

# "Why that not now": participants' orientations towards several organizational layers in social interaction

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Dans la perspective de l'analyse conversationnelle, cet article offre une analyse détaillée d'une pratique consistant à mettre en cause le positionnement séquentiel d'une action « maintenant » et à la reporter à un autre moment. En cela l'article discute d'un des principes fondamentaux de l'analyse séquentielle, qui est l'orientation des participants vers la question "why that now?" (Schegloff & Sacks 1973) lors de leur interprétation de toute action au sein du déroulement de l'interaction sociale. En particulier, l'article s'intéresse à la manière dont les participants traitent une action à la fois dans son positionnement séquentiel "ici et maintenant" et en tant que pouvant être repositionnée "plus tard", voire lors d'une interaction future. Ce faisant, l'analyse montre comment les participants s'orientent à la fois vers le présent et vers l'historicité de leurs interactions, en tenant compte de différents niveaux d'organisation et de leurs temporalités à la fois connectées et distinctes. L'analyse est fondée sur un corpus de réunions de politique participative au cours desquelles des citoyens sont invités à proposer des idées pour un projet d'aménagement urbain. Lors de ces réunions, le modérateur – mais aussi d'autres participants – peuvent proposer qu'une suggestion, une idée, une proposition ne soit pas traitée et discutée lorsqu'elle est formulée ("maintenant") mais à d'autres moments de la rencontre ou lors d'une rencontre ultérieure : de cette manière ils mettent en cause son positionnement séquentiel et sa légitimité, tout en reconnaissant sa pertinence possible "plus tard" au fil d'une série de rencontres ou d'un projet, s'orientant ainsi vers un agenda institutionnel plus vaste. L'article offre une analyse systématique des pratiques par lesquelles ces post-positions sont accomplies ainsi que les *accounts* qui en construisent la justification et l'intelligibilité publiques.

## **Mots-clés:**

analyse conversationnelle, multimodalité, vidéo, réunion politique, organisation de la séquence, séquentialité, *accounts*, postpositions.

## **1. Introduction**

Within Conversation Analysis, social interaction is described as temporally and sequentially organized in a step-by-step manner: participants produce and format actions by finely orienting both retrospectively towards the previous action and prospectively towards the next one. Participants organize the progressivity of their talk by orienting to the omnipresent question "why that now?" (Schegloff & Sacks 1973). This provides for the understanding of the action itself, what it is responsive to, what it projects, its specific format, whether it is on/off topic, its lexical and syntactic choices, etc. The importance of the sequential positioning of utterances and actions has prompted a specific interest within Conversation Analysis for the local relevancies characterizing a specific moment in time and within a sequence: "now". This has a particular

importance for sequence organization: for instance, a first pair part projects a normatively expected second pair part – and the latter is legitimately produced in a slot that is opened by the former (Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Schegloff 2007).

However, Conversation Analysis has also explored other organizational levels: most importantly, the overall organization of social interaction (Robinson 2012). Participants orient specifically to the moment within the entire conversation in which they are positioning their action, such as opening (Schegloff 1968) or closing (Schegloff & Sacks 1973), but also specific episodes or phases (for example, the phases through which a medical consultation is progressively achieved, Heritage & Maynard 2006). For instance, participants may recycle elements of the beginning of a telephone call when initiating its closing and they may recapitulate what has been said and agreed upon during the call, thus orienting towards the call as a whole (Schegloff 1986); they may also orient towards the transition from one topic to another, from one task to the next (Modaff 2003), or from trouble telling to less delicate matters (Jefferson 1984).

Participants may also orient to more than just the activity they are currently engaged in: they make arrangements, refer to future encounters, plan the next meeting, promise to call back, hence projecting future activities as relevant: "The use of arrangement-related items to organize a 'next' encounter provides for 'this' conversation to be one in a series" (Button 1991: 270).

Thus, in achieving an action, a participant may orient to different organizational orders, some of which are more local, some more global. These orientations can be managed together and at the same time, but one can also supersede the others. The phenomenon we focus on in this paper – in which a speaker initiates an action and another participant objects that it is not well positioned "now" and postpones it "later" – shows how "now" can be the terrain for concurrent orientations towards not only what is relevant to do "now", but also what has been done "now" that could be more relevant at another moment. Postponing an action to later moments, or even later encounters, reveals how participants orient to both local and global forms of organization.

## **2. The phenomenon: postponing an action**

Postponing an action, as revealing participants' orientations towards various organizational orders, will be studied here on the basis of a large corpus of video recorded meetings of citizens engaged in a participatory project in urban planning in a French city. Citizens are invited by the city administration to share ideas for a future park to be built on an old military site. They participate in different events and activities, including some brainstorming sessions, where they are invited to make suggestions and proposals. The data we focus on here are extracted from the first series of brainstorming sessions of various

groups, preceding a second series of sessions held two weeks later. In each meeting about 25 citizens gather together, a few officers in charge of the urban project are present but listen rather than interact with them, and a facilitator manages the session. After preparatory discussions in small groups, the serial organization of the activity consists of the facilitator selecting a citizen and opening a new sequence, the citizen making a proposal, the facilitator reformulating it for submission to the public discussion, and finally, when an agreement has been reached, writing it on a whiteboard (see Mondada 2011, 2012, 2013).

The phenomenon of interest can be observed in the first excerpt. The facilitator, Prévost, selects Géomard, who proposes shared gardens in the park. This proposal is neither accepted nor elaborated on as such: Prévost asks for further elaborations and postpones its discussion to another meeting, claiming that it is more relevant for what they will do "next time". Nonetheless, he proposes to write down what has been said. The practice through which an action is declared as not relevant "now" and is postponed to another moment is the focus of our analysis.

**(1a)** (time11 – JardPart\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_01.08.18)

```

1          $(0.8)
  geo      $raises RH--->
2  PRE     parce qu'on est là [sur des] intentions sur des: (0.4)&
           because we are now [on the] intentions about the: (0.4)&
3  ?       [>ouais ouais<]
           [>yeah yeah<]
4  PRE     &usages que vous souhaitez\##* alors $par[don j`]vous$ ai *coupé=
           &usages that you wish\          so par[don I ] cut you=
  geo      ---->$slowers hand----$
  pre      *points to geo-----*
  fiq      #fiq.1

```



```



5  GEO          [oui euh]
                    [yes ehm]
6  GEO          =on en a on en avait parlé d'ce problème\ (0.4) c'est pas
                    =we have we had talked about this problem\ (0.4) this is not
7  un point d'détail/ dans les usages/ (0.5) on avait envisagé
                    a detail/ concerning the usages/ (0.5) we had considered
8  la possibilité du jardin partagé:/
                    the possibility of a shared garden/

```

While Géomard has already raised his hand, bidding for the turn, the facilitator offers a formulation of the ongoing activity (Heritage & Watson, 1979) ("we are now on intentions" (2), concerning the future uses of the park). This formulation has a normative effect on what is to be done next. Prévost then selects Géomard (4) (Figure 1) who orients to this formulation and considers it

a constraint for the formatting of his own proposal. Géomard voices a proposal that has been discussed in his small group (6). As a preface, he claims that "this is not a detail" (6-7) and in order to exhibit the appropriatedness of his point, he recycles the category "usages" (7) – which is a rubric mentioned by Prévost (4) – and the title of a column of text written on the board. Even before it is actually uttered, Géomard's proposal is thus explicitly presented as fitting with the ongoing activity. Furthermore, by claiming that his proposal is *not* a detail, he retrospectively and prospectively orients toward a too detailed proposal as possibly problematic. At the end of his turn he proposes to have shared gardens (8). This is not immediately responded to (9), projecting trouble:

(1b) (time11 – JardPart\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_01.08.18)

- 9 (0.6)  
 10 GEO hein c' [est:] euh da:ns dans cer\*tains [xx]  
 right i [t's:] ehm i:n in certain [xx]  
*pre* \*2H circ mouv--->
- 11 ? [mm ]  
 [mm ]
- 12 PRE [d'accord\] (.)  
 [all right\] (.)
- 13 mais #quel est l'objectif derri\*ère\\* (0.2) c`\*qui m'intéresse#  
 but which is the objective behind\ (0.2) what interests me  
 ---->\*,,,,,,\* \*2H circ mouv--->  
*fig* #fig.2 *fig.3#*
- 
- 14 c'est (.) jardins partagés c'est déjà une réponse pré\*cise#  
 it's (.) shared gardens it is already a precise response  
 -->\*points fwd->  
*fig* *fig.4#*
- 15 (0.2) >c'qu'on< verra plus ta\*rd\*  
 (0.2) >what we< will see later  
 -->\*circ. gest\*
- 16 (0.3)  
 17 GEO pour la conviviali[té: pour euh les]  
 for the conviviali[ty: for ehm the ]  
 18 BLE [ça rentre ça rentre] dans l'éducatif/ aussi=  
 [it enters it enters] in the educational/ too=  
 19 PRE =voi:là d'acco\*rd oké\*# (.) gar\*#dez-le bien\$ pour la prochaine  
 =there you go all right okay (.) keep it well for the next  
 \*nods---\*stop gest\*RH open tow. GEO-->  
*fig* #fig.5 #fig.6
- 
- 20 fois/ (.) j`vais l'\*marquer quand meme\ jardins partagés (.) \*  
 time/ (.) i will mark it nevertheless\ public gardens (.)  
 ---->\*RH points to whiteboard-----\*
- 21 \*gardez-le pour\* la prochaine fois/ \*aventure/ j`\*  
 keep it for the next time/ adventure/ i  
 \*circ gest-----\* \*points to BLE\*



discussed several minutes before with Blondin (who is pointed at while he mentions it), and offers to write it down (22). Interestingly, at this point, and while continuing the rolling gesture representing the future (Figure 7), he looks at one of the officers of the public administration in charge of the coordination of the urban project (23) who sits in the margins of the room and mentions again the "spirit" of the next meeting. This gaze (cf. Mondada, forthcoming) to the officer shows an orientation towards the agenda of the next meeting as something that is not orchestrated by the facilitator alone but that obeys institutional constraints, personified by the representative of the city.

Prévost closes the sequence with two formulations of what they are doing: firstly, he repeats the initial formulation (25, cf. exc. 1a, 2); secondly, he adds another one referring to the progressivity of the activity (25), done with a stopping gesture (Figure 8). These two formulations make explicit the constraints imposed on the proposals, namely concerning their suitable, relevant, and timely character: they are expected to be on topic and to be not too specific since detailed topical developments are postponed to the next session.

This excerpt shows various aspects of the phenomenon studied here:

- the facilitator initiates a new sequence and opens a slot for the action of a participant – for a proposal;
- a citizen is selected and utters a proposal;
- the facilitator treats the citizen's action, or at least its contents, as not fully relevant "now" and postpones them, relocating them within the future course of the activity or the procedure. Postpositions can be done within different turn formats – referring to a future time, or offering accounts for why the action is not relevant now. Moreover, the postposition can be followed by a concession, consisting of writing down the idea;
- in most of the cases, the participants tacitly align with the postposition. But they may also negotiate its reasons, insist on, and resist it.

The practice of postponing refers to an alternative sequential positioning of an action. It reveals an orientation to: a) the *local sequence organization*, to the slot created here and now and identified by the participants as making possible, relevant, and legitimate some type of action – here: proposals; and b) the *global organization* of the activity or the procedure. The latter refers not merely to another possible temporal slot, but invokes a global agenda. This global agenda is not publicly announced as such, it is contingently evoked within the course of the activity, so that the accounts given for not doing an action now both refer to it and reflexively constitute it. Moreover, this global agenda does not uniquely depend on the facilitator, but also on the overall institutional context and its organizational constraints: in some cases this can

be expressed through bodily orientation by the facilitator turning to the officer, who represents the institution in the room.

The following analyses aim at showing the methodical and systematic character of this practice and its orientation to multiple local and global organizational orders. First, we describe the design of a slot for an action – here, a proposal - and the recognition of this slot by the citizen performing that projected action. Second, we explore the practice of postponing the elaboration of the action and the issues it raises – mainly related to its accountability and institutional legitimacy. Third, we show how participants either align or disalign with the postposition – with a special focus on how they resist it.

### 3. The identification/recognition of a sequential slot for an action

Postposition is a practice that can target a diversity of actions in a variety of sequential environments. In particular, the practice can treat actions that are locally categorized as misplaced by the participants – such as, in our corpus, initiating a new sequence when the previous one is not completed, self-selecting to respond to a participant disregarding what the facilitator is doing, etc. But the practice can also be mobilized for actions that are sequentially adequately placed, being produced in a sequential position where they have been projected and expected. We focus here on this latter possibility, i.e. on actions done within a slot that has been provided for that purpose – and more particularly, proposals made after the facilitator has initiated a new sequence, inviting the citizens to utter the next suggestion, and after the facilitator has selected a particular speaker, giving him the right to speak for that particular action. Thus, we focus on postpositions that do not address a problem of misplacement, but that do something else.

In some cases, the facilitator initiates a new sequence by just selecting the next speaker, without specifically constraining the type of projected action:

#### (2) (time8c – SportDouves\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_01.01.22)

```

1 PRE      y a c'monsieur d'abord
           there is this sir first
2 BLE      madame navarro tout à l'heure nous a bien rappelé qu'il
           missis navarro a moment ago has reminded us that there
3          y avait trois zo:nes/ l'esplanade/ le fort/ (.) et les douves/
           were three zo:nes/ the esplanade/ the fort/ (.) and the moats/
4 PRE      mh
5 BLE      donc\
           so\
6 GIL      °ah ben oui ça [x°]
           °oh well yes that [x]°
7 BLE      [dé]jà/ on sait que: on peut mettre le la
           [ju]st/ we know that we can locate the the
8          partie sport dans les douves\
           sports area in the moats\

```

After being selected, Bélingard refers to a previous contribution by the project's manager, Mrs Navarro, in which she depicted three areas in the park.

Bélingard suggests that one of these, the moats, can be converted into a sports area.

In other cases, the facilitator may be more explicit:

**(3)** (time16 – Decouverte\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_1.05.43)

1 PER est-ce qu'il y avait d'autres choses/ (.) madame  
were there other things/ (.) madam

Here, the expected action is not specified, but is located in a series that is progressively expanded: "other things" are indexically understandable as concerning an action that is coherently added to the previous one, that of making proposals.

In the following excerpt, the design of the slot is explicitly formulated:

**(4)** (time1 – Dénivellation\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPB\_01.53.33)

1 PER est-c`que ça:: suscite des: des réactions/ évoque des choses/ (.)  
does thi::s generates reactions/ evokes things/ (.)  
2 parmi les autres groupes/  
among the other groups/  
3 (0.3)  
4 BEN oui/  
yes/  
5 PER \*ou:a[is]  
ye:[ah ]  
*per* \*points to BEN-->  
6 BEN [(°°ex]cusez-moi°°)  
[(°°ex]cuse me°°)  
7 (0.3)\*  
*per* -->\*  
8 BEN c'est-à-dire qu'on pourrait utiliser la d- le:: la dénivellation  
it means that we could use the d- the:: the drop  
9 du parc/ (0.2) justement/  
of the park/ (0.2) justly/

At the beginning of the fragment, the facilitator explicitly offers a slot for "reactions" (1-2) and indeed Benillon proposes to exploit the geography of the park to make water circulate (8-9).

In the next excerpt, the facilitator formulates the invited action with the verb "to wish" (4):

**(5)** (time12 – PasDeLogement\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPC\_01.39.12)

1 (1.6)  
2 PER euh:::  
ehm::  
3 (1.3)  
4 PER par rapport à c'que vous n'souhaitez pas est-[c'qu]'y  
in relation to what you don't wish are [there]  
5 ? [hm]  
[hm]  
6 a enco[re des] choses que vous avez à::  
mo[re] things that you have to::  
7 MIC [(houlà)]  
[(wow) ]  
8 MIC oui y (en a)=  
yes there (are)=  
9 PER =à [aj]outer/  
=to [a]dd/  
10 ? [a-]  
[a-]  
11 (1.0)  
12 PER on [vous écolute  
we [listen to] you

13 CAT [ben]  
[well]  
14 (0.6)  
15 MIC bah (0.2) euh: ça a pas été évoqué mais (.) la mode est à: la:  
well (0.2) ehm: it hasn't been evoked but (.) the fashion is to:  
16 reconversion des casernes en logements étudiants\  
convert barracks into student housing\  
17 (0.5)  
18 MIC je pense qu'on peut dire qu'on n'souhaite pas de logements\  
i think that we can say that we do do not wish housing\  
19 (1.1)

Here the facilitator invites the citizens to add further "things they don't wish" (4-9) and selects the next speaker (12), Michelet, who proposes to ban the construction of student housing. Interestingly, the citizen uses the same verb ("we do not wish" 18) in the negative form. This further shows – as in excerpt 1 – that citizens exhibit the adequacy and conformity of their action in that specific slot.

In the excerpt below, the facilitator invites the citizens to fill a new slot (1), and subsequently specifies the type of action that is relevant, in this case a proposal regarding the usages (2):

**(6) (time8a – SportDouves\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_01.02.35)**

1 PRE autre chose sur votre groupe/  
another thing within your group/  
2 (0.2)  
3 PRE sur euh (0.3) c'que pourrait être sur les \*usages hein/=  
about e:hm (0.3) what could be in the usages right/=  
*pre* \*turns twd whiteboard-->  
4 GIL =au point d'vu\*e sport on a pas bien précisé/  
=concerning the sports we haven't well precised/  
*pre* ---->  
5 (0.7)  
6 PRE alors préci[sez\  
so pre[cise\  
7 GIL [c'est un] un euh un parc de détente/ un parc de loisirs/  
[it's a] a ehm a park for recreation/ a park for leisure/  
8 un parc de où on peut faire du sport/ (0.5) \*avec par exemple un  
a park of where we can practice sport/ (0.5) with for example an  
*pre* \*walks twd whiteboard-->  
9 piste d'\*athlétisme [euh dans les fossés/  
athletics track [ehm in the moats]  
*pre* ---->\*turns twd GIL---->

Prévost opens a new sequence by offering the group to voice "something else" (1) and before a response is given, adds a further specification, concerning the rubric of "usages" inscribed on the whiteboard – which is not only mentioned but also bodily oriented to (3-4). Giles responds by pointing at a lack of proposals concerning sports (4) and is explicitly invited to develop the topic (6) – which he does (7-9).

These instances show that the facilitator may explicitly design a slot for a specific type of action, and that the citizens design their action in order to exhibit its relevance and adequacy for that slot. Nonetheless, the facilitator can postpone discussion of their proposals.

## 4. Postponing the invited action

Postponing the elaboration of the citizen's action is generally done straight after the formulation of the proposal. It can be done in both minimal and expanded turn formats (section 4.1). Accounts can be added to legitimate the postponing by relating it to a general agenda (section 4.2). In some cases, as a concession, the facilitator proposes to write the proposal on the board (section 4.3).

### 4.1. Minimal vs. expanded turn formats

Postponing can be achieved in turns designed in various ways. The minimal format makes explicit the temporal dimension of the postponement, with a reference both to "not now" and to the future.

The following fragment is the continuation of extract 6, in which Giles proposes an athletics track in the park. He finishes his proposal in a vague way (13). At this moment, Prévost puts his left hand in the air, making a stopping gesture:

#### (7) (time8a – SportDouves\_continuation of ex. 6)

13 GIL [euh:: ] \*des choses des choses comme #ça\  
[ehm::] things like that\  
*pre* \*LH stopping gesture--->  
*fig* #fig.9



14 ? [en bas/]  
[below]  
15 POU le terrain de [foot]  
the soccer [pitch]  
16 PRE [alo]rs \*attendez \*au-delà x #peu importe\* où on les  
[we]ll wait beyond x no matter where we  
*pre* --->\*RH open--\*twd GIL-----\*RH stop gest-->  
*fig* #fig.10  
17 mettra/\*  
will put them/  
*pre* -->\*  
18 (0.2)  
19 GIL \*terrai[n de foot]  
socce[r pitch]  
*pre* \*RH horizontal--->  
20 PRE [trop tôt] encore=  
[too early] yet=  
21 GIL =\*terra[in de foot]  
=socce[r pitch]  
*pre* ->\*RH stop gesture--->

Various participants (14, 15) collaboratively expand and support Giles' proposal. But Prévost, with a stopping gesture (Figures 9-10), puts it on hold ("attendez"/"wait" 14), and qualifies it as "too early" (20) although Giles

persists in repeating Poujade's formulation (19, 21). Postponing is done solely by referring to temporal (in)adequate positionings.

Likewise, the continuation of excerpt 2 shows how the proposal of a specific location for sports in the park is made, its elaboration is postponed as occurring "a bit early" (11), followed by the promise to be treated "next time" (16):

**(8) (time8c – SportDouves\_continuation of ex. 2)**

```

7 BLE [dé]jà/ on sait que: *on peut mettre le* la
      [ju]st/ we know that: we can locate the the
      pre *looks at officer-*
8 partie sport dans les douves\
  sports area in the moats\
9 (0.3)
10 ? °ouais°
  °yeah°
11 PRE *pas d'problème [mais ça:/ (.)] ça c'est un peu tôt pour
  no problem [but that/ (.)] that is a bit early to
  pre *waves RH-->
12 BLE [ça on l'sait]
      [we know that]
13 PRE l'dire* hein/ [c`que *vous êtes] en train d'nous #dire/
  tell that right/ [what you are] telling us/
14 BLE [xx xx xx xx]
      [xx xx xx xx]
      -->* *gesticulates RH palm open vert-->
  fig #fig.11

```



```

15 >non non /non< c'est +dans la lo#gi+que/+ on en parlera#
  >no no no< it's within the logical perspective/ we'll talk
  +....+looks officer+,,,+looks aud--->
  fig #fig.12 fig.13#

```

```

16 la prochaine fois/
  next time about that/

```



```

17 BLE ah b[on\]
      ah [okay\]

```

Prévost looks at the officer (7) signaling some trouble with the proposal and raises his hand, starting to wave (11, Figure 11). As he categorizes the proposal as coming "a bit early" (11), Bélingard continues to speak and makes a gesture of dejection. Prévost responds to this gesture, treating it as problematic, and refuses it (15). Moreover, he quickly gazes again to the

officer when referring to the global "logics" (Figure 12), then reiterating the postponement to the next session (16) while looking back at the audience (Figure 13).

These minimal postpositions negate "now" as a relevant moment for the action, the future tense, and the reference to a "next" event. By addressing the officer in an embodied way, the facilitator orients to the political agenda. Postponing can be also be done in a more elaborated way, by offering some contrastive formulation of what has to be done "now" vs. "later"/"next time" as well as some account for it.

An instance of contrast between "now" and "later" (10, 15) is observable in the next fragment. The citizens are discussing the needs of the schools. Provocatively, Lemerrier proposes that one of these needs concerns a swimming pool.

**(9) (time15 – Piscine\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_01.03.50)**

4 LEM [les besoins pour les écoles se sont au-  
[the needs for the schools they are the-  
5 c'est aussi la pisci\*ne\  
it's also the swimming pool\  
pre \*,,,turns twd board-->  
6 (0.5)  
7 JEA ah non non [non mais]  
ah no no [no but]  
8 GEO [ah mais] [non]  
[ah but] [no]  
9 [<1.5 ((hullabaloo))>]  
10 PRE [\*non non mais non (on \*verra) \*après a#[près]]  
[no no but no (we will see) later l[ater]]  
11 LEM [vous par]lez  
[you talk  
pre -->\*turns twd aud-----\*,,,,,,\*RH stop gest, walks twd aud-->  
fig #fig.14



12 d'activi[té sportive [pour les écoles/]  
about sport [activities [for the schools/]  
13 [<5.2 ((hullabaloo))>]  
14 GIL [(ne comprend pas) xx xx xx xx xx]  
[(doesn't understand) xx xx xx xx xx]  
15 PRE [pour l` moment (0.2) chut chut] non non  
[at the moment (0.2) shush shush] no no  
16 pour l` mo[ment/ \*(0.2) on on #essaie de proposer] des tendances  
at the mo[ment/ (0.2) we we try to propose] some trends  
pre ---->\*two hands open twd LEM's table, stands-->  
fig #fig.15

Lemerrier's statement (4-5) is responded to by several citizens disagreeing with it (7-9). Prévost seems to orient to this when he postpones the proposal: he uses the future ("we'll see" 10) and a temporal location ("later" 10), and

makes a stopping gesture toward the hullabaloo (Figure 14). As the hullabaloo continues, he formulates what they are doing "now" as "proposing trends" (15-16) – letting transpire that the proposal does not meet this formulation. While he says this, he opens his hands towards Lemercier's table (Figure 15). The postponing is also a way of putting the disagreement and the hullabaloo to an end.

In a similar way, Blondin's proposal is postponed by evoking the "spirit" of the proposal:

**(10)** (time16 – Decouverte\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPA\_1.05.43)

(continuation of exc. 3. 13 lines omitted)

15 BLO est-ce qu'il pourrait y avoir aussi un esprit à la fois euh écologie  
could there also be a spirit both ehm ecology

16 botanique (0.5) dans la découverte euh pour les enfants en faisant par  
botany (0.5) in the discovery ehm for the children in doing for

17 exemple comme on fait pour les adultes des p'tits jardins  
example like we do for the adults small gardens of

18 ouvriers (0.2) .h avoir des petits jardins ouvriers aussi  
allotment (0.2) .h have small gardens of allotment as well

19 0.6)

20 BLO euh[:]  
ehm[:]

21 PRE [d'acco]rd donnez-moi simp\*lement l'esprit (.) sur les p'tits  
[all ri]ght give me simply the spirit (.) about the small

22 jardins ouvriers on [verra]  
allotment gardens we'[ll see]

23 BLO [voilà]  
[there you go]

Blondin's proposal is articulated in two parts: the first is more general, referring to an ecological ideal (15-16), the second is more concrete, and mentions shared gardens (16-18). The latter is postponed – with "we'll see" – while the former is acknowledged as adequately addressing "the spirit" which is the aim of the meeting, categorically close to "the trends" mentioned in the previous excerpt. So, postponing can occasion a formulation of what is supposed to be done "now" (expressing "trends", "the spirit"). It can also generate a contrastive formulation about what will be done "later".

**4.2. Accounts for postponing: making the global institutional agenda visible**

When postponing is done with an account, the latter does not only formulate what is being done "now" but also sheds some light on the global ongoing political procedure, referring to the distribution of topics and tasks within a series of meetings – therefore orienting to an organizational order beyond the actual interaction, concerning several sessions.

The distribution between what is done "now" and what will be done "later" is made particularly clear in the following excerpt. Rubens is proposing a historical footpath across the park (1, 3, 5-6):

**(11)** (time7 – ParcoursHistorique\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_GPB\_01.50.47)

1 PER ouais/ allez-y [j` vous en prie]  
yeah/ go on [i beg you to]

2 RUB [y a y avait] deux choses \*on avait  
[there is there were] two things we had

per >>looks at RUB\*nods-->  
 4 deux ch- deux cho\*ses/ donc y avait (0.2) madame qui voulait  
 two th- two things/ so there was (0.2) madam who wanted  
 per ---->\*looks at RUB---->  
 5 parler de .h euh les les: de: de faire un:: quelque chose comme un  
 to talk about .h ehm the the: of: of doing a:: something like a  
 6 parcours historique (0.6) [dans le: dans le: dans le parc/]  
 historical route (0.6) [in the: in the: in the park/]  
 ((8 lines omitted))  
 15 ALC \*[(et donc là\* c'est y a- y a) [un xx tout] l'château:=  
 [(and so there it's there's- there's) [a xx whole] the castle=  
 16 PER [j`pense c'est]  
 [i think it's ]  
 per \*small nods--\*  
 17 RUB =oui/ y a dé[jâ (un) xx x (en fait)]  
 =yes/ there's al[ready (a) xx x (actually)]  
 18 PER \*[j` pense qu'on on]\* on::: on  
 [i think that we we] we::: we  
 per \*steps twd RUB-----\*  
 19 re\*viendra #\*plus en détails #\*sur comment  
 we'll come back more in detail about how  
 per \*hands up-\*hand down palms up\*turns tow board, hands up->  
 fig #fiq.16 #fiq.17



16



17

20 fi\*#nalement tout ça #peut se traduire dans l'es[pace] dans la\*  
 finally all that can be translated in the sp[ace] in the  
 21 RUB ? [mhm]  
 [mhm]

per -->\*points to board with open hands-----\*  
 fig #fiq.18 #fiq.19



18



19

22 deuxième séance [la s`maine] prochaine .h: là on va rester sur  
 second session [next] week .h: there we will stay on  
 23 RUB [d'accord]  
 [okay]  
 24 RUB ? les ambiances=  
 the atmosphere  
 25 PER =voilà on exprime des souhaits des envies voilà en termes  
 =that's it we express wishes desires that's it in terms  
 26 d'usages et[caetera]  
 of uses et[caetera]  
 27 RUB [et puis la deu]xième=  
 [and then the sec]ond=  
 28 PER =et peut-être pas trop les concrétiser pour l'instant/  
 =and maybe not too much concretize them at the moment/  
 29 RUB et l-  
 and th-  
 30 PER ça nous f`ra gagner du temps et: la s`maine prochaine  
 that will make us save time and: the next week  
 31 on aura deux heures (0.2) voilà pour euh:: rentrer un peu plus  
 we will have two hours (0.2) so to ehm:: go in a bit more



acknowledges and orients to the double constraints of the local organization (the adequate management of the meeting, under scrutiny of the officials) and of the global political agenda. During the meeting, repeated references to what is to be done in the next event progressively build an accountable distribution of activities between sessions. This is initially explicitly formulated; progressively it is just briefly alluded to as in the following two cases:

**(13)** (time 2 - Liste\_CAB\_FC\_191108\_ATE\_GPC\_02.06.20)

1 BAU ouais mais: si on va là-dedans `fin moi j'en ai toute une liste aussi  
yes but: if we'll enter into that well me i have a whole list as well  
2 [hein/]  
[right/]  
3 PER [ouais] j`pense qu'on: rentre dans des: [grandes précisions]  
[yeah] i think that we: enter in: [great precisions]  
4 ANV [ouais ouais]  
[yeah yeah]  
5 LSY non mais enfin des:  
no but finally:  
6 (0.4)  
7 PER on verra ça la: la prochaine séance  
we will see that the: the next session  
8 (0.7)

**(14)** (time3 – Artistique\_CAB\_FC\_181108\_ATE\_PUB\_01.27.25)

1 JEA non mais y a déjà un bâtiment hein (0.3) qu`était euh pour eu:h  
no but there is already a building right (0.3) that was ehm for e:hm  
2 (0.4) la fanfare=  
(0.4) the brass band=  
3 PRE =[d'accord\  
=[all right\  
4 LAT [xx xx]  
[xx xx]  
5 JEA donc euh j`pense c'est [pré]vu pour/ hein\  
so ehm i think it's [plan]ned for/ right\  
6 PRE [okay]  
[oke ]  
7 PRE on on reviendra après dans les dé- plus précisément hein  
we we will come back after in de- more precisely right

The agenda for this meeting vs. the next one emerges within the ongoing interaction. This global project is invoked to make the action of postponing accountable and legitimate; at the same time, its explicit contour emerges progressively (within the opposition between general trends and wishes to be proposed now, and more concrete architectural implementations and solutions to be kept for the next session). This allows the facilitator to postpone proposals that have been locally invited and that have responded adequately to this invitation – e.g. actions that are sequentially designed and recognized as being locally relevant.

**4.3. Postponing with a concession: offering to inscribe the proposal**

The fact that a relevant action is being postponed can raise several difficulties. Postponing is easier to do when the proposal generates disagreements (see excerpt 9), but may be delicate in other cases, namely when several citizens support it. The facilitator orients to possible difficulties when postponing a proposal and its discussion. One way in which this orientation is implemented is within a concessive action, consisting of writing on the board what has been



14 BLE [xx xx xx xx]  
 [xx xx xx xx]  
 ble *throws up hands-----looks down-->*  
 fig *#fig.20*



20  
 15 PRE >non non /non< c'est dansf la logique/ on enf parleraf  
 >no no no< it's within the logical perspective/ we'll talk  
 ble *---->looks up-----fnods-----f*  
 16 la prochaine fois  
 next time about that  
 17 BLE fah b[on\  
 ah [okay\  
 ble *looks down-->>*

Prévost postpones Bélingard's proposal (11-13). In line 14, the citizen disagrees with the facilitator in an embodied way, throwing up his arms in a frustrated gesture (Figure 20). Even though the resistance is expressed only in an embodied way, Prévost responds promptly to it (15), abandoning his ongoing turn and restarting it with a first refusal of Bélingard's resistance ("no no no" 19), followed by an account clarifying that it is planned to talk about that topic the next time. In response to the account, Bélingard looks down saying "ah okay" (17), formally accepting the postponing even though he clearly displays that he is not agreeing with it.

In the following excerpt, the facilitator Perneti proposes several times to write down Michaud's proposal as a concession. However, he refuses, and explicitly resists:

### (18) (time12 – PasDeLogement, continuation of exc. 5)

15 MIC bah (0.2) euh: ça a pas été évoqué mais (.) la mode est à: la  
 well (0.2) ehm: it hasn't been evoked but (.) the fashion is to: the  
 16 reconversion des casernes en logements étudiants\  
 conversion of barracks into student housing\  
 (0.5)  
 18 MIC je pense qu'on peut dire qu'on n`souhaite pas de logements\  
 i think that we can say that we do not wish housing\  
 19 (1.1)  
 ((12 lines omitted))  
 32 MIC non mais [y aurait un gardien hein y aura] un xxxx  
 no but [there would be a guard right there'll be] a xxxx  
 33 PER [on va l`noter hein ça donne euh]  
 [we will note that down that gives ehm]  
 34 PER non non [j'allais d-]  
 no no [i would s- ]  
 35 HEN [(mais le gar]dien il ser[xx]  
 [(but the gu]ard will be [xx]  
 36 ? [sch:]::[ ::]  
 [sch:]::[ ::]  
 37 PER [on va l`[noter/]&  
 [we'll [note it/]&  
 38 ? [sch:]  
 [sch:]  
 39 PER &faut [bien s]'rappeler c`que: nous a dit [yves ] bert en  
 &we must [well] keep in mind what yves bert told us at

40 ? [mm]  
[mm]

41 ? [oui]  
[yes]

42 PER [début:/] que: les bâtiments c'est quand même un usage&  
[the beginning:/] that: the buildings are nevertheless a usage&

43 JAC [°mhm°]  
[°mhm°]

44 PER &qui sera réfléchi (0.4) [dans: un] deuxième temps\  
&which will be thought of (0.4) [in: a] second time\  
45 HEN [°(ensuite°)]  
[°(afterwards°)]

46 ? ((les bati[ments]))  
((the buil[dings]))

47 PER [MAIS ]  
[BUT ]

48 CHA °°ah [ouais°°]  
°°ah [yeah°°]

49 MIC [non] j'in[siste]  
[no] i in[sist]

50 PER [on va]  
[we'll]

51 MIC [j'insiste]  
[i insist]

52 PER [on va l` noter] quand [même]=  
[we'll note it] never[theless]=

53 PLE? [de toute] façon=  
[in any] case=

54 MIC =parce que c'est: actuellement à la mode et c'est même finan[cé par]&  
=because that it's: currently fashionable and it's even fund[ed by]&

55 PER [oui]  
[yes]

56 &l'état/  
&the state/

After Michaud's proposal, a long pause (19) flags for a dispreferred answer. During the 12 omitted lines, they discuss whether the proposal regards housing in general or student housing. Perneti offers to write down the idea (33, 37) before she postpones the discussion (39-44). Michaud does not accept this and insists explicitly on debating it here and now (49, 51). Perneti repeats the suggestion to write down the proposal (50, 52) but Michaud resists again, and gives an account of why it is relevant to discuss it now (54-56).

In sum, the local as well as the global agenda for the meetings is something the citizens may resist. This agenda is locally managed, as is visible in the negotiations between the facilitator, the representatives of the city (as in excerpts 1, 8, and 11), and the citizens.

## 6. Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated that the organization of action is seen, treated, and achieved by the participants with regard to both the *local* organization of sequentiality and to the more *global* political agenda. By postponing an action from "now" to "later", participants display, on the one hand, an understanding of what is relevant, adequate, and legitimate to do now; on the other hand, they orient towards the later organization of the activity, not only within a local time and immediate sequential environment but also with regard to a larger time span and within later activities. Postponing an action to a "later" moment orients to the overall organization of the session; postponing it to the "next meeting" orients to the overall organization of the procedure within a historical

time, as structured by a series of sessions. This also points to a larger agenda, which can be more or less transparent, shared and agreed upon by the participants, as well as more or less (a)symmetrically defined by the institution – as demonstrated through the analysis of the embodied conduct of the facilitator, clearly orienting at crucial moments to the officers representing the political institution. This makes a broader institutional framework relevant. The asymmetric access to and control of the agenda by the facilitator and the politicians is, however, a subject for resistance and re-negotiation by the citizens. In this sense, the article reveals that positioning an action *now vs. later/next time* can become a political matter involving democratic rights to decide the institutional agenda and define the relevance of political actions done right now.

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## **TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS**

Transcription of talk has been realized according to the ICOR conventions for French:

[http://icar.univ-lyon2.fr/projets/corinte/bandeau\\_droit/convention\\_icor.htm](http://icar.univ-lyon2.fr/projets/corinte/bandeau_droit/convention_icor.htm)

Transcription of gesture has been done according to the conventions developed by Mondada:

[https://franz.unibas.ch/fileadmin/franz/user\\_upload/redaktion/Mondada\\_conv\\_multimodality.pdf](https://franz.unibas.ch/fileadmin/franz/user_upload/redaktion/Mondada_conv_multimodality.pdf)

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