

Chapter 14

Civil Society Between Populism and Anti-populism



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14.1 Introduction

Civil society groups polarize opinions in normative terms. Most people see the majority of civil society groups as a positive force in society. They value their activities on behalf of specific groups of citizens and appreciate their role in improving democratic life through their educational, informational, and deliberative activities. However, certain associations, such as anti-immigrant vigilante groups, racist groups, or more generally exclusionary groups focus on opposing a political enemy defined in ethnic, religious, or political terms. They justify their actions by asserting that they are defending other social constituencies that need protection, which they often identify as a victimized national majority. There are, in other words, at least two rival conceptions of the functions of civil society, which are frequently articulated through concepts of “good” and “evil”, or “civilized” and “uncivilized”. Each one of these rival conceptions claims a “high ground” of legitimate involvement and seeks to demonize the other. In the current political culture, torn between a populist and an anti-populist bloc, it is necessary to clarify the contribution of civil society to a “good society” and to document the strategies, discourses, and actions that help or hinder this goal. In this chapter, after articulating the political impact of the categories of good and evil and their implications for civil society, I formulate a typology of “bad civil society” groups and relate it to the findings of some of the other chapters in the present volume.

Regardless of rival claims, not all social and political formations and the associations related to them are equally likely to be perceived as good or evil. Right-wing populist parties are more likely to polarize opinions about the values of their activities. That is, their speeches, their electoral manifestos, their civil society

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organizations, and their forms of political participation. A type of action that polarizes opinion in normative terms are their associational activities. These encompass the formation and support offered to a variety of civil society groups aimed at advocacy, service delivery, and cultural interventions in the public sphere.

The contest between right-wing populist parties and their opponents is often fought out in the public sphere by employing the categories of good and evil. The concepts of “good” and “evil” do not have wide currency in the social sciences. However, the social and political implications of these concepts are important, as shown by analyses of political discourse. Of interest here are those political discourses pertaining to matters of culture, welfare, and migration. They are important as recurring elements of political discourse in many different political and social arenas and as normative concepts that decision makers mobilize to provide resources and legitimacy to civil society organizations. Voters and debates in the public sphere often argue their competing viewpoints by employing the categories of good and evil; they evaluate policies using these categories, and they often evaluate political parties, social movements, or associations in similar ways.

It is important to identify what a good civil society is, and what it is not, as a vibrant and effective civil society is only viable if the state provides the resources and the regulatory framework that enables its operations. Thus, criteria to formulate regulatory frameworks that benefit one or another type of associations are controversial. Different normative conceptions lead for instance to different levels of resources donated to civil society, different levels of governance at which funding is distributed, different specifications of criteria for access to state resources, such as processes of accreditation and checks to ensure compliance with constitutional standards. In other words, the different normative conceptions of civil society which are dominant in different systems of thought produce different configurations of civil society organizations and result in different functions attributed to civil society organizations (Chambers and Kymlicka 2002). There is a relation between the configuration of the population of civil society organizations, the structure of the state, and the prevalent ways of regulating them (Warren 2001). For this reason, it is important that there is clarity on the appropriateness of state policies toward civil society, and that, for instance, unconstitutional organizations are discouraged, such as those that should be classified as “evil” civil society. This debate is particularly relevant after the right-wing populist successes of recent years and the often asserted imperative to “protect” communities, which translates into narrow understandings of national culture, welfare chauvinism, and restrictive migration policies.

These successes point to at least a partial colonization of civil society by the values of right-wing populism. This amounts to a cultural shift, which is sometimes described as the “populist moment” with reference to previous populist moments, but also to an understanding of civil society not as merely a set of organized groups. Rather, civil society enacts a cultural space in which individuals and a wider variety of organizations, such as the media, and activities taking place in the blogosphere, reflect distinct and widespread populist views (Goodwyn 1978; Mouffe 2005). Thus, I refer to “civil society” both in the meaning of an aggregate of

non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests, which are also known as “associational ecologies”, and as individuals in a society which are independent of the government (Warren 2001). In the first meaning, I include political groups with roots in civil society. These include also right-wing populist parties, which can be considered as movement-parties due to their contentious repertoires, and connections to distinct associational ecologies (Ruzza 2010; Ruzza 2017). I then consider radical right parties, associations, and movements under the same umbrella of radical right civil society formations (on the concept of movement-party, see: Rucht and Neidhardt 2002).

14.2 “Protecting” Communities

As frequently utilized conceptual categories, “good” and “evil” are labels that are often central to debates within political formations, and more generally in the public sphere. In the rhetoric of extremist groups “doing good” might mean protecting a community from perceived threats—no matter if the community is not cohesive, or even not socially meaningful, such as the community of “the whites”, and no matter if the asserted perceived threat is a political fabrication. They then might purport to pursue the good of society, even if this view is not often shared by relevant segments of the population. Nonetheless, to pursue their ideology, they might form associations, which through political violence, or other forms of intimidation might objectively exert a negative impact on the lives of certain groups of citizens for the supposed benefit of other groups. Here I am referring to a set of associational activities characterized by discursively exclusionist, undemocratic, or violent features.

An example from Italy illustrates the contemporary relevance of this debate. For the last few years, civil society-sponsored vessels helped to salvage migrants attempting to reach the Italian coasts using small boats to cross the Mediterranean Sea. These ships would routinely rescue migrants’ boats from stormy international waters and take them to the Italian shores where they could apply for refugee status. These activities were generally labeled as “good” by Italian public opinion, until in 2018 a new populist government took power, reuniting the anti-establishment populist Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*, M5S) and right-wing populist League (*Lega*, L). The new government, inspired by nationalist law and order values, and an emphasis on security, sought to redefine the activities of rescue operations in negative terms. Pro-migrant NGOs operating at sea came to be redefined as “merchants of death” as in the views of the new government their operations incited other migrants to attempt the same voyage, which caused hundreds of failed attempts by would-be asylum seekers, and numerous drownings. Rescuing migrants was then supposedly motivated by NGOs-vessels trying to support the business of like-minded NGOs groups seeking to acquire state funds to house the migrants they had rescued. Thus, the “good” pro-migrant civil society was redefined in the eyes of the populist government as a “bad” civil society. A change of migration and refugees

policy in a more restrictive direction had already been effected in 2017 by the then minister of interior Minniti during the previous center-left government. It included a decree to accelerate the assessment of asylum claims by refugees and a new “code of conduct” for NGOs operating at sea (Minniti 2017). However, this reversal of framing, in turn, legitimated the closure of all Italian harbors to NGOs-vessels, and further legitimated their indictment for illegal entry when they attempted to land. This policy reversal was met with overwhelming support by the Italian public opinion. On the other hand, the vigilante groups that inspected poor urban areas at night, which the progressive NGOs had denounced for harassing minorities, came to be redefined by the winning populist parties as providing security to a victimized population, supposedly terrified by an increasing number of violent aggression, rapes, and robberies by illegal migrants. These two examples show the relevance of the categories of good and evil civil society.

Here below I clarify the criteria for what can be appropriately defined as bad civil society. A related concept, which has also been utilized to describe the same phenomenon, is “uncivil society”, which is often used to describe the right-wing populist discourse in the social media, and also more broadly the discourse of violent non-state actors (Krzyzanowski and Ledin 2017). Thus, a different definition of “bad civil society” is “uncivil society” which is equally characterized in normative terms—here we will use these terms interchangeably. “Uncivil” as “lacking civility” implies a specification of why certain types of associations are “bad” and also, therefore, implies a vision of the good society, which is based on the acquisition of civility as a positive value, or at least a vision of a “civilizing process”, in which associations play a causal role (Elias 2000; van Iterson et al. 1984). With particular reference to organizations connected to the political right, I examine in the following the factors that have made civil society relevant for political actors and point to a relation of mutual dependence between the associational world and political movements and parties. In this context, I focus on a relationship of mutual dependence between the social and the political sphere—a relation, which develops even when most observers would classify certain civil society activities as uncivil.

14.3 “Bad” Civil Society, But Bad for Whom?

The previous example of vigilante groups, which different actors considered alternatively good or bad, points to the co-existence of two different concepts of goodness, which however differ in one key respect. To the extent that the security of one part of the population—the majority, or what certain actors identify as the mainstream in a partisan way—requires the social control or worse, the upsetting of another part—for instance, the migrant population—the concept of civil society is in principle exclusionary. In other words, the concept of good is pursued by focusing on only a section of the population. The second is inclusionary, as it conceptualizes any interference with the personal integrity of any part of the population as negative for the entire population. From this example, I argue that there is a conflict between

two rival visions. One is espoused by right-wing populist parties, which is exemplified by the vision entrenched in the victory of Trump in the 2016 US elections and its “America first!” slogan. The other reflects the cosmopolitan vision of civil society as a “civilizing” factor, which was dominant in the classic literature on civil society and more recently in the second wave of civil society studies that shaped the field from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s (Cohen and Arato 1992; Keane 1999). These two visions point to a struggle for meaning, and for legitimate social practices in an era that is characterized by the success of populist parties throughout Europe.

A contest is taking place in the public arena in which specific parties’ activities, civil society groups, and social movements are evaluated for their social value. The role of intermediary associations—that is, associations with political purposes, which are also rooted in civil society, is often particularly controversial. These encompass a variety of civil society groups aimed at activities of advocacy, service delivery and cultural interventions in the public sphere. A contest is taking place between exclusionary associations and other public-interest associations for the legitimate appropriation of the label of “goodness”.

Right-wing populist movements and parties are still an electoral minority, ranging around a 15% of the vote in several countries, but their cultural framings have had a significant impact as a consequence of the financial crisis of 2008 and the “refugee reception crisis” of 2015 and the following years (Rea et al. 2019; Trezn et al. 2015). Populist voters express concern for personal security, economic security, values of cultural protectionism, and hostility towards migrants (Rooduijn 2018). The contrast between progressive inclusionary associations and exclusionary ones is marking the political climate of contemporary Europe and amounts to a struggle between a populist and an anti-populist bloc, which on the contrary articulates values of cosmopolitanism, tolerance, and social inclusion.

As the literature on right-wing populism points out, the populist bloc is characterized by a set of distinctive cultural features, which are used to define populism. Briefly, they include the assertion of a vertical split between people and elites, the belief in an essentially homogeneous “people”, which is betrayed by self-serving and corrupt elites. They are characterized by forms of enemy-thinking rooted in anti-universalist practices justified as a legitimate defense of an aggrieved but supposedly virtuous part of the population. In their forms of political participation, they opt for anti-system action repertoires. In their political choices, they prefer to rely on charismatic leadership, whose unquestioned authority is seen as a way of bypassing of checks and balances of liberal democracy, thereby creating a symbolic link between the leader and its “people”, and thus addressing the corruption of political elites. They typically assert the unquestioned values of nativism and nationalism as a source of inspiration for public policy (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013). In contemporary Europe, it also notably includes strong Euroscepticism. Because of its frequent use of unconventional action repertoires, its roots in civil society and the alternative policy vision it espouses, populism can be characterized as a social movement (Aslanidis 2016). It is opposed by an anti-populism movement, which is occasionally also determined, but in several ways still searching for responses to the populist challenge.

Populism and anti-populism are then more than purely political phenomena. They are different from ideologies formulated by parties born in Parliaments and confined to political elites. They might as well be utilized, defined, and redefined by elites in different social and political locations, but they are embedded in their respective societies. Their parties of reference have roots in communities. This is the reason why the political challenge of right-wing populism in its espousing of “uncivility” is novel and difficult. It is also difficult because “uncivility” is shaped and expressed differently in different political contexts. It is a chameleon-like behavior, which is a trade-mark ideological trait of populist formations, as several empirical studies have shown (Mazzoleni and Ruzza 2018; Taggart 2000). As two fields of actors and ideational constructs compete for legitimacy, supporters and resources, both populism and anti-populism shape and modify their messages according to emerging opportunities, and in doing so both populism and anti-populism can profit from the indeterminacy of their ideational systems of reference. For this reason, populism and anti-populism need to be seen as aspects of civil society with a different understanding of ethical behavior. In the following, I focus explicitly on the populist type.

14.4 The Features of Uncivil Society

While, as noted, the emergence of right-wing bad civil society organizations has been interpreted as a worrying indicator of more general social problems, discussions of the organizational forms and ethical nature of these organizations are much less frequent in the literature. This is partly because two key issues—the definitional issue of the boundaries of ethically unacceptable behavior, and the issue of moral agency—are dependent on views of what is a good society, which analysts of comparative politics working on the extreme right rarely tackle. However, to properly conceptualize the role of uncivil society, it is necessary to examine at least briefly the concepts of the good and the bad society, and then the good and the bad civil society.

Given the limited space available, here I conceptualize concisely the good society as a society that ensures a basic set of needs essential for human development. This approach to the good society is distinct from deontological and consequentialist conceptions, and is more closely related to approaches based on virtue ethics—approaches that conceptualize the good society as societies in which humans can flourish, and their well-being is maximized (Swanton 2005). As noted by Draper and Ramsay (2011), approaches differ in how easily the main conceptions of the good society allow for empirical comparisons of societies. In terms of clarity and comparative qualities, they utilize the “capability approach” as an approach related to virtue ethics (Nussbaum 2000). In particular, they suggest Nussbaum’s and Sen’s concepts of the good life as optimal in this respect (Draper and Ramsay 2011; Nussbaum 2000; Sen 1999). As posited by Sen, at a minimum, a good society is a

society that addresses the need for physical safety, access to the means to formulate informed decisions on peoples' lives, and for civil and political rights. Using these standards, I argue that the extreme-right civil society can be classified as "bad civil society". This is because unlike the good civil society it does not foster the general human needs posited by Sen. The reasons bad civil society does not address the above-mentioned human needs become clear after I discuss why the rest of civil society does, which it is then conceptualized as the "good civil society".

"Civil society", before the arrival of right-wing populist civil society associations, has often been associated with the good society. Civil society has been seen to promote a good society by engendering certain key qualities, such as the ones discussed by Sen (1999), but not only those. Different authors stress different aspects according to their conceptions of the good society. One key virtue that is often emphasized is the conceptualization of civil society as a training ground for developing social trust. I posit that at least an element of social trust is a necessary precondition for the enjoyment of the sense of safety, which Sen considers necessary for humans to flourish. Trust is also connected to issues of rights, as the enjoyment of rights is in turn based on sufficient inter-individual trust to protect individuals from violations perceived or actual of their political and social rights (Misztal 1996; Taylor-Gooby 2000). Similarly, Putnam has singled out the civic virtue of generalized reciprocity as an outcome of involvement in associational activities, and again reciprocity is often based on trust (Putnam 2000). This is of course not the case of associations based on "enemy politics"—a definitional aspect of bad civil society, which are therefore an intrinsically different type of civil society.

Other aspects connected to full-fledged visions of the good life differ markedly from left to right and relate to virtues that different systems of thought consider essential and entrenched in their ethical views of civil society (Chambers and Kymlicka 2002). For instance, the right and the left differ in their promotion of egalitarianism, self-reliance, deliberating skills, or caring communities (Ruzza 2011). Similarly, fundamental differences in the role of associations characterize the currently dominant political visions of liberal minimalism, conventional representation, and participatory democracy, and each of these visions is oriented by different principles (Fung 2003). Nonetheless, while there are differences of emphasis among philosophical conceptions of positive values, there are nonetheless shared values, such as the ones mentioned above, and there are disvalues that can also be shared by several political conceptions.

14.4.1 A Typology of Bad Civil Society

To sum up, the associational activities of groups belonging to bad civil or uncivil society are morally evil because they deny on several accounts the human needs for physical safety, access to the means to formulate informed decisions on peoples' lives, and for civil and political rights. They can be classified in a set of distinctive

types, which consist of (1) Nazium-type bad civil society; (2) fanatical bad civil society (3) bad communitarianism; (4) banal bad civil society. As previously mentioned, not all right-wing populist-inspired civil society groups are uncivil. Some are mainly bonding and not bridging associations. However, this typology is helpful in putting together some of the case studies presented in this volume.

A “bad civil society” or an “uncivil society” is then a civil society which, unlike other types of civil society, cannot conceivably be said to foster either generalized trust or the positive values shared by other political conceptions. Alternatively, more stringently, it is a civil society that engenders the opposite of a good society, that is, a society marked by disvalues—negative values that all ethical worldviews despise, such as the promotion of racial discrimination. In this respect, it is often cited what in philosophy is sometimes known with sad irony as the “reduction *ad Nazium*” (Benn 1998). At the Nuremberg trial, it has been noted that no accuser defended their actions of torture and murder with reference to a moral theory of any sort (Rosanvallon 2006). This case is then often used to argue against moral relativist defenses and in favor of the postulation of an objective evil (Benn 1998). The practices of the Nazis can be conceptualized as the **negation of human development and thriving**. By examples such as this, it has been argued that there is such a thing as objective wickedness, defined as intentionally doing acts that are wrong (Midgley 1984). In the words of a classic work of ethics on this topic:

We need to grasp clearly how appallingly human beings sometimes behave. Moreover, we must see that we cannot always shift responsibility for that behavior off onto an abstraction called ‘culture’. (Culture, after all, is made by people.) There have to be natural motives present in humans which make cruelty and related vices possible. (Midgley 1984: XI)

In our case, one can, for instance, classify as objectively evil the instances of right-wing skin-heads physical aggressions against migrants to inflict bodily harm. I characterize as a distinctive type of bad civil society the instances of unjustified and unexplained aggression—we shall call it the “Nazium-type bad civil society” (1). This category is illustrated by the extreme violence and destruction perpetrated on civil populations by armed gangs in the context of local wars, which has been noted for instance both in European and in African contexts (Nzau 2017). In several of these cases, extreme violence is perpetrated by armed gangs without clear ideologies and finalities.

With reference to the work of Koehn, it is possible to identify another category of evil civil society. Her category of “**evil as fanatical impiety**”, illustrated with the case of the right-wing terrorist Timothy McVeigh is particularly interesting as it typifies, in the extreme, right-wing acts of aggression of right-wing vigilantes groups, such as in the case of aggressions motivated by fanatical zeal against minorities youth perceived as criminals, even when this perception is hardly justified (Koehn 2005, p. 207). She presents this case as one of “Fanaticism as the Unreasonable Repudiation of Reason” (Koehn 2005, p. 216). In a context such as this—fanatical right-wing extremism—the fundamental needs postulated by Sen (1999) are violated, such as needs for individual physical integrity, as well as civil rights as rights to mental integrity, life and safety, and as protection from

discrimination on grounds such as race or national origin. I call this type “fanatical bad civil society” (2). This category is illustrated for instance by the actions of Anders B. Breivik whose fanaticism has overridden all considerations for the lives of his victims (Hemmingby and Bjørge 2016).

However, there are other types of activities of “bad civil society” groups inspired by **identity-based associations**, which have an objective exclusionary impact on the part of communities that are labelled as undesirable, “inassimilable” or marginalized and derided, without overt aggression. These associations take an ascriptive-based concept of communitarianism as their implicit philosophy. They idealize like-minded communities, which are defined in ethnic or racial terms to which they also often attribute distinctive identities and distinctive character traits. One can consider for instance the activities of associations that do not admit members from racial minorities and engage in activities in the public sphere that border with what has been defined as “hate speech”. In this case, the range of approaches has varied more widely, and the border between ethical and unethical behavior is debated. What are the practices of “identity building” for some, are instances of discrimination for others (Gilbert 2010). In this respect, it is well-known that following the example of the French *Nouvelle Droite*, the modern European extreme-right has appropriated the identity-based language of the new social movements of the eighties to argue for exclusionist practices (Fella and Ruzza 2012; Lloyd 1998). While these uses have been stigmatized and condemned for their instrumentality, equivalent identity-strengthening practices acting in the framework of a politics of cultural identity have been endorsed by philosophers from a range of traditions, and particularly by communitarian scholars (Gilbert 2010, p. 11).

On the other hand, attacks against the glorification of many forms of politics of cultural identity have also been prominent in recent years (Barry 2001). Critics are not only focusing on the impact of excluded communities, but more generally on the conception of community that several defenders of the politics of identity endorse. There is in several of these conceptions an inability to recognize the fluidity of identities, and the constraining character on individuals that a strong defense of communities’ cultures engenders. This leads some scholars to argue that “cultural identity is in several respects morally pernicious” (Gilbert 2010, p. 14). I characterize this type as “bad communitarianism” (3). The literature shows how some of these uncivil society groups organized around societal divisions often attempt to operate as alternatives to the state, oppose liberal democracy and liberal-legal processes and engage in unruly behavior, including violence and criminality (Wallis 2019). A “bad communitarianism” turn propagated by right-wing populist formations has been evidenced in the normalization of anti-pluralist views across many European public spheres in recent years (Krzyzanowski and Ledin 2017). This has particularly been noted in some Central and Eastern European countries (Bustikova and Guasti 2017).

However, rather than adopting a blanket negative connotation for all identity-based exclusionist groups, it is more appropriate to focus on the actual practices that the political pursuit of identity can generate. In this respect, it is useful to review the

actual associational practices of right-wing groups and the motivations behind these practices.

In addition to evil acts perpetrated intentionally by right-wing groups, if one also includes the broader category of exclusionary identity politics one also needs to consider (d) **evil acts done not intentionally** but in other ways, for instance out of carelessness for the consequences. We are referring to a carelessness that could be for instance rooted in the differential attribution of the category of humanity to “friends” and “enemies”. In this respect, there are several useful typologies available in the literature of evil acts committed out of mindless disregard for their consequences, or because of prioritizing the obedience to orders, or instrumental pursuit such as career choice, which result in evil consequences, or from the unreflective assumption of a cultural framework of “politics of the enemy”. One can think in this respect of Arendt’s well-known category of the banality of evil (Arendt 2006). Mindless and careless evil can be perpetrated not only by single individuals, but by groups of individuals as well, such as in the instance of public derision of migrants, or religious groups by groups of insensitive individuals. I call this type of evil civil society “banal bad civil society” (4). I list in this category criminal gangs whose interest in acquiring resources legitimates corrupt practices that have negative consequences for society. This category of “uncivil society” has been identified in the literature on several developing countries that show the mindless behavior of local organized actors and the negative consequences it produces (Caiani et al. 2012; Hainsworth 2008). It has also been shown in the dealings between international “respectable” commercial and political actors in developing contexts, which unintentionally legitimate and encourage corrupt practices and produce negative societal consequences (Cooley et al. 2018).

14.5 European Uncivil Civil Society

Considering the sections of this volume on the right-wing populist and retrogressive mobilization, one feature that emerges from several chapters is the extent to which the contest between the populist and the anti-populist bloc compete and sometimes interact in the public sphere results in a merger of traditional national values, and new populist ones. For instance, in the chapter by Anders Hellström and Mahama Tawat we see how multiculturalism is now defined as “unaffordable”—a change that has occurred in recent years, showing the diffusion of the values of populist groups, in both Sweden and Denmark. However, on other issues the two cases differ, revealing how traditional openness to refugees remains noticeable in Sweden. The chapter by Emil Edenborg also points to the way right-wing populism is enabled by connecting its xenophobic values to perceived national specificities, such as strong Swedish concern for gender equality, and therefore promoting an ethnopluralist mind frame and a securitizing narrative. It is useful to point out that the changed

image of multiculturalism is still quite recent. As late as 2011, Europeans debated the then-controversial assertion by political leaders such as the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the UK Prime Minister David Cameron, and later by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, that “multiculturalism has failed”.

The previously proposed typology offers some additional means to organize the findings from the previous book chapters. The formations which are most clearly identifiable as evil based on the criteria previously listed belong to the first type—the xenophobic groups. Xenophobic organizations and particularly racist organizations, situate themselves at the boundary between legal and semi-legal action or accept the price of illegality, with the organizational costs that this implies. Groups of skin-heads illustrate the **Nazium-type** of sheer wickedness (Midgley 1984). However, in the field of racist groups, one also finds examples of a different type of evil civil society: these are organized groups, which unlike the often uneducated and angry “globalization losers” of the skin-head sort are organized.

In the second category of our typology, extreme-right civil society groups illustrate the “**fanatical bad civil society**” type. These tend to prevail in organized militant right-wing groups. Several countries manifest a clear distinction between a right-wing populism, which while despising the institutions of liberal democracy takes part in elections and an extreme right, which acts outside of parliaments and is generally more radical and not infrequently staffed by fanatical activists. In this category, one would also have to count the fanatical online communities of which Breivik was a member. Although no chapters in this book focus on their activities, there is a wide literature on them in Europe that point to their relevance and to their fanatical use of violence (Caiani et al. 2012; Hainsworth 2008).

Several chapters in this volume illustrate the positions of parties that express what we have defined as **bad communitarianism**. They are particularly relevant in the current European context, including the chapter by Radu Cinpoș and Ov Cristian Norocel where xenophobic remarks are routine in the political communication of the parties examined. This category includes committed nationalists. It refers to groups whose main concern is (national) territory. The protection, glorification, and asserted homogeneity of their territories of reference is a constitutive trait of most types of nationalism, which inspires most organized mobilization. In contemporary Europe, there is an old tradition of civic-nationalism that attempts to interpret nationalism in non-exclusivist terms, for instance by setting relatively open criteria for membership. These include, for instance the Basque and the Catalan nationalisms, but there are also cases of movements that merge the nationalist frame and the xenophobic exclusionary frame, such as the Italian League and the Belgian *Vlaams Belang*, and thus situate themselves in the uncivil society category. The chapter by Gokay Özerim and Selcen Öner clearly illustrates the exclusivist nationalism of political dynamics occurred in Brexit and in the Austrian cases, and shows the “othering” or “enemy politics”-role that Turkey has played in the political life of these countries. Communitarian nationalists also include those civil society groups that articulate the vertical dimension of people against the elites. This is a dimension

that has produced a set of important movements and parties. The anti-elite narrative recurs in most European populist formations. Euroscepticism is pervasive in all European populisms and is particularly well illustrated by the UK case study.

The **banal bad civil society** is a type of civil society that emerges out of the naturalization and institutionalization of xenophobic values and is more likely to be expressed at the individual level in countries where right-wing populist parties have been successful and have institutionalized their views in state policies. Not surprisingly, the colonization of political culture by the populist bloc is stronger in countries with populist governments, such as shown in the chapter by Radu Cinpoș and Ov Cristian Norocel with reference to Poland and Hungary. This is also the case of Italy, where in 2018 the majority supported strongly the previously mentioned anti-immigrant policies of their populist government. The Central and Eastern European cases and the Italian case also show how governmental rhetoric can counter the spirit of tolerance and protection of human rights that their countries' membership in the EU should protect. All these cases, as well as the Finnish case examined by Katarina Pettersson, point to the "normalization" of xenophobia (Norocel 2017). Government positions on such controversial issues as migration and refugee policies are presented as sensible, factual, and thus uncontroversial. Frequently there is a tendency to favor a "culturalist" framing, whereby a natural pride in one's cultural heritage or a feeling of nostalgia are the preferred ways to neutralize and communicate the harsh policies marginalizing migrants. More generally, nostalgia, but also connected emotions are frequently and intentionally mobilized by right-wing populist and extreme right formations as evidenced in the chapter by Katherine Kondor and Mark Littler with reference to the Hungarian case. Similarly, the emotional glorification of an imaginary past emerges centrally in the chapter on Generation Identity by Anita Nissen. The importance of nostalgia also comes forth clearly in the work of Andreas Önnersfors in his chapter on Pegida. These findings point to the importance of studying the role of emotions in the politics of uncivil society.

14.6 By Way of Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the distinctive features of populist civil society in contemporary Europe and offered a systematization of this political environment by anchoring it with examples from the contributions in the present volume. This notwithstanding, we should not forget or dismiss the flourishing of a civil society that consolidates the anti-populist block. Indeed, this volume presents a multifaceted array of **emancipatory initiatives from below**, which denounce and forcefully oppose welfare chauvinism and narrow cultural retrenchment around national ethnic majorities. These take various forms, such as the analysis of the Danish *Venligboerne* by Martin Bak Jørgensen and Daniel Rosengren Olsen, which illustrates how a civil society actor decisively move beyond fear and nostalgia as a

master frame and provides a transitional space for learning. At the same time, the boundaries of the civil society itself are questioned, as illustrated by Camilla Haavisto in her analysis of the “Right to Live” collective in Finland. In this case, Iraqi and Afghan asylum seekers recast the culture of gratefulness towards the host country that asylum-seekers were previously expected to subscribe to, and attempt to present themselves as a collective with its own voice, visibility, and legitimacy in the public sphere. There is hope even in the Central and Eastern European context, as Alexandra Ana shows in her analysis of an emerging “street feminism”, which contours a politics of intersectional hope by way of bridge-building and solidarity among such diverse groups as forcibly evicted persons, feminist NGOs, anarchist groups, and Roma feminist and anti-racist organizations, and refugees. Last but not least, Larisa Lara-Guerrero and María Vivas-Romero evidence how Latin American migrants in Brussels are actively involved into a transnational social movement, which creates, transforms, and employ the transnational networks in both their homelands and the host land.

To conclude by returning to the two conceptual master frames that underpin the present volume, at the moment feelings of nostalgia are skillfully used to ensure the increase the visibility of uncivil society elements in European societies. This is nonetheless accompanied and counteracted by vigorous anti-populist emancipatory mobilizations, which instill hope in cosmopolitan visions of Europe.

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