The contribution of the 'professionals of participation' to the participatory turn.

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Despite the fact that over the past 30 years participatory reforms have been implemented all over the world and the growing interest within the social sciences about these procedures, it's quite surprising how little we still know about the dynamics of this "participatory change". Most of the researches about participatory democracy are focused on democratic innovations. There are a lot of in-depth studies of particular cases (Porto Alegre, British Columbia Assembly, BAPE in Québec, CNDP in France, BPL in Poitou-Charentes) which aim to evaluate the effects of the innovation on the quality of democracy or of public policies. In these studies the "participatory turn" is conceived as a new spirit of democracy, a new way of public policy making, mobilized as a supposed explanatory variable of the implementation of such procedures. Three “reasons” are often mobilized to explain why some public authorities implement such innovations. Both of the first two ones are functionalist and analyze the participatory reforms as a response to social, political or managerial problems. The first focus on the context and on the social demand for participation and the second focus on the “failures” of the public policy making (Fung, 2006). The third ones is decisional and focus on the “belief” of the elected representatives who decide to implement participatory reform (Röcke, 2009 ; Sintomer, Talpin 2010) : the political will and the ideological motives of the leader and his supports would explain why some public authorities are more innovative than others. But, these analyzes fail to explain the growing number of participatory practices. Firstly, they're mainly focused on the “innovations” whereas understanding the institutionalization of participation require to analyze, also, the logics of the “ordinary”, “weak”, “non-innovative”, participatory arrangements (Bherer, 2011). Secondly, they're based on a distorted vision of public policy which overvalues the rationality of the decider and of the public policy (Mazeaud, Berthome, Sa Vilas Boas, 2012). In the contrary, the public policy analysis has now well established that the “political decider” promoted in the political competition has little power in the policy making, and that the public policies not only, not at all, aim to solve problems.

Recent works on public policy analysis have aimed to show the variety of uses of public participation procedures. These studies demonstrate that in many cases public
participation has become an autonomous public policy and have nothing to do about democracy (Participations, 2012; Quaderni, 2012; Gourgues, 2013). We propose to lengthen this perspective by analyzing the contribution of the “professionals of participation” in the participatory turn. Our work switch the focus from the participatory innovations to the “professionals of participation” (facilitators, consultants, public servants, trainers), the ones who conceive, who legitimate, who facilitate these innovations, and who profit from this activity. These professionals are badly known. In some of the researches mentioned, the “public participation practitioners” are taken into account as an input (or a condition) of the success of the procedure (for example Forester, 1999; Escobar 2010). Indeed, the quality of the practices of these practitioners is seen as a key variable in the implementation of participatory procedures. In those approaches, it’s rather the practices or the know-how which interest the social scientists and not the “professional group”\textsuperscript{1}. Authors prefer employing the term “practitioner” (Forester, 1999). Sometimes, the researches underline that the practitioners contribute to the circulation of procedures but the contribution of the professionals is never the core of the publication. As it has been noticed yet by G. Smith and E. Cooper (2012), recently a few studies have focused on the practitioners of public participation but mainly in the perspective of evaluating their contribution to the democracy, and of identifying the best practices. Other researches, especially those of Carson and Hendriks (2008), have studied the transformation of “deliberative ideals in commercial goods bought and sold in a expanding consultancy market”. They studied the impact of the commercialization of participatory procedures on the democratic dimension of public participation.

Our approach noticeably differs from the two described above. Neither we aim to identify the best practices nor we aim to understand the impact of the belief of practitioners on the deliberative procedures. Contrary to these studies that see the emergence of participation professionals as a consequence of the participatory turn, we analyze how, in the french case, the professionalization of participation has contributed and still contribute to produce the participatory norm. Our research aims to analyze the actors (consultants, public servants, social scientists) who contribute to define, legitimate, implement public participation in order to understand why and how participatory reforms have been implemented in such a variety of contexts and in such a variety of devices, but not everywhere. We should point out that we don’t argue the professional dynamics are the first and only explanatory variable of participatory reforms. Our purpose is not to unveil the hidden power of the professionals of participation who would decide everywhere and all of the time of implementing participatory reform. Our study even shows that things are too complicated to pretend define one model to explain the implementation of all the participatory devices. But, we argue that, at least in the french case, the professionalization is a key variable to understand the institutionalization of public participation.

Our contribution will be divided into three sections. First of all, we would like to expose our methodological perspectives. Indeed, to focus on the “professionals of participation” is a real challenge. The undetermined limits of this professional group and these recent changes justify a specific research protocol. This protocol should take into

\textsuperscript{1} About the sociology of the professionals groups which inspired our research (Demazière, Gadéa 2010).
account the changes of several dimensions such as participatory policies, participatory consultancy market, individual trajectories of professionals. In a second section, we want to highlight, on the one hand, how these “professionals of participation” have worked directly on the production of this participatory norm, especially because they provide the evidences: participation is a social need, social demand for participation exists in and through the procedures they animate, participation needs skills and know-how. On the other hand, we also show how the enormous plasticity of the professional group composed of individuals, with very different trajectories and different practices, also explains why the participatory norm is a vague norm. In other words, we argue that the indeterminacy of what participation means is a condition of the existence of a participation market. In a third section, we want to show that focusing on the “professionals of participation” could renew the research already available on participatory democracy and more especially how this perspective could bring up questions about the idea of a global participatory turn. We will propose some hypothesis which need to be obviously consolidated to better understand the professional dynamics of participatory norm in an international comparative way.

1. Analyzing the dynamics of the professionalization: a methodological challenge

A- “Professionals of participation” : an heuristic scientific category

The main methodological problem of analyzing the professionalization of public participation is that professionals who work on the participation market cannot be consider as a real profession. “Professional of participation” is not a « profession » in the sense of the anglo-saxon's sociology of professions, i.e a limited group of professionals, whom skills, qualifications and activities are well defined, organized, controlled and legitimized, as lawyers or doctors. The boundaries of this professional group are not clearly identified so it better to talk about the existence of a « participatory nebula ». This “participatory nebula” is composed with consultants, public servants, experts; any are facilitators, others are trainers, others evaluators. Nowadays, these actors work on several public sectors as sustainable development or urban renewal. In fact, talking about “professionals of participation” could be meaningless for a lot of the actors who develop expertise on the design of participatory tools in France. Furthermore, few of them identify themselves under this label. So, we consider this label rather as a scientific category constructed in order to study the development of an expertise in participatory tools and the professional dynamics of the promotion of participatory democracy. We don't define a priori who are (and who are not) a professional of participation. We try to analyze the process in which more and more actors (consultants, public servants, social scientists) are professionally engaged with public participation whether to design, to facilitate, to evaluate the participatory procedures. By “professionals of participation”, we mean all of those whom professional activity deals with public participation, and who earn money with public participation. So in contrary to the researches that aim to analyze the values of the deliberative practitioners or the role of the consultants, we don't focus on one type of participation professional. In this way, our perspective doesn't aim to quantify this professional group but aims to focus on the changes, on the dynamics of this participation market. In other words, as it's useless to endlessly attempt to count and track
every participatory procedures, it's impossible to do an exhaustive census of all professionals of participation. We prefer to identify which kind of professionals decide to develop expertise in the design of participatory tools; if there are changes of trajectories, academic trainings depending on the period; if there are some dynamics of standardization or of diversification in their practices and their discourses. We try to know if we can draw some parallels between the changes of public participation policies and participation market. Seen in this context, the development of participatory engineering can't be only studied as a consequence of the implementation of participatory reforms but also separately and in some way with autonomous dynamics.

B- An empirical approach:

Our approach of the “professionals of participation” is based on a specific protocol that takes into account the changes of several dimensions such as: participatory policies, participatory consultancy market, individual trajectories of professionals.

These three dimensions were firstly studied in our Phd researches (Nonjon, 2006; Mazeaud, 2010). One was devoted to the development of a participation market in France. This work analyzed the professionalization of public participation and the development of an expertise on the design of the participatory tools. In this study, the author focus on the private professionals (consultancy, non-profit organizations, experts) who produce expertise and tools on the participation field. The other was devoted to the uses and the effects of participatory procedures in a french region. The work was mainly focus on the conditions of implementation of a participatory reform and so, on the way the political and administrative actors have integrated the participation in their discourses and in their practices.

Nevertheless, these Phd researches share common perspectives. Firstly, these Phd analyze the public participation policies not only as a response to a social demand but rather as a public offer which had been produced by different kind of professionals (elected representatives, public servants, consultants, experts) for reasons which are not necessarily bounded to the democracy. For example, Alice Mazeaud has studied how S. Royal, with the support of a group of public servants, activists and social scientists, has used “participatory democracy” to construct her political identity; in this perspective, her political voluntarism and her belief in “participatory democracy”, usually promoted as a “cause” of the participatory reform in Poitou-Charentes, is analyzed as a product of the work of legitimization of the reform. Secondly, both are based on empirical and ethnographic data (Participant observation, biographic interview). Thirdly, those researches tried to adopt a longitudinal approach. For example, in the case of the emergence of a participation market, Magali Nonjon worked on the trajectories of professionals which deal with participation since the seventieth; she paid close attention to the biographic data of these actors, to the retrainings.

Nowadays, we are convinced that it's important to study private and public professionals of participation together. Our research emphasizes the strong relationship between the development of a private and a public expertise on the design of participatory tools (partnership but also competition). We decided to develop cooperative researches on these “professionals of participation”. We particularly observe since 2011 areas dedicated to the promotion of the participatory know-how, skills and abilities: forums, symposiums,
professional trainings. We also set up a databases to compile data on job offers which deal with public participation (for example the census of the job offers published in Gazette des communes) and on the consultants who work on the participation market. We still use semi-structured and biographic interview of these professionals.

2. How the 'professionals of participation' have contributed to the making of the French participatory norm.

Our study shows that the emergence of public participation professionals is not only a consequence of the institutionalization of public participation but a factor of this institutionalization. Two dimensions are very important to understand: on one hand, "professionals of participation" have worked directly on the production of this participatory norm, on the other hand, the enormous diversification of the professionals of participation encourages fluidity and variety amongst this norm and therefore ensures its success.

A -When the professionals of participation worked on the evidences of the French "participatory turn"

The first point is that these professionals, in relation with social scientists, have played a key role in the legitimatization of the participatory offer: to grow up the market, an so to insure their professional activity, they have to legitimize the demand of participation. This is a condition of their professional survival. All the participatory reforms are based on the postulate of an existing social demand for participation\(^2\), and on the idea that participation improve public decisions and public policies. Most often, the belief on the necessity of participation is shared by the social scientists - many of them define themselves as public sociologists (Nez 2012) - and the professionals of participation, and we can observe a collusive work to demonstrate the benefits of participation. The regular interpenetrations between social scientists and professionals explain how some of the social sciences works are so quickly used by the professionals. The best example is the "three objectives of participation" (democratic, managerial and social) brought out by Bacqué and Sintomer (2001), which is now used as a trilogy in most of the public discourses to justify the implementation of public participation. This work is assumed and some institutions are especially dedicate to it. For example an aim of the ICT (Institut de la concertation), created in 2000, in order to facilitate the debate between professionals and social scientists on public participation, is to « better the visibility of the public participation devices to the public authorities, mainly the sub-governments and the companies»\(^3\). This work, which forms an important part of their activities can be viewed as a professional necessity: the existence of participation professionals is conditioned by a public order for participation, so the professionals need to carry it on. That's why we could often observe participation professionals acting as lobbyists to local authorities, which in France are the main bid

\(^2\)The reality of this demand is a still opened question. Very little studies have been made to appreciate if people really want to participate.

\(^3\)http://www.concerter.org/
sponsors and employers. This work is partly self-sustained: the multiplication of participatory mechanisms give credence to the rhetoric of necessity.

This lobbying to demonstrate that participatory mechanisms are a necessity is fueled with the outputs of the participatory processes. A part of implementation of participatory mechanisms is dedicated to the authentication of the social demand for participation. The attendance of public is the main evidence provided to demonstrate the demand: if people comes, that demonstrate citizens wanted to participate! Thus, the main threat on participation is the absence of public. It explains firstly how to mobilize the public, specifically the marginalized ones, is a recurrent topics of the professional trainings. Secondly, it explains also that public participation is always quantified and the number of participants is put up as an evidence of a successful participation: some outputs of participation (video, reports...) are produced in order to “monstrate” that people have participated. This tendency is well seen on the market of participation: the consultants have developed more and more tools and services which the only function is to authenticate the participation (Bonnacors, Nonjon, 2012).

The second point is that the professionals of participation have succeed in demonstrating that the professionalization of participation is a necessity. Firstly, they have argued that the democratic prophecy could be realized only through procedures requiring specific skills. Secondly, they have positioned themselves as essential “mediators” of elected officials / citizens / public servants relationships. So, they have progressively imposed the idea that participatory expertise and skills were a condition to implement “real”, “good”, participatory reforms. The emergence of specific academic trainings (we think to the master’s degree called “ingénierie de la concertation” in the University of La Sorbonne), or professional trainings are a perfect illustration of this new dynamic. The acknowledgement of an expertise on public participation is, of course important for the consultants, who can provide advises on public participation, but also for public servants in charge of participation, who are often in weak institutional position to the other public servants (Gourgues, 2011; Mazeaud, 2012). Step to step, we could observe an intensification of the professionalization, and so, of the division of the participatory work. The promotion of the “guarantor” of the quality and the sincerity of the procedure is a good example. The “guarantor”, who used to exist only in the public debate, has been promoted in the academic field. The role of “guarantor” is now organized in many participatory devices. To sum up, even there is no consensus on what should be the best positions of the “facilitator” (public servants, consultants) and of the “guarantor” (scholars, non-profit organizations...) (Blondiaux, 2008), nowadays nobody can say that implementing public participation policies doesn't require a professional staff to design, facilitate and even guaranty, the procedure.

Basically, this rise of expertise on participation could be considered as an evidence of the participatory turn. Whatever the local context, using participatory skills and so, calling on to the services of professionals of participation (private or public one) seems to become a common practice. More, the professionalization of participation and the institutionalization of a participation market has increased the circulation of participatory tools. We could observe that in the symposium or in the participatory trainings, the professionals of participation share their practices, their experiences on the implementation of participatory devices. That's why the design of participatory tools seem to be more and more standardized and similar (we
think to participatory toolkit, or animation tools like post-its, chinese portray) (Bonaccorsi, Nonjon, 2012 ; Mazeaud, Nonjon, 2012). This standardization of participatory tools and practices ensure obviously the development of participatory norm. Nevertheless, we would like to show that whereas the rise of public participation policies is an evidence of the growing interest on public participation- we can't talk about “a participatory turn” of about the emergence of one single “participatory norm”.

B- Is there really one participative standard ? The french 'professionals of participation', a fragmented professional universe

The widespread of participatory tools and know-how doesn't mean that all the professionals share the same vision of what is participation, and of what are the best practices. On the contrary, if the institutionalization of a public offer of participation has produced some kinds of routinization, very few of them want to formalize what public participation should be. The internal dynamics of the market explain why they seek to keep up the plasticity of the participatory norm. So, whereas the ambiguity of the notion of participation (deliberative democracy, public dialogue, participatory democracy...) is often criticized and even deplored, our research shows that, this ambiguity is a collective resource of the professional group. The indetermination of the participatory norm facilitate the growing up of the market. More, the indetermination of the participatory norm is also produced by the professional competition inside the market. To understand this point, it's useful to make the history of these professionalization

During the seventies, in France, the ideal-type of « professionals of participation » was similar to an activist. Those who promoted participation were often involved in urban action groups, as in the « atelier populaire d'urbanisme de l'Alma Gare » in Roubaix, the « petit séminaire » in Marseille, or the « moulin de la Pointe » area in Paris. Those activists were often social scientists, as Michel Anselme and these co-workers of the CERFISE. For them, it was important to pool their own resources for the sake of the participatory cause. At this time, participation was clearly a way to build an « other society ». Those intellectuals thought that it was necessary to help inhabitants in working-class areas to develop participatory projects. They were the first who conceived the idea of « facilitator » in urban policies and public participation. They also were the first who imposed the idea of that participative democracy needs know-how and skills (Rosenberg, 1979 ; Anselme, 1985).

We can't improve this issue, but their approaches have impacted the professionalization of the public participation field. First of all, promoting the idea of a « facilitator » has signified to recognize the fact that we need participatory tools and obviously the developing expertise in the design of participatory tools. Secondly, imagining participatory tools has led to participative democracy being primarily a question of practices or design which not necessarily depends on activists resources (Tissot 2002, Nonjon, 2012). So, during the nineties, other profiles not necessarily activists have developed participatory tools as architects, urban planners, but also communication professionals, management consultants. Each one claimed to be able to use their own technical skills to develop public

4 For more details, Nonjon 2006
participation. For example, architects develop tools to explain urban planification to the inhabitants which were concerned by urban planning. Professionals of industrial design develop participatory tools kit for public administration (we thought in particularly to the FING, « Fondation Internet Nouvelle Génération »). These changes of trajectories and profiles of « professionals of participation » have deeply impacted the participatory market between the seventieth and the beginning of 2000's. Even if professionalization of participation doesn't mean the end of the activists, the activist of the seventieth have been compelled to adapt themselves and their practices to the development of expertise in the design of participatory tools.

These changes in the participation field are not only the consequences of the transformations of trajectories of those professionals, but also the consequences of the transformations of public policies. In the french case, with the professionalization of urban planning during the nineties, the participation which was considered during the seventieth as a way to build a « new society », has became a tool for modernization of public administration (Tissot, 2002 ; Mazeaud 2010; Nonjon, 2006). From that time, participatory tools are shared in a wide range of policy domains and not only on the urban planning : environment, development policies. This dissemination of the participatory practices has risen the number of public orders, and led to the emergence of new positions in public administration specifically assigned to public participation (« chargés de mission démocratie participative », « chef de projet participation »). Most of those public servants of participation contract out public participation to consultants, and have a lot of difficulty to be acknowledged as expert in their administration ; they are too far from the political power to decide to implement participatory devices, they are only in charge of the implementation. But a few, closer to the political leaders, played a key role, not only in the participatory reform, but also in the promotion and the circulation of the practices; they succeeded in being acknowledge as expert on public participation, and became competitors to the consultants.

In fact, in France, the group of the professionals of participation is at the same time institutionalized and still very fragmented. We can observe a hierarchy inside the group between the acknowledged professionals - those who are in touch with social scientists, who develop the “innovations”, who are invited to share their experience in the trainings etc. - and the crowd of professionals who lack of skills, qualifications, legitimacy to be acknowledged in their professional field.

This diversity of types of professionals (according to their trajectories, their trainings, their practices, their links with social scientist, politicals...) increase the competition in public participation field. The competitive dynamics explain why the professionals of participation have no interest in defining what the participatory norm should be. On one hand, the indetermination of the “norm” make all the appropriation possible - for example, at the moment in France, the local authorities and the public servants try to make the idea of “community organizing” their own to renew their participatory practices. On other hand, the indetermination make all the innovation possible. So, the competition inside the market explains both the standardization and the dynamics of differentiation.

Firstly, each term used to describe public participation (consultation, participatory democracy, mediation, participatory communication, public dialogue, deliberation) match with a segment of the professional group and of the participation market. The actors don't have the same conceptions of the goal of participation or of their own role and they try to position
themselves on a segment to stand out from their competitors. Secondly, this professional
dynamic match with a political logic. Elected officials don’t want to give the impression that
they follow the participatory “fashion”, so they always try to invent new names for the
participatory reforms, to make a difference to the others. The local authorities always recycle
the participatory devices by renaming them, by reformulating them in order to give the
appearance of novelty and innovation. The consequence is a multiplication of the names
(Assises territoriales, forum participatif, Etats généraux, atelier participatif, jury citoyen,
fabrique participative, dialogue citoyen, diagnostic en marchant) used to designate the
devices which are, in practices, very similar. From this point of view, innovating is also a diary
practice of public servants in charge of public participation (Gourgues, 2012). Their
institutional position is conditioned by their ability to innovate in regard to the ordinary
decisional processes. They legitimize themselves by demonstrating how much innovating
is public participation. In this way, innovating is their professional routine: renewing their own
practices help them to sustain their engagement and the participation of citizens. Finally our
researches on the french case, show that the process of institutionalization is both the most
tangible sign of the existence of a participatory norm and of its impossible codification.
Indeed, we can observe that the standardization and the depoliticization are, also, a
consequence of the work of local authorities, and of the consultants, to differentiate
themselves from their competitors.

3. The French case put into comparative perspective: hypothesis on the “global
participatory turn”.

In what measure, our study of the professionals of participation can renew the researches on
public participation in a comparative perspective? More especially how this perspective can
bring up questions about the idea of one single global participatory turn?

A- Limits of the international comparison of participatory procedures:

As some democratic innovations have spread all over the world, the study of public
participation has taken a comparative turn. The former studies used to put the variety of
procedures into perspective (Fung, Wright 2003, Smith 2005, Bacqué et al. 2005) and the
new ones are more often focused on one kind of procedures (PB : Sintomer and al. 2008;
Consensus Conference: Dryzek, Tucker 2008) but they all mainly focus on the impact of the
participatory devices on democracy or policy making. The cross-national researches on
public participation face two main limits. Firstly, the transnational dynamics which explain the
transfer of the “innovations”, but also the transfer of discourses, categories and practices,
has thus far received little attention. Who are the actors, the institutions who contribute to this
“global participatory turn”? Some researches have pointed out the role played by
international institutions like OECD, The World Bank etc., but there are probably just the
most visible ones. Others actors, as professionals associations, scientific or activist
networks, must also be analyzed.
The second criticism deals with the categories used to compare. So far, the comparison were based on the “devices”, the “procedures” in order to identify how and in which condition a “model” is appropriate. If this approach can highlight the flow of innovations, it don’t allow to take into account the variety of practices and the changing meanings of public participation observable in each country. If it’s certain that democratic innovations, especially PB, and CC, have spread all over the world, it’s certain too that in each country we can observe different styles of public participation. The fact is that, whereas we can observe a growing interest for public participation and citizens’ participation all over the world, we cannot consider a priori that the dynamics are the same. More, by talking about a “global participatory turn”, there is a risk to gather some processes that can have nothing to do with. In fact, even the recent researches on the international spread of so-called “democratic innovations” pointed out that the idea of transnational circulation of participatory “norms” should probably be lessen. For example, the growing number of PB in the world is not a sign of the diffusion of one model but underlines that the ambiguity of the procedures make all the appropriation possible (Ganuza, Baiocchi, 2012). The methodological challenge is to empirically analyze the reality of the “global participatory turn”. That means to understand both the transnational process of homogenization and standardization and the national declinations. And we think that our approach through the professionals can be heuristic to do it.

B- Comparing the professionalization of participation : an other methodological challenge

Whereas a comparative analysis of participation focused on participatory devices runs the risk to overvalue the “homogeneity” of the participatory reforms, our approach aims to analyze the heterogeneity of the national patterns of public participation. Studying the professionalization of participation is a way to develop a comprehensive comparison of public participation (Demazière, 2013). That means that the categories of the comparison are not defined before comparison but constructed during the comparison in order to understand the diversity of meanings, of practices, of institutions of public participation. An yet, we think that the category of “professionals of participation” we used in the french case could be scientifically relevant to analyze public participation policies in other context. Indeed, our researches stress some specific characteristic of the french participatory turn and the national patterns of public participation.

First of all, our study underlines that even in the French case, we can’t talk about one single “participatory norm” (Mazeaud, Nonjon, 2013). The participatory field is much more divided than what the unification of discourses can let think. If all the public authorities have developed a participatory discourse, if some devices and some practices have been spread off, they are also still very huge differences in the ordinary practices. Beyond the participatory discourse, there is no “ideological” or “practical” dominant model ; the main characteristic of participation is its indetermination. We saw that despite the regular references to the trilogy of objectives “social, democratic, managerial” of the participatory reforms, the institutionalization of public participation has sometimes nothing to do with democracy, or with improving the quality of public policy, but it has to do with processes of professional recategorization, of market or of political competition. Secondly, we show that the French market of participation is mainly structured around the local authorities, which are the most important bid sponsors.
and employers. The private companies and the associations aren't important providers of public participation. Whereas the activists were the most numerous in the 70's, now most of the participation professionals are consultants or public servants, and are not necessarily democrat activists. This dynamic of institutionalization and professionalization - centrality of a public offer of participation and soaking of the citizen participation by the local political system and the public administration – seems coherent to the importance of the state in the french society.

These results convinced us that focusing on the professionalization of participation could lead to new questions in the participation academic field. A fast overview shows that in other countries the institutionalization and the professionalization of participation seems to take other paths, we can think about the importance of “community organizers" in the USA, or about the role played by the BAPE in Québec. In others contexts, there is also a very large kind of professionals of participation (public servants, consultants, non-profit organizations, experts, activists); They have different activities (trainers, facilitators, designers, evaluators). Nevertheless, the professional dynamics seem to be different. But in any case, the professionalization of participation should be considered as an important issue.

Our objective is not to produce an international comparison of the national patterns of participation. We don't want to model the participatory culture in order to explain the context of the participatory reform. We don't want to produce quantitative data. Our objective is to analyze empirically “the global participatory turn" and to highlight in other ways the dynamics of the participatory reforms that occur at the same time all over the world. We argue that analyzing the professionalization of participation can be a scientifically relevant approach to understand what the participatory turn means. So we don't aim to be exhaustive. We don't hope studying all the professionals of participation all over the over. Even in France, we show that it's impossible to pretend to an exhaustive study. And it's sure that in a comparative perspective we will never be able to collect so much qualitative data than in France. Our approach is much more modest.

On the base of our analysis of the French case and of the work we began with L. Bherer on the Quebec case, we can make some hypothesis, which guide our protocol. Our research would we directed in three directions. Firstly, We would try to encourage an international reflexion on this professionals (for example we deal to organize a specific colloquium with L. Bherer on this topic during the IPSA, 2014). The objective is to capitalize on the different researches made on participatory democracy in order to identify the different forms of professionalization. Secondly, we would like to study the areas, the institutions, the actors of the transnational circulation of ideals, practices and discourses on participation. So, we would have to observe areas of international socialization of the professionals of participation and the role of professional associations like IAP2, of scientific networks, or of transnational activist movements in the transnational circulation of ideas and practices. But our, hypothesis is that international socialization only concern the upper professionals of participation, and so, the “democratic innovations" who circulate from a country to other is the tip of the iceberg. Thirdly, we'll identify a few countries, representatives of different forms of professionalization to make qualitative study. As our approach is decidedly comprehensive, we can't define a priori who are the professionals of participation. We'll have, in first time, to discover in each country whose kinds of actors can be gather under this category, and so the composition of the group should be different in each case. And, in a second time, we'll have
to explain this composition, and to understand the dynamics of this professionalization. To compare the dynamics of professionalization and of institutionalization, we think about analyzing the trajectories of some kinds of professionals who are present in many countries (professional of the public debate for example), the associations of professionals of participation, and a census of the consultants and of the job offers.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, our analyze aims to show that the institutionalization of public participation has its own dynamics. That means the beliefs of the public authorities, the “failures” of public policy, the social demand of participation are not only “reasons” which explain the participatory reforms, they are also arguments, justifications used by the participation professionals to legitimatize their existence. That means that participatory reforms have sometimes nothing to do with democracy or with quality of public policies. In this sense, switching the focus from the devices to the professionals allows us to renew the questions about public participation. More, whereas the focus on the democratic innovations tends to overvalue the process of standardization, the approach through the professionals shows that the standardization is only the tip of the iceberg. Developed in a comparative perspective, this approach could be fruitful to understand the transnational transfers of practices, an so to study what public participation means in each country.


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