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Saskia Bisschops & Raoul Beunen

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A new role for citizens' initiatives: the difficulties in co-creating institutional change in urban planning

Saskia Bisschops * and Raoul Beunen 

Faculty of Management, Science and Technology, Open University, the Netherlands

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In this paper, we analyze the institutional work that underlies the attempt to institutionalize a more active role of citizens in urban planning. We draw on a case in which a group of citizens aims to redevelop a brownfield site into a vital urban area. This citizens' initiative is co-creating a new form of urban planning with the municipality, private organizations and individual citizens. The study shows how citizens' initiatives can be a driver for institutional change, but that uncertainties about new institutions tend to reinforce the maintenance of existing ones. This paradox explains why even if the ambition for a new form of planning is widely shared, actually realizing institutional change can still be difficult and time-consuming.

Keywords: citizens' initiatives; co-creation; institutional work; institutional change; urban planning

1. Introduction

Citizens increasingly want to become active participants in urban planning and governments increasingly put in effort to ensure inclusive planning processes (Brand and Gaffikin 2007; Boelens and de Roo 2014; Meijer and van der Krabben 2018). As digital technologies continue to make information more accessible, both the demand for co-creation and the potential of its contributions are likely to increase even more in the near future (Fung 2015). Research on participatory and collaborative governance in planning (Healey 1997, 1998, 2003; Innes and Booher 2010), more recently complemented by related literature on co-creation (Bovaird and Loeffler 2012; Scholl and Kemp 2016), reveals that, despite often high ambitions, there are significant challenges and sometimes participation is simply not effective as Innes and Booher (2004, 419) bluntly state: "Legally required methods of public participation in government decision making in the USA – public hearings, review and comment procedures in particular – do not work." Partly as a response to the perceived failures of downstream implementation of participatory mechanisms, an increasing amount of citizens' initiatives step up to deal with (local) urban planning issues themselves (Healey 2015; Fung 2015; Van Meerkerk, Boonstra, and Edelenbos 2013). Citizen-initiated urban developments are often associated with 'organic development strategies' (Van Karnenbeek and Janssen-Jansen 2018) which entail an open-ended plan, a greater role for smaller private actors and an enabling role for government (Buitelaar and Bregman 2016). When these novel planning ideas are implemented the development process inherently become a process of co-creation, that on one hand is described as fuzzy and complex (Boelens and de Roo 2014)

*Corresponding author. Email: saskia.bisschops@ou.nl

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and, on the other hand, as evolving in an incremental way (Van Karnenbeek and Janssen-Jansen 2018). Co-creating a new way of urban development is not a well-established way of working yet and therefore the roles and rules need to be invented and negotiated along the way. Despite the widespread enthusiasm for these citizens' initiatives (Rotmans 2014; SCP 2016), little is known about the effects these initiatives bring about, how these effects come about in practice, and how enduring they are (Healey 2006; Tonkens *et al.* 2015; Mattijssen, Behagel, and Buijs 2015; Kooij *et al.* 2018).

The aim of this paper is to provide a fine-grained, empirically grounded understanding of the processes through which citizens' initiatives co-create their new role in urban developments, and assess whether these processes have a transformative effect on local urban planning. We take an institutional lens to unravel the messy day to day practice of co-creating a novel planning approach and argue that in order for a change to qualify as transformative it should be institutionalized in norms, rules and regulations. In explaining how such change comes about we use the concept of institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca 2011), which allows us to analyze the actual actions of actors and the institutional effects thereof and separate these from the institutional setting in which they are embedded. Current research on citizens' initiatives tends to focus on successful cases and is criticized for overestimating initiatives' creativity, flexibility and decisiveness and their capacity to evoke change, and for their (incorrect) portrayal of governmental agencies as rigid rule followers that hamper change (Uitermark 2015). Analyzing institutional work helps to gain insight into the way both citizens and governmental actors use existing rules, reinterpret these, or create new ones when it fits their purposes. The concept of institutional work is also suited to explore the range of actions through which actors impact planning institutions and trigger their maintenance or change (Beunen and Patterson 2017). Viewing institutional work as a combination of actions brings attention to the temporal dimension of institutional work, in which the order and sequence of actions is important in explaining the effects achieved (Czarniawska 2009). Therewith the analysis shifts from snapshots to a moving picture (Pierson 2004) and systematically situates particular moments (including the present) in a temporal sequence.

We draw on a careful reconstruction of a citizens' initiative in Gouda, a mid-sized city in the Netherlands, where citizens aim to redevelop a former industrial site of 2.5 acres into a lively urban area with small craft businesses, events, urban farming, a city beach, restaurants and (tiny) houses (Figure 1).

GOUDasfalt is a particularly interesting case, because it differs from most other citizens' initiatives in the Netherlands that are either temporary in nature, awaiting commercial development, focus on just one aspect of planning, as for instance maintenance of a public garden, or are in fact initiated by local governments (Uitermark 2015). Until late 2014, the area was in use as an asphalt plant and due to its location in the vicinity of residential areas and the city center a longstanding thorn in the side of citizens as well as municipal officials. When it was offered for sale at the end of 2014, the city council, however, hesitated acquiring the plot because a previous redevelopment of an industrial area resulted in a considerable financial loss. A loosely organized group of citizens, predecessors of GOUDasfalt, turned the tide in the wavering decision making process. They filed a petition, signed by over 750 citizens, evoking the municipal council to grasp this unique opportunity, ensure no heavy industry could return and turn the area into an attractive waterfront in addition to the city center. The citizens formed an official foundation and put themselves forward as a private party, willing to co-develop the area with the municipality and other citizens, businesses and stakeholders (GOUDasfalt 2015). In February 2016, the acquisition of the area by the municipality of Gouda came

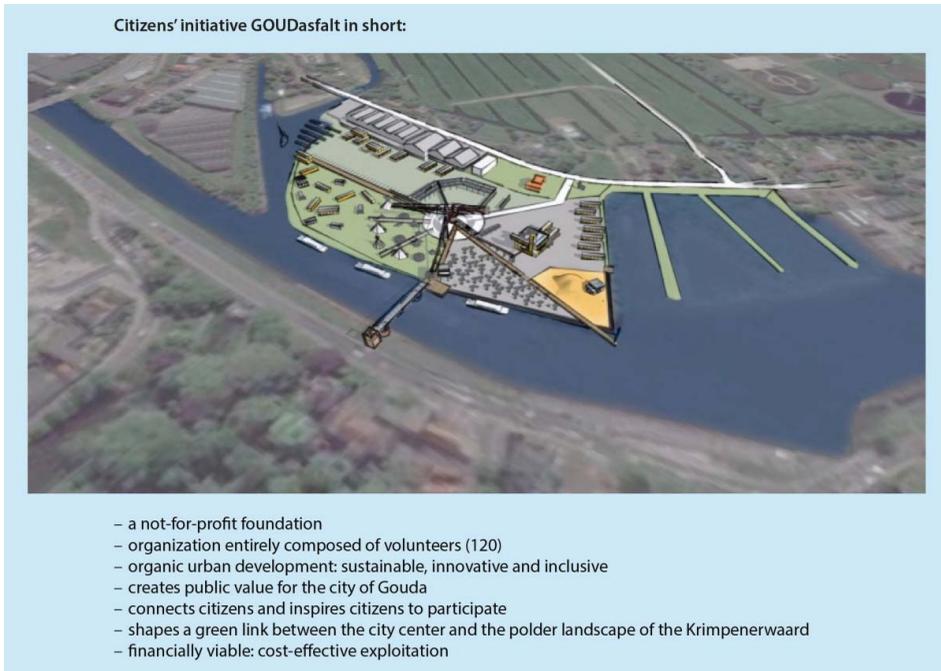


Figure 1. The citizens' initiative GOUDasfalt in short.
 Source: Open University, the Netherlands.

into effect, supported by a resolution giving first development rights to the citizens' initiative GOUDasfalt. This paper focuses on how the citizens' initiative puts their ambitions into practice after the acquisition of the area, trying to co-create an alternative form of urban planning to support the organic development of the area.

The following section elaborates on the framework that was used to analyze the case, including a brief description of the method and followed by a detailed analysis of the planning process, the actions through which the actors involved attempt to change urban planning and the outcome of that process. Our main conclusions and discussion are presented in the final section.

2. Theoretical framework and method

This paper builds on the wider literature on institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca 2011; Bettini, Brown, and De Haan 2015; Beunen, Patterson, and Van Assche 2017) by further unpacking the dynamics of institutional change and aiming to connect institutions and actors in a comprehensive manner. We therefore introduce a theoretical framework (Figure 2) that not only breaks down the concepts of institutional change and institutional work into observable categories but also links these concepts to different contextual dependencies. This level of detail will enable us to analyze how the path of institutional change is shaped by actors' actions and the interplay with the institutional context in which these actions are taken.

Institutions are understood as the norms and rules that structure human action and interactions (North 1990) and can be both formal and informal (Ostrom 2005; Van

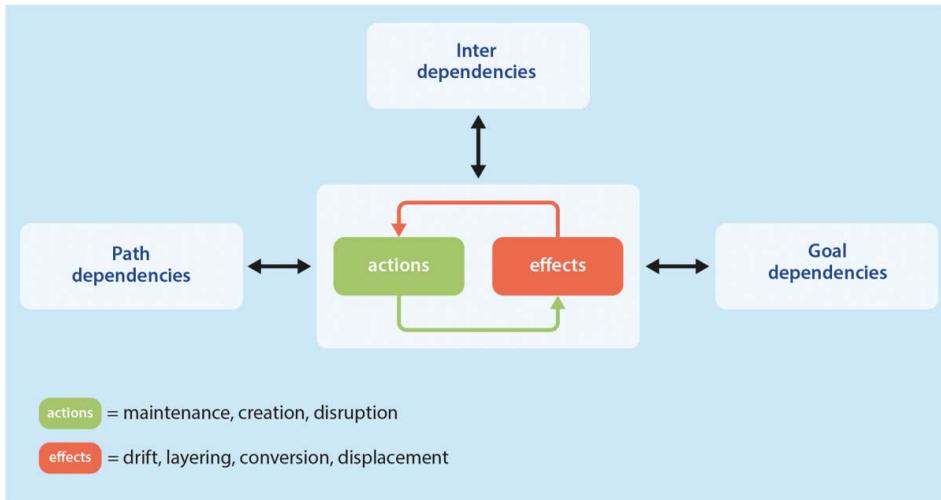


Figure 2. Theoretical framework: how inter, path and goal dependencies influence institutional work (actions) and the effects.

Assche, Beunen, and Duineveld 2014). Although institutional structures offer a degree of stability, institutions do change over time (Greif 2006; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Institutional change can result from deliberative revisions, but also from shifting understandings and interpretations and changing interactions with other institutions (North 2006; Hall 2010; Larsson 2015; Cleaver and De Koning 2015). Institutional change can thus refer both to radical institutional reconfigurations as well as to gradual evolutions (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Bergsma *et al.* 2017). Furthermore institutional change can take place in different ways. Mahoney and Thelen (2010), for example, distinguish between displacement (rules are replaced by new ones), layering (new rules are added to existing ones), drift (rules change due to changes in the environment) and conversion (rules change because they are interpreted and enacted differently). In the context of organic urban development, institutional change can refer to a substantial or transformative change of the formal regulatory framework through, for example, the adoption of a new planning act that enables a development without a detailed plan containing the exact multi-purpose use of an area. Within the framework more gradual institutional change can also emerge through the approval of new policies, the issuing of alternative permits, or a new way of including citizens in urban developments that becomes habitual.

Institutional work brings attention to those actions through which actors attempt to, or actually do, create, maintain or disrupt institutional structures (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Beunen and Patterson 2017). Creation of institutions might range from work directly aimed at reconstructing rules to actions through which belief systems are reconfigured and the institutional structures change as a result (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). This form of work is often associated with the citizens' initiatives as they introduce the novel planning approach. Maintenance is more frequently attributed to governments and refers to the work of actors to uphold existing institutional structures and ensure their relevance, even when they have a taken-for-granted status and are perceived as powerful and self-enforcing (Lawrence, Winn, and Jennings 2001). Actors' attempts to undermine institutions are defined as disruption, for example, when

governments decide to refrain from enforcing certain planning rules and thus diminish their relevance in practice. This definition of institutional work acknowledges that both actions and effects matter, that actions can be purposive or not, effects can be intended or not, and that not all actions may affect the institutional structure. Institutional work in citizen-initiated urban development inherently takes place in interaction between actors, for instance in discussions about how to legitimize organic development.

In unraveling institutional change processes in practice, the challenge lies in accounting for the sometimes seemingly irreducibility of context and the difficulty of separating actions and their effects from the settings in which they take place (Couch, Sykes, and Börstinghaus 2011). We therefore distinguish three important contextual aspects: legacies from the past, interactions between actors and institutions' during the process, and shared ideas about the future. Our theoretical framework (Figure 2) places the actions of actors (creation, maintenance and disruption), and the effects of those actions (displacement, layering, drift and conversion) within the context of three different sets of contextual dependencies: interdependencies, path dependencies and goal dependencies (Beunen, Van Assche, and Duineveld 2016).

Path dependencies are regularly mentioned as influencing change processes (see North 2006 for an overview) with a common notion that 'history matters'. This history becomes relevant via existing institutions, decisions made, trusted roles and responsibilities, and through historically developed discourses (De Vries *et al.* 2015). All these aspects lead to a unique set of opportunities and challenges for institutional change.

Interdependencies refer to dependencies between actors, between actors and institutions and between different institutions (Alexander 2001; Ostrom 2005). A particular citizens' initiative is interdependent with other actors, such as their governmental counterparts and other citizens, and all these actors operate within a wider set of processes and institutions that govern the development and planning of the urban area. These include, for example, the discussions and negotiations in the political arena through which collective-binding decisions concerning urban planning are taken, as well as enforcement of relevant institutions such as property rights, the zoning plan or environmental legislation. Van Dam, Duineveld, and During (2015, 174), for example, concluded that citizens' initiatives tend to shape themselves according to the (perceived) expectations, wishes and actions of involved governmental actors.

The third set consists of goal dependencies, referring to the impact of shared perspectives on the future on actions in the present (Jasanoff and Kim 2015; Beunen, Van Assche, and Duineveld 2016; Hoch 2016). Especially if these perspectives are embedded in formal institutions, e.g. written down in vision documents or covenants, their impact on present day actions can be significant. Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca (2011) refer to this as future-oriented intentionality. They built on the conceptualization of "projective agency" that refers to the capacity of actors to imagine alternative possibilities and they explore how actors use these imaginations to consciously reshape immediate social situations (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

The combination of these different dependencies creates rigidities in the governance path, as not all changes are possible and attempts to change into a certain direction will be influenced by the existing context. Yet the interplay between different dependencies also creates flexibility. Actors have the capacity to do certain things and not others in their attempt to navigate through (or out of) current urban planning processes, knowing that other actors are doing the same (Garud, Kumaraswamy, and Karnøe 2010). Analyzing these different dependencies helps to gain insights into the factors that

influence various forms of institutional work and the impact this work has on the process of institutional change.

Methodologically, it is important to study change processes in ‘real time’, because otherwise it would be tempting to think of any sequence of events and subsequent actions (retrospectively labeled as a path) as having been inevitable (Garud, Kumaraswamy, and Karnøe 2010, 770). We therefore rely on fieldwork, mainly consisting of participative observations of more than 50 meetings executed from 2015 to 2017, complemented with additional interviews and analyses of (policy) documents and press releases. The meetings observed include weekly board meetings of the citizens’ initiative of GOUDasfalt and meetings between the municipality and GOUDasfalt, which helped to gain insight into the negotiations between the municipality and the citizens’ initiative. These meetings took place on a managerial and operational level and included meetings with municipal and national urban planning experts. All meetings were recorded, transcribed and complemented with notes. Other gatherings, such as city council meetings, official signing of agreements and inspirational evenings provided additional impressions and an opportunity for informal talks with those present. In 2016 and 2017, 10 interviews were conducted, based on a short list of topics, with a number initiators of other citizens initiatives to provide context for the initiative of GOUDasfalt, experts in the (financing of) urban developments and the main actors of the municipality of Gouda. Finally more than 150 documents were studied, varying from policy documents to websites from opposing citizens’ initiatives and newsletters to volunteers of GOUDasfalt.

In the reconstruction, we analyzed the actions through which various actors maintained, created and disrupted institutions, how the roles of actors shifted and which intended and unintended effects all this had. We further identified how and when interactions took place between actors, between institutions and between actors and institutions. We analyzed if and how the actions could be traced back to previous actions, other past events or existing rules and how certain ideas were put into action and others not. We looked for recurring patterns to explain the path of development of this specific urban planning process and the outcome. The main conclusions, based on the detailed reconstruction, were presented to the board of the citizens’ initiative GOUDasfalt, as well as to the municipal project managers, urban planners, and enforcement officials in order to verify them.

3. The citizens’ initiative GOUDasfalt

3.1. Introduction to the case

The citizen’s initiative GOUDasfalt started after the location of a former asphalt plant became available for redevelopment. The GOUDasfalt initiative managed to get political attention, because the municipality of Gouda included facilitating societal entrepreneurship and civil participation as a major priority in its municipal coalition agreement (Municipality of Gouda 2014). This political ambition was used to legitimize the municipal decision to put forward the citizens’ initiative GOUDasfalt as preferred partner for the redevelopment of the brownfield area. When the city council voted in favor of the acquisition of the area, they also automatically ratified the partnership. The basis for this initiative was formalized with a Cooperation Agreement between the municipality of Gouda and the citizens’ initiative. It contained general conditions for the formal relationship between the two parties, which would be specified further in a rental agreement foreseen upon key transfer in July 2016. Both parties were keen to ensure activities and events, as well as sub rental of existing buildings, could start immediately

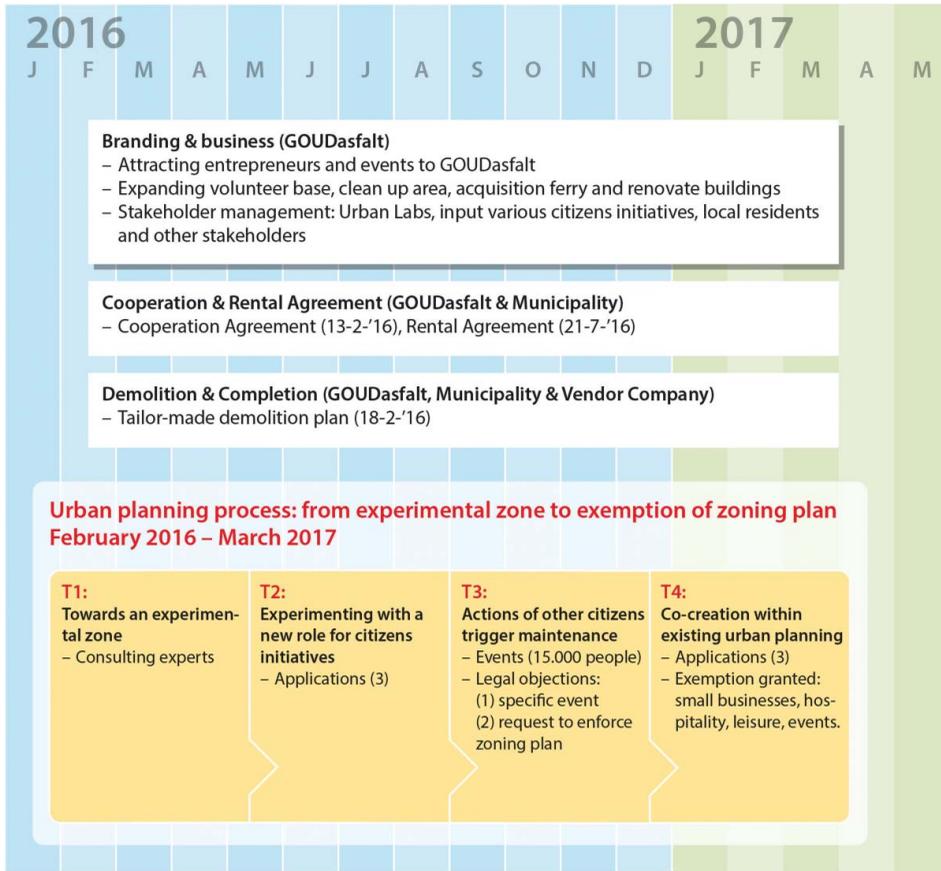


Figure 3. Urban planning process: from experimental zone to exemption of zoning plan February 2016–March 2017.

Source: Open University, the Netherlands.

after key transfer and the area's organic development could grow from there. As the current zoning plan did not allow for these activities, negotiations on how to legalize the intended transformation commenced at the same time as the demolition of the asphalt plant and negotiations about the rental agreement (Figure 3).

In this section we first provide a chronological overview and describe four different periods in which the urban planning processes can be divided. We emphasize particular forms of institutional work in relation to specific contextual dependencies and the subsequent effects within these periods. Then we focus on explaining the outcome of the entire urban planning process by analyzing what actions contributed or hampered institutional change and identifying recurring patterns.

3.2. *First period: aiming for an experimental zone with lenient urban planning rules (T1)*

In this first period, the citizens' initiative and the municipal project managers aimed to co-create new planning rules to legalize the intended development of the area. They assumed current regulations would not allow for the development to start upon key transfer.

Through media coverage of planning experiments of other citizens' initiatives in the Netherlands, they learned about a possible solution: create a so-called experimental zone. At this point it was very unclear what an experimental zone was, other than that it was based on lenient urban planning rules. In the early stages of the planning process, the citizens' initiative, the responsible alderman and several parties in city council believed that an experimental zone was an existing means to make organic urban development possible. The next step was to gather more information about how such a zone could be implemented in Gouda. Although these early assumptions turned out to be incorrect, our study shows how the idea of an experimental zone remained an important driver for the actions of the citizens' initiative.

Despite mainly positive expectations about creating an experimental zone, the municipal project managers did have reservations and decided to consult experts from the municipal urban planning department. The planners confirmed their concerns and stipulated the relevance of the current urban planning framework for the governmental task to balance stakeholders' interests. This shows the interdependency between the co-creation process and specific existing planning rules. It resulted in a cautious translation of the initial ambitions in the cooperation agreement: to "further investigate the possibilities of a so-called experimental zone" and "a best effort commitment to revise the current zoning plan, insofar as the public responsibility allows for" (Municipality of Gouda and GOUDasfalt 2016, 8). These concerns and the subsequent institutionalization in a formal agreement, delimited the implementation of new planning ideas from the start. Furthermore it became apparent that an experimental zone could not be arranged swiftly. Experiences from elsewhere showed that these experiments operated within the existing zoning plan, with the municipalities in question agreeing to temporarily refer from upholding it (Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment 2016). If local stakeholders are on the same page, this way of working suffices and therewith room for (temporary) urban planning experiments can be created. The municipality of Gouda, however, was not inclined to make an exception on regulations, especially because broad consensus on the project was lacking. Municipal planners therefore suggested working within the existing framework of urban planning rules and applying for a temporary exemption from the current zoning plan. Such an exemption could be granted for 5 or 10 years and should enable GOUDasfalt to move forward on a legal basis. The institutional work did not have the intended effect, which was the creation of an experimental zone to legalize the organic development from the start, and shifted from creating new rules to maintaining existing ones.

3.3. Second period: experimenting with a new role for citizens' initiatives (T2)

The new division of roles between the citizens' initiative and the municipality marked the start of a second period in which the municipality, according to the cooperation agreement, was supposed to facilitate, while the citizens were responsible for further developing the plans. The citizens' initiative of GOUDasfalt, therefore, was asked to take the lead in the planning process and put their ideas in an application for exemption. This decision was driven by path-dependency, especially by the condition the city council put forward, upon acquiring the plot, to execute the project at zero costs. It not only resulted in a very businesslike owner-renter agreement between the municipality and the citizens' initiative, but also prevented pro-active guidance from the municipality in the planning process. The idea of an experimental zone was still the main premise underlying the first application for exemption for a broad variety of functions, ranging from events, a

restaurant and city beach to green areas and housing. This first application and the one that followed were immediately rejected by the municipality and considered insufficient to process. The new division of roles in this urban planning process proved to be problematic. The municipality anticipated more expertise regarding the rules of the urban planning process and willingness to respect its limitations (interviews municipal project managers and urban planners, 2017) as their goal was to find a solution in maintaining current rules. The citizens' initiative kept trying to create new rules by aiming for an impossible solution: an experimental zone (GOUDasfalt 2016a; 2016b; 2016c). Because the citizens' initiative GOUDasfalt deliberately proceeded with signing contracts with event organizers, allowing them promotions and media campaigns to attract visitors to the events in August and September 2016, the municipality, at this point, had little more choice than to change their strategy to condoning the upcoming activities in breach of the current zoning plan. Experimenting with this new role of citizens' initiatives in urban planning proved to be unsuccessful as the legalization of the development upon key transfer, the intended outcome, was still not in sight in July 2016.

3.4. Third period: actions of other citizens trigger further maintenance (T3)

In the summer period the urban planning process came to a halt, but the public launch of activities on the GOUDasfalt area were off to a great start. More than 15,000 people visited the events on the terrain. The first entrepreneurs and social organizations were welcomed and negotiations continued with numerous interested parties. The actual use of the area in breach of the zoning plan and the lack of communication by the municipality, as a result of the ineffectiveness of the urban planning process so far, provoked a formal complaint from local residents. They made use of current planning regulations to interfere in the urban development of the area. The municipality was requested to enforce the current zoning plan, terminate the conflicting use and maintain existing rules. Following such a complaint, a municipality is required to answer for the conflicting use of the area in court and worst-case scenario was the court deciding to put a halt to the project altogether.

The complaint had a profound effect on the planning process and its outcome. The objection procedure and the formal response times resulted in a tight schedule for legitimizing the urban development, limiting the time for negotiations and hampering the creation of new rules. Also, the municipal goal shifted towards effectively countering the objection. Therefore, all functions less likely to be granted or in need of more time to explore, as for instance the, for GOUDasfalt, very relevant function of residential housing, had to remain out of scope. The municipal goal and subsequent actions shifted from facilitating all intended functions of GOUDasfalt to maximizing the chance the permit could be granted and upheld in court. The study shows how the actions of other citizens, using current urban planning rules to submit formal complaints, increased focus on the legal side of the process and triggered institutional maintenance. At the same time, these actions facilitated the planning process because the municipality allocated the necessary budget to pro-actively guide the citizens' initiative.

3.5. Fourth period: co-creation within existing urban planning rules and regulations (T4)

The last period started with a new round of negotiations between the citizens' initiative and the municipality in order to legalize the organic urban development within the

current planning system. Subsequently, one might expect more maintenance work, but we also identified multiple actions to co-create new rules. The municipal planners took the lead and put forward specific requirements for the application. These included a more detailed map of spatial arrangements, pointing out various functions as events, residential buildings, parking, commercial activities and recreation and their specific location. The citizens' initiative GOUDasfalt perceived these requirements as delimiting the scope of the exemption and had trouble overseeing their consequences for the development of the area.

One of the first items to be discussed was the duration of the exemption. This example shows interdependency with the duration of the newly created cooperation and rental agreements between the municipality and the citizens' initiative under private law and the existing institution, national urban planning law, which allows for a period of exemption for 5 or 10 years. The citizens' initiative GOUDasfalt preferred a 10-year period, because several (social) entrepreneurs withdrew because investments would not yield sufficient returns in a 5-year timeframe. The municipal urban planners advised a 5-year period for the exemption to be consistent with the duration of cooperation and rental agreement and proved to be effective in their work as the citizens' initiative submitted an application for a 5-year exemption.

Another important item under discussion was how to legalize events in the exemption of the zoning plan. This negotiation shows how difficult and time-consuming it is to create new urban planning rules, especially if ideas and interpretations differ. As there was no experience with allowing for events through an exemption of a zoning plan in Gouda, the municipality decided to co-create a new policy including the definition of events with the citizens' initiative. When defined as 'any form of public entertainment' almost any gathering could be labeled as an event. On the other hand, a lot of activities might be viewed as regular activities of business located on the area. Broad interpretations of the current zoning plan labeling as many events as possible as regular business would limit the amount of specific permits needed and subsequently the costs. But that definition also raised concerns, because it was not likely that local residents and other stakeholders could make a distinction between events and regular business meetings. Both categories might cause public nuisance, evoke complaints by local residents and negatively impact public opinion. Also, the number of people visiting, the number of days and the nature of the event could affect nuisance as well as safety. Both parties aimed for safe events, which would not cause nuisance for local residents, but differed in how to achieve this. The municipality wanted to provide a sound legal basis that could withstand formal objections and ensure that they could operate adequately in case of an emergency. GOUDasfalt took a less formal approach and wanted to prevent objections by pro-actively inviting local residents and other stakeholders to become part of their plans. The citizens' initiative furthermore struggled with the need for a significant amount of events to secure their financial viability and the awareness that too many might cause complaints. The negotiations resulted in the following text in the application for exemption of the zoning plan: "Up to 12 major events will be held each year. A major event is defined as an event with more than 1,000 visitors, a duration of several days or that is classified as a high risk event" (GOUDasfalt 2016c, 5). The institutional work consisting of negotiating the definition of events and the subsequent effect, as written down in the application, later proved to have an unintended outcome. It became the most important trigger for other citizens to complain formally to the exemption, arguing that the text did not specify or limit events with fewer visitors than 1,000 and, in theory, events with 999 people could be held every day.

Although new rules for permitting events could be considered institutional change, that is layering new rules on top of existing ones, the formal request to uphold the zoning plan, did not lead to any actions to evoke major changes in the urban planning framework. For instance, no actions were taken to come to a new understanding of how one should weigh a particular citizens' initiative against the interests of other citizens in another way than by the formal procedure to object. Instead, the request to uphold the zoning plan and the need to answer for the conflicting use of the area in court changed the original open mindedness of the municipality into a focus on the maintenance of existing rules. Within existing rules, however, municipal planners found room for renewal and reinterpretation and partly did so in a co-creative process. The actual exemption might even be considered a kind of experimental zone within the current planning system and therefore a significant institutional change. Instead of pinpointing each square meter of the area, five zones were designated on the site, each allowing for a broad range of functions. One zone, for instance, consists of the whole area and allows for activities, events, art, parking and green spaces. Restaurants, leisure and small businesses and even new buildings, other than residential ones, are sustained in specific zones. In February 2017, the exemption was granted with immediate effect (Omgevingsdienst Midden Holland 2017), thus the reinterpretation of the exemption led to a conversion of existing urban planning rules.

3.6. Summarizing the main factors that help explain the outcome of the urban planning process

In the end, the ambition to co-create an experimental zone with lenient planning rules in order to facilitate the initiative resulted in a permit for exemption of the current zoning plan embedded in existing planning rules. One might conclude that the local urban planning framework remained unchanged and thus the actors were not very successful in their attempt to create new planning institutions and to evoke institutional change. One might even conclude that institutional change was not necessary at all, as legalization of the citizen-initiated organic development was found within the current planning system. Our fine-grained analysis however, shows that a more gradual change took place through layering (adding new rules to existing ones) and conversion (reinterpretation of existing rules) (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). We identify four recurring patterns that help to explain the pathway of change in this urban planning process and how the institutional work of actors and emerging effects were influenced by different contextual dependencies.

3.6.1. Institutionalization of ideas on a new role for citizens' initiatives

The study confirms our assumption that goal-dependencies are important to keep a process running, especially when these ideas are subsequently institutionalized in formal documents (cf. Hoch 2016). The shared aim to redevelop the brownfield area into a lively waterfront and, even more importantly, to do so in close cooperation with citizens and other stakeholders, had a lasting effect during the entire urban planning process. The institutionalization under private law strengthened the interdependence between the citizens' initiative and the municipality and stimulated both the initiative and the municipality to cope with the complications and struggles during the urban planning process, for instance in the second period when experimenting with a new role division proved to be difficult. Both depended on the actions of the other on multiple fronts, and

although this created some tensions, they were both aware that only cooperation could bring the process further. Although this did not result in a formal change of the role of citizens' initiatives in urban planning rules or regulations, their more prominent role in planning was actively pursued and settled in practice through layering, in the wider political and private realm by various policies and contracts.

3.6.2. Unintended effects of actions can hamper creation of new rules

Decisions can also have unintended consequences for actions of actors in a change process. Particular path-dependencies are created through the institutional work that actors carry out due process (Pierson 2004). In this case, the conditions deemed necessary to secure votes in the municipal council for acquisition of the area, greatly impacted on the division of roles and responsibilities in the actual development of the area, the interpretation thereof and the subsequent actions taken. Our study shows how the municipalities' decisions deliberately molded the citizens' initiative increasingly into a commercial, project-developer type role. The dissenting political views in the city council resulted in a very businesslike agreement between the initiative and the municipality, which disturbed the, until so far, clear division of roles: the citizens' initiative, acting as a source of inspiration, gaining the support of numerous other citizens and the municipal officials doing their magic in the political arena. The more formal division of roles and responsibilities between government and initiative not only triggered the initiative to focus on their business, instead of on developing a new form of planning, but also prevented the municipality from pro-actively guiding the initiative and working on necessary institutional changes. Although the municipality and the citizens' initiative shared the ambition to change urban planning, they both refrained from taking necessary actions, which made the transition process vulnerable to unanticipated events and contingencies, such as the formal complaints of other citizens. These objections were the trigger to revive the stagnant planning process and this shows how a particular action by one actor can trigger a further dependence between actors and on the wider institutional structures.

3.6.3. Operating in the spotlight tends to trigger institutional maintenance

The case also shows that institutional change was difficult because the citizens' initiative was subject to a lot of debate, not only in the political arena, but also in the city itself. This study shows that, in response to uncertainties, the involved actors had the tendency to revert to existing rules, even though the actual intention was to change these. This is not surprising given the role of institutions to stabilize expectations (North 2006; Greif 2006), but it shows that emerging institutional changes are often a combination of creation, disruption, and maintenance (Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca 2011; Czarniawska 2009). The reform process in this case evolved from a search for a new form of planning to a somewhat standardized planning process; and institutional work shifted from creation to maintenance. At the start of the GOUDasfalt project, both citizens' initiative and municipality considered an experimental zone with lenient planning rules the best way to facilitate organic development. During the process, they learned that such an experimental zone was not an existing formal institution and that other municipalities using it simply refrained from enforcing the current zoning plans. For the citizens' initiative, this was no problem and a viable way to move forward, but the municipality did not like such construction, mainly because of the fact that so many people were

closely following every step they were taking. Once they found out about this, they decided to search for another way to facilitate the project, one that fitted with existing rules.

3.6.4. Institutional change can emerge from reinterpretation of existing rules

Various elements contributed to the tendency of actors towards maintaining existing rules and, although the ultimate outcome can be labeled as institutional stability, our study also reveals more gradual change took place. As Garud, Kumaraswamy, and Karnøe (2010) point out, initial conditions or contingencies during the process are interpreted by actors. The municipal planners used the formal objection to secure budget for the project, taking the lead in the urban planning process and thereby creating room to envision an experimental zone within the current planning system. Not in the least because the citizens' initiative persisted in their claim that lenient planning rules were absolutely necessary for realizing organic development. Within the limited timeframe of a couple of months the municipality and the citizens' initiative managed to legalize the development with an extraordinary exemption of the zoning plan.

4. Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper is to provide a better understanding of the processes through which citizens' initiatives co-create their new role in urban development. The study shows that it is the combination of different forms of institutional work that shapes the path of a citizens' initiative and the institutional changes that are realized. In Gouda, the citizens' initiative and the municipality started with an ambitious plan to co-create new planning rules to legalize the intended redevelopment of a brownfield area. During the process, the attention gradually shifted from developing new rules to facilitating the organic development through the existing planning framework. Institutional maintenance became predominant through actions that were a reaction to perceived uncertainties and external parties who demanded clarity about the initiative. Few actions were taken to actually disrupt institutions and replace these with alternative ones, and the process did not result in new planning rules to facilitate organic development. The focus on existing institutions re-affirmed the relevance of these institutions and, in the end, the way forward was largely found within existing rules. Some of these existing rules were made even more important than they normally are, because many parties, including critical entrepreneurs, citizens, and politicians, were closely following every step the municipality took. In order to avoid legal and political problems, the municipality decided to strictly adhere to the rules. The study shows that the ambition to change institutions creates uncertainties about the roles and responsibilities of involved actors and about the rules that need to be followed. In response to these uncertainties, actors have a tendency to fall back on existing institutions and maintain the relevance of these institutions. Thereby institutional work takes the form of maintenance, rather than disrupting existing institutions or creating new ones. We argue that this is, to some extent, a consequence of a lack of a conscious reflection on the actions needed to change institutions. Although it will be impossible to fully control everything that happens, a more profound reflection on necessary forms of institutional work might smooth the transition process. It will be easier to identify tensions between old and new rules and to discuss how one plans to deal with these tensions. Without such reflection, these tensions will inevitably become visible during the process, evoking old practices rather than stimulating new ones. When one

becomes more conscious about how a new form of planning relates to the maintenance of existing institutions, a better navigation of the change process could be achieved.

Furthermore, analyzing moving pictures, rather than taking a snapshot view, appears a promising avenue for gaining a better understanding of how institutional work relates to gradual forms of institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Over the years, the actors in Gouda managed to co-create some form of institutional change by adding new institutions to existing ones (layering), for example, the rules regarding the legalization of events and the agreements between municipality and the citizens' initiative. Institutionalization under private law proved to be robust during the urban planning process and ensured the more prominent role of citizens in practice. Our findings also suggest that maintenance work can provide leeway for change, if that work is directed at new interpretations or new ways of enacting existing rules. The new approach to the temporary exemption of the zoning plan came into effect through reinterpretation of existing institutions (conversion) and, although realized within the current planning framework, might be considered the most significant change. Such change can be easily overlooked, when research focuses on the creation of new rules as the obvious or most logical action to evoke institutional change.

The study thereby shows that a citizens' initiative can indeed be a driver for institutional change, but also that change does not come about easily. This urges more attention to the gradual and incremental forms of change and the activities that influence such changes if we want to improve our understanding of how more transformative forms of change in urban planning unfold over time.

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ORCID

Saskia Bisschops  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6466-8259>

Raoul Beunen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5005-075X>

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