



Community development and social actor theories: a case study in Montréal (Canada)

G. Sénécal

Institut national de la recherche scientifique, INRS Centre Urbanisation Culture Société, Université du Québec,
Canada

Correspondence to: G. Sénécal (gilles.senecal@ucs.inrs.ca)

Received: 21 October 2011 – Published in Soc. Geogr. Discuss.: 28 February 2012

Revised: 26 June 2012 – Accepted: 26 July 2012 – Published: 31 August 2012

Abstract. Research focusing on community development processes is increasingly making use of the notion of actor. Actors are engaged in a system of actions. A range of sociological theories has given rise to the various stances adopted by social actors, including the theatrical actor, the strategic actor, the actor-network, or the reflexive actor. We review these theories in an attempt to define an analytical framework by employing what we call a bricolage methodology. The aim is to gain insight on the interactions that bind together the various stakeholders by function (acting and the actors' roles) in the fields of action (the scenes of interaction and real interventions) and on effects (the results of these actions). We then propose to apply our analytical framework to a case study on the process of developing an action plan in the Villeray district of Montréal (Québec, Canada).

1 Introduction

The notion of social actor refers to all stakeholders, individuals, groups or coalitions within civil society or public institutions involved, for example, in processes and in carrying out initiatives in support of community development or urban revitalization. The actor metaphor has inspired many sociologists, starting with Simmel (1908) and especially Goffman (1959, 1974) who borrow from the world of theatre the concepts of acting, interaction and the scene. Its use is justified by its contribution to the “actionalist” (theory of action) and “interactionist” (microsociology) paradigms. The metaphor is also based on the ideas of scenes (the places and scales of action) and acting or role-playing (the social interactions). At the core of the sociology of organizations and of recent schools of planning theory, at least the ones advocating for public participation, the metaphor does not draw on a unified theory incorporated into a well-established methodology. The theoretical field of collective action and social actors can be subdivided into several approaches, some of which provide a narrow definition of the term actor, while others are broader in scope. They can refer indiscriminately to an association or an individual engaged in action. Actors

are placed into conventional categories such as the organization or the group, an individual or even a social movement. Action can be set at different scales, such as society as a whole (to address social change), the metropolitan area, the local community or social networks. Even if territorially based, for example, at the neighbourhood level, action cannot refer however to any particular political space such as the struggle for social equality or for women's rights.

At first, actor theories aim to understand how social processes are set up to defend a specific goal, such as social development or urban revitalization. They throw light on the way organizations operate, sometimes as a consolidated group, and often in partnerships. They are also useful for the study of forms of exchange between people. Social actors accomplish what Simmel theorizes as reciprocal actions (Simmel, 1972). In this paper, several approaches or paradigms are considered in order to distinguish the participatory processes existing within the action, acting, and interactions involved in collective action mechanisms. We maintain that a certain level of ambiguity surrounds collective action and several theoretical advances may therefore be necessary to understand its many facets.

Two points should be clarified to help specify the limits of the exploration we have undertaken. First, a distinction must be drawn between individual actors, those who are embodied by a representative of an organization, and collective actors who consist of abstract entities such as a social network or a social movement. Second, our aim is not to merge theories or to draw comparisons between them. By considering several theories, we acknowledge that social actors are not one-dimensional, and can rely on strategic, communicational, reflexive and other skills. They can combine various stances related to the characteristics, functions and modes of action developed in each of the theories identified. Indeed, these actor stances (strategic, communicational, etc.) can be observed through action. An actor can therefore adopt each one at a time during the course of any given situation.

For this reason, we intend to re-examine these theories with the purpose of proposing an analytical model, which in certain regards is based on a do-it-yourself (or bricolage) method, following the current trend in research, and not on a unified comprehensive theory. Moreover, this model will be applied to a particular case of community development. Both the strategies that actors adopt and the interactions that get them to compete and collaborate are evaluated using an analytical framework divided by function (of the actors), field (action scenes), and effects (results).

2 Social actors and community development

Social actor theories present a very wide perspective for understanding the processes related directly to community development. The main hypothesis behind these theories is that social actors try to leave their mark on the social or political system within a given territory, notably by promoting the ideals of justice, development or democracy. Here, an actor's contribution is not limited to interventions in municipal or metropolitan level policy debates. It is rooted in everyday life and scenes of interactions taking place at the micro level. At the territorial scale, the actor can take the shape of a collective, such as an alliance of individuals and organizations or a network, with the aim of fostering a project for social change. In short, each actor can adopt several stances, which means that they act in several types of situations. Our goal is to combine these various perspectives into an analytical framework aimed at providing insight into the situations that arise in community development by drawing on the different stances adopted by actors, which we identify as strategic, theatrical, actor-network, communicational, historical and reflexive (Table 1). Actors can engage in community development processes and are associated to some form of action: negotiate, bargain, communicate, oppose, hold dialogues, make alliances, etc. Power struggles and role negotiations occur in particular places and at various scales of community life in order to respond to urban renewal processes, or when micro-level controversies ignite. In these sit-

uations, an actor takes a defensive stand to protect the quality of surroundings, contribute to neighbourhood development, improve access to public services and amenities, or to engage and influence decisions. Geography lies at the heart of the notion of social actor. In fact, social actors are often represented as territorial actors.

The term actor, to be sure, remains vague. Despite being the focus of analysis, it is seldom clearly defined though it provides the impulse to action, the basis for processes and the driving force of change. The origin of the use of the term actor in this context comes certainly from Parsons and his sociology of action (1968), which theoretically grounds what is known today as collective action. Already in 1937, Parsons views collective action as interventions aimed at development or social change, i.e. as an association of individuals interacting with each other in a given situation to advance a goal or purpose. Actors pursue actions based on values, interests, the material conditions in which they find themselves and the social norms and values that derive from the social organization itself, and in doing so must face dynamic social relations (Parsons, 1968). These forms of theorization have undergone revisions, most notably with the addition of the organizational theory that has broadened the way in which the role of the actor is conceptually framed.

From this standpoint, therefore, we can agree on the following proposal: actions taken by a group or by individuals in a given situation to influence group-based processes or to demand that changes be made regarding community life are the major accomplishments of social actors. These groups define reality in a particular way, which in this case encompasses the neighbourhood, and which causes a kind of identity to come into existence (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Individuals, groups or organizations involved in collective action can be described as officers, activists, militants and even partners. More recently, the term actor has expanded in studies concerned with decision-making and power relations in organizations. In their famous organizational theory, Crozier and Friedberg (1980) define collective action as a game between actors who seek, in a context of uncertainty, to enjoy a degree of freedom with which to defend a cause. These authors place collective action within organizations, specifically in the power relations formed around commonly experienced problems that require strategy and cooperative input from everyone. It is argued that the "*results of collective action are the opposite of what individual actors wished. It is never merely because of the properties of the problem, it is always also the result of the human structuration of the field of action*" (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980:4). Therefore, actors are primarily members of an organization facing other actors and subjected to power relations seeking to intervene in the hope of finding a shared solution to a given problem. That being said, "*everybody is an actor as soon as he (or she) acts in a field of action, that is, contributes by this behaviour to the historical structuring of this field of action*" (Crozier and Friedberg, 1995:75).

Table 1. Actor categories, practices and community scenes.

Actor Categories	Practices	Community scenes
Strategic Actor	Power relations formed by organizations	Social and community development planning
Theatrical Actor	Patterns of exchange in daily life	Direct meetings occurring during the process
Network Actor	Networks, dialogical and hybrid forums	Dealing with conflicts in public consultations and local dialogical forums
Communicational Actor	Deliberation on land-use planning issues and their media coverage	Practices of participatory democracy and building a democratic consensus
Historical Actor	New social movements focused on the urban environment	Civil society promoting societal change
Reflexive Actor	Assessment of practices and results of actions	Committees responsible for giving a critical account of the situations

Whether on a societal or organizational scale, actors are characterized by their capacity or the role they play in a system. Becoming integrated into collective actions that involve shared goals and forms of cooperation that go beyond the individual level, actors must continuously negotiate and bargain in order to reach agreements and compromises. However, actors are not limited to this strategic role of defending specific interests. According to Touraine, the actor must be considered simultaneously “*as an agent of transformation of his environment and of his own situation*” (Touraine, 2000:900). The actor is thus an autonomous subject (an individual, an agent, etc.) and a constellation of active forces (networks, alliances, coalitions, movements) engaged in a collective action.

The term actor is also used to portray close-range interactions occurring in the scenes of everyday life. The theatrical metaphor, which Goffman helped popularized, conceives of actors differently. To be considered as such, one must be part of a group “*whose members are supposed to be together*” (Goffman, 1959:34). As at the theatre, actions unfold in scenes where the actor communicates and interacts with others (Goffman, 1959, 1967). These scenes progress in real places where actions are grounded, such as a public space, a park or a dance hall (Goffman, 1974). Goffman claims that places are in fact scenes where grounded relationships are established. He considers that the environment, through its set rules and shared codes, has an influence on the course of the action (Goffman, 1974). At varying degrees and depending on the situation, such ritualized scenes shape social interactions and allow individual actors to assert an identity (*ibid.*). Those actors situated in the scenes of everyday life are, in a way, united in action while practicing

a ritual whose rules are more or less accepted and through which exchanges are accomplished (sharing ordinary things, ideas, values, standards, representations) that can lead to a change in the situation (Goffman, 1974). It follows that community development can be understood as a space of interaction where actors perform on two scales: the organization and the scenes of everyday life. Subtle direct or small group interactions are a preferred form of symbolic exchange, and thus through behaviour and speech, special meanings given to the community are passed on.

This particular action addresses community life and is implemented in various scenes at the local level, where issues of urban planning, social development or poverty reduction are debated. A parallel can be drawn between the strategic actor and the actor engaged in community development and indeed involved in networks and organizations that discuss conflict situations. This view is akin to the actor-network theory, which posits that all elements in a given situation are equally relevant (Callon, 1986). The network is constructed in response to controversies arising in debates on land-use planning and the urban environment. Actors face the challenge of having to interact with each other to reach common solutions that contribute to the common good. In the actor-network theory, actors form themselves into communities, such as the fishers, scientists and scallops in Michel Callon’s famous paper (1986). Non-human actors are equally important in defining the issues surrounding the controversy. Callon employs a multi-step process: problem-identification, which links the issues raised by the various actors; the interests-at-stake (finding the common interest); the enrolment (casting of roles for each actor); and mobilization (broadcasting the issue and the possible solutions to the entire society) (Callon,

1986). The actor-network forms into a group intended to address a controversy, which brings together heterogeneous actors committed to furthering a cause (Latour, 2005). Facing a technically complex situation, whether the focus of the debate is on locating a nuclear facility or a transport infrastructure, the group comprises both professional and lay experts. The citizen appears as a central figure in the situation and is called upon to respond through skills and knowledge. Under conditions of environmental uncertainty, the actor-network enters the debate using skills and knowledge with the hope of finding a common interest. These discussion and problem-identification processes are described as hybrid forums. This exploration phase facilitates the shaping of an intense public debate, is open to differing opinions and can lead to well-founded solutions (Callon et al., 2009). Another point should be made regarding non-human actors, namely that they form an integral part of what is commonly known as scientific uncertainty. Without going further into this theoretical controversy, all debates that invoke non-human agency (animals, rock formations, etc.) have great difficulty in understanding how the “facts of nature” shape the social context.

This search for a social consensus by actors with various backgrounds and interests is reminiscent of the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984, 1987). The actor advocates for standards and values in the hope of enhancing adherence. The search occurs on a society-wide scale amid the public debates that are comprised within it. Habermas conceives these venues for deliberation and media coverage as the public sphere. The problems of the experienced world are broadcasted in the social and political systems (Habermas, 1991). The actor engaged in the public sphere can be defined as a communicating and deliberating subject seeking the common good and defending the public interest. This function is to foster discussions and work towards the emergence of a social consensus. Furthermore, proponents of communicative planning theories have applied this function of deliberating by subscribing to the idea of an open debate and participation by all without the distorting hierarchical power relations that irreversibly hinder the search for shared solutions (Healey, 1997). For many authors, the equality of all who partake in debates could not be assumed or indeed be possible (Fraser, 1992; Flyvbjerg, 1998). Based on the criticism made of the communicative turn in planning, it is argued that actors assert values, interests and visions that are brought into play in a given context, which depend on the social conditions and economic and political structures surrounding the process of deliberation (Fainstein, 2005). It is also argued that even in contexts where access to debates contrasts widely since not everyone is endowed with the same communication skills and has equal access to decision-making, the participatory process generates interactions and leads to reframing issues and projects. For other authors, interactions occurring between unequal actors through debates on social and community development give rise to conflict situations and help towards finding potential solu-

tions. This does not rule out the possibility that actors with fewer resources and limited access to power can be forced to agree to an unsuitable and imposed solution or even be excluded from the solution.

The very idea of being involved in a conflict and in networks raises the question of status. The actor may be a protestor seeking to amend a decision bounded in time and space and which affects him or her directly. Involvement can also mean struggling for social change. In the latter case, the actor can embody what Alain Touraine (1978) refers to as a new social movement. Labour or national liberation movements are no longer the bearers of change. Alternative lifestyle movements and those advocating for environmental quality have replaced them. New social movements differ from the former ones in that they alter the relationship existing between individuals and their immediate surroundings, following the example of feminist or ecological critique. They enter into the public sphere by seeking to claim their own identity and greater participation in democratic life. On urban issues, new social movements embody what Touraine calls the utopian community, a project in which personal identity and community belonging are merged. Their existence is sparked by local conflicts and inspires engagement in protest activities directed towards “issues of privacy” related to ecological and cultural matters (Touraine, 2000). Collective mobilization requires continued monitoring of the intentional meaning of the action, what Giddens calls the “reflexive monitoring of action” (Giddens, 1990). Examining the way social actors coordinate their actions is based on rationalizations that correspond, in Giddens’ view, to an assessment of contexts, needs, constraints, and capacity to act. From this perspective, actors are brought to analyze the results of the actions undertaken. Such a reflexive actor exists in the scenes of critical debate in which comprehensive reviews are conducted and possible adjustments considered.

By drawing on existing theories or paradigms, often united only by the term actor, and developed by opposite or unrelated schools of thought, we aim to develop a classification of the various actor categories to provide a deeper understanding of all facets of local action systems. We also aim to take into account both the actors operating within major organizations of social and political life, including local and public institutions, and those operating in the interstices of power in such community-based networks. Actors are thus examined at all scales and in all situations or possible organizational structures, including those found in barely institutionalized organizations, i.e. the grassroots. Besides, this perspective includes individual, autonomous actors operating in an informal way. These actor categories are conspicuous in decision-making mechanisms (the planning process, public policy coordination, cost sharing, etc.). They intervene in these political arrangements to influence decisions, by negotiating and bargaining, while seeking to establish their position in power relations shaped by the impediments and capabilities of each. The three notions of network, coalition, and social movement

Table 2. Bricolage with the functions of actors and social processes.

Functions	Action settings	Effects of processes	Data and documents
Plan, resolve issues, coordinated decision-making	The community or neighbourhood organizations and networks	Actions implemented, decisions and new policies taken	Summary reports of the public exchanges on the action plan and decision-making
Hold dialogues and get involved	The scenes of interaction between participants, the insiders and the outsiders	Passing on values and sharing of collective identities	Identity discourses and narratives on matters of interest and significance
Suggest a change and join the rest of the community	The public and media spheres	Broadcasting the project for social change	Content of exchanges in the media
Rationalize and exert control over the action	The committees in charge of coordination	Redrafting the action program	Critical discourse on actions and on effects developed in the new plan

comply in certain respects to provide the actor with an unprecedented place in the construction of scenes of community deliberation, even if they cannot be fully integrated or even defined along similar epistemological lines and made to oppose each other.

The purpose of considering different approaches was to relate the actor categories both to practices of deliberation and to scenes where policy debates on the future of the community occur. These practices of collective action point to the strategic aspects of negotiation and to a reflexive assessment undertaken by the group on the conditions of action. Given that practices unfolding on numerous scenes emerge from the six categories of actors, the course of a process like collaborative planning can be investigated.

3 Bricolage with the actor categories and community development

Today, bricolage is a recognized methodological concept. Lévi-Strauss employed it to show the ethnologist the importance of using all available materials, which vary according to content and nature and are drawn chiefly from the literature, observations or discourses recorded during interviews. The work involves processing and arranging the materials to produce, for example, categories of practices or narratives (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). In addition to facilitating the combination of various materials, bricolage provides an intuitive understanding to determine possible associations and make comparisons. For the actor theories, the commonalities and overlaps across the six categories described briefly in Table 1 are essential, such as the fact that different theories ascribe the same functions to actors. A conceptual synthesis of the actors' functions is proposed that does not consider the differences between the various schools of thought. By identifying existing community development processes in terms of

the functions, we can speculate on their possible effects (Table 2). It follows that urban conflicts yield direct exchanges and give rise to committees or to relatively public places of exchange.

For social actors, the purpose of joining a group is to extend their influence, contact other networks and engage in the public sphere (through public opinion, media, Internet). Debates can then be pursued through public consultation mechanisms. At the neighbourhood level, actors can select a multitude of representational forms. They adopt a strategic approach when working in planning and decision-making organizations. In the planning and local dialogue scenes, they use negotiation and bargaining to address the issues of community development. Specifically, the preferred scene is the voluntary sector as well as the many coalitions that emerge haphazardly from the various situations. If invited to enter partnerships, often with public institution officials, grassroots actors' degree of freedom is reduced but their ability to influence decisions is increased. In each situation, the key is to maintain direct relationships between institutionalized actors (the insiders) and with individuals with little or no institutional connections (the outsiders). They jointly consider their interests and values. The efficiency of this symbolic exchange depends on the shared vision of community life and the sense of belonging it conveys. Whether mired by conflict or strengthened by mutual collaboration, each actor must reconstruct the narrative order of interventions in terms of their effects and results. Although scenes of collective action can stimulate reflexivity, the fact remains that reverting to a small committee is the favoured course of action for actors, especially to think critically about issues. At this level, redrafting the original plan and drastically redesigning its content become feasible.

This bricolage approach is based on the work by the authors mentioned in Table 1 (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980;

Goffman, 1959; Callon et al., 2009; Habermas, 1991; Touraine, 1981; and Giddens, 1990). It serves as a mechanism to monitor issues under negotiation over time (conflict resolution, urban planning, social and community development). It combines the various stances adopted by actors, scenes, processes and their effects as well as the reflexive narratives generated by the actions. We now apply this observation and analytical tool to a particular situation: the strategic planning process in the Villeray district. This situation is defined by the dynamics of the relationships that have brought the actors together throughout the process. The phases of the action coincide with the specific stances adopted by social actors (Table 1) and with functions (Table 2). Each actor involved in a situation cannot be relegated to just one of these stances. Therefore, an individual, a representative of an association or an institution were able to adopt, while the situation was unfolding, a strategic outlook, build a network to amplify interactions, deliberate and interact to defend a particular point of view, examine the impacts of an action, or even ponder on ways to bring about a significant social change. Either simultaneously or successively, actors can make adjustments to the way in which they intervene on different scenes. By positioning themselves at the neighbourhood level and focusing on its current and future needs, the scope of actors becomes collective and territorial. The analytical tool developed here (Tables 1 and 2) examines closely in a piecemeal fashion (the action phases) the situation in the Villeray district called the Forum Social (FS), according to its scenes (places, committees, public forums, etc.) and the stances adopted by actors.

To this end, we followed the local Villeray action plan development process by observing various events taking place at different times: committee meetings, assemblies to which the public is invited to discuss neighbourhood issues and proposals for action, the debates involving the network of actors, and social activities such as the launch of the action plan. We collected and analysed a series of documents including minutes of meetings and focus groups, materials published in the neighbourhood print media or online, and finally, the action plan in its various forms. Finally, we pieced together the FS discourse from the 24 interviews conducted among those who were involved in its organization (the coordinator, the members of the various committees, spokespersons of sectoral networks invited to participate, and representatives of public institutions (regarded as partners) who attended the event. Drawing on Mucchielli's (2004) approach to contextualize the situation, data was processed by coding categories according to issues, actions carried out, and induced impacts. Moreover, at each stage of the FS, we carefully recorded the composition of actors who attended, the interactions that occurred, and the means of dissemination to report on the event.

4 The Villeray Forum Social: an urban planning and community development effort

The Villeray district, north of the City of Montréal (Québec, Canada), is faced with many social problems related to poverty, poor housing and environmental stresses such as heavy motor vehicle traffic. However, it has a very dense network of community groups that promote social rights, provide care services, and specialize in planning and intervention. Several organizations form active partnerships with public institutions such as municipal departments or the Government of Québec's Health and Social Services Centers. These organizations join what is known as a "Table de concertation" (an inter-sectoral discussion forum) where social and urban issues are addressed, and which allow various sectors of intervention (including youth, seniors, food security, housing, and urban planning) to join into one scene. These working groups receive a grant from the *Initiative montréalaise de soutien au développement social local* (tri-partite funding scheme sponsored by the City of Montréal, the Department of Public Health of Montréal and the United Way). Their mandate is to draw up action plans and to intervene in debates around community development, social development and urban planning and land-use management (Sénécal et al., 2008). Cash-strapped, it is in effect limited to consultation and the start-up of projects completed by others.

The "Table de concertation" is a collective of community and public actors. Participating members must agree to follow the two principles of autonomy and sharing. Members can equally work with other authorities or convene to debate and make decisions by joining a "Table sectorielle" (a sectoral discussion forum). For example, actors concerned by housing issues, or the city council (the authority for the borough's elected officials to meet and deliberate) can constitute such forums. Some actors engage in local battles in defiance of public sector partners, by challenging, for instance, the rise in public service user fees. They actively take part in local street parties, social housing protests, or public consultations held on current affairs. In addition, they make their presence felt on the very local level scenes, such as a primary school board where they discuss traffic safety around the school building.

Likewise, actors can get involved in national debates on the struggle against poverty or in metropolitan level debates held on the transportation plan. To voice their concerns, most must rely on the media. At all scales and on all scenes, each actor tries to find the most fitting stance. Despite their differences, what brings actors together is the pooling of resources and the capacity for action that is provided by the Table de concertation. In many respects, the principle of sharing offers an explanation regarding the motivations of autonomous actors to invest in partnerships and join coalitions, even though such bodies of actors are composed of community groups and government representatives. Nothing prevents the same actors who join forces in one case to oppose each other in

another. Each actor can be present on several scenes at a time and even adopt various stances. One can alternate between strategic, communicational, theatrical, and other stances. Finally, among the factors of adherence towards the Table de concertation is the shared sense of neighbourhood belonging with the community's territory.

4.1 Organization of the Forum Social

In the fall of 2006, the *Table du quartier Villeray* (a neighbourhood issue table) began working on an action plan. The FS process sought to mobilize the entire independent community movement and local authorities and bodies. This process of creating a district-wide partnership went through several phases: information gathering, consulting and discussing, organizing a public assembly meeting, drafting the plan, holding reflection and review sessions with the committee and the public at large.

The community sector spearheaded the FS, but appointed Health and Social Services Centre professionals and borough officials were also directly involved. Many headed these committees to oversee the process. The approach was originally intended to cover the canonical themes of social development (poverty reduction, government support, access to public services and facilities). Although limited in scope, there was a clear intention right from the start that the FS approach should be participatory and democratic.

4.2 The action plan's progress

In 2007, FS activities were held for residents and representatives of various community-based neighbourhood networks (see 2007 in Table 3). The 2007 *Regroupement pour le Développement de Villeray* (RDV) report defined how citizens could participate. Guided tours were organized for neighbourhood residents and for targeted groups such as food security advocates or senior citizen volunteers. Once the tours were completed, discussion groups were formed to address neighbourhood issues. The dialogical stance of the emerging actor-network was thus reinforced.

At the onset, citizen participation was referred to as a way to ensure and support the involvement of community groups and public institutions to contribute to a shared vision (RDV, 2007). Participation by outsiders (citizens and barely institutionalized actors) therefore became more widespread. From the launch of the FS (March 2007) to the organization of the public forum (June 2007), the process brought together a wide range of actors who helped broaden the range of concerns. The debate was expanded to include several other neighbourhood scenes. Informal meetings were held to ensure that uncooperative actors would take part in a process where institutional partners played a leading role. Ordinary citizens appealed to organizers to consider including in the issues file personal concerns such as quality of the urban environment or barriers to access public health services. Fur-

thermore, the documents published at the launch of the FS, which were broadcasted in the local media, found a wide-reaching support. The debate was also expanded to the new public sphere of Internet. These interactionist and communicational stances disrupted the agenda and influenced the types of issues included in the file handed to participants at the June public forum (Forum Social de Villeray, 2007a). Typical questions of social development were raised, while others supplemented them as a result of their involvement in the process. With outsiders, often just ordinary residents, new issues emerged on the agenda, including the quality of the built environment, green design, and pedestrian safety – particularly around schools (Forum Social de Villeray, 2007b, 2008a).

Shortly after its launch (fall 2008, in Table 3), the group in charge of the FS presented fifty proposals for action, addressing every issue ranging from the more traditional community demands (access to social housing, increased social assistance, free transit services, etc.) to resident demands (green design, pedestrian and school children safety, bicycle paths, a community-run health clinic). Following the FS, the proposals for action at the regional and national levels, which often sparked strong political demands (higher minimum wage and social assistance, reduced transit fares, increased funding and construction of social housing, etc.) were reproduced and published in a manifesto broadcasted in the media (Forum Social de Villeray, 2008a). In the end, however, it was banned from distribution because the public agency partners refused to endorse it. Five priority action areas were targeted, including the development of active transportation and traffic calming near schools (Forum Social de Villeray, 2008b).

The public activities held during the 2007 FS made possible citizen participation on a large scale and the expansion of community-based and institutional actor networks. A communicative turn marked this period: the debate was wholly public and went far beyond the groups serving at the Table de quartier (neighbourhood round table). This may have reflected a communicational actor situation, but it also revealed a social change initiative, a kind of community utopia that the 2008 fall manifesto exemplified. This rising social movement remained at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, stemming from the FS was a collective project promoting well-being, social justice and the quality of the urban environment. Communicational actor, social movement, collective actor – whichever term is given – the FS actors were able to rise above their interests and strategic behaviours. Subsequently, select committees were in place to conduct a reflexive assessment of the actions undertaken by the FS. At this stage, the process was carried out within a particular sector and network. For example, the organization focusing on housing issues was excluded from the FS activities.

The process is depicted in chronological order according to events and publications in Table 3. Three basic points stand out. First, the common approach to social development based on assisting the poor is pursued, but an accompanying

Table 3. The scenes of the Villeray Forum Social process (sources: Conseil Communautaire Solidarité Villeray, 2008; Forum Social de Villeray, 2007a, b, c, 2008; Regroupement pour le développement de Villeray, 2008).

Dates	Events	Approaches followed and categories of actors
2006–2007	Record of meeting activities	<u>Preferred approach:</u> community development and citizen participation <u>Actors in attendance:</u> community organization leaders and public institution officials
March 2007	The Villeray FS <i>C'est chez nous</i> progress report	<u>Orientations:</u> themes focus on participation, housing, income, safety, adult training and education, health, leisure and culture <u>Actors in attendance:</u> community organization leaders and public institution officials
March–April 2007	Neighbourhood walks and Focus Groups	<u>Orientations:</u> initial themes on social development are supplemented by environmental themes on transit and active transport, green design and a bike path. <u>Other actors in attendance:</u> citizens and local stakeholders.
May 2007	The public Forum's participant handbook	<u>Orientations:</u> initial themes on social and environmental development are supplemented by social rights and the sense of pride of being from Villeray. <u>Actors in attendance:</u> event coordinated by neighbourhood citizens, community organizations and public institutions.
June 2007	Proceedings of the Forum Social process 2006–2007	Themes identified in the March 2007 progress report are addressed and supplemented by those addressing quality of life (sanitary housing conditions, public space cleanliness), local employment, access to shops, and environmental concerns (greening, active transportation, walkability, safety around schools, bike paths, composting), improved access to leisure and cultural activities.
November 2008	Launch of the action plan	The action plan is released and includes the 50 proposals defined in the March 2007 report and the proceedings of the May 2007 public forum, along with those focused on the urban environment and approved by the public assembly. A number of proposals are included in a manifesto. <u>Actors in attendance:</u> community and institutional actors form alliances or coalitions to commit to priority projects.
Spring 2009–Spring 2011	The Quartier 21 project	<i>Quartier 21</i> presents plans for securing areas around local schools, which are implemented by the borough. <u>Actors in attendance:</u> a coalition of community associations and public institutions

environmental approach brings a shared focus on green development and active transportation. Second, the outsiders (the barely institutionalized residents and groups) have advanced the themes being discussed in the public sphere in Montréal for several years, namely increasing participatory democracy at the neighbourhood level, preserving high quality living environments, and advocating against car-friendly urban development projects. Thirdly, priority projects defined by the FS are to be carried out by combining the forces of civil society organizations and public institutions. Among the five priority projects, two are worth mentioning. The community-run health clinic will be implemented through a partnership between qualified community organization actors and officials from the Health and Social Services Centre. In the other case, two organizations specializing in the urban environment will lead, in the wake of the FS, a flagship project on traffic calming near schools. A city grant (programme Quartier 21) will enable them to develop traffic calming plans for each school located in the borough.

In the course of this final stage of the FS (2009–2011, in Table 3), interactions between the neighbourhood ac-

tors were more personalized, and small expert committees were formed, bringing together institutions and specialized groups. The FS was removed from the public sphere. The original purpose of public meetings was to provide information rather than for consultation. Nearer to being hybrid forums than communicative turn planning practices, the emphasis was placed on interactionist and dialogical stances. This could entail that the other stances defined in the model were no longer considered. On the contrary, the Table de quartier intends to get another planning process underway, leading to a new action plan in 2012.

5 Discussion and final remarks

Using the analytical framework for the categories (or types) of social actors, we have explained how the functions served by different actors on the scenes or fields of action produced observable effects. The various stances adopted by actors were identified at one point or another during the Villeray Forum Social (FS). Strategic relations undoubtedly determined the way the FS was organized and the initial selection of

topic areas. However, face-to-face interactions, open debates with the public, and the shaping of communicational space all brought profound change to the action plan. The effect of network-based practices of interaction, communication and dialogue was remarkable.

A series of policy reports, prepared during the FS process, facilitated the coordination of initiatives and broadened the scope of actions. On the one hand, community actors sought to widen their networks and expand their planning capacity. They conducted outreach activities across all community sectors in Villeray. Whether by means of committees or public meetings, the partnership approach between community organizations and public institutions helped foster a consensus regarding the action plan. On the other hand, the increased network extended to outsiders: the barely institutionalized actors and citizen residents placed environmental and urban design issues at the heart of the process. As a result, the FS was able to establish a collective project accepted by all of the community actors. This is the second significant effect of the process.

Action was finally taken on active transportation and traffic calming near schools. In this case, a larger coalition was formed, composed of environmental groups promoting active transportation and opposing the domination of the car. The Quartier 21 project was conceived as an actor-network looking for ways to calm traffic and to improve the walking and cycling conditions in the city. This project, which is to some extent a type of hybrid forum arranged like a laboratory bringing together professional and lay experts, led to the development of traffic calming plans for all neighbourhood schools. This outcome clearly points to the fact that the effects of the FS process were not merely procedural.

In the wake of the FS, three conclusions can be further drawn: the failure to distribute the manifesto shows the limits of partnership with professionals and officials in public institutions. Active transportation and traffic calming issues now occupy the public media sphere at the metropolitan level. Does this represent a new social movement serving as a vehicle for change of the material living conditions, the dawning of a new way of urban life? It is too early to tell, but it may be seen as a harbinger of a utopian community social movement applied to the city. Finally, the practices of democratic citizenship appear to be carried forward to the neighbourhood planning process, which began in 2012.

On a personal interaction level, in committee or in informal discussions, adjustments were repeatedly made to the process. Reflexivity was also an important part of the FS process. In short, participants in the FS reproduced, alternatively, the various actor categories defined in our analytical framework. They have thus demonstrated an ability to adapt to different contexts and, often with limited resources, to implement significant actions. Specific to each context, actors embody one aspect or another of the various stances identified in the course of our work.

What conclusions can be drawn from what has been described here? First, the actor is not limited only to one of the categories (or types) defined in the model. An actor embodies a number of types, depending on the scene of collective action. As situations evolve, various individuals, groups, or networks enter into these different scenes of collective action of urban planning or land-use management. Second, the bricolage approach used to define this model is not intended to construct a meta-theory. Rather, the identification of particular categories of actors provides a mechanism for observing and analyzing the situations in which actors (individual or collective) intervene, act, interact, communicate, or defend their project or program. The model breaks down the processes taking place on a given territory according to the modes of action, selected scenes, roles, and functions. The social geography of the territory, as illustrated by the Villeray case, is driven by actors engaged on ever-evolving scenes. Drawing together within such planning, mobilization, and territorial development processes every moment of collective action, a new category is created: the multi-type and multi-scene actor performing across different sites and situations in order to address issues and problems with the intention of contributing towards the common good for the entire community.

Acknowledgements. The author would like to thank the handling editor, Chris Philo, and reviewers for their helpful and judicious comments. He gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Edited by: C. Philo

References

- Berger, P. and Luckman, T.: *The Social Construction of Reality*, Garden City N.Y., Doubleday, 1966.
- Callon, M.: Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of Saint-Brieuc Bay, in: *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by: Law, J., London, Routledge, 196–223, 1986.
- Callon, M., Lascoumes, P., and Barthe, Y.: *Acting in An Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy*, Cambridge, MA, and London, UK, MIT Press, 2009 (first published 2001).
- Conseil Communautaire Solidarité Villeray: *Plan d'action 2007–2008*, 2008.
- Crozier, M. and Friedberg, E.: *Actors and Systems: The Politics of Collective Action*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1980 (first published 1977).
- Crozier, M. and Friedberg, E.: *Organizations and collective action*, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 13, 71–92, 1995.
- Fainstein, S.: *Planning Theory and the City*, *J. Plan. Educ. and Res.*, 25, 121–130, 2005.
- Flyvbjerg, B.: *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Forum Social de Villeray: *Cahier de participation*, 12 May 2007a.

- Forum Social de Villeray: Actes de la démarche de forum social 2006–2007, 11 June 2007b.
- Forum Social de Villeray: Compte-rendu des groupes de discussions, 2007c.
- Forum Social de Villeray: Lancement du plan d'action, 12 November 2008a.
- Forum Social de Villeray: La démarche participative, les pistes d'action et les mécanismes de suivi, 2008b.
- Fraser, N.: Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy, in: Habermas and the Public Sphere, edited by: Calhoun, C., Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 109–142, 1992.
- Giddens, A.: *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press in association with Oxford, Blackwell and Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Goffman, E.: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York, Anchor Books, 1959.
- Goffman, E.: *Interaction Ritual*, New York, Anchor Books, 1967.
- Goffman, E.: *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, London, Harper and Row, 1974.
- Habermas, J.: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Thomas Burger, Cambridge MA, The MIT Press, 1991 (first published 1962).
- Habermas, J.: *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society, Boston MA, Beacon Press, 1984.
- Habermas, J.: *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, System and Lifeworld: A Critique of Functionalist Reason, Boston MA, Beacon Press, 1987.
- Healey, P.: *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1997.
- Latour, B.: *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Lévi-Strauss, C.: *The Science of the Concrete*, in: *The Savage of Mind*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1–22, 1966 (first published 1962).
- Mucchielli, A.: *Méthode d'analyse par la contextualisation situationnelle panoramique*, in: *Dictionnaire des méthodes qualitatives en sciences humaines*, edited by: Mucchielli, A., Paris, Armand Colin, 47–52, 2004.
- Parsons, T.: *The Structure of Social Action*, New York, The Free Press, 1968 (first published 1937).
- Regroupement pour le développement de Villeray (RDV): *Villeray c'est chez nous*, Progress report, 2007.
- Regroupement pour le développement de Villeray (RDV): *Plan d'action issu du Forum social de Villeray*, 2008.
- Sénécal, G., Cloutier, G., and Herjean, P.: *Le quartier comme espace transactionnel, l'expérience des Tables de concertation de quartier à Montréal [The district as a transactional space: the experience of the Montréal neighbourhood-level Dialogue Tables]*, *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec*, 52, 191–214, 2008.
- Simmel, G.: *On the Philosophy of the Actor [Zur Philosophie des Schauspielers]*, in: *La parure et autres essais*, Paris, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 139–147, 1998, (first published 1908).
- Simmel, G.: *On Individuality and Social Forms*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Touraine, A.: *The voice and the eye: An analysis of social movements*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981 (first published 1978).
- Touraine, A.: *A Method for Studying Social Actors*, *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 6, 900–918, 2000.