

Communities, communication and sustainability

Commissioned by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN)



Gummy Industries - 2019



Impressum

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The contractor bears sole responsibility for the content.

1. Communities, communication and sustainability: what's the purpose of this paper?
2. Online communities, why are they relevant?
3. How to communicate to achieve political goals?
4. What can politics learn from commercial communication?
5. What's the proposed solution?
6. Resources

Communities, communication and sustainability:
what's the purpose of this paper?

Our purpose is to define an actionable guide for
Bundesamt für Umwelt.

Our goal is to increase awareness and knowledge about
sustainability within Swiss and European population.
We want to drive a real change.

Challenge

Our main challenge is being attractive
to a mainstream audience.
We want to engage with it, not only
with the most sensitive niches.

In order to understand how to become attractive to a mainstream audience, we are going to analyze all the online phenomena (related to social themes) that resonate with a broad audience

Online Communities

How do communities take shape and how can they be effective in influencing people?

Political Parties

What can we learn from the most successful political parties? How do they leverage online communication to achieve their success?

Brands

Nowadays, how do brands define themselves by being part of social movements? What's the reason behind the fact that big brands are standing more and more for social causes?

2

Online communities

Why are they relevant?

Communities

Why are they relevant?

Communities are social units with commonality such as norms, religion, values, customs or identity. They are based in the same physical or technological space.



Communities

Why are they relevant?

Community is, essentially, the opposite of consumerism, the core belief for modern society.

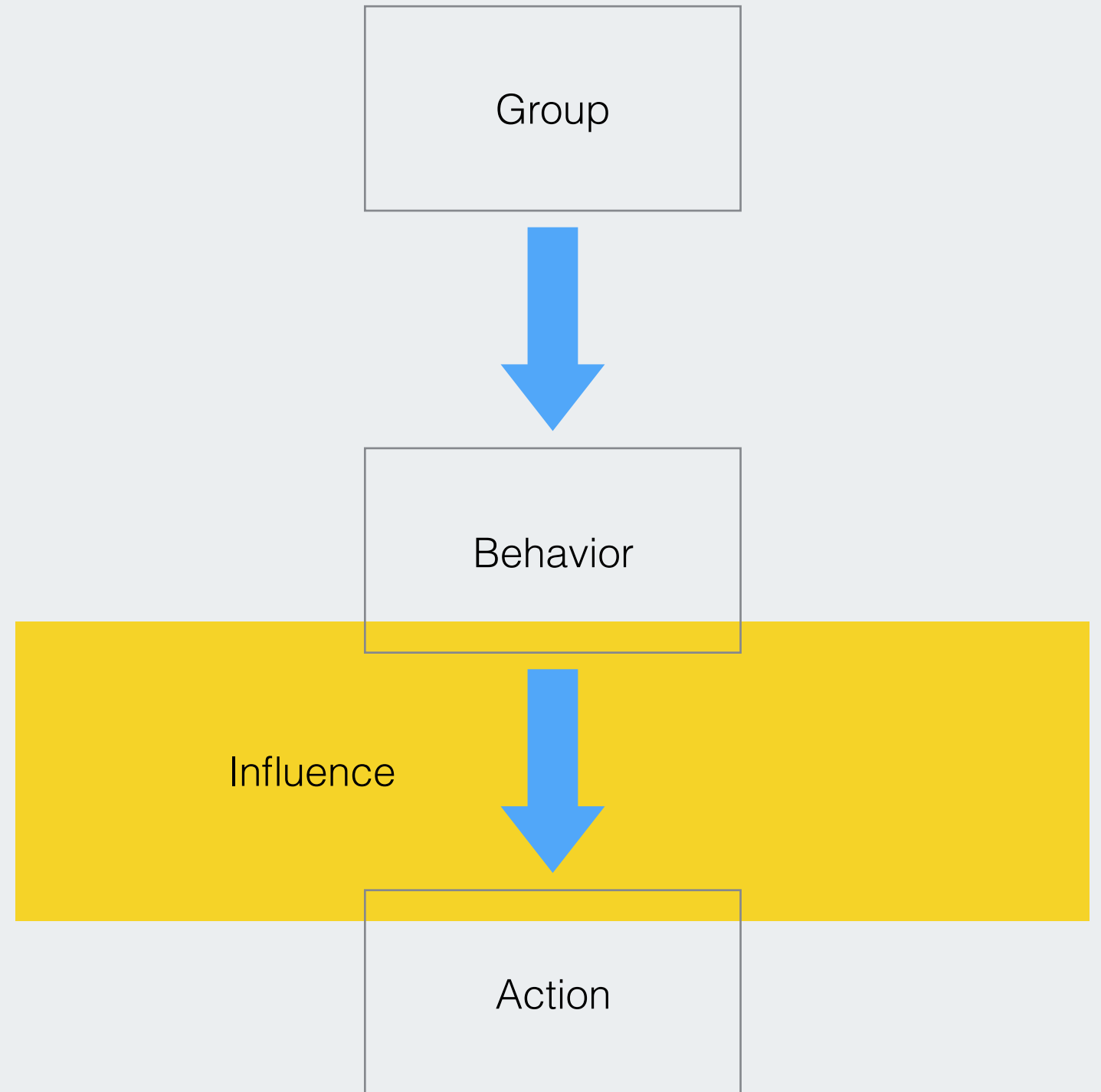
Consumerism is concerned with the acquisition of material goods by economic competition.

Community is concerned with the development of positive relationships in a cooperative manner.

Communities

Online communities

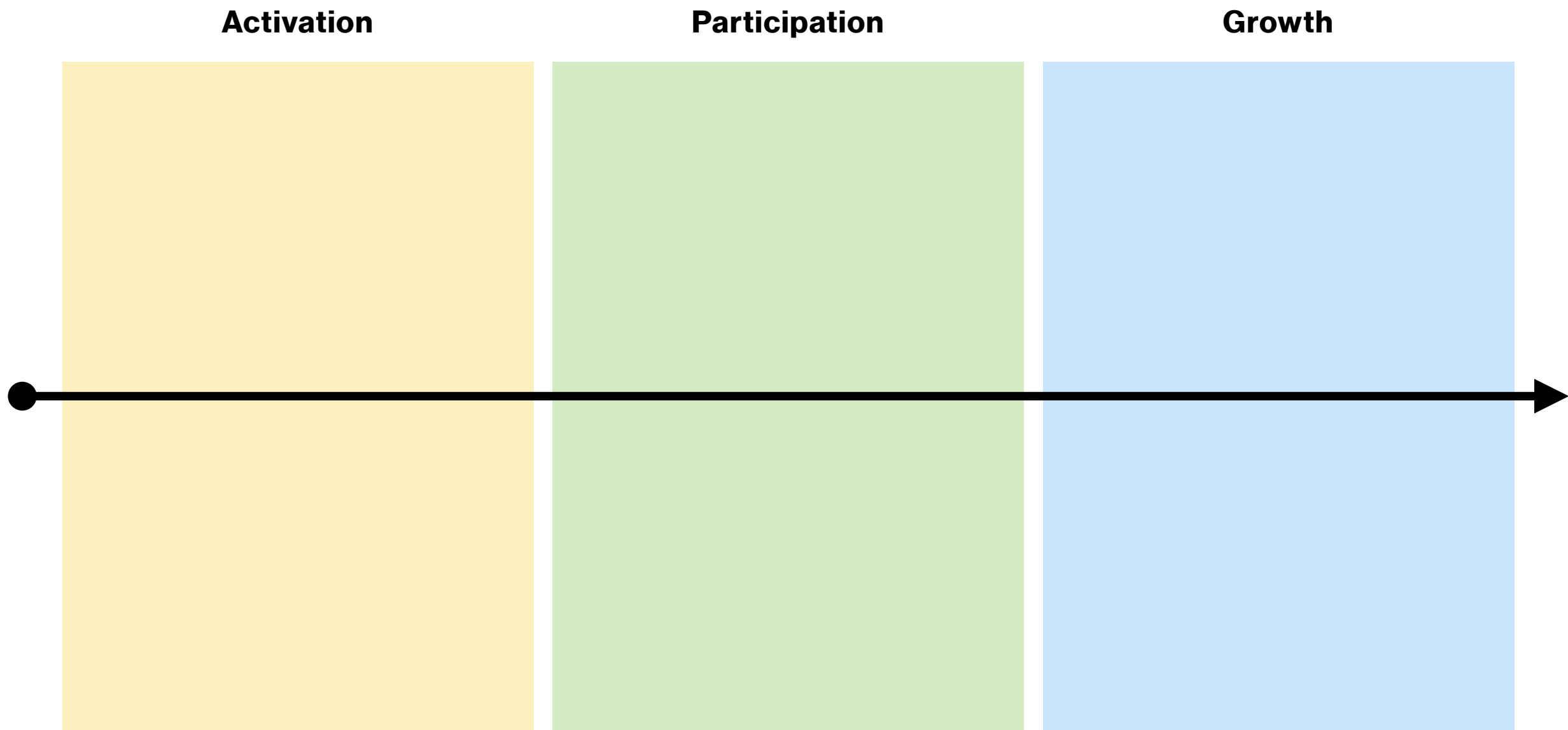
Online communities, in particular, are a perfect example of how to activate people, incentivizing them to act, in a very effective way.



How does a successful
community usually take
shape?

Communities

A path for successful communities



Communities

A path for successful communities

Activation

A few close people share the same interests, culture and values.

Everything starts with needs

The community start defining a common **language** and **cultural belonging**
First **habits** and **rituals** take shape

A strong **leader** makes the community stronger and their growth is faster

Participation

The community starts growing as soon as a cultural code is shared and people start talking about the community, outside its borders

People outside the community feel that belonging to a community can be **useful** in several ways: defining themselves through their belonging, getting actionable benefits, having a common believe

Growth

The message of the community starts becoming clear and understandable even to a broad audience

Engaging members keep the community alive

A strong leader renews new habits and sense of **identity**

Communities

A path for successful communities

A few close people share the same interests, culture and values.

Sometimes, everything starts with a need

Barn raising: is a collective action of a community, in which a barn for one of the members is built or rebuilt collectively by members of the community



Communities

A path for successful communities

The community starts
defining a common
language and **cultural**
belonging

First **habits** and **rituals**
take shape

On Sunday you go to Mass, you dress
in a certain way, you follow a certain ritual.



Communities

A path for successful communities

The community starts growing as soon as a culturale code is shared and people start talking about the community, outside its borders

The Burning Man festival in Nevada gathers people temporarily, sharing the same culturale codes and making people outside the community to talk about the community itself



Communities

A path for successful communities

Aspiring members feel that belonging to the community can be **beneficial** in several ways

Benefits can be related to personal status, self-esteem, social identity, personal achievement.

Aspiring members have to understand and visualize them, thanks to a clear communication strategy, defined by powerful storytelling, clear statements, identity icons, clear actions, uniforms etc...



Communities

A path for successful communities

The message of the community gradually becomes clear and understandable even to a broad audience

The main goal of the community becomes more and more clear while people talk about it within (and outside) the community.



Communities

A path for successful communities

Engaging members keep the community alive

Only an active community endures and thrives: the most dynamic members make the community evolve, reacting to external and internal impulses.

It strengthens the relationships amongst its members, enhancing the benefits of being a member.



Communities

A path for successful communities

Growth is easier (and faster) if there are a few items

Incentive to share, talk about the community

- Providing to others a certain image of myself
- Helping people
- Sustaining causes
- Feeling useful and important

Growing relationships

Tool for sharing

Power of the message

Message clear and easy

Communities

A path for successful communities

Don't focus only on the platform.
“If you build it, they will come”
is a common mistake.

Communities

A path for successful communities

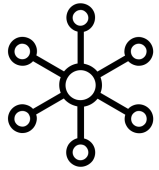
**Communities start from the bottom.
That's what makes them successful.**

Are there any recurring hierarchies
and organizational patterns?

Communities

A path for successful communities

There are three types of communities, defined by the strength of the relationships within their members



Hubs

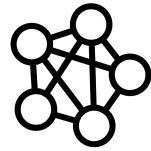
A community where a central knot ties everybody together. If the central hub disappears, the community becomes weaker.

A charismatic figure is the key to this community affiliation

“Greta Thunberg’s fans”

Gummy Industries

2019

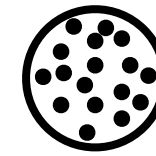


Networks

Each peer is bound to others. You have very strong links and strong barriers to enter and to exit.

Personal relationships are the key to this community affiliation

“The family”



Pools

Peers are loosely bound, because they have similar values, similar codes, similar habits.

The shared activity, goal, or values are the key to this community affiliation

“Vegetarians”

Communities

A path for successful communities

Are there any unwritten rules that help communities succeed?

- Each single member is worth a lot for the community
- **Shared responsibility on the common purpose**
- Tone of voice and language have to shape on the context
- There can be a few **small groups** within the community, but they can't contrast the **common purpose**
- **Reputation** within the community is **hierarchy**
- Trolls get kicked out soon
- **Founders** are very important in defining **behaviors and rules**
- The **engagement** within members have to be constantly **monitored and nurtured**
- A community has to be **useful and meaningful**
- You can't only focus on the platform

Are there any recurring behavioral patterns within the online communities?

Communities

A path for successful communities

Communities have a well defined structure.

We can expect only 1% of the members to actually produce content and 9% to interact



Hierarchy of community members

Why is a community (bottom-up approach) more effective than institutions (top-down approach) in influencing people?

Because they make people feel they are part of the solution

People don't participate in a community to obtain a monetary reward.

People take part in a community to have some non-monetary compensations.

1.
Reputation
I am active because I want
to feel respected

2.
Self esteem
I am active because it makes
me feel a better person

3.
Social capital
I am active because I want
to build a group of people

Communities

A path for successful communities

Reputation and self esteem are the reason why “peer review” systems work so well in online (and offline) communities

“Like” and “Upvote” are ways to leverage users self esteem.

Most collaborative and interactive community platforms employ some sort of feedback system.

Facebook has Reactions (six of them), Quora and Reddit have upvotes, Twitter has Likes.

Wealth Creation

Money Management

Wealth Management

+7

What are the best ways to save money?

Answer

Follow · 1.4k

Request

3



100+ Answers



Shanaya Elize, Business Strategist

Updated Aug 14

Originally Answered: [What is your secret to saving money?](#)

I live in UAE with my husband (both in mid-to-late-twenties), though we have different salary accounts, we combine our money as soon as we get our salaries and work around it. (Combining our money helps in bigger montly investments and better financial status). Fortunately, we are in sync with each other and have 100% transparency with each other, till date and hope to continue in the future.

Following are the rules that we live by when it comes to organizing o

1. **We first pay ourselves** - There is a fixed amount of money (20% of combined income) that goes to our joint NRI acco...

(more)

Upvote · 398

Share · 18



Farida Sultana

Excellent article. I like the idea of buying gold. I knew UAE is the gold coun

Communities

A path for successful communities

A color can be a reward, in itself

The World of Warcraft forum (a hundred millions people community) rewards the most active users by letting them write in green on the forum (a non-economical reward, totally reputational, visible by other users).

When a user starts writing green, he gets lots of compliments from other users.

Banned account due to "Ab x

us.battle.net/wow/en/forum/topic/11422882329



Ravenhawke ▾
90 Blood Elf Rogue
The Dark Passengers
10860 🏆

You will need to submit a ticket and ask for a review, it cannot be done over forums.



Orlyia ▾
Support Forum Agent

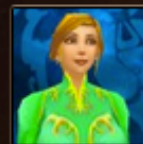
Your account has been accessed by malicious parties, Capzie.

You need to appeal this, but even more important is making certain of your s they can't get back in.

I'd recommend a full security sweep of your system and making certain your secure.

You also need to avoid reusing passwords between WoW and anything else other games, websites, apps.

You can open that contact through the Support link in the menu bar above.



Mirasol ▾
MVP - Technical Support
12 Human Mage
Flying Doom Bunnies
9165 🏆

Useful checklist time! You may find the following helpful OP

1. Download, install, and update Malwarebytes (free version is fine). Boot into safe mode and run a FULL (not quick version) scan with the game up and gibber login fields. Some malware only activates under those conditions.

2. When that scan is done, run a FULL virus scan with an updated virus scan

Communities

A path for successful communities

Startups like GreenApes try to motivate users through economic incentives (a free coffee, a discount)

There are very few communities that proved this approach right

Caffè omaggio
Santanera



GREENAPES
YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THE JUNGLE

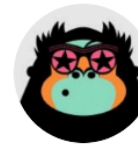
Benvenuto su greenApes
Il social network per la sostenibilità ambiente
Esplora la Giungla

+ Impatto positivo

Esplora la G

♥ Più in vista

⌚ Più recenti



SullaLiana · Ape rank 3

7 hours ago · Italy

Ho riciclato in modo creativo

XP



Riuso i fogli stampati da una parte per farne blocchi per la lista della spesa o per i memo domestici



Communities are able to build
common opinions that gradually
become shared behaviors

Are there any examples, specifically related to environment and sustainability, we can learn from?

Communities

Examples

Fridays for future is the single most successful sustainability campaign of the year

Kicked-off by Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, it's an international movement of school students who take time off from class to participate in demonstrations to demand action to prevent further global warming and climate change.

On September 2019, an estimated 2 million people participated in demonstrations worldwide.



Communities

Examples

Extinction Rebellion is how you create a movement, in 2019

It's a global environmental movement with the stated aim of using nonviolent civil disobedience to compel government action to avoid tipping points in the climate system, biodiversity loss, and the risk of social and ecological collapse.

Extinction Rebellion wants to rally support worldwide around a common sense of urgency to tackle climate breakdown and the sixth mass extinction. A number of activists in the movement accept arrest and imprisonment, similar to the mass arrest tactics of the Committee of 100 in 1961.



Communities

Examples

Minimalism means challenging consumerism, while being cool anyway

A lifestyle-related community, promoted by Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus, that help over 20 million people live meaningful lives with less through their website, books, podcast, and documentary.

“Being a minimalist means you value yourself more than material things. It means making decisions based on what you need instead of getting everything you want. It does not mean the things you buy are cheap. It means they are something you need, regardless of how much they cost.”



Communities

Examples

Project 333 is a powerful campaign aimed at creating awareness on fast fashion and environment

Project 333 is a minimalist fashion challenge: it challenges people to spend 3 months wearing only 33 items, proving that less is more.

Relaxolott's Project 333: October-December 2012

Five Sweaters



One Blazer



Two Coats



Two Button-Downs



Two Pairs of Slacks
and Two Pairs of Jeans



Six Scarves



Six Knit Shirts



Satchel, Tote, and
Shoulder Bag



Ankle Boots,
Ballet Flats,
and Sneakers



...and a Hand Knit Hat!



Communities

Examples

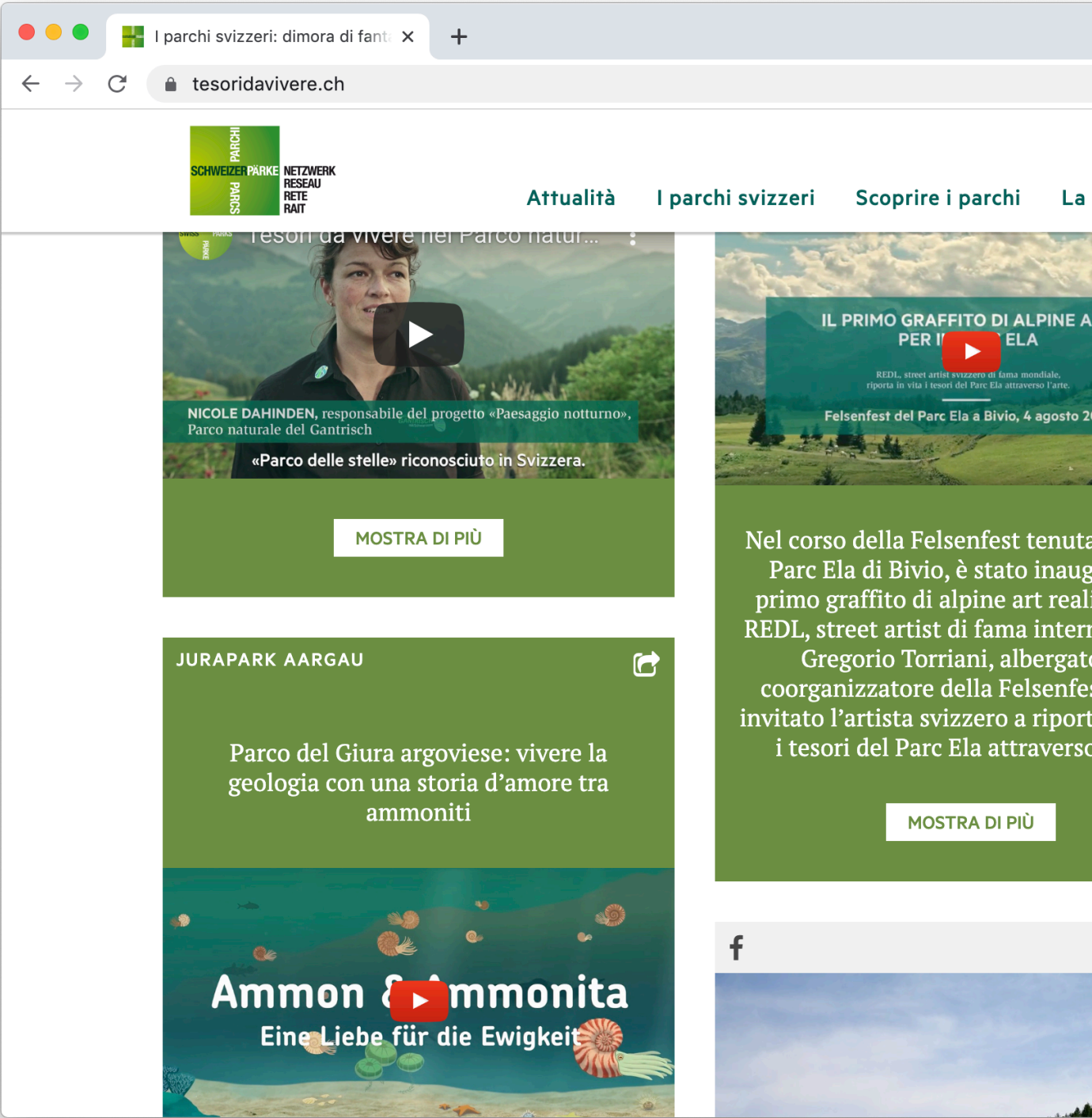
MissioneB is going to rebuild biodiversity in Switzerland

It involves families, individuals, associations and municipalities in recreating the local fauna, by creating green spaces wherever possible.



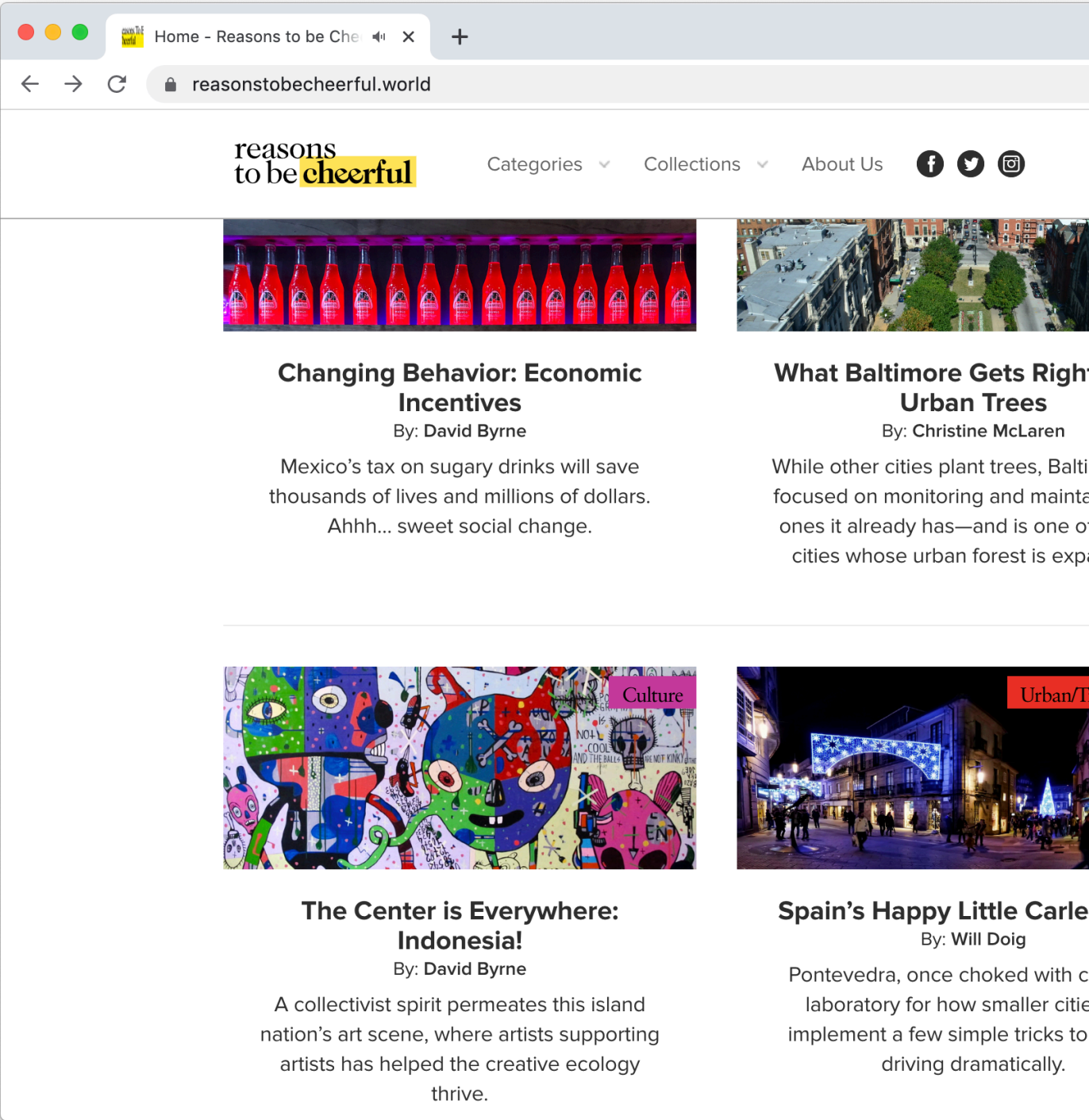
Tesori da vivere brings people to hidden treasures, in Switzerland

Tesori da vivere is a campaign aimed at creating awareness on Swiss National Parks, inviting the population to go visiting the secret treasures that they safeguard.



Reasons to be cheerful is a great way to build a community by leveraging positive emotions

Reasons to be cheerful, founded by artis and musician David Byrne, is a non-profit editorial project aimed at telling stories that reveal that there are, in fact, a surprising number of reasons to feel cheerful.



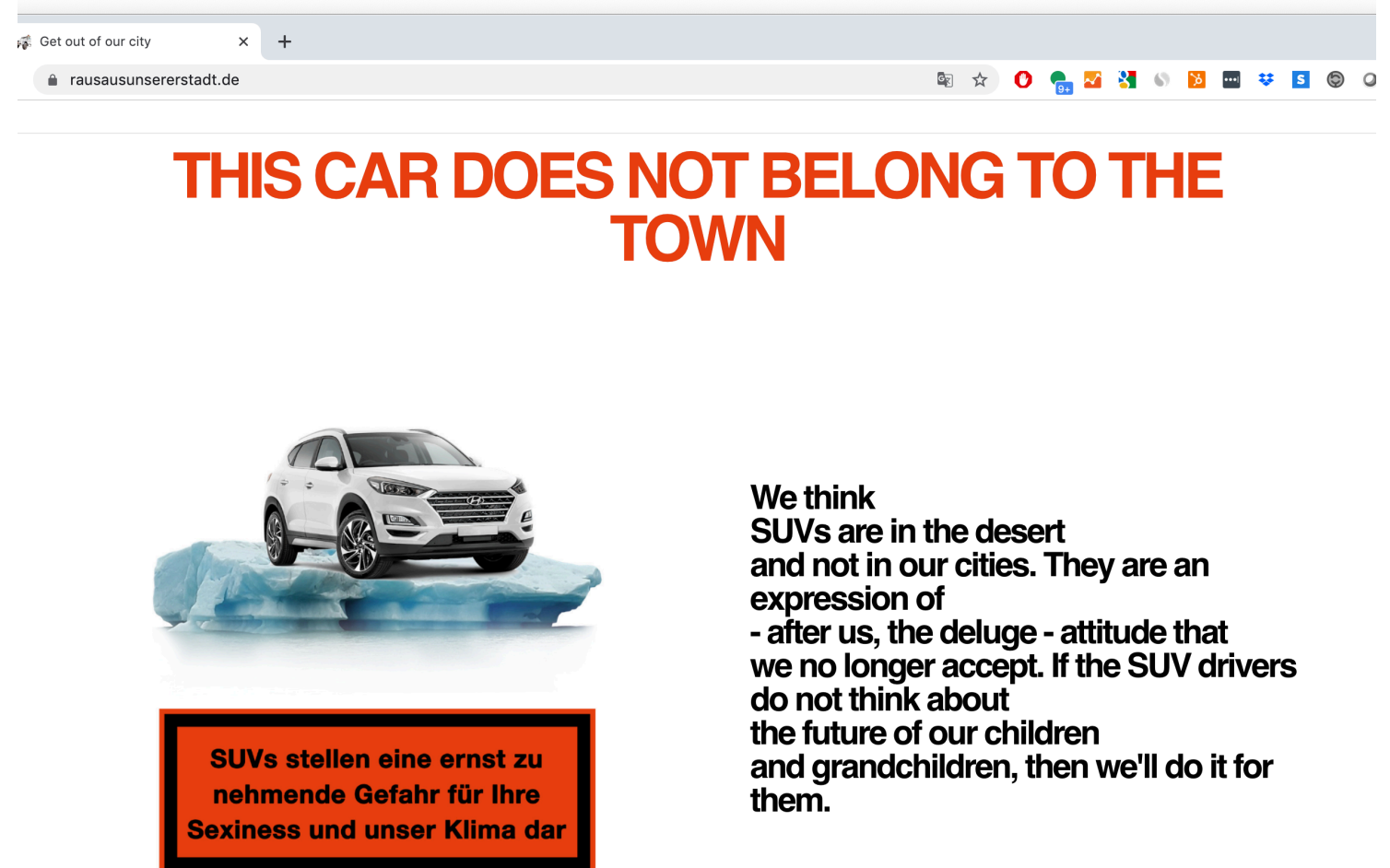
Communities

Examples

RausAusUnsererStadt community uses shame to create awareness on environmental issues

A German community aimed at shaming SUV owners, by spreading the message through stickers, posters and flyers.

Video



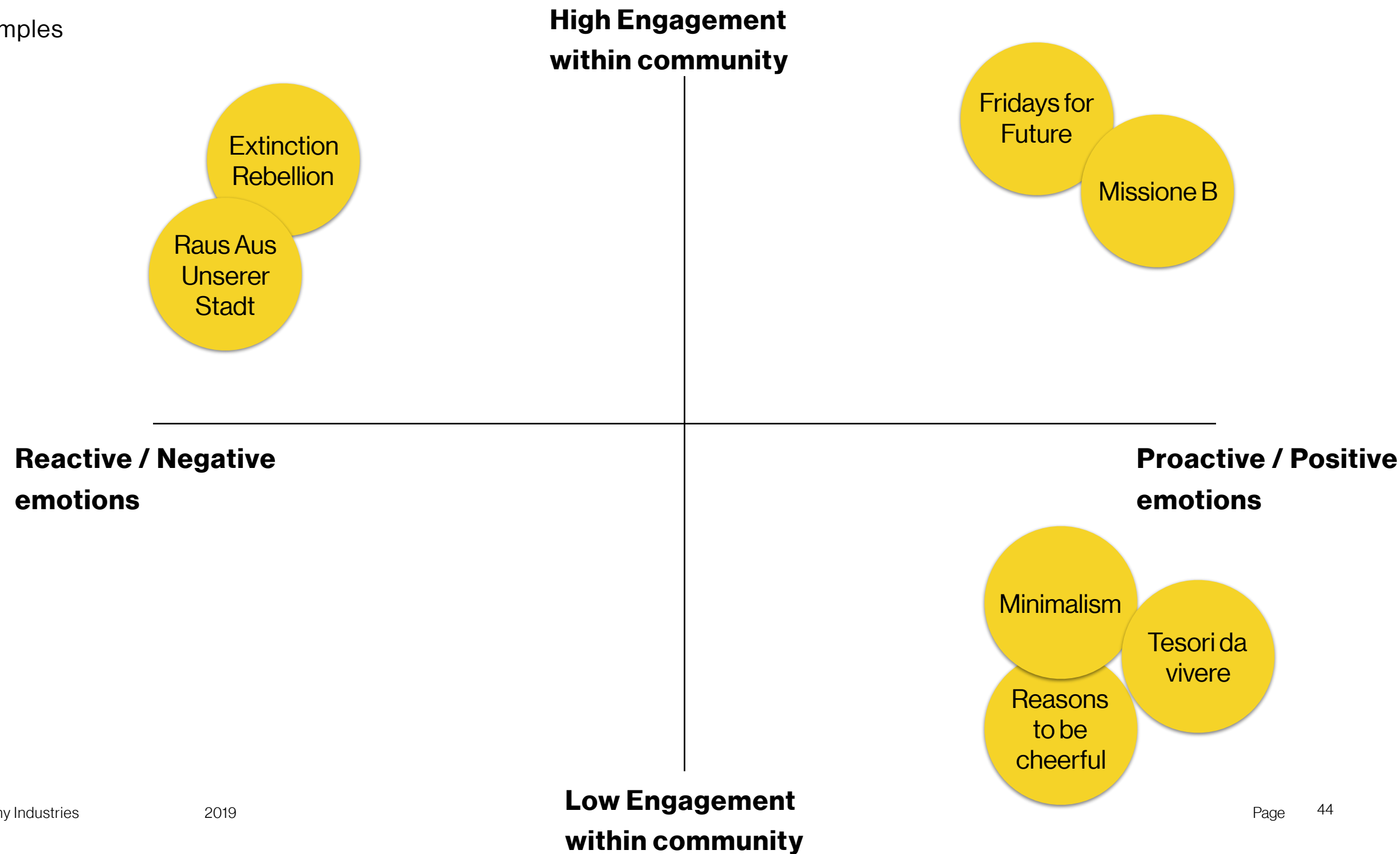
THIS CAR DOES NOT BELONG TO THE TOWN



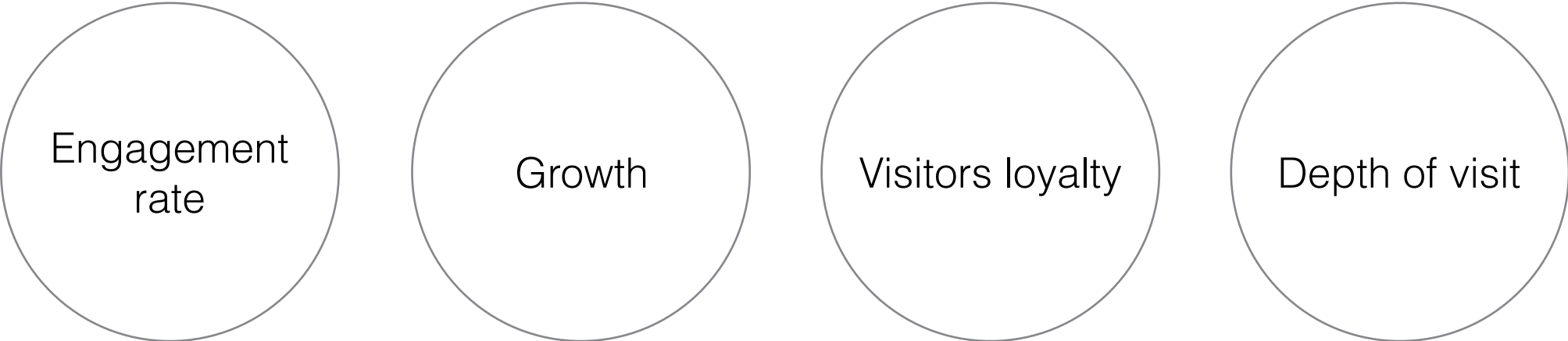
**SUVs stellen eine ernst zu
nehmende Gefahr für Ihre
Sexiness und unser Klima dar**

**We think
SUVs are in the desert
and not in our cities. They are an
expression of
- after us, the deluge - attitude that
we no longer accept. If the SUV drivers
do not think about
the future of our children
and grandchildren, then we'll do it for
them.**

Communities
Examples



How to measure the success of a community?



Engagement
rate

Growth

Visitors loyalty

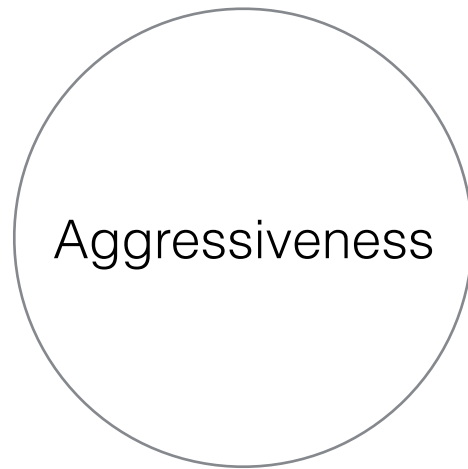
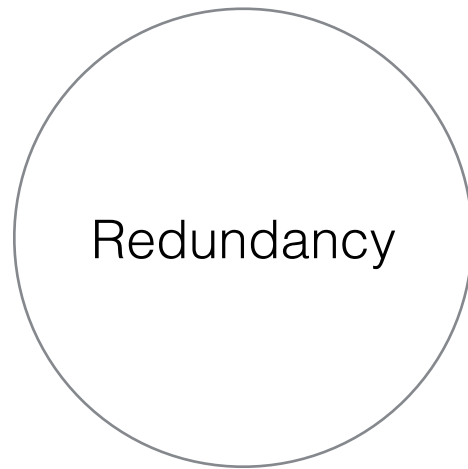
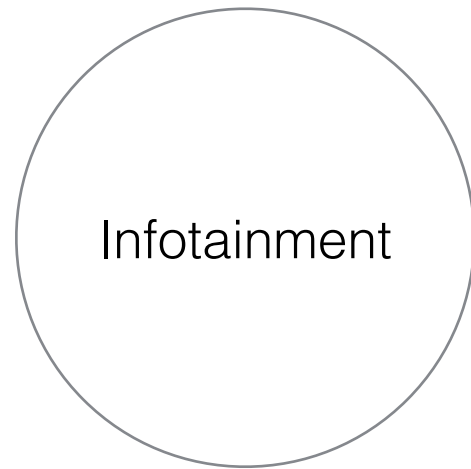
Depth of visit

3

How to communicate to
achieve political goals?

There have been recent
phenomenons in institutional
communication that demonstrate
societal and political themes can still
become mainstream

Contemporary political communication has to consider 3 main factors



Political movements

Recurring behaviors

Infotainment is a combination of information and entertainment, in which news/information are presented through an entertaining point of view



Political movements
Recurring behaviors

Redundancy or repetition, is the constant diffusion of the same message concept and frame over and over, until you can achieve media effects



Political movements

Recurring behaviors

Aggressiveness

represents the necessity of standing out in a high-competitive environment through the strength of your message and, sometimes, through the identification of an enemy



These 3 factors can be easily
observed in the following successful
political campaigns

Political movements

Examples

Brexit

Take back control

A strong slogan, seemingly giving power back to you, the individual, is what channels emotions and desires in citizens in the best way possible



Political movements

Examples

Salvini

Repetition, repetition and again repetition

Through a uniform and simple graphic style,
Salvini's communication team is able to convey
different messages in a single and more
recognisable format



Political movements

Examples

UDC

Clear and direct

The message from the UDC is straightforward and can be understood without too many filters. Simple but efficient, that is what characterises a well-built message



Lasciamo distruggere la Svizzera da sinistroidi e europeisti?

Reagiamo, votiamo



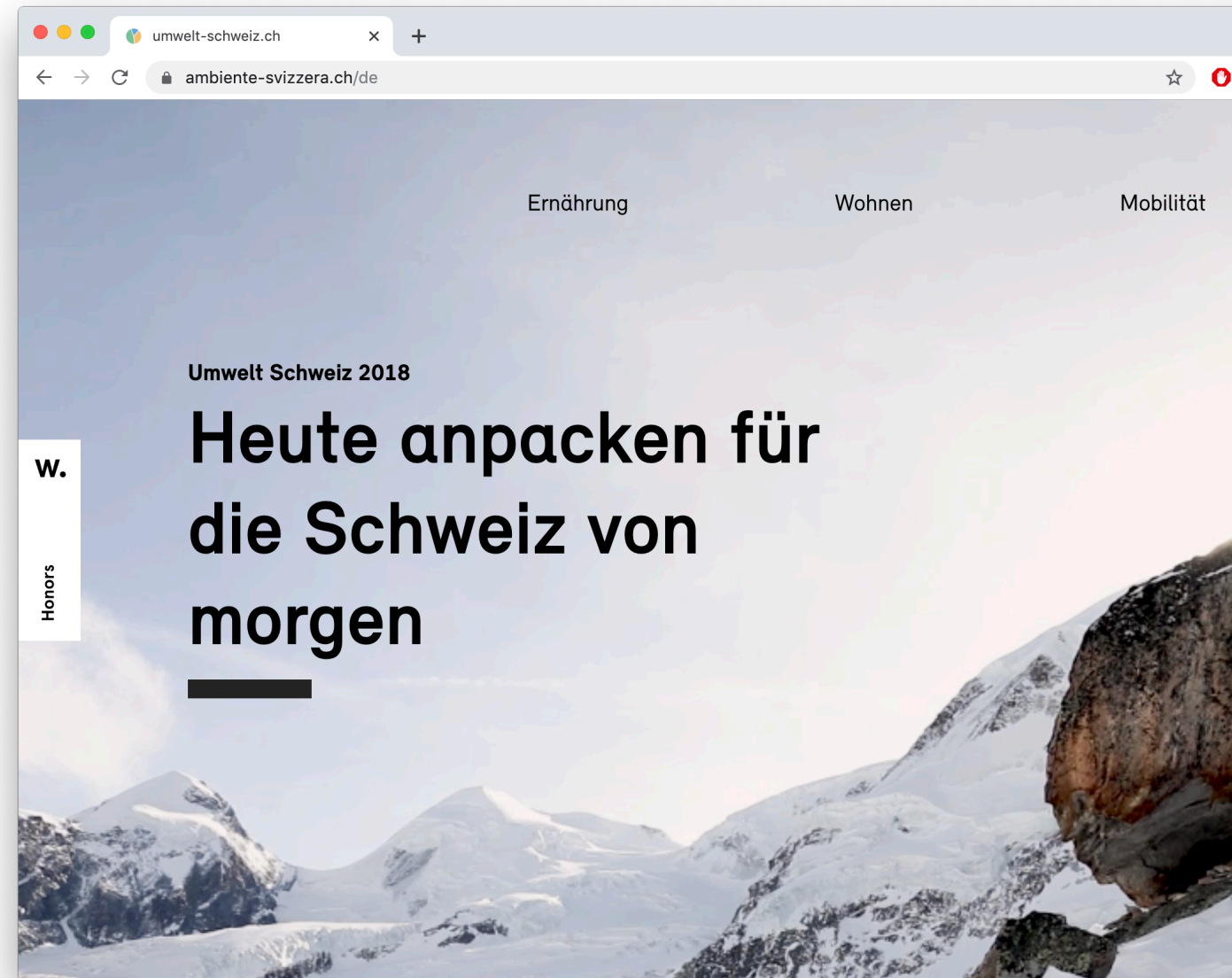
Political movements

Examples

Umwelt Schweiz

A clear call to action

Setting the tone and pointing out the problem is essential for an environmental community created over new mobilisation processes, such as connective action



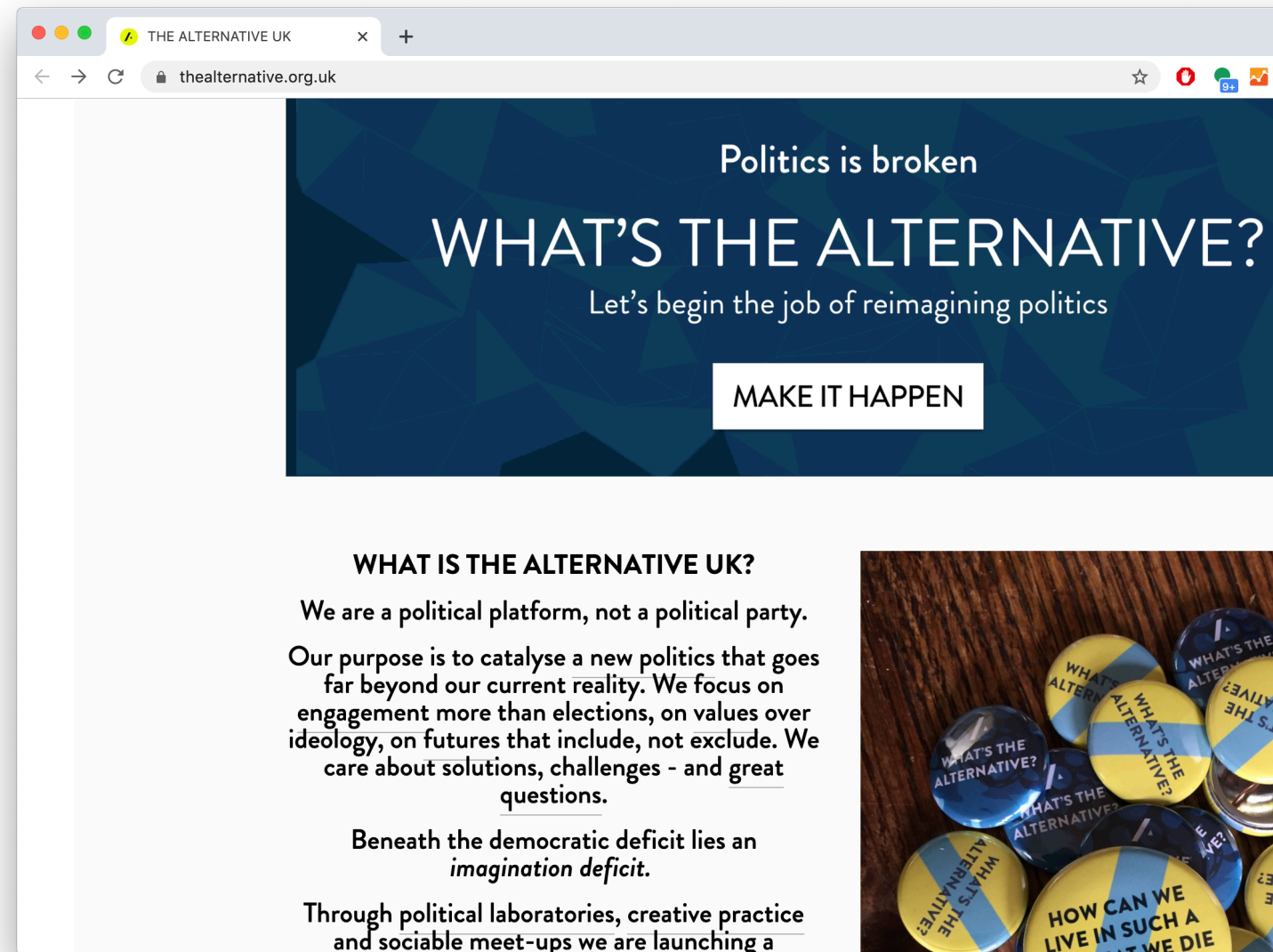
Political movements

Examples

The Alternative UK

Its name says it all

Creating an alternative is necessary: that is what this English project aims for; delivering a new story, a different perspective is essential in dealing with politics that have bored citizens

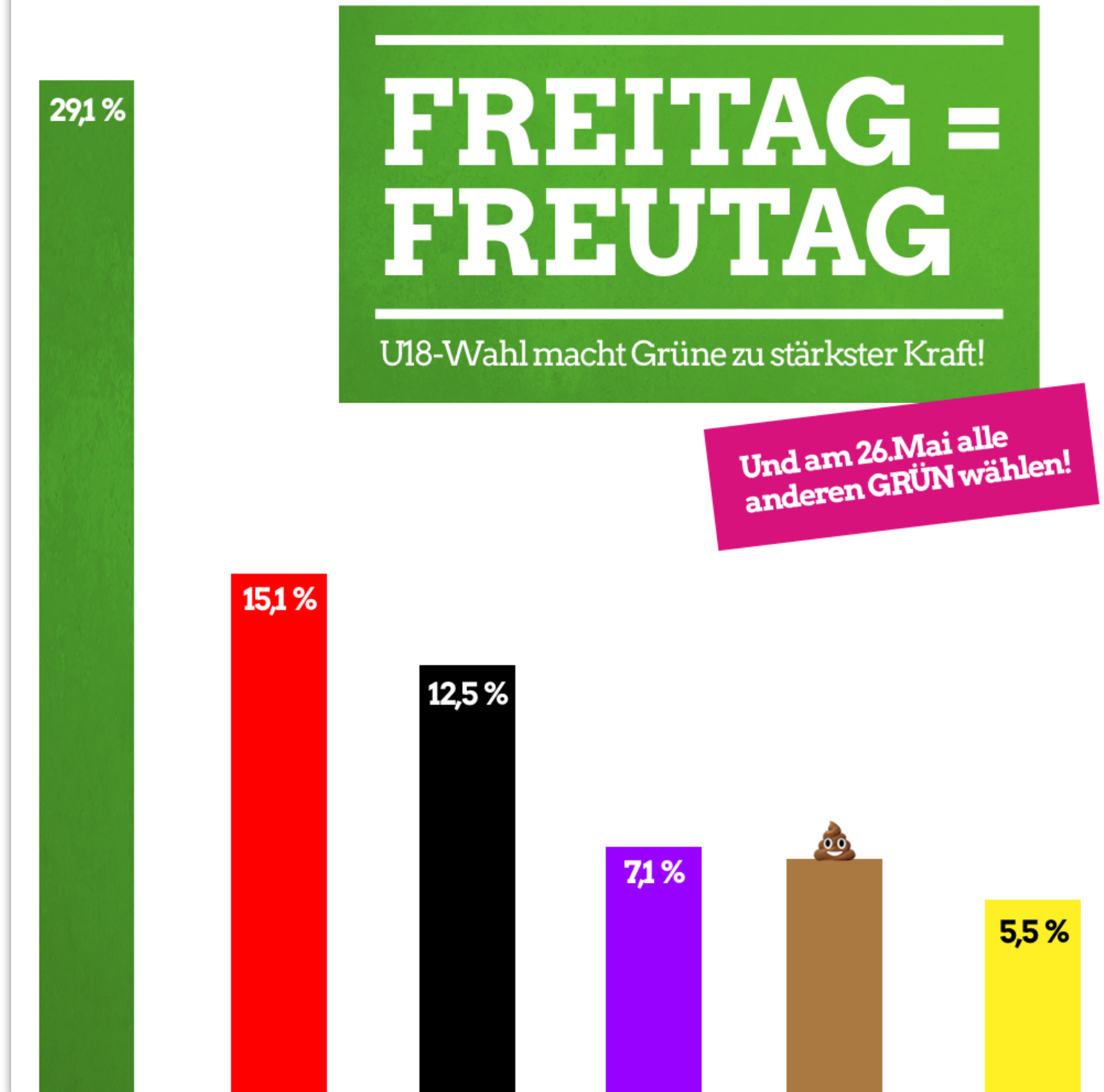


Political movements

Examples

Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen
From 10,7% to 20,5% in the
European elections

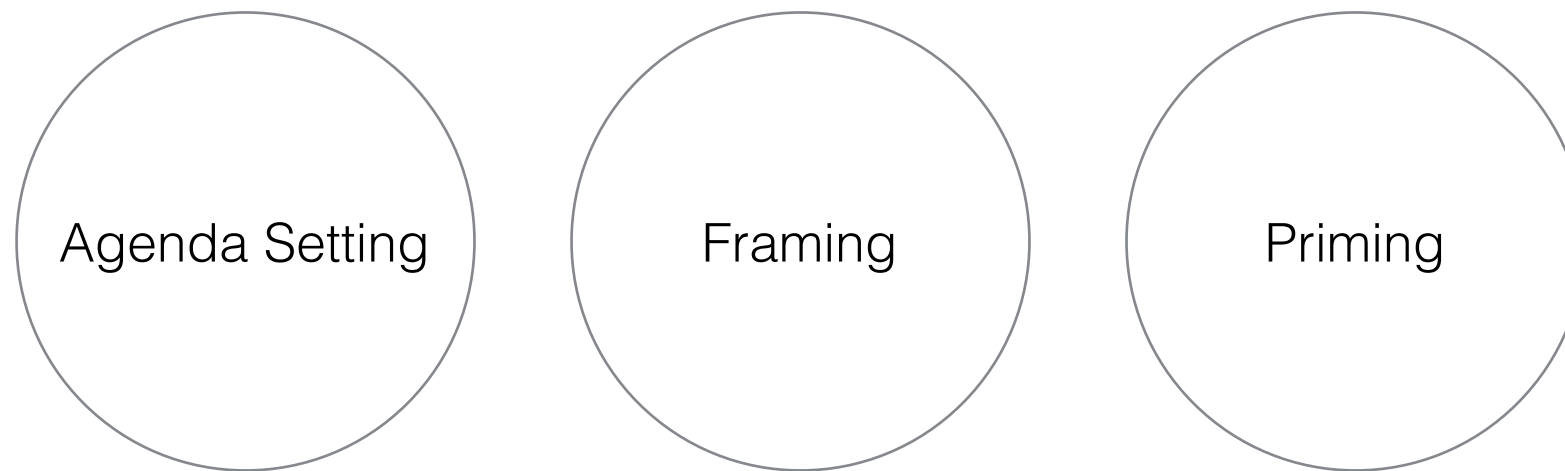
First German political party between newer
generations, thanks to the construction of a
clear and direct political message centred and
developed around the environment



So what can we learn from politics?

Mild and slow communication is not
working inside the new media logic

The new mainstream political actors are getting traction in the media through 3 main concepts



Political movements

What to do?

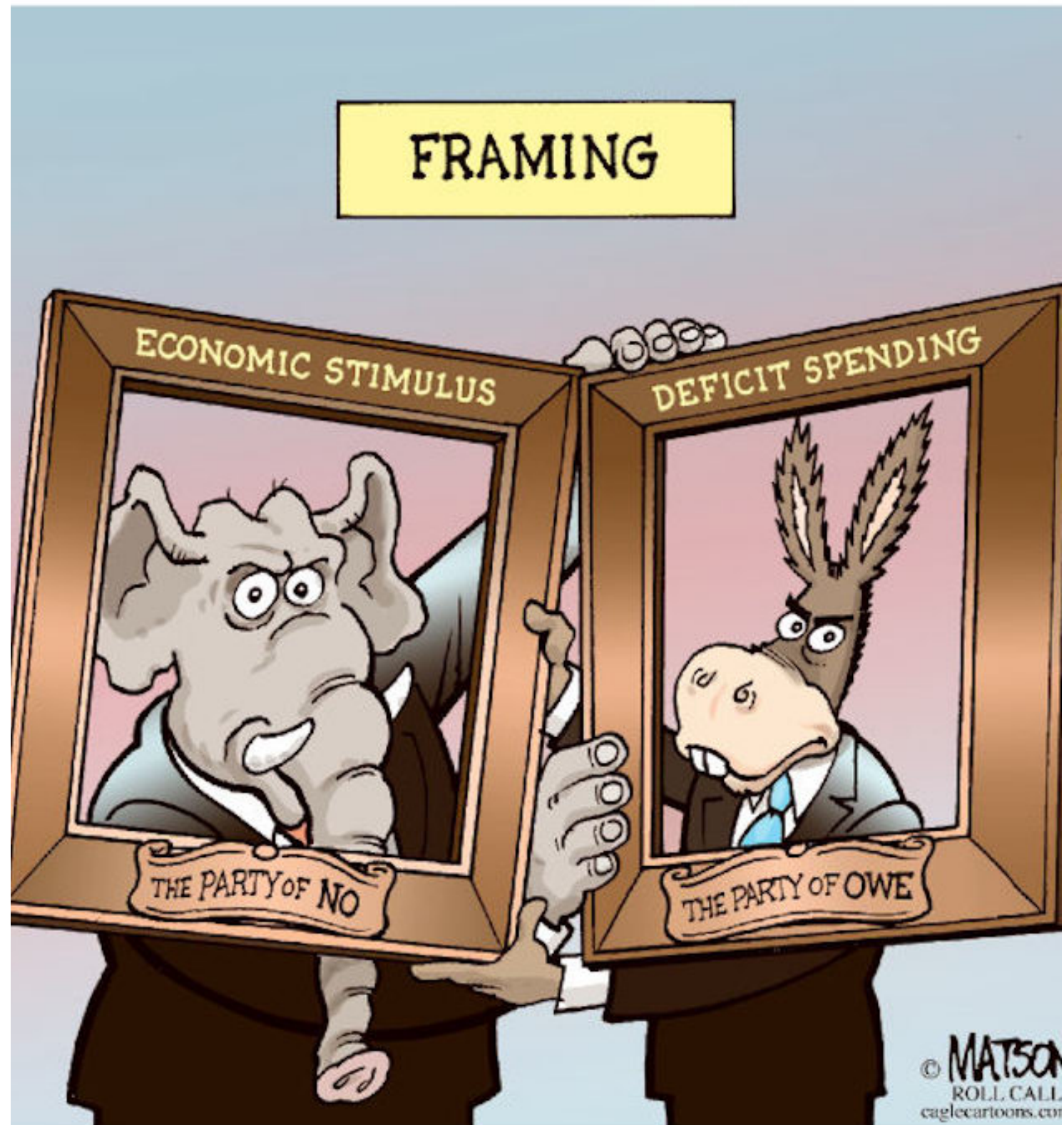
Agenda setting:
the objective is to
dominate the media
agenda, setting it
according to our pace
and to the topics
relevant to our
environmental agenda



Political movements

What to do?

Framing:
we need to control the way in which environmental issues are described, giving one single approach to the public to understand our issue



The frame is the lens through which we consider a certain topic.

There are two categories of framing:
equivalency framing and
emphasis framing

Equivalency framing:
it represents the framing through a positive or negative attitude, to citizens' issue interpretations and attitudes towards a certain topic.



Political movements

What to do?

Emphasis framing:
it focuses on one aspect
of the topic to highlight
it and to narrate a story
through that perspective.

The importance (and power) of using specific terms

death tax **vs.** estate tax

undocumented worker **vs.** illegal alien

pro-choice **vs.** pro-abortion

accuser **vs.** victim

homosexual marriage **vs.** gay marriage

irate **vs.** concerned

special rights **vs.** equal rights

We can also identify 2 other categories of frames: **issue specific** and **generic frames**

Political movements

What to do?

Priming:

it is important to shape public opinion towards environmental issues to consider them as essential in every political party programme

A successful example of priming can be seen when the Italian ex deputy-prime minister Matteo Salvini focused the attention on the migrant crisis of the “Diciotti” ship, shifting public opinion to polarise on the openness/closeness of docks for many days.



We can describe Priming as how the exposure to certain content in the media will influence people's subsequent thoughts, opinions, and behaviour.

Considering this, key is not to become populists but, rather, to become popular

To sum up, a successful political message has to be:

- Entertaining
- Repetitive
- Captivating

It also has to be:

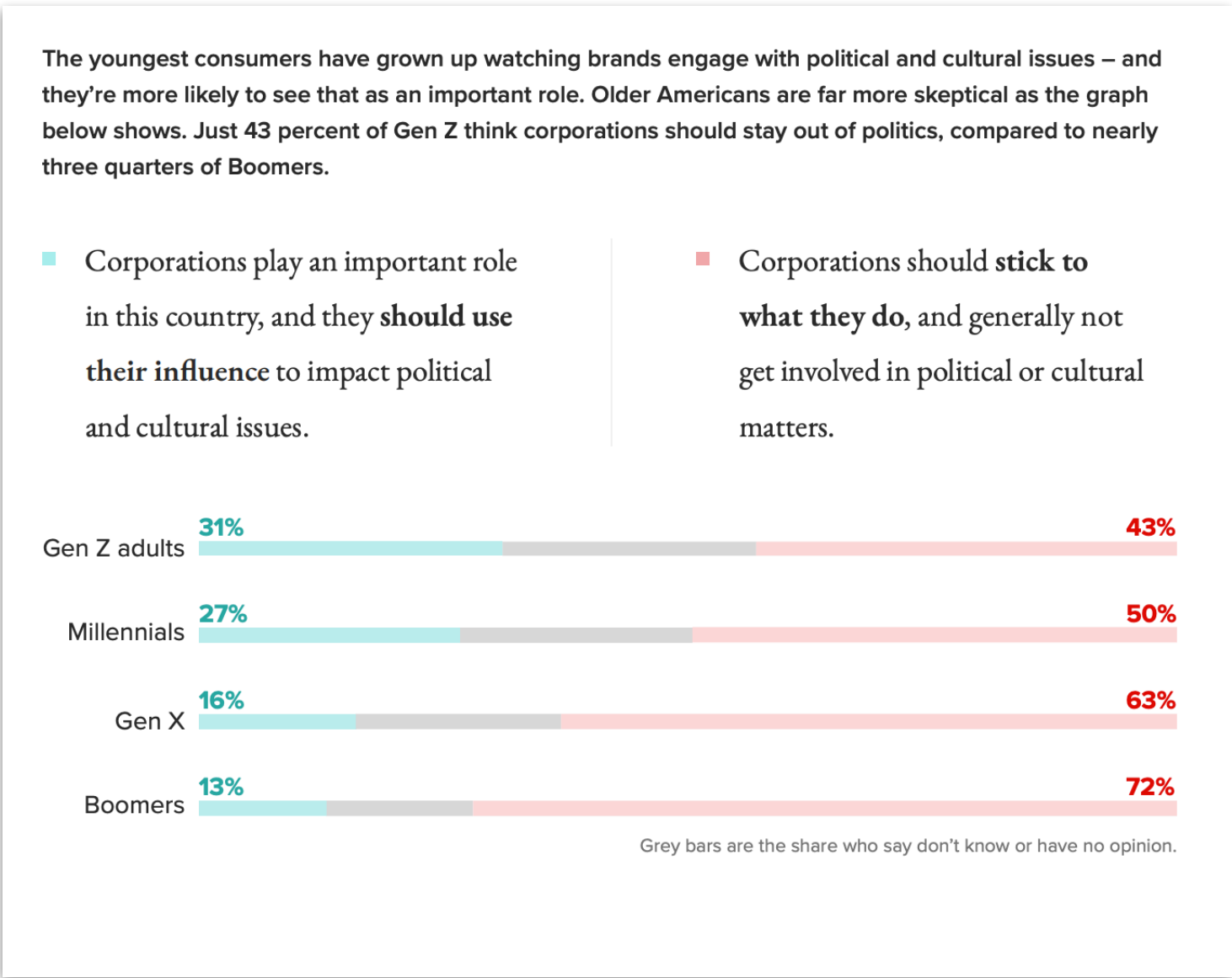
- at the center of the media agenda
- framed through our own perspective
- a key political evaluation element

What can politics learn from commercial communication?

Are there any non-political institutions that are very good in communicating political and social themes?

Millennials and Gen Z adults expect brands to take position on social - political themes in 2019

Source: [Morning Consult](#)



Therefore brands act accordingly,
considering social matters keys for
competitive advantage

Commercial communication

Examples

Nike fights racial discrimination (and Donald Trump)

Nike picks Colin Kaepernick, an outcast American football player and civil rights activist, as the face of its new global advertising campaign, aimed at standing out against racial discrimination.

President Donald Trump publicly disapproves the campaign.



Commercial communication

Examples

Patagonia is in business
to save our home
planet, by selling
clothes

Each year, Patagonia contribute 1% of its
annual net revenues to nonprofit charitable
organizations that promote environmental
conservation and sustainability



Netflix paints an entire neighbourhood of Milano with the colors of the rainbow, to celebrate the pride month

During the pride month, Netflix launches a campaign in Italy, standing for gay rights

**Rainbow
is the new black.**



HAPPY PRIDE

NETFLIX

Airbnb exists to
create connections
between people,
regardless gender,
religion or ethnicity

Airbnb launches a bold, emotional campaign by
standing on inclusion, fighting any kind of
discriminations



Commercial communication

Examples

Jigsaw stands for immigration

British fashion brand Jigsaw celebrates immigration with its “love immigration” campaign. In answer to the idea that immigration threatens “British values”, they spread a manifesto, which begins “British Style is not 100 per cent British. In fact, there’s no such thing as 100 per cent British.”



♥immigration

British Style is not 100% British.

In fact, there's no such thing as '100% British'.

Or 100% Dutch, French, American, Asian or European.

Whatever your opinion, at some point in your ancestry someone moved in and unsettled the neighbours.

Because none of us are the product of staying put.

And we're no different.

As a clothing brand we couldn't do what we do if people weren't free to move around.

Without immigration, we'd be selling potato sacks.

We need beautiful minds from around the world.

Working with beautiful materials from around the world.

To make beautiful things for people around the world.

Fear, isolation, and intolerance will hold us back.

Love, openness, and collaboration will take us forward.

JIGSAW

Beautifully British since 1970

Are there any recurring patterns we notice in brands facing social and political themes?

Engagement with influencers is key to boost the campaign and to build trust with the target audience



Brands try to build and nurture **communities**, with the **appropriation** of social issues



Commercial communication

Recurring patterns

Each person feels
that belonging to a
community is a great
way to get
empowerment,
finding a reason to be
alive



Successful
campaigns count on
**incisive, short
statements**, that
clearly express
reason why and
fundamentals of the
campaign



Commercial communication

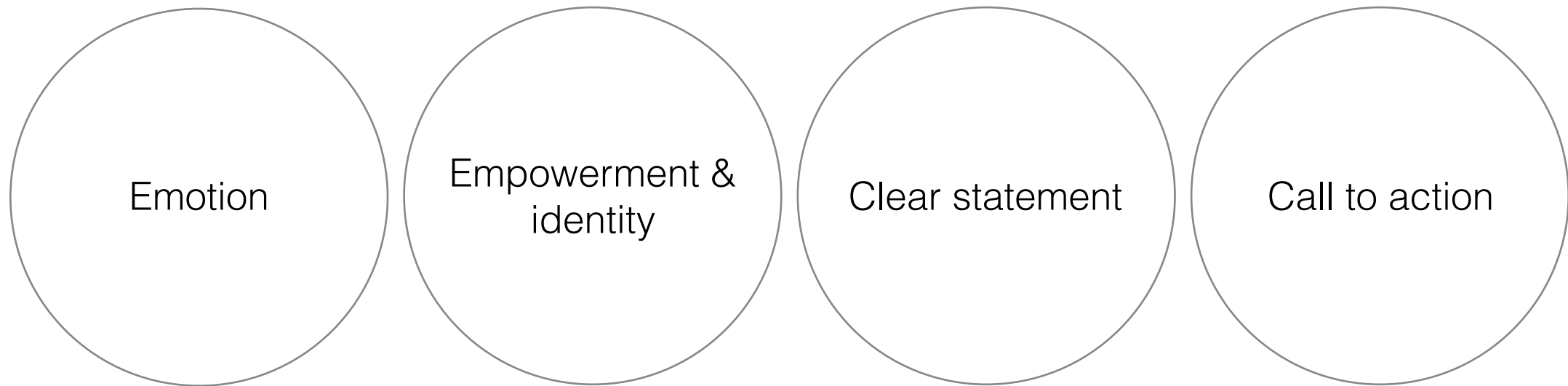
Recurring patterns

A clear **call to action** increases the chance of the campaign to go viral, by fostering the target audience to take over the message, create and spread the content



So what can we learn from brands?

To sum up, in order to build a strong brand by leveraging social and political matters, you need



What's the proposed solution?

So, how to leverage what we learned from online communities, successful political trends and advertising?

How to increase awareness and knowledge about sustainability within Swiss and European population?

How to drive a real change?

1. Identify proper communities to engage with

By mapping online communities that deal with environment and sustainability, we can track languages, cultural codes, recurring behaviors and users hierarchies.

2. Analyze languages and cultural codes, common values and unwritten rules

Taking possession of cultural and linguistic references is key to successfully engage with a community

3. People love group identity: being part of a community is a way for them to feel empowered by contributing to something important

People trust their peers: that's why a bottom-up approach is way better than the traditional top-down one

4. By engaging with community leaders and influencers, the messages we want to promote spread more easily and efficiently

5. Emotion is key: all the messages have to activate strong, instinctive emotions, in order to catch people's attention and push them to spread the message

People lack of attention: we need strong, emotional baits to attract and activate them. Most powerful emotions are surprise, excitement, anxiety, anger and humor

6. People need incentives to take action. However, they don't have to be tangible: they can even be an intangible prize that give them status within the community

7. The message has to be as simple as possible

Every time we draft a statement, we need to keep in mind that it has to arise within thousands of messages. And it has to be understood in an instant

8. Plus, it has to be potentially shareable

People love sharing content that show their bonding to a cause, their values and their belonging to a community.

Moreover, they want to provide practical to their peers.

And then, accordingly, we can define
a proper action plan

Our solution
Action plan

Mapping

Map local communities / cultural pioneers (local groups that act within society and influence public opinion)

Map language, cultural codes and leaders

Engagement

Engage with community leaders and influencers

Draft of an incisive message

Release tools that help the message to be spread more efficiently (landing pages, merchandising, social media...)

Provide incentives (even financial) to engage and take action.
The message spread beyond community borders

Disclosure

Make institutions to engage with community leaders, giving them an official role in policy making: an yearly assembly of local communities, representative of the population, makes the involvement of communities institutionally recognised

Institutional testimonials

Positive behaviors become routine

Media coverage

Our solution

Action plan

Map local communities / cultural pioneers (local groups that act within society and influence public opinion)

We analyze facebook groups, hashtags, twitter conversations, google places comments and other platforms, to map communities and to identify leaders to interact with.



Our solution

Action plan

Engage with community leaders and influencers, providing them incentives to act and helping them to boost their popularity and reliability

After a first informal contact, we engage with community leaders, starting a dialogue, asking for suggestions and involving them in deep conversations. We can do it by direct messages, sharing our action plan, or publicly.



Our solution

Action plan

Draft an incisive message

We need a clear, catchy, bold statement, to catch the attention and push users to spread it.

And then, we have to monitor engagement and sentiment.

The message can be drafted by analysing the communities' vocabularies and by asking the communities directly to help us defining it.



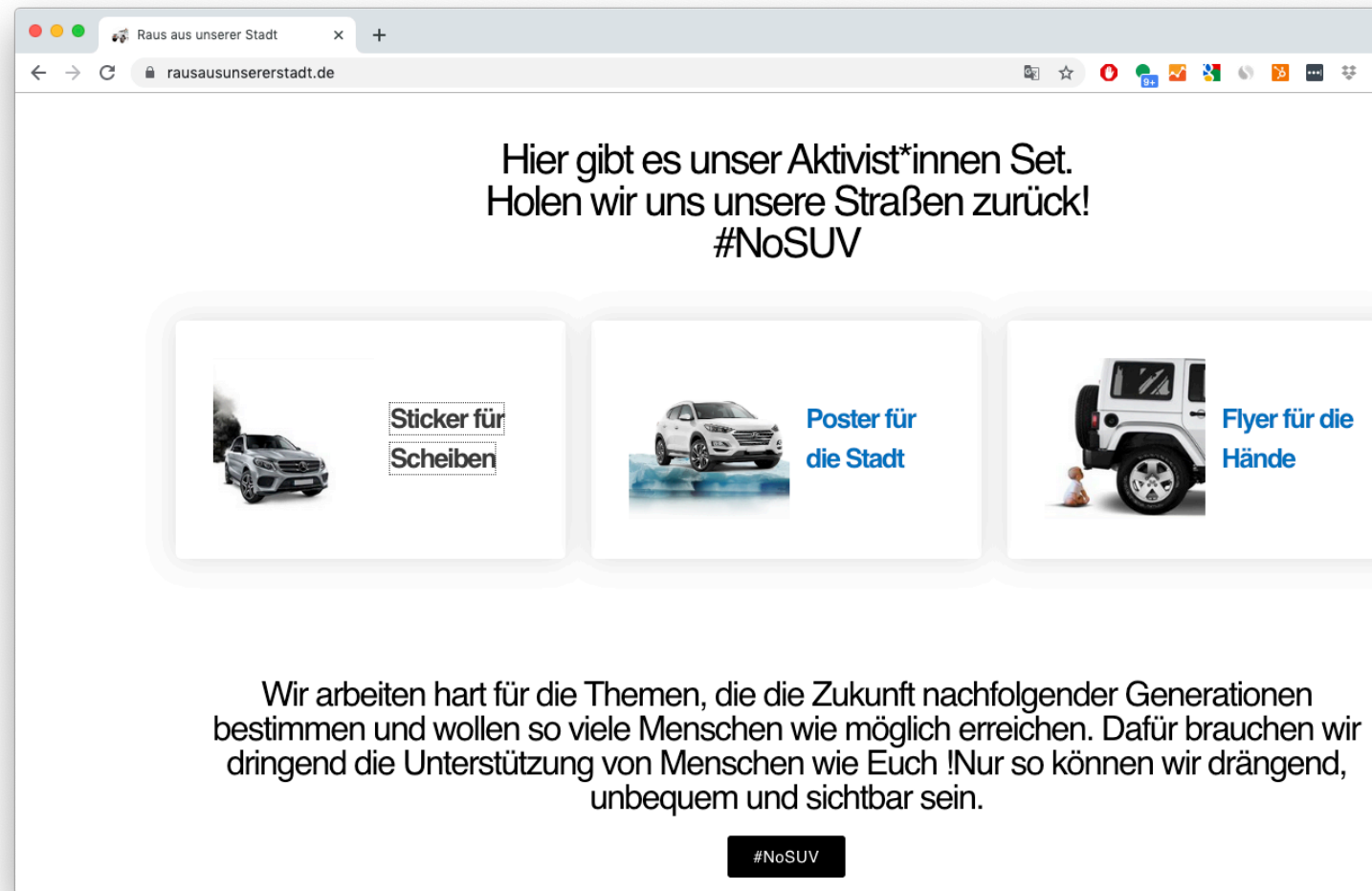
Our solution

Action plan

Release tools that help the message to spread more efficiently (landing pages, merchandising, social media...), making people feel they can have a leading role in a wide project.

UX has to be cool and smooth.

By releasing a specific, interactive website, creating hashtags, and engaging in FB groups, we simplify the interaction and boost the spread of the message.



Our solution

Action plan

Provide incentives (even financial) to engage and take action.

This way, the message spread beyond community borders

We engage with community leaders and influencers providing them an incentive (financial, or a sense of empowerment) to take action. Then, we make this incentives accessible to a broad audience.



Our solution

Action plan

Make institutions engage with community leaders, giving them an official role in policy making: an yearly assembly of local communities, representative of the population, makes the involvement of communities institutionally recognised, and so official

We define a roadmap with several formal moments in which community leaders are recognised to be officially authoritative. We draft an action plan with them.



Our solution

Action plan

Make the project spread and become official with a proper media coverage

With press conferences and advertorials, we exploit traditional media to boost the power of our actions, reaching the eldest population.



We can foster positive behaviors by
inverting the process of policy
making.

Internet gave voice to masses.
Being able to track the most
meaningful messages, mapping
where and how they spread, is key to
understand society.

By giving an official voice to the most relevant communities, we can reach a mainstream audience in a more convincing way.
Driving a real change.

Community is the message.
Let's spread it.

Resources

Bundesamt für Umwelt

Resources

Consumerism and sustainability, Gwendolyn Hustvedt

[The Guardian](#)

Consumerism and sustainability: a point of view beyond social marketing - Afonso Carlos Braga, Arnolfo Jose de Hoyos Guevara

[Ecos Magazine](#)

[The Guardian](#)

Motivating sustainable consumption: a review of evidence on consumer behavior and behavioral change. A report to the Sustainable Development Research Network - Tim Jackson

[Medium](#)

[Congress.gov](#)

This changes everything - Naomi Klein

[Forbes](#)

[Wu Ming Foundation](#)

[Bloomberg](#)

[The Daily Beast](#)

[The Guardian](#)

[Morning Consult](#)

[Cultural Branding](#)

