

# The Impact of the Web and Political Balance to e-Democracy

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**Abstract.** In this paper we explore the relations between the Web, governance individual and collective action.

We set three questions which arise in relation to the interaction between the Internet and socio-political dynamics.

1. How do we delineate democracy in these new conditions?
2. Does the Internet create a new crisis of political balance or does it intensify an imbalance of a whole political cycle?
3. How can we explore new forms of political balance based on the reality of the Internet?

We explore these complex dynamics from a theoretical perspective proposing a model which combines the theory of minorities with a catnet framework. We run simulation experiments and analyze experimental outcomes. We conclude that the complex relation between the Web, governance models and collective action produces non predictable outcomes and a possible crisis. Only a substantial shift in the stance of the state and the authority, bearing the meaning of acceptance of a wider democracy, will create a new balance that will reflect the new conditions. This shift could occur either cooperatively or through a social conflict.

**Keywords:** Web, e-Democracy.

## 1 Introduction

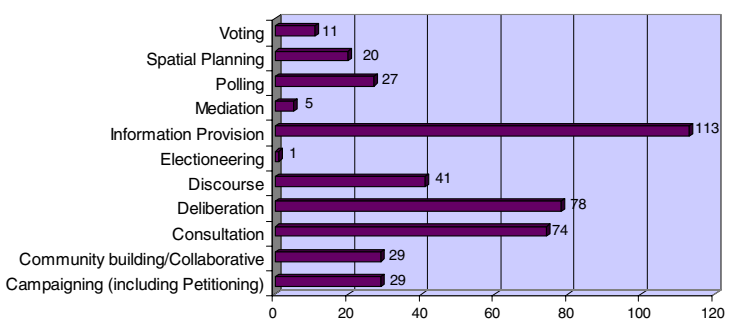
It is accepted that the need for a strong governance perspective where citizens and businesses seek empowerment becomes a challenge for the public sector and state entities. In recent years both e-participation and e-government had made significant advances and have set in motion certain social interactions, as well as opinion and public service distribution procedures accordingly. On the one hand ICT advances in the fields of information diffusion and social networks, caused a critical mass of coherent e-communities and groups which grow at certain rates either at the level of population size or at the level of dense collaboration and information flow.

According to D. Broster [10] next stage is probably “the need to include a strong governance perspective where citizens and businesses seek empowerment and where

both geographic boundaries and the role of administrations, the private and civil sectors, are all blurring". This situation entails profound challenges and opportunities for governance. A new governance model where government is seen as just one form of collectivity alongside other forms which are emerging as ICT is taken up, could meet these new challenges. People are becoming increasingly educated and connected and therefore seek to be involved. On the other hand they demand this involvement to guarantee transparency, collaboration, accountability in information flow through an increased intelligent use of the technology.

In principle this demand could be based on the interlink of e- participation and e- government dynamics and practices. Each one could provide advantages to such a process. For instance e-participation could mobilize citizens in order to provide arenas for deep conversations and opinion exchanges and operate as providers of crucial innovative ideas and concepts concerning governance. But at the same time e- participation practices are not themselves mature to guarantee misuse of the participation processes as well as threats to sensitive data and identity protection. Besides e- government practices, while matured to a more or less degree seem to be developed and run with no significant relevance to proposals expressed directly by citizens. Therefore the concept of e-government itself should be reoriented towards a) interrelations with citizens, b) overcoming border, racial, etc barriers c) incorporating direct on line collaboration, communication between government agencies and citizens.

ICT growth could provide these opportunities. As is shown by European e- Participation study [27] 258 e-Participation cases were identified and collected which entail weak e-Participation culture diffusion and lack of a dense citizen – government networking model while private social networking grows at significant and accelerated rates. Concerning e-Participation areas a vast majority of these 258 reported cases enable information provision (113 cases) and deliberation (78 cases), followed by consultation and discourse.



**Fig. 1.** e-Participation Areas -Source European e-Participation Study

Regarding the participation level, cases were identified in all different levels but the majority of the results refer to the local level confirming that participation is usually higher at the local level and consequently indicating that governments are seldom being willing to communicate governmental plans, legislature proposals and several issues of great importance to citizens.

The results also show that EU's policy encourages e-Participation practices which is indicated by the percentage of e-Participation projects funding. National Governments seem to be unwilling to financially support e-Participation practices.

## 2 Web, State and Political Movements

### 2.1 Web and the Democratic Deficit Condition

The Web interacts with the population through a wide range of procedures and primarily regards them as consumers. Thus, it sets into motion an interaction between the market and the consumer. Although this type of interaction is market oriented, has the property of diffusing information in a manner where the customer is not passive receiver.

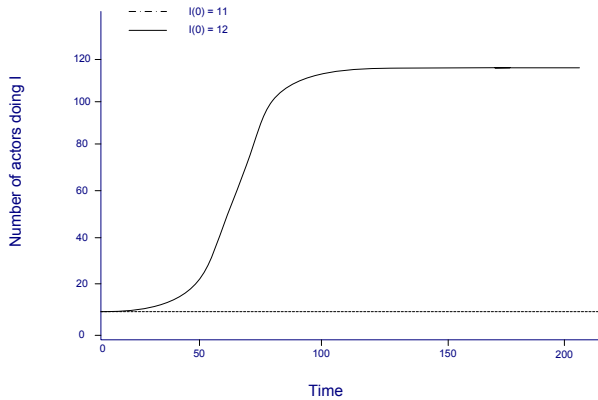
E-Governance interacts with the citizen, through a network of services, which not only offers, but also accommodates conventional government functions. However, the fact that the services offered to citizens do indeed improve their lives, does not compensate for their dissatisfaction in light of other distinct government practices. To illustrate, the fact that the citizens of a country, as Web users enjoy the benefit of services allowing straightforward transactions with the state and averting bureaucracy, does not imply that this will compensate for their malcontent in the likely event that their country becomes embroiled in a war or in practices which destroy the environment, etc. Yet, it is exactly this empowerment of the consumers and the citizens, granted by the possibilities offered through the Web and ICT that prompts them to become more demanding consumers of both the state and of the market provided services. Web, therefore, entails user's empowerment while e-Government does not yet target citizen's empowerment.

In interpreting such a setting, Castells [12] proceeds with an analysis of the relationship that holds between the Internet and democracy and he discovers that for the time being Internet use, rather than reinforcing democracy by enhancing knowledge and citizen participation, tends to exacerbate the crisis regarding political justification. He goes on to say that in the contemporary world, there is a widespread crisis vis a vis political justification and the dissatisfaction of citizens with their representatives. However, beyond the citizen-state relation, intense crises and discontent arise in relation to the nature of the economic globalization system and the inequality and imbalances it produces, the global environmental problems, the violation of human rights by many states, events and conditions that generalize, globalize and aggravate the crisis environment. Indeed, it is the Internet itself that acts as the platform for the swift diffusion of these feelings of discontent, thus breeding rapid destabilization.

In venturing to express the aforementioned in a loose formalism, we could describe the citizen-state relation as multi-dimensional and we could grade satisfaction according to how the citizen-consumer perceives the level of satisfaction that each governmental act generates. Thus, we could define as  $\{U+\}$  and  $\{-u\}$  the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction accordingly which consumer is able to compare with a value  $U_i$ . Furthermore, provided that the Web provides an organizational framework that empowers the Internet user through communication and information,  $U_i$ , constantly increases, putting pressure on  $\{U+\}$  and  $\{-u\}$ . This process does not necessarily enable consumer to

suggest a policy that will bring about the result she/he anticipates. Therefore, we must define the justification crisis not as a number of propositions put forward by the citizens, but as a rising wave of increasing malcontent that within the Web finds suitable conditions to gain speed and force.

Having defined the process which concerns the decreasing political justification of governments and the empowerment of the citizen as an ICT consumer, we can build a model that describes the dynamic development of this form of social change. Aberg [5] has shown population dynamics and the expected values of two alternative strategies of a population (in fact, in the standard Aberg model the alternatives are: being or not being a member of a trade union). She specified a differential equation model with a reasonable micro foundation. Generalizing as referring to the decisions between doing I (accept a particular policy) and doing S (don't accept it), if the actor's opportunity sets consist of these two alternative actions, if the value of doing one thing rather than another depends upon what others do and if the speed at which individuals change actions depends on how desirable each alternative is perceived to be, then the social outcomes the actors are likely to bring about can be approximated by a set of differential equations. When applying the Aberg's model, it is evident that only a small percentage of a population is required to take on a strategy or an action to dismiss a particular policy or to reject the political justification of a government or the representatives of the citizens in general (political parties – the government, etc.), so that eventually the whole population supports this strategy.



**Fig. 2.** Social outcomes expected in a structurally undifferentiated setting – Source P. Hedstrom [16]

The trend described above could depict the process by which the citizens empowered by ICT technologies would call political justification into question and demand their involvement in the decision making process. Yet this trend would not inform us about the specific political counter-propositions, nor can this model provide information on the dynamics in the development of such policy producing processes. This process requires collective action and collective action must be precisely specified.

## 2.2 Web and Collective Action

In a careful study of the current bibliography referring to the relation between the Internet and society, the state and democracy, it appears that this relation is classified in four discrete levels: the relation of the citizen and the state (institutions, policies, governmental procedures), the empowerment of the citizen – Internet user (user empowerment), the rising, dynamic presence of collective movements that flourish on the Internet and the reinforcement of the citizen through state initiatives (e-government, e-learning, etc.). It is usually the case that collective movements are cited, but their dynamic is not included in the procedures for the improvement in the quality of democracy. On the contrary, the results of the actions of collective movements are considered on the one hand, as processes that are derived and justified according to the vested rights of the citizens within the contemporary interpretation of democracy and on the other, they are considered as expressions of protest, although not capable to impose forms and aims of governance.

The history of social movements, as is commonly acknowledged, is traced back to the time that the capitalist system emerged. As Ch. Tilly [30] demonstrates in his research, structural change (economic transformation, urbanization and state expansion) has shaped collective action, not only directly, but also indirectly through the transitions in the form of collective expression in everyday life. Moreover, the reorganization of daily life transformed the nature of conflict and the forms of solidarity (that had been established in the Middle Ages), which after all, bear the most important impact on the structural change of political conflict.

Castells confirms Tilly's position (albeit without any reference to the latter) and develops a similar line of reasoning, stressing that the Internet is not just a useful tool that is used simply because it exists. It fits in with the underlying attributes that distinguish the emerging social movements in the Information Age. These movements found in the Internet the appropriate organizational means with which to build the highways to social change. According to Castells, the Internet has always been the organizational framework of such movements and it therefore cannot be separated from these, just as the industrial plant and the local inn became the organization frameworks for the formation of the labour movement. According to Cohen and Rai [13] the distinction between old and new movements is misleading. Movements such as the labour movement of the industrial age, still exist in our day, redefining themselves according to the social values whose connotations they extend, for example by demanding social justice for all, as opposed to the defense of the interests of a specific class. Cohen and Rai indicate six important social movements that have developed a form of coordination and action on an international scale. These include the movements concerned with human rights, women's rights, the environment, the labour movement, the religious movement and the peace movement. Social movements in the age of the Internet are mobilized essentially in reference to cultural values, so that the efforts to change the codes of meaning in the institutions and the practices of society become the real battle in the process of social change within the new historical context [11].

What needs to be noted is that the discontent of individuals described above, is not automatically transformed into a collective action that proposes policies and raises political demands, but on the contrary it leads to simple abstinence from democratic

participation that invalidates political justification and conduces to the political crisis. It virtually reproduces a form of behaviour in citizens that corresponds to their behaviour as consumers that is consumer's usual reaction.

At the same time, the state, as the authority, favours individualistic behavior since it usually does not subvert the state authority. State authority is undermined only when the citizens collectively articulate specific positions regarding the forms and strategies of governance that will yield specific and desirable results. Such positions are generated only by collective movements and collective action. In our day, it stands that the crisis of political justification bears direct impact upon political parties and the bureaucratic syndicate organizations. Castells refers to political parties as empty shells that become active only every four years in view of elections, inevitably becoming increasingly alienated from society. Syndicate organizations are organized according to the old-fashioned model of a vertical hierarchy and for this reason they are falling from grace with society.

The Web however, with the organizational possibilities it provides for communication, information and coordination is gradually replacing these forms, creating the conditions for collective action, which most often springs from the spontaneous coordination of the users and from their initial malcontent. L and C. Tilly [30] defines collective action as the situation where people act together in order to achieve common interests. Olson [25] maintains a similar view. These definitions, although seemingly extremely simple, require complex concepts to understand them, for example the concept of interest. Connolly [14] names these compound concepts "cluster concepts".

In order to comprehend collective action, it needs to be determined in relation to individual action. As is referred by Alexandropoulos [1], very collective action builds upon the existence of an opposite to a separate and clearly defined sphere of individuality, within a discernable field of individual interests that exist independently of collective interests. This position does not coincide with the common idea that the term individual refers to someone who acts alone as an individual, while the term collective refers to someone who cooperates with others to achieve a common goal [1]. The criterion of the common goal does not suffice to define collective action. The space separating individual and collective action, contains the common or combined actions (joint actions), a term coined by Blumer [6,7,8], which refers to common collaborations in daily life (e.g. support of a sports team, a wedding, a company venture, etc.), whose nature and substance are discriminate from collective action. Collective action, on the other hand, refers to particular characteristics, the most important being that it causes a shift in the social structure to which it incurs change.

Today, when technological advances and especially the Web have instigated and set into motion a large number of combined actions by virtue of the communication potential ICT offers (e.g. FACEBOOK, YAHOO, etc.), collective action appears as a derivative of the combination of the new possibilities ICT provides to the individual and the crisis in political justification. Developments progressing at an ever increasing pace, but perceived at a much slower rate, prove that in fact the Internet actually does interact with progressively greater intensity with the socio-political dynamics, so that it is not yet clear, if it is simply a tool for political interaction or on the contrary, it is the reason for transforming the rules of the political game, by transforming the aims and the forms of intervention and action of the politically active. The Internet simultaneously displays conflict and management, the liberty of new movements and supervision, citizen networks and

networked individuality, which all reflect on the political level. The perception of democracy as the situation, in which the cooperation of the state and the citizens is only possible exclusively through state initiatives and in the forms of e-government services, tends to ignore this type of dynamic. Social movements with an intense political character are present on the Internet. These movements set political goals, to a greater or to a lesser extent, or in any case, they set goals that oftentimes take on an intense political hue.

Also on the Internet there coexist state supervision, the introversion of the state and the effort to increase its effectiveness in the form of services provided to the citizens and a strong trend in networking among states, either to reinforce their supervision or to deal with universal problems; a dynamic that circumvents older stereotypes in relation to the texture, the mandate and the tendencies of the state. From the above, what should we include and what should we exclude from the concept of democracy in the age of the Internet, as we have perceived it thus far?

The Internet, according to Castells changes the rules of the game, conflict changes societies and politics manages societies.

From this viewpoint three interesting questions arise in relation to the interaction between the Internet and socio-political dynamics.

4. How do we delineate democracy in these new conditions?
5. Does the Internet create a new crisis of political balance or does it intensify an imbalance of a whole political cycle?
6. How can we explore new forms of political balance based on the reality of the Internet?

### 3 The Limits of Democracy

Recent literature points at the mass changes occurred by the interaction of empowerment dynamics caused by ICT and the changing role of citizen which demands control over his life and improved and efficient governance

European Commission points at the role of e-Government as an enabler for better government, an intrinsic political objective encompassing a series of democratic, economic, social, environmental and governance objectives, which are could be articulated around two major axes namely cost effectiveness and efficiency as well as the creation of public value (European Commission, 2004).

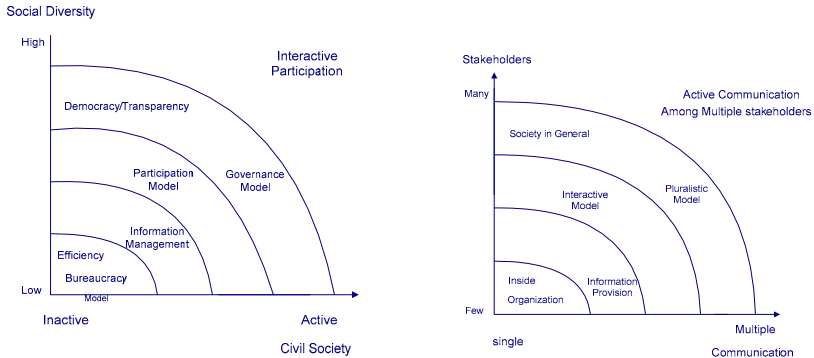
J. Millard (2007) has proposed that these axes should not be seen as independent and equal pillars, but rather as means and ends with the interrelationships that this implies. Therefore public value is the ultimate goal while effectiveness and efficiency are only means to this higher end. According to Millard (2007) public value can be provided by governments. He has identified four overarching ends to which public sector can contribute.

1. Liberal values covering constitutional and subsidiarity structures
2. Democratic values covering citizenship democratic participation through
  - a) representation
  - b) direct engagement
3. Social values covering needs for and responses to socio economic support are determined

4. empowerment values covering how citizens, communities, groups and interests in society can be empowered to further their own as well as collective benefits.

Seang Tae KIM [28] proposes two theoretical models of development and convergence of e- Government and e- democracy.

This process is shown in the following Figures



**Fig. 3 and 4.** Source Seang Tae KIM (2008)

According to Seang Tae KIM the concept and function of e-government has been changed because of advanced technology and social needs. The emergence of citizens as policy decision makers and as the focal point of democracy has brought about the emergence of e-democracy. Current discussions concerning e-government have some limitations in addressing possibility and current change, because they ignore developments of civil society and democracy.

J. Millard remarks the necessity of a widely defined public domain which incorporates public interests, public space, public culture and public sanctuaries, i.e. beyond the existing formalised public sector.

“The public domain is thus seen more and more as wider (possibly much wider) than the public sector, as it also includes and empowers civil society. The old narrow idea of government in which citizens passively receive services and vote every four or five years, and where the state acts on their behalf (government for the people but not by the people) is being challenged by the responsible parent, the informed patient, the active citizen, the dedicated teacher, nurse or local public servant, and by outsourcing to individual volunteers or private companies. Each of these could, with an extension of choice and voice, both individual and collective, be enabled to take greater control over their own lives and the lives of their communities, with or without direct support from the formal democratic and government institutions. We need to decide the extent to which we wish to see such developments take place” [22].

We have entered in a phase where old state practices are strongly challenged and citizens demand direct involvement to social collective and political issues. Accordingly problems are becoming global and complex while Web is transformed from a mean of political facilitation to a context of challenging state’s dominance. In such a



context it becomes problematic a prediction of the character and impact of social outcomes to be brought about by social actors.

## 4 Crisis or Reinforcement of Balance

In the pages of this paper, but also in the bibliography, the significance of the crisis concept is repeatedly revisited. The concept, according to Morin E. [3] refers to a twofold gap: in our knowledge and in the social reality. Morin has processed the significance of crisis in a systemic approach according to which the concept of crisis consists of a constellation of interrelated concepts.

The first suggestive situation and evidence of a crisis is the occurrence of disorder. Usually, the sources of disorder are external but the most interesting cases are those that derive from ostensibly non-disruptive, routes. Often, these processes are revealed as a rapid increase of a variable against other variables. "When we consider, from a systemic point of view those types of processes, we can observe that the boost causes an overcharge phenomenon: the system cannot resolve the problems that used to, under specific limits. It should be able to be reshaped. But, the system cannot comprehend or realize such a reshaping. Or the crisis does originate from a double blind situation, that is double stagnancy where the system is stagnant between two conflicting demands and it is disrupted and finally goes out of control" [3].

Morin argues that under crisis emergence, the systemic operation will be mutated to irregularity, the functionality to a glitch, the continuity to a rupture, the complementarity to a collision. This Morin's version seems to be verified by the aforementioned events. In the following we will focus on two possible disorder signs which may indicate crisis caused by the Web era.

The first sign refers to a latent disruptive process which appears in the Web evolution itself. The Web is considered, until nowadays, an endless innovation process which joins a huge and accelerated amount on information which flows among large populations worldwide. In the current debate about Web, is stated the question if its rapid expansion can be continued smoothly or it will lead to a disorder affecting its functionality. It is argued that considering that the storage of the largest amount of information in the history of human nation, in the context of the biggest computational capacity ever existed, it will be jeopardized from the lack of more intelligent and faster ways of retrieval of information, which can lead to an inflation not supported from its underlying technologies.

A specialization of this argument is the skepticism developed concerning the new intended directives for the semantic Web [29]. It is pointed out that the continuous uploading of content to the Web, begins to create problems in the selection of the desirable content, shifting to the user the uncertainty of selection. "The power of the Web will increase dramatically if the data can be defined and linked in such a way that the machines will overcome the representation layer and will include the combination data beyond the limits of specific applications, organizational and social structures" [29]. For this purpose, an argument of ontology application has been suggested, which retortion argues that liberty and decentralization are better than centrally defined and controlled ontologies. The retortion also mentions as arguments the increase of cost which is implied from the decision of ontology use and the risk of top down absolutist structures, which may the ontologies imply.

The specific example of Web evolution:

- a) Confirms Morin's statement that the excessive system expansion incurs disruptive appearances which derive from non-disruptive routes.
- b) That every (social) system contains irregularity which, in some degree, is reduced, controlled and managed. But, beyond a specific limit the crisis that, initially, emerges as a disorder incurs a reduction of the capability to apply determinism, which emerges with uncertainty, bottleneck in the reorganization mechanisms and irregularity.

If we transfer this view in the social-political field of the Web, we have to wonder whether the Web simply revealed the crisis of political legalization or, on the contrary, the expansion of Web interactions and the consequent social networking in fact have set in motion this process through the facilitation and empowerment of the user. In this case Web liberated disorder. Since social dynamic is very complex this disorder could be transformed into trend through the gradual formation of social movements which directly challenge policy making. In this case the system has to increase complexity in order to manage error.

## 5 New Forms of Political Balance

Under the new circumstances, a large number of empirical observations and studies report the strengthening of the mash-users. Furthermore, the citizen's strengthening is becoming more globalized thanks to the Internet, and it is often observed that users originating from different cultures and countries, or even speaking different languages join each other seeking for certain practices to be applied or demanding others to be stopped. For example, a newspaper article [2] reports that: *"... comments and posts on digital walls often go as far as the contents of a meal, teasing among friends, inside jokes among colleagues or the aftermath of a wild night out. Of course there is another side, which is evident in the various actions and initiatives that have sprung from the "book", with causes varying from the Gaza horror and the American Elections to the assassination of Grigoropoulos and last December events in Athens. The massive nature and the momentum of the reactions in these initiatives is so strong, that certain regimes (Syria, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Iran are some of them) choose to lock their citizens out of the electronic home of Facebook"*.

Despite the fact that raw suppression does not characterize democratic governments of the modern world, monitoring and suppression is rising in an international level. Also, it is often accompanied by ideological interventions, such as the necessity of increased security against global terror.

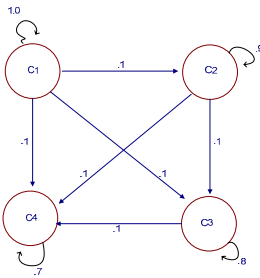
The aforementioned Aberg model captures the dynamics of the emergence of behavioural patterns of the user population, but it is not equipped with tools that can be used to record the evolution structure of these events. Societies (modern societies even more) do not feature just persons and a state authority, but are characterized by the dynamics of forming and reforming of groups, according to the notions of the combined actions of Blumer. In a sense, even authority is reflected as such a group, although it is divided in clusters and layers following the actions and the dynamics of the dominant trend, of pressure subgroups or the various political parties e.t.c. A more

complicated dynamics determines the diffusion of action from group to group, and the result is always dynamic and constitutes an emergence.

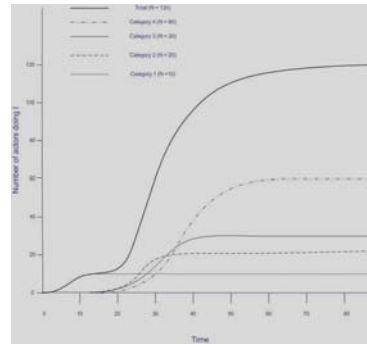
Depending on whether there are consensus circumstances or not, the existence of a stable or unstable equilibrium points, a society of beliefs or deviant beliefs, in other words, whether the society is hot, using Morin (Μωρέν) definition, social interaction takes several forms and directions that sometimes lead to collisions or conflicts (?), and when this happens, group behaviour emerges.

To understand this complex dynamics, we refer to the theory of minorities [4, 23, 24], according to which the notion of “population” does not have a real meaning. The population we usually refer to as a “silent majority” must be considered as a complex mesh (grid?) of social subgroups or other social sub-categories, whose bonds with authority, connecting or opposing, may be more or less powerful, rendering it more or less sensitive to the changes proposed by various sources, and especially minorities.

It is exactly this pattern of social interaction which is captured by an extended version of Aberg’s model proposed by Hedstrom [16]. According to Hedstrom the potentially relevant actor to actor network will be difficult to define *ex ante* and furthermore the causally efficacious network will vary considerably from one time point to another. In situations such as these where the relevant actor to actor networks are unstable and difficult to pin down, it may be better to focus on a type of network that White (1965) referred to as a *catnet* that is, a network connecting the social categories to which individuals belong. A *catnet* then describes the relations that exist between such categories.



**Fig. 5.** A catnet – Source P. Hedstrom [16]



**Fig. 6.** Social outcomes in a structurally differentiated setting Source P. Hedstrom [16]

The likely influence exerted by members of one category on members of another can be seen as a joint function of

1. how aware members of one category are of what those in other categories do, which partly, but only partly, depends upon the frequency of contacts between the categories
2. The probability that such awareness results in an individual in one category adopting the beliefs, desires and actions of an actor in the other category.

Hedstrom argues that by embedding the Aberg's model into a catnet concept we get a handle on how the group structure is likely to influence the social outcomes actors bring about.

According to the above Figure provided by Hedstrom, contrary to Aberg's structurally undifferentiated setting where an initial proportion of actors was required in order to be observed a coordination of actor's actions, in a differentiated setting no coordination is required. It is sufficient for a single actor in Category 1 to do I for everyone else to end up doing the same.

In order to explore social dynamics under circumstances such as those described above we extended Hedstrom's model in order to be combined with the model of influence of minorities [23, 24, 26]. In this setting a dominant collective actor (the state) has been modeled as just one form of collectivity which is consistent in that proposes a particular strategy. Besides a minority has been modeled representing a collective actor which tries to propagate an opposed strategy. Both collectivities affect population.

For simplicity we assume four groups (C1 the authority propagating strategy {I}, C2 a minority propagating strategy {S}, C4 a subgroup of the general population which is capable of being informed of both available strategies and is also assumed as more sensitive towards strategy {S} and finally a subgroup C3 which is assumed not perfectly informed about the competitive strategy {S} and therefore traditionally accept both the dominant group (C1) and the suggested dominant strategy {I}. All these groups consist a catnet. We executed a series of simulation experiments where influence rates between groups vary considerably from one case to another. Therefore, influence of groups and the diffusion of strategies from one group to another entail complex social dynamics.

We have summarized the experimental results into three distinct outcomes.

### *Case 1*

1. In this case the particular parameterization concerning influence rates is as follows:
  - (a) The dominant group (C1) influences subgroup C3 while the minority (C2) influences subgroup C4.
  - (b) C3 influences weakly C1 and C4 influences weakly C2 accordingly.
  - (c) There is an influence transmission between C3 and C4. In the first experiment C3 influences C4 while in the second experiment C4 influences C3.

The outcomes are as follows:

#### *1<sup>st</sup> experiment*

The outcomes of experiment 1 show that in this case C3 and C4 groups perceive strategy {I} and there is no ability to the minority group C2 to diffuse its strategy. This outcome derives from the indirect influence of strategy {I} from C3 to C4 group. Outcomes show the gradual domination of strategy {I} and are presented in Figure 7.

2<sup>nd</sup> experiment

On the contrary in this case influence is assumed to be indirect but it is also assumed to flow the opposite direction, that is, C4 influences C3 and not vice versa. The assumption of a direct influence (C1 influences C3 and C2 influences C4) remain the same as this in experiment 1. In this case the outcomes that social actors bring about are shown in Figure8. Outcomes of this particular setting show that in this case the minority's strategy propagates through population subgroup's indirect influence and becomes the dominant strategy.

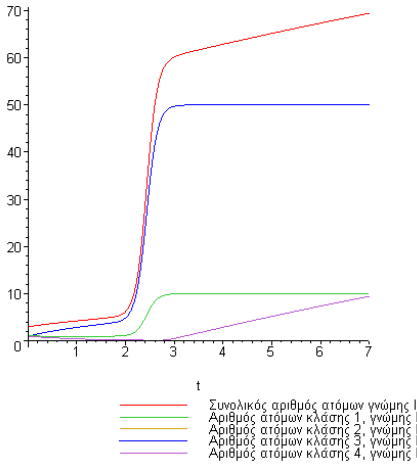


Fig. 7. 1st Experiment indirect influence

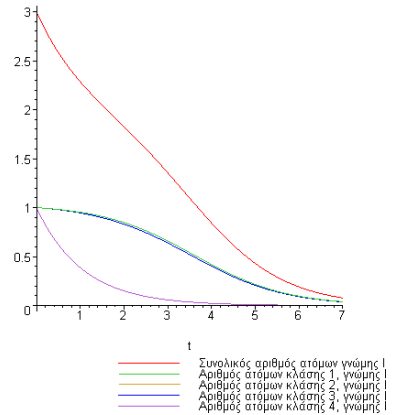


Fig. 8. 2<sup>nd</sup> experiment indirect influence

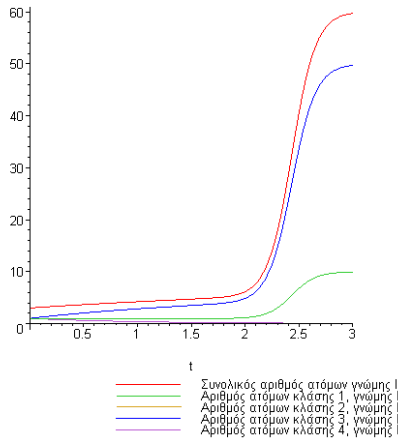


Fig. 9. Emergence of conflict

### Case 2

In this case parameterization supports the assumption that social influence is distinguished into two different paths so that C1 influences C3 and C2 influences C4 but no influence dynamics exist between C3 and C4 groups. In this case results show that there is a possibility for locking to a condition of social conflict. Outcomes however, depend upon the tension of influence. In an extreme case two clusters emerge which adopt opposite strategies.

### Case 3

In this case we have extend the assumption setting in order to permit influence exchange between groups C1 and C4 while influence rates between groups C3 and C4 hold.

This setting is more consistent to social conditions where groups debate but also coordinate and therefore influence each other. The outcomes of this particular setting shows that both strategies are possible to become dominant depending on the particular values of influence rates. Those outcomes, however, are qualitatively different from those shown in cases 1 and 2 in that, social influence propagates directly between conflicting groups C1 and C2. This influence transmission is more likely to occur through direct bargaining and could therefore entail social consensus.

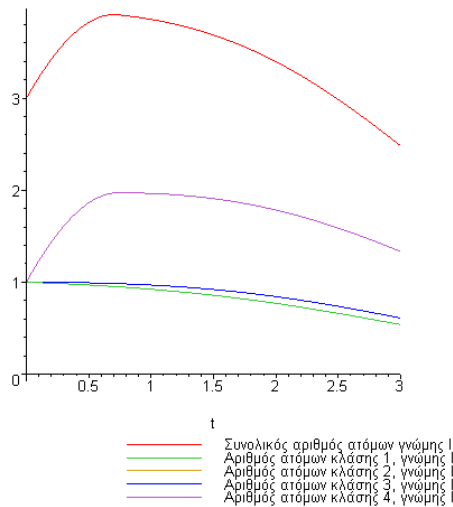


Fig. 10. Influence exchange between conflicting groups

## 6 Conclusions

Nowadays, Internet is a reality that offers no guarantees by its self that a new political and democratic balance will replace political practices that undergo a legitimization crisis. Therefore, everything is possible.

Only a substantial shift in the stance of the state and the authority, bearing the meaning of acceptance of a wider democracy, will create a new balance that will reflect the new conditions. This shift can occur either cooperatively or through a conflict. In the past, this dreadful dynamics has appeared in the form of conflicts of dynamic movements and destabilization. With each appearance, it caused a generalized crisis leading to the emergence of a new political balance. The struggle that led to the welfare state is an example of such a dramatic event. Today, the political, social and economic system are put to the test, and on top of that, ICT and the Internet create a new user profile, more educated, up to date and insisting on new values

It is very odd how things seem to repeat, using analogies. J. St. Mill [18, 19, 20, 21], although a supporter of a utilitarian individualist tradition approached group action by dealing with the relationship between the person and the state. This led to the formation of arguments explaining the reasoning behind the participation of people in groups, collective actions and democratic processes. According to Mill, a rationalist person is motivated to participate in collective actions, in order to protect its own rights by the representatives, the leaders, and others. At the same time, participating in a collective action acts as an educational process. Mill's position was that citizen participation in the state functions is a necessity. This participation is what ensures that their interests will be served by those appointed to represent them. On the contrary, the presence of passive individuals that abstain from political functions favours the natural tendency of the representatives to represent their own self interests instead of the interests of the people who appointed them. The Web may bring this issue back to our societies.

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