

Paradise lost: Language, values and populist frames

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COUNTERPOINT

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE FOR DECISION MAKERS

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She regularly facilitates high-level workshops to advise decision-makers on how to make use of these insights. Before joining Counterpoint, Ulrike worked as a management consultant where she advised senior-level management and led large-scale change projects.

Trained as a systemic consultant and therapist, she has experience in working with systems, organisations and groups to foster shifts in perspectives.

Burden

Kick

Relief

Hammer

Burden
Taxes

Taxes
Relief

98 % of our thoughts are associative and automatic. It takes a lot to overcome this.

System 1	System 2
Fast	Slow
Automatic	Considered
Associative	Deliberative
Emotional	Logical
	
Engage	Encourage

Daniel Kahneman, 'Thinking Fast and Slow'

We see the world differently.





Are they hotdogs or legs?



We all have mental frames. We use them to filter information and arguments.

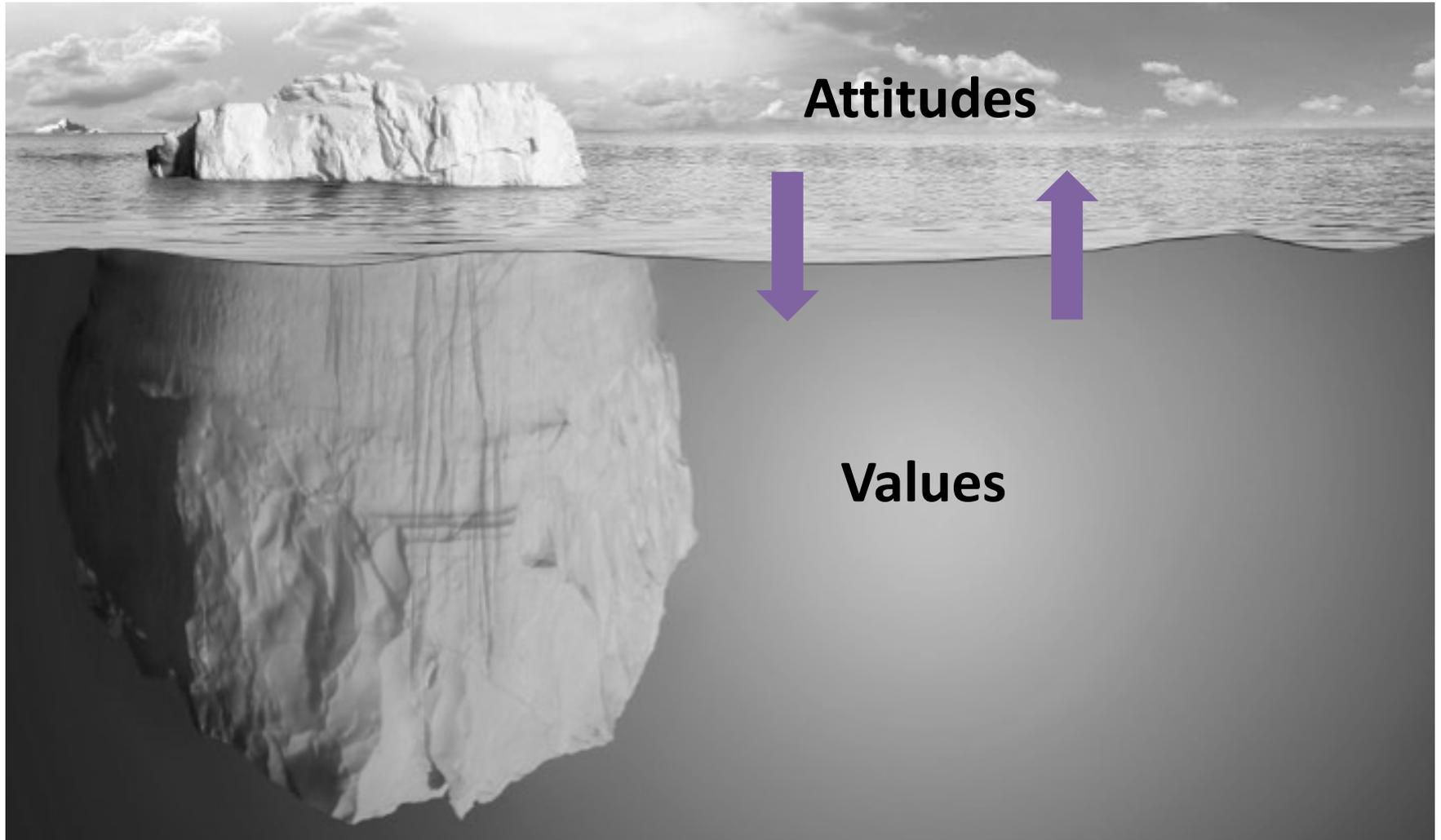


Communication frames trigger certain mental frames.

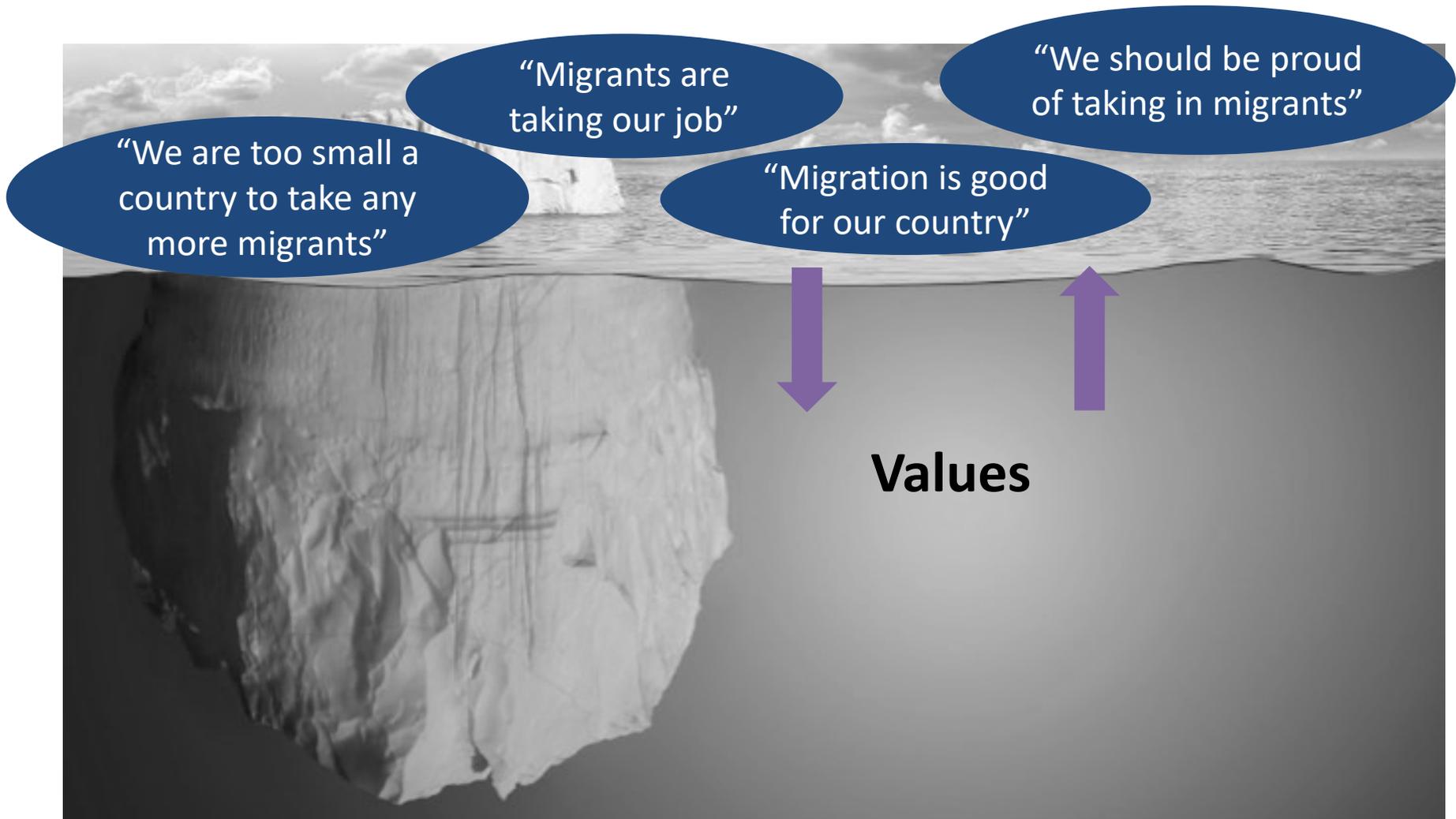
Hotdog frame



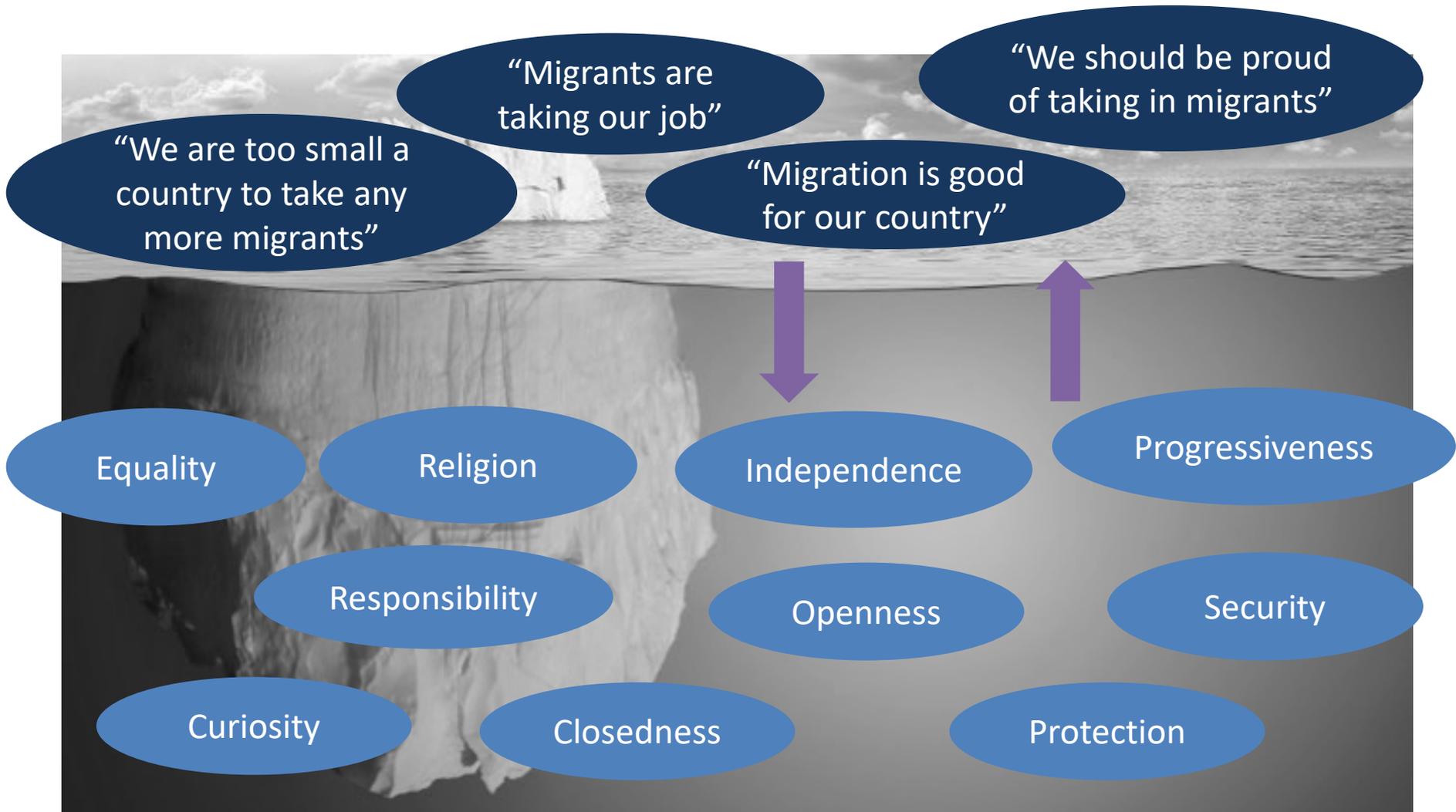
Mental frames consist of visible attitudes and often invisible values.



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Tomorrow we vote



This is a
corrupt
government



This is a waste
of time

Tomorrow we vote

Mental frames



It is important
to participate



We can shape
something

Tomorrow we vote to make a difference



Corrupt
government



Waste of
time

Tomorrow we vote to make a difference



It is important to
participate



We can shape
something



Make a
contribution



Corrupt
government



Waste of
time

Communication frames.

Tomorrow we vote to make a difference



Exercise
responsibility



Exercise
influence



Make a
contribution

Crime is a **wild beast preying on** the city of Addison. The crime rate in the once peaceful city has steadily increased over the past three years. In fact, these days it seems that crime is **lurking in** every neighborhood. In 2004, 46,177 crimes were reported compared to more than 55,000 reported in 2007. The rise in violent crime is particularly alarming. In 2004, there were 330 murders in the city, in 2007, there were over 500.

Crime is a **virus infecting** the city of Addison. The crime rate in the once peaceful city has steadily increased over the past three years. In fact, these days it seems that crime is **plaguing** every neighborhood. In 2004, 46,177 crimes were reported compared to more than 55,000 reported in 2007. The rise in violent crime is particularly alarming. In 2004, there were 330 murders in the city, in 2007, there were over 500.

Thibodeau & Boroditsky (2011)

➡ Framing influences attitudes.

Don't thi



s grey hair.

Intuitive “ethics”

Care: Kindness, Nurturance

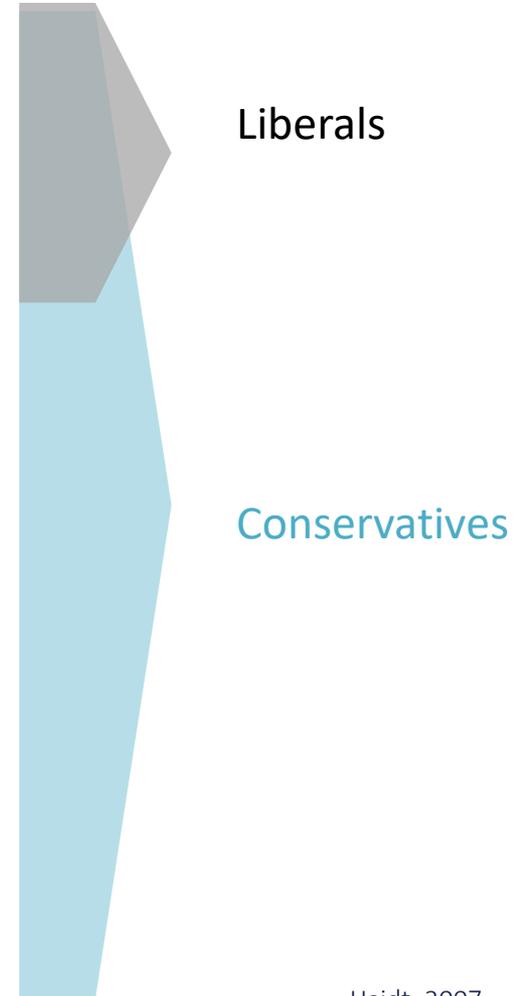
Fairness: Justice, Rights, Autonomy

Liberty: Avoiding oppression, being independent

Loyalty: Patriotism, Self-sacrifice for the group

Authority: Leadership, Tradition, Strictness

Sanctity: Purity, Avoiding contamination



Haidt, 2007

Reframing – a step by step guide.

1 Establishing your new frames

Identify *your* values

- Which values do you want to promote?
- Which worldviews underpin them?

Choose new communication frames

- Which new or existing language and symbols promote these values?

2 Mapping and adapting them to the audience

Map the audience

- Where and to whom are you communicating?

Identify mental frames

- What are the concerns in the audience (find out, do some research)

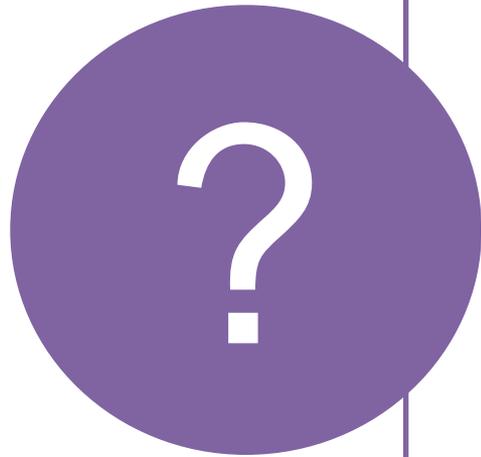
Interpret mental frames

- Which values, emotions, demands underlie them?

Adapt and test your framing

- How does your audience react?
- Engage with the audience

Question.

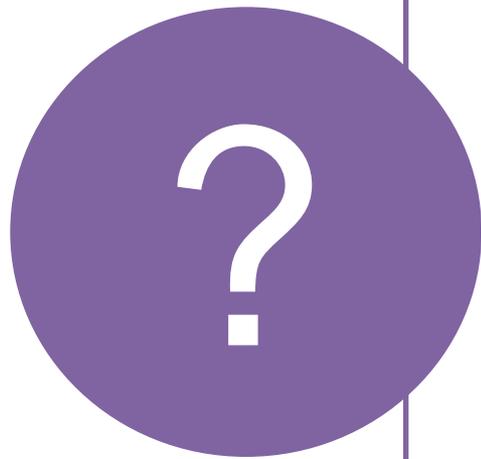


Which key values do you want to stand for?

What do they mean to you?

Why do you care about them?

Question.



What are the views/concerns in your audience?

Which values and demands feed into them?

Populist frames

Ruled from above

Actors: the ruled and the rulers

Problem: the rulers who represent the elites have gained too much power over those they rule, the hard-working ordinary people. The ruled no longer have control over their own affairs and are at the mercy of the unaccountable rulers.

Solution: the ruled should be able to rule themselves. We must reduce the power and reach of the rulers, either by reducing their influence or by eliminating them altogether.

The frame activates the following values: Liberty, Democracy

Populist frames

The bearers of truth

Actors: the naive cowards in power, the fantasists who have put their head in the sand; vs the “truth-tellers”, the realists who have the nerve to tell it as it is.

Problem: the naive cowards in power have not listened to the truth-tellers. As a result, a great disaster looms.

Solution: the naive cowards listen to the truth-tellers and disaster is averted.

The frame activates the following values: Integrity, Foresight, Courage

Populist frames

Paradise Lost

Actors: the representatives of tradition – who long for something lost in the past – and the representatives of modernity – who have forgotten or even betrayed the Ideal “Paradise Lost”.

Problem: The representatives of tradition want to bring back the Paradise Lost, while the representatives of modernity are engulfed in what is depicted as a meaningless rush towards a soulless future.

Solution: bring back the Paradise Lost

The frame activates the following values: Respect for Tradition, Sense of Belonging

Populist frames

Reinstating Common Sense

Actors: the bookish, disconnected professional politicians vs the down-to-earth, practical real representatives of the people.

Problem: the professional politicians are in charge. Their ideas border on the absurd but are nevertheless being implemented to disastrous effect. They have subverted the natural order of things, because they have no appreciation of nature, “real life” or the heartland.

Solution: we need to listen to the non-professional politicians who have other forms of experience – they are in touch with reality and can find the way out of the mess the politicians have gotten us into.

The frame activates the following values: Natural Order, Competency

Populist frames

Order versus chaos

Actors: the people who long for order and stability and the bringers of chaos and uncertainty.

Problem: the bringers of chaos have undermined order, destroyed the social fabric, and wreaked havoc on people's lives.

Solution: return to a state of order.

The frame activates the following values: Control, Order, Solidarity

Which frames can be identified?

Madam President, eight years ago, no fewer than 12 countries joined the European Union. Everyone knew then only too well that those countries were not ready to join. The ambition was to create not a stable EU, but, first and foremost, a large EU. The accession requirements were simply relaxed.

The consequence of that is that already three hundred thousand people from Central and Eastern Europe have moved to the Netherlands. The reality is that the sheer numbers of these people are causing major problems in terms of housing, employment, education and social security. Unfortunately, this has also been accompanied by a large increase in crime and a massive burden on our society.

Yes, Madam President, this is the reality, one we have found out about through the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV)'s website, which has already received more than a hundred thousand complaints.

The Brussels elite is partly responsible for the relocation of crime to the Netherlands, and the overburdening of services that this entails, because of its open-borders policy. The free movement of persons, yes, but this has also been accompanied by the free movement of crime and the concomitant social burden. The Dutch are bothered by it and have had enough. And they are not alone. France is having the same problems and now even the French President, Sarkozy, is threatening to suspend French membership of the Schengen area.

Auke Zijlstra (non-attached)

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How to respond?

Madam President, a question: does the honourable member know what Poland's growth figures are and would it not be a splendid thing if the Netherlands achieved such a high level of growth, too? And do you know any people in your neighbourhood who can say that they have never had a Polish worker provide a service for them? Can you confirm that?

Ria Oomen-Ruijten (European People's Party)

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Ria Oomen-Ruijten (European People's Party)

“Not so long ago, Mr Zijlstra, as you well know, Europe was divided. But eight years ago, ten new members joined the European Union. The larger EU has been a success. Because of it, Europe is more united, more peaceful, and more economically vibrant.

Now part of the deal of membership is to enjoy the benefits of free movement. This movement has been significant and for some it has been unsettling and disruptive. This is the harsh reality. To address these concerns, it is vital to seek out and stop people who want to take advantage of the system, who want to commit crimes or who aren't interested in contributing to society. But, Mr Zijlstra, can't you see that the way your party addresses this issue is only making things worse? I have colleagues, friends who have come to the Netherlands from Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, who work hard, who are kind and loving people, and who have contributed so much to our country – what are they supposed to think when they see your website telling people to write down everything they don't like about Eastern Europeans? What do you say to them?”

Take-aways on countering populist rhetoric

1. Avoid operating in one of the frames chosen by a populist speaker (e.g. by negating the same words, by not explicitly challenging the frame).
2. Take the underlying concerns addressed on board: e.g. concerns about free movement. Acknowledge grievances.
3. Emphasise personal experience, issues of credibility.
4. Add personal elements to the arguments, e.g. own background, experience, track record. This helps draw attention away from the “reinstating common sense” or “bearers of truth” frame.
5. Avoid frames that are impersonal, abstract or frames that evoke being imposed from outside e.g. obligation, personifying institutions without talking about “us” “we”.

Thank you!

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