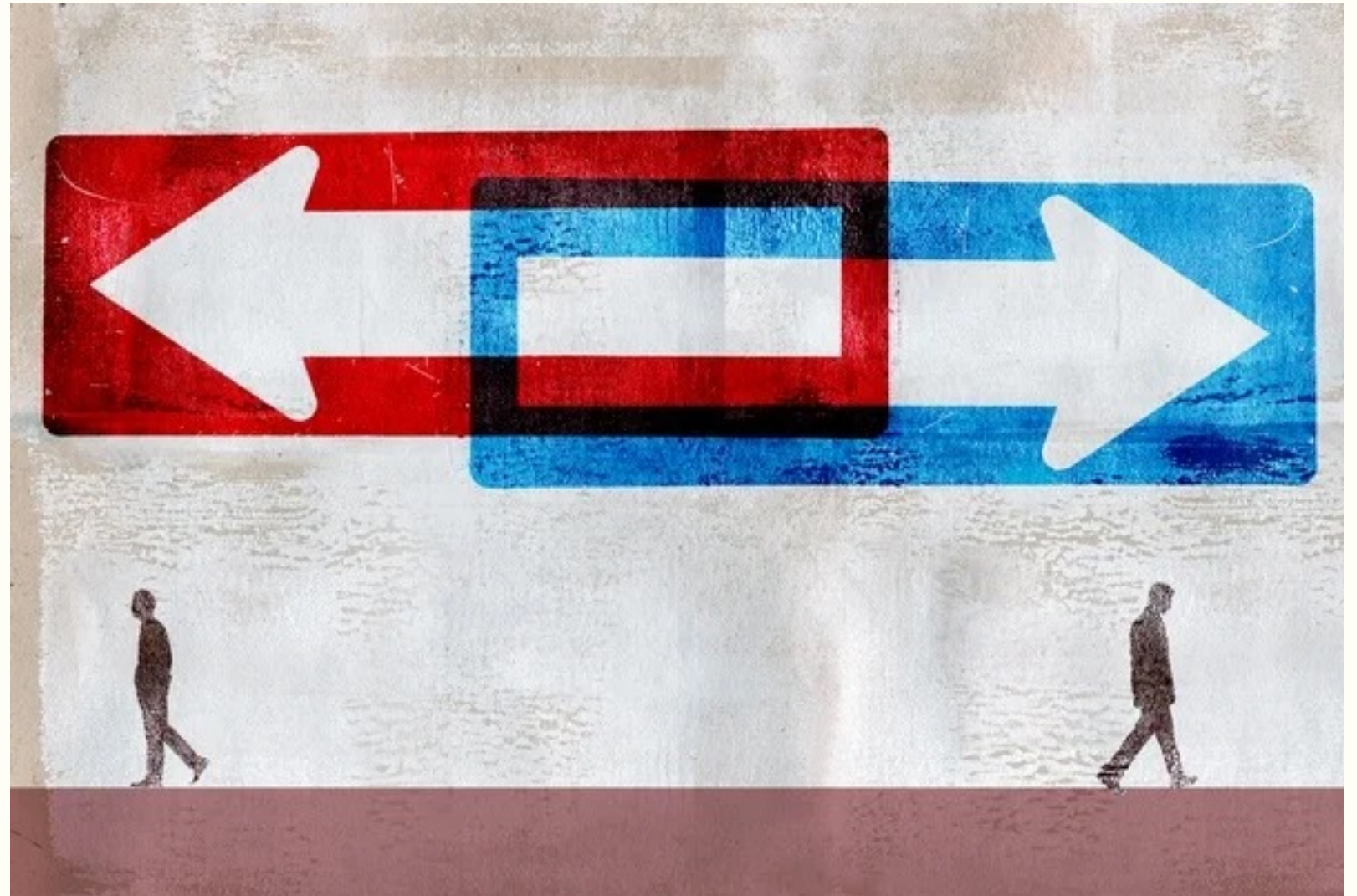


Some reflections on truth decay,
polarization & depluralization
(radicalization)

Christophe Busch
Christophe.busch@hannah-arendt.institute





**Globalisation
Algorithmisation
polarisation**





High impact events

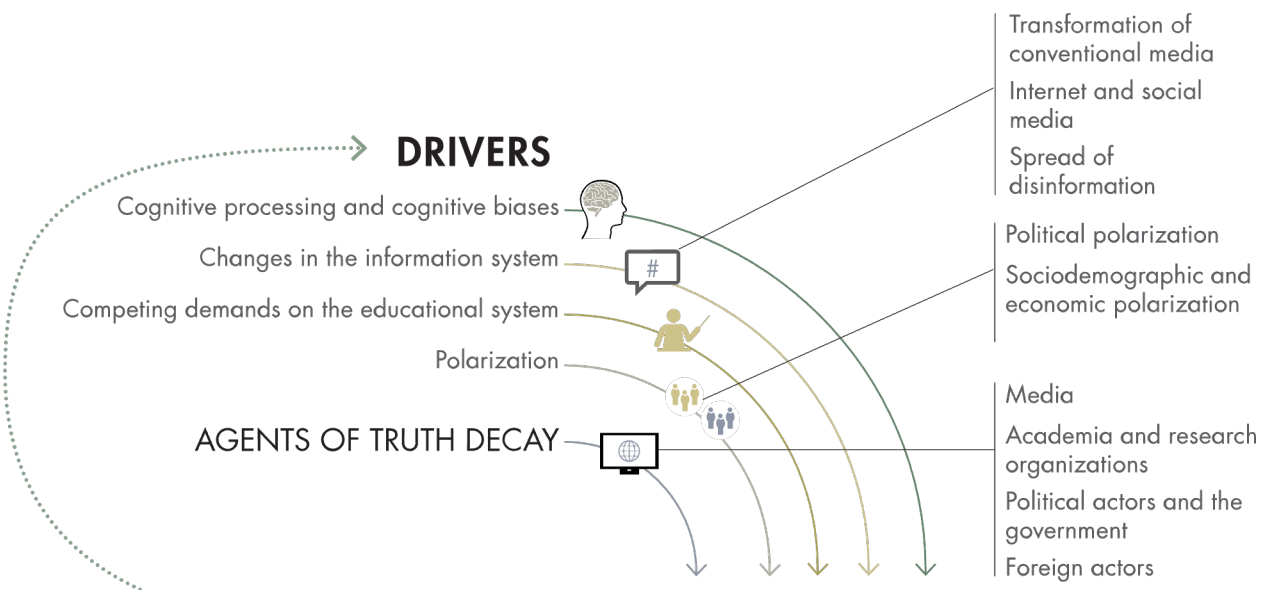
New information & communication technologies



puts pressure on truth systems

Episodes of truth decay



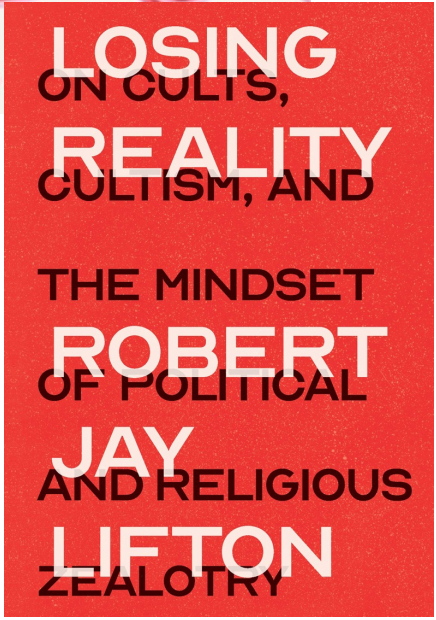
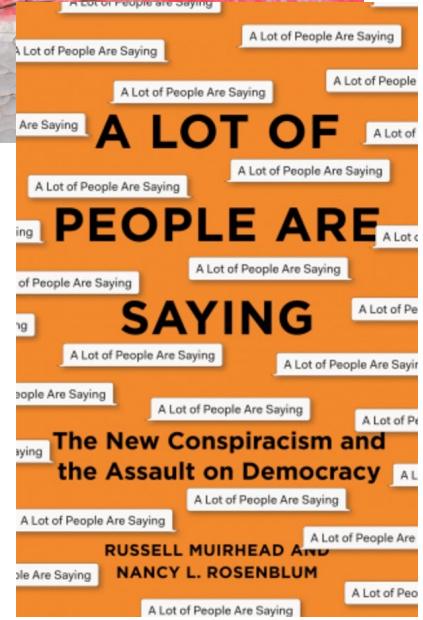
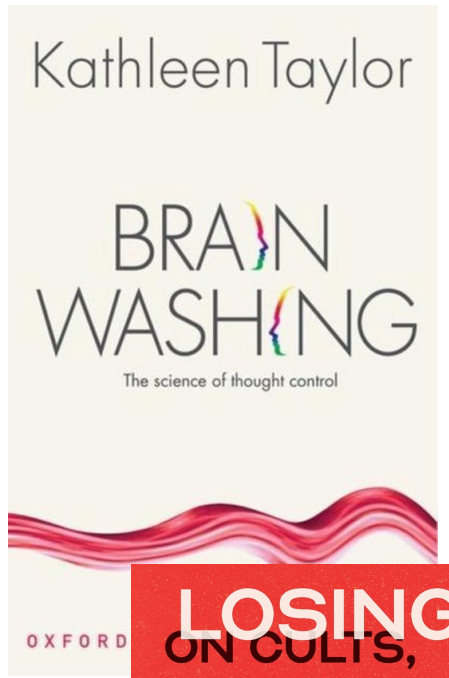
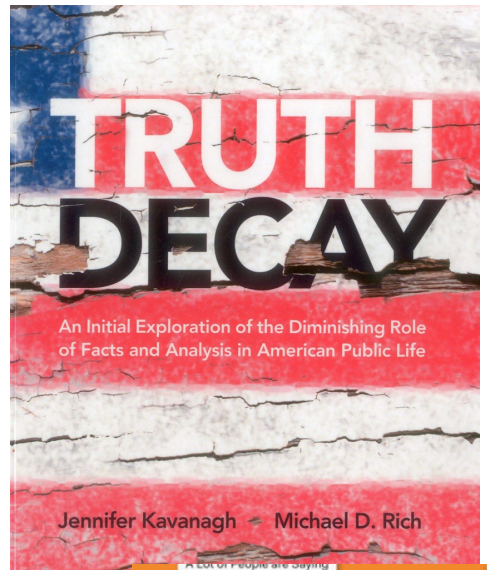


TRUTH DECAY'S FOUR TRENDS

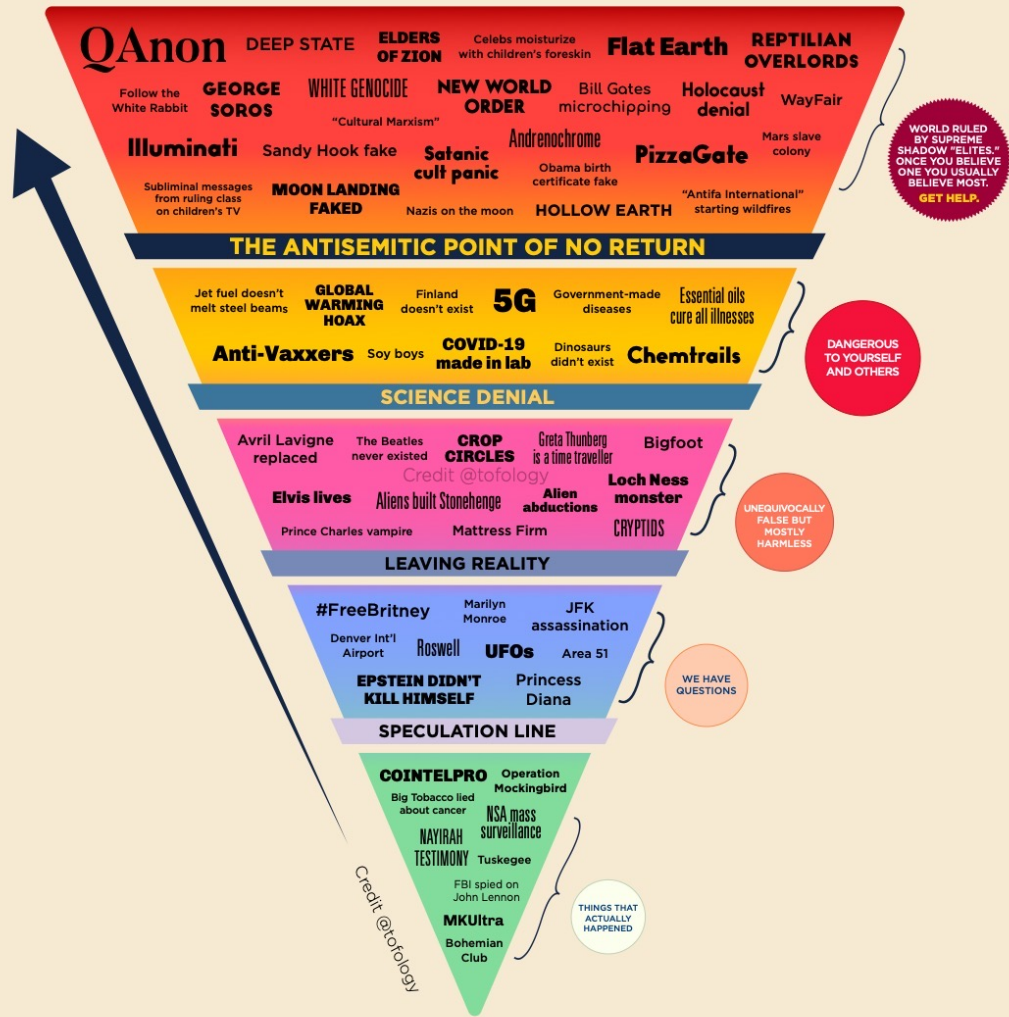
- Increasing disagreement about facts and data
- A blurring of the line between opinion and fact
- The increasing relative volume and resulting influence of opinion over fact
- Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information

CONSEQUENCES

- at the personal, community, national, and international levels
- Erosion of civil discourse
 - Political paralysis
 - Alienation and disengagement
 - Uncertainty



DETACHED FROM REALITY

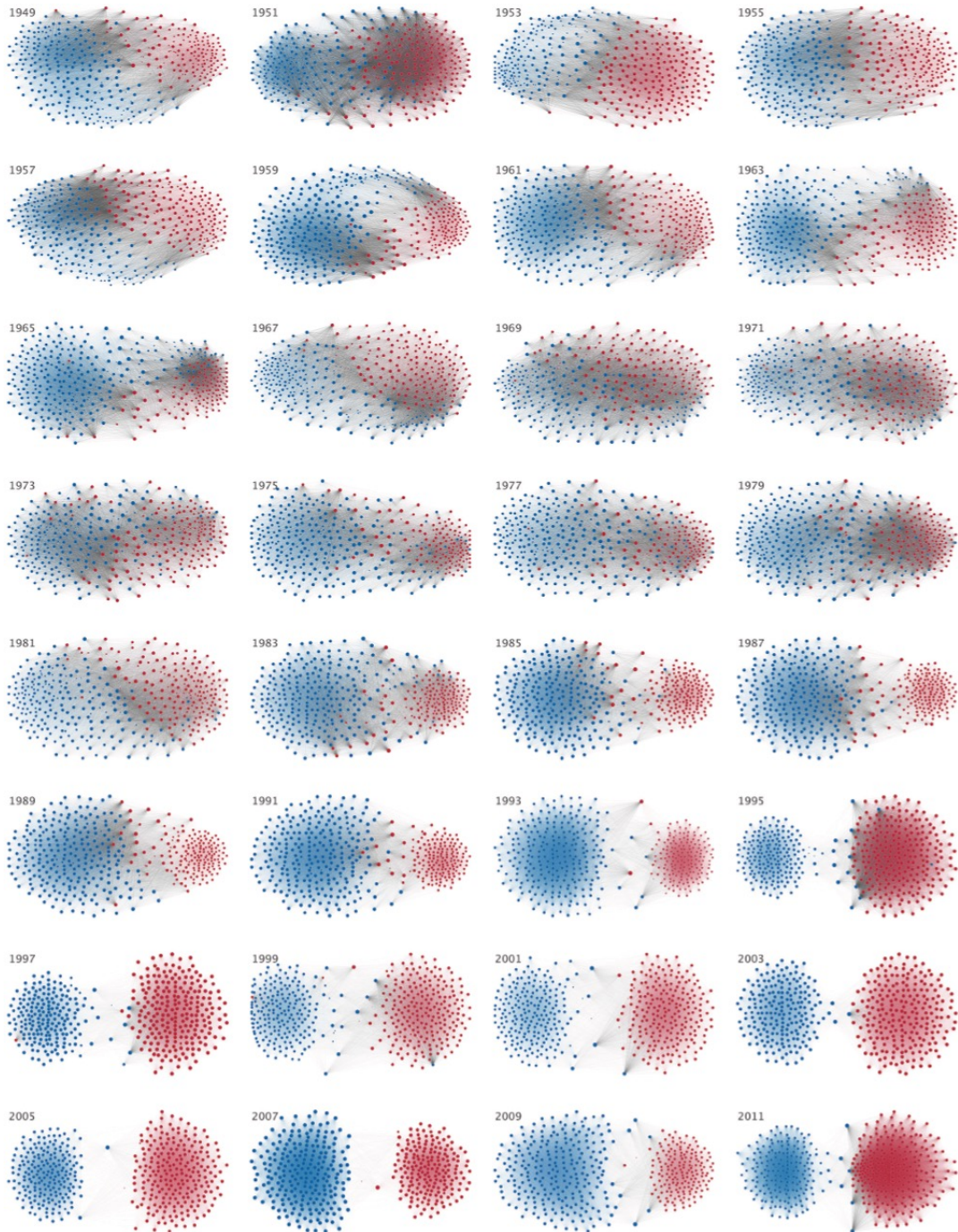


GROUNDING IN REALITY



40 People Missing After First Flat Earth Surfing Championship





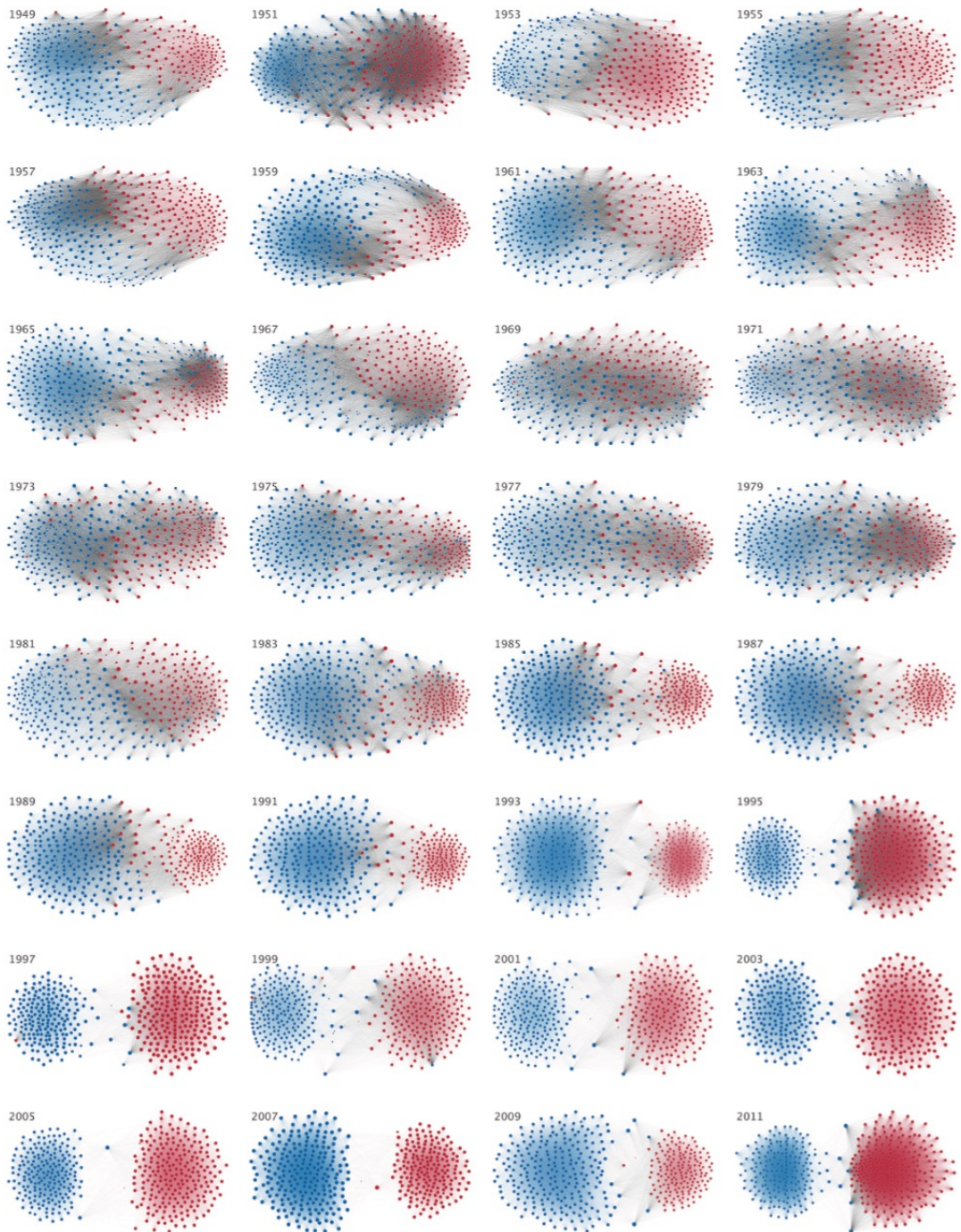
"A lot and maybe most people, in order to find something, have to first know it is there"

G.C. Lichtenberg, Sudelbücher, J668.

Division of Democrat and Republican Party members over time.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0123507>

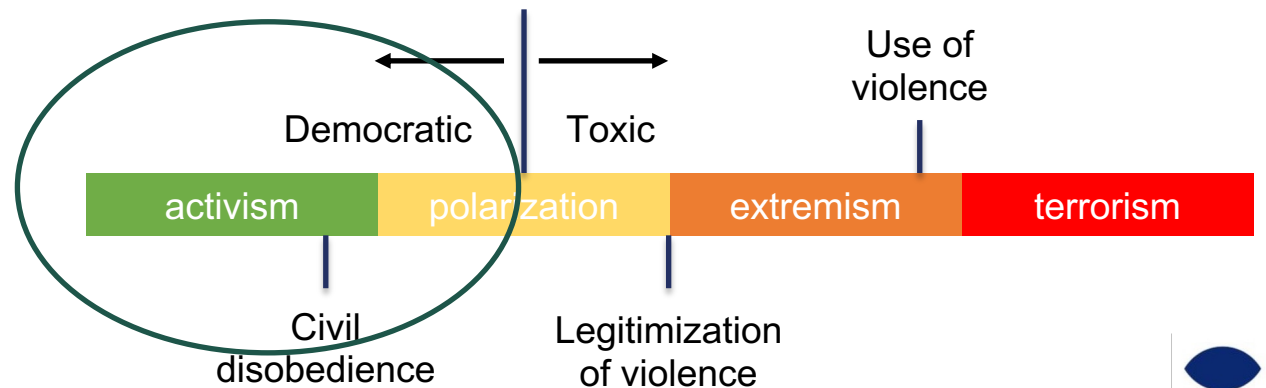




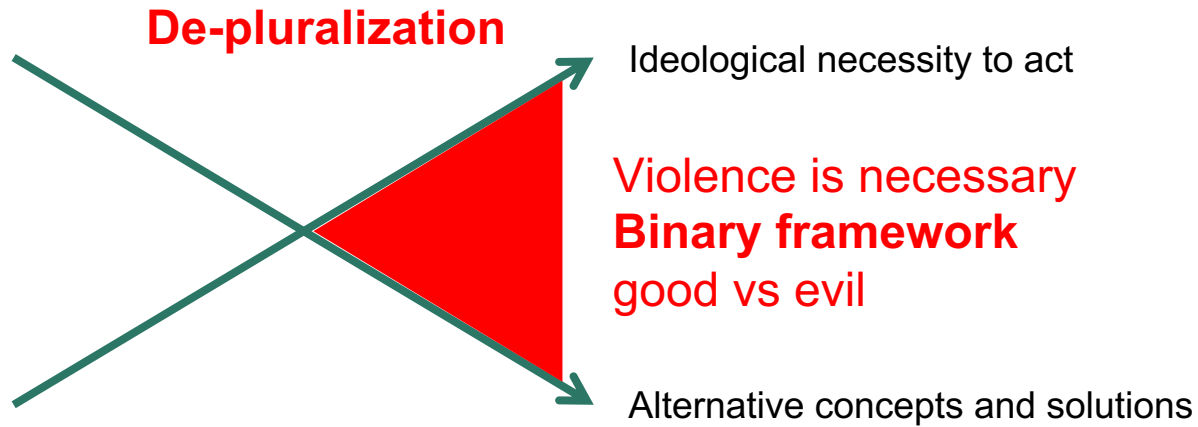
Polarization: enriching or threatening?

- **Democratic** / Political / thematic / ideological (*ball*)
- **Toxic** / affective / social (*person/group*)

Multi-voicedness - space - depolarization & agonistics



Process of de-pluralization



Crisisnarratives (JM Berger): **conspiracy, dystopia, impurity, existential threat**, apocalypse

Existential threat > feeling of urgency > extreme acts

Process of de-pluralization

a process of individual de-pluralization of political concepts and values (justice, freedom, honor, violence, democracy, etc.)

Values, concepts & identities are rewritten, restructured & redefined piece by piece

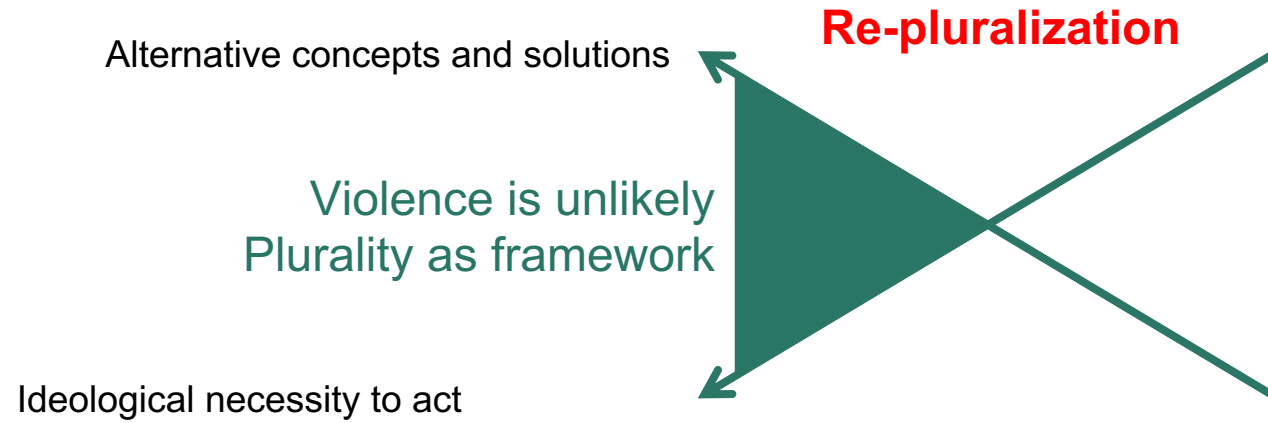
No alternative interpretations possible (de-plural), reductionist & simplistic frame of reference

E.g. **problem definition** (population) - **solution** (migration stop/remigration) - **vision of the future** (white Europe)

Binary frame combined with need to act (crisis coming)



Process of re-pluralization



Crisisnarratives (JM Berger): **conspiracy, dystopia, impurity, existential threat, apocalypse**

Existential threat > feeling of urgency > extreme acts

Process of de-pluralization

a process of individual de-pluralization of political concepts and values (justice, freedom, honor, violence, democracy, etc.)

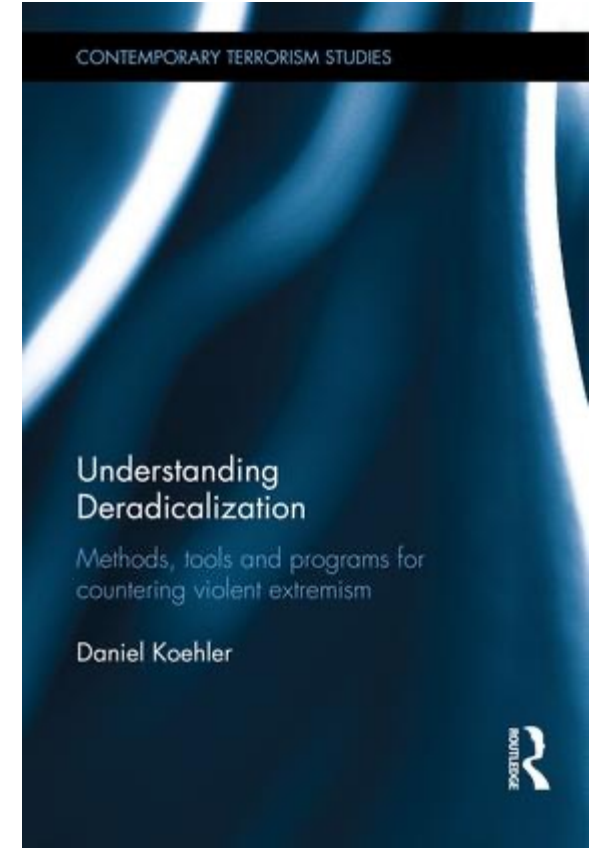
Language & social media!

Values, concepts & identities are rewritten, restructured & redefined piece by piece

No alternative interpretations possible (de-plural), reductionist & simplistic frame of reference

E.g. **problem definition** (population) - **solution** (migration stop/remigration) - **vision of the future** (white Europe)

Binary frame combined with need to act (crisis coming)



Radicalization / 3N / puzzle



Complex interplay

- **‘Causes’ & ‘causes of the causes’**
- Structural / accelerating / motivational & trigger – causes
- **3 N approach**
- Needs – Narratives – Networks
- **Puzzle approach**
- Grievances – ideologies – networks – supportive structures /facilitating environments

<https://opev.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/BJ%C3%98RGO-Tore.-Root-Causes-of-Terrorism-.pdf>

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2019-22726-000>

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375>

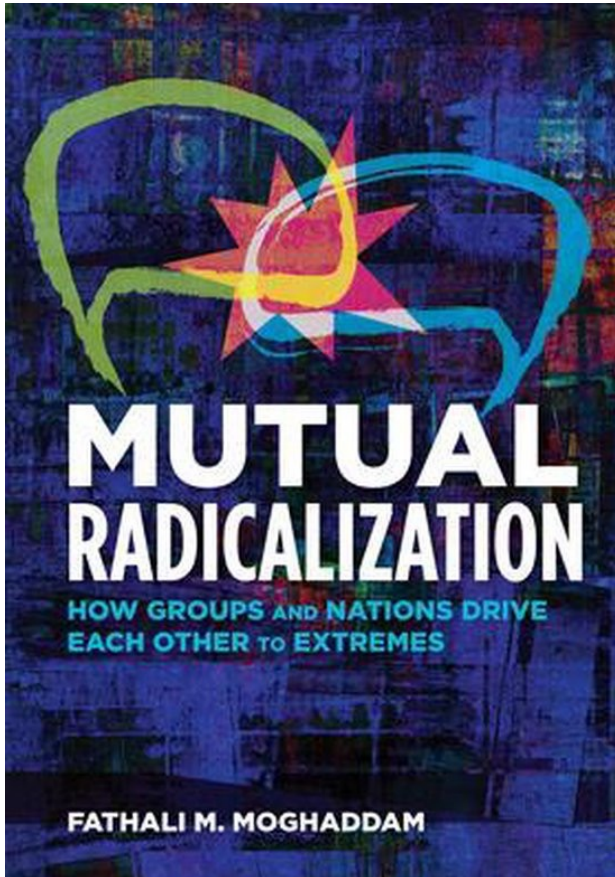
IDENTITY

&

TRUTH



Mutual radicalization



Stage 1. Group Mobilization

- Step 1. Heightened Group Salience
- Step 2. Perceived Injustice and Relative Deprivation
- Step 3. Identity Mobilization
- Step 4. Outgroup Denigration and Intergroup Differentiation

Stage 2. Extreme Ingroup Cohesion

- Step 1. Aggressive Leadership Dominates
- Step 2. Aggressive Followership Dominates
- Step 3. Conformity and Obedience Enforced
- Step 4. Cognitive Convergence Around an Ideology

Stage 3. Antagonistic Identity Transformation

- Step 1. Cycle of Increasingly Hostile Responses to Exaggerated Outgroup Threats
- Step 2. Group Shifts to the Extreme Positions
- Step 3. Radicalized Identities Become Normative
- Step 4. Trigger Events (Re)ignite Direct or Indirect Violent Conflicts

Political Motivated Reasoning
Pathological Hatred
Irrationality - Rationalizations
Runaway Selection





hannah
arendt
instituut

"Power is only realised where word and deed are not separated, where words are not empty, and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to hide intentions, but to **reveal realities**, and where deeds are not used to commit violence and destroy, but to **establish relationships** and **create new realities**."

The human condition, 184.

