A TOOLBOX FOR DEMAGOGIC COMMUNICATION

A TOOLBOX FOR <mark>DEMAGOGIC</mark> COMMUNICATION

DEMAGOGUES

= who
★   **seems** to make politics and certain **issues accessible**
★   speak in a way that **stirs up** the public

= dangerous because they
➢   harness **large numbers** of supporters
➢   tap into their **emotions** (rather than reasoned principles).

= lead towards **irrational populism,**
unleashing a force that causes chaos and cannot be controlled.

A TOOLBOX FOR DEMAGOGIC COMMUNICATION

If you want to disenchant populists,

you can understand their communication as a business model in 4 steps.

Elvis Bekmanis, Unsplash

1st STEP: Creation of a **simple world view**

2nd STEP: Stimulation of specific **emotions**

3rd STEP: Attraction of **followers** around a **tight leadership**

4th STEP: Assumption of **power**

1st STEP: Creation of a **simple world view**

Us (the threatened) versus the others (flexibly changeable)
e.g. "Our identity is at stake due to immigration and refugees"

creation of a distorted image of reality
e.g., warning of alienation, threat, and injustice

Simple words and simple message
e.g. "Make America great again!", "Austria first"

consistent black-and-white painting
thereby the "natives" always appear as the decent ones

embodiment of a unified will of the people
e.g "That's what the people want!"

frequent idealization of the past
e.g. "everything was better in the past, the future looks bleak"

use of lies and conspiracy theories

no self-reflection or self-doubt
e.g. "I am the greatest", "I know how the 'people think'"

Self-promotion as a victim (martyr/exclusion cult) delivered in the form of a complaint
e.g., "the establishment is marginalizing us," "immigrants or refugees are endangering our hard-earned prosperity"

2nd STEP: Stimulation of specific **emotions**

Real-time communication via social media to make supporters feel like they are always there

Self-stylization as a fighter for justice and common cause
e.g. "They are against him because he is fighting for you!"

Polarization (construction of fundamental opposites)
Us vs. the ones out/up there!

arbitrary, misleading use of statistics, quotations…
e.g. the majority of the people voted me (non-voters not considered)

Redicolization of political opponents
e.g. "he is corrupt", "she is ugly"

Attacks on political opponents through counter-offensives, the shifting of the topic or the invention of scapegoats.

Expression of indignation through the use of abbreviations, distortions, exaggerations, swearwords and lurid images

Generalization and exploitation of individual cases as a symptom of the moral decay of the elites/system or as a proof that the group presented as enemy is really such.

Building a parallel public sphere via social media (fomenting distrust of traditional media, at least of the critical ones)

Ego-centered, success-oriented storytelling with details from private lives, e.g. "I am a self-made man"

3rd STEP: Attraction of **followers** around a **tight leadership**

Declaring one's own goals to be common goals,
e.g. "I am the spokesperson for the people, opening the way to a new country"

Setting up opposites
e.g "myself as a man of the people against the technocrats and bureaucrats"

Taking strong action against apostates
(up to "mudslinging" = saying insulting or unfair things about someone, in order to damage their reputation)

Claiming the right to issue directives over the entire organization
e.g. "anyone who is not for me is against me"

4th STEP: Assumption of **power**

Announcement of a new policy
e.g. "Unlike my predecessors, I will be honest with you/make sure you are better off financially/provide for your protection."

Operating a policy of effects (including to distract from complex issues)

Addressing different target audiences in different manners, adapting style and contents
(speeches prepared for international encounters fundamentally different from the ones prepared for the local workers)

Breaking taboos, aiming at escalation
(if needed, excuses like "it was just a joke")

Breaking away from previous promises

Breaking with old democratic structures
and moral authorities

Possibly embracing authorianism