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## Yes, we can! But in Europe?

Obama sets a trend, not only by involving a new generation of youth in politics, but also by utilising the experience of an older generation, across the boundaries of party and descent. What an example for us, in this Europe paralysed by populism and referendums.

These are exciting times. Imagine that a new prime minister in Holland invites dozens of experts in the country to come up with ideas, to participate in work councils, on energy, social justice, transport, health care, science and more. Imagine that she or he asks for suggestions for the names of the most capable people to bear responsibility on high posts. And imagine that he or she seriously listens to that, by appointing panels to have those ideas and people tested on their value, by using tens of detailed criteria. And thereby not being led by the well-known old boys and girls network.

Imagine - but something like that is really completely unimaginable. Politics never works that way. Not even under Obama, because there, too, power relations and old networks and obligations play an important role.

And yet, something happened there that looks like a silent revolution of the political enterprise. There may be some occasional company accidents along the way, and especially a dose of old acquaintances and the apparent reproaches, because every choice for a person has its restrictions and means that someone else is left out. But nonetheless something special is happening. The high expectations that Obama caused so far seem to be converted into concrete steps thanks to a thought-out and subtle direction.

Wait, this sounds familiar. Wasn't it Ségolène Royal who wanted to let the French people decide on her priorities, via her websites on which they could name their dreams for France? Didn't the current Dutch cabinet also listen to the voices and moods from society?

Obama's mobilising approach goes much further. Via his new way of practising politics, he has mobilised hundreds of thousands, not only to vote but to participate. For the first time, there is someone who truly wants to close the gap between arrogant rulers and common people, between Washington and the services-lacking suburbs to the barren plains of the grain farmers. And for the first there, there is someone who utilises all modern means for that: internet communities, mobile phones, YouTube, electronic forums and old fashioned discussion gatherings.

Closing the gap means to distill from that maze of opinions and ideas something that goes further than the illusion of the day, simplistic idealism or easy populism. That is what went wrong with Ségolène Royal and many others. Where Obama maybe lacked a detailed vision in the beginning, he now compensates with the ideas that his transition team collects and digests. In this way, a coherent image of the future seems to gradually develop, of the changes, and yes even of the sacrifices that will need to be made. Because that is eventually the plan, I think, even though Obama did not explicitly articulate it: the transition from a wasting, egocentric and materialistic society to one in which - using the incredible potential in knowledge and entrepreneurship - well-understood self-interest applies far-reaching changes in energy use and consumption patterns, and in societal responsibility for the country that keeps the world as a whole in mind.

Will he be able to succeed? There are so many obstacles to overcome. In Washington, not only ministers and assistant ministers need to be appointed, but all high officers who are the leftovers of two terms of the Bush government. Some are good but not loyal; others might appear to be loyal but are not competent. This process of tidying up and replacing will take months, if not years, and causes tensions, if only for the continuity of the federal government.

What surprises me the most is that much of the cynicism has disappeared. Thanks to his charisma and strategy, Obama sets a trend, not only by involving a new generation of youth in politics, but also by utilising the experience of an older generation, across the boundaries of party and descent.

What an example for us, in this Europe paralysed by populism and referendums. Imagine that prior to a government formation, or, better yet, prior to elections, a team is assembled to guide the new prime minister and his government in formulating concrete translations of election promises, free from parties, but on the basis of merit. An intelligent group of people, fed by numerous initiatives via the internet and other media, who are not motivated by self-interest and do not aspire to hold a ministry post, but who simply want to serve their country. So that the thinking about the future of the country does not take place in a far-off province, far from press and snoops, but is visible, created by shared thinking and continuously open for new plans.

It's as if a curtain has been pulled aside and the light enters again; this is how one of my American colleagues described it. Maybe, a new way of practising politics is forming: by mobilising the base without falling back into rewarding the short term and the here-and-now. I would like to pull back such a curtain in Holland and in Europe, with the same goal: uniting left and right, young and old, native and nonnative, to make a transition to a truly sustainable society. All that's needed is the search for a Dutch or European Obama.

This article was translated and edited by WatchingAmerica.com