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Identity and Identification in Politics and Economy:

Why "Branding" can not replace Brand Techniques

Abstract:

In a look back upon Weimar Republic's struggles to become an open democratic society and upon the adverse working of populist messages uniting masses both left and right, this paper sheds a light on populist developments and their working in recent and present times. Starting from Brand Techniques Specialist Hans Domizlaff and his endeavours, to open the eyes of democratic politicians relying on "reason" in their communication with the people, in order to generate and grow awareness about the needs of effective communication to the masses, the paper tries to show the parallels with post-war populist developments, in his home country Germany and beyond, and to link this to his findings on economy and the keys to crisis vs. lasting prosperity and the related criticism of prevailing paradigms weakening Europe, its peoples and its role as example of long peace and prosperity thanks to defending values and their diversity as key to individual and joint success. In doing so, the paper also draws attention upon the necessary steps to evolve from "Mass Psychology", as proclaimed by Authors like Elias Canetti and Hans Domizlaff and to translate "Group Psychology" as pronounced by Hofstetter into a practical understanding of semiotics, in order to develop effective tools for the communication to people in their diversity, uniting their identification with each others for common causes by means of signs of identity retained significant by groups in their distinction. The paper hints upon the lessons to be learnt and applied by democratic politicians and their assistants, in order to leave the field neither to misleading paradigms nor to populist extremists. Rather, the paper advocates in favor of a populism of qualitative reason and distinction in a new understanding of democracy not lending itself as tool for fascistoid repression of minorities, but rather as a means to unite all minorities, which together are the absolute majority, for the sake of their distinction, which is the root to lasting prosperity for all and peace.

Key Words:

Identity, Identification Democracy, Brand Technique, Markentechnik, Domizlaff, Democracy, Open Society, Crisis, Prosperity, Peace, Populism, Qualitative, Distinction, Diversity.

Introduction:

Are state employees and politicians any more intelligent, learned and wise than the people they pretend to serve? How can they, thus, claim any justification to patronise any of their citizens?

But also:

Are citizens wise enough to recognise and distinguish counterproductive political concepts from those in fact digging to the roots of problems and solving them? Is it true, that crowds have a greater wisdom than geniuses and groups of geniuses? Why is there an opposition to real elites? And why do those who oppose the "raison d'être" of elites as much as the admission, that geniuses exist, even in our days, and that they need to be employed for the best of society rather than being repressed? Aren't they aspiring to just the same role of leadership, with all the competences? Just without the competence required to know and lead their peoples in their best interest? Why do they need and install repressive systems, which true leaders do not need? Helmut Schmidt's ostentative receiving Brezhnev in his modest home in Hamburg, without fences and guards other than those in place for the occasion of the USSR's leader's private visit, has led to the guest's question, how he could feel safe and keep the people at a distance? But, back in the USSR, Brezhnev and other repressive leaders alike were not only acclaimed by paid claqueurs. Some will have believed in his leadership being right. And probably these will also have acclaimed illegal actions repressing others. Maybe they were part of the repression. Just as the Nazis in Germany have given power over educated people to those, who normally would not even have been seen fit to serve those, whom they now in feisty manner repressed.

In today's political landscapes, all over Europe, so called "populism" is a phenomenon used, abused and angering political parties and politicians. As a result, populism is a topic worth discussing in itself. Is it bad? And, if so, why? Is the forming of majorities not a normal process required in democracies? What is the role of "the media" in populist movement's success in reaching out to groups and masses and acquiring power, possibly even majorities?

When blaming movements as "populist", in most cases there are extreme positions not only presented, but succeeding to convince fast growing groups of citizens as voters. This may concern rather the left or the right wing. Thus, fascistoid positions and opinions requiring the "say" for their political camp over the rest of the world. Of course, this reminds of Hitler and Stalin as much as of Iranian, Turkish and Saudi governments, and many more. It is the qualitative aspect of a basically anti-democratic tendency using the mechanisms of democracy to gain power. This may justify a "rethinking" of democracy and its roots in feudalist concepts of state - and of politicians as well as administrations, both in theory servants of the only sovereign called "the people", but patronising the people and, moreover, minorities, which are also part of every people. Actually, as every person is different and therefore shall find itself in many cases as part of a minority, the equal right of "being" just as different as one is, thus: diverse, is probably the most important of all fundamental constitutional rights. A right necessary to fight for in all senses and contexts. But a right abnegated by present day "populist" movements of any kind. Moreover, this is of utmost importance, as the deeper roots of the "economical" crisis are to be found – and cured – in the culture of every people, region and state: In the culture of dealing with diversity. Only diversity, qualitative distinction rather than quantitative criteria and measures, can constantly generate the diverse demand and offers, the innovations generating new employment much needed to let every region prosper.

In the face of such deeper insight, one must not only review sciences and their theory, namely the dealing with paradigms and their overdue replacement by sober cognitive openness, but also education – and rethink democracy. But while all this will take time, democracies are under pressure. Both by hidden agendas and foreign interests bluntly imposed, and by internal groups. Thus, for democrats and their reasonable concepts, it is important to communicate effectively.

Identity and Communication:

Communication links Identities to causes, and those again to identities which identify themselves through the causes with signs. But the best arguments fail in front of large groups and "masses". In such groups and masses, even the most intelligent individuals become part of the crowd and

While the first identities are those of the "senders" and, thus, can be dealt with as "brands", the second set of identities is diffuse. In certain contexts, one group of people may identify with one set of values, attitudes and preferences, while in other contexts, some of these do join in with entirely other groups. And so forth. Dealing with diversity as a basis of open democratic societies requires the understanding of the principles of set theory in such ways, that all people are members of many different sets and sub-sets. Reaching out to them and catering to them, requires an interest in their values, attitudes and preferences: In the qualitative distinction lately often named as so called "soft" factors. These are the material, decisions are based upon. But hated by those recurring to simplistic quantitative criteria for distinction rather than engaging themselves in a true interest leading to understanding the people rather than inducing them to anything short-lived. Catering means serving and thus requires a truly benevolent interest. Goodwill is the word, which can more precisely specify, what "*love of next of kin*" means. Now: How can one shape and communicate goodwill in order to earn identification with a common cause shared with some, never all, other people? How can one design a brand appealing to target groups while not necessarily offending others? After all: Wise coalitions are needed. And in order to have the fitting partners for the coalitions, offensive "populist" must not be allowed much success. This, however, requires to understand the origins of their successes.

Dissatisfied Citizens returning to the Polls

Ever since the sudden rise of the "Schill" Party's success in Hamburg, Germany, one can observe the same mechanisms leading to sudden rises of populist leaders harvesting on dissatisfaction by proposing "obvious", often simplistic but always extremist stances and policy proposals. After the Austrian export to Germany, Hitler, already the Austrian phenomenon of an illiberal right turn of a "liberal" party – and its lasting – the "phenomenon Haider", has provided much reason to analyse not only the working of populist campaigning, but also to detect the hidden agendas behind such sudden rises. Here the media can be seen as tools. And one must take them into account as potential adversaries. Thus: Campaigning for truly democratic positions must work without such media support. How much so, can be seen in the case of Italy and the populist right wing movements, with a figure like Berlusconi in the double role of "*Hugenberg and Hitler in one person*". This case also illuminates the importance of truly independent free media, as far as public radio and television are concerned: What the allies have implemented in Germany would probably have hindered, that, once at the government, Berlusconi could also reign into RAI (radio televisione italiana) to the extent he actually did. But in Italy, too, the work of dissatisfaction and retreat into a kind of depression - then suddenly turned into an outburst leading to a strong role for a new party, can be studied with the example of the "Grillini"... Greece and Catalunya are other cases of extreme populism nurtured by dissatisfaction. What, however, must not be overlooked: In all cases one can observe a long growing dissatisfaction with the "official" players, politicians and parties and their administrations. Thus: In all such cases, the "populist" parties with their simplistic extremist "solutions" would never have any chance, if not thanks to the incompetence of the long time political leaders. Moreover, as in the case of Hamburg's "for ever" – and always more ostentatiously against the people – reigning social democratic party, the disregard for the people as groups, and their specific needs and preferences, must be seen as the reason behind slowly increasing abstention from voting – and then the sudden union behind someone promising the change – which in a

coalition together with the equally incompetent, just differently interest-related christian democratic party in fact occurred. After the change, which led to sudden relief and uprise in many ways, but also to many ill developments serving foreign hidden agendas, the "Schill"-party disappeared as quickly as it had grown. Its only function had been that of making the change possible. This has a certain parallel to the Spanish change from fascism to democracy, as heard in a comment by Spains King Juan Carlos I about former prime minister Adolfo Suarez: *"I don't understand, why he continues to struggle in politics. His historic function, of leading over from fascism to democracy, is long accomplished. And I have ennobled him to the state of a count."* In fact: After that, all the rest appears as minor. Now, in the case of Schill in Hamburg, such reduction to the brief historic function as *"agent of change"* has been assured by the people itself, by means of a defeat in new elections. In Italy, neither Berlusconi nor Grillo so far have been taught the same lesson. And also Greeks extreme leftists and Germany's "left" still pend such redimensioning. And so in many other countries. But: Is that the culpability of the respective peoples? Or result of the lack of truly convincing alternatives? Or is it only the lack of "right" communication to specific target groups and masses, pushing unreasonable anti-democratic forces aside?

Nonverbal Communication of sober Reason

During the German "Weimar Republic", many parties have reached out to different target groups with their specific programmes. Not only have they missed the opportunity to form solid coalitions serving the minorities they represented and the people as a whole, all together. But they als lost out to the people who in their deception of the democratic forces' inability to cope with the increasingly harsh problems of the country and the global crisis on purpose ignited by oligarchs in the USA in order to push the Dollar over the Britishch Pound as the world's leading currency. What was not known than, and disclosed only rather recently, is, that the Hitler and his Nazi party received bold financing from US magnate and anti-semite Ford. One can be certain: Such things do happen also right now. And the latest Australian elections are a vivid example. Just as much as changes in "A's" attributed or withdrawn by rating agencies. After all, like all other media, these are part of the international press and in hands of moguls. As democratic defenders of *"open societies against its enemies"* one must, thus, to be on the safe side, communicate to the masses by means, which are unconfoundable. This is, what in the struggles of democrats to save democracy in the Weimar Republic, Hans Domizlaff, the inventor of "Brand Techniques" as the most sound concept of non-verbal communication with masses, had in vain proposed to democratic leaders. A famous meeting finally taking place with Brüning and the Vatican's Nuntius and later Pope ended with no real results. And of the little booklet which Domizlaff had circulated among "hand-selected" democrats, four copies made it to Hitlers Nazis. Learnt by heart by Josef Goebbels, in order to pass his copy on. There were no photocopiers in those days. And, thus, became the foundation of the opposite: Of a German Ministry of Propaganda serving the fascists rather than democracy uniting the people behind one common cause: Peace and prosperity for all and all of Europe. This, however, as proven already by the financing of Hitler through Ford, was not in the interest of foreign parties. They needed a week Europe: War. And this was further made possible by assuring that Hitler's forces had enough petroleum to wage the war against Russia. Assured through the direct interests in the German chemicals conglomerate "IG Farben" by Rockefeller and Consorts. Such foreign interests exist also, and not only since the intentional "Crash" of 2008, in current European developments, including the stirring up of anti-EU and anti-Euro hostility. Patterns are similar: The Euro had been about to be an alternative to the Dollar for global trade. This paper is not about clear signs of interference and the hardly camouflaged interests it serves. The question it deals with is: How to communicate to the people, without stirring unrest, but showing and leading the way towards self determination and full employment, thus to prosperity and peace?

As Domizlaff wrote, and Mass- and Group-Psychologists like Canetti and Hofstetter confirm, multitudes of people do not, by no means, act as reasonably as the individuals constituting them, if alone. Rather, Masses and larger groups perceive, think, decide and act at a cognitive level more close to worms, if not amoebas, than learned and thoughtful intelligent human beings. Moreover, reasoning, however fitting it may be, does not reach the masses. And if it does in calm times, there will be incidents lending themselves to stir up the masses to counter all the logical arguments. If Sharon orchestrated his "march on the Temple-Mount" just in time to be able to still stop the Oslo peace process - and be elected for an anti-peace government, in its variants over time still in place and, due to the immigration of "orthodox" jews and the increasing stream of moderate jews leaving Israel, already a decade earlier, German right-wing leader Strauss just needed a sexual murder to stir up public opinion in favor of capital punishment again. Here, the "welcome" negative incidents have been abused as signs in favor of already overcome paradigms.

In order not to leave room, or better, not to leave a vacuum for such signs, constructive democratic parties need to develop and erect and reiterate their own strong positive signs. Which are these? Success, tangible to the interest group, and, moreover, not only in quantitative sense, certainly would be the strongest sign. That is, why we so strongly engage in spreading the voice, against some misleading disinformation, how the "Bilbao Effect", the sustainable strong and lasting turn around of the Spanish Basque country's economy, has really been achieved. A method to be adopted and adapted – and even improved – elsewhere. Everywhere. But, as both parties and target groups are qualitatively diverse, methods of conceiving and specifying a specific "reason to exist" for companies, organisations and their offers, stand to be applied and adopted, leading to clear visions not so much to be stated but to be enacted in order to lead to identifiable distinction and identification with it. Here a number of techniques can be presented and used. Their description, however, probably would dilute the message, which is:

Perceivable, tangible, however tacit distinction, deeds and results, ways and being rather than words and explicit claims, are the most important signs. Serious use of means of nonverbal expression in the way, all graphics are designed, can further underline the distinct nature and serve as reinforcer of the identity with which the target groups reached will identify themselves. Speak less, and do not express the internal tacit claim, but enact it. Make it perceivable, without words, to everybody. And one will create a success, and in their multitude successes, not leaving any room for those, who need the negative to prevail with their populism.

Conclusion:

The solution to the communications problems of moderate democratic parties is:

Brand Technique as its best. In the service of democracy, open society and its economy. Based on Domizlaff, and also on von Keysselitz, but developed far beyond. It is a means of turning the complexity of holistic sustainable approaches into simplicity. Surprise gradually will be changing into belief - and support. Staunch support. Against all odds. For self determined independence of everybody, every group, region, country and continent. Use signs, bold, stable signs and their continuity to prevail. Use Semiotics. Not so much its theory and terminology. But its principles. The principles of psychology of perception and information-aesthetics.

As the diluted anglo-saxon "light" version of Brand Techniques, the so called "Branding", is a poor superficial concept not only not reaching the objectives but misleading the leaders from their duties in leading the process of qualitative definition of goals and identities, and not to delegate the steering of the identity, the article aims at showing, that seriousness and substance is needed.