholders from De Achterhoek region frame the responses they observe as a change in (planning) culture. According to them they have left the era of government control and are now entering a time where citizens are more in control over their living environment. Citizen participation is a common term to indicate the process of citizen involved planning. In De Achterhoek, this term is converted into participatory governance. Participatory governance (*overheidsparticipatie* in Dutch) was first introduced in the 'Kadernota doe-democratie', distributed by the Ministry of internal affairs (2013). The national government offered the concept to local and regional governments to adjust their planning practices, but the actual use of the strategy is by no means mandatory. In De Achterhoek, local policy-makers use the term participatory governance to point out the change of culture they experience, but also citizens were familiar with the concept (Text box 1).

Text box 1. Excerpt from focus group 1, (C: representative of community initiative, N: representative of NGO, M: representative of municipality).

— C1: *What we do is a hybrid practice, it is in between citizen and government initiatives. In our village we had a vacant piece of land, it was ill-maintained and only occasionally used for events. Together with some others living in our village we made a plan and the municipal board provided us with a budget. Now we are implementing it.*
— C2: *Very straightforward …*
— C1: *Indeed, straightforward. We made use of the energy, and the municipality enhanced that. That is what we call governmental participation. The department of public worked along with us and helped us figuring out ways to realize our plans. This really was an effective interaction.*
— N1: *This is cross-pollination. It worked out great. Everybody is satisfied, terrific!*
— M1: *At our municipality we co-developed several initiatives and supported people in realizing their projects. We are not going to take over their projects, but they can always fall back on us. We now work with fixed contact persons, usually someone from the department of spatial planning.*
— C2: *In De Achterhoek this is now a standard practice.*

Though the introduction of participatory governance did not involve any formal change in planning regulation, the participatory governance concept nevertheless may have consequences for policy-makers that directly deal with citizen initiatives. Instead

of implementing an internally developed policy, they now have to facilitate citizens in realizing their initiatives. This addresses different competences, but also other norms and values. However, participatory governance did not come with a different rule-set: procedures for building permits and other aspects of statutory planning remained unchanged. Institutional change in De Achterhoek is a dialectical process: it is both shaped by municipalities and groups of active citizens. Citizens demand a different, softer approach from municipal officers for implementing their initiatives. They use their informal networks to permeate municipal departments, but also at political level, to achieve their goals. At the same time, municipal officers have been appointed to promote citizen initiatives. Often these interactions lead to productive relations. They are focussed at building consensus (as demonstrated in Text box 1). However, from earlier interviews, it appeared that this process is also sometimes accompanied with frustrations concerning the redistribution of responsibilities (without sufficient resources) towards citizens.

6.2. Driving forces for change in De Achterhoek

6.2.1. Exogenous driving forces

The most important exogenous driving forces for institutional change in De Achterhoek are (expected future) depopulation, devolution and economic decline. These driving forces did not lead to immediate crisis, like shock events, but do involve general social changes over time. Depopulation changes the composition of local communities. In De Achterhoek, as well as in other depopulating regions, young people (especially women, high educated, qualified and well-paid individuals) show a higher tendency to out-migrate (Weck & Beißwenger, 2014). Elderly, on the other hand, rarely move to other parts of country. This process of selective out-migration has several consequences for local government and citizens: the demand for services like schools and day-care decreases, while the demand for (elderly) care facilities increases. Also, social capital structures are affected by selective out-migration: retirees that have ample time for citizen initiatives are numerous, but young and qualified citizens are scarcer here.

Devolution has led to an increased number of tasks for local governments: over the past years, many social welfare functions have devolved from central to local governments. Budgets, however, are reduced. Also, strategic spatial planning has become less prominent at the level of central government. Municipalities in their turn devolve tasks to the level of citizens. The Dutch government stimulates this trend and forms an important driving force for the shift towards a participatory society and participatory governance (Syssner & Meijer, 2017). Budget cuts, austerity measures and the (nation-wide) economic recession of the past decade further increases the turn towards citizen initiatives.

6.2.2. Endogenous driving forces

Though citizens mention driving forces like depopulation and participatory society in their requests for governmental support and subsidies, these factors rarely form the core of their motivation for a citizen initiative. From the focus groups and earlier interviews, it appeared that continuity of village life is the most important driving force for them. Citizens take over public facilities and develop new activities to maintain liveability and to prevent out-migration. They use their adaptive capacity to deal with circumstances shaped by depopulation and devolution. The development of citizen initiatives is path

dependent, in the sense that collective action is deeply rooted in De Achterhoek. Citizens are organized – and often have been for a long time – in numerous associations. Additionally, nearly all localities have a village board that manages common interests and holds contact with local government. The village board is an institutional layer that dates back to medieval times, and can be seen as a predecessor of current public administration. However, it is important to note that village boards are not under laid by a representative democracy, like the municipal board. A village board consist of volunteers that feel inclined to represent the villages interests (usually retired male inhabitants). The ideas of those who actively participate in the village are best represented, especially if these ideas are combined with the informal networks these representatives have at municipal departments. Nevertheless, communities in de Achterhoek have strong internal institutions: if village boards act too much 'ahead of the troops' or in other ways inconsistent with the communities dominant future ideas, they usually are corrected from within (Mirck & Aalvanger, 2013).

These existing organizational structures in De Achterhoek increase the adaptive capacity of citizens. Moreover, in the past neighbour help (locally known as 'naoberschap') was an important institution for survival. This tradition still forms a fundament for citizen initiatives and is referred to by both citizens and representatives of municipalities.

The adaptive capacity of citizens and governments has been a driving force for a progressive turn towards participatory governance. Both stakeholders groups actively search for room for manoeuvre within existing formal rule sets to realize informal planning initiatives. This is mostly done via personal contacts and informal networks. Moreover, citizens found (and governments appointed) fixed contact persons within municipal departments to facilitate citizen initiatives, which further increases the formation of adaptive informal institutions (Text box 2).

The deliverance of tailor-made solutions has led to institutional conversion. Local circumstances (like physical impact, public support, neighbours or interpretation of rules) can facilitate or block flexibility in realization. But also, much depends on the establishment of rewarding networks, personal identification and commitment of involved civil servants. Though representatives of governmental organizations were aware of the creation of precedent, dissimilarity was judged as inevitable by most participating stakeholders.

Text box 2. Excerpt from Focus Group 2. (C: representative of community initiative, M: representative of municipality).

— C6: We have a fixed contact person within the municipality. He figures things out for us and that is very convenient. The municipality is a maze for us, but he had a lot of questions about us too. The key is to make a connection. The changes we are going through [as a civic organization], are also needed at municipal level.

— C5: We have the same experience. Our contact person is a civil servant, but he functions best outside the municipal office. He knows where to go with certain questions. However, there are always people at positions that cannot be circumvented and prevent implementation of initiatives.

[…]

— M5: Our role as civil servants no longer solely consists of monitoring. Now we have to deliver tailor-made solutions.

Representatives of five different municipalities joined the focus group sessions. All referred to participatory governance as their new mode of governance. However, local planning cultures led to differences in practice per municipality. One municipality radically changed their planning culture and now actively outsources public facilities to the level of citizens. Another municipality chose a more controlling strategy: they feel that

citizen initiatives should be facilitated, but only as long as it supports their own spatial development strategy. Other municipalities preferred a more tentative approach and focused on avoiding precedent. The approach a municipality chooses affects the level of self-organization and possibilities for participatory governance from above. And though not specifically addressed during the focus groups, several other studies point out that these structures are not only shaped by informal interactions and good intentions to promote active citizenship but also by reasons of governmentality (Nederhand et al., 2016; van Dam et al., 2015)

6.3. The degree of institutionalization of citizen initiatives in spatial planning

While the increasing role for citizen initiatives in spatial planning in the UK has led to formal institutional change (like the UK Localism Act installed in 2011; see Gallent, 2013), in the Netherlands, it did not lead to any changes in planning regulation. Nevertheless, De Achterhoek case study provides some evidence of informal institutional change and, alongside, a certain degree of institutionalization of these citizen initiatives. Four observations support this. The first observation is the development of a pragmatist, instead of monitoring, attitude towards existing formal institutions. The second observation involves a changed role for civil servants and a shift of responsibilities. A third observation actually refers to a situation of unequal institutionalization: the increased gap between active communities that have been successful in implementing citizen initiatives and communities that have not. A final observation concerns the way how unconventional initiatives are dealt with. Below we will further exemplify these effects.

6.3.1. Pragmatism is leading

Our research shows that successful citizen initiatives are often based on a pragmatist interpretation of formal planning regulations. Active communities and experienced civil servants (like the before mentioned contact persons) have learned that early stage collaboration leads to more successful and rewarding projects. Through this early collaboration, citizens became more aware of formal procedures and how to integrate them in their planning processes. To avoid lengthy public consultation procedures, they made sure that all inhabitants became involved in the planning process and none of them would protest. In an early phase, civil servants and citizens were able to fine-tune project proposals, so they would better fit other strategic planning objectives. Doing so, stakeholders avoided conflicts about diverging expectations and prevent dead lock situations. If an idea would not fit formal planning, at first sight, most contact persons searched for other options to realize an initiative, for example, via compliance with other policy domains or via the political way. This is a dialectic process, through which formal and informal institutions are constantly shaped and re-shaped. Nevertheless, within this dialectical process and through the convergence towards consensus, the views and ideas of those that actively participate and have strong positions within the communities (e.g. village board members) are strengthened.

6.3.2. Shifting responsibilities

Another effect of an increased focus on citizen initiatives, as an alternative for the distribution of public facilities, is a changing role of civil servants. Instead of developing policy

goals and achieving them with internal means, civil servants now depend much more on the motivation of community groups. Citizens have become the problem owners of disappearing local facilities, which implies a redistribution of power and resources. All participants believe that these issues are more efficiently tackled at the citizen level, but the balance is delicate between effective facilitation and abandoning control over spatial developments (see Text box 3).

Text box 3.   Excerpt from Focus Group 1. (C: representative of community initiative, N: representative of NGO, M: representative of municipality).

— N1: *[how municipalities share responsibilities] varies a lot; whether citizens with an initiative are taken seriously differs per municipality. Citizens that are developing initiatives should be trusted. Having faith and taking people seriously is essential for governments*
— M1: *that is a very difficult issue*
— C2: *it is difficult, but I also notice that people at the municipality would like to steer too much …*
— M2: *At our municipality [the shift towards government participation] is only loosely steered from above. The executive board is very much in favour. But civil servants that are employed for 30 or 40 years cannot let go. These are the fanatics, and that is very frustrating. As a contact person for citizen initiatives I always promise they get a response, but also that I cannot control the outcome.*
— M1: *that is part of the change of organizational culture. First we followed formal laws and procedures and now there is this organizational change, from government to citizen participation. We are struggling with letting go and passing the buck, but also with being in charge. For civil servants and administrators this is very difficult. I have noticed how lengthy such a process can be: when should an administrator interfere? How can we trust that something does not become a financial debacle or ends without result?*

6.3.3. Active versus passive communities

The transfer of responsibilities and problem ownership to citizens also implies that localities will not all develop at the same rate. Some localities lack initiative, for instance, because they have little organizational power or social capital. These localities are unlikely to take over governmental facilities and make use of available knowledge and subsidies at municipal level. All participants agree that this a consequence of this new mode of governance: it is unrealistic to expect governments to take care of all needs experienced in society, the era of the welfare state has passed. The effect is that the degree of institutionalization of informal planning in local planning processes differs among localities. Some say that governments should make an extra effort to stimulate these communities. Others believe that all facilities are already made available, and that it is up to citizens themselves to make use of them: you cannot keep pulling a dead horse.

6.3.4. Dealing with unconventional initiatives

One can argue that the real challenge for informal planning are situations in which must be dealt with unconventional or even conflicting initiatives. In every focus group, we asked how participants dealt with unconventional or unwanted citizen initiatives. Most participants found it hard to imagine what such an initiative could be. In their turn, policymakers and politicians hardly encountered initiatives that were not in line with their policies. One participant came up with an example of a citizen that wanted to establish a coffee shop (for the consumption of soft drugs) in a vacant building in the centre of the village. In the Netherlands, coffee shops are legally tolerated, however, this does not mean that they are always locally accepted or perceived as appropriate land uses. The involved civil servant clarified that he had explained the procedure to the initiators, but did not take an extra step to realize this initiative. In the end this initiative blew over. A

group of citizens, who established a platform to support other citizens in implementing initiatives, are sometimes confronted with projects they could not identify themselves with. They used the same strategy as the civil servant: check if there is public support for the idea and if not, wait until the idea would pass. Tacit interactions like these are the result of sharing and protecting specific interests, by adopting certain formal rule-sets and strategically ignoring other options. Adaptive informal institutions, strategically employed by gate-keepers (like civil servants deciding about funding), however also allow an increasingly narrowed representation of citizen initiatives.

If there is sufficient public support, unconventional initiatives take a different course. Sometimes a citizen initiative overrules municipal policies. Citizens with a drive can mobilize extensive public support and means to force implementation of their ideas. A classic example, mentioned during one of the focus groups, is the closure of primary schools. As the number of pupils is dropping in De Achterhoek, municipalities close and merge primary schools. At the level of individual schools, parents fight these decisions and sometimes take over schools. Village schools are often symbolic for a vibrant village life, meeting places and preservation of young families. Though independent, parent-run schools are allowed and receive funding; their continuation has an impact on the availability of resources for other schools in the area. From a regional perspective, this results in a misbalanced distribution of primary education. However, not all municipalities have been able to stop or steer this development. Also, other depopulating regions experience this problem (Larsson Taghizadeh, 2016; Witten, McCreanor, Kearns, & Ramasubramanian, 2001).

7. Discussion and conclusion

De Achterhoek is one of the frontrunners in the Netherlands in a paradigm shift from government-initiated planning towards government facilitated planning, wherein citizen initiatives play an important role in the spatial organization of public objectives. The process was driven by demographic change and economic decline and embedded in a strong local tradition of volunteering, the so-called noaberschap. The prior existence of citizen initiatives can be considered a vital driving force for the shift towards participatory governance. This process of institutional change is remarkable as it did not involve any change of formal laws and regulations. However, the way in which policy-makers and citizens deal with each other and how they both became actively involved in bottom-up, informal and community-led planning practices did lead to an informal institutional change. In line with our theoretical frame, this institutional change is characterized by the collective willingness to change by communities and local governments, and mainly driven by endogenous forces. To verify the robustness and resilience of this change, we ask ourselves two questions in this final section: (1) Has this informal institutional change become routine behaviour (indicating a 'high degree' of institutionalization)? and (2) Has stabilization of this institutional change occurred?

7.1. Has the institutional change become routine behaviour?

In the previous section, we presented some evidence that informal planning based on citizen initiatives in De Achterhoek has reached a certain degree of institutionalization.

Local authorities have adjusted their working processes to incorporate these initiatives in their formal planning processes and they have actually downsized their traditional pro-active role in planning. Communities and planning officials seem to work together in a harmonious way, citizens taking part in citizen initiatives see no reason to change planning laws, and so far insolvable conflicts have not appeared.

Municipalities maintain fitting their spatial strategy as a criterion for facilitating citizen initiatives. In this way, municipalities also maintain their controlling role over land use change. However, this criterion is rarely exercised rigidly: most initiatives fit within the range of conventionality. This is partly due to intensive cooperation between citizens and policy-makers at local level: ambitions and possibilities are shaped in this process. Furthermore, the underlying goal of most initiatives is the preservation of village life: this usually does not lead to extreme or controversial initiatives. Avoiding conflict at village level is another criterion that influences the conventionality of initiative types: communities have a high tendency to avoid projects that are likely to cause local opposition. Problems occur when decisions about downgrading facilities are not understood or accepted by communities. Civic action, especially combined with massive media attention and political support, can overrule municipal spatial strategies. From a regional perspective, autonomous civic initiatives affect an even distribution of facilities. Nevertheless, uncontrolled civic action is also a result of shifting power balances, and a consequence of the new model for participatory governance.

The process is incremental, dialectical and path dependent: both citizens and policy-makers shaped the process of informal institutional change. However, a starting point cannot be set: volunteering always has been important in this region and is, therefore, largely path dependent as well; in the past rural communities were largely self-reliant. These traditions are still visible and form a large resource for the adaptive capacity of citizens. Also in other rural regions, these path dependencies have been fundamental for a shift towards community-led planning and participatory governance (Meijer et al., 2015; Woods, 2010). Nevertheless, early on participation of municipalities did push citizen initiatives forward and seems to have become routine behaviour.

7.2. Has stabilization of this institutional change occurred?

Though the number of planning practices confirming a process of informal institutional change is increasing, some developments may perhaps slow down or even alter this process in the future. Firstly, we found that successful citizen initiatives have clear local boundaries, and that the observed institutional change tends to stabilize within these boundaries. Citizen initiatives seldom exceed the scale of a village, not to mention the borders of a municipality. The transformative capacity of citizen initiatives exists of close interactions between citizens and policy-makers that seek for possibilities within institutional frameworks. At the level of a locality, networks are proximate and inter-actions take place informally. In addition, citizens find it much easier to establish public support and action for local experienced problems. This limitation of citizen initiatives chimes with insights from previous field research in Sweden and Spain, and is referred to in literature as 'the proximity principle' (Meijer et al., 2015; Meijer & Syssner, 2017; Rivera, Soderstrom, & Uzzi, 2010). Though regional governments also offer support (in the form of subsidies or political support) and experiment with trans-regional bottom-

up projects, extra-local projects remain rare. Furthermore, regional concerns (like an even distribution of care and educational facilities) are difficult to secure via citizen initiatives: communities have a strong local commitment, but have little influence or interest when it comes to extra-local decision-making.

Secondly, citizen initiatives so far mainly include small or medium investment projects. We must wait and see whether citizen initiatives will get involved in larger investment projects as well (like community enterprises in the UK, see Healey (2015)). Traditionally, local governments have worked closely together with private property developers and they might continue to do so. This cooperation often does not involve any participation of communities. One possible consequence might be a dichotomy in some localities of citizen initiative versus private sector initiative, where these initiatives may even be competing each other now and then.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most difficult effect to deal with – in the context of Dutch spatial planning – are the inequalities that occur between and within communities; not all citizens have the capabilities or feel the urge to develop initiatives. Within communities, conventional projects and the ideas of strong actors (that for example volunteer in village boards) tend to dominate; views of less visible citizens (young, poor, female or other ethnic groups) are at risk of being unrepresented. Though the benefits of deep or direct democracy are often praised, other authors address the democratic deficits, like unequal representation and participation, within the shift towards self-organization and participatory democracy (Connelly, 2011; Healey et al., 2008; Johnson, 2001). Whether this is experienced as a problem in De Achterhoek is not clear yet and needs further research.

Policy-makers are limited in their possibilities to facilitate these possibly underrepresented groups or less active communities. Dutch spatial planning traditions have always been based on – as much as possible – equal opportunities to all cities and citizens. This can be seen, for instance, in the way municipal finance has been 'organized'. It is based on redistributing municipal income between municipalities, while there is a back-up system in place providing municipalities in financial trouble support from other municipalities. Other authors observed similar limitations of providing support for citizen initiatives (Curry, 2012; Eversole, 2012; Gallent, 2013). The so far 'hidden' effects of the institutionalization of community-based informal planning is that the divergence between 'successful' municipalities (with many citizen initiatives) and 'less successful' municipalities (missing any citizen initiative) or the representation of 'hidden' groups within communities, has not stabilized yet and will increase. Whether that is found acceptable or not remains to be seen.

Note

1. In Limburg (the Netherlands), the provincial government is trying to reverse depopulation by attracting new investments. Another Dutch depopulating province, Zeeland, follows a similar strategy, by focussing on grey economy and tourist investments. In Groningen, a municipality opted to demolish the redundant housing stock, but changed its strategy after severe local protests. These top-down strategies appeared to be costly and risky approaches.

Disclosure statement

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Appendix

Table A1. Composition of focus group meetings in De Achterhoek.

Meeting	Function	Type organization	Name organization
1	Chair	Citizen initiative	Dorpshuis Beltrum
	Chair	Citizen initiative	Varsevelds Belang
	Civil Servant	Municipality	Gemeente Oost Gelre
	Director	NGO	Gelderse Federatie Dorpshuizen en Kleine Kernen
	Civil Servant	Municipality	Gemeente Bronckhorst
	Volunteer	Citizen initiative	Dorpsaccomodatie Rietmolen
2	Policy advisor	Regional organization	Regio Achterhoek
	Depute	Province	Provincie Gelderland
	Civil Servant	Municipality	Gemeente Berkelland
	Volunteer	Citizen initiative	Dorpsaccomodatie Rietmolen
	Employee	NGO	Plattelandsjongeren Gelderland
	Chair	Citizen initiative	Zorgcorporatie Mariënvelde
3	Civil Servant	Municipality	Gemeente Winterswijk
	Chair	Citizen initiative	Zieuwents Belang
	Civil Servant	Province	Provincie Gelderland
	Civil Servant	Municipality	Gemeente Berkelland
	Board member	Citizen initiative	BS22
	Civil Servant	Municipality	Gemeente Doetinchem

Table A2. Script and topic list of focus group meetings.

Topic	Questions	Related indicator
General introduction	Introducing research aim and program of the meeting	
	Introductions of all participants (including expectations of meeting)	
Example 1. Citizen initiative in Spain (which was to large degree autonomous, but had a problematic relation with local authorities; not until recently were their initiatives legalized and did they receive financial support)		
Social relations	Who is responsible for the development of citizen initiatives?	Redistribution of power and resources, Bottom-up initiated change, Informal institutions: expectations, norms
	What is the role of municipality?	Collective expectations, Changing attitude
Financial situation	Should citizen initiative be financially independent	Redistribution of power and resources, norms
	Can a citizen initiative have commercial aspirations?	Informal institutions, shared expectations
	Are current revenue models stabile?	Stabilization of institutional change
Example 2a. Citizen initiative in Sweden (Strong embedded local organization initiated several projects, local representation is tremendous, but fear of exclusion exists as well; local government believes this community is an example for others, does not see a need for extra checks and balances: this community is responsible for their own projects)		
Inclusion/ exclusion	Are citizen initiatives feasible for every community?	Scale of occurrence of intuitional change
	Do citizen initiatives represent local needs and desires?	Collective expectations, Path dependence
	Do you (as governments) experience a necessity to check local support/inclusion?	Informal/Formal institutions: checks and balances. Degree of institutional change
	Is there sufficient (financial) control?	Formal institutions: checks and balances
Support	How is governmental support arranged in your municipality/community?	Adaptive informal institutions/compliance
	Until what extend is governmental support for citizen initiative desirable?	Adaptive informal institutions/compliance
	Can governments further withdraw?	Degree of institutional change
Example 2b: The Swedish initiative desires to reinstall the local train stop. Technically this is possible, but institutionally there are many constraints: this decision needs to be supported by numerous (governmental) organizations. Reopening the train stop has become infeasible.		
External policy development	Do you experience constraints or opportunities concerning policy defeat between municipalities and higher-level governments?	Adaptive informal institutions/compliance, Exogenous driving forces
Example 3 Citizen initiative De Achterhoek (Realized a sports accommodation, but was bureaucratically heavily challenged: applying for financial support was time-consuming and partly unsuccessful due to a subsidy cut, after a policy review municipality withdrew from a long term financial arrangement, some neighbours formally objected to the plans)		
Policy review	Policy reviews (as in this example) occur, due to political changes. Have you experience with such reviews?	Planning culture, Adaptive informal institutions, Exogenous driving forces
	How do you, as a stakeholder deal with it?	Adaptive informal institutions
	Can communities be legally protected in such cases/	Formal institutional change, role of formal institutions
	Into what extend are local governments responsible for locally wanted services	Shift power/resource balance, Changing attitude towards planning
Limits of change	How is dealt with controversial issues (when a minority has substantial complaints, if an initiative does not fit the strategic municipal policy, if an initiative negatively affects other settlements?)	Planning culture, tacit expectations (social appropriateness), compliance, path dependence

(Continued)

Table A2. Continued.

Topic	Questions	Related indicator
Formal institutions	Is there sufficient room for manoeuvre within current planning procedures and formal rules for citizen initiatives?	Informal/formal institutional change, endogenous driving forces
	Are other (or less) policy instruments wanted to (better) embed community initiatives in current planning practices?	Informal/formal institutional change, role of formal institutions