

**Making Sense  
of Gov 2.0 Strategies:  
*“No Citizens, No Party”***

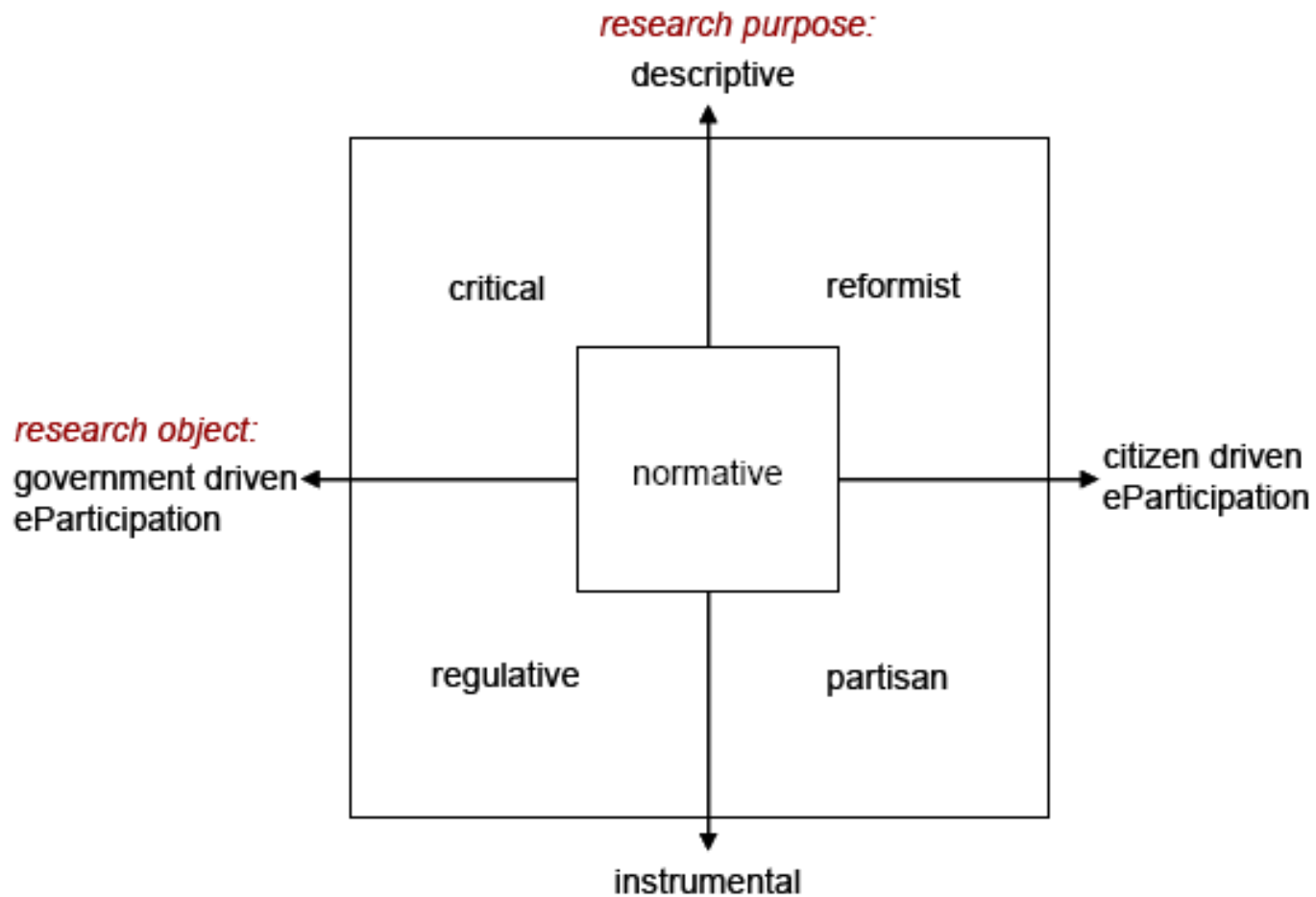
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# Electronic Democracy

“The use of ICT to **engage citizens**, support the democratic decision-making processes and strengthen representative democracy”

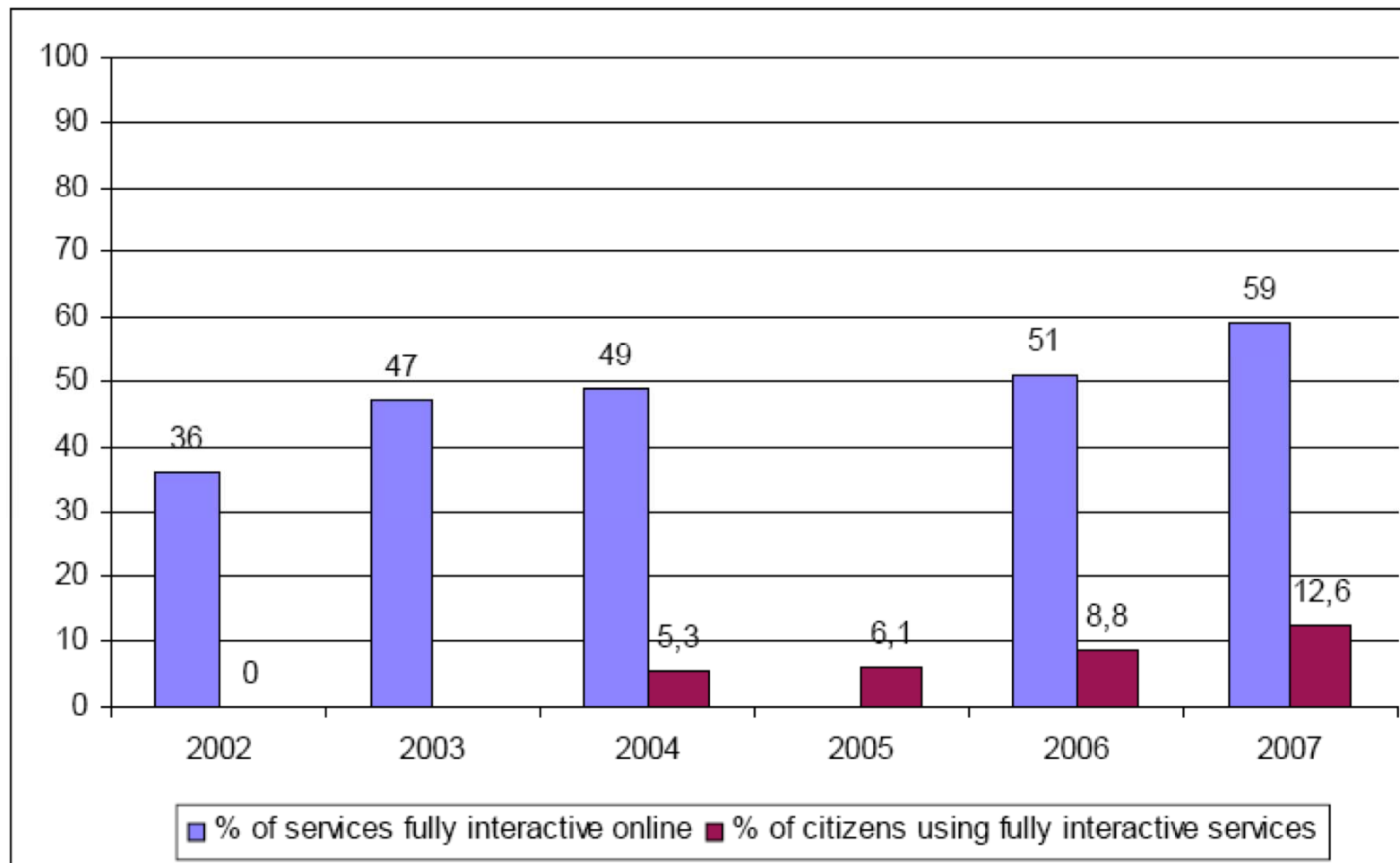
*(Macintosh 2004)*

# We take on a normative approach



# Online public services: where's the audience?

Source: David Osimo (2008) – “Web 2.0 in Government: Why and How”, JRC  
Scientific and Technical Reports



# Online Participation:

## *Yes, we can do better than that*

Project Acronym	Pilot Location	No. Posts (*)	No. Users (*)	No. Views (*)
DALOS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LEGESE	Bristol (UK)	146	N/A	4000
	Vysocina (CZ)	N/A	N/A	1000
	Fingal (IE)	N/A	N/A	N/A
LEXIPATION	Hamburg (DE)	968	285	16000
	Thessaloniki (GR)	35	62	12000
	Massa (IT)	202	93	1800
	Alston Moor (UK)	52	273	464
LEX-IS	Hellenic Parliament (GR)	128	74	3797
	Austrian Parliament (AT)	253	152	12332
SEAL	Dutch House of Representatives (NL)	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Austrian House of Representatives (AT)	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Italian Chambers of Deputies (IT)	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Italian Senate (IT)	N/A	N/A	N/A
TID+	Estonia (EE)	N/A	N/A	N/A

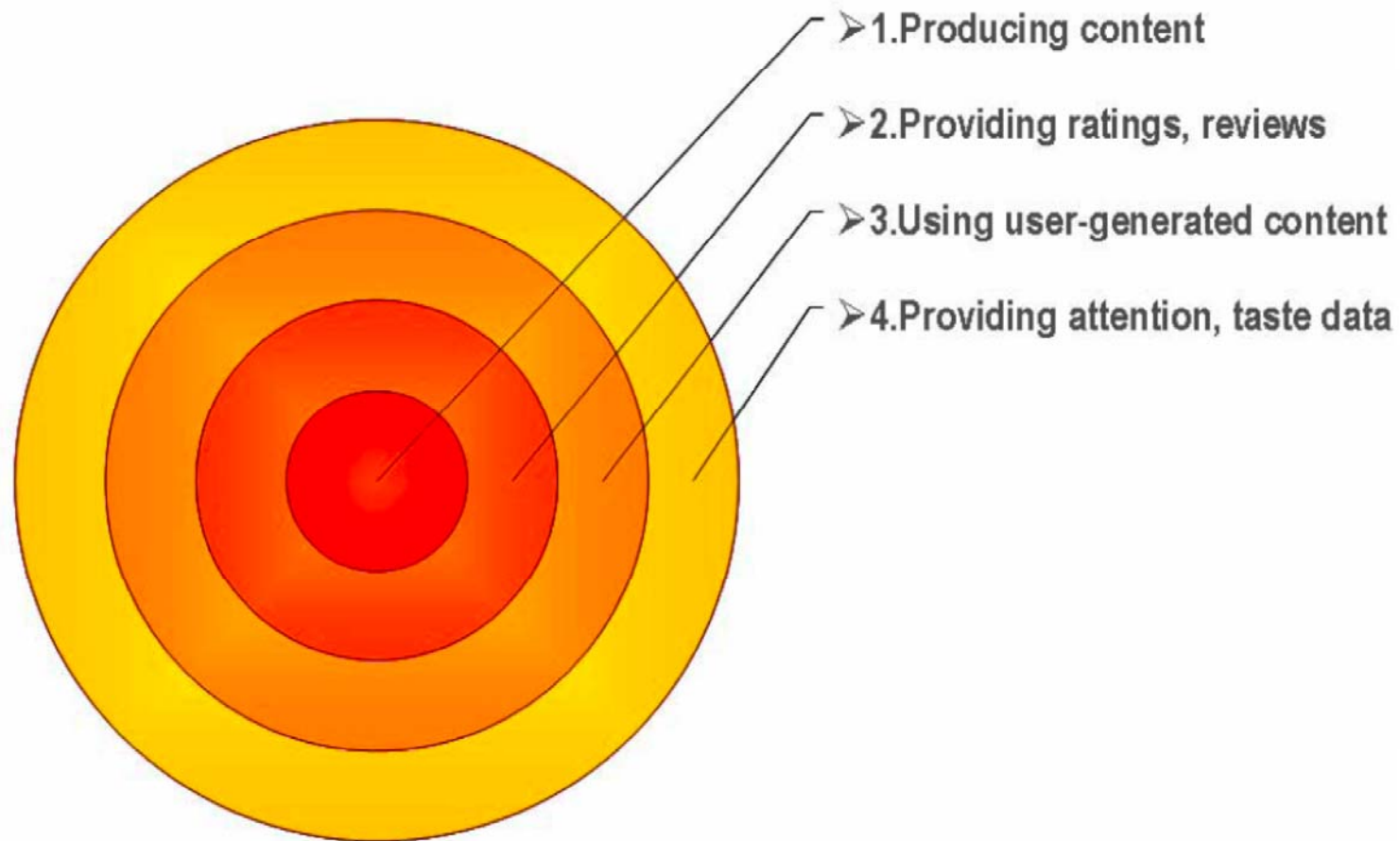
(\*) as of January 2009

*Source: Charalabidis et al. – “E-Participation Projects Consolidated Results, ”, MOMENTUM 2009*

# Possible explanations

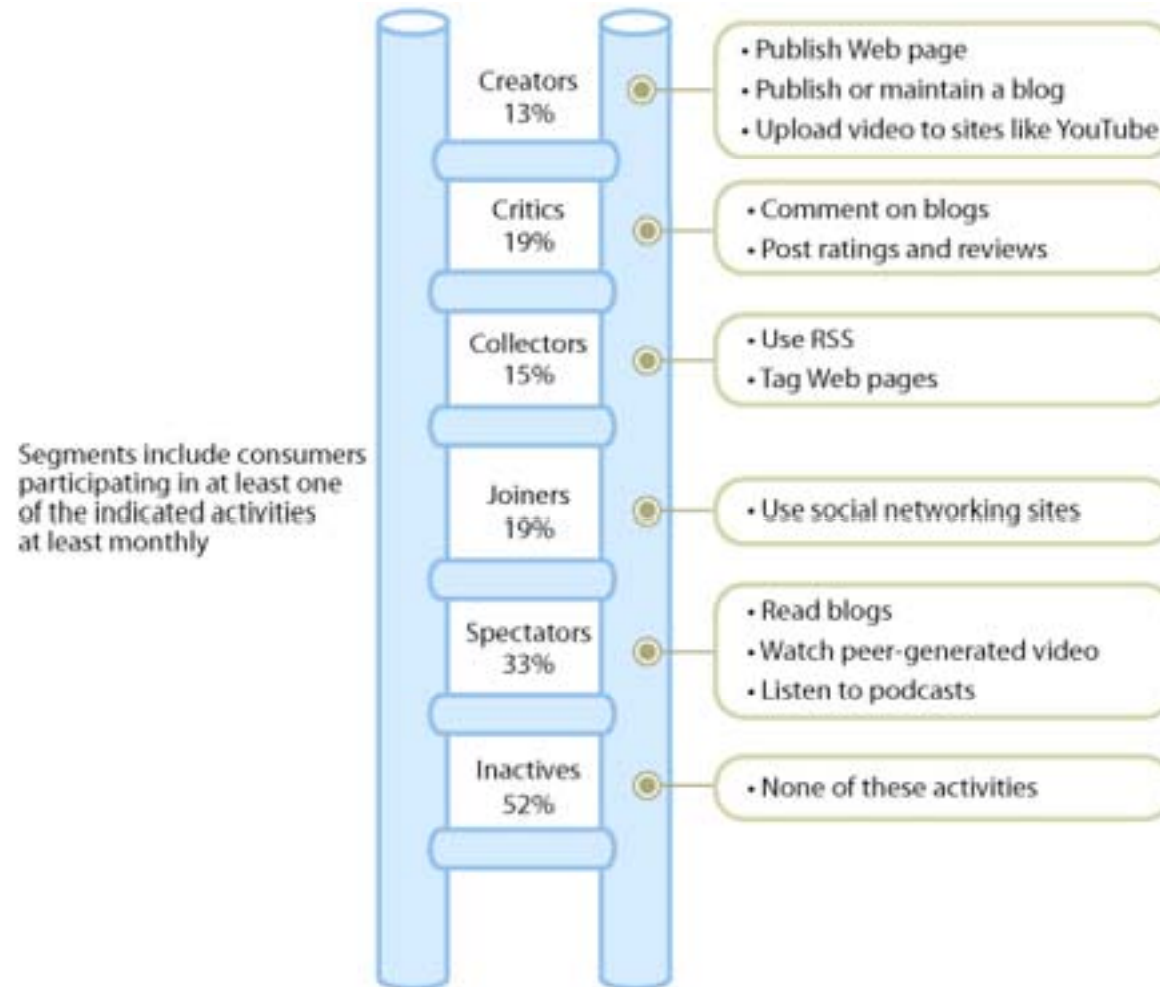
- Governments expected **citizens to make the first step** (waiting for them to move forward and participate in online debates, blogs etc.);
- Designated “official” spaces were largely **unknown to the general public**, due to the high costs and the slow pace of promotion/dissemination activities;
- The topics dealt with were **distant from people’s** daily problems and/or priorities, so that content contributions by non experts were limited;
- Previous similar attempts ended up with **no real stock taken** out of the citizens’ opinions;
- The tools adopted were **not appropriate to the case**, or usable only by an affluent and acculturate minority of the targeted population;
- The methodologies implemented were **not scalable**; thus, they could only be adopted in pilot trials with a limited impact at system level.
- The distribution of online **users behaviour** was not taken into account.

# Key Roles in Web 2.0



*Source: David Osimo (2008) – “Web 2.0 in Government: Why and How”, JRC Scientific and Technical Reports*

# The new ladder of eParticipation



Base: US adult online consumers

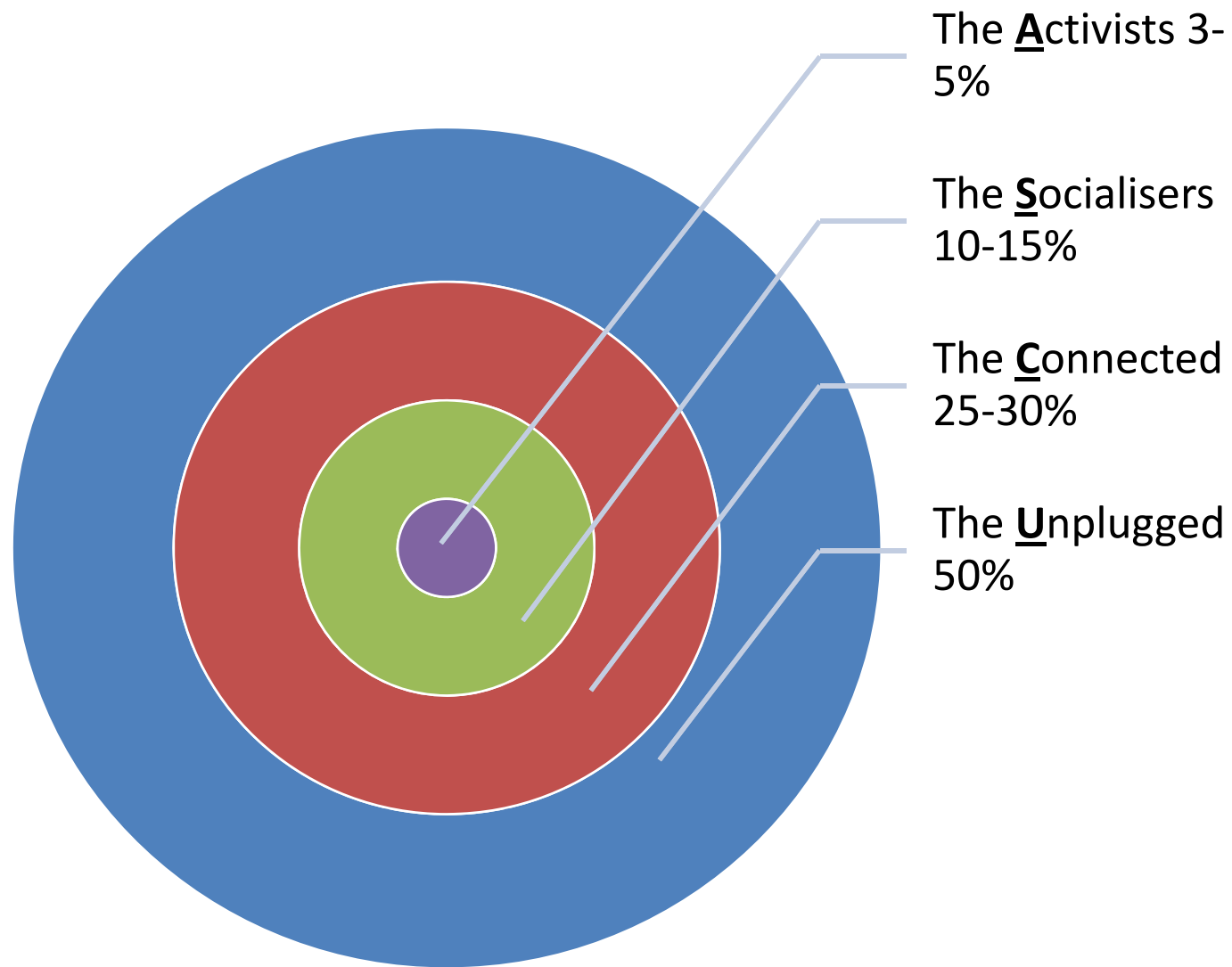
Source: Forrester's NACTAS Q4 2006 Devices & Access Online Survey

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.



# The ASCU model of Internet presence



*Source: own estimates*

### The Activists

- a small share of the population (3-5%)
- highly educated, politically and culturally
- spend most of their time on the Internet
- have time to respond to political calls (incl. eParticipation experiments)
- have time to create/share own agendas (b.m.o. blogs, social networks, etc.)
- pathology: hijackers...

### The Socialisers

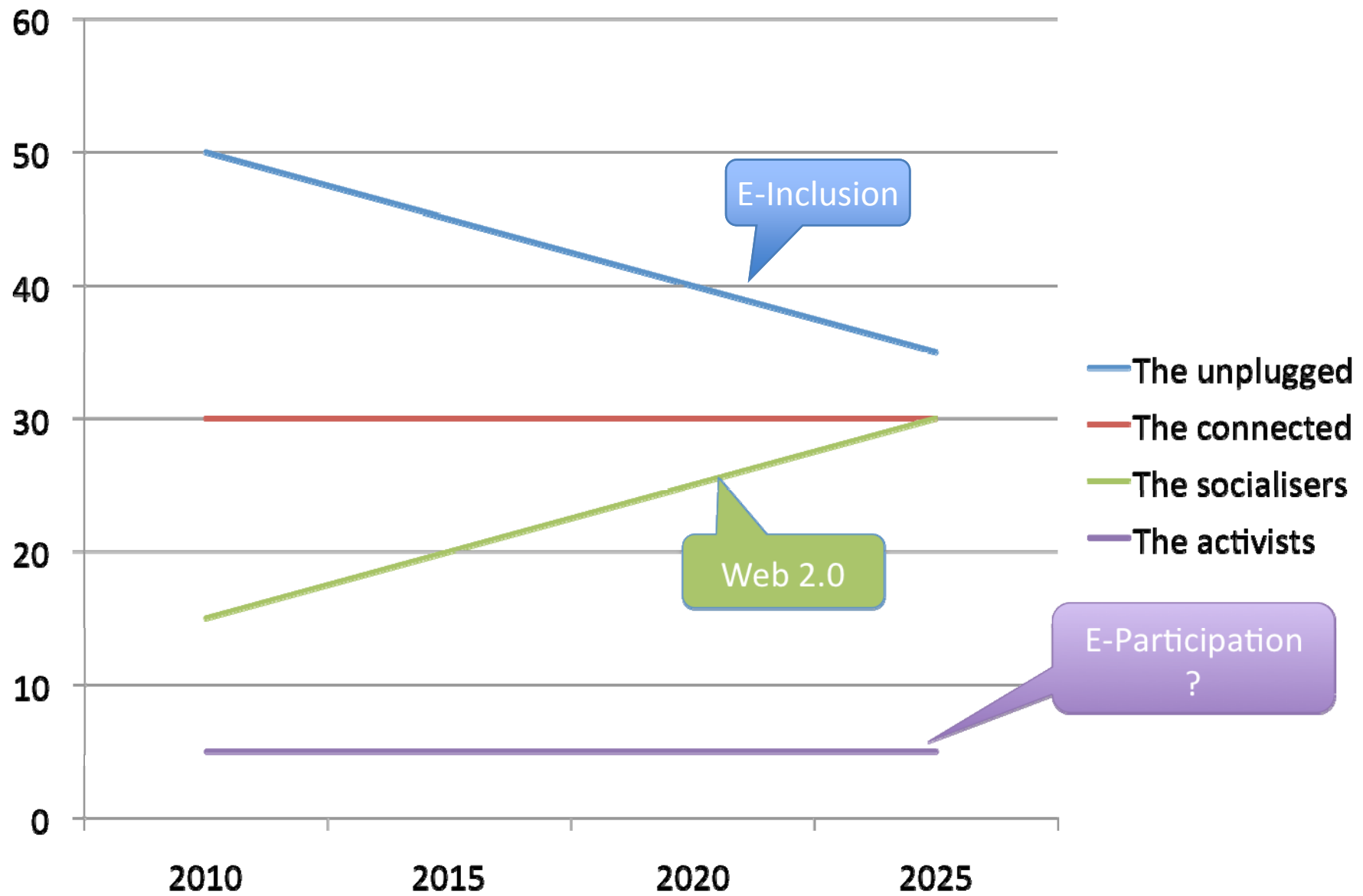
- a bigger share of the population (10-15%)
- mostly “Y” and “Z” generations
- deeply rooted in the multimedia usage concept (e.g. iPhone™)
- low interest in politics as such
- tend to create communities and social networks of peers, esp. online
- pathology: addicted...

### The Connected

- the remaining 25-30% of Internet users
- more akin to the characters of society as a whole (e.g. families, businesses, elderly, professionals etc.)
- spend a variable time on the Internet, mostly seen as an additional I&C environment
- don't use eGovernment services though
- don't have time or will to respond to political calls
- may have limited skills and/or knowledge of Web 2.0 tools
- are sensitive to privacy / security issues...

### The Unplugged

- the rest of the world (50% of EU citizens)
- lack of access and motivation to go online due to a variety of known factors such as:
  - low economic wealth
  - poor education, Internet skills
  - digital divide (broadband...)
  - social marginality (immigrants...)
  - isolated location (rural...)
- the same factors also hamper political/electoral participation as such
- if plugged, can migrate to any remaining profile ...



# Implications for policy making

- One of the main factors contributing to the limited impact and scalability of eParticipation projects is the presence, also on the Internet, of a high level of **social complexity** (Macintosh, 2008).
- The considerable **variance** of the population in terms of political interests, education and technological skills, and particularly online behaviour makes it difficult to design workable and effective systems to support electronic participation.
- Harnessing such complexity requires **flexible and adaptable strategies** from the government's side.
- We stress the need of a change of approach in the implementation of eParticipation experiments that also keeps into account the new scenarios introduced by **Web 2.0** and **mobile communication**.

# Implications 1/4

## The Activists

- a political minority, yet extremely “noisy” and “powerful” (consensus leaders)
- may show a critical attitude/approach towards the ruling establishment
- policy makers can be reluctant to base their choices on this community’s “will”
- typical objection: they are “unrepresentative of the silent majority” of the country

## Exploit the Activists for Crowdsourcing of Ideas, Concepts, → Policy Innovation

- existing eParticipation technologies are fit enough, only the social aspects must be improved (OECD 2003)
- innovative methods and tools (such as Virtual Town Meetings) can be very supportive to the goal
- little potential conflict with the rule of representation (participation is a policy tool - not a goal in itself)

# Implications 2/4

## The Socialisers

- too uninterested and uninformed to engage spontaneously in political activism
- may react randomly in case their will is forced to express itself
- being “the next generations”, their view is important to know (and steer?) for the politicians
- policy makers gradually more afraid to ignore “what’s happening there”

## Listen to what the Socialisers have to say → Citizens Intelligence

- innovative tools for reputation management have never been used in the public sector till now
- discreet, yet systematic collection of feedback from the “crowd” can help
  - frame new policy initiatives
  - fine tune existing ones
  - prepare participatory trials

# Implications 3/4

## The Connected

- if they are in this category it's because they don't see Internet as the locus of eParticipation
- policy makers may want to reach them with propaganda messages – full stop
- being “the old generation”, there can be a declining trend in its size over time
- how to involve them is an open issue for eParticipation trial designers

## Show the value of their direct Internet presence to the Connected → Policy Visualisation and Simulation

- as they are not using eGovernment services, would they be convinced of taking part in eGovernance anyway?
- incentives to policy makers: moderate to low
  - possibly through new legislation forcing to increase the usage of Internet resources from the public
  - also a pressure from stakeholders to improve the quality of electronic governance
- incentives to people: moderate (the old sad story of free riding...)
  - scope for mParticipation here

# Implications 4/4

## The Unplugged

- if they are in this category it's because eInclusion policies are not 100% effective
- policy makers can give priority to offering a representation rather than giving them a voice
- how to involve them has quite similar traits to the case of connected people
- though they are not on the Internet, they have a mobile phone with them

## Connect the Unplugged via mobile resources → migrate from (e-) to (m-) Participation and Governance

- not only is mobile Internet more widely diffused and diffusible, but mParticipation can also help
  - find/locate people where they are (GPS features)
  - keep them continuously updated of policy advances
  - push them to socialise and interact more
  - involve them more stably in the decision making process
  - exploit new ways of providing public services (e.g. through co-production with users)



# Conclusions

- The **value** deriving from the design, development and implementation of such a modular eParticipation strategy is **threefold**:
  - Firstly, it allows accounting for a high level of **social complexity** with respect to technological use and political participation.
  - Secondly, it increases the chances of a successful implementation by providing a range of tools to be used in different ‘mixes’ according to the **specificities of the context** and of the policy making process considered.
  - Thirdly, it provides a policy platform aimed at responding to the needs of a more **collaborative environment** to support government and civil society working in partnership.

# Implications for research

- Today's research should be aimed at shaping tomorrow's participation
- **What will stay:**
  - Social complexity and mobility (→ mParticipation?)
  - Time as a scarce resource
  - Skills enhancement of people (motivation rather than culture)
  - Awareness raising still key (offline goes hand in hand with online)
- **What may go:**
  - “First generation” digital divide (broadband access)
  - Politics as we know it today (social dialogue Vs. on-off talk)
- **What may add-up:** see overleaf

# Some new research questions

- On the **technological side**: how is eParticipation being changed and shaped by:
  - The convergence of GPS with mobile technologies
  - The fastest growth of mobile Internet, particularly in emerging countries?
- On the **pragmatic side**:
  - What are the viable business models to support a sustainable eParticipation implementation?
  - How would a legal/regulatory reform agenda look like?
  - May self-organization represent a possible incentive to promote integration of participatory activities into daily political decisions?
- On the **operational side**:
  - Who should have a say? Is the presence of an interest (expressed through a contribution) a sufficient condition to create a right to participate?
  - What weights should be used to determine single contributions' importance? Competence/reputation, closeness to the problem, time devoted to the participation, level of repetition? And in what mix?
  - To what extent does the awareness of being observed changes people's behaviour (Heisenberg's uncertainty principle)?
  - What is the fine line that delimits listening from overhearing ("big brother is watching you")?

*Thanks for your kind attention*

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