

Interactive comment on “Community development and social actor theories: a case study in Montréal (Canada)” by G. Sénécal

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Received and published: 18 May 2012

A critical point raised calls into question the relation I establish between the theoretical and empirical sections. Referee 1 writes “The fundamental problem with the paper is the disconnect between the theoretical discussion and the case study”. I am aware that improvements can be made in linking the two parts together. I intend to add for each of the phases of the Social Forum shown in Table 3 a comment that draws parallels between the context, the types of actors present, and the adopted postures. In doing so, I will show that the evolution of the Forum Social (FS), which should perhaps be better documented, testifies that actors modify the ways in which they intervene and interact according to the scene on which they act and the resulting posture. Moreover, it is necessary to show that the situated actors (individuals and organizations), during

the course of the FS process, have taken the appearance of a collective actor. In a way, they have constructed a common discourse and project. By shedding more light on the progress and the sequence of the situations, and by drawing on the notion of posture, I intend to show that the FS actors have constructed actions and achieved results. Table 2 provides some examples. During the preliminary phases, actors adopt a strategic posture of negotiation in order to influence the topic being addressed in the plan under development. The organizers of the Social Forum try to extend the network of participating actors, by informal agreements, and broadcast the initial documents across a public communication space (such as a local community newspaper). Their goal is therefore to reach out to the neighbourhood's residents (by conducting local visits and organizing focus groups), then convene in a subcommittee (that are confined spaces of deliberation) to examine the issues once more that will be addressed at the public forum. Thus is created a space of deliberation. Its aim is to facilitate a process of discursive consensus-building that centres largely on the urban and the living environments. Reconvening in a feedback committee, once the action plan is made public, offers an opportunity for reflexivity, which places on the agenda the proposed social claims and the defence of rights that foreshadow a project for social change (the manifesto). Actions stemming from the FS take the form of concrete proposals that are the focus of debate in local media, notably on the urban environment on the one hand, and on a utopian urban project whose goals are to improve accessibility to services, life conditions and social justice, on the other hand. The process of setting in motion priority actions takes the form of an experience in technical democracy. In the end, the FS became a social and community development experience, which took place on several scenes (committee, networks, media, public forum, etc.) and required that participants have multiple skills. Using the proposed model, the dynamics of the FS were closely followed, and assessments of both procedural and substantive effects were carried-out. The third point I intend to clarify is the methodological approach that I pursued. Throughout the process, discourses were compiled (which I collected from documents, meeting minutes, reports, statements on deliberations) that were produced

on the different scenes of the FS (negotiation committee, networked discussions, action feedback committee, focus groups, public forum, coverage in the media, action plans). I then proceeded in encoding them following a standard approach by topic category. I thus was able to follow the evolution of the contents of the action plan step by step.

Interactive comment on Soc. Geogr. Discuss., 8, 61, 2012.

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