

Towards New Forms of Concertation with States

The Challenges of Catholic Synodal Reform



Prof. Louis-Léon CHRISTIANS

Université catholique de Louvain (la Neuve)



Introduction

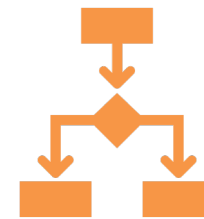


Synodal reform launched by
Pope Francis (2021)



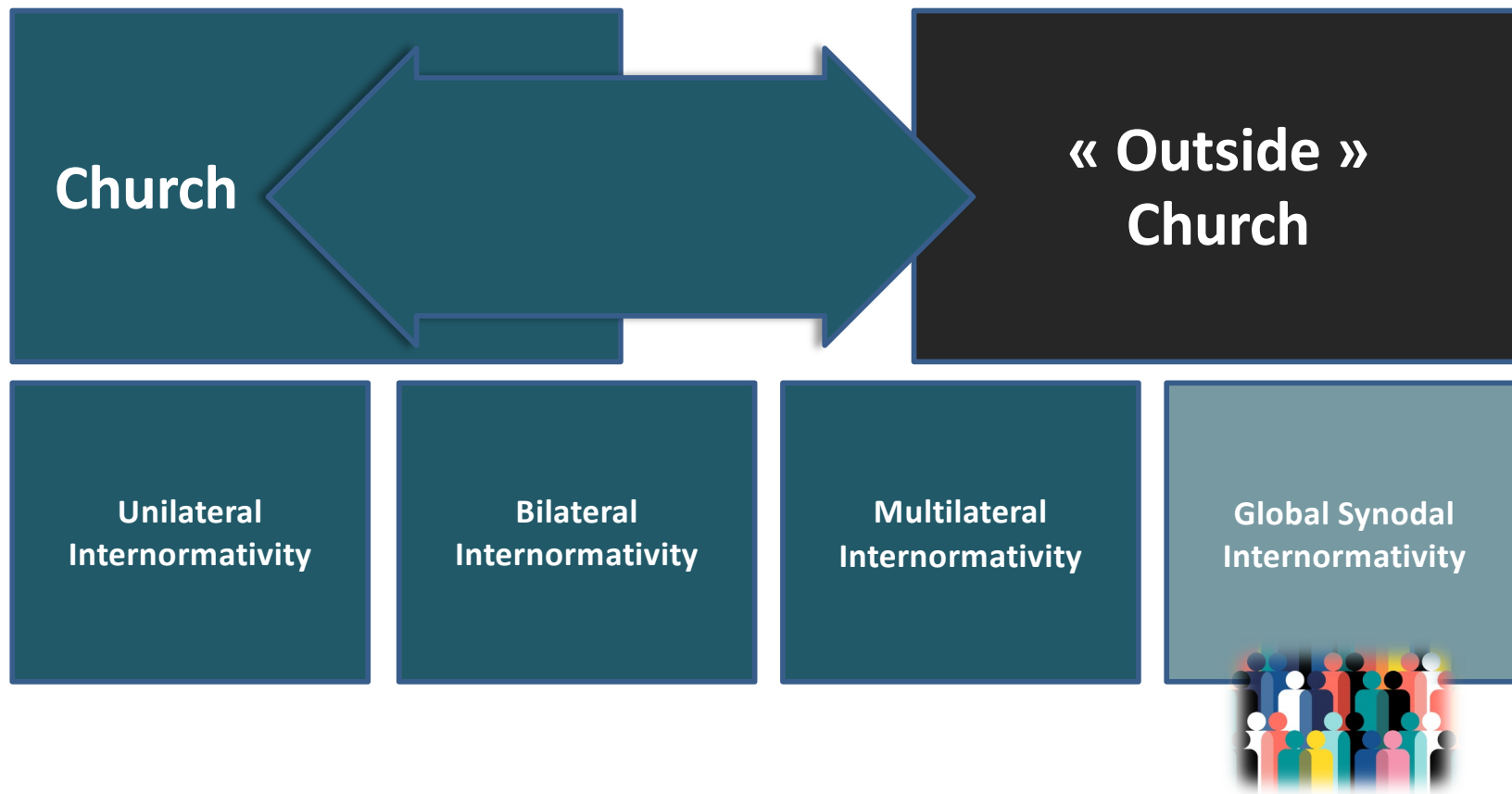
AD INTRA Dialogue: communion,
participation, mission, internal
dialogue

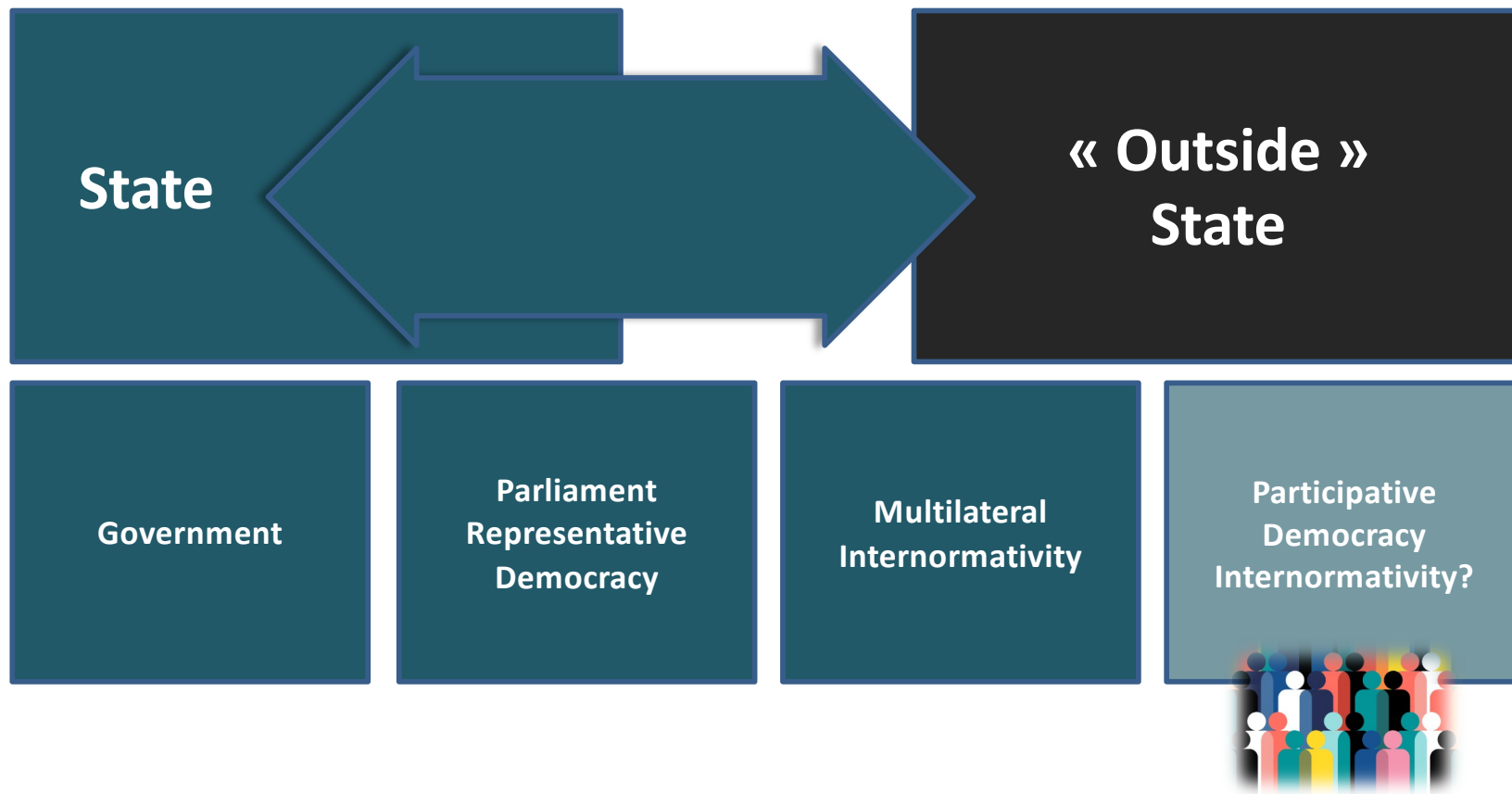
Sensus fidei



AD EXTRA dialogue : what
impact on Church-State
external concertation?







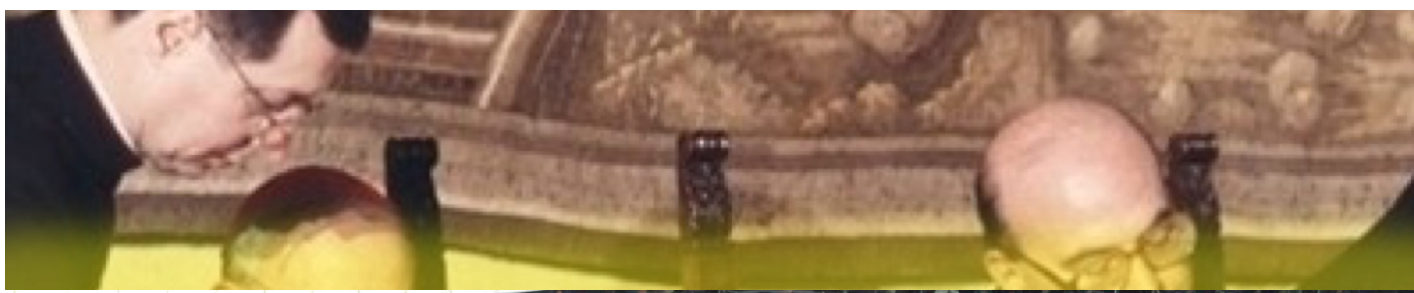


**Bilateralist
Law Taking**



**Multilateralist
Law making**

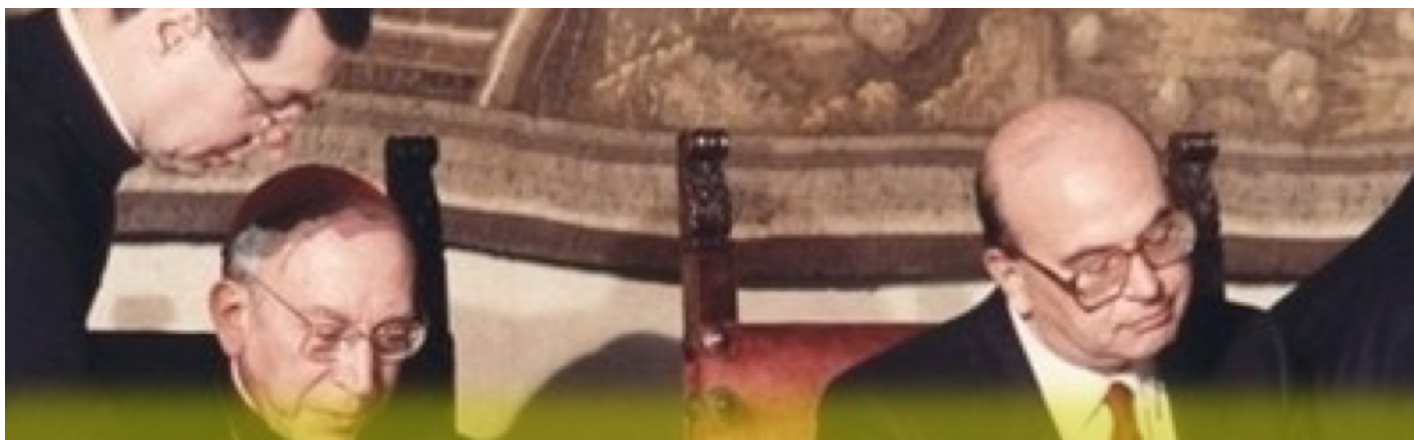
1. Hybrid actors
2. Hybrid legal frameworks
3. Ethical/political Hybridity
4. Hybrid Reception



**Multilateralist
Law making**

1. Hybrid actors
2. Hybrid legal frameworks
3. Ethical/political Hybridity
4. Hybrid Reception





**Communicative
Action
(Habermas)**



1. Hybrid actors
2. Hybrid legal frameworks
3. Ethical/political Hybridity
4. Hybrid Reception



**Multilateralist
NGO informal making**

1. Hybrid actors
2. Hybrid legal frameworks
3. Ethical/political Hybridity
4. Hybrid Reception

Gaudium & Spes, 76

- (...) The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other. Yet both, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same men. The more that both foster sounder cooperation between themselves with due consideration for the circumstances of time and place, the more effective will their service be exercised for the good of all. For man's horizons are not limited only to the temporal order; while living in the context of human history, he preserves intact his eternal vocation. The Church, for her part, founded on the love of the Redeemer, contributes toward the reign of justice and charity within the borders of a nation and between nations. **By preaching the truths of the Gospel, and bringing to bear on all fields of human endeavor the light of her doctrine and of a Christian witness, she respects and fosters the political freedom and responsibility of citizens ».**



24 nov 2002

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

DOCTRINAL NOTE **on some questions regarding** **The Participation of Catholics in Political Life**

*The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, having received the opinion of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has decided that it would be appropriate to publish the present **Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life**. This Note is directed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church and, in a particular way, to Catholic politicians and all lay members of the faithful called to participate in the political life of democratic societies.*

Fratelli tutti, 175

- (...) Among these normative instruments, preference should be given to multilateral agreements between states, because, more than bilateral agreements, they guarantee the promotion of a truly universal common good and the protection of weaker states.
- 175. Providentially, many groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, its lack of attention to fundamental human rights and to the critical needs of certain groups. Here we can see a concrete application of the principle of subsidiarity, which justifies the participation and activity of communities and organizations on lower levels as a means of integrating and complementing the activity of the state. **These groups and organizations often carry out commendable efforts in the service of the common good and their members at times show true heroism, revealing something of the grandeur of which our humanity is still capable.**

Synod Synodality, GR8

1st General Congregation October 2, 2024

Group 8 The Role of Papal Representatives in a Missionary Synodal Perspective (SR 13)

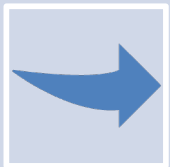
(...) more than half of the Papal Representatives (54 from about 104) had responded to the invitation to express their views on being a synodal church. They not only reported that their response was the fruit of a synodal discernment process in their Nunciatures involving all who work with them, but their responses also show how they are eager to participate in reflecting **about their own synodal way of decision making in “walking with the local churches”**, as well as assisting the people of God to become an ever more synodal church enabling them to be truly missionary.

(...) Among the topics raised are the procedures for episcopal appointments and **the involvement of lay persons therein, a necessary consideration for culture** and context when the Holy See issues documents or renders decisions otherwise, and the need for accountability and transparency.

I. Redefining contact persons



Multiplication of internal Church voices



Weakening of Roman verticality



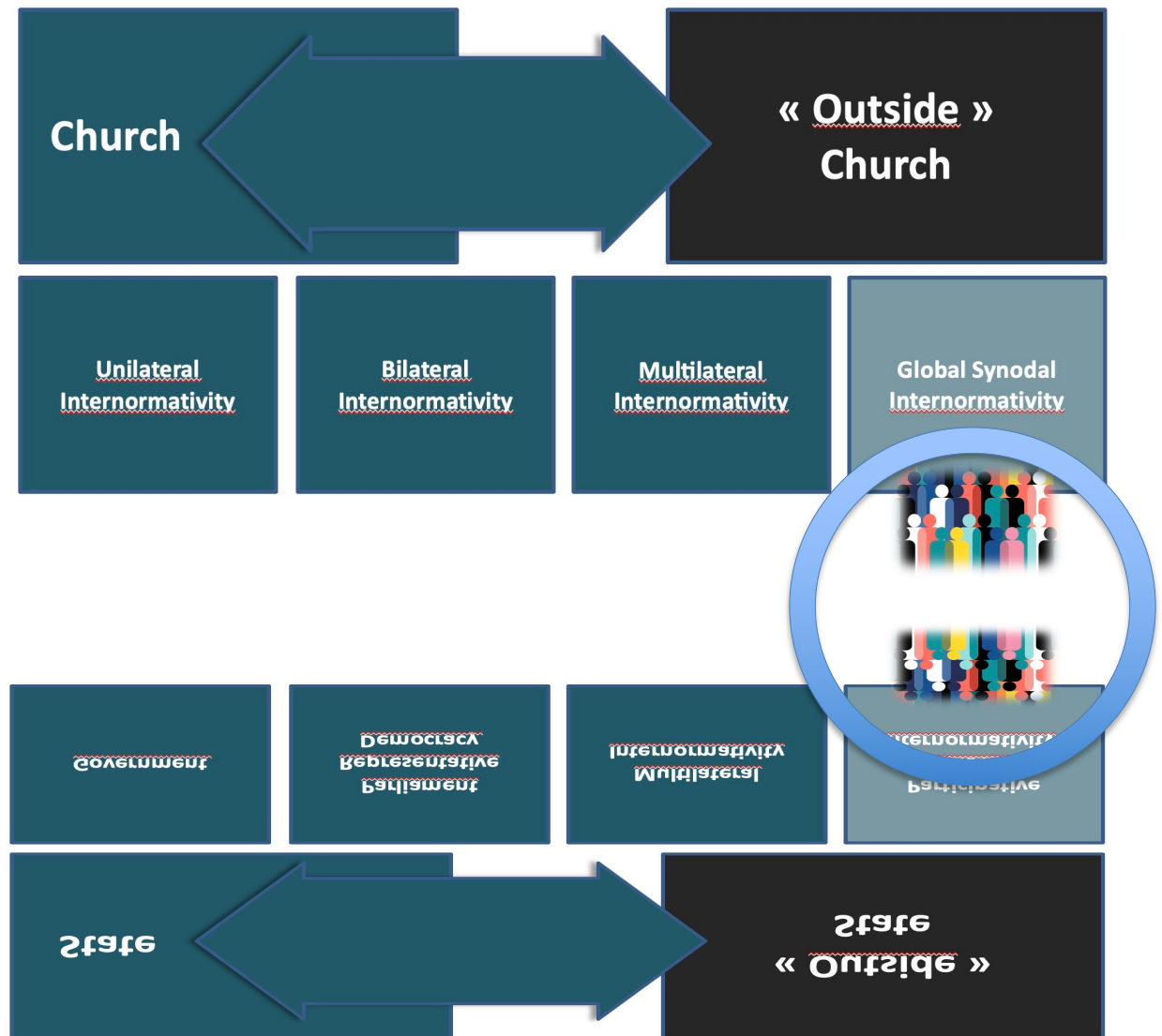
Who speaks for the Church?

Code of Canon Law, 227

Can. 227 — The lay Christian faithful have the right to have recognized that freedom which all citizens have in the affairs of the earthly city. When using that same freedom, however, they are to take care that their actions are imbued with the spirit of the gospel and are to heed the doctrine set forth by the magisterium of the Church. **In matters of opinion, moreover, they are to avoid setting forth their own opinion as the doctrine of the Church.**

Hypothesis 1

Ideal new bottom-up Synergy



II. Cohabitation of legal frameworks

Tension between synodality and classical hierarchy

Institutional fluidity difficult to control legally

State recognition based on fixed structures

III. Renewed ethical & political dialogue



Multiplication of intermediate documents



Rethinking traditional agreements (concordats)



Deterritorialization of the Church

IV. Differentiated reception and unity

Heterogeneous reception in different countries

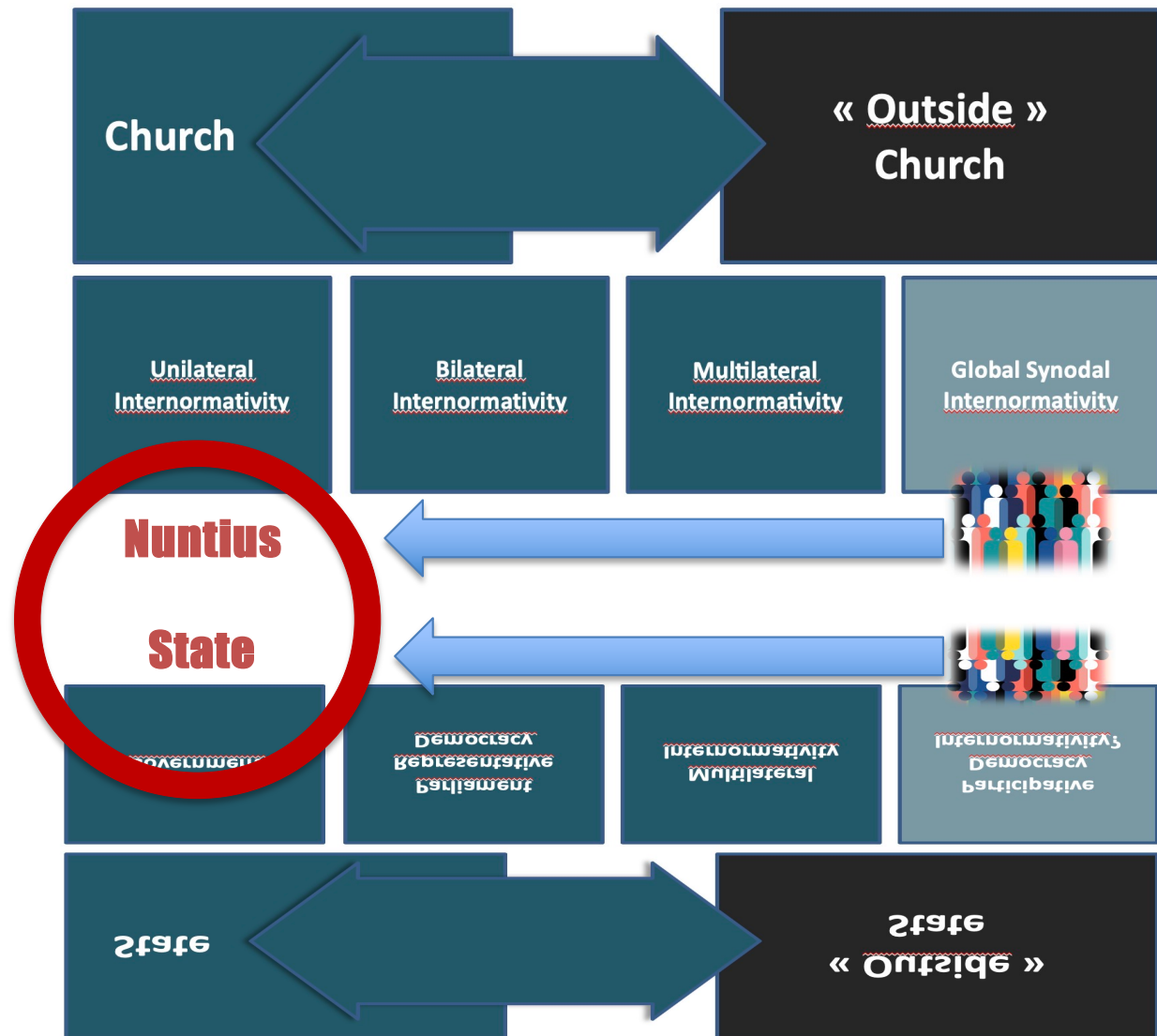
Plurality of ecclesial representations

Risk of fragmentation of the ecclesial partner

Hypothesis 2

New Power strategies

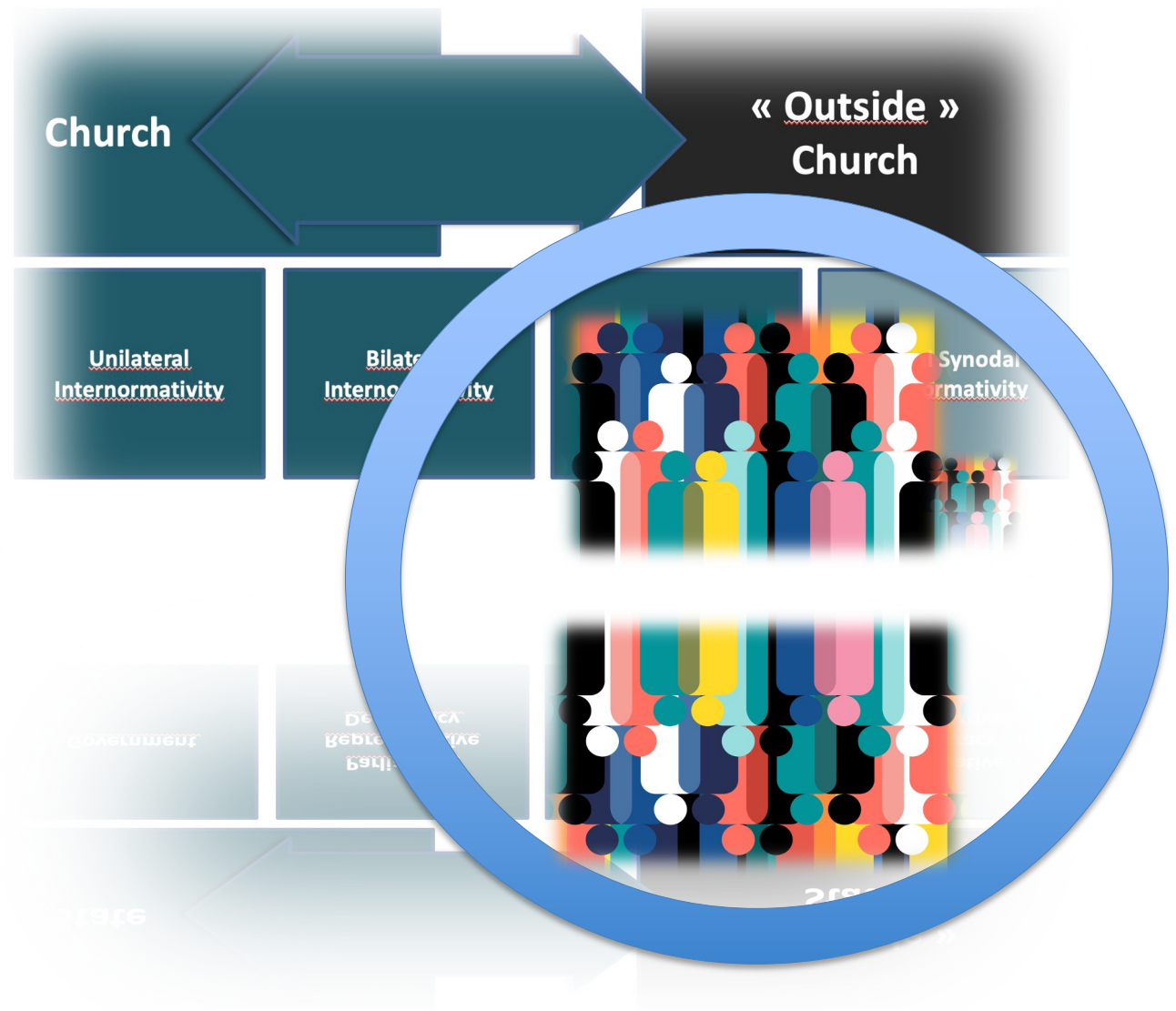
1 Authoritarian Revival
before participatory
democracy succeeds = no
destabilisation of classical
diplomacy ; = relegitimation
of autocratic power



Hypothesis 3

New Power strategies

3 Anticipation by the Church of a progressive failure of the State (and the Church?) in a fragmented postmodern world = Status of International Catholic NGOs



Conclusion

**Towards new interactionS between
two horizontal participative models**

**While maintaining the mechanisms
of reflexivity and decision-making
within their proper roles ?**

**Three Different futures for Church-
State reform**

Conclusion

Segreteria Generale del Sinodo: Tracce per la fase attuativa del Sinodo, 07.07.2025

We live in a world that is spiraling into an endless spiral of violence and war, **which is increasingly struggling to build opportunities for encounter and dialogue, with a view to the common good and peace.** More than ever it needs a Church that knows how to be "in Christ as the sacrament, that is, the sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (Lumen Gentium, no. 1; cf. DF, no. 56). In the variety of contexts of this world, the Synod "constitutes an act of further reception of the Council, prolonging its inspiration and relaunching for today's world its prophetic force" (DF, no. 5)