From vertical to horizontal: who drives, who manages, who controls?

Françoise Grossetête, Dominique Pon, Nicolas Revel, Guy Vallancien
Moderator: Antoine Flahault

There are too many institutes forming the health care system. They produce many contradictory texts and regulations leading to numerous inspections. This vertical system puts in place a silo organisation where no one is responsible for global policies. It doesn't take into consideration patients' feedback and doesn't stimulate cross-functional or inventive collaborations between professions at all.

1. Vertical democracy and horizontal democracy: from centralisation to decentralisation

In France, like in Europe, the political model is very vertical. On the contrary, in Switzerland, citizens vote everywhere for everything, and sometimes on the scale of a canton. In Switzerland, democracy is horizontal. France needs to have regions as powerful as the Swiss cantons to be able to develop a similar system.

2. The new horizontal functioning of businesses is not a token of democracy.

Although democracy exists in France as well as in Europe, it still remains very vertical. In companies, the functioning was vertical to start with, but contrary to France and Europe it isn't democratic. Management has transitioned from paternalism to industrialisation, but has never been democratic. Companies have methodically eliminated all connections to the human aspect. The manager illustrates this absence of democracy through his role. More and more companies are starting to develop collaborative and horizontal methods but democracy is not at the center of their functioning.

3. The limits of horizontality in managing structures and making decisions

The H1N1 bird flu incident in 2009 is a perfect example of vertical functioning.
A decision was taken at the highest level. If the debate had been based on a horizontal democratic functioning, the decision wouldn't have been taken at all. Whatever the relevance of the decision, it is extremely rare that a proposal obtains more than 50% of positive votes.
Therefore, horizontal democracies have limitations when big decisions have to be taken.

4. The intersecting of vertical power and horizontal democracy, on condition that the state allows local initiatives to develop

Just like companies' matrix management, the healthcare system needs to make vertical and horizontal logics coexist and interact. This means going beyond the simple reporting remarks of field work professionals. Innovation and trials don't come from a high level. They come from field work and need to be reported upstream quickly. This upstream reporting needs to be organised so that France can at last deploy what really works. The government needs to limit its interventions, free up initiatives and monitor *retrospectively* instead of wanting to legislate *in theory.*