'Yes We Can':

Identity politics and project politics for a late-modern world

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ABSTRACT

There is widespread agreement in mainstream participation studies that social capital and civic engagement in Western democracies are in steady and continuous decline. How did it happen then that Barrack Obama was able to mobilize 10s of millions of volunteers and supporters for his spectacularly successful and novelty creating Presidential Campaign? This was against all scientific odds and statistics. Part of the answer is that his campaign was directed to building *political capital* for solving *common policy concerns*. This shows a gap in political analysis in which the study of reflexive individuals in discursive political communities is situated. When, to an increasing extent, such individuals are deliberately choosing *not* to engage in 'big' politics, it is not because they feel inherently opposed to it or highly satisfied with it. It is above all because they think that the 'old' kind of 'big' politics does not leave them space and autonomy to pursue the kind of identity politics and project politics that they prefer. Obama's rhetoric resonates with the lived experiences of such individuals, because it does not expect, or assume, their blind or rational obedience. Rather, it requests them to participate directly in his project, trying to convince them that Obama's eventual success relies crucially on *their* abilities to make a political difference. This marks a creative shift in political communication from being oriented towards keeping government effective and legitimate to getting people freely and actively to accept and help in executing what has to be done in order to solve common concerns. The paper discusses why this shift has not been detected by mainstream participation studies, following their development in Almond and Verba's civic culture, through Putnam's social capital framework, to Norris' cause oriented politics. Later, Marsh et al's new politics of lived experience is introduced and connected to the project politics model for studying Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens. The conclusion is that Obama's rhetoric in particular appeals to Everyday Makers and Expert Citizen and that their reciprocal resonance opens for a fusion of identity politics and project politics in a new, much more communicative and interactive democratic model for doing what neither neo-liberalism nor statism apparently can do: getting things done in a timely and prudent manner by establishing more balanced and discursive two-way relations of autonomy and dependence between political authorities and laypeople in their political communities.

INTRODUCTION

Since Robert D. Putnam published his article about how American's were increasingly 'bowling alone' (1995), many have asked whatever has happened to civic engagement in the Western world. As Russell J. Dalton recently noted (2008: 76), there is: 'an apparent consensus among contemporary political scientists that the foundations of citizenship and democracy in America are crumbling' (Dalton 2008: 76). Similarly, Macedo et al argues (2005: 1):

> Citizens participate in public affairs less frequently, with less knowledge and enthusiasm, in fewer venues, and less equally than is healthy for a vibrant democratic polity.

However, after having witnessed how millions of volunteers and active supporters provided time and money for Barack Obama's novel and spectacular campaign, the question which needs to be asked is why no mainstream Political Scientists seem to have seen this development coming. For instance, at its high point, my.barackobama.com had 2 million active users, more than 100,000 profiles and 35,000 affinity groups, and was the coordination point for 200,000 events. In addition 70,000 people raised $30 million using MyBO, while in the last four days of the campaign, users made 3 million telephone calls as part of the get-out-the-vote effort (http://www.winningcampaigns.org/Articles/Obama-Campaign-Vendors-List.html). Why given this spectacular net of particular activities could mainstream Political Science claim that young people had: 'forsaken their parents' habitual readiness to engage in the simplest act of citizenship' (Putnam 1995: 69)? I will examine this paradox by asking these questions:

1) Why was it that the organizers of the Obama Campaign could see a potential for participation that mainstream Political Scientists could not see?

2) What is it in the mainstream participatory models that prevent scholars from detecting that such a vast potential for participation exist in society?

3) What kinds of new activisms was it that the Obama Campaign in particular addressed and managed to activate?

The answer to the first question is evident in the famous campaign slogans of 'Yes We Can' and 'Change Can Happen'. These slogans direct one's attention to a new political community approach to participation, stressing how people from different (sub)cultures, with different religions and of different race and gender can work together for a common cause in light of their mutual acceptance

and recognition of their intrinsic differences. This kind of immediate and concrete political community *action*, combining identity politics and project politics, simply constitutes a black hole in the mainstream's underlying liberal democratic model, the key emphasis of which is how to reach a rational and consensual *decision* on an existing conflict of interest. Just as identity politics is not reducible to a matter of (minority) rights so project politics cannot be identified with a 'small' cause-oriented protest politics of no relevance to the conduct of 'big' politics.

The answer to the second question is clear when entering my.barackobama.com:

I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE.

Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington...

I'm asking you to believe in yours

As I shall show, this focus on, and imagining of, a two-way, non-hierarchical and mutually conditioning authority relationship simply has no resonance for mainstream participatory models, all of which take it for granted that political authority always involves a command-obedience relationship between a hierarchical state and people in civil society. What is stressed in mainstream participatory models is never that laypeople can make a real difference to the structuration of the political regime from inside the political system. The focus is always on how people orient themselves to government from outside in civil society, whether actively, as virtuous citizens, or passively, as obedient subjects. In this model the building of political capital from below in the political community plays no significant role, precisely because the responsiveness and effectiveness of any political regime is determined by the 'inputs' of economic and social capital (in the shape of facilities, legitimacy and trust) that it receives from the outside. The model which enjoys hegemony in the mainstream is Almond and Verba's one of *the civic culture* (1963) as composed of three subcultures: the participatory culture, the parochial culture and the subject culture. This model does not only hold for Putnam's social capital model (1993, 2002 (ed.)). It even applies to new approaches, moving beyond the analysis of social capital and responsible and effective government to cause-oriented critical citizens (Norris 1999, 2003, 2007) and forms of micro-personal political activity (Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley 2004).

The answer to the third question becomes visible when browsing by category on MyBO through the 28.000 groups and circles that one can choose to join, on and off, when one has the time for it and feels like it (checked 04.05.2009):

Local (9735), People (5248), Issues (4938)

5

Interests (4291), **National** (3926)

As the weighting of locality, people and issues indicate when compared to those of interests and nation, this site appeals precisely to reflexive individuals, who mix identity politics and project politics, the personal and the communal, and the local and the global. Such individuals want empowerment from above in order for them to be able to do things themselves from below. Such individuals would in most mainstream participation studies be dismissed as: 'atomized forms of citizenship [in which] people often have only a surface engagement with political issues and complexities' (Stoker 2006: 11, cf. Cain, Dalton and Scarrow (eds.) 2006, Putnam (ed.) 2002), Pharr and Putnam (eds. 2000). In contrast, Obama's local experiences as a community organizer in Chicago in combination with his team's knowledge of how to use ICT for political campaigning had shown him how reflexive individuals, who have deliberately chosen not to engage in conventional 'big' politics may be mobilized for building creative political communities in virtual as well as real space ((http://fabians.org.uk/images/stories/pdfs/yes_we_can.pdf, checked March 21 2009). This is also why Obama could mock the mainstream in his victory speech in his favorite city (http://elections.foxnews.com/2008/11/05/raw-data-barack-obamas-victory-speech/):

> [The campaign] grew strength from the young people, who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy; who left their homes and their families for jobs that offered little pay and less sleep. It drew strength from the not-so-young people who braved the bitter cold and scorching heat to knock on doors of perfect strangers, and from the millions of Americans who volunteered and organized and proved that more than two centuries later a government of the people, by the people, and for the people has not perished from the Earth. This is your victory.

Obama here seems to speak directly to those whom in alternative participation studies have been called Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens, who consider politics as lived experience and who can be mobilized if: 'governance initiatives can open up political spaces for young people to organize around and articulate the issues that concern them' (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones 2007: 221). Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens are people who want to engage directly in helping to solve those policy risks that confront them in their everyday lives, rather than merely helping to articulate citizen's wants as demands that call for collective decisions. Such political participants have a project identity, more than a legitimating or oppositional one. They do not engage primarily in order
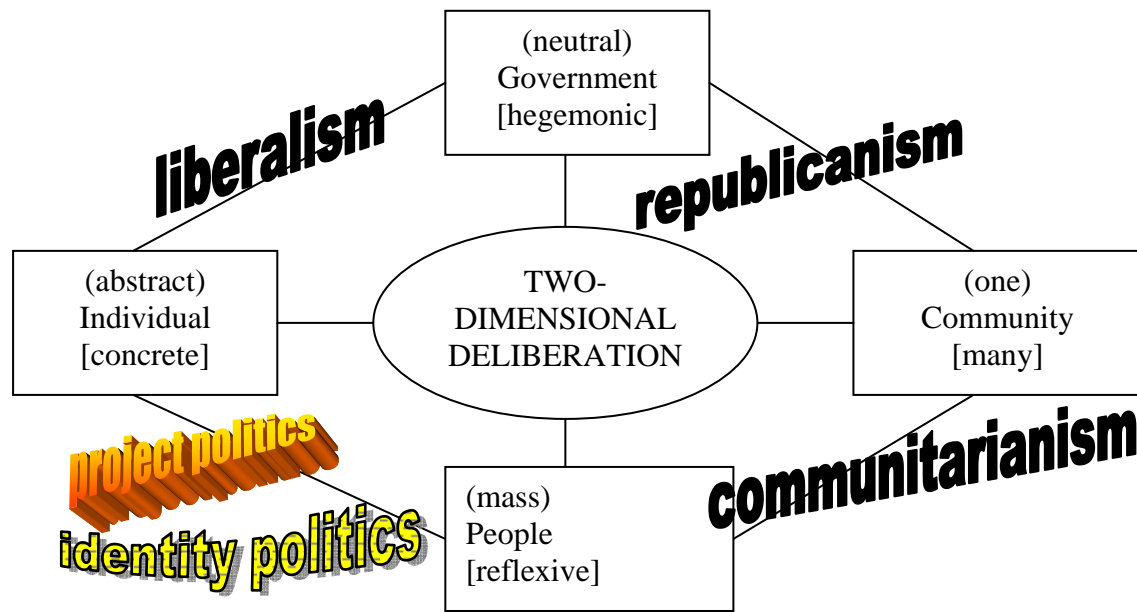
to give voice to repressed interests and identities, but rather in order to help to empower people and develop their own identities as well as their capacities to act in solving common concerns.

Whatever the outcome of Barrack Obama's Presidency, one thing already stands out sharply from his campaigning. His campaign suggests that there is an alternative to both market and state, namely a multilevel governance approach to engaging people with various identities in common projects and building reflexive political communities that enable them to express their individuality in cooperation with others, for the explicit purpose of making a difference in the solving of common concerns (Bang and Esmark (ed.) 2007, Bevir and Trentmann (eds.) 2007, Acheson and Williamson 2007, Clark, Newman, Smith, Vidler and Westmarland 2007). The Obama campaign managed to form new crucial connections with laypeople, involving them in policy articulation and promising them a stake in policy delivery when the time was ripe. His project may eventually fail, but what stands out is his political lesson that elections today must be won by mobilizing and empowering people to make a difference in, and through, immediate and concrete political action.

1. Identity politics and project politics: two black holes in mainstream thought

How people construct their political identity in and through their participation in concrete policy projects on the output side of political processes is a theme which has for a decade at least been a core subject in local political analyses (Bang (ed.) 2003, Fischer 2003, Hajer and Wagenaar (eds.) 2003). In what ways do new models of identity and project politics dissociate themselves from the way they are treated in mainstream Political Science? Let us, for the sake of convenience, introduce a simple model, describing how the old and new models of participation approach the relation between government and people, and individual and community respectively:

Figure One: the Core of Old and New Participation Studies

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                    (neutral)
                    Government
                    [hegemonic]

   liberalism                    republicanism

 (abstract)          TWO-              (one)
 Individual      DIMENSIONAL        Community
 [concrete]      DELIBERATION        [many]

   project politics
                                    communitarianism
   identity politics
                    (mass)
                    People
                    [reflexive]
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I

Very crudely put, I will describe their relation as follows (Bang and Dyrberg 2003, Habermas 1997, 2002). Liberalism is rooted in the relationship of the individual to government (or the state). The individual is endowed with certain universal rights and a contract is established by government to protect those rights as a neutral umpire but also with force, if necessary. 'Community' is regarded as an aggregate of individual preferences and government is considered a 'necessary evil' which should be as small as possible in order not to lead to overregulation of the free market economy. Simultaneously, government should be sufficiently strong to hinder violations of the individual's 'life, liberty and estate'.

Communitarians are directly opposed to liberals in regarding rights as secondary to learning and integrating norms about the common good. The individual appears as a communal construct shaped by the kind of morality, networking, learning and trust that identify a well-integrated community. Participation is regarded as a collective enterprise aimed at achieving a common goal. Differences are recognized but also assimilated to contribute to the common good. There is little room for individuality here, since the individual is but the result of its collective build-up. Furthermore, as is the case in liberalism, government is considered an omnipotent threat, though not primarily to individual freedom, but to the common good.

Republicans emphasize how political institutions foster the virtues that lead people to do their duties as citizens (Doheny 2007: 407). Republicanism does not only argue that a republic is the best form of government, but, in particular, that the political institutions of republican government are the creators of individual rights and the common good. In my view, republicanism, due to its classical Greek roots, is constitutively ambiguous with regard to whether it conceives of itself as a universally, generalisable, logic (Habermas 1997) or as a context dependent, and historically constructed, hegemonic power (Mouffe 2000, cf. Bang 2007). In both versions the focus is on how republicanism induces commonality and solidarity to strengthen the deliberative spirit among groups with different interests and identities in society. However, there is disagreement about whether republicanism is about *removing disorder* from an underlying general democratic order, or whether it is rather a matter of creating islands of democratic order out of an underlying general disorder (ibid). In the latter version, the specificity of democracy does not lie in some universal procedures and integrative norms for removing particular conflicts from a general form of integration, rather, it lies: 'in the recognition and legitimation of conflict and the refusal to suppress it by imposing an authoritarian order' (Mouffe 2000: 183). Here, the need is to keep a fundamental antagonism at bay and 'domesticate it' in order to be able to use it for liberating purposes as institutionalized democratic agonisms.

As indicated in figure 1 identity politics and project politics have no space in conventional democratic theory, precisely because they investigate into what liberalists, communitarians and republicans do not, namely how individuals, sharing in a political division of labour, can develop political commonality from their political individuality, and vice versa. There are thus no way of insulating individuality from commonality in identity politics and project politics, because it is always a matter of being able to see oneself in the other and of recognizing this other in oneself (Strong and Madsen 2003). Placing emphasis on how political individuality from commonality is constructed bottom up, the notions of identity politics and project politics clearly dissociate themselves from liberalism and its notions of an abstract, 'freestanding' individual as well as from communitarianism and its notion of one overarching common good. But they also dissociate themselves from republicanism in which the main emphasis is on how an institutional hegemony constructs virtuous citizens from the top down. Thus, identity politics and project politics may be described as the black hole in contemporary democratic studies, because they conceive of people as reflexive, historically situated, individuals who want to govern themselves and with others through

their concrete interventions in the ongoing processes of events in the world. However, they do have old ancestors, since anarchists made that point long ago:

> Anarchism….owes its origin to the constructive, creative activity of the people, by which all institutions of communal life were developed in the past, and to a protest – a revolt against the external force which had thrust itself upon these institutions (Kropotkin in Capouya and Tompkins 1975: 57).

> No ruling authorities, then, No government of man by man; no crystallization and immobility, but a continual evolution-such as we see in nature. Free play for the individual, for the full development of his individual gifts – *for his individualization* (ibid: 65).

However there *are* significant differences between the 'old' anarchism and the new models of identity politics and project politics. First of all, they are non-evolutionary, in focusing on *the individual* as a concrete, historically located subject, on *government* as a temporary hegemony for exercising power over others in time-space, on *community* as composed of many, relatively autonomous and historically situated ones, and on *laypeople* as an ensemble of historically situated human beings who are able to make a concrete political difference whether acting alone or together. Secondly, they do not usually specify the connection between the dominant hegemony and laypeople as an eternal struggle between oppressors and those resisting such oppression. Domination is described as liberating as well as oppressive, and the interventions by laypeople from below are pictured along a scale ranging from total rejection to complete acceptance of political authority (Giddens 1986).

This brings us to the notion of political community. What is inconceivable in the 3 democratic models is exactly the understanding that political learning and cooperation in such a community can spring from a deliberate choice on the part of reflexive individuals *not* to participate in the formal regime institutions, except perhaps as voters. Today, this is becoming obvious, in particular in the study of local governance and participation on the internet (Cornfield 2004, Davies 2007, Häyhtiö and Rinne 2008, Loader 2007, Lowndes and Sullivan 2007, Marsh et al 2007). Activists, local studies show, shun 'big' politics, because it does not allow them to feel immediately engaged in, and influential in solving, the many concrete policy problems that confront them in their everyday life (Bang (ed.) 2003, 2005, Barnes, Newman and Sullivan 2007, Coleman 2007, 2008, Hajer and Wagenaar (eds.) 2003, Heffen, Kickert, and Thomassen (eds.) 2000, Marsh, O'Toole and Jones

2007, Newman (ed.) 2005,). Furthermore, activists do not think that those involved in 'big' politics regard them as reflexive political beings capable of self- and co-governance. What seems to distinguish them from the old anarchists is that they have a project identity that means that it depends on the concrete context whether they fight against or collaborate with the authorities (Castells 1997). To them, recognition of difference is more fundamental to life in the late modern Polis than are mere tolerance, eternal resistance or an overarching commonality or national identity. Identity politics and project politics shun the notion of the individual as an abstract and universal mechanism who dutifully plods through life's concrete experiences leaving its rational choice on all events and structures coming its way. Individuals are considered as 'bundles' of identities; as subject and objects of the attribution of meaning; as layered into multiple levels and practices; and as discursively (re)constructing themselves on their journey through all these levels and practices in which they are contextually embedded (White 2008: 17, cf. Beck 1996, Giddens 1996).

In practice, identity politics and project politics are nearly inseparable, because identity is very much a project, the realization of which depends crucially on the *transformative capacity* of oneself and others (Bang 2003b, 2004, 2005). In democratic theory, however, identity politics is usually absorbed into the old input model as an extension of the old discussion of self-interest vs. the general interest (Kymlicka and Norman 2000). However, those studying political identity are not only sceptical of any abstract ideal of good citizenship; they simply abandon them in favour of developing concrete discursive practices for managing what they consider an eternal tension between the legitimate domination of a given hegemonic power and those minorities who have been excluded from it (Giddens 1986, Mouffe 2000). However, the link between the notions of identity politics and project politics show how these model go way beyond the old input political question of how conflicting interests, as well as diverse and combating identities, can acquire free and equal access to, and recognition in, the political decision-making processes. They deal in concrete action more than in collective decisions, meaning that they place key emphasis on the linking of identity construction to the exercise of control on the output side. They hold that concrete influence on the articulation and delivery of social policy is more significant and relevant to overcome problems of exclusion than are abstract political rights.

Those studying identity politics and project politics directly accuse the 'old' liberal model of universal rights for concealing how a certain hegemonic identity is operating the so-called 'neutral state' as a skewed power favouring some political identities (such as white, middle-aged, Christian men) above all else. One example is the discussion about whether to introduce quotas to secure

women and migrants (with a state citizenship status) a fairer and more equal representation in Parliament or other important societal institutions, such as executive committees and boards of directors (cf. Lister 1997, Phillips 1998). Such quotas do violate the liberal tolerance principle, based as it is on the notion of an abstract individual's inalienable 'natural' rights. On the other hand, they obviously represent a legitimate claim from the point of view of identity and project politics, saying that gender equality and cultural equality will not come about in liberal democracy unless we introduce and enforce such quotas on the majority. Indeed, it is hard to neglect how democracy is the outcome of the play of a dominant male identity in history. This is inscribed into the workings of all major societal institutions, as regularized path dependencies that are very hard to overcome by rational means.

2. The Civic Culture Revisited

Let us go back and consider how it is that democratic politics has come to be identified with input political issues concerned with how conflicting interests (and identities) acquire free and equal access to, and recognition in, political decision-making processes. Almond and Verba's study of the civic culture is a convenient starting point, since they were among the first to state that (1963: 14):

> incumbents and decisions may…be classified broadly by whether they are involved either in the political or "input" process or in the administrative or "output" process. By "political" or "input" process we refer to the flow of demands from the society into the polity and the conversion of these demands into authoritative decisions.

By distinguishing between whether individual orientations towards the polity were directed towards politics or administration and political or non-political outputs, they developed a notion of civic culture centred around the questions of what knowledge individuals have of: i) their nation and their polity in general terms (history, size, location, etc.); (ii) how their 'inputs' relate to their polity's basic structures, roles and policies; (iii) the structures and actors involved in the production of 'outputs' and policy enforcement; and (iv) their rights, power, obligations and possibilities of access to influence (ibid: 16). The answers to these questions distinguishes the orientations of individuals towards: (a) the polity as a general object; (b) input objects; (c) output objects; and (d) themselves as active participants. This, in turn, enabled Almond and Verba to develop a notion of the civic culture of democracy as composed of 3 types of culture, the parochial, subject and participant culture (ibid):

Table 1: Orientations in the Civic Culture

Orientation Culture	Polity as general object	Input objects	Output objects	Oneself as active participant
Parochial	0	0	0	0
Subject	1	0	1	0
Participant	1	1	1	1

In the parochial culture, people's knowledge about specialized political objects is almost non-existent. We are dealing with 'unsophisticated', 'close-minded' and 'insular' individuals engaging in the culture in their pre-modern, tribal or local consciousness in which there is no idea of individuals occupying specialized political roles and no separation between one's political role and one's other roles.

In the subject culture, people do have a sense of the polity as a general object and of specialized roles associated with those who exercise authority over oneself and others when enforcing (**?**) their policies. This is the 'we must obey the bastards' or 'government knows best' orientation, characteristic of people having almost no sense of themselves as active, influential, participants and possessing virtually no knowledge of how their engagement in the culture relates to the conversion of demands into collective decisions.

In the participant culture, participants are collectively and explicitly oriented towards their polity as a whole. They can distinguish between incumbents and structures in relation to both inputs and outputs and they are fully aware of their important and significant roles as people who articulate common concerns and who seek to influence the conversion of demands into policies as virtuous citizens. Here, we are dealing with 'truly modern' individuals who know how to act collectively in order to acquire access to, and recognition in, the democratic decision-making process.

Almond and Verba's distinction between 'input' and 'output' is derived from David Easton's definition of 'the political' as a system of decision and action, including: 'all events, actions and behaviours oriented towards the authoritative articulation and allocation of disputed and contested material as well as non-material values for a society' (1953, 1965).

Figure 1: **put into Box**

The political system
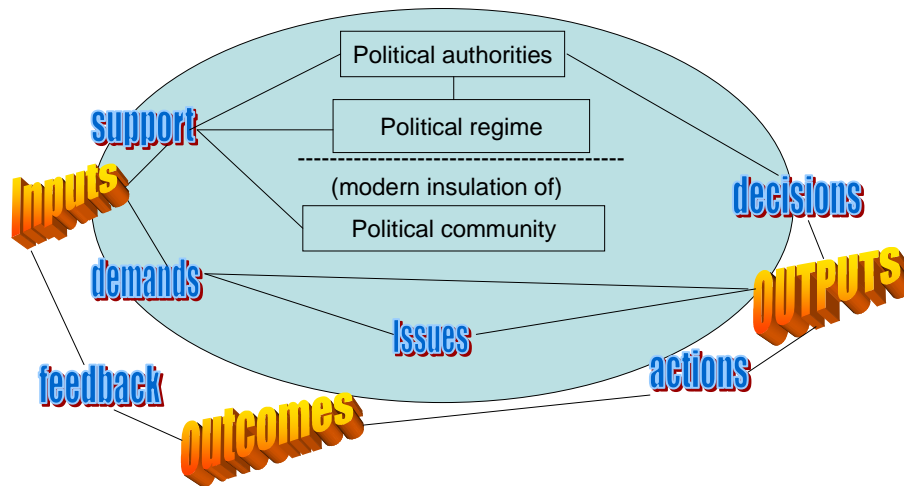
Put very briefly, the political systems model asks how 'inputs' are converted into 'outputs' and with what 'outcomes' (Bang 2003a; Bang and Esmark 2007, Bang and Esmark 2009). If we begin from the politicization of people's wants as demands, we can study how these demands are aggregated and/or integrated directly into collective decisions, or into issues in search of such collective decisions. We can then establish how collective decisions are articulated and delivered as binding actions that people accept (but not necessarily agree to) for a variety of reasons. Finally, we can analyse how feedback from the consequences of those actions leaves its impact on the inputs of support and demand. Support can be examined as support for: (a) political authorities as incumbents of authority roles (for instance *trust*); (b) political regime as a structured set of values, norms and power relations (for example *legitimacy*); and (c) political community, consisting of a group of persons bound together by a political division of labour (for instance a sense of *common destiny* or *political belonging*, Easton 1965: 177).

The punctuated line between regime and community in Figure 1 indicates how the black hole in democratic analyses in which the notions of identity politics and project politics are situated stems from, and relates to the insulation of the state (or government) from market and civil society in

modern political theory and praxis. This displacement of political community from its 'home' inside the political system is the main reason why the notion of political system is usually identified with the notions of 'government' (authorities + regime) or 'state' (authorities, regime + something else, such as monopoly control over the means of violence). As Foucault points out, the dislocation of political community springs from a: 'contract of rational despotism with free reason [or emancipation]' (2007: 203). By this he means that modernity never beheaded the sovereign King of feudal society, but instead tried to make his hierarchical rule, and will to be obeyed, an instrument and medium of public reason in the civic culture 'outside'. As such, Almond and Verba simply echoes Kant when describing the participatory culture as standing outside of government, actively trying to give voice to people's grievances by politicizing their wants as demands; when viewing the parochial culture as a governmentally-protected domain for the spontaneous and free accumulation of social capital; and when regarding the subject culture as a potential irrational nuisance to be kept silent and apathetic by a centralized bureaucracy treating subjects as clients. The underlying argument is that:

> the public and free use of autonomous reason will be the best guarantee of obedience, on condition, however, that the political principle that must be obeyed itself be in conformity with universal reason' (Foucault 2007:203).

The modern conception of political hierarchy as a means of protecting and serving the civic culture is in my view unfortunate. It distorts the theoretical and practical significance and importance of identity politics and project politics by concealing how laypeople in political community are necessarily, or logically, connected with political authorities for the structuration of the political regime. Political authority can assume many other forms than hierarchy which turns the relationship between political authorities and laypeople into one of command and obedience (Easton 1955, 1958). The political regime can be structured in many different ways to be both the medium and the result of the ongoing communication and interaction between political authorities and political laypeople in time-space. The very core of political authority is difference, not opposition. Political authorities are different from laypeople, because they engage in the systematic articulation and solving of the daily affairs of a political system, are normally recognized by laypeople as having the responsibility for these matters, and take actions which are mostly accepted as authoritative by laypeople most of the time, at least as long as the authorities act within the limits of their role (Easton 1965: 212). Laypeople do not have these systematic tasks and responsibilities, but are in principle free to organize themselves more loosely and spontaneously for the pursuit of their various

life political projects. This means that they can experiment with new political tactics and modes of participation beyond the regime's authoritative conception (cf. Habermas 1997). These are then potentially available to political authorities as a kind of 'free political variety' that they can institutionalize and layer into the regime via their systematic articulations and strategic interventions. I see this duality of political authority and political laypeople as the primary reason why it is absolutely necessary for any authoritative conception to listen and learn from how laypeople experiment with and intervene in political decision and action outside of this conception. The fact that many laypeople do not participate within the bonds of the authoritative conception of the going regime does in no way make them less necessary to the continuation of the authority relationships. In effect, political authorities cannot make and implement any political decisions unless laypeople understand what they have to do, and can and will accept the political messages of their political authorities as binding for their own actions (Bang 2003a). As I shall argue, a major contributing reason for Obama's victory was exactly his rejuvenation of the notion of political community, bringing laypeople back into the political system as central to its construction and reconstruction (cf. Catlaw 2006).

2.1. The Civic Culture Today

Party membership has fallen considerably in the last decades and so has turnout at election time (Hay 2007). Labour unions and other big interest organizations experience increasing troubles with getting new members and activating existing ones (Stoker 2006). Engagement in social movements is not as high as it used to be (Putnam (ed.) 2002). Even such intrinsic citizen practices as attending political meetings and writing to politicians are shrinking (Hay 2007). Furthermore, citizens no longer primarily get their political identity from their identification with political parties (Dalton and Wattenberg (eds.) 2000), nor are they as obedient as they used to be (Bang 2003a and b). In fact, reflexive individuals increasingly loathe hierarchical commands. They demand a much more communicative and problem-oriented authority, if they are going to accept and support it.

Most mainstream Political Scientists see these developments as signs that apathy is spreading and undermining the civic culture. They adopt Putnam's early pessimism from 'Bowling Alone' (1995, cf. Wattenberg 2007) and blame individualization and consumerism for reducing social capital, by undermining active participation in public affairs and, thereby, undermining the stability and effectiveness of representative institutions (cf. Putnam (ed.) 2002). A vicious circle is created in

which increasing political apathy leads to more social distrust and disaffection, which, in turn, leads to escalating political apathy, etc. If we do not manage to stop this, we will be: 'cursed with vertically structured politics, a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and a culture of distrust' (Putnam 1993: 15).

However, Putnam's stories of decay, which echo those of Almond and Verba, who also emphasize the close connection between the accumulation of social capital in a mixed civic culture and responsive and effective formal political institutions, are not unchallenged in mainstream Political Science. Another group of researchers, with Pippa Norris (1999, 2003, 2007) and Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley (2004) at the forefront, argue that Putnam's pessimistic view of citizenship results from his presumption that civic engagement is only for the sake of helping 'the lonely crowd' to voice and organize their concerns in the formal and institutionalized arenas of modern democratic government. They suggest that fewer people engage in this kind of civic engagement because more are participating in a range of new modes of protesting, consulting, deliberating and co-governing beyond conventional organizations and formal institutions. New cause-oriented critical citizens and forms of micro-personal political activity are on the march, revealing how most stories of decline and apathy are merely a product of: 'the older focus on citizenship activities designed to influence elections, government, and public policy-making process within the nation-state' (Norris 2007: 641). Participation research, as Norris demonstrates, must move beyond the formal institutions to appreciate how the new protest movements and forms of micro-politics have:

> more fluid boundaries, looser networked coalitions, and decentralized organizational structures. The primary goals of new social movements often focus upon achieving social change through direct action strategies and community building, as well as by altering lifestyles and social identities, as much as through shaping formal policy-making processes and laws in government (Norris 2007: 638).

Norris emphasises that the old participation studies are dated because they do not grasp how new modes of life politics and identity politics are becoming increasingly visible. Norris also 'sees' how politics is spreading to the output side as: 'cause-oriented repertoires, which focus attention upon specific issues and policy concerns' (ibid: 639). Yet, she soon withdraws into a mainstream position tracing these repertoires back to the input side, as evidence of new identity conflicts giving voice to new post-materialist values beyond materialist interests.

In this way identity politics is co-opted by interest politics, whereas critical, cause-oriented activism is relegated to the domain of 'small' politics. As Stoker succinctly puts this position (2006:202):

> The old rules of politics have not changed; politics remains about people expressing conflicting ideas and interests and then finding a way to reconcile those ideas and interests in order to rub along with one another (Stoker 2006: 202).

By definition, therefore, all new forms of identity politics and project politics are, in the final analysis, subordinated to more traditional representative political processes and arenas. Democratic government is still considered the 'neutral' arbiter of clashing interests; political community is still a unified national community; laypeople still appear as masses tied to clearly identifiable group and class interests in society; and the individual is still thought of as an abstract, universal one endowed with certain 'natural' rights. Identity politics and cause-oriented project politics are regarded as momentary 'disturbances' in the democratic chain of government. They are subjected in 'the Kantian way' to the rational choice of individuals and the integrative norms in civil society in order to prevent them from doing harm to the democratic goal of equal freedom. Marcuse has a term for this: he would have called it 'repressive tolerance': http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/65repressivetolerance.htm.

2.2. Politics as Lived Experience

The theoretical challenge confronting the study identity politics and project politics is most of all Almond and Verba's model of the civic culture which contends that:

- politics is only about inputs, whereas outputs are solely about administration;

- autonomous administrative power is what all democratic pluralists must fight with any available means to avoid monism and the arbitrary, illegitimate, use of coercion;

- freedom and equality require the insulation of the civic culture from political and administrative power, as well as the control of these powers by a constitutional regime, ensuring that they are put to use in a rational, responsive and effective manner.

What we got to demonstrate is how this model is in a peculiar sense very 'unpolitical':

a) It sees those in the participatory culture as set up to fight political power with moral and instrumental reason, rather than with a logic of immediate political action;

b) It treats those in the parochial culture as being concerned with creating social networks and accumulating reciprocal social trust in themselves and their social localities, not with creating cooperative political communities and expanding their capacities to 'make a difference' in, and through, their communicative and interactive political actions;

c) It conceives of those in the subject culture as obedient subjects, who either hate politics or feel that 'government knows best', they are not reflexive and cooperative individuals who stand prepared to accept and recognize themselves as bound by political authority, precisely as long as that authority does *not* threaten or command them to do so.

Marsh, O'Toole and Jones (2007) challenge this non-political conception of political culture by starting out from an examination of how people themselves define 'the political' in their concrete everyday practices. Thus, they break away from the mainstream to study identity politics –not by isolating and privileging particular aspects of identity (class, gender, race, etc), rather by considering all such particular identities as revealing a politics of lived experience about how people themselves draw the line between what is political and non-political. As they show, many young people may have avoided the 'old' formal politics because they felt it had nothing to offer them. Hence, to write them off as: 'politically apathetic is too simplistic and sweeping a statement' (2007: 22). In fact, these 'apathetic' youngsters may turn out to be the most active in more informal and ad hoc governance networks and practices, such as the new kinds of blogging, making comments on blogs, viewing , posting, and forwarding news stories and videos as ways to participate (Coleman 2007, 2008, Cornfield 2004, Häyhtiö and Rinne (eds.) 2008, Kline and Burstein 2005, Loader (ed.) 2007).

More specifically, Marsh, O'Toole and Jones challenge the mainstream, identifying four flaws in its participatory models (2007: 18-19):

(1) Although the mainstream is moving beyond the narrow conception of participation as revealing a relation between social capital, interest politics and the formal institutions of democratic government, 'there is little engagement with how young people themselves conceive of the political and there remains a tendency in their work to imposes a view of 'the political' on their respondents'.

(2) There is a serious lack of understanding of non-participation in democratic government: 'Put simply, it is frequently assumed that if individuals do not engage in the activities that researchers take to represent political participation, they are politically apathetic'.

(3) '[A]ge, class, ethnicity and gender are viewed merely as independent variable, rather than as 'lived experience', and, hence, the relationship between these and political engagement is poorly understood'.

(4) '[M]ost researcher pay insufficient attention to the broader context of patterns of governance and citizenship, the ways they are changing and the consequences of these for political participation'.

These four flaws are prompted by a political practice in which government decides what is to be regarded as legitimate and illegitimate. For example, when Tony Blair called the demonstrations against the WTO and G8 meetings in the UK and elsewhere 'mindless thuggery' (quoted in Marsh, O'Toole and Jones 2007: 23), he was attempting to depoliticize their engagement (cf Hay 2007). His underlying presumption was that only political activity sanctioned by formal political authorities is legitimate. By viewing and specifying the protesters as non-political and illegitimate hoodlums, Blair could legitimate their policing by the state. However, in regarding the protesters' informal, unconventional and unorthodox form of political participation as irrational and undemocratic, Blair and the police actually demonstrated that they did not, or would not, understand what was going on. There was an explicit reason why the protestors chose confrontational tactics, rather than 'civic' ones, namely that they had earlier experienced how 'non-violent protests are just completely ignored….despite a massive turnout' (Urban quoted in Marsh, O'Toole and Jones 2007: 23). So, what Tony Blair and the police experienced as being the irrational behaviour of hoodlums seeking trouble was actually a calculated event flowing from the belief that: 'a certain amount of trouble is the only way to get the media to cover a protest like this' (ibid).

> This point made is not to justify violence, but to suggest that what is political is in the eye of the beholder and what is regarded as legitimately political is policed by the state. To analyse politics and political participation, we need to rethink the claim that individuals who do not participate in politics in conventional, orthodox ways are politically apathetic (Marsh, O'Toole and Jones 2007: 23).

From this follows the obvious conclusion that: 'we should distinguish between political participation and political non-participation. This leaves open the question of why individuals do not participate in formal politics' (ibid).

Marsh, O'Toole and Jones describe their position as a critical realist one, conceiving of the politics of lived experience as a structured and structuring process. This means first of all focusing on how

participants' understanding of age, class, gender and ethnicity shapes their perception of what are political and non-political. But, this should be done within: 'the structural as well as the discursive constraints on how individuals construct and indeed live their identity, or what Butler (1999) calls their 'performativity''(2007:29).

Indeed, the politics of lived experience brings us way beyond the mainstream view of participation. Yet, although it is pointing us in the direction of a notion of a political community composed of reflexive individuals and groups, it seems to me that Marsh, O'Toole and Jones in their critical realism still give priority to the emancipatory 'input' goal of freeing 'the people's voice' from exclusion. Their approach seems to be more 'input driven' than 'output directed', in the sense that, 'in the last instance', what counts is that policy contributes to inclusion, that is to securing that all interests and identities enjoy free and equal access to, and recognition in, the political decision-making processes. In this way, their socially structured politics of lived experience also imperceptibly turns into a struggle between having a resistance identity and a legitimating one. In contrast, project politics is tied to an ongoing project of empowering people and enabling them to make an autonomous difference to the articulation and delivery of policy on the output side. Such a project identity differs from both the legitimating and oppositional one.

Was it perhaps an ingrained resistance identity and sense of exclusion which made the protestors in Britain choose the tactics they did in their struggle against globalization? Apparently not! When reading what they said, it is not so much hostility, or a feeling of exclusion, which decided their choice of tactics. But, nor was it obviously a legitimating one that proceeded according to what those in the formal institutions would accept and recognize as 'valid' democratic participation. Rather, the demonstrators had a project which was dear to them and which they thought was worthy of public attention, although it was developed outside the formal institutions and also ranged far beyond these in its global and local orientation. They neither believed in the legitimacy of 'the system', nor did they appear as feeling entirely estranged from it. They simply wanted to get media coverage for their struggle for better and more humane 'glocal' policies. Thus, the protesters' immediate actions were not primarily targeted at giving voice to repressed interests and identities in civil society. Their focus was primarily on how to make their project public in face of limited or no media attention. Their project identity was not prompted by some general norms or reasons. It was constructed in and through their concrete experiences with how to make a difference as members of a reflexive political community (cf. Figure 2). This brings me to what I consider the next conceptual element in forging the relation between identity politics and project politics, namely the notions of

everyday makers (EMs) and expert citizens (ECs) (Bang and Soerensen 2001, Bang 2003b, Bang 2005, Bevir (2004), Blakeley and Evans 2009, Box 2005, Catlaw 2006, Coleman 2008, Lie and Marsh 2008, Marsh, O'Toole and Jones 2007, Rhodes 2007).

3. Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens: New Participants in Search of a New 'Big' Politics

Marsh, O'Toole and Jones conceive of ECs and EMs as the very embodiment of their politics of lived experience. They demonstrate how the mainstream participation literature, by dismissing ECs and EMs as 'free riders', 'mindless thugs', 'small p' participants etc conceal their contributions to creating a more inclusive politics. ECs and EMs often belong to groups which are oppressed as a consequence of a lack of both recognition and a belief in their political capacities for exercising their differences on their own terms and conditions as members of a communicative and interactive political community (cf. Schneider and Ingram 1997) - whether as immigrants, gays, lesbians or whatever.

ECs and EMs may be regarded as the living proof of how the resistance identities of social grassroots and social movements in industrialist society are changing into project identities, aiming at politically transforming an increasingly glocalized network society (cf. Castells 1997: 356-358). Their participation is governed by a project identity which makes them put concerns for immediate and prudent action above worries over rational decision-making. Whether they engage in protests, collaborate in public-private or state-civil society partnerships, make alliances with the media, or do voluntary work in their neighbourhoods, they always have a concrete project in mind that they aim at realizing. They can be out fighting against 'the system' in one particular context and then shift to teaming up with it in another; they can ignore an institution's attempts to involve them, but they can also help the institution in solving its problems on the condition that it simultaneously empowers them to pursue their own life-political projects. The important thing is that, to ECs and EMs, participation and support are not solely a matter of being either *for* or *against* 'the system'. They adopt an oppositional or legitimating identity only if it is functional to developing their project identity and, thus, to meeting their specific life plans or policies (Bang 2005, Collin 2009).

ECs are most often new professionals, particularly in voluntary organizations, who feel they can articulate and do policy as well, and even better, than politicians and other professionals from the public and private domain. They deal with all types of elites and sub-elites who somehow are significant and relevant to securing the success of their various projects. ECs:

- have a wide conception of the political as a discursive construct; a full-time, overlapping, project identity reflecting their overall life style;

- possess the necessary expertise for exercising influence in elite networks;

- place negotiation and dialogue before antagonism and opposition;

- embody a view of themselves as autonomous parts of the system, rather than as identical with it or external and oppositional to it.

ECs put policy before politics in their project identity. They are more concerned with having an impact on the concrete articulation and delivery of policies that helps them in realizing their various projects, rather than in fighting so that all can enjoy free and equal access to, and recognition in, collective decision-making. Since they have become habituated to think of 'big' politics as relating solely to conventional input politics, they have deliberately chosen to develop their 'small' tactics for 'making a difference' outside of the formal institutions of democratic government. Because they see themselves as placed inside, rather than outside, of 'the political', they are not afraid of using their knowledge, skills and tactical judgments to influence others. They build networks of negotiation and cooperation with politicians, administrators, interest groups, media and private companies across conventional boundaries, and in the process they develop their project identity and network consciousness. As compared to more traditional activists, ECs are not in the game to fight or cherish 'the system'. They may do so, if it suits their projects, but, mostly, they want to be taken seriously as prudent and competent partners to the exercise of good governance. Consequently, ECs are also a resource or political capital for the going system. In particular, they have a fund of everyday experience about how to deal with policy problems of exclusion based on 'race', gender, poverty etc.

EMs are in many ways a response to ECs whom they confront in nearly all the institutions, network and projects that they traverse in their everyday lives. EMs do not feel defined by the state and they are neither apathetic about, nor opposed to, it. Like ECs, they don't want to waste time getting involved in the 'old style' civil society politics; they prefer to be involved as reflexive individuals participating with other reflexive individuals for getting a particular and very concrete project going, right where they are. They typically think globally, but act locally. They normally are interested in 'big' politics, but they do not derive their primary political identity from it. They are somewhat sceptical of ECs, whom they think are too system-conforming and too concerned with 'winning' the games that professionals play. EMs make a distinction between participating to feel

engaged and develop oneself and participating to acquire influence and success; they draw a clear line between participating in policy-politics as laypeople and as professionals. They aim to encourage more spontaneous and lowly organized forms of involvement than those of ECs, who typically will seek to professionalize all 'spontaneity', such as collaborating with media in the timing and spacing of certain protest projects. Unlike ECs, EMs don't want to mould the identity of others in the direction of certain goals. They rather want to pursue a credo of everyday experience, stating:

- Do it yourself
- Do it where you are
- Do it for fun, but also because you find it necessary
- Do it ad hoc or part-time
- Do it concretely, instead of ideologically
- Do it self-confidentially and show trust in yourself
- Do it with the system, if need be.

Like ECs, EMs do not believe that representative democracy can be rescued, either by governing as a unity from above, or by accumulating more and more social capital from below. They present a practical alternative to Putnam's notion of 'strong government' and 'thick community'. EMs identify themselves with neither. Their commonality does not build on a common good, but on the acceptance and recognition of their common capacities for making a difference, which is precisely why they are not satisfied with being obedient supports or 'virtuous' citizens of the state. EMs, like ECs, are concerned with creating political capital by enhancing political capacities for self-governance and co-governance in and through various communicative and interactive projects and networks.

ECs and EMs demonstrate in their discursive practices how political participation is moving from the input side to the output side. They argue that creating identity relies crucially on getting control, and, consequently, that power is as significant and important to building viable political communities as are values and norms. This brings us back to the Obama campaign which precisely indicates that there is another crucial mode of political communication and interaction which does *not* begin by examining how the accumulation of social capital is tied to political decision-making for the sake of keeping it effective and responsible (Putnam 1993). This is the 'output' mode of communicative governance, which depends for its success on actors' practical abilities to 'make a

difference' inside 'the political' to the articulation and delivery of salient policy values (Bang 2003 a+b, Hajer and Wagenaar (eds.) 2003).

Therefore, the primary reason why the mainstream literature did not foresee what was coming stems from its identification of 'the political' with 'input politics', with how people's wants are given a social voice and politicized as demands that are converted into collective decisions (cf. Little 2008). As is the case in the notion of civic culture, this makes one believe that outputs, as the programming and implementing action, are simply the domain of non-political administration. What the fusion of identity and project politics shows is that 'administration' is political through and through as revealing how the social and the economic are politically constructed in and through the exercise of political authority (Bang 2003a, Bang and Esmark (2009), Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler and Westmarland 2007, Easton 1955, 1958, Hajer and Uitermark 2008). The argument here is that state, market and civil society could not have come into being, except through the exercise of the political capacity to articulate and deliver a policy-package which is acceptable to, and recognized as binding by, at least the most important and relevant actors in the societal field.

3.1 Obama as a New Empowering and Communicative Authority Figure for ECs and EMs

This brings me finally back to the Obama campaign. Drawing on his experiences as a local community organizer, Obama 'nationalized', and rapidly acquired, global support for his critique of the political mainstream and its stories of a people in decay:

> *And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation -- the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election* (http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/03/18/obama.transcript/, watched March 27 2009).

Obama's famous slogan of 'yes we can' echoes the 'Si se puede' of Ceasar Chavez and his United Farm workers in their fight for better wages and working conditions (http://ufw.org/_board.php?mode=view&b_code=hotissue&b_no=3241). But, it is actually a slogan that many formal policy institutions and agencies make use of, such as the British 'Together We Can' initiative (Home Office 2005a, b), which was addressed to securing better urban integration (cf. Lowndes and Sullivan 2007 and Musterd and Ostendorf 2008). What Obama above all is trying to make evident is that the building of a community

dedicated to change is political not social, because it is about the ability to make a concrete difference to the political governing of the social by listening to and learning from one another about how this is to be done. Dryzek would call this an example of a bridging rhetoric (2009:7):

> [This] takes seriously the outlooks…of an intended audience that is different in key respects from the speaker – and from the kind of people or discourses the speaker represents

Transposing his locally developed bridging rhetoric to the national and federal level, Obama has accomplished the first comprehensive attempt to build identity politics and project politics into the democratic equation of 'big' politics. What he is illuminating is how mainstream conceptions of citizenship tend to neglect how participation in a political community first of all requires transformative capacity - that is sharing in power - to bring about an intended state of affairs. The credo of 'Yes We Can' reintroduces the notion of political community and locates it at the heart of 'the political'. Due to the separation of input politics from output administration in mainstream Political Science, this political community has long seemed like a black hole, invisible to those in both state and civil society. As a result, community has largely been identified with the building of social capital, whereas 'the political' has mostly become synonymous with effective and responsible government. The Obama campaign shows that there is a 3rd way between economically effective and socially responsible government in which the idea and practice of prudent political community governance is situated (Flyvbjerg 2006). This 3rd way involves sharing in a political division of labour as the condition of developing a sense of mutual identification and a capacity for making a real difference in common (Bang and Esmark 2007, 2009, cf. Crozier 2007, Fischer 2003, Hajer and Wagenaar (eds.) 2003), Dean 1999, 2007, Rose 1999).

When Obama's rhetoric did its job it was first of all because it managed to build a bridge between identity politics and the new projects politics of reflexive individuals such as EMs and ECs. Obama articulated an image of himself as a commonality inspiring political authority who does not expect a 'blind' or rationally motivated form of obedience. He spoke about authority as a reciprocal and communicative, two-way, power relationship, which combines (a) goals, (b) tactics and (c) ethos, in order to get people with different, and sometimes even incompatible, identities and projects freely to accept that cooperation across all conventional boundaries may be the only way to solve America

and the World's common challenges and problems. As Obama said in his victory speech (http://elections.foxnews.com/2008/11/05/raw-data-barack-obamas-victory-speech/):

> I know you didn't do this just to win an election. And I know you didn't do it for me. You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. For even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime -- two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century.

Obama here speaks directly to laypeople who:

- refuse to be treated as obedient subjects (the subject culture);

- are not at all parochial, but have a very precise sense of the difference between orienting oneself to 'inputs' or to 'outputs' (the parochial culture); and

- think that political participation is way too enjoyable, significant and important to be handed over to virtuous citizens, who do not think of 'the political' as an ongoing project but as a chore and an omnipotent threat to their freedom which must continuously be resisted and made legitimate (the participatory culture).

Had Obama tried to command obedience, had he appealed to the parochial in people or had he required that his volunteers should be only grave and morally dedicated citizens opposing or attempting to legitimate 'the system', I doubt that he would have been able to get so many volunteers engaged in canvassing, block by block, to help get voters to the polls and spreading the rhetoric of 'yes we can' to every municipality, neighbourhood, city and village in the US.

Obama's campaign appealed to people, who felt estranged by, or external to, the 'old' political machine, and also considered it untrustworthy and unable to deliver (Hay 2008, Little 2008). It managed to politicize the whole domain of administration, convincing participants that the prospects for solving our common challenges and problems depend on our reconnecting in new political communities for the exercise of good governance (Bang (ed.) 2003), Bevir and Trentmann (eds.) 2007, Hajer and Wagenaar (eds) 2003, Heffen, Kickert and Tomassen (eds.) 2000).

As David Easton pointed out about political community many years ago (1965:326):

> Where the members [of a political system] identify strongly with one another, they can tolerate intense and passionate dispute among themselves without jeopardizing the integrity of the community.

Political community will always exist in tension with social community. Members of a political community cannot thrive in a morally unified and normatively integrated social community, exactly because they derive their political integrity from their reciprocal acceptance and recognition of each other's differences. As we have seen, the mainstream conception of the civic culture makes one blind to this kind of creative political capacity characteristic of political communities. In viewing the exercise of political authority as a matter of legitimate domination, the mainstream literature conceals how members of a truly democratic political community could not submit themselves to a hierarchically organized authority requiring their blind or rational obedience. They would insist that the exercise of political authority is not primarily about commanding and disciplining people in society 'outside' (Hajer and Uitermark 2008). Rather, it has to do with communicating and interacting with each other inside 'the political' for the sake of empowering people and improving their political knowledgability and life-chances (Carens 2000, Thomson 2007, Wenger 1998).

Introducing the means and goals of community governance at the state and federal level, Obama joined forces with those political researchers outside the mainstream literature who, for many years,have argued that:

> If the traditional forms of government are unable to deliver – either because of a lack of legitimacy or simply because there is a mismatch between the scope of the problem and the existing territorial jurisdiction – then networks of actors must create the capacity to interact and communicate (Hajer and Waagenar 2003:11).

At the same time, the Obama Campaign made it evident that a political authority which would take this communal political capacity to interact and communicate seriously could renew the democratic imagination:

> reclaiming the meaning of citizenship, restoring our sense of common purpose, and realizing that few obstacles can withstand the power of millions of voices calling for change (Presidental Annoucement February 10 2007, http://obamaspeeches.com/099-Announcement-For-President-Springfield-Illinois-Obama-Speech.htm).

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