



Participation, Top-Down Collegiality and Intermediaries

Emmanuel Lazega[1]

Organizing for participation

In society at large, top-down participation provided by institutional authorities, mainly in the form of dialogue and consultation, is often taken up (or even driven) by associations (for example, as part of “governance” among “stakeholders”). However, at the same time, it is often approached by the very same associations with defiance and mistrust. In contexts where asymmetries of power and inequalities are huge, the avoidance of sharing truly decisional power with weaker and nevertheless legitimate parties has been widely documented (see Fisher, 2012). For example, decisional power is rarely shared with parties such as vulnerable citizens or migrants with human rights, from different origins in need of welcome, orientation, and integration. Civil society organizations in particular, which try to locally push a broad agenda or a set of general causes, are suspicious of officials offering participation because they think they are trying to avoid the emergence of counter-powers, counting on citizen apathy, and trying to invite “anyone” to the table, short-circuiting representatives of civil society associations, by inviting only highly selected people based on clientelistic criteria and hiding purposes of social control behind co-optation (Selznick, 1949).

In other words, bottom-up participants try to avoid the traps of top-down “fake” participation, where their demands are not truly taken into account, where decisions are made before projects are submitted for consultation, etc. The dilemmas of institutional participation are nevertheless managed by bottom-up participants, especially when they are in weak positions, often in contradictory ways. Nevertheless, they often participate to represent the collective will, to defend interests protected by the law, to mobilise their knowledge and competencies, and to obtain recognition. They get involved despite this because they fear that if they are not at the table, they will be on the menu. They want to strengthen participative democracy so as to create closer links with representative democracy, i.e. between the social and the political, and prevent confiscation of the latter by the *notables* who tend to think of themselves as the sole representatives, if not owners, of general interest at large. Weak bottom-up participants and their associations can also think that, if their interests are not recognized and catered to, they need to keep playing the game so as to be able to undermine such institutionalized participation settings, boycott the official ones and produce alternative ones.

Bringing together representatives of the weak and representatives of the powerful is violent. Violence to which the weak are subjected requires linchpin intermediaries. The latter provide two kinds of resources at least: knowledge and learning, i.e. experience, and personal relationships with the other side. Both these resources facilitate engaging the other side by finding points in common and making commitments as credible as they can be. Super-centrality of intermediaries can help them punch above their weight: intermediaries such as the professions have always chosen their side eventually, more often that of the powerful than that of the weaker parties.[2] Perhaps the best way to start this presentation of an organizational approach to participation is by defining its organizational form, i.e. collegiality, as two-dimensional.

Participation from an organizational perspective: two forms of collegiality

Participation in that sense always involves the will to represent the collective, to defend interests protected by the law, to mobilise knowledge and competencies, to obtain recognition. From an organizational perspective, participation requires participants to come together and find ways to collaborate, even in highly conflicting situations (Archer, 2017). Recent work in the sociology of organization has taken a second look at collegiality as an organizational form that accounts for participatory efforts towards collective action among peers with non-routine problems to solve. This organizational form has been used, for example, by experts and professionals who exert formal self-control and are thus, to a large extent, self-regulating. They create at least one forum, the committee of the whole – that may rely on the input of a more or less complex and hierarchical system of committees and sub-committees – where decision-making can be collective.

Waters' (1989) approach to the collegial form of organization has listed the formal characteristics of collegial settings that help peers manage the dilemmas of their collective action. Further examination of collegiality has also shown that it works based on a form of social discipline and collective responsibility that depends on personalized relationships between members, i.e. on ‘relational infrastructures’ (Lazega, 2001; Archer and Donati, 2016). Indeed, in organized settings, participation in non-routine collective action – for example,

for team production, regulatory activity, or enforcement of previous agreements – requires personalized cooperation with others. This cooperation is expressed through personalized transfers / sharing or exchanges of various kinds of resources, especially knowledge and experience, as well as in commitments to exchange partners. These resources include, for example, information, a coworkers' goodwill, advice and, at times, emotional support, including many other means that can serve individual and collective ends. In an ideal-typical collegial organization, personalized ties become the source of a social discipline that helps close/distant members exchange, learn, monitor, exert pressure, sanction each other, select leaders, or negotiate precarious values for self-regulation. Collegiality as an organizational form based on self-governing by personalized relationships has thus been described, for example, among professionals and semi-professionals (lawyers, scientists, teachers, priests, judges, social workers, etc.).

In this collegial form, which is not democratic,[3] cooperation is not based on purely moral virtue but on the existence of personalized interdependencies, the need to manage them strategically in situations of uncertainty and performance of non-routine tasks, even in highly conflictual situations, and a definition of collective responsibility (Lazega, 2017).

A case of articulation of bottom-up collegiality and top-down collegiality

This organizational approach recognizes that the formal and social features of a collegial organization are ideal-typical, like those of classical bureaucracies. Indeed we live in an increasingly bureaucratized world where tasks are routinized, work relationships are increasingly impersonal and hierarchy is taken for granted, except at the top of organizations where everything is political, or in “collegial pockets” where management must let professionals self-manage (this typically occurs in R&D departments). But bureaucracy and collegiality challenge each other constantly, stimulating change in each other's implementation. The Catholic Church itself has often been studied as a particularly interesting and sophisticated example of combination of bureaucracy and collegiality. A diocese is a bureaucracy in which the bishop is the absolute master of his organization. But a diocese cannot exclusively be conceived as a bureaucracy. It is also a collegial setting because priests consider each other as peers and are driven by their own religious orientations and senses of professionalism. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, if a bishop does not try to understand how each of his priests is motivated by his *Beruf*, or calling, and values his autonomy, the latter may simply leave.

An empirical example can be used to illustrate the importance of the combination of bureaucracy and collegiality in a Catholic diocese in France. A diocese is a complex organization with fuzzy borders due to the great number of associations, movements and groups that gravitate around it. It is composed of bureaucratically organized local communities complete with administrators, committees and a multitude of services. It is led by a bishop; nominated by the bishops of the given province; and appointed by the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. When focusing on the relationships between priests, a collegial form of social discipline emerges; based on their interdependencies in performing their various pastoral responsibilities, it is possible to identify a division of labour among them implying religious “orientations”, among which it is difficult to establish any particular order and where the role of the Catholic chain of command is also somewhat uncertain. The social organization of the diocese, when examined from the priests' point of view, displays characteristics of a collegial organization. The fact that priests dedicated to different orientations interrelate makes it possible for them to build separate, local forms of consensus. All these elements substantiate that a bottom-up type of collegiality among priests exists.

The notion of “religious orientation” refers to the principle of an internal division between heterogeneous approaches to pastoral activities. An orientation is the basis for these priests' commitment and expectations, for their conception of themselves and of their church. Between 1998 and 2001, Wattebled (2004) identified three different orientations – ritual, activist and intellectual – themselves stemming from two other orientations that had become nearly extinct: Catholic action directed at independent occupations and a specific orientation directed at the working class (*prêtres ouvriers*). Those orientations are part of distinct, historically ancient traditions updated at the local level and by the contemporary situation of each individual diocese. The plurality of religious orientations is not solely linked to religious logics. It also depends on the diversity of the groups of believers and their social evolution: for example the development of highly under-privileged urban areas (*banlieues*), and the disappearance of traditional working-class neighbourhoods, the transformation of middle class attitudes to politics, or the quest for social distinction among the well-off bourgeoisie.

But the Roman Catholic Church is also a bureaucracy in which the bishop, as an absolute master of his diocese, retains most of the power; his authority is monocratic in theory. Formally speaking, his power can be curbed from above, since the Bishop of Rome and the Roman Curia have the capacity to intervene should disagreement arise; as well as – since Vatican II – from below through the councils, particularly with respect to finances (i.e. the existence of the Diocesan Council for economic affairs). It is the bishop's duty to appoint at least one Vicar General to assist him in directing the diocese. In the example used here, the bishop reintroduced elements of collegiality by setting up an Episcopal Council, an equivalent to the “executive suite” in the diocese. The

Episcopal Council was where decisions were made and important diocesan orientations decided upon. The bishop carefully selected the members of this Episcopal Council. This selection was based, on the one hand, on the system of committees set up by the bishop in top-down fashion to cope with the pressures stemming from below, and on the other hand, on the perception, by the bishop and Vicar General, of the legitimate religious orientations present in the diocese and “deserving” representation. Under such constraints, the bishop as an absolute master did not always have much choice as to who should sit on the Episcopal Council if he did not want his diocese to disaggregate under centrifugal forces.

The figure below maps the advice network among the priests of the diocese as reconstituted by Wattebled (2004). Religious orientations that are organized by the priests in the Diocese include *activist*, *ritual* and *intellectual* orientations for the main part and illustrate the variety of a priest’s expertise, commitments and initial form of participation. They may explain the plurality of Catholic identities noted in and between parishes. The size of the nodes represents the centrality of the priest in this network. Priests represented by white circles are uncommitted in terms of orientation. The three most central light grey rounded squares are the “linchpins”, i.e. most central priests in the advice network with an uncontroversial, declining ‘Catholic orientation towards independent occupations’, high popularity among the peripheral and uncommitted (in terms of orientation) priests, and high administrative positions close to the bishop. The white squares with a cross represent an intellectual orientation. The triangles represent activist priests, i.e. black upward triangles for priests sharing a militant orientation, and black downward triangles for priest sharing a working class orientation.[4]

Bottom-up collegiality among priests is based on the diversity of their commitments expressed by these orientations and on their will to jointly transform them into locally credible pastoral projects. The orientations reflect the fractioning of a diocesan clergy, thereby better able to respond to, and socialize, part of the several Catholic identities present. Bottom-up collegiality organizes cooperation between interdependent priests building up their orientations locally and wanting to remain in control of them. The top-down creation of the presbyteral council towards the end of the 1960s formally translated the hierarchy’s reaction to that observable fact and its recognition of the need for participation. At stake in this collegiality is the preservation of commitment and professionalism, i.e., in the present case, defending a specific and minimal authority of the priest with regard to lay people as much as with respect to the bishop.

The bishop maintained a participative social order in this institution which was thus segmented by identifying in each of these groups / orientations the most vocal persons, the priests with social status in their group, and invite these ‘representatives’ to become members of the Episcopal Council. In exchange for participation in running the diocese from this committee they had to agree not to develop any form of oppositional solidarity or criticize each other in public, i.e. accept the internal heterogeneity of the diocese, thus avoiding the appearance of organizational and “institutional drift” (Selznick, 1949). Observing exchanges between priests in their specific organizational context is a good way to grasp specific dimensions of bottom-up collegial organization, for it brings to light the existing exchanges in their specific social discipline and relational infrastructures, and thus in the joint production of their respective pastoral orientations.

It is worth mentioning that this participation, that brings top-down and bottom-up forces together, is complex. As shown in the figure, the most central members are priests who are often (but not always) administratively closest to the bishop. They often represent the declining orientation of “Catholic action in independent milieu”: they have authority individually but they are perceived to be as a spent force collectively. To understand this paradoxical situation it is important to add two additional characteristics of the diocese to the picture. Firstly, many priests are ‘peripheral’ in these networks. Their relational capital is quite modest. They do not belong in any social niche and do not declare any specific orientation. These ‘peripheral’ priests tend to seek advice from the colleagues who represent uncontroversial orientations; they do not necessarily care whether these advisors have administrative responsibilities. Formality matters, but not exclusively.

Secondly, it is important to know that the bishop himself had a militant and intellectual sensitivity. In order to pacify the milieu, he needed as deputies priests with high intermediarity and representing such an uncontroversial orientation. He found them, at the time and in this case, in these representatives of Catholic action in independent milieu. Structurally speaking these three persons became the linchpins or pivots of the structure. They were in a position to be trusted by the bishop and the many peripheral priests, as well as remaining on speaking terms with the traditionalists, intellectual and militants, i.e. the orientations that were the most creative in terms of adaptation to the environment, but also generating the tensions in the diocese. This intermediarity and linchpin position is thus complex, mobile, processual; it includes a mix of unthreatening popularity among the ‘unaligned’, brokerage between the ‘aligned’, and proximity to the bishop who backs them up while keeping them under close supervision.

Participation through top-down collegiality and intermediarity is the complex management device thanks to which the bishop tries to manage the diversity of Catholic orientations, and the unity of his diocese. If bottom-up

collegiality depends on a form of specialization in various domains – in conceiving of diverse and often opposed religious orientations for instance – which makes it easier to grasp the diversity of Catholic identities (Donégani, 1993, 2000), this bishop manages this diversity and preserves unity by co-opting the most central colleagues/intermediaries in matters of collaboration, advice and personal support. Here network analysis shows how the meeting of top-down and bottom-up collegialities can produce (or the lack thereof could hinder) social participation. Bringing in the most visible representatives of the various religious orientations as members of the Episcopal council is an attempt at maintaining and keeping this fragile balance of social participation. When it is a priority for the bishop, it can also sometimes be at the cost of closing his eyes on deviant, abusive or wayward behaviour, i.e. avoid sanctioning destructive practices of members whose exclusion could threaten this fragile balance.

Violence and the role of linchpin intermediaries: providing learning and networks

Generalizing this precise example of participation based on a combination of bottom-up and top-down collegiality among heterogeneous peers could be misleading, especially for more violent contexts in which the weaker parties in participation do not always have the skills and trained capacity, resources and personal relationships required by top-down collegiality with dominant elites. In this empirical case, priests speak the same language to some extent, refer to a common framework even if they do not agree on priorities, and live in the same diocese, which facilitates the creation of personal relationships, for better or for worse. The elites' portfolio of strategies available for coordinating bottom-up and top-down collegiality is fairly large. The first step is co-optation by carefully choosing members of social niches to sit on executive councils. According to the level of managerial rationalization implemented, the transformation of collegiality into a management tool may either constantly refine the relationship between the two types of collegiality, or even forgo bottom-up collegiality, keeping only the rhetoric, thus sterilizing creative cooperation between peers.

For example, at the international level, private and voluntary partnerships have been created to define voluntary sustainability standards for agricultural commodities (Busch, 2011) based on a participative governance model: all stakeholders participate in horizontal manner in an inclusive process of negotiation of such standards in "roundtables" (Aldaba, 2002; Cheyns, 2011). Tensions arise between local minority voices, international NGOs and industries because having a voice in such partnerships is not easy. The top-down collegiality constructed in such roundtables is presented with the rhetoric of horizontality, but in fact it is bureaucratized, infused with taken for granted values, technical knowledge, pre-accepted balance of interests, and a posture of technocratic detachment that makes negotiators on the powerful side feel free from moral responsibility. In such situations, weaker minorities are usually emotional and angry. They wish to talk about the violence (material and symbolic) that they experience, violations of their rights, damage (loss of water, land, pollution, health issues, etc.) to their environments, and about justice and collective responsibility (Varman and Al-Amoudi, 2016).

This often tends to discredit and desolidarize them in this top-down collegiality context and to make them even more vulnerable than before they came to the table. The lesson that can be learnt from such situations is that there is a collective learning process going on in participation. Learning and mentoring (to become a strategic, political actor) is often provided by third parties with competence and experience, i.e. intermediaries that help the parties converge, or believe they converge, towards a "pragmatic" definition of the situation that will be more or less recognized as a common basis for political negotiation. This presumed-to-be-common definition of the situation can be that of the strong, that of the weak, or some kind of compromise.

Intermediaries, such as the "linchpins" identified in the example above, participate either by introducing stakeholders to a predefined framework or to appropriateness judgments. They often help them learn the skills and use the equipment needed to hold their own in the company of the dominant "peers"; or they help stakeholders to build or redefine a framework for negotiation in which their capacities to generalize their problems and claims are improved. Beyond accompanying critical participation, intermediaries are often expected to be able to define, much beyond their recognized status, new forms of personalized collective responsibility and solidarity, and draw the parties to this common cause and attached commitments. High or lower level elites, to the extent that they have an interest in participation, also need the framework of top-down collegiality and intermediaries to whom they subcontract personalized relationships with usually segregated weaker parties.

The intermediaries' position can be in a contradiction that sometimes forces a party, whom they try to help, to take its distances and dissolve its dependent relationship with them. Bringing together bottom-up and top-down forms of collegiality is not easy, precisely because of the initial and asymmetric distribution of power. This is in fact part of the core of political activity at all levels. Either adapting to predefined appropriateness judgments and participation framework created by powerful players trying to both empower and manipulate weaker parties; or creating a new kind of appropriateness judgments and framework that are meant to help weaker parties increase their negotiation power and achieve a better defence of their interests.

The integration of migrants is another example of violent political issue in Western democracies where linchpin intermediaries play a key role. It generates contradictory policy designs, implementations and evaluations by public authorities, corporate actors, political parties, and civil society associations. The category of “migrant” covers diverse sociological realities. A migrant’s situation varies due to many factors: their economic and political conditions of departure and arrival, their language and culture, and the support that they can gather. Integration profiles combine different factors. In particular, social and organizational network analyses of migrants (composition, structure, and resilience of personal networks) observe how their integration takes place and ask what is a successful integration. Lubbers *et al.* (2010) and Molina *et al.* (2011), for example, show that, in Spain, migrants who feel well integrated have at least one third of their personal network composed of persons who live in the host country already. This is a rare situation for many categories of migrants. The lesson of such situations is that participation and integration requires personal relationships with several linchpin intermediaries from the host country.

Migrants themselves usually try to survive individually or with their families by creating such personalized relations with locals, often themselves previous migrants. Research has shown how individuals in general develop (increase the size and composition of) their network (although not necessarily its structure). They do so using at least three ways. First by “preferential attachment”: they identify central persons in the collective and try to establish a relationship with these persons. The latter become mechanically increasingly central over time. A second strategy uses transitivity: one follows the networks of one’s neighbour. Thirdly, one can use “homophily”, i.e. establish relationships with others similar to us (in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, for example) by signalling and using this similarity. The more actors use transitivity, the more linchpin intermediaries are likely to play a role in these network dynamics. When households lose their initial network and intermediaries, for example displaced households in their new forced places of residence, they may no longer be able to cope with life contingencies and, in such precarious conditions, new linchpin intermediaries are a way out of relational capital traps.

In violent contexts, however, especially when public authorities do not put welcoming policies into place, migrants have to rely, for their long integration process, on intermediaries with resources, including experience and relationships. Within the institutional framework and its implementation of policies that facilitate or prevent migrant integration, the organizational level of agency identified above deserves some attention here as well. Along with the bureaucratic fortresses of migration policies that structure the context in which integration does or does not take place, the issue of the participation and representation of migrants arises as a very problematic one as well, even when they speak the language of their host country perfectly. Unless they belong to very well-organized communities where they can represent their interests themselves, their personal survival networks do not overlap with the policy networks that organize their necessarily slow integration, if any, and/or much more rapid exclusion, segregation, exploitation if not destructive overexploitation. From an organizational perspective, this means that their participation and interactions with the fortresses depend upon linchpin intermediaries who can represent them by sharing some of their status, resources and legitimacy.

These linchpin intermediaries try to help them participate in a bottom-up process that may take a very long time to meet with the top-down policies designed for them, if that meeting ever takes place. The role of these intermediaries is again underestimated because they can be in a position to speak on behalf of the weaker parties that they help participate because the creation of personal relationships in the host population, as shown by Lubbers and Molina (2010), is key. In addition, these linchpin intermediaries can also add organizational and institutional weight to migrants’ rights when they are professionals (social workers, lawyers, doctors, priests, etc.) with capacity to, on the one hand, mobilize civil society associations, charities, and concerned citizens (especially around children); and on the other hand access the fortresses and speak on behalf of the migrants to the main players of public and private institutions and policy networks. Eventually, it is often again through these intermediaries that top-down collegiality meets with bottom-up collegiality, if at all.

Understanding how collegiality works, and its frequent dependence upon intermediaries, shows what is needed for “honourable” participation of the weaker party in fragile co-regulation with the stronger party. When the weaker party has mobilization capacity, experienced and well-connected representatives with the stronger party, top-down collegiality can work, often with difficulty for those who compromise the most, materially and symbolically. But the above illustrations also show that top-down collegiality cannot work in coordination and negotiations between weaker parties and stronger parties in which the weaker party does not have mobilization capacity, as well as experienced and well-networked representatives at the table. In such situations, third parties – often militants, concerned citizens and/or professionals who act as experts, advisors – can be helpful to the weaker party if they choose that party’s side. The brokerage that such third parties perform is not only that of a go-between; it provides the weaker party with both (re)framing capacity, buy-in or access to personalized relationships with the other side, i.e. some of the main resources for bottom-up participation in the top-down collegiality model. This is why, in helping the weaker party organize for participation, linchpin intermediaries

can also play very destructive and damaging roles (for this weaker party). Intermediaries whose loyalties are taken for granted could mislead, promise more than they can deliver, leave the weak in deeper desolidarization, misery and oppression just to let them know where real authority lies, sometimes for purely ideological reasons. Perpetuating subordination, segregation and betrayal exactly where participation had generated hope is also part of the dark side of the moral history of the professionals – social workers, teachers, lawyers, priests, etc. (Maines, 2001).

Will the new forms of online social networking help?

Online social network platforms are often used by vulnerable but pre-organized actors in situations of exclusion to find support and capacity for mobilization and collective action. When backed by pre-existing social organizations, online social networks may increase collective action, mobilization and emancipation capacity of entire populations. Social sciences currently do not have access to existing big social network data that would help them test hypotheses on the extent to which online social networks have increased the capacity of vulnerable actors to participate in bottom-up collegiality, to rely on new knowledge and relationships, and participate more actively and efficiently in their own integration as they see it – perhaps especially with less dependence upon linchpin intermediaries. More generally, public research is late in understanding the relationship between concrete physical social networks and online virtual social networks. Private research laboratories set up by large existing platforms are currently studying the interactions, overlaps, differential dynamics and mobilisation of both concrete and virtual networks. Results of such analyses are not shared, and highly manipulable by powerful companies and institutions, for which they also represent high stakes.

Understanding how young generations and citizens in general use and develop their own network “literacy” and online mobilization practices is an important issue for the development of civic engagement in policy-making. Online engagement may alter and disrupt democratic processes, practices, and occurrences.[5] A better understanding of how these technological solutions interact with the social and political arrangements of participative engagements might provide answers to such questions and represent important stakes, opportunities and/or threats for democracies.

Becoming a participatory actor: a three-players “game”

The aim of this paper is to summarize available bits of sociological knowledge on this organizational dimension of integration and participation via top-down collegiality, i.e. political work, experience and personalized relationships, and their potential pitfalls. Participation most often takes place in social contexts that are already violent in terms of imposing their inequalities and discriminations on the population, thus depending on the “generosity” of the masters willing to “share” some of their power. In periods of such inequalities, discriminations and upheaval, the elite knows that their contours might be redefined. Therefore they may become genuinely, or simply pretend to be, interested in participation and co-optation of threatening forces, but on their own organizational terms based on top-down collegiality. As a consequence, even in favourable political and institutional contexts, working on specific participatory projects requires intermediaries that come attached to top-down collegiality. Linchpin intermediaries bring experience (i.e. appropriate knowledge) and personal relationships to both sides. Indeed, in such organizational frameworks, the cogs of politics are profoundly knowledge-based and relational.

Participation is a three-role situation that can generate much discontent. Especially in contexts where consensus does not reflect what participants engaged in the process really think and does not speak to their real life (Bühler, 2002) personalized relationships, in which private interests can be recognized and safeguarded, matter. In situations where the weaker party is very vulnerable, subject to delegitimization and symbolic violence as understood by Norbert Elias, a third party of intermediaries can help this weaker party “become a strategic actor”. It can provide material support, advice, relational access and symbolic recognition as a party that can honourably come to the discussion table where change and common actions are designed, and commitments are made. This requires struggle against exclusively top-down collegiality and work in favour of the latter’s meeting with bottom-up collegiality, i.e. a definition of collegiality that makes it inclusive, underlines its principles of heterogeneity, rotation in positions of authority, consensus building, last word for the committee of the whole, etc. This ideally accepts the weaker party’s participation in the definition of joint regulation, i.e. the political order itself.

When negotiations and coordination become tense, experience, skills and personal relationships of intermediaries are used to manage tensions, share knowledge and, nevertheless, keep cooperation going. When there is no will, time, and resources for that, the process becomes too costly and artificial, with players going through the motions, *pour la galerie*, not with the aim to reach compromises. A knowledge of how to confront the other side, value and use experience, organized learning, mobilized personal relationships to manage conflicts, are required for participation as an organizational process in institutional contexts where demands of the weak are considered legitimate. Any cooperative situation is based upon conflicting definitions

of the situation, appropriateness judgments, construction of a minimal shared meaning and experience that modifies each other's representations. Short of these adjustments, participation is fake and does not reflect any form of cooperation at all. Developing learning and personal ties to the other side has long been the role and turf of professionals with experience of such situations, for example lawyers, social workers, or priests. This development is not a sufficient condition, a guarantee that participation in a regulatory process will be truly integrative, but it is a necessary condition.

Two issues are raised by this need for linchpin intermediaries. Firstly, it is often argued that the danger that intermediaries represent for the parties is a recursive transformation into *notables*, the very category that participation intended to avoid in the first place. Rotation of intermediaries (when there are enough of them) might help prevent them from thinking of themselves as sole owners of the definition of the general interest. Secondly, at some point, third parties as intermediaries are put by principals in a situation in which they must choose their side. As seen above in the description of religious orientations in a Catholic diocese, priests in the Catholic Church often do choose their side. But their institution has built an internal organizational structure, that of top-down collegiality, that helps ensure its longevity by integration of these diverse and potentially conflicting orientations, i.e. priests that have chosen different, conflicting sides, in particular the side of the strong more often than the side of the weak. Intermediaries' work is ambiguous and uses ambiguity. With top-down collegiality, the institution organizes for participation in the long run by taking sides without taking sides while still taking sides (Litwak, 1961). Network analysis of peer production in a diocese suggests that institutions designed for managing participation can live with such contradictions and tensions for centuries. They allow individual members to choose their side as intermediaries in the participation processes, while still belonging to an institution that claims neutrality and promotes values that are impossible to live up to in real life.

What lesson can be drawn from this approach to the combination of top-down and bottom-up participation? Top-down collegiality is still mostly practiced in traditional ways, i.e. in exclusive, rarefied, privatized rooms, from the beginning to the end of the process. Powerful parties control the risk of goal drift by identifying intermediaries who are not always properly elected representatives and by building personal relationships with and among these intermediaries. In such collegial oligarchies, elitist egalitarianism can be cosy. Perhaps online social network platforms will prevent this organization of participation from taking place outside the surveillance of public opinion and the media, and without open and inclusive political debates. With institutions using top-down collegiality, at least network analyses could give the weaker party a chance of monitoring their linchpin intermediaries and the quality of the latter's help. Participation thus needs intermediaries but also mechanisms of social control of intermediaries. The institutional entrepreneurship of intermediaries can perhaps be used while still avoiding the dangers created by their 'rent seeking' status. In spite of the difficulties / disappointments generated by participation, it could help the weaker parties hold their own in the framework imposed upon them from above. Over time, attempts to redefine collective rights behind collective responsibilities may exploit this capacity to try to keep others' powers in check. In a context of bleak prospects for vulnerable and weak parties, that in itself may be a lesson that should perhaps not be ignored.

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End Notes

[1] Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris.

[2] In this presentation, I will not consider the case where these intermediaries transform themselves into independent institutional entrepreneurs whose status inconsistency helps with political action provided they use the right rhetoric and culture (Lazega, 2001). The relationship between intermediary and independent institutional entrepreneurship remains to be further explored.

[3] "There is absolutely nothing 'democratic' about collegiality. When the privileged classes had to guard themselves against the threat of those who were negatively privileged, they were always obliged to avoid, in this way, allowing any monocratic, seigneurial power that might count on those strata to arise" (Weber 1978:362).

[4] The black squares represent priests with ritual orientation. For an interpretation of this structure, refer to the text. For a detailed presentation of the network study of this diocese, see Wattebled (2004) and Lazega and Wattebled (2011).

[5] See ICA'17 conference themes and interventions.