Emotion strategies of EU-based human rights and humanitarian Civil society Organizations (CSOs) in times of populism

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses how the strategies of European Union (EU) based Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have evolved in the context of the rise of populism with a specific focus on the role of emotions. I propose an in-depth qualitative analysis of human rights and humanitarian EU level CSOs involved in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Emotions inspiring CSOs values, such as compassion have been seriously challenged after the populist turn. This article also shows how CSOs' emotion-based strategies (including blaming and shaming, vilification, boosting and compassion selection) have evolved in the context of the rise of populism. Data is retrieved from semi-structured interviews, position papers, press releases and speeches from key well-established EU-level CSOs including Amnesty International (AI), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières-MSF).

1. Introduction

European Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are under mounting pressure since the last few years, including regulatory burdens, financial stress, lack of access and even direct attacks, threats and intimidation (EUFRA, 2017a). The silencing and shrinking of CSOs has sometimes been related to the rise of populism, especially when it comes to negative public discourse and smearing campaigns. With this in mind, this article aims at analysing how human rights and humanitarian CSOs' emotion-based strategies have evolved in the wake of the populist challenge.

To answer this question I combine a policy-process approach with the study of emotions in social movements research. The focus on the rise of populism is an original contribution to the policy process approach that, up until now, has mostly focused on the governmental decisions and public policies (see also Ruzza and Sanchez Salgado, in this issue). From my perspective, the study of political opportunities in times of populism

requires the broadening of the policy process perspective to include the role of emotions in policy-making. Populism is indeed considered to break established rules of politics and campaigning, among other things, by appealing to emotions (Mudde, 2004). It is often considered that one of the main characteristics of populism is demagogy, or in other words, the use of highly simplistic, passionate and emotional discourse directed to the 'gut feelings' of the people.

Since the rise of populism has significantly changed the political landscape in which CSOs operate, I expect that CSOs have adapted their goals and strategies to this new context. In the first section of this article, inspired by social constructivism and the emotions turn in social movements research, I propose an analytical framework to investigate the evolution of interactions between CSOs and key actors (including public authorities, populist groups and CSOs' members and supporters) in the wake of the rise of populism. The rise of populism has been a great challenge not only to the values and goals of CSOs but also to the emotional foundations of their discourses and strategies. I also show how traditional emotion-based strategies employed by CSOs, such as blaming and shaming and compassion selection, have evolved in the context of the populist challenge and how new emotion-based strategies, such as vilification and boosting have emerged and seem to be gaining increasing relevance.

2. The rise of populism, emotions & the study of CSOs

This section introduces first the main concepts that will be used in the subsequent analysis (CSOs, populism and emotions) as well as the analytical framework. It concludes with a brief presentation of the methodology and data employed.

2.1. Understanding CSOs, populism and emotions

In line with this special issue, CSOs are defined as non-profit and non-political groups acting for a public purpose. CSOs stand out for their normative dimension supporting values such as equality, justice and solidarity (Sanchez Salgado, 2014). Populism remains a slippery concept, especially if we consider that there are very distinct types: left-wing and radical right populism (Golder, 2016). In this article, the attention is placed exclusively in right-wing populism, and more specifically in the type of right-wing populism that emphasizes ethnic nationalism and that tends to be exclusive. Populism is understood in broad terms including several dimensions such as an ideology, a political strategy and a political communication style (Hanspeter & Pappas, 2015). As an ideology, populism has a thin conceptual core including an antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite and the idea of popular sovereignty. As a political strategy, populism is perceived as a specific way of competing for and exercising political power.[1] As a political communication style, populists tend to communicate with the people in a direct manner bypassing mainstream media (portrayed as corrupt elite institutions) and focusing in social media (De Vreese et al., 2018).

While there is not a generally accepted definition of emotions, the following elements are often highlighted: activation of key body systems, appraisal of situational stimuli, overt or inhibited expression, and socially constructed labels and rules (Demertzis, 2013). Studying emotion-based strategies employed by groups assumes that groups can actually have

and display emotions. Group emotions presuppose identification of the individuals with the group (Schmid, 2014) or join commitment to the group as a body (Gilbert, 2014).

While in political psychology the study of emotions has usually meant the study of individuals (how individuals react emotionally to different stimuli), the political sociology of emotions has adopted a macro-level perspective, directing the attention to how social rules shape the emotional life of members of a given society (Demertzis, 2013). Most of the existing research presupposes a very specific relationship between emotion and cognition: emotions are seen as relational or *thought-dependent*. This means that emotions are triggered by cognitive states. However, emotions can also be programmatic or *thought-directing*: they can give direction to life, motivate cognition and give rise to values, identities, interests and norms (Barbalet, 2006; Minner, 2015).

Emotions are also relevant in politics because they can be considered as states of readiness that can potentially lead to action tendencies (understood as impulses to accomplish a specific action) (Frijda, 2007). To illustrate with a few examples, an emotion such as indignation would lead to punishment, contempt to the exclusion of the unworthy person and fear to the neutralization of danger (Minner, 2015). More importantly, current research concludes that emotions tend to assume precedence in the control of action and attention. What individuals feel is thus relevant not only because it frames their values and vision, but also because feelings motivate political behaviour and lead to support some policy solutions to the detriment of other options.

Emotions have been increasingly integrated into the study of collective action and CSOs activities (Jasper, 2011; Sanchez Salgado, 2018). For example, emotions help explaining participation in collective action. They can also redirect or revify social movements and can help understanding group dynamics and rituals (Jasper, 2011). Given the focus on the present analysis on interaction, literature on social movements and competitive framing process is particularly relevant (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2017). Both in their though-directing and thought-dependent role, emotions can be related to literature on social movements' instrumental framing. Frames can be considered as cognitive stimuli evoking specific emotions (thought-dependent role). In their thought-directing function, emotions would contribute to the emergence and legitimation of frames.

While emotion-based strategies can led to a variety of effects-both desirable and undesirable- within the study of populism emotions tend to be seen in a negative light. Emotions are central in the rhetoric of right-wing political parties that frame issues like immigration in terms of emotions such as fear, anger and anxiety (Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). While the emotive underpinning of populism is more visible than the emotion-based strategies of other key-actors, most studies about populism have only studied emotions in an implicit or incomplete way (Demertzis, 2019). General calls to concepts such as the mythical heartland or the populist mood are common without really elaborating further.

2.2. CSOs affective response to the populist challenge

To better understand how the rise of populism has affected CSOs' emotion-based strategies and discourses, the present article analyses the patterns of interaction between CSOs and other relevant actors such as public authorities, populist groups and CSOs' members and supporters. This is in line with the socio-constructivist approach assuming

that CSOs' discourses and actions are to be understood within the framework of the inter-actions with other social groups. These interaction patterns can be the result of uncon-scious adaptive responses or deliberate moves to influence public policy. Emotion-based strategies can consist of cultivating certain emotions with the hope that they will lead to specific forms of behaviour. They can also consist of spreading certain beliefs or facts aiming at producing an emotional reaction.

Compassion has been considered to be an indispensable emotion for the understand-ing of human rights CSOs and humanitarian impulses (Kapyla & Kennedy, 2014). According to the standard view, compassion is understood as 'an altruistic emotion in which a person is capable of placing herself into the skin of another fellow human being, of experiencing some of the pains and sufferings of that person, and thus becoming motivated to either alleviate (immediate aid) or ameliorate (long-term social transformation) her condition (Kapyla & Kennedy, 2014, p. 263)'. Compassion is generally connected with morality. It is considered as a benevolent emotion that motivates individuals to do the right thing. While compassion can be associated with pity, these two concepts have different conno-tations (Hoggett, 2006). Pity is always felt towards an innocent and pure victim whereas compassion is unconditional.

Compassion is the most prominent emotion for human rights and humanitarian aid, but other emotions also play a relevant role when CSOs enter in dynamics of interaction with specific targets or audiences. On the basis of the empirical data collected for this research, the most prominent patterns of interaction identified included emotion-based strategies such as blaming and shaming when CSOs engaged in interaction with policy-makers, vilifi-cation when they interacted with populist groups, and boosting and compassion selection when they engaged with their members and supporters. I argue that – in the wake of the populist turn – CSOs have modified some of their typical emotion based-strategies (e.g. blaming and shaming) and that they have engaged in new strategies (eg. vilification) (see Table 1).

Compassion filtered through anger is likely to take the form of blaming and shaming (Kapyla & Kennedy, 2014). Blaming and shaming consists of appealing to guilt or shame to generate a desired action.[2] Anger or indignation implies an action tendency of moving against (Frijda, 2007). It often results in the punishment of the perpetrators, or the development of new legislation to prevent the same type of occurrences in the future (Minner, 2015). If blaming and shaming are to have effects, policy-makers must feel ashamed or at least must fear to be perceived as shameful. While blaming and shaming is often considered as a successful practice in the short term to reduce violence and human rights violations (Franklin, 2008; Krain, 2012), a few studies claim that the

Table 1. Emotion-based strategies developed by EU based CSOs.

Emotion-based strategies	Name	Emotions	Interaction with	Possible effects
	Blaming & Shaming	Shame Indignation	Public authorities	Regulation Punishment Compassion fatigue
	Boosting	Pride	members and supporters	Enthusiasm Arrogance
	Vilification	Contempt	Populist groups	Exclusion Affective polarization

evidence provided so far to reach this conclusion is anecdotic or that data should be dis-aggregated to obtain robust results (Hafner-Burton, 2008; Ruggeri & Burgoon, 2012). In some areas such as finance naming and shaming has been considered as a messy and unpredictable policy tool (Van, 2011). While callouts are considered necessary in many cir-cumstances to make leaders accountable, the indiscriminate use of this tactic can hold back CSOs alienating them from potential allies.

A second strategy, that appeared to be relevant when CSOs interacted with populist groups, was polarization-vilification (McCaffrey & Keys, 2000). Polarization-vilification has been studied within social movements literature as a strategic framing strategy and has some overlapping with other framing strategies such as ignoring and countermaligning (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2017). Polarization-vilification appears as a relevant counter-framing strategy in the wake of the populist turn (see Cullen in this special issue). Since vilification implies the action of making something or a group look as evil, vilification tends to culti-vate emotions such as hate or contempt. Feelings of contempt potentially led to dynamics of exclusion or shutting off (Frijda, 2007). To better understand this strategy it is important to keep in mind that focus upon opponents is a key to emotional dynamics (Collins, 2001). Rivals would take focus and energy from picking lines of disagreement from their enemies. When this happens, the vilification strategy is paired with increasing levels of polarization. An alternative to vilification (preventing exclusion and polarization dynamics) would be understanding and forgiveness. Understanding could lead to more effective communi-cation and even would transform enemies into friends, or 'liberated oppressors'. Forgive-ness can led to the reintegration of members in society whenever they repent from their misbehaviour (Minner, 2015).

As a reaction to the rise of counter-narratives against human rights, CSOs may tranform boosting strategies addressed to their members and supporters. Mobilizing emotions such as compassion and pride tends to make people move towards the other, including willing-ness to help and care for (Frijda, 2007). While compassion is usually considered as a nor-mative emotion with a benevolent character, it can also be perceived as a social construct with ambivalent effects depending on the narratives seeking to govern its performance (Kapyla & Kennedy, 2014). On the worst side of compassion's usages, CSOs and social movements would exploit poverty to increase charitable donations or to increase their visibility in the media. The diffusion of a view of poverty out of context, without sufficient consideration of the underlying structural social and economic factors has also been referred to as poverty porn (Mooney, 2011). The misrepresentation of poverty may have unintended perverse effects, such as reinforcing the distinction between a superior west and an inferior other in which the West – supposed to save the others – is empowered (Kaskure & Krivorotko, 2014). Compassion may also be exclusively con-ceived as synonymous with pity and at worst, such biases may lead to lack of moral atten-tion (Kapyla & Kennedy, 2014).

2.3. Methodology: in-depth case study and content analysis

While the study of emotions, feelings and sensations is complex, I opt here for the study of expressions of emotions consisting on observing explicit emotional expressions present in discourses (Flam, 2015). The study of argumentative and rhetorical manifestations of emotions is of major importance for explaining social life (Minner, 2019). It is often

argued that emotions affect social life through language. Since this method does not investigate to which extent emotional expressions correspond to individual 'true' feelings, any findings are open to further discussion and would be reinforced by comparison across cases and settings.

The analysis concerns some of the most popular CSOs active at the EU level: Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Doctors without borders (MSF) and International Rescue Committee (IRC). The selected CSOs are international professionalized CSOs interacting frequently with EU policy-makers. They are comparable to many other well-established CSOs based in Brussels. As non-political actors, EU based CSOs tend not to get involved in political campaigns. However, the world of civic action is very diverse and thus, a few CSOs have a more political profile than others. For example, HRW discusses in-depth the rise of populism with a clear willingness to contribute to the public debate on this topic

The present article investigates EU based CSOs discourses and strategies in one specific policy area: migration and asylum. Humanitarian and Human Rights CSOs working on this specific policy area are considered a most likely case. I expect indeed that CSOs goals and discourses are more affected by right-wing populism in this policy area than in other policy areas. In this article, I focus on right-wing populism given its emphasis on exclusionary dynamics and the frequent expressions of reject towards migrants and asylum seekers. I include both political parties (active in the EP) and populist movements. The conclusions of this article may not be directly applied to left-wing populism.

Regarding the level of analysis, it is often argued that the current EU system of interest representation encourages professionalized advocacy based on the provision of expertise (Sanchez Salgado, 2014; Cullen, 2010). Thus, EU based CSOs may be less inclined to use emotion-based appeals in their discourses addressed to EU institutions than social movements or grass-roots groups at the national level. This is an important fact to keep in mind for the interpretation of findings and their application to other levels of analysis.

The analysis includes systematic content analysis with Atlas.ti and in-depth interviews with key-players. The Atlas.ti analysis covers primarily policy papers (e.g. press releases) on the topic of migration published by the CSOs under study (Table 2). I also analysed 10 European Parliament debates on the topic of migration from 2014 until January 2017 to cover the position of actors interacting with CSOs (Sanchez Salgado, 2018). The content analysed can be considered as emotional discourse (display of emotionality) and discourse as strategic tool to evoke audience's reaction (Katriel, 2015). These documents do not include many instances of discourses on emotions where CSOs reflect on their own feelings.

For the Atlas.ti content analysis, I developed a series of word markers to refer to populism, such as populism or populist and I also looked for words usually associated with this concept, including xenophobic, and anti-refugee. To grasp emotional dynamics, the

Table 2. Number of policy documents per CSOs.[7]

	AI	HRW	IRC	MSF	Total
Amount	86	46	30	99	261
Years	2015–2016	2015–2016	2015–2017	2015–2016	2015–2017

Source: elaborated by the author.

emotion markers only included words referring *directly* to generally acknowledged emotions such as fear, compassion and shame. Since emotion and populism markers were coded using the Atlas.ti automatic coding function, there are few chances of subjective bias (thus, inter-coder reliability tests are not needed).[3] I did not use emotion markers referring to emotions implicitly or indirectly (including emotion grammar, thematic frames or expressive speech acts), and thus, emotions are probably underrepresented. The findings from the content analysis have been triangulated with semi-structured interviews with three representatives from the communication or advocacy departments from AI, HRW and MSF.

3. The rise of populism: from compassion (moving towards) to fear (neutralization of danger)

This section shows to which extent emotions are relevant for the study of CSOs strategies in interaction with other key-players in the context of the rise of populism. Table 3 – presented here for purely descriptive purposes – shows which emotion markers appeared frequently in the analysed policy documents.

Table 3 suggests that the debate and interactions among key players on the migration domain is not only about facts, values and policy solutions, it is also (if not mainly) about which emotions should be felt. While all analysed CSOs are well known by their professionalism and sound research, CSOs representatives affirmed that a strong emotional approach was also needed so policy-makers and public opinion could know that the problem was urgent (Interview 2). Appealing to emotions was considered to be of utmost importance. Because all have emotions, Human rights and humanitarian CSOs wanted to appeal to a sense of humanity and compassion (Interview 1). Placing emphasis on emotion and suffering was also considered to be a classic strategy employed by humanitarian CSOs to rise public consciousness about an issue (Interview 3).

As expected, compassion played a thought-directing role shaping CSOs' values and recommendations. According to CSOs policy documents, public authorities should feel compassion (and base their policies on compassion) instead of giving in to fear. CSOs under investigation used the word marker compassion 18 times and – except for a couple of times – they used this reference to compassion to urge public authorities to base their actions on compassion. The obligation to base public policy on

Table 3. Emotion markers used Human Rights & Humanitarian CSOs.

Markers	AI	%	HRW	%	Rescue	%	MSF	%	Total	%
Emotion markers	84 (0.96)*	100	54 (1.04)	100	34 (1.06)	100	244 (2.2)	100	416	100
Compassion	6	7.14	7	12.96	4	11.76	1	0.4	18	4.33
Fear	22	26.19	14	25.92	4	11.76	37	15.16	77	18.51
Hate	7	8.33	6	11.11	0	0	9	3.69	22	5.29
Hope	12	14.28	9	16.67	9	26.47	50	20.49	80	19.23
Shame	16	19	3	5.55	2	5.89	12	4.91	33	7.93
Suffering	15	17.86	5	9.26	2	5.89	70	28.69	92	22.11
Sad/sadness	0	0	4	7.40	2	5.89	12	4.92	18	4.33
Love	3	3.57	3	5.55	1	5.89	35	14.34	42	10.10
Others **	3	3.57	3	5.55	10	29.41	18	7.38	34	8.17

Source: elaborated by the author.[8]
*To give an idea of the relative importance of emotions I added the average number of marker per press releases.
**Emotion markers included in Others: panic, surprise, sympathy and trust.

compassion resonated with a universalistic master frame (commitment to humanity or to the international community as a body). CSOs representatives interviewed affirmed that members and staff of their organization genuinely felt compassion in an individual and collective way.

> Use of the emotion marker Compassion by CSOs:
> The world is facing a massive refugee crisis. Yet there's something missing from the international response: compassion. (HRW, 21 may, 2015)
> We are witnessing the worst refugee crisis of our era, with millions of women, men and children struggling to survive amidst brutal wars, networks of people traffickers and governments who pursue selfish political interests instead of showing basic human compassion. (AI, 15 June 2015)
> However the IRC urges all European leaders to exercise compassion for those who have taken the desperate decision to leave their homes in search of sanctuary. (IRC, 25, February 2016)
> Instead of arguing over solidarity amongst member states, it is time for the EU to take concrete action in helping the people fleeing terrible humanitarian crises and to agree on policies that are effective, humane and based on compassion for people, rather than a hostile discourse of institutional rejection. (MSF, 23 June 2015)

In the context of the rise of populism, the programmatic (thought-directing) role of compassion has been increasingly challenged. Populist groups do not only reject CSOs values and proposals, CSOs are also criticized for the feelings they display. The so-called soft-hearted approach to migration (and particularly compassion) is perceived to be a key problem. Just to illustrate with an example, populist leaders would affirm that 'we must not allow our compassion to imperil our security (Nigel Farage, intervention at the EP 20 May 2015)'.

From the perspective of strategic framing, it could be argued that compassion resonated with a universalistic master frame which is now challenged by a localist frame supported by populist groups (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2017). The rise of populism has thus led to a process of conflictualization between the universalistic frame based on compassion and the localist frame based on fear.

In the context of this new conflictual scenario, fear seems to have taken precedence over compassion in the framing and development of public policies on the topic of migration. The impression among CSOs representatives is that the debate has shifted and that many fear-based policies accepted today would have been unacceptable years ago (Interview 2). The EU is no exception to this trend. In line with the majoritarian view in the Council of Ministers, the analysis of EU policies that are being actually implemented showed that they are more based on security (fear) than in the protection of human rights (compassion). Most of the proposals from CSOs and left-wing political MEPs inspired by compassion (moving towards) such as creating legal paths to migration, increasing substantially development aid or humanitarian visas, have been blocked by the Council. The priority has been given to fear (neutralization of danger) including border controls and the repatriation of refugees to unsafe countries, while the EU allowed member states build walls and tear-gas people in need of international protection. EU policy-makers seem to be so far more committed to the nation-state (or the EU) than to the international community, and thus, self-preservation and self-interest are the values that have been emphasized. This preference for fear over compassion is often rationalized, as explained by a HRW deputy director for Europe division:

> Council president Donald Tusk has effectively argued that the EU needs to set aside core values to combat migration and terrorism- so as to preserve the EU and the values it embodies

in the long term. This attitude and position from mainstream political leaders represents as much of a challenge and threat to human rights values as do the populist themselves. (Ward, 2017)

4. Emotional patterns of interaction among actors in the case of migration

This section explores how the main emotion-based strategies used by CSOs to address public authorities, populist groups and their members and supporters have evolved in the context of the rise of populism. It also discusses how the actors inter- acting with CSOs have been contributing or reacting to such manipulation or adap- tive strategies.

4.1. CSOs and public authorities: the decreasing effectiveness of blaming and shaming

According to CSOs, the biggest risk for Europe is not the rise of populist parties itself, but rather their outsize influence on mainstream policy-makers. Mainstream political parties are indeed accused of neglecting humanitarian and human rights engagements to the benefit of what is perceived to be the will of the majority.

The adoption of a blaming and shaming strategy is clear in the documents analysed by the frequent use of the word shame by CSOs in their policy documents, especially in the case of Amnesty International and Doctors without Borders (see Table 3). In the discourses under analysis, the explicit emotion marker shame appeared 33 times, which is quite often compared to other emotion markers. Very often, the word shame appeared in the title or in the short description of a document to motivate to continue reading the rest of the document. Most of the time, shame was used to refer to Europe or to the EU and its member states (79 per cent, 26 times out of 33). The other occurrences referred to the international community, to governments or politicians in general. Only a populist leader, Viktor Orban, was directly mentioned in a press release specifically dedicated to his policies.

Examples of the use of emotion marker shame:
Before it was demolished at the end of October, the sprawling migrant camp in Calais had become a symbol of Europe's shame. (HRW, 22 November, 2016)
European Union (EU) governments should hang their heads in shame at the ongoing reluctance of many to ensure a collective and concerted search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean, said Amnesty International. (AI, 12 March 2015).
For months MSF has spoken out about a shameful European response focused on deterrence rather than providing people with the assistance and protection they need, said Jerome Oberreit, International Secretary General of Médecins Sans Frontières. (MSF, 17 juin 2016).
Europe's response to the refugee crisis within its borders is shamefully inadequate. (IRC, November 4, 2015).

The emotion fear was also used referring to public authorities (17 times out of 77). CSOs argued that current public policy towards migrants was based on fear and they accused politicians of fear mongering. As understood in these documents, fear monger- ing included stigmatizing refugees as a threat, a disregard for human dignity, a crisis/ invasion narrative and insinuating that migrant flows are mainly illegal and economic. While the emotion marker was fear, this word was used in these cases to bring shame on public authorities. In the majority of cases the word fear was used to point to fears

from refugees, especially by MSF. As Table 3 shows, along with fear and shame, CSOs documents also mentioned frequently emotions such as suffering and hate.

> Examples of use of emotion marker fear by CSOs
> Leaders need to be serious about identifying and removing people who pose a threat or who don't need protection, but they should not foment fears and prejudice that play into the hands of extremists and risk blinding host communities to their common humanity. (HRW, 4 March 2016)
> The EU needs to be responding not with fear and fences, but in the best tradition of the values it purports to hold dear. (AI, 17 November 2015)
> Obsessed with the fear of 'pull factors', these states are interested not in saving lives, but in keeping people out of sight. (MSF, 17 April 2015)
> This is relevant in countries like Greece, where the fear is that refugees bring economic burden, but the reality could be of benefit. (IRC 7 September 2016)

All CSOs representatives interviewed confirmed that they used strategically blaming and shaming. While it was considered that this strategy was usually successful, there was also the impression that blaming and shaming did not work so well since the populist turn. According to a CSO representative:

> Yeah I mean of course we do. And I mean that is kind of (name of the organization) bread and butter so I would say to name and shame the governments or non-state actors who commit human rights violations but I think we are finding more and more that naming and shaming just is not enough because very often the people who we are naming don't have shame. And in fact, they are proud of what they are doing. So we are having to diversify. I say from the tactic you know if you look at the Trumps, the Orbans, the violations that they are committing are state policy and, I mean, that has always obviously been the case but I think there is an element, at some point we might think if we just exposed those that would be enough but actually no. (Interview 1)

Why would blaming and shaming fail? First, policy-makers did not always take responsibility for the policies they were actually implementing. An illustrative example is the so-called EU-turkey refugee deal, presented as the main EU response to the refugee crisis. When the legality of this agreement was challenged before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the European Council, the Council, and the Commission refused to acknowledge the authorship and legal responsibility for this deal (Carrera et al., 2017). Second, CSOs thought that policy-makers only took into account CSOs blaming and shaming strategies when the general public opinion shared CSOs views (Interview 3). According to CSOs representatives, policy-makers are very conscious of their image, and thus, when they feel their image can be damaged, blaming and shaming can work. That's the case, for example, of Lybian detention Centres. In the words of a CSO representative:

> … towards the end of last year, there were 20.000 people in detention centres in Libya where they were at risk of torture, and other human rights abuses. Now we know for sure that there are less than 5000 people in those. And so in many ways the shame that we were part of highlighting both at the end of last year exposing what is happening in Libya in many ways that has worked in that context. And I think that we can say you know because of meetings that we had with public authorities and with others that they were conscious of their image in that work around the complicity of keeping people in Libya, or returning people to Libya, we are trying to, you know. (Interview 1)

However, since the rise of populism (and the increasing challenge to compassion in favour of fear) a compassionate approach seems to contribute less to the improvement of politicians' image. For this reason, it is considered that blaming and shaming did not work

in advocacy campaigns such as the one about the EU relocation system. In any case, there is no reason why policy-makers should be particularly inclined to feel compassion *per se*. Rather the contrary, high power individuals tend to experience less compassion than low power individuals and tend to engage more frequently in emotion-regulation (Van Kleef et al., 2008). People skilled at down-regulate emotions such as shame through emotion-regulation (such as high power individuals) are also more likely to experience a collapse of compassion. Collapse of compassion means that, as the number of people in need increases, the degree of compassion tends to decrease (Cameron & Payne, 2011).

4.2. CSOs and populist discourses: from exclusion to affective polarization

In the analysis of policy documents about immigration and asylum seekers, the word populism or populist only appeared four times, and it was often accompanied by words such as xenophobic, hate and anti-refugee. These results could be interpreted as a framing strategy based on ignoring, which is generally used to avoid the legitimation of counter-frames (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2017). If they are considered unworthy of being addressed publicly, the corresponding emotion that may be felt (or at least displayed) towards populists is contempt. As previously explained contempt leads potentially to exclusion or polarization (Minner, 2015). While populists have been excluded for many years from political discussions and public policy, after the rise of populism in the last years, the main effect seems to be increasing polarization.

Whenever mentioned by CSOs, populist groups were considered as the enemy in the sense that they clearly opposed human rights and humanitarian CSOs' values and views. According to HRW's views (and most generally Human Rights groups), the will of the majority needs to be limited by human rights safeguards and the rule of law (Roth, 2016). In this sense, the rise of populist nationalism is *directly* opposed to universal rights and liberal democracy. Indeed, populist groups sustain that human rights can be an obstacle for the majority will. Claiming to speak for the people, populists argue that 'the majority should make do with weaker human rights protection in return for secure jobs and prosperity, defence of traditional values, resistance to cultural changes, and prevention of terrorism (Molander, 2017)'.

The increasing polarization becomes also evident when the attention is turned to the discourses of populist groups. Populist groups have in the last years increasingly disparaged CSOs. CSOs are considered by populist groups to be part of the class of the progressives and politically correct (Mudde, 2004). First, CSOs are accused of belonging to the treacherous political, journalistic and academic elites responsible for the derailing of western society (Willinger, 2013). Human Rights gurus or victimologists are accused of spreading anger and outrage and of encouraging a victim mentality. The human rights industry is also considered to be unrealistic, self-righteous and invested in financial and ego-rewarding jobs.[4] In his declaration of war against the 68ers, Willinger expresses his vision of a multicultural society in the following way:

> You've promised yourselves a utopia, a peaceful, multicultural society of prosperity and tolerance. We are the heirs of this utopia and the reality looks very different (…) For us, your multicultural society means nothing but hatred and violence. In the name of your 'tolerance' you hunt down all who criticize you, and call those you hunt intolerant. We have had enough! (Willinger, 2013, p. 17)

Examples of criticism of the so-called soft-hearted approach to migration:
Middle-class and wealthy MEPs, who have enough cash to avoid the economic and social problems of mass migration, come up with schemes such as this to salve their consciences, but they ignore the poor, the voiceless, the immobile, who live throughout Europe and who will have to live on the edge and suffer the consequences of these schemes. (Steven Woolfe, EFDD, EP Debate 9-9-2015)
The EU, and many people in this chamber, need to realize that their naïve, soft-hearted approach to migration has not only failed, but has actually cost lives and funded terrorism and crime. (Jane Collins, EFDD group, EP Debate 9-9-2015)
So you talk about human rights, but do you not agree with me that the human rights industry actively works against us? On a radio programme recently on the BBC, I actually challenged the Red Cross and said you turn economic migrants into refugees, and he openly admitted that. It is there to hear on tape. I was in the Greek migrant camps three weeks ago and the same thing is going on. Do you actually believe that taxpayers' money should be wasted on such initiatives?. (Janice Atkinson, ENF, EP Debate 26-10-2016)

As may be expected, there are some differences in the way populist groups and parties approach human rights. At the EU level, Farage's Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) has occasionally accepted the legitimacy of some International Human Rights instruments.[5] On the other side of the populist spectrum, anti-Islam identitarians activists have occupied mosques, blockaded roads, clashed with left-wing activists and launched a vessel, the C-Star, to chase CSO's boats down.[6]

In the past, mainstream policy-makers tended to exclude populist solutions regarding migration and refugees – just as CSOs. More recently, while many policy-makers continue to support CSOs, many other policy-makers have not only criticized CSOs, they have also implemented measures that are clearly against them, as for example the criminalization of assistance to people in danger. CSOs rescue missions in the Mediterranean have been criticized not only by Italian prosecutors and politicians comparing them to a taxi service to Europe (BBC, 2017), but also by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) (Frontex, 2017, p. 32). Greek and French authorities have imposed restrictions to humanitarian assistance, as for example, during the forced eviction from Idomeni or by forbidding the provision of food and sanitation to migrants in Calais (Ton, 2017). When faced with criminalization and restrictive laws, CSOs engage often in dynamics of increased political opposition and polarization (interview 3).

4.3. CSOs and the general public: towards sophisticated communication

In the context of the rise of populism, there is a widespread impression that human rights CSOs could be doing a far much better job in terms of communication with the public opinion (EUFRA, 2017b). There is a specific concern about how to deal with counter-narratives and how to provide messages in an environment of hostility towards facts. There is the impression that narratives against human rights have now a firm grip on the public consciousness. To address this new trend, many CSOs are developing new communication strategies including elements of boosting and compassion selection. While the rise of populism is certainly not the only reason shaping the development of CSOs' new communication strategies, my interviews tended to confirm that is one of the most prominent reasons. One of the key points of the newest strategy of human rights CSOs analysed is to broaden the public support for human rights (including addressing a wider audience). A CSO

representative expressed this idea in the following terms: 'we want to make Human Rights popular (Interview 1)'.

In the past, human rights CSOs would publish fact-based reports in traditional media but in the new context, they are developing a varied set of communication tools, such as the use of videos, graphics, drawings and social media such as twitter and Facebook. The communication strategies developed are increasingly sophisticated, including adapting communication channels to national specificities and tailoring messages to specific audiences, with a focus on young people. While social media offer new opportunities for communication, it is also more difficult to control the content (specially in the case of twitter). A good example is the MSF-sea twitter that has triggered many negative messages from opponents to rescue missions.

CSOs are also taking advise from experts including cognitive scientists and epistemologist to learn how to communicate better. This is, for example, reflected in a seminar organized by the EU Agency of Fundamental Rights (EUFRA) about effective human rights communication, including topics such as the brain perspective to effective communication, how to create viral campaigns, and connecting human rights to men and women in the street (EUFRA, 2017b, 2018).

While CSOs are using communication strategies to persuade the public, they have seldom changed or reframed their main message. CSOs' analysed have accepted to take the risk to follow their own principles (focus on compassion towards refugees) even if this means to enter into tension with predominant public opinion or with their supporters (focus on fear of refugees). By defending their positions, CSOs are aware that they are losing donors and supporters and thus, economic resources and capacity (Interview 3).

Emotional work is also present in CSOs' new communication strategies. The most evident emotion strategy mainly addressed to the large public is boosting. According to a document on communication published by AI UK:

> Most of us respond better to positive affirmation than to criticism. If we are rewarded for doing good, we are likely to do good again. So we'll remind our audiences that they are good people. This will make them feel better, and be more likely to engage with us. (Amnesty International UK, n.d., p. 18)

In contrast with the fearmongering discourse used by populist groups (and some public authorities) CSOs wanted to put forward an optimistic discourse based on hope. The prominent use of emotion hope is visible in Table 3. Also, according to a CSO representative interviewed:

> I think one way in which we attend to do that is telling the stories of people who are fighting back. So not only people who are survivors or victims of human rights abuses but people who are actively holding their governments to account, or who are defending human rights themselves. So using positive stories. (…) Yeah. Using positive stories. Also emboldening people to feel like they can make a difference, they can change things. So using success stories. And those success stories might not be: We changed this! It might be: We gathered 1000 people. That's a success story. Or we did a successful I don't know, successful march you know. That's in itself is a success story. (Interview 1)

CSOs have also traditionally used techniques to encourage or amplify feelings of empathy or compassion; including compassion selection. For example, since people tend to care

Table 4. Use of word makers referring to individuals in CSOs documents.

	AI	HRW	Rescue	MSF	Total
Baby	4	4	1	19	28
Boy	10	30	2	21	63
Children	91	441	34	243	809
Girls	0	5	3	7	15
Men	34	24	3	70	131
Women	30	35	13	143	221
Family	45	68	13	111	237

Source: elaborated by the author.

about their family, CSOs may tend to show pictures or talk about the situation of families, so their public can feel more inclined to feel compassion (Interview 1). Amnesty Interanational UK communication strategy also highlights that a focus on the family helps to build on existing commitments thanks to messages such as 'Because you care about your family, you care about human rights (Amnesty International UK, p.18)'. As shown in Table 4, the documents analysed used much more often the word marker children than word markers referring to women and men. In addition to this, the word markers women and children are always used in press releases and policy documents with a positive connotation while men is used in both a positive and negative context.

CSOs representatives interviewed did not necessarily have the impression that they were using compassion in a selective way. The focus on women and children could also be related to the media logic that includes bias such as personalization and dramatization (Bennett, 2016). A CSO representative also affirmed that they tried to talk about families (rather than men) because they wanted to counter the general discourse that most refugees were young men (Interview 2).

While it is always difficult to know what is going to have an impact on the target audiences, some CSOs representatives affirmed that the usual emotions (namely the focus on compassion towards other's suffering) played today a lesser role on the topic of migration and that it would be important to focus on something else (Interview 3). The public increasingly distrusts CSOs and tends to challenge – even to ridiculize – messages directed to cultivate compassion.

5. Conclusion

This article has shown how a few of the most popular and professionalized EU based CSOs have responded to the populist challenge, with a specific focus on interaction and emotional dynamics. While remaining professional (emphasis in writing reports documenting facts) CSOs have also engaged in emotional work. Compassion was and continues to be the emotion that plays the most prominent thought-directing role in the shaping of CSOs values and goals. This focus on compassion has been increasingly challenged by populist groups whose ideas have a firm grip among policy makers and the public opinion. It is uncertain to which extent CSOs can directly address this challenge: how do you make public authorities and public opinion start feeling what they actually do not feel?

The second part of the paper has shown the evolution of CSOs strategies in the context of the rise of populism. All in all, the response to the rise of the populist challenge seems to

be partly ineffective, as is the case of blaming and shaming; partly unconscious, as in the case of vilification or excessively focused on communication techniques and marketing as is the case of boosting and compassion selection. The blaming and shaming strategy traditionally used by CSOs has become less successful in the context of the rise of populism and the prominence of fear-based policy-making. Public authorities are committed to the nation-state and prioritize self-interest and fear over compassion. While in the past, CSOs vilification strategy contributed to the exclusion of populists of the policy process, after the populist turn we assist rather to a dynamics of polarization. Regarding their members and supporters, CSOs have engaged in sophisticated communication strategies appealing to emotions to make human rights more popular, including boosting and compassion selection.

Notes

1. In Western Europe, this specific way of exercising power is mainly characterized by a personalistic leader that claims to have direct and unmediated access to people's grievances, acting as *vox populi* and articulating people's deepest feelings.
2. An alternative way to hold public authorities accountable would be to focus on clear expectations, and ensure that there is enough capacity, clear measurements and clear feedback (Bregman, 2016). For this to be effective, non-accountable policy makers should also face clear consequences, such as being removed from office.
3. This type of automatic coding does not require any subjective action by coders and thus, can be replicated by anyone. Determining in which occassions specific emotions were addressed to the EU or public authorities (see Section 2) was also quite straithforward and only a couple of occurrences were considered to be open to subjective interpretation, which in any case, does not change the results.
4. Australian Parliament. Joint Standing Committe on Migration. Submission no. 180 available online, consulted on the 1rs June 2017.
5. Nigel Farage is opposed to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) but this opposition is related to loss of sovereignty (who should be responsible for human rights enforcement) and not to human rights.
6. (2017) Far Right raises £50,000 to target boats in refugee rescue missions in Med, The Guardian, retrieved on 6th June 2017: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/03/far-right-raises-50000-target-refugee-rescue-boats-med
7. I selected all documents available on the website on the topic of migration for the years 2015 and 2016. For IRC documents were included up until May 2017.
8. To avoid an excessively long table, only the emotion and cognitive markers that appeared more than 10 times have been included.

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