civil society innovation and populism in a digital era

INNOVATION REPORT 2019

Civil Society Innovation and Populism in a Digital Era

introduction

The International Civil Society Centre and JustLabs hope this report:

1

recognises the amazing efforts of the "invisible innovators" who cannot communicate openly or visibly about their work because it could put them at risk. We hope it encourages international colleagues and partners who can speak out publicly about these efforts to do so.

2

offers you creative inspiration as you explore strategies to reach new audiences, engage new tools and tactics and devise new ways of working in populist contexts.

3

illustrates how strategies not originally designed as direct responses to the challenges associated with populism can be highly effective, either individually or in tandem with others.

4

increases your knowledge of diverse populist contexts and civil society responses to them in different regions of the world, from the well known to the less publicised.

5

inspires sharing and learning across our sector, thereby catalysing further innovation and ultimately a stronger and more resilient civil society. We want to spur organisations to work together to implement and scale these strategies, wherever possible.

The International Civil Society Centre's 2019–21 strategy aims to highlight innovations that can benefit the civil society sector internationally. We seek to advance understanding of the most promising innovations, both inside and outside our sector, that can be applied to tackle common challenges. Meanwhile, our partner in this shared adventure, JustLabs, was created to provide a space in which such innovations can be brought to life, tested and shared with the wider social change field. To achieve our joint aims, we have collected and shared some of the most inspiring and interesting examples in this new annual Innovation Report format, with the hope of fostering an interactive platform for sharing innovative ideas and best practices among international and national civil society organisations and networks.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are innovators, testing new approaches to both traditional and emerging problems. One of today's issues creating an unprecedented challenge to civil society is the rise of populist leaders and their pervasive rhetoric, in different parts of the world. Populists have been adept at winning hearts and minds and creating or mining divisions in society, based on fear and hatred. This undermines the progressive values and ideals of inclusion, equality, diversity and respect for human rights advanced by CSOs working on social and environmental justice and sustainable development (our focus for this report). These CSOs either pose an existential threat to the anti-plural, anti-debate and supposedly unstable environments which populists promote, or are attacked by them as representing illegitimate "elite" or "intermediary" positions.

The traditional toolkit of civil society actors— policy-centred tools, naming and shaming tactics—has so far proven inadequate in responding to these new challenges. CSOs must find innovative, fresh and effective ways to not only respond but also more fundamentally revive their impact in this new landscape. They can also learn and benefit from the lessons encountered by others: our goal for this inaugural report.

populism

and

innovation

POPULISM AND INNOVATION

We looked at three factors in order to decide which initiatives to highlight:

1   innovativeness

2   effectiveness in countering populism

3   responsiveness to the potential of digital media in the specific context, either as an enabler of populism and/or the innovative response

In this report, we have defined innovation as "an iterative learning process which identifies, adapts/adjusts and shares novel ideas for improving civil society action, impact and operating space".

When we assess whether an initiative is innovative or not, we examine whether it is different from prior or similar initiatives in the following ways:

a) What does it tell us, and what can we learn, about previously unseen opportunities or risks in the relationships among civil society, populism and media?

b) Does it adopt new tools or strategies and/or appeal to new audiences? We look at two main dimensions: "where to aim" (audiences) and "how to respond" (which include assets, tools and tactics; assets can include partnerships).

For our civil society audience, we have redefined the specific categorisations adopted for our innovation model using the "Innovation Ambition Matrix" (see chart below, adapted from www.doblin.com), further refining a classic diagram from the mathematician H. Igor Ansoff to help the private sector allocate funds among growth initiatives. These are as follows:

where to aim

CORE
Optimising use of existing assets, tools and tactics, to engage core audiences of stakeholders and supporters.

NB. 'Assets' can include partnerships.

ADJACENT
Incrementally evolving, adapting or expanding use of assets, tools and tactics and/or engaging important secondary audiences (directly or indirectly).

NB. Typically new for the innovating organisation (particularly in, but not necessarily limited to, the relevant context or location).

TRANSFORMATIONAL
Creating new assets, tools and tactics to engage new audiences.

NB. Typically new for civil society organisations / this sector in the relevant context or location.

how to respond

For each case study, we have also indicated the stage of the innovation, as follows:

| experimental	The innovation is at or near the start of implementation, or in a pre-implementation or preparation stage (i.e. beyond a concept and with organisational commitment and practical planning in place).
	No evidence or lessons are yet available to inform either its iteration/adaptation or assessment of its effectiveness, influence or impact.
emerging	The innovation is in the process of being implemented.
	Some evidence or lessons may be generated to inform iteration/ adaptation of the innovation and to assess if it is demonstrating effectiveness, influence or impact.
established	The innovation has been fully implemented.
	Evidence is available to assess if and how it has been effective or achieved influence or impact. Wider lessons or conclusions can be shared with others.

We limited our search for innovations to those that respond to different facets of populism. We define populism as having two core elements:

a) **anti-elitism**
b) **anti-pluralism**

with four additional features:

i) **anti-debate**
ii) **resistant to countervailing facts**
iii) **rejects intermediaries**
iv) **deploying crisis, breakdown or threat**

As a "thin-centreed ideology",[1] meaning it does not, in itself, prescribe specific policies or political ideologies, populism can be found across the political spectrum: left, centre and right. Yet it is often tied to "thicker ideologies" that prescribe sets of claims about the world, such as socialism, fascism, nativism and authoritarianism.[2] These "thick ideologies" are accompaniments, but not intrinsic elements, of populism.

core elements

anti-elitism	anti-pluralism

additional features

anti-debate	resistant to countervailing facts	rejects intermediaries	crisis, breakdown or threat
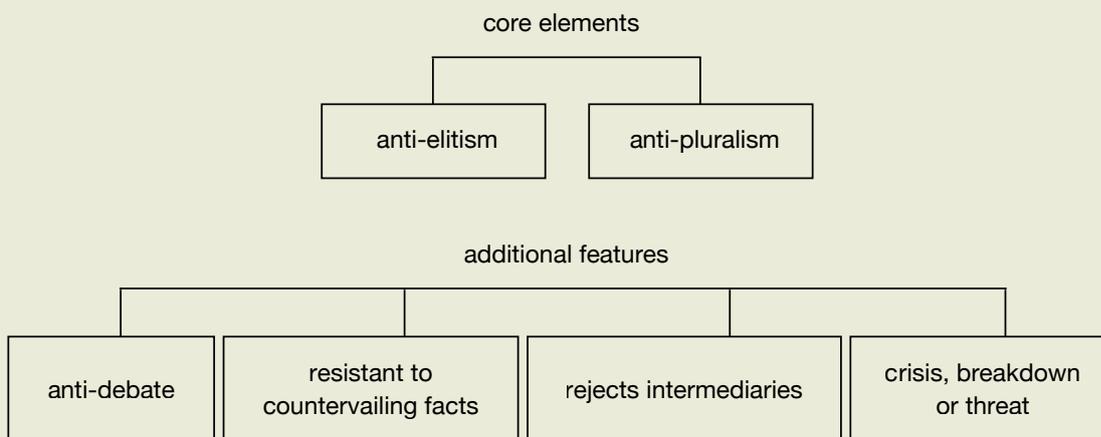
TWO "CORE ELEMENTS": ANTI-ELITISM AND ANTI-PLURALISM

Anti-elitism presupposes the existence of a "real people" that the populist alone claims to represent. In these narratives, the "real people" struggle against a corrupt and immoral "elite" that not only oppresses the "real people" but also protects or coddles supposedly illegitimate groups considered as the "other", such as migrants and minorities who commit crimes and rob the "real people" of opportunities. This explains why marginalisation and/or scapegoating of already marginalised groups, communities or constituencies is common in populist contexts. Moreover, the definition of the "elite" is frequently defined by the populist. In the United States, the billionaire President may be considered

1

Caas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, Populism: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

2

Uri Friedman, "What Is a Populist? And is Donald Trump one?" The Atlantic, February 27, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/02/what-is-populist-trump/516525/.

"elite" by standard definitions. Yet he has successfully managed to redefine the "elite" as the traditional Washington establishment, thereby casting himself as an outsider working on "the people's" behalf. Further drawing on these polarising concepts of "us" and "them", some have classified three types of populism:[3]

	cultural populism	socio-economic populism	anti-establishment populism
the people	Native members of the nation-state	Hard-working, honest members of the working class, which may transcend national boundaries	Hard-working, honest victims of a state run by special interests
the others	Non-natives, criminals, ethnic and religious minorities, cosmopolitan elites	Big business, capital owners, foreign or 'imperial' forces that prop up an international capitalist system	Political elites who represent the prior regime
key themes	Emphasis on religious traditionalism, law and order, national sovereignty, migrants as enemies	Anti-capitalism, working-class solidarity, foreign business interests as enemies, often joined with anti-Americanism	Purging the state from corruption, strong leadership to promote reforms

THREE WAYS THAT POPULISTS FRAME "US VS. THEM" CONFLICT[3]

Anti-pluralism supposes that the will of "the people" can only be defined by the populists themselves, thereby transposing their decisions into larger moral claims that are not subject to contrary evidence. Moreover, by conceptualising complex societies into homogeneous "us" and "them" categories, populists fail to integrate diverse perspectives, voices and interpretations into situations and conflicts. To galvanise support, they tend to leverage emotions, values and the sense of belonging. In so doing, they often couch their policy decisions and issues in a simple and straightforward manner, oversimplifying situational analyses and solutions. Populists do not want to countenance the need to recognise and accept a more complex or perhaps contested reality, with different ideas, opinions and perspectives to consider on these issues.

Populism is **anti-debate**. Civil society and human rights organisations naturally promote debate as a way of testing government policy and distilling the best ideas for social change. But since the legitimacy of the claim of the populist leader to represent "the people" is couched in symbolic and moral terms, as opposed to facts or verifiable will gleaned through processes of contestation such as elections or legislative debate, it is therefore immune from questioning. Indeed, while debates and elections occur in populist contexts — in fact, populists tend to utilise elections a lot — they are rarely genuine contestations of discourse or power. Instead, these elections and debates masquerade as civic discourse in order to bolster the perceived democratic legitimacy of the leader, leading the political scientist Jan-Werner Muller to claim that "populism without participation" is hardly ironic.[4]

Second, populism is **resistant to countervailing facts**. Exposés of corruption or even crime do not necessarily bring down populists because they can justify their behavior as attempts to redistribute wealth and opportunities to "the people" that have traditionally been limited to elites. This explains why populists, unlike secretive dictatorships, can be brazenly candid about engaging in corruption. In contrast, civil society and human rights organisations thrive on facts. They document violations, provide evidence for decisions and present findings in a professional, if sometimes technocratic, manner. According to Benjamin Moffitt's The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation (2016), technocracy is populism's opposite:

Each of the features of the technocratic style are [sic] directly opposed to the features of populist political style. While populists appeal to "the people" versus "the elite" and argue that we should trust "common sense" or the wisdom of "the people", technocrats place their faith in expertise and specialist training, and by and large do not concern themselves with "the people". While populists utilise "bad manners" in terms of their language and aesthetic self-presentation, technocrats have "good manners", acting in a "proper" manner in the political realm, utilising "dry" scientific language, dressing formally and presenting themselves in an "official" fashion. This divide is also marked by the role of affect and emotion: while populists rely on emotional and passionate performances, technocrats aim for emotional neutrality and "rationality". Finally, while populists aim to invoke and perform crisis, breakdown or threat, technocrats aim for and perform stability or measured progress. Here, the "proper" functioning of society is presented as being able to be delivered by those with the requisite knowledge, training and standing.[5]

Third, populism **rejects intermediaries**.[6] While democratic leaders traditionally communicate with the public through formal channels such as representatives, political parties, or from behind a podium, populist leaders emphasise direct communi-

4

Jan-Werner Müller, What is populism, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

5

Benjamin Moffitt, The Global Rise of Populism" Performance, Political Style, and Representation, Stanford University Press, 2016.

6

Weyland would refer to it as "a political strategy with three main features: a leader who appeals to a heterogeneous mass of adherents who feel excluded and as such are available for mobilization; the leader interacts with adherents directly, almost personal, eliminating the intermediaries, especially parties; if the leader uses a political party, it remains a personal vehicle with a low level of institutionalization".

cation with "their people" and undermine entities that seek to mediate and qualify these relationships. In Venezuela and Ecuador, Rafael Correa and Hugo Chavez, and now Nicolas Maduro, have held regular and lengthy unscripted weekend talk shows that convey the illusion of speaking directly and candidly with the public. As only the leader represents "the people", political parties, independent courts, the media and civil society are excluded from intervening in the relationship between the populist and the public.

Finally, populists **thrive on crisis, breakdown or threat**.[7] In so doing, they justify extraordinary measures — the building of walls, the arrest of opponents without due process, or the waging of a "war on drugs" — in order to protect "the people" against perceived existential or conspiratorial threats. Such threats also justify the populists' identities as outsiders and reformers of the existing structural order, allowing them to pose as the "solution to the crisis".[8]

7

Benjamin Moffitt, The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.

8

Octavia Bryant and Benjamin Moffitt, "What actually is populism? And why does it have a bad reputation?" The Conversation, February 5, 2019, http://theconversation.com/what-actually-is-populism-and-why-does-it-have-a-bad-reputation-109874.

For the innovation case studies, we look at the role of digital media either in the context of the problem or as part of the innovative solution. In terms of the problem, is digital media a trigger, an enabler, a mediating factor or a barrier to populism? As for the solution, does the initiative transform the role of digital media, take advantage of its potentialities or blunt its negative potential in the specific populist context?

strategies

strategies

The 14 case studies highlighted in this report illustrate seven overall strategies used by civil society organisations to innovate in response to populist contexts.

STRATEGY 01

Creating alternative digital youth-led spaces.

CASE STUDIES

08	14
PG 86	PG 138

STRATEGY 02

Building citizen skills to combat misinformation and fake news.

CASE STUDIES

09	12
PG 94	PG 122

STRATEGY 03

Using new digital tools and tactics to speak to all sections of society.

CASE STUDIES

10	13
PG 106	PG 130

STRATEGY 04

Developing new positive narratives for an alternative future.

CASE STUDIES

04	11
PG 52	PG 114

STRATEGY 05

Inclusive communications and social listening in divided contexts.

CASE STUDIES

05	06
PG 62	PG 70

STRATEGY 06

Strengthening civil society solidarity and resilience networks.

CASE STUDIES

01	07
PG 24	PG 78

STRATEGY 07

Renewing trust from the roots up through a new concept of accountability.

CASE STUDIES

02	03
PG 32	PG 40

case studies

core innovation

81

resilient roots

resilient roots

ORGANISATION CIVICUS	**LOCATION** Global
INNOVATION CATEGORY Emerging Core Innovation	**RECOMMENDATIONS** 2, 4, 5

STRATEGY

Strengthening civil society solidarity and resilience networks.

SUMMARY

A network-wide initiative with civil society organisations around the world to generate new learnings and insights on the link between dynamic accountability and organisational resilience, and inform future sector practices.

A growing number of governments and populist politicians are seeking to delegitimise the actions of civil society organisations (CSOs) by either demonising them as elite "special interest" groups, or accusing them of "losing touch" with the people they aim to serve.

In relation to the **two core elements** of populism, in contexts around the world, CSOs are frequent targets of the populists' **anti-elitist** rhetoric. Populists have skilfully exploited the professionalisation of civil society/non-governmental organisations and their reliance on foreign funding to vilify these groups as illegitimate elites working against the interests or welfare of the "real people" they claim to represent, and/or the nation's sovereignty. Indeed, CSOs can pose significant threats to populist agendas, as they frequently champion the inclusion and rights of the marginalised or minority groups that the populists are defining as the illegitimate "others" robbing opportunities from these "real people".

Given that populists claim to be the sole voices of the people's will, the independent voices of CSOs, coupled with their messages of social inclusion and diversity, are also highly unwelcome to populist **anti-pluralist** agendas. In a number of countries, invoking "the people's" or national interests are used to justify political moves — typically implemented via legislative and administrative measures — to heavily restrict the operation and funding of CSOs. Organisations that challenge or question populists in power, or use fact-based research to highlight sensitive issues or inconvenient truths that do not conform to their binary "us versus them" social, economic or environmental narratives, are usually the biggest targets.

CSOs pose challenges to the following **additional features** of populist agendas:

Seeking to **promote debate** as a means of testing government policies and distilling the best ideas for social change.

Producing and publicising **countervailing data and evidence** that can challenge or expose populist disinformation campaigns, data manipulation tactics and unethical or corrupt behaviour.

This evidence can be particularly inconvenient to populist agendas when revealing that the **supposed crises, breakdowns or threats** they are promoting have been misrepresented or overblown for political aims.

Populist leaders also aim to delegitimise the **role of CSOs as intermediaries** for the public — especially politically, socially, and economically marginalised populations — as populists claim that only they can understand and act on "the people's" behalf. It is therefore imperative for CSOs to develop and strengthen a broad base of citizen support.

Traditionally, CSOs have typically demonstrated accountability through highly technical processes of regulatory compliance and donor reporting, which are often not suitable for convincing skeptical politicians and ordinary citizens of their importance and legitimacy. Moreover, such processes can give the impression that CSOs are primarily serving the interests of their well-resourced donors and funders.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Digitisation is starting to transform the ways in which people can relate to organisations, enabling a new accountability paradigm for CSOs and public institutions. Now, newly empowered citizens are demanding more active roles in co-shaping programmes, policies and processes. At the heart of these dynamic relationships lie two-way digital dialogues between institutions and stakeholders, which promote regular interaction, adaptive performance and actionable decisions based on recent, visible data. Digital tools can help facilitate these dialogues, but they are ultimately sustained by the ongoing support of senior staff, tested accountability mechanisms (which could be "low tech"), staff training and skills development.

CIVICUS' Resilient Roots initiative is currently testing whether CSOs that are more accountable and responsive to their primary constituents, or "roots", are ultimately more resilient against external political or structural threats (the project's central hypothesis). The initiative is working with a network of partner CSOs in 15 countries, including populist contexts such as India and Serbia, to co-design and roll out year-long pilot accountability projects that seek to deepen the engagement of the organisations (such as India's Video Volunteers case study 02 pg 32 and Serbia's FemPlatz case study 03 pg 40) with their primary constituents. CIVICUS provides financial and technical support for the design, implementation and ongoing review of the partners' pilot projects and access to capacity support where necessary. CIVICUS also facilitates peer learning between these projects and is developing an evidence base of the emerging links between primary constituent accountability and CSO resilience. The main features of the innovation include:

The creation of a primary constituent accountability measurement process. All the partner CSOs are surveying their constituents and staff at the beginning and end of each pilot initiative, to help assess whether they have made gains in accountability over its duration.

CIVICUS devised a common "resilience testing" methodology applied across all the contexts and organisations. This established baseline assessments on the common types of civic space threats and/or restrictions, their degree of severity and the response strategies deployed by the partner CSOs.

By measuring threat responses against their original benchmarks at the end of each year-long pilot project, Resilient Roots will be able to assess whether any changes can be attributed to factors related to primary constituent accountability. Quarterly monitoring and progress updates provide data to assess Resilient Roots' central hypothesis.

The approach to capacity development has optimised learning. So far, the pilot partner organisations have appreciated the hands-on support for project design and implementation and the strong emphasis on course correction, flexibility and experimentation.

This process allows horizontal monitoring and exploration of the factors and pathways that increase public support, build trust and increase legitimacy. CIVICUS and its partners can see how approaches are adapted to manage threats and develop more nuanced understandings of the relationship between accountability and resilience across various contexts.

The initiative encourages peer learning among the pilot projects and will foster the creation of a wider body of evidence and lessons. These resources will subsequently be able to help other organisations to develop and refine their own constituent accountability approaches.

While the pilots are still in their early stages, all organisations are already achieving impressive results, revealing rich insights about their primary constituents' needs and interests. These include the need to more clearly articulate what the CSO does and does not do, so constituents are able to engage in its activities more effectively, and a real appetite from them to be involved in the planning and delivery of the organisation's activities.

1

Primary constituent accountability is a complex concept and many of the partner organisations have required significant guidance to fully understand and address it in practice. Nevertheless, breaking down this concept into specific activities and ways of working makes it easier to communicate, digest and act upon. In fact, the process has catalysed the development of an organisational learning culture that is essential for new approaches to remain effective over time. Focusing on external (constituent) accountability has also triggered important internal changes — particularly with regard to governance and staff — among the partner CSOs. Indeed, for many organisations, working on internal accountability was seen as a precondition for working on their external accountability practices.

2

Organisational resilience is highly context-specific and not linear. To make the measurement process more manageable, CIVICUS and its partners have only focused on one type of resilience: against threats to civic space. So far, factors such as an organisation's type, size and focus seem to have strong influence over the way the CSO perceives, experiences and responds to civic space-related threats. Different CSO responses to threats should not be viewed hierarchically (e.g. "resisting" is not necessarily a sign of greater resilience than "desisting"), but as a constant negotiation. The interplay between primary constituent accountability and resilience appears to be even more complicated than originally assumed, and further work should consider a number of other issues that also influence CSO resilience.

3

Findings are still emerging, but the initiative continues to confirm if and how establishing broad-based citizen support and being able to draw on large networks of allies or members as sources of solidarity and support can benefit CSO resilience, especially during times of crisis. This could have big implications for CSOs in terms of changing their dynamic accountability and people-powered decision-making processes.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **emerging**, **core** innovation with an exciting new experimental framing which explicitly links accountability to organisational resilience. It demonstrates incremental use of existing tools and tactics for research and measurement, monitoring, learning and capacity support, with existing partners.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

CIVICUS is a global alliance of CSOs and activists with more than 4,000 members in more than 175 countries dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world. Its goals are to defend civic freedoms and democratic values, strengthen the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action and empower a more accountable, effective and innovative civil society. It does this by building solidarity and connections among civil society across borders and at scale, producing timely and world-class knowledge and analysis, innovating and incubating bold initiatives and promoting, modelling and disseminating civil society best practices, advocating for open spaces and systemic change and amplifying the voices of those usually not included, and promoting the resourcing of a diverse and resilient civil society.

02

femplatz's pilot
for resilient roots

femplatz's pilot
for resilient roots

ORGANISATION	**LOCATION**
FemPlatz	Serbia
INNOVATION CATEGORY	**RECOMMENDATIONS**
Emerging Core Innovation	1, 3, 5

STRATEGY

Renewing trust from the roots up through a new concept of accountability.

SUMMARY

This case shows how a civil society organisation can adapt communication tools and tactics to bring its primary constituents closer to what it does and strengthen its resilience in a populist context that challenges the legitimacy of its work and goals.

The populist conservative Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) came to power in 2012 on the basis of a "backlash from voters buffeted by the economic crisis", and subsequently under the leadership of Prime Minister and then later President, Aleksandar Vučić. The **two core elements** of populism are present in Serbia as follows:

anti-elitism: Serbia has a long history at the "vanguard" of populism, most recently deploying a complex mix of socio-economic and nationalist narratives: using rhetoric which promotes the EU integration agenda and economic reform, but also borrowing securitarian discourses from Western governments fighting terrorism. Populists and right-wing parties have used austerity measures, worsening economic conditions and nationalistic framings as political opportunities[1] to undermine overall gender equality in Serbia. Opponents, especially independent media, are cast as "traitors" and "foreign mercenaries".

anti-pluralism: Increasingly, Vučić has been exercising almost autocratic control over the country's affairs, symbolised by his iron grip on the media. This was part of the reason for big protests sparked around the country for several months in early 2019.

In recent years, new national policies in Serbia have been characterised by serious gender stereotyping, traditionalism and patriarchal discourse that promotes and "protects" highly conservative ideas about family and traditional gender roles ("women as mothers"). The adoption of the new Law on Gender Equality has been stalled for almost three years without meaningful public dialogue, and the responsible government ministry has even stated that "forcing gender equality is not good for our country, especially if we want to draw new investors in Serbia".[2] In other words, the use of anti-gender rhetoric and traditional "Serbian national

family values" are often conflated with fear-mongering socio-economic populist narratives.

Gender stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory statements are widely present, perpetuated and continuously reinforced in the media and across Serbia's political spectrum, very often by powerful public officials such as ministers, state secretaries and even the President. These discriminatory and sexist statements are not isolated incidents but clearly portray longstanding patriarchal attitudes in governmental authorities, that shape public policies about women's rights and influence their positions in Serbian society.

This populist language is inflammatory, offensive and above all dangerous, as it is capable of shaping citizens' attitudes and influencing a "public backlash in the perception of gender equality",[3] and is fast becoming a mainstream narrative. It also reinforces a culture of acceptance and impunity to (online) gender-based violence. Threats, intimidation and harassment of female journalists, women's rights defenders and female public figures and opposition leaders have become normalised.

In recent years, CSOs publicly criticising the government or working on sensitive issues have been threatened and harassed. Serbia is currently classed by the CIVICUS Monitor as having narrowed civic space.

1
Rydgren, J. (2005). Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family. European Journal of Political Research (44), 413-437.

2
Zakon o rodnoj ravnopravnosti stopirale mere stednje i interesi poslovne zajednice (in Serbian language), Insajder, 8 January 2018, https://insajder.net/sr/sajt/tema/9309/

3
CEDAW/C/SRB/CO/4 Concluding observations on the fourth periodic review of Serbia, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 8 March 2019

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

The digital sphere has become filled with online gender-based violence, targeted towards civil society. A study in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia[4] in 2018 showed that 54.3% of activists in non-governmental organisations/non-formal groups (working in the area of gender equality, social exclusion and discrimination, youth, LGBT+ rights, Roma rights, rights of persons with disabilities) had experienced online violence. Well paid "netizens" are also employed to scan online social media, commenting in favour of the government and against anyone with opposing views.

4

Research on online gender-based violence: overview of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia, One World Platform and Alternative center for girls, 2018

Through its primary constituent accountability pilot for Resilient Roots, FemPlatz has focused on building stronger relationships and trust with its primary constituents to shape and strengthen its advocacy demands for gender equality. Together with a diverse group of 120 women and 10 women's rights organisations in Serbia, FemPlatz discussed the meaning of advocacy, the benefits and challenges in policy-making, FemPlatz's accountability to them and their active participation in its work. The main features of the innovation include:

FemPlatz recognised the need to change its language and communication methods in order to build trust with the community it was working for. Civil society organisations often react strongly in public to misogynistic statements, but the impersonal and highly technical expert language they use often serves to disconnect communities of affected women from the issues at stake.

First, FemPlatz changed the way it talks about gender-based discrimination and women's rights so that women could relate to its stories and start deconstructing anti-feminist populist narratives. To provide evidence-based information and build a community of support, FemPlatz tested different methods to explain its advocacy work. This included providing details on policy adoption processes in Serbia, discussing their impact on women's everyday lives and drawing connections between seemingly benevolent statements and official public policies. FemPlatz encouraged women to share their own stories and opinions.

To be truly representative, FemPlatz opened all communication channels and methods to its primary constituents. This included phone calls, office hours, email, chat platforms and even tools for sending audio feedback recordings for women who have writing or speaking difficulties.

FemPlatz adapted each approach to address specific needs, such as simplifying surveys for women with learning disabilities. It has also facilitated small group meetings with elderly women, art workshops with young feminists and initiated home visits to rural women.

FemPlatz's objective was to initiate meaningful dialogue and spark the co-creation of programmes, even though the content and formats can vary. To achieve this, FemPlatz created a toolbox of online and offline instruments to collect feedback and provide communication guidelines, as well as new internal procedures for how to course-correct its work in line with participant feedback.

FemPlatz's primary constituents expressed a preference for short, clear and visually appealing information sent by email or posted in closed chat groups that were organised by topic or theme. FemPlatz responded by producing topic-specific learning materials, user-friendly versions of its reports, more visual and less written content, infographics, two-page policy briefs, human interest stories and more.

FemPlatz designs communications materials with mobile phones in mind, incorporating simple content that can easily be accessed, responded to and shared. Acting on another suggestion from its primary constituents, FemPlatz also occasionally organises thematic meetings to directly discuss women's feedback. It regularly thanks female participants for their engagement, time, dedication and discussions.

Directly demonstrating these changes within the organisation's tools and tactics itself as a result of this engagement helps build the capacity and confidence of its primary constituents that they can be active agents of organisational (or "institutional") change more broadly.

1

An organisation like FemPlatz must never assume what is best for its primary constituents. Instead, it is important for organisations to be responsive to their constituents' changing needs, and adopt a flexible and iterative approach. FemPlatz has recognised that accountability to primary constituents must be embedded in its everyday work, across its programmes and as part of its organisational culture.

2

Meaningful change came from these investments in actively seeking input from FemPlatz's primary constituents. By responding, and showing these changes as a result of the feedback, FemPlatz not only built stronger relationships with its key audiences, but the responsiveness of the process also empowered constituents as agents of change, thereby strengthening their confidence.

3

Although many traditional advocacy activities are being implemented to fight populist anti-gender discourse, FemPlatz has shown that building trust among primary constituents, engaging them through meaningful communication and shaping programmes with their input, have helped forge lasting communities of support and empowerment for women. This approach has helped women feel more connected to the organisation, empowering them to share their stories. The process has forged an important shared platform from which to question conservative and patriarchal public discourse together.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **emerging**, **core/adjacent** innovation. With an explicit focus on engaging the organisation's core primary constituents/audiences, it demonstrates incremental and adaptive use of existing tools and tactics in response to their feedback.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

FemPlatz is a feminist advocacy organisation operating in Serbia since 2017. It empowers women and girls, advocates for gender equality policies and women's rights, strengthens the capacities of relevant stakeholders and changes negative attitudes about gender equality and social inclusion. Its work focuses on the rights of women from disadvantaged groups who are exposed to multiple and intersectional discrimination.

03

video volunteers'
pilot for
resilient roots

video volunteers' pilot for resilient roots

ORGANISATION Video Volunteers	**LOCATION** India
INNOVATION CATEGORY Emerging Core Innovation	**RECOMMENDATIONS** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

STRATEGY

Renewing trust from the roots up through a new concept of accountability.

SUMMARY

This case shows how a civil society organisation can adapt digital tools and tactics to bring its primary constituents into organisational decision-making and governance, build a listening, learning and training community and grow its accountability and resilience.

India is one of the most well-known populist contexts in the world, and clearly exhibits the **two core elements** of **anti-elitism** and **anti-pluralism**. First, the populist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi, has continually presented itself as an anti-establishment alternative to the "corrupt" elites; in this case, the longstanding Congress Party and Nehru-Gandhi dynasties, which dominated the political landscape for decades after independence. Second, Modi's **anti-pluralism** prioritises Hindu nationalist policies that demand strict religious adherence, and equates this concept of *Hindutva* with Indian national identity. This has marginalised millions of religious minorities in the country, caused significant social polarisation, and fuelled further cultural populist rhetoric perpetuating divisions between "the people" and "the others". Some **additional features** of populism are also present:

resistant to countervailing facts: The use of lies in India has been weaponised by the government and other actors. WhatsApp, the largest messaging platform in India, has also become the platform of choice for spreading false information by the government, the opposition party and even ordinary people. In this increasingly nationalist environment, stoked by the BJP, WhatsApp has become an ideological battleground.

rejects intermediaries: These politics of deliberate division are simultaneously accompanied by efforts to reduce space for civil society and media organisations to engage in democratic dissent and dialogue. Indeed, civil society organisations (CSOs) are frequently cast as unnecessary or even dangerous intermediaries to Modi and the BJP's supposedly direct relationship with "the people". For example, see Modi's hologram speech that reached multiple rallies at once: a not-so-subtle attempt to cultivate a "direct" relationship with the electorate. Many CSOs and activists focused on rights-based advocacy have been targeted by government authorities. Advocates for operational and resourcing restrictions have been labelled "anti-development" for working against environmentally extractive projects that the government champions as initiatives to lift Indians out of poverty. The CIVICUS Monitor currently classifies India as having obstructed civic space.

Modi has been described as a "high-tech" populist; his highly sophisticated social media campaign strategy was crucial to his initial electoral victory in 2014, effectively bypassing traditional news and media channels to engage directly with millions of people (and first-time voters) with anti-elite messages that he also adapted to low-tech imaging devices, such as the holograms.[1]

crisis, breakdown or threat: In line with his *Hindutva* vision of India, Modi casts the Muslim minority as a threat to the country, inciting gruesome public lynchings and further polarisation between Hindus and Muslims, while diverting attention away from real and very pressing economic crises.

1

Schroeder, R. (2018) Digital media and the rise of right-wing populism in 'Social Theory after the Internet'. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt20krxdr.6.

Access to digital media has enabled Video Volunteers to innovate a low-cost, scalable model of citizen journalism and grassroots activism and advocacy, empowering large numbers of marginalised citizens — "Community Correspondents" — to create and share "impact videos" that both report stories of bottom-up change and initiate local campaigns. Every year, hundreds of videos provide information, mobilise community-level discussion and collective action, enable networking with other activists and increase the awareness of local public administrations. This includes opportunities to generate and disseminate news stories from remote, rural parts of the country that do not receive attention in the mainstream media.

Digital media also helps overcome some of the challenges that accompany working with geographically dispersed communities of primary constituents: Video Volunteers works with more than 200 Community Correspondents and video activists across 160 districts in India, including from some of the poorest and most conflict-affected areas. As these Correspondents often work alone in their communities, without access to regular face-to-face contact with their peers or Video Volunteers staff, it has been difficult for the organisation to manage, train and maintain morale throughout this far-flung activist network.

The spread of mobile phones — and particularly the platform WhatsApp — began to help solve this dilemma. While Video Volunteers started using WhatsApp in 2015 as an activist/community management tool, it was only a year later that the use of platform took off because of the provision of free 4G SIM cards to hundreds of millions of people in the rural population by the private sector. For many Community Correspondents, this was their first online experience.

Video Volunteers is co-creating the organisation's future with its grassroots Community Correspondents. The project helps find new ways to listen, identifies recurring issues and uses feedback to devise joint solutions. More broadly, Video Volunteers seeks to develop and expand the vision for a community media movement in India, while experimenting with participatory leadership and decentralised styles of organisational decision-making. The main features of the innovation include:

Video Volunteers actively listens to its primary constituents instead of assuming or interpreting. For example, Video Volunteers regularly surveys the Correspondents on issues of concern, facilitating a regular feedback process that improves the relevance of communications and allows for flexibility.

Regular two-way communication allows Video Volunteers to both acknowledge and remedy potential problems before they escalate. This has ranged from explaining regional office closures to clarifying processes and solutions to various practical and operational issues. These can be as simple as explaining how to find produced videos on the Video Volunteers website or clarifying payment procedures for Correspondents.

The new regular feedback process has also supported learning on impact. For example, the organisation shares with Community Correspondents training tips and processes to get government officials to watch their videos in spite of distance or perceived disengagement with the content. Continuous feedback and iteration has also inspired Video Volunteers to rewrite and revise its impact manual.

Video Volunteers embraces infographics, short training tips and micro-learning modules shared over WhatsApp, in response to the feedback from the Correspondents. Modeled on best practices used by corporations to train remote employees, these bitesize communications help remind the Correspondents of important tips and techniques in addition to teaching them new information.

Only so much training can be delivered over a platform like WhatsApp. Video Volunteers uses data gathering and surveying to make its wider training and support processes more robust. Eight staff members act as "field mentors", each managing sub-groups of about 40 Community Correspondents. The mentors hold detailed 1-2 hour phone calls with individual Correspondents once a month, ensuring each receives ongoing and consistent training and support.

Video Volunteers has also created a new advisory council made up of high-performing Correspondents who have earned the respect of the wider network. At an initial three-day workshop, 37 Community Correspondents and 7 staff members discussed the past nine months of feedback and accountability work to inform future strategies.

Using digital communication tools, working groups will take forward this advisory council's identified priorities. A "core council" was elected and created fair separate working groups (for its 37 members), designed to address impact and Correspondent engagement, safety and security and welfare, respectively. Staff members facilitate bi-weekly 30 minute calls with their working group over WhatsApp, and then communicate key points to the larger Community Correspondent network.

In this way, Video Volunteers builds new levels of leadership among the Correspondents while identifying new strategic directions to help inform future models and possibilities for the community media movement in India.

While it is still too soon to tell, access to passionate peer support (rather than "top-down" staff efforts) may be more effective in energising "lapsed" or dormant Community Correspondents, as they draw on so much shared experience. Following the working group steer on this priority issue, there was a real desire from empowered Correspondents to directly motivate their less active peers. This means it is also Video Volunteer's primary constituents who are actively spreading its mission and values.

Video Volunteers now plans to convene the council twice in the next year to discuss strategies to evolve both the organisation and community media as a whole into a fully-fledged movement in India. It will also discuss ways to provide Correspondents with greater leadership opportunities within the management of the organisation.

1

WhatsApp groups can be powerful tools for bringing geographically dispersed communities of activists and supporters into one community, provided that listening and learning activities are prioritised. Video Volunteers has invested significantly in researching methods and models to support WhatsApp-based learning communities. These have ranged from techniques of asking questions to facilitating dialogue to sharing lessons. Video Volunteers has also learned to manage some of the inherent practical challenges that come with using WhatsApp, such as unseen messages, shut-off phones and communicating with Constituents who change their phone numbers.

2

This regular feedback and survey model does not necessarily always bring up brand new insights for Video Volunteers. However, it is habit-forming and creates a systematic regular reporting schedule. Indeed, in the same way that a CSO would put in place regular procedures for communicating with its institutional donors, Video Volunteers has created a programme for changing mindsets and discipline around accountability and communication with its primary constituents. These efforts may seem time-consuming at first, but in the long run, you can develop a regular routine of sending short, simple messages to stay in touch with primary constituents on social media.

3

More time is needed to see whether these efforts are making the organisation more resilient over time, but Video Volunteers has indicated some of the potentially destabilising short-term risks of moving to new governance, power and accountability models. These range from potential perceptions of favouritism (i.e. when certain individuals obtain more influential roles) to higher internal activism (thanks to staff empowered by the organisation's commitment to accountability and transparency).

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

In some ways, this case study avoids straightforward categorisation within our innovation framework. It reaches its **core** audience in greater depth, and at the same time is also **transformational** in its use of tools and tactics to do this. This is an **emerging** innovation, running for less than one year.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

Video Volunteers is a community media organisation in India that empowers marginalised citizens to tell their stories so they can right the wrongs they witness, join the global digital content revolution and shape the direction of their country. Access to digital media has enabled Video Volunteers to innovate a low-cost, scalable citizen journalism model, empowering large numbers of marginalised citizens to create and share "impact videos", which both report stories of bottom-up change and initiate local campaigns. Every year, hundreds of videos provide information, mobilise community-level discussion and collective action, enable networking with other activists, and increase the awareness of local public administrations.
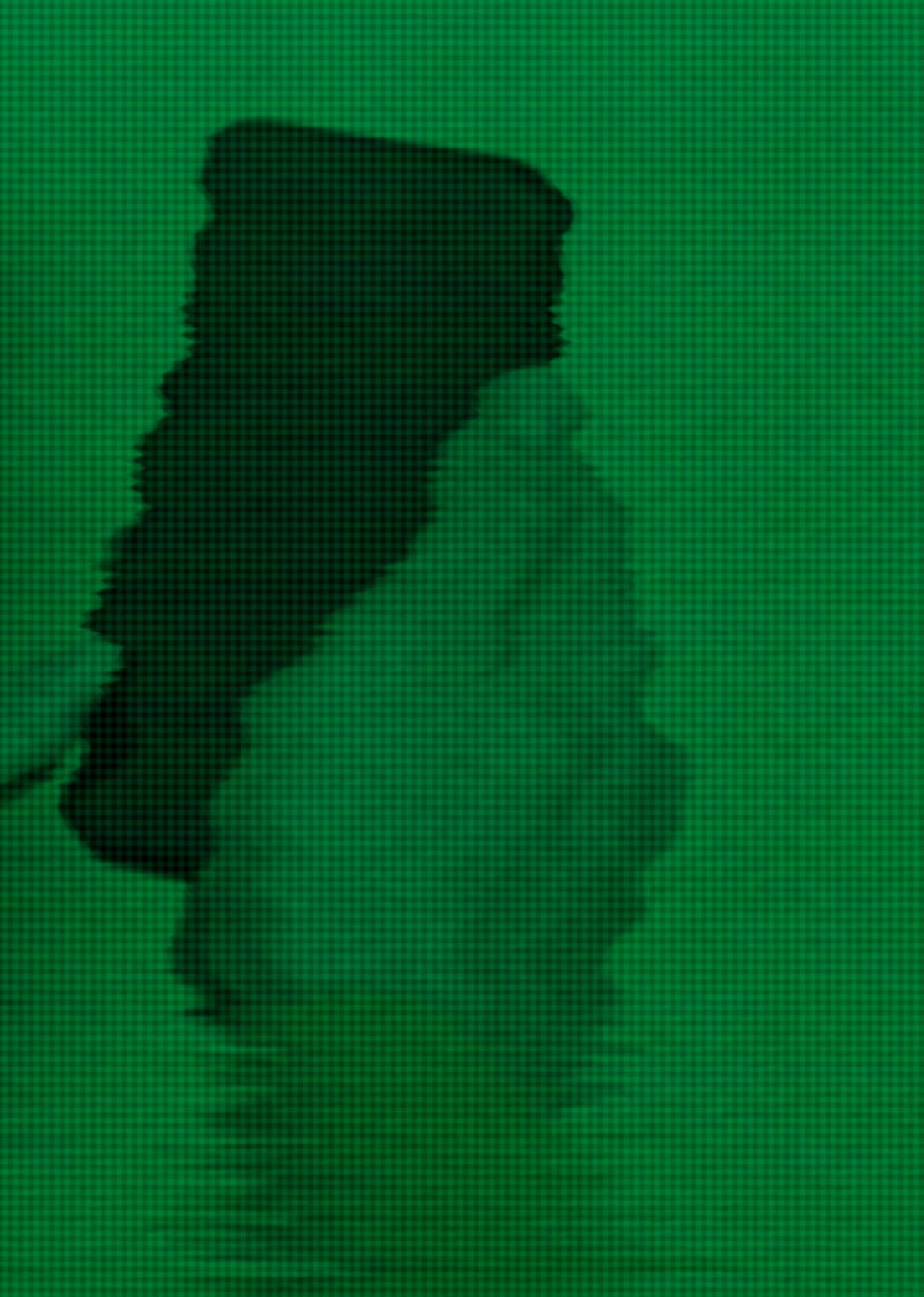
POPULISM

2019

INNOVATION REPORT

case studies

adjacent innovation

new narratives
for human rights

new narratives for human rights

ORGANISATION Amnesty International	**LOCATION** Global
INNOVATION CATEGORY Emerging Adjacent Innovation	**RECOMMENDATIONS** 1, 3, 6

STRATEGY

Developing new positive narratives for an alternative future.

SUMMARY

Using social media as a cost-effective way of testing new narratives and telling new stories — about what and who human rights are for — in different countries.

Populist narratives tend to be reinforced by compelling stories and myths that draw on universal tropes, such as **anti-elitism**, that they promote using digital media to bypass traditional media. This tactic essentially turns social media into an **anti-pluralist** tool for promoting — without debate or scrutiny — their vision of a divided and dangerous world. As rational critiques of populist narratives are frequently discredited, some civil society organisations (CSOs) have found "myth-busting" strategies to be less effective in combating populist messages than telling alternative stories that relate to people's daily lives. In this way, organisations can avoid the frames of existing narratives, instead creating viable alternatives that by their very existence undermine the **two core elements** of populism.

According to Anat Shenker-Osorio's[1] cognitive linguistic research, human rights advocates often use language that at best confuses audiences and at worst reinforces negative perceptions of human rights. For example, framing rights as abstract entities that are arbitrarily "bestowed" on people — robbing people of agency — has perpetuated ambiguity about what rights are in the public mind. Without a consistent definition of human rights, why they matter and how they work, moral calls to action are often reduced to simplistic claims that refugees, women, journalists, or activists should not have their rights taken away or "be treated like criminals". This enables populists to undermine the legitimacy and relevance of human rights, especially for the anti-elitist "us" that they claim to represent.

Audience research, global polls and focus groups have shown that "persuadable" audiences have a very limited understanding of human rights. Many view them as "distant", "heavy" and politically informed, and are skeptical of their relevance to their own lives. Others do not understand who benefits from human rights, and assume that they unfairly favour certain groups, such as criminals, terrorists, or sex workers, or that they only apply to victims of abuses such as torture or political imprisonment. Populists actively perpetuate these misunderstandings and, because there are few alternative messages, human rights organisations are vulnerable to populist narratives that prey on feelings of loss and insecurity. Too often, CSOs frame human rights in terms of problems — as ways of listing abuses — rather than solutions to universal challenges encountered around the world, or tools for building a fairer society.

Human rights organisations are rarely able to articulate what they stand for, how their values translate into action, and how those actions will impact societies. Historically, their communications strategies have clustered around reactions to international crises, often resorting to naming, blaming and shaming tactics. In order to communicate a moral case for action and path forward, CSOs should develop a new vocabulary of solutions and shared values. Not only would this explain how human rights create change but also, by tapping into universal human values, return human rights to a "common sense" position in the public consciousness, rather than a reactive one.

1

https://australianprogress.org.au/how-to-talk-about-human-rights/

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Populists usually have a very simple story to tell, know the response they want to elicit and are adept at using the media and digital marketing tactics to influence the public. They have gamed social media algorithms to promote stories from dubious sources that fit their narratives. They have invested heavily in advertising to inject their narratives into the social media feeds of specific target audiences. In the USA, Donald Trump's campaign has already spent over $16 million on social media advertising since November 2018.[2] In Brazil, India, the Philippines and beyond, populists continue to use Facebook and WhatsApp groups to spread hate, fear and division.

Despite efforts to regulate social media platforms to stem the worst abuses, digital marketing is here to stay. CSOs should therefore find ethical ways to harness it for positive outcomes. For example, disseminating content on Facebook posts can transmit values-based messages, and also test them much more cheaply than more time-consuming focus groups. This should be seen as a more accessible tool that can be used with, rather than instead of, other forms of testing, especially as content that makes people click, share and sign may not necessarily signal messages that will win debates. It can, however, be a first step that helps to set organisations in new directions.

2

https://www.techforcampaigns.
org/2018-political-digital-adverti-
sing-report (after November 2018)

To identify new potential ways of talking about human rights, Amnesty International has applied social media tools primarily used for fundraising to a new end – testing positive narratives. It is an example of how civil society can use social listening, A/B testing, audience segmentation and micro-targeting to promote positive narratives around human rights. These tests aimed to act on recommendations from Anat Shenker-Osorio's cognitive research by:

Framing human rights as actions that people practice, rather than abstract objects or goals "bestowed" on people by governments.

Casting human rights as a collective vision for entire societies rather than individual protections.

Using constructive vocabularies about "journeys" and "building" instead of conflicts.

Framing human rights as universal tools for safer, happier and more peaceful lives rather than individual self-interest and extrinsic values.

At the end of the testing process described below, two key potential narratives emerged as new ways of talking about human rights:

a) human rights as "rules of the road": as guidelines for living together and treating each other fairly;

b) human rights as the "glue" that binds us together in our shared humanity.

As a result, Amnesty International has developed a brand strategy centred on telling stories that illustrate humanity in action.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE TESTING PROCESS

The process began with an exploratory phase auditing quantitative audience research previously carried out by Amnesty International offices in several national markets and meetings with street fundraisers to see what themes emerge in face-to-face conversations with people on the street. The target audiences for the Facebook testing were identified using the platform's tool to target "lookalike audiences" – people with a similar profile to current followers. These people had strong affinities for human rights and human rights organisations. They came from a broad mix of regions ranging from Barbados to Botswana and Estonia to Zambia.

The first round of testing focused on engagement, rather than recruitment. Amnesty International's brand team applied four sets of Facebook ad copy about human rights to three separate videos: a profile of an activist, a short inspiring animation and an upbeat video for the annual report launch. The videos were run multiple times with different Facebook ad copy. In this first phase, the "cause/glue" and "rules of the road"-themed ad copy performed best. The traditional "safety net" message performed poorly and subsequently was dropped from Amnesty's messaging strategies.

THE DEAL

BELIEF/GLUE

CAUSE/GLUE

RULES OF THE ROAD

The second round of testing applied the four best-performing narratives to an upbeat video produced by Amnesty International France (itself based on the insight that people want to be part of a successful cause). Each narrative was paired with three different versions of a sentence of text, each of which varied by swapping single words. For example, instead of "fighting" for a better world, alternative texts spoke of "moving", "finding the way", "making", and "standing together". The study found that casting human rights as a connective force performed best.

The third round tested which values messages would drive a higher rate of sign-ups to a human rights organisation. It centred around recruitment in 24 emerging markets, especially Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan. Four bespoke animated short videos were created to illustrate the following ideas:

- Change/Hope (an empowering message)
- Humanity (a uniting message)
- People Power (traditional activism)
- Compassion (a traditional aid message)

In the tests run by Amnesty International's digital marketing and brand teams, the "humanity" message performed best, with "change/hope" and "compassion" messages enjoying varied success in certain markets. The traditional "people power" message performed the worst.

The purpose of A/B testing is not to identify definitive new messages, because the content that performs best can vary according to factors such as its quality, relevance to a target audience, how it fits algorithms and even the time of year it is posted. A/B testing should instead be seen as a means of trialing innovative new messaging and sense-checking regular content in combination with other testing methods (which can only be used intermittently by most organisations).

1

In order to combat populist anti-elitist narratives, civil society groups need to frame their causes in terms of binding communities together rather than confronting governments. To do this, they should work together to brainstorm new tactics, share positive results and, crucially, work together to cross-promote content that tells stories reinforcing a common narrative: operating as a unified, multi-faceted movement rather than separate brands.

2

Civil society groups need to test using metaphors from everyday life that can explain core concepts like human rights to audiences. In these tests, language around "humanity" tested well, while conceiving human rights as a "safety net", a "confrontation", or "protecting victims" proved less effective. Hope-based communications workshops (see case study 11, pg 114) suggest the language and imagery of "gardening", "building" and "eating together" are promising vocabularies for human rights. Continuing these workshops could identify further potential narratives and metaphors for A/B testing.

3

A/B testing and direct targeting offer an accessible space for testing unusual content around values and assessing impact across different audiences. It also can be used to target content directly to decision-makers. This simple tool is now standard across the digital marketing sector and national politics, particularly in the USA, but CSOs should experiment to find unique and ethical ways of using it. For example, it could be used to promote the authentic voices of communities and supporters with user-generated content. Messages that perform well in A/B tests could be trialed with focus groups (even if these are informal gatherings of supporters) and in daily communications.

4

Human rights groups could start developing creative content based on concepts of "rules of the road", "a way to treat each other better" and "the glue that binds us together in our shared humanity". They can then apply these potential framings to current issues, using them to identify and promote everyday stories that bring these narratives to life.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

This is an **emergent**, **adjacent** innovation for message framing and testing, adapting existing tools and tactics for new uses and audiences. It is also starting to expand beyond Amnesty International to several human rights organisations.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people in more than 70 countries. It campaigns for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

05

voices of inclusion

voices of inclusion

ORGANISATION

ARTICLE 19

LOCATION

Myanmar and Malaysia

INNOVATION CATEGORY

Experimental Adjacent Innovation

RECOMMENDATIONS

1, 2, 4

STRATEGY

Inclusive communications and social listening in divided contexts.

SUMMARY

A multi-faceted initiative to counter hate speech and intolerance, funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It builds from social listening and research to understand the root causes of hate speech and intolerance in order to design appropriate advocacy and training initiatives.

For Myanmar, the main features of the national populist context, with the **two core elements** of populism — **anti-elitism** and **anti-pluralism** — and the **additional feature** of the disregard of facts, are described elsewhere in this report (see case study 08 pg 86).

In Malaysia, by contrast, the May 2018 election has been described as a "democratic disruption [standing] apart in a year of populist nationalism".[1] The Barisan National coalition that had ruled since 1957 lost power, ending the dominance of "communal race-based politics".[2] There was real optimism of a "New Malaysia" following this seismic change, and that the equal rights of previously marginalised groups would finally be recognised and respected but, one year after the elections, major concerns were still being raised around the continued restrictions on fundamental freedoms. In addition to the failure around progressing promised institutional and political reforms, increasing ethnic and religious intolerance continues to threaten stability, and both political leaders and the Malaysian public have noted growing concern about incendiary rhetoric concerning race and religion.

The Malaysian government has an important role to play in curbing hate speech and other forms of intolerance, but needs to do this through policy solutions that do not restrict speech, are aligned with international standards and law, and focus not only on criminal measures but also positive initiatives to "address discrimination and conflict in society and to promote tolerance and intercultural understanding".[3] This raises interesting questions about the roles and expectations of new political leaders in "post-populist" contexts, where the effects of social divides perpetuated by their predecessors are still present.

Moreover, the looming threat of populist politics is still present, with the fact that the Pakatan Harapan ruling coalition's electoral victory was actually dubbed as a struggle against "a corrupt and entrenched Umno and Barisan Nasional elite, who, through excessive and large-scale corruption, weak governance and the mismanagement of the economy, greatly harmed the livelihood of the people and ruined Malaysia's standing among its peers"[4] (the **anti-elitism** core element). It remains to be seen whether this would be mere rhetoric or an actual basis for greater equality and change.

1
https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/asia/article/2177481/how-malaysias-democratic-disruption-stands-apart-year

2
https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/2158098/has-malaysia-moved-past-race-based-politics-election-will-give

3
https://www.article19.org/resources/malaysia-efforts-to-combat-hate-speech-should-not-trample-freedom-of-expression/

4
https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/123299

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital media provides opportunities for well-organised and politically-motivated actors — populist or otherwise — to quickly and effectively spread negative narratives and hate speech about their targets. However, the public nature of social media also creates new opportunities for civil society organisations (CSOs) and activists to proactively listen, research and design appropriate responses to this harmful content, as well as to understand how and through whom hate speech emerges and spreads.

Big corporate platforms such as Facebook need to act to remove and decelerate the spread of harmful narratives and hate speech online. Yet they are often unwilling or unable to recognise the individuals and groups best equipped to monitor and flag where and how the harmful content is developing and spreading. There is a catch 22 here: these platforms demand or insist on transparency about who the sources identifying and flagging harmful content are, yet it is this very lack of visibility which not only protects them from risk, but also allows them to be effective. In this context, international CSOs can be critical intermediaries between the formal and structured workings of the private sector on the one hand, and the informal and fluid workings of civil society actors on the other.

Voices of Inclusion is a multi-faceted initiative to counter hate speech and intolerance, incorporating a wide range of advocacy and training initiatives to combat stigmatisation and prejudice, and to empower marginalised communities in Myanmar and Malaysia. It is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The main features of the innovation include:

These activities are founded on evidentiary and analytical research aimed at isolating root causes of hate speech and intolerance in both countries. ARTICLE 19 is at the early stages of carrying out listening and attitudinal research to understand the fears, prejudices and other societal factors that contribute to hate speech and intolerance, and how negative narratives, harmful stereotypes and hate speech develop and spread through social networks.

The research will examine how these messages are heard by and in different communities, and the role and influence of different political and social actors in perpetuating them. The research methodology will draw from the experience of previous listening research, such as that conducted by researchers affiliated with the Myanmar Media and Society (M.MAS) Project.[5]

This process will deliver insights to inform the design of future advocacy strategies, ranging from "community influencer" level to technical advisory approaches with private data and tech sector companies/platforms to national and global level policy work with political, governmental and multilateral stakeholders.

The key elements of the process are:

Applying sociological and anthropological research methodologies to a general understanding of the root causes of hate speech and intolerance.

Cross-sectoral collaboration between international and national CSOs, academics and local researchers.

Staging of project activities to allow for in-depth research to influence the design and implementation of advocacy and training activities.

Using dual methodologies to generate insights on social attitudes and influences. In addition to the social listening research described above, ARTICLE 19 will—through an adjacent project—use traditional market research-style surveys carried out by professional companies or consultants to test the efficacy of messages promoting inclusion and tolerance.

5
https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/
research-centres/program-
me-modern-burmese-studies/
myanmar-media-and-socie-
ty-mmas-project

1

Social listening is a huge asset and resource for international CSOs, but national partners and academics with local knowledge are best positioned do this. They are able to monitor dialogue and conversations in native languages, have very localised linkages and can use or adapt their monitoring methods and tactics around contingent contextual risks. International CSOs should resource professional psychosocial support for partners such as individuals and groups or organisations engaged at the frontlines of these challenging contexts. Providing the space and support for them to perform requires these longer-term commitments to resilience. This should be part of the reciprocal pact for accessing and using the data and insights for which they are taking the risks to deliver.

2

Taking time to listen and understand social attitudes and narratives before designing an advocacy strategy is critical, but public messaging in and of itself is not enough. It needs to be part of a more comprehensive approach which includes advocacy with the actors and leaders — in both political and social sectors — who influence the perpetuation of harmful and negative narratives and stereotypes. CSOs need to find effective ways to convert some of these actors, such as religious leaders, into advocacy champions capable of building positive and personalised understandings with their followers.

3

When it comes to sourcing and monitoring data for advocacy work, it is important to embrace and accommodate informal methods, processes and ways of working with local partners. As shown elsewhere, this model also "does not look much like a standard civil society process of researching, reflecting and advocating".[6]

6
https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/feb/19/open-data-techsoup-restart-slovakia

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **experimental**, **adjacent** innovation. Still at a very early stage of implementation, it involves incremental use of research, survey and monitoring tools and tactics to ultimately connect important adjacent audiences, such as private data and digital platforms like Facebook, with insights from actors they either do not recognise or work with.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

ARTICLE 19 works for a world where all people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life without fear of discrimination. Two interlocking freedoms — the freedom to speak and the freedom to know — set the foundation for all its work, and when either come under threat, ARTICLE 19 responds with one voice, through courts of law, global and regional organisations and civil society wherever it is present. ARTICLE 19 has worked across the Asia Pacific region for more than 20 years, with team members across Southeast Asia, including in Myanmar and Malaysia.

06

inclusive
communications
strategy

SZAVAZZ.
A TISZTA
LEVEGŐÉRT.

SZAVAZZ.
MERT
A MÉHEK
NEM TUDNAK.

inclusive communications strategy

ORGANISATION	**LOCATION**
Greenpeace Magyarország	Hungary
INNOVATION CATEGORY	**RECOMMENDATIONS**
Established Adjacent Innovation	1, 5, 6

STRATEGY

Inclusive communications and social listening in divided contexts.

SUMMARY

International civil society organisations (CSOs) can creatively reach new domestic audiences with positive messages about the value they deliver for them and society, even in a deeply divided context.

Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been described as "creat[ing] the template for the populism sweeping western democracies",[1] and the evolution of his rhetoric over time has been extensively analysed. According to the Global Populism Database's comparative study of speeches given by global leaders, Orbán, although not considered populist during his first term through to 2002, since later returning to the country's premiership in 2010, has become "one of Europe's most populist prime ministers".[2] The **two core elements** of populism are present in the case of Hungary:

anti-elitism: Orbán has moved anti-immigration and anti-Muslim cultural populism from the margins to the mainstream,[3] pitting the Christian Hungarian majority ("the people") against accused immigrant invaders (the "other") who are supposedly supported by "the elite" — human rights organisations and liberals — and pose a threat to Hungary's traditional, Christian fabric.

anti-pluralism: Erroneously equating migrants with terrorists has won Orbán votes. Now, he has presented himself as the defender of Hungary (and Europe) against Muslim migrants. "We will never allow Hungary to become a target country for immigrants",[4] he has claimed. "We do not want to see significantly sized minorities with different cultural characteristics and backgrounds among us. We want to keep Hungary as Hungary".[4]

Additional features of populism are also present:

anti-debate: The constraints placed on opposing voices have actively discouraged and limited public criticism of the government and other politically sensitive topics. Elections have been routinely held in Hungary but are regularly influenced to ensure the victory of the ruling Fidesz party.

resistant to countervailing facts: Corruption by the Fidesz party and close associates is frequently reported. However, this has failed to bring his administration down; to the contrary, corruption is often justified as an unofficial policy for Hungarian interests. Prominent Orbán supporter Andras Lanczi has claimed that "[w]hat some call corruption is essentially the main policy of Fidesz …the government has set goals like forming a layer of domestic businessmen, building pillars of a strong Hungary in rural areas or in industry".[5] In fact, even Orbán has claimed that his revolt against international capital and liberal values has sought to build "Hungarian national capital" by empowering a class of Hungarian entrepreneurs.

rejects intermediaries: Orbán has waged a war against all institutions and sectors in Hungary that he deems illegitimate representatives of the "popular will". Since 2010, Fidesz has pushed through constitutional and legislative changes that have enabled it to monopolise control of the country's independent institutions. It has also enacted policies to constrain the operations of opposition groups, media, academia, religious groups, and civil society organisations (CSOs). The country's status has declined from "free" to "partly free" in the Freedom in the World 2019 index,[6] and has become classed as obstructed civic space in the CIVICUS Monitor.[7] The Fidesz government has pressured CSOs with heavy new compliance, registration and reporting burdens aimed at sidelining dissenting voices and organisations, such as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Central European University, and other CSOs and media outlets. Guarantees of freedom of expression, protected in the constitution, have been undermined by complex media legislation and politicised regulation enacted by Fidesz.[8] It is estimated that 90% of all media in Hungary is now directly or indirectly controlled by the party or government loyalists.[9]

1
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/orban-s-brand-of-populism-blinds-him-to-reality-jtvjbp659

2
https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2019/mar/06/revealed-the-rise-and-rise-of-populist-rhetoric

3
https://www.brookings.edu/research/anti-muslim-populism-in-hungary-from-the-margins-to-the-mainstream/

4
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/Viktor_Orban

5
https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/hungary-orban-balaton/

6
https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/hungary

7
https://monitor.civicus.org/country/hungary/

8
https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/hungary

9
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2017/08/29/the-state-of-hungarian-media-endgame/

use of crisis, breakdown or threat: Orbán has always used the supposed threat of an immigrant "takeover", underwritten by George Soros, the person he has tagged as the Hungarian people's nemesis and connected actors, including CSOs supported through his philanthropy. This so-called "crisis" has been used to justify illiberal policies and the repression of dissent.

The attacks on traditional media and civic space in Hungary makes it challenging for CSOs to communicate with the public to champion societal change. In this context, it is critical for them to appear as objective, non-partisan entities and to publicly and judiciously criticise government actions in a way that highlights issues of key importance when it most matters to the organisation's cause and values.

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Social media, especially Facebook, has helped fill a communications gap for dissenting or independent voices and organisations, and citizens who wish to access alternative information.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE INNOVATION

Greenpeace Hungary's new communications strategy is founded on:

(i) balanced and non-partisan campaigning in traditional and social media

(ii) engaging with all segments of the public and explicitly tailoring its messaging to ensure that Greenpeace's work feels relevant and valuable to diverse domestic audiences.

The main features of the innovation include:

Whilst always maintaining its core environmental framing and identity, Greenpeace Hungary balances diverse topics, issues and campaigns. Some resonate with all members of the public and highlight environmental protection and health issues, while others may be more critical of the government (e.g. the proposed construction of a new nuclear power plant with Russian support). This allows some of Greenpeace's broader messages to be picked up by the pro-government media, ensuring that the organisa-

tion is not seen as overtly partisan or anti-government. It also broadens the potential public audience and consensus for both Greenpeace's work and environmental issues more broadly.

Greenpeace has developed and used its own media channels to communicate about the government's environmentally destructive pet projects. It also reaches out to the few traditional media outlets which are still independent. When Greenpeace does criticise government positions, it grounds its reporting in strong factual evidence of environmental impact in order to reduce risks of being discredited as a partisan organisation.

Greenpeace has effectively worked strategically with other CSOs on some broader topics where Greenpeace brings a strong environmental perspective. A coalition of human rights and environmental organisations has been formed which communicates in one united voice to both the media and public through its Facebook page, open letters, press releases and manifestos. Having one voice helps strengthen the value of solidarity and underlines why CSOs serve Hungarians' interest through their work, rather than only serving foreign interests as government propaganda would have it.

Greenpeace works in a transparent way and communicates to all segments of the population about the national and international benefits of its work. It has been critical for Greenpeace Hungary's domestic audience to understand that it is an extremely transparent and credible organisation, funded only by individuals and foundations established by individuals, that delivers value and highly relevant results.

Greenpeace addresses relevant issues in everyday language, moving away from the highly technical language of climate policy. It works hard to frame environmental issues within universal values relevant to people's lives, often engaging references to both liberal values (solidarity, pluralism of views and of society, global identity) and conservative ones (patriotism, Christian values, importance of family and children). Greenpeace also links environmental issues to broader health concerns, using inclusive and non-aggressive language to touch on universal values such as the defence and respect for life of all forms. (NB. This has also been important to Greenpeace more broadly in response to the growing student-led climate change movements that have captured the public's imagination and garnered widespread international support).

Let's protect our public parks for our children.
This was part of a green city campaign with the goal of mobilising people to protect green areas in Budapest. While the campaign aimed to evoke the love of trees and highlight their importance in humans' well-being, it also addressed pro-government voters by mentioning children and using the Hungarian national flag.

Vote. Bees can't. Vote for clean air.
Both were used as part of an online mobilisation campaign that aimed to encourage people to vote at the European Parliamentary elections. Instead of any partisan messages, the language and visuals were framed around universal environmental benefits, such as bees and clean air. They also encouraged non-partisan actions, such as demanding an environmental programme from all candidates.

Do you also want clean air in Budapest?
This was part of Greenpeace's clean air campaign in Budapest. The picture displays the Chain Bridge, an iconic national historic monument widely seen as an inclusive symbol of progressivism and patriotism. Showing this bridge in both smog and clean air sends a strong subliminal message.

Greenpeace's communications stress the importance of communities and the value of courage. The organisation is encouraging people in Hungary to press for change on local problems relevant to them. Greenpeace uses empowering language, such as the phrases "We Can" and "Do it, Others Can't". It has also created free online DIY guidelines for the public ("How to defend trees", "How to do campaigning"), makes sure that positive examples are distributed, encourages actions and facilitates collaboration among change-makers.

Our natural treasures are in danger. Sign the petition.
This encourages people to sign the petition calling for the restoration of an independent Environmental Ministry that was closed in 2016. The petition was launched in response to massive government lay-offs of environmental protection employees. By depicting animals that are native to Hungary and loved by Hungarians, the campaign argued that environmental protection is in the interest of everyone, and that the expertise of experienced staff is necessary at the institutional level for effective environmental work.

As a result of its communications strategy, there has been substantial growth in Greenpeace Hungary's reach since 2016:

More than 200% growth in both the total number of Facebook page likes (to more than 150,000 in 2018, from around 70,000 in 2016) and the active email list size (to around 110,000 in 2018, from just over 50,000 in 2016).

More than 850% growth in users signing at least one petition (to more than 170,000 in 2018, from just over 20,000 in 2016).

By the end of 2019, Greenpeace Hungary had more Facebook likes than the Hungarian government!

01

Even in a deeply divided context, you can achieve substantial growth in engaging new audiences if you connect with them in the right way. Instead of using alienating policy and technical speak, Greenpeace has stressed the importance of communities and values that resonate with and positively motivate different segments of society. In this way, it has raised awareness of both local and global issues, and has empowered the public to appreciate the relevance and agency of both its own — and Greenpeace's — actions.

02

In order to convey an organisation's value to the entire population, it is essential to spend time identifying the most accessible language for the public. It is also important to focus on compelling (but not controversial) issues, to engage with positive emotions and values, and to tell relatable success stories about the difference the organisation makes in citizens' lives. This resonates strongly with the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union's (HCLU's) efforts to present alternative narratives for human rights and respond to the shrinking civil society space in Hungary. Its "HCLU is needed" (Kell a TASZ) social media campaign avoided reactive, defensive communication responses to politicians and pro-government media, in favour of embracing a proactive space to "start telling our own story about who we are, what we believe in, and who we are fighting for".[10]

03

CSOs must take every step to appear clearly non-partisan and fully transparent about who funds them, who and what they work for and the results they are delivering. This is especially crucial in contexts where the sources of funding of an organisation are being used to delegitimise it.

10
https://www.dejusticia.org/
wp-content/uploads/2018/04/
Rising-to-the-populist-challen-
ge-VERSION-FINAL-PA-
RA-WEB-1.pdf

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **established adjacent** innovation. It demonstrates incremental development of the organisation's public engagement and communications tools and tactics to reach significant numbers of new (domestic) audiences in support of its work.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

Greenpeace is an independent campaigning organisation which uses peaceful, creative action to expose global environmental problems, confront the systems that threaten our environment and develop solutions for a green and peaceful future. It works through 27 independent national/regional organisations that work directly with communities on the frontlines as they protect the environments they call home. Since 2002, Greenpeace Magyarország/Hungary has become one of the best-known environmental organisations in the country due to its high-profile campaigns and strong media presence.

87

the together project

the together project

ORGANISATION	LOCATION
InterAction	USA

INNOVATION CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS
Established Adjacent Innovation	2, 5

STRATEGY

Strengthening civil society solidarity and resilience networks.

SUMMARY

An advocacy hub engaging new allies beyond the sector and operating as a network to mobilise the grassroots solidarity and support of civil society partners in response to politically-targeted discrimination and disinformation.

In terms of the **two core elements**:

anti-elitism: Donald Trump's 2016 US Presidential election victory on a populist-nationalism platform depended on his carefully crafted persona. Trump cast himself as the "true representative" of the American people fighting the corruption and arrogance of the "progressive" cultural and political elite of the Washington establishment. Trump's inauguration speech included: "We are transferring power from Washington DC and giving it back to you, the people ... The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country." Since his election, Trump has promoted an explicit agenda to ban Muslim immigration. This is part of a broader nativist movement in the US, elevating latent anti-Islamic attitudes to the level of national conversation. The reduced rhetorical distance between the US administration and conservative right-wing Islamophobic groups has helped normalise and legitimise politically-motivated anti-Muslim content and communications in the media.

anti-pluralism: Trump has used language such as: "The only important thing is the unification of the people – because the other people don't mean anything."[1] His claims to represent "the people" delegitimise all other political competitors and excludes anyone defined as not supporting this group.

Other **additional features** of populist-nationalism present in the case of Donald Trump are:

anti-debate: Those who opposes and seeks to expose Trump's non-factual claims have been quickly dismissed as liars, traitors or enemies of the state who should be sent to jail.

resistant to countervailing facts: Trump's false claims are common features of his politics. By April 2019, the Washington Post identified more than 10,000 instances in which he had used false or misleading claims.[2]

rejects intermediaries: Trump's consistent attacks on the media as "fake news" highlights his disdain for any intermediaries between himself and "the people".

crisis, breakdown or threat: Trump has used "crisis" talk to justify his anti-minority policies. He proactively incites fear of non-Americans with scenarios suggesting immigrants will take over the United States.

1
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/24/donald-trumps-warning-sign-populism-authoritarianism-inauguration

2
https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?destination=%2fvideo%2fpolitics%2ffact-checker%2fpresident-trump-has-made-more-than-10000-false-or-misleading-claims--the-fact-checker%2f2019%2f07%2f26%2f080f8376-225a-49cc-9c66-9b685abc3d5e_video.html%3f

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

In 2019, Freedom House[2] has tracked polarising political and media trends, the "outsized influence of special interests",[3] the decline in independent and fact-based reporting "in favor of bellicose partisan media",[3] and the growth of social media platforms that "reward extreme views and fraudulent content".[3] In this context, US citizens are increasingly influenced by echo chambers of non-factual information and news that confirms their existing bias and opinions. Content promoted via social media now plays a disproportionate role in shaping public debate and opinion about policy issues. Rumours, lies and false information can spread quickly and pervasively.

International civil society organisations (CSOs) are also vulnerable to online disinformation attacks and campaigns intentionally designed to create confusion and division, discredit targeted organisations and their leaders, and promote inaccurate views about the communities they support. For instance, because of basic name-checking mistakes and then incorrect information gathered from social media profiles, an article in the US mainstream media falsely linked an impartial aid organisation delivering life-assisting programmes in Palestine to terrorism. Such "manufactured dissent" can rapidly spread internationally through digital platforms and networks, creating huge workloads for the organisations having to defend their credibility online. Fighting off trolls, false claims and smear attacks have cost members of the Together Project significant human resources and capital. One organisation, for example, had to spend over US$100,000 in one year to improve search engine optimisation results for its name and leaders.

3
https://freedomhouse.org/
report/freedom-world/freedom-
world-2019/
democracy-in-retreat

The Together Project is an advocacy and solidarity hub supporting and representing US-based development and humanitarian relief organisations confronting targeted prejudicial regulations due to their operating principles or religious faith. The main features of the innovation include:

The Project has developed expertise in adapting technical advocacy tactics: Since 2017, the initiative has addressed both the discriminatory policies in the financial sector and inaccurate public risk perceptions that challenge these organisations, through advocacy with policymakers and regulatory officials. This has included convening expert briefings, advocating for specific language in bills and amendments, and facilitating policy and practice meetings with the US Congress, US Treasury officials, regulatory bodies and the financial and legal sectors on the impact of financial access and other operational support issues experienced by affected CSOs. The coalition has also participated in relevant multi-stakeholder dialogues and workstreams led by the World Bank and others.

These activities have achieved clear success in engaging new audiences and allies, notably the banking and regulatory sectors and new "champions" in Congress.

The Project has developed "a model of collaborative thought leadership" that enables information sharing and the development of common strategies in response to the attacks on these organisations. The Project does this by engaging a broad secular and interfaith solidarity coalition of CSOs. This has allowed the targeted organisations to find allies to carry important messages to different constituencies, including a broad, diverse faith-based community of international CSOs.

These relationships have enabled the strategic deployment of "surrogates" capable of promoting positive messages to members of Congress and others when advocating for specific issues. Most notable are the levels of solidarity actions leveraged through allied international CSOs, which mobilised their grassroots supporters to take direct action in support of an attacked organisation.

The Project has successfully cultivated a strong "one for all, and all for one" sector mentality in support opposed against politically-motivated attacks. Along with the five formal coalition members (American Relief Agency for the Horn of Africa (ARAHA), Helping Hand for Relief & Development, Islamic Relief USA, United Mission for Relief and Development (UMR) and Zakat Foundation of America), more than 75 other organisations are involved in learning and working group activities in support of positive public image, civil society strengthening, and responding to disinformation attacks. As InterAction stresses,[4] "the exponential effect of displaying a united front" often goes beyond aiding an individual organisation. Rather, it promotes "a deepening of the public morale and posture for the entire sector domestically and abroad".

Without focusing on potential backlash, these allied organisations have stood together on principle with the coalition members and have mobilised significant shows of solidarity and support through their respective networks. For instance, a recently proposed congressional amendment, supported by a politically motivated think tank opposed to one international CSO, sought to cut the charity's government funding. The think tank was drawing on baseless and incorrect "evidence" to link the CSO to supposed terrorist activity, funding and individuals. The amendment was ultimately withdrawn, not just because of effective insider advocacy involving the organisation's congressional champions, but also because the congressional office was flooded with messages of sector support from 50+ organisations on behalf of the targeted organisation.

4
https://icscentre.
org/2018/10/26/
the-together-project-les-
sons-for-collective-acti-
on-in-the-face-of-chilling-effe-
cts-on-civil-society/

01

Taking proactive measures to establish relationships, build trust and promote accurate information about what international CSOs are doing and who and what they represent helps counter false claims and motivates new audiences to consider why and how they might provide support.

02

Building a base of both unlikely and likely allies is critical. Indeed, engaging likely allies encourages them to adopt new principle- and values-based solidarity actions and further mobilise their extensive networks to do so as well. This operating model is also valuable when advocating with government, regulatory and financial access stakeholders for change.

03

Working as a network and addressing problems collectively have been essential to sharing insights and identifying solutions. Investing and contributing time, resources and relationships to better understand issues and vulnerabilities with like-minded organisations also builds sector capacity and solidarity capital as a longer-term insurance asset. In polarised political contexts, any international CSO, however impartial, non-partisan or apolitical it appears, could be at risk of targeted attacks aimed at discrediting its work, leaders or communities. "Keeping your head down and hoping it won't be you" is no longer an effective avoidance strategy.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **established**, **adjacent** innovation. It demonstrates incremental use of advocacy, convening, education and media engagement tactics in different forums. It also establishes supportive adjacent audiences from the banking, regulatory and political sectors and mobilises the networks of other international CSOs.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

InterAction is the largest alliance of international CSOs and partners in the USA, with 180-plus members working in more than 100 countries to eliminate extreme poverty and vulnerability, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace and ensure dignity for all people.

08
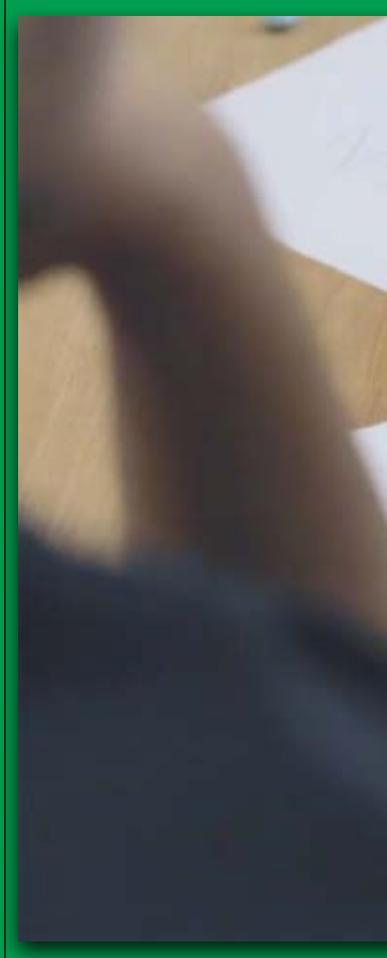
shift

shift

ORGANISATION Save the Children	**LOCATION** Myanmar
INNOVATION CATEGORY Emerging Adjacent Innovation	**RECOMMENDATIONS** 1, 2, 3, 4

STRATEGY

Creating alternative digital youth-led spaces.

SUMMARY

This initiative borrows and implements concepts from corporate start-up culture — a campaign incubator and accelerator model — to both invest in and scale small ideas from local youth actors, and build their skillsets and agency.

Since the 1960s, Myanmar's ruling military elites have espoused a nationalist vision of Burma grounded in the majority culture (Burman), the majority religion (Buddhism) and the majority language (Burmese). These policies have isolated and oppressed Myanmar's ethnically diverse population. Despite a recent transition to proto-civilian democratic control, Myanmar has adopted an "anything goes"[1] model of populism that supports authoritarian rule. The **two core elements** of populism are present in Myanmar:

anti-elitism: the political landscape is dominated by the Burman ethnic majority group, which defines itself uncompromisingly as the one "true embodiment" of Myanmar, thereby marginalising minorities as the "other".[2]

anti-pluralism: Denationalisation rhetoric employs "recent arrival" myths to deny the longstanding presence of minority Muslim communities, especially the Rohingya population, in the country. This has fueled prejudice and violence against the Rohingyas, and common acceptance of this situation. Alarmingly, the military's harsh treatment of this group has received widespread support from the local population, even though they themselves have been victimised by these forces. Hardline Buddhist monks portray themselves as leading a struggle to save Buddhism from a "rampaging Islam".[3]

One **additional feature** of populism in the context of Myanmar is that it is **resistant to countervailing facts**. Radical Buddhist monks and others have mobilised communities with disinformation and fake news, delivered systematically through social media, to justify and promote ongoing political and ethnic persecution.

1
https://www.boell.de/sites/
default/files/v2_web_perspecti-
ves_asia_2018.
pdf?dimension1=division_as

2
https://www.opendemocracy.
net/en/
how-populism-directed-against-
minorities-is-used-to-prop-up-
myanmar-s-democratic-reviva/

3
https://www.bbc.com/news/
world-asia-41263073

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

In less than ten years, there has been transformative growth in access to the internet in Myanmar, from around 1% of the population to 80%. The rapid adoption of social media networks has created new opportunities for public engagement. However, this promising new space for civic expression is now under threat, having been monopolised and manipulated by well-resourced and highly organised actors skilled at spreading disinformation, politically-motivated propaganda and negative agendas to assert their vision of a mono-cultural state, and control over citizens through online information warfare. Fake social media accounts promoting nationalist, anti-Muslim and pro-Buddhism content have proliferated in recent years.[4]

Children and youth make up almost half of Myanmar's population, yet their voices are often ignored, dismissed or de-legitimised by traditional hierarchical and authoritarian political structures and decision-making. Youth voices representing ethnic and religious minorities, girls and socially excluded groups such as LGBT+ are even more marginalised. Myanmar's education system does not prepare youth with the critical thinking skills needed to actively participate in civic debate. Nor does it prepare them to effectively navigate the new digital civic spaces that have emerged overnight. Low levels of digital literacy and poor critical thinking skills make youth susceptible to online disinformation and hate speech, cyber-bullying and digital security issues, causing them to withdraw from civic participation in this space and thereby reinforcing the nationalists' goals. But there is significant potential to inform, invest in, activate and empower this next generation of Myanmar's leaders to insert their voices into the political discourse and advocate for social issues that are important to them.

4
https://time.com/5425609/
facebook-remove-myanmar-military-accounts/

Shift enables emerging youth movements to directly develop impactful digital campaigns for positive change by providing the community, structure and seed funding to connect them with creative and technical mentors. Youth are the decision-makers at every stage of the campaign design process, which tackles issues spanning peace, gender equality, mental health, education and the environment. The project also develops their digital literacy and campaigning through experiential learning methods.

The main features of the innovation include:

This approach challenges "old power" structures which have historically marginalised citizens, particularly young people, in decision-making, to be more responsive to "new power" peer structures.

This new model is also a deliberate decentralisation of Save the Children's own institutional power, which has led to the evolution of new internal ways of working (i.e. self-disruption).

The key elements of the process are:

An independent advisory board governs a competitive grants-based mechanism for youth groups already actively campaigning on issues. The board provides seed funding for campaign development.

Successful grantees then attend a five-day campaign accelerator workshop. This workshop develops digital literacy and safety skills that are then used to co-design a campaign strategy using a variety of fun and participatory activities specifically for Myanmar youth. Teamed with a creative partner, the participants explore an issue they want to change and identify the vision and targets for a public campaign. They then develop and test two creative concepts, plan how they might initiate the campaign and make important decisions on budget priorities.

With the youth acting as "clients", the creative agency takes a number of weeks to internally refine the two creative campaign concepts and then pitch them to the youth group for its final decision. Campaign approaches vary based on the preferences of the youth group, but may include video, photography, documentary, song, theatre performances, street art and even public stunts or other offline activities.

Public engagement for all campaigns is driven through Shift's own Facebook hub that connects campaigners across the country through private online groups to exchange ideas and build connections.

While each issue-based campaign has its own specific targets, overall the Shift campaign brand provides agency to youth voices needed to influence national policy. Even more importantly, Shift inspires a new generation to see that youth (especially from marginalised groups) can lead change through people-led movements.

Save the Children already sees the potential to scale this model for youth-led digital advocacy in similar regional contexts, such as Thailand, Sri Lanka and even Afghanistan.

1

Creating space to accelerate entrepreneurial thinking for context-relevant campaigns or responses requires international civil society organisations (CSOs) to work with new types of partners, rethink internal decision-making and budgeting processes and eliminate organisational egos. Save the Children has deliberately set out to bring together traditional and non-traditional actors — tech start-ups, campaign strategists, and local creative agencies — to ensure youth have unlimited access to cultural leaders and mentors. The project's approach has also challenged Save the Children's own procurement and financial procedures to provide youth with opportunities to shape the planning and budgeting process. When it comes to campaigning, international CSOs need to build in greater flexibility and allow for more bottom-up "trial and error" campaign development processes.

2

Experiential learning and putting your money where your mouth is, is very powerful. Many skill-building workshops with civil society groups fail to support the actual application of those skills. In contrast, Shift fully funds the issue-based campaign upon completion of the skills development workshop, thereby transforming its impact and delivery. As they have a stake in the campaign's success, youth are both more motivated and more critical of the skills they are developing and the campaign they are designing. The majority of learning will happen in the delivery of the campaign. This direct investment in youth reinforces both the organisation's belief in them, and ultimately their belief in themselves.

3

International CSOs should not always try to be the voice for people, but instead focus on ways to organise "from behind" and develop models where people can speak for themselves. If the goal of your project is to reinforce democratic principles, empower people and inspire leadership, international CSOs need to actively dissolve their own organisational power. Although this can be difficult, especially for larger organisations, when it comes to the right of children to participate, it is fundamental. Empowerment begins with ownership of one's own strategic direction — whether a youth campaign or international CSO — and must continue throughout the entire duration of any project.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **emerging adjacent** innovation. It is still at an early stage of implementation, and demonstrates use of new tools, tactics and types of partnership to engage the organisation's core primary constituents (youth groups).

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

Save the Children International is one of the world's largest child's rights organisations, currently working in around 130 countries. It has worked in Myanmar since 1995, supporting children's rights to survival, protection, development and participation.

transparenCEE

Türkiye Nüfusunun Ne
Kadarı Ciddi Maddi
Yoksunluk İçinde?

transparenCEE

ORGANISATIONS

TechSoup, ePaństwo Foundation,
K-Monitor, ActionSEE and Opora

LOCATION

Central/Eastern Europe and Eurasia

INNOVATION CATEGORY

Established Adjacent Innovation

RECOMMENDATIONS

2, 4

STRATEGY

Building citizen skills to combat misinformation and fake news.

SUMMARY

Facilitating cross-border experimentation and learning communities of enterprising civic technologists can lower barriers to deploying and scaling technologies, increase reach and deepen the impact of their innovations.

Since 2011, TransparenCEE has been operating in a number of populist environments in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, a region with significant concentrations of post-communist authoritarian "strong men" leaders or politicians engaging in polarising populist-driven agendas to legitimise their rule and influence. This includes Hungary and Ukraine, which are described elsewhere in this report (case studies 06 pg 70 and 12 pg 122).

Romania has not received as much international attention in terms of illiberal populist politics. However, prominent politicians, notably the ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD)'s leader Liviu Dragnea, who has recently been convicted of corruption, have deployed narratives and tactics used by better-known populist leaders in neighbouring countries in support of their brand of populism. This has ranged from invoking "Soros network"[1] conspiracy accusations against those who push for minority rights to "enemy of the state" rhetoric against foreign influence to inciting fears about EU attempts to transform Romania into a Western colony, characterised by the appearance of "we do not sell our country" slogans in mainstream media. The PSD was elected to power in 2016 with an exceptionally low voter turnout (39%) and a host of popular but unrealistic policy promises such as lower taxes, higher pensions and public sector salaries and increased social assistance.

In contrast, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been described as the "inventor of 21st century populism",[2] and the evolution of his rhetoric has been extensively analysed. According to the Global Populism Database,[3] a comparative study of the speeches of global leaders, Turkey has witnessed the largest increase in populist rhetoric of the 40 countries analysed. Despite being classified as "not populist" when taking power back in 2003, Erdoğan is the only right wing leader in the world to reach the "very populist" categorisation in 2019, indicating a huge shift

in his discourse during his 16 years at the top of Turkey's political system. These cases exemplify the **two core elements** of populism:

anti-elitism: pitting "the people" (i.e. Islamists in Turkey) against a "corrupt elite" (i.e. secularists in Turkey).

anti-pluralism: the absence of any serious contestation of power or moral authority except that of these "strong men" leaders.

The other four **additional features** of populism are also present to varying degrees in the region:

anti-debate: Elections are formally or informally dismissed, for example, Erdoğan dismissed the results of the Istanbul municipal elections and demanded a rerun, while Dragnea dismissed his party's EU parliamentary loss as a "hate storm".[4]

resistant to countervailing facts: Populist leaders and politicians across the region often lie, exaggerate, misrepresent or manipulate information to support the particular narratives they are promoting. Moreover, they often contradict their public statements in order to be provocative or generate controversy, and dismiss or do not engage properly with public challenges from other actors who have credible contrary data or evidence.

rejects intermediaries: Threats against traditional mediating institutions, such as the media, the courts and civil society organisations (CSOs), are common.

crisis, breakdown or threat: Rhetoric of crisis, such as the breakdown of social order due to immigration or corruption (such as in Romania), is used to to justify strong-handed, illiberal policies.

1
http://euvisions.eu/archive/populism-eastern-european/

2
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/from-reformer-to-new-sultan-erdogans-populist-evolution

3
https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2019/mar/06/

4
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-27/romanian-populist-s-eu-vote-loss-is-by-far-not-his-main-problem revealed-the-rise-and-rise-of-populist-rhetoric

TransparenCEE is both a programme and community of non-profit, IT and media organisations promoting technology for transparency and accountability in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It has successfully supported the scaling of community-driven civic technologies such as fact-checkers. The main features of the innovation include:

The programme has worked with communities to identify problems they want to solve with digital technology, finish and scale their solutions, then link solution designers to similar programmes and communities across the region.

Participating civic technologists can exchange ideas and best practices, forge new collaborations, learn new campaigning and coping strategies and generate new insights into future programming at the intersection of technology and social justice. Programme tactics include convening events and cross-border thematic working groups for networking, addressing specific knowledge gaps and developing new solutions and implementing practice-oriented research and analysis.

TransparenCEE has built connections between groups and organisations in different countries which had already been independently — and often unknowingly — experimenting in parallel to build tools for fact-checking and "truth monitoring" politicians.

Numerous experiments have tested approaches and community engagement models to make fact-checking tools more accessible to journalists. These include using crowdsourcing and reader polls to identify statements which people want to be verified, automatic fact-checking, social media sharing- and

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Social media is one of the key channels through which populist leaders and politicians across the region personalise and disseminate their own brands of identity politics and "alternative solutions" they purport to represent. At the same time, however, similar digital tools enable traditional media outlets, CSOs and individuals to verify facts and hold politicians accountable for their statements.

web browser-plugins and live fact-checkathons. Through TransparenCEE, parallel innovators had the opportunity to learn from the international community of fact-checkers and then apply and adapt their learnings to develop relevant tools and campaign strategies for their home contexts.

By working as a community, TransparenCEE members have been able to leverage each other's strengths, knowledge and lower the costs of testing and launching new programmes. As others had already built fact-checking tools, members could instead focus on risk-free trialling of the tools (and campaign strategies) with their respective communities, saving valuable resources and time.

The community has also facilitated cross-border adaptation and replication of successful tools in new regional contexts. For example, fact-checking initiatives in the Western Balkans developed through Action SEE Network later replicated the Faktograf fact-checking initiative to Croatia from successes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. TransparenCEE provided funding and connections to peer groups to run the fact-checking website, as well as training sessions in fact-checking methodologies for journalists.

Different fact-checking and consistency or "truth monitoring" tools and tactics related to TransparenCEE include:

Factual developed by Funky Citizens in Romania to fact-check the public statements of politicians — in parliamentary debates, on government websites and the general news — using teams of independent experts and citizen volunteers. Funky Citizens has also partnered with media organisations to live fact-check TV debates before elections. Facts were then published as live text in media partner newsbars and via social media within minutes of the public statements. The tool's growth in online reach via Facebook has been remarkable: it is now used by 1.6 million out of the 9 million Romanians on the platform.

Doğruluk Payı developed by Ortak Gelecek in Turkey to monitor politicians includes a weekly Periscope session to discuss recent fact-checks, enables easy content sharing through WhatsApp, allows readers to upload statements they have fact-checked and keeps its large interested audience informed (such as its 160,000 followers on Twitter).

Opora's social media scraping tool developed in Ukraine analyses statements from politicians' social media profiles, to hold them accountable for their statements and identify inconsistencies. By aggregating data from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and visualising it through trends, word-clouds and maps, this tool significantly shortened an otherwise time-consuming process.

After its success in Slovakia, the Demagog.sk fact-checking website, developed by the Slovak Governance Institute to monitor the arguments of politicians and other public figures at political debates and other public arenas, was scaled - by volunteers - to the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. In the Czech Republic, the site successfully built a large digital following by regularly polling its audience about what facts they wanted to be checked.

The TransparenCEE network is also a key player in conducting research on the technological aspects of transparency of governments in Central and Eastern Europe. Its "alGOVrithms: The State of Play" report revealed the scale of algorithm usage in government-citizen relations within the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Poland, Serbia and Slovakia. It also highlighted the lack of transparent policies as well as ethical or legal frameworks that clarify both state and citizen responsibilities for safe application of algorithms. The Asset Declarations in Central and Eastern Europe: Current Trends project is also assessing the efficiency and functioning of asset disclosure systems in 19 countries in the region.

1

There is an enormous amount of talent, both technical and in terms of civic leadership, which can help build technologies to engage the digital public for civil society causes. However, there are few spaces where social justice leaders and technologists can come together to build, test and prototype. There are even fewer ways of obtaining user feedback to inform technical design and build communities of users. Too often, limited resources have resulted in good tools addressing the wrong problem, great social leaders not equipped with good tools, or good tools and leaders not optimised for campaigning. Communities can overcome this, share skills and learn together, but also benefit from the support of cross-border CSOs in facilitating these connections.

2

International CSOs should build connections with enterprising groups — both large and small — and communities of civic tech activists as assets and networks for data and evidence to inform advocacy efforts. Organisations such as TechSoup can also help broker these connections. For instance, the Open Courts dataset compiled by two students for a university project became a meaningful new asset for Transparency International Slovakia's data-driven evaluation of the state of Slovakia's judiciary system.

3

Tapping into this talented pool of motivated human capital with the skills to both lower barriers to organising and analysing data, and to convene and influence communities of like-minded peers on social media, requires more informal working processes and partnership strategies. This model "does not look much like a standard civil society process of researching, reflecting, and advocating".[5]

5
https://www.theguardian.com/
global-development-professio-
nals-network/2013/feb/19/
open-data-techsoup-restart-slo-
vakia

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **established**, **adjacent** innovation. It demonstrates incremental development of technological tools for fact-checking, available as new open source assets for audiences elsewhere. Since 2011, it has also enabled new opportunities and modes of cross-border experimentation, skill-sharing, learning and scaling for audiences of socially-motivated groups of coders.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

TechSoup is an enabler and connector in the world of new technologies and social change, primarily focusing on technology capacity building for civil society.

ePaństwo Foundation (EPF) creates tools for open culture, public information and civic media, building citizen engagement and information skills to strengthen democratic processes.

K-Monitor in Hungary helps institutions, journalists and individuals fight corruption through community building, technology development, advocacy and research.

ActionSEE (Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in the South East Europe region) is a network of CSOs jointly working on promoting and ensuring government accountability and transparency in the region, raising the potential for civic activism and participation, promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms on the internet and empowering CSOs and individuals in the region to use technology in their democracy promotion work.

Opora is a nationwide network of public activists in Ukraine dedicated to enhancing public participation in political processes by developing and implementing models of citizens' influence on state and local government activities.
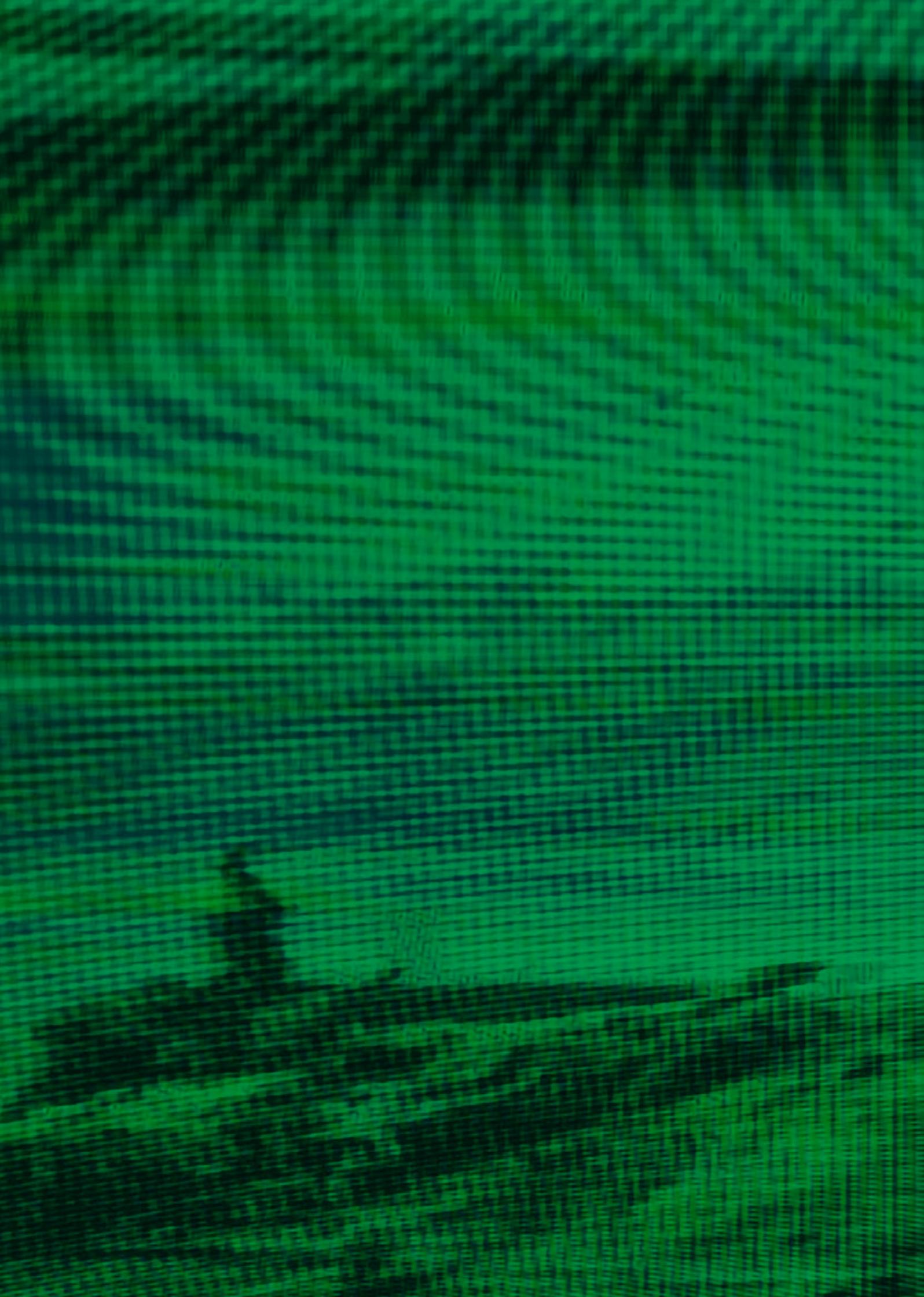
case studies

transformational innovation

18

whatsapp
for lgbt+ rights

whatsapp
for lgbt+ rights

ORGANISATION	LOCATION
All Out	Brazil

INNOVATION CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS
Emerging Transformational Innovation	1, 2, 3, 5

STRATEGY

Using new digital tools and tactics to speak to all sections of society.

SUMMARY

Experimentation with new tools, tactics and partnerships to engage and motivate new supporters for LGBT+ rights under attack in Brazil.

On 28 October 2018, far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro was elected Brazil's president. Before then, he was not much more than a political outcast in Congress, known for his hateful and inflammatory rhetoric: paying homage to one of the most notorious torturers from Brazil's military dictatorship, for example, or claiming he "would rather die in a car accident than have a gay son".[1] Yet, after a campaign fuelled by disinformation and fear-mongering, he was elected with 55% of the valid votes. Bolsonaro is one of the country's most vocal anti-gay advocates. As president, he has continued to fuel violence and discrimination against LGBT+ Brazilians.

With Bolsonaro at the helm, the **two core elements** of populism are present in Brazil:

anti-elitism: Divisiveness has characterised Bolsonaro's populist rhetoric throughout his career. During his presidential run, he attacked the previous left-leaning administration as an "enemy to be fought" and labelled it as responsible for all issues negatively affecting Brazilian society. For example, after his first round win, Bolsonaro called the opposition "red bandits",[2] and publicly threatened to jail or banish them from Brazil.

anti-pluralism: By capitalising on divisive "us versus them" rhetoric, Bolsonaro's administration not only dramatically simplifies Brazil's complexities, but also places anyone who opposes his views or opinions in the "them" camp. This is a long list ranging from journalists investigating corruption scandals to civil society organisations (CSOs) to foreign governments that question his policies and to even his own former supporters. Most dangerously, this rhetoric positions Bolsonaro as the sole voice of "us", allowing him to push through his ideas without regard for protocol or expertise.

Additional features of populism include:

anti-debate: For example, Bolsonaro failed to attend any debates during the second round of the elections, and is known for shutting down press briefings when asked questions he does not want to answer.

resistant to countervailing facts: Bolsonaro not only dismissed the latest data on Amazon deforestation as lies, but also fired the scientist ultimately in charge of producing the numbers.

rejects intermediaries: Bolsonaro frequently addresses Brazilians using Twitter and Facebook Live, often prioritising these channels over official ones, such as when he forewent a meeting with the French Foreign Minister to get (and livestream) his hair cut.

crisis, breakdown or threat: Bolsonaro uses this as a political strategy, for example making headlines by stating that Brazil-based US journalist Glenn Greenwald "might do some jail time in Brazil"[3] for reporting on political scandals. He has also declared he will fight "gender ideology" and the "problem of migration" in Brazil, presenting them as crises even though they barely exist in reality.

1
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/28/world/americas/brazil-president-jair-bolsonaro-quotes.html

2
https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-election-controversy-factbox/factbox-a-good-hoodlum-is-a-dead-hoodlum-brazils-bolsonaro-thrives-on-controversy-idUSKCN1N301I

3
https://www.france24.com/en/20190727-brazils-bolsonaro-says-greenwald-could-do-jail-time

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital media — particularly WhatsApp, a Facebook-owned messaging platform — plays a key role in Bolsonaro's political strategy. During his presidential run, his campaign delivered massive amounts of misinformation to millions of phones across Brazil. Every time that Bolsonaro picks an "opponent" (usually on social media), fake news and defamatory statements against that target start circulating on WhatsApp almost immediately.

WhatsApp is also used by 120 million Brazilians to convene digital civil society spaces, communicate and take action. All Out's recent decision to adopt this platform as its main mobilisation tool was significant not only for benefiting from a popular means for citizens to connect, but also as a direct response to the Bolsanaro administration's aggressive weaponisation of this technology.

As a Facebook-owned platform, WhatsApp user data may remain vulnerable to exploitation by groups or governments using micro-targeting for the manipulation of elections or referendums. All Out will need to carefully monitor this risk. However, progressive civil society forces like All Out cannot simply leave the online "market square" and surrender the digital space to those spreading hate with terrifying effectiveness through these tools. CSOs also need to monitor the risk that the progressive monetisation of these Facebook-owned platforms privileges the ideas and interests of well-resourced actors over others.

All Out launched a pilot project in mid-2018 to understand how to effectively "localise" its work in Brazil, establishing a presence in the country and adapting its tactics and tools to build support for LGBT+ rights. Initially, All Out employed its standard global tactic and tool of using email for mobilisation. For every new LGBT+ rights campaign, the organisation emails the members in its database and prompts them to take action. All Out also started using WhatsApp informally and, thanks to the platform's importance and reach in Brazil, soon noticed considerably more engagement among its new membership there. All Out has therefore adopted WhatsApp as its core mobilisation tool in Brazil, a significant shift for the organisation and a new practice among civil society groups in the country.

The main features of the innovation include:

All Out invested in more consistent learning and testing on WhatsApp, and reached out to other partner groups in Brazil to assess if and how they were also using it. Despite its relevance, not many were using it as a mobilisation tool, and the few that did only saw it as a peripheral piece of their strategy.

Using a less formal approach and a significant amount of manual management, All Out launched its WhatsApp strategy in October 2018. Its goals were twofold: first, to determine if Brazilians would be interested in engaging with the organisation there, and second, to assess whether it could build a constituency on the platform. All Out used paid promotions on Facebook and added "Join us on WhatsApp" asks in its emails, social media channels, and website. Within a month, All Out had generated 3,000 signups.

This initial spike in growth prompted All Out to make additional investments in its WhatsApp strategy. It adopted a Brazil-based bot management platform, RapidPro, to expand and refine the way it was managing

WhatsApp and tested two additional recruitment strategies:

An engaging quiz about LGBT+ rights that members could answer on WhatsApp.

An innovative partnership with the national branch of US ice cream brand Ben & Jerry's. Users received free toppings in return for signing up on WhatsApp to help fight for LGBT+ rights.

These combined tactics were soon successful, bringing in more than 18,000 sign ups in less than two months: more than All Out's entire constituency in key countries. With this success, All Out migrated to an official WhatsApp account. While navigating Facebook's requirements, costs and monetisation ambitions is time consuming, All Out will soon fully launch its WhatsApp-focused actions in Brazil.

1

All Out's experience demonstrates the importance of researching and adapting well-established tools and tactics to local environments. Indeed, All Out's local, native capacity was key to understanding if and how the mobilisation strategy needed to change in order to work in Brazil. All Out's critical mass of local staff helped tailor strategies specifically to Brazil.

2

Adopting a new platform has required re-thinking the organisation's voice and practices. While All Out was fairly comfortable with the possibilities of email mobilisation, moving to WhatsApp forced it to experiment with new communication.

3

Using WhatsApp presents an opportunity, but also significant risk. Relying on a Facebook-owned platform poses significant questions about how data is used and managed, as well as significant costs. As Facebook is still defining how it will further monetise WhatsApp, there are increased risks involved in investing in the platform.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **emergent**, **transformational** innovation. This updated use of tools, tactics and partnerships for mobilisation is new for civil society groups in Brazil, and is already showing early success in recruiting new supporters. However, it is still emergent, as the most significant outcomes are expected when All Out deploys WhatsApp more widely.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

All Out is an international organisation that runs campaigns for LGBT+ rights around the world. It uses creative mobilisation tactics, both online and offline, to raise global awareness and push for change in moments of crisis or opportunity around LGBT+ rights.

11

hope-based communications
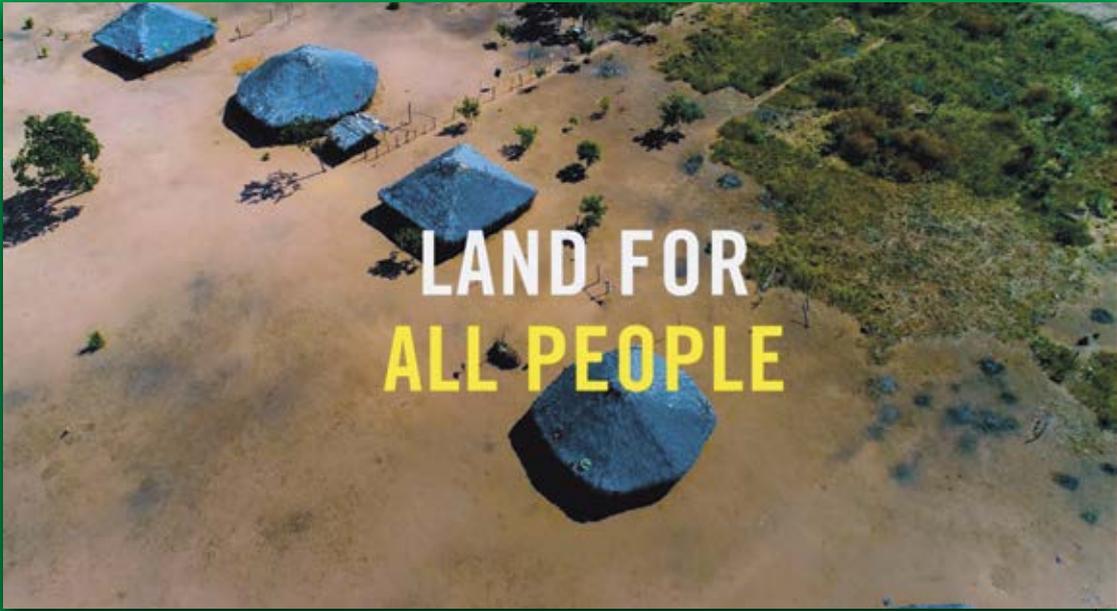
LAND FOR
ALL PEOPLE

BUILD A LONGER TABLE
FOR REFUGEES
SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS
YOU CAN TAKE TODAY

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

hope-based communications

ORGANISATIONS

Amnesty International
Hope-Based Communications
(and others)

LOCATION

Global

INNOVATION CATEGORY

Emerging Transformational Innovation

RECOMMENDATIONS

1, 3, 6

STRATEGY

Developing new positive narratives for an alternative future.

SUMMARY

Focusing messaging on values, and avoiding reacting to and feeding populist narratives, can engage new audiences with a positive vision of the future as a constructive alternative to fear, crisis and division.

While populism functions differently in various contexts, most populist politicians are known for pushing the boundaries of acceptable speech: making "politically incorrect" statements, or "telling it like it is". In doing so, politicians get free publicity and shift the "Overton window"[1] of what is considered "common sense" in public discourse. In other words, they frame the debate and control the narrative.

Using these techniques, well-planned campaigns can shift formerly unthinkable and radical ideas into what become regarded as sensible and popular, to the point that the pressure for them to become policy becomes irresistible. This has been evident in changing attitudes towards women and LGBT+ people, but also in the eroding support for human rights, particularly for those migrating or escaping war and persecution. So if strategic use of narrative can help bring about cultural and societal change, why not aim for a 2030 where politics is built on kindness, gender equality, a sustainable approach to the economy and a worldview built on "empathy and responsibility to care"?[2]

Populists are comfortable being **criticised by "elite" institutions** like civil society organisations (CSOs). Too often, entering into open debate or conflict with them feeds the "us vs them" narratives on which they thrive. When the messaging of CSOs simply reacts to political or world events, it allows others to set the terms of debate. This relegates civil society to the role of reacting rather than making the case for their own values. As cognitive linguist Anat Shenker-Osorio says, good messaging is not about saying what is popular, it is about making popular what needs to be said.[3]

Taking control of the narrative is also important for ensuring the tone of public discourse is conducive to progressive values and policies. A sense of **crisis, scarcity and conflict** is the perfect breeding ground for populism.

A sense of certainty, abundance and shared humanity promotes empathy and taking responsibility to care for one another. Research from Hope Not Hate has found that people who are more optimistic about their own lives tend to hold more liberal views than those who feel pessimistic.[4]

To counter the climate of fear and division that populists are trying to create, CSOs need to cultivate a welcoming terrain of hope and empathy for people who desire a constructive alternative. Research by More in Common in 2018[5] found an "exhausted majority" of Americans across the political spectrum wanting to move beyond division and polarisation in order to "create trust and connection […] around what unites them". This means talking less about "fighting" and more about "building". It means countering dehumanisation with compassion and positive, authentic stories about minority groups with which audiences can empathise.

1
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/26/us/politics/overton-window-democrats.html

2
https://georgelakoff.com/2011/02/19/what-conservatives-really-want/

3
https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/C3-Messaging-This-Moment-Handbook.pdf

4
https://www.openglobalrights.org/hope-counters-hate-in-polarized-and-populist-narratives/

5
https://www.moreincommon.com/hidden-tribes

MAIN FEATURES OF THE INNOVATION

Hope-based communications is a simple methodology that proactively and explicitly promotes the values and solutions we want to see in society. It focuses on creating a climate of togetherness and empathy to avoid being side-tracked by responses to populist frames and narratives. Moving beyond a vocabulary of facts and rational arguments, it encourages greater consideration of the emotions and ideas that CSOs need to activate in target audiences, putting forward an alternative vision of how things could be and how to get there.

The main features of the innovation include:

Hope-based communications developed as a classic case of "intrapreneurship" within an international CSO. It started with a spontaneous blog post,[6] then evolved into a simple informal checklist — inspired by Greenpeace's Seven Shifts storytelling strategy — circulated internally within Amnesty International and inviting colleagues to ask themselves questions about their work. First presented within Amnesty as an optional framework to use, it received so much interest from other civil society groups that its orginator, Thomas Coombes, has further developed and documented it as a freely available open source methodology and set up the Hope-Based Communications consultancy, dedicated to supporting its application in the sector.

Hope-based communications involves carrying out five simple shifts that can lead to some dramatic changes in thinking.

From problems to solutions:
· What do we want to see happen?
· How would your solution work in practice?

From threat to opportunity:
· Have you shown people the opportunity for change?
· How can human rights make things better?

From "against" to "for":
· What is the alternative to the abuses we are exposing?
· What wider principles are at stake?
· If authorities applied your solution, what values would they be living by?

From victims to heroes:
· Who can our audience side with in this story?
· Are your protagonists relatable: are their motivations clear, their hopes expressed, their values shareable?

From fear to hope:
· What positive emotion can people feel — or anticipate feeling in the future — by connecting emotionally to this story?

Such shifts can reframe conversations.
For example, instead of sounding the alarm about biodiversity loss, how might one
promote a policy that will achieve biodiversity gain?

Above all, focusing on allegorical stories that show your values in action and reinforce your narrative is a necessary prerequisite for making the best use of new technological tools that enable precise targeting of content to different audiences.

6
https://medium.com/@T_Coombes/hope-not-fear-a-new-model-for-communicating-human-rights-d98c0d6bf57b

Anistia Brasil *"Brasil for Everyone"*

When opposition to civil society groups became a feature of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's profile, any aggressive counter-mobilisation risked being labeled as "radical" activism. In response, Anistia Brasil applied the hope-based communications approach when launching its first report about human rights under Bolsonaro. The Brazil for Everyone campaign focused on a positive unifying message that promoted diversity and gave voice to marginalised communities in a calm, welcoming atmosphere. They simply say "I am here".

Amnesty International USA *A longer table*

Populists have turned the issue of migration into a powerful recruitment tool, framing it as a "crisis" where borders are "violated", rousing fears of invasion and unwanted social change. At first, civil society responses highlighted the scale of the crisis, which unwittingly fueled populist politicians who staked their campaigns on stability and security. Yet Amnesty International USA ran a campaign that celebrated positive behaviour. By depicting Americans welcoming newcomers, the organisation reframed the migration narrative around stories of "welcome" instead of "crisis".

The Longer Table campaign focused on images of Americans and newcomers coming together to eat: the most universal human communal activity that exists. It also promoted authentic stories by asking supporters to organise local community events, thereby bringing people together to replicate the campaign imagery in reality. Crucially, this messaging offered genuine opportunities for supporters feeling overwhelmed by the scale of the "crisis", encouraging them to become part of the solution.

Amnesty International New Zealand
Messages of Hope

In response to the Christchurch mosque shootings in May 2019, Amnesty International New Zealand emphasised what it "stands for", rather than sending a reactive message "against hate". Its "Messages of Hope" campaign invited supporters to send messages of solidarity to the directly affected community. Over 10,000 messages were sent, and the organisation posted a selection of them on billboards across the country, promoting healing and togetherness rather than division.

Other notable illustrations of the five shifts (not necessarily in populist contexts) include:

· Amnesty International Denmark's "Let's Talk about Yes" campaign about domestic violence, which called on the government to adopt consent-based rape laws.
· Canada's Refugee 613 campaign on community resettlement.
· Charity: Water's use of positive messaging to promote its efforts to provide clean and safe drinking water to people in developing countries.
· US Planned Parenthood's Unstoppable movement (and manifesto) for a world where everyone can control their own bodies and futures.

Beyond the civil society sector, the European Green party's hopeful messaging in its 2019 parliamentary electoral strategy was a response to the threat of strong populist performance across the continent, offering voters a proud, progressive and welcoming message while more centrist parties did not. It built on the "Green Wave of Hope" campaign the German Greens used to respond to the rising anti-migrant populism of the AfD party in the 2018 regional elections in Bavaria, Germany.

Corporate brand campaigns like Nike's "Dream Crazy", Gillette's the "best a man can be", and TV2 Danmark's "All that we share" advertisements also illustrate some of these ideas, suggesting that at present companies are more effective in communicating values messages than the very CSOs that exist to defend them.

THE KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Feeling good is a political action. Cognitive linguist Anat Shenker-Osorio advises CSOs to exude confidence in countering "crisis-reliant" populists seeking to make people feel like they live in a world spiralling out of control.[6] Organisations must project the sense that "we got this", or "that there could be some steady, reliable normalcy".[7] Research by More in Common into attitudes towards populism and refugees in Italy proposed a similarly constructive message: "Let's get organized, let's manage this and take advantage of it".[8] Visual messaging emerging from hope-based communications workshops held in different parts of the world suggest a new direction for civil society communications: "building" instead of "fighting", connective images of communal activities such as gardening and eating together, holding hands and hugging. Focusing attention and communications on those who are already implementing solutions, combined with expressing support for people acting on values of kindness, tolerance and social inclusion, will have two key effects. First, it will give voice to the "silent majority" who share many of the same values. Second, it will subvert the populists' claim to speak for "the people".

2

Consistent messaging and taking creative risks are essential. To change narratives, messaging needs to flow consistently across communications, not just isolated one-off campaigns. This means that conventionally reactive communications materials, such as press releases, need to pivot from alarmist populist responses to hope-based values messaging. While the media traditionally focuses on crisis narratives, feel-good stories also perform well on social media, so CSOs must create surprising, eye-catching (and, where possible, heart-warming) stories. This might involve taking creative risks, or using unexpected imagery. For example, research finds that showing images of our planet increases empathy, but they are rarely used by civil society groups beyond the context of climate change.

3

Authentic and compelling people-focused storytelling is necessary to attract the attention for civil society narratives to become salient in public discourse and thereby compete with populist narratives. It also humanises marginalised groups targeted by populists, for example by creating encounters between those groups and the target audience of populists, thus telling a story of shared humanity. To replace populist **anti-elitism** narratives, civil society groups must show relatable spokespeople and messengers, for example by promoting user-generated content on social media and having supporters "take over" their social media channels, so that audiences can see people "like them" acting on values these organisations want to promote. This will empower audiences to take action on their own accord, overcoming the sense of powerlessness that fuels populist politics.

7
https://www.openglobalrights.org/hope-guide/

8
https://www.moreincommon.com/italy-report1

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **emergent**, **transformational** innovation. It has developed a new methodology for framing campaigns and communications to reach new audiences, but is still being experimented with by a number of different CSOs.

INNOVATING ORGANISATIONS

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people in more than 70 countries who take injustice personally. It campaigns for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

Hope-Based Communications is a new communications consultancy set up to bring this methodology to the sector and to advise CSOs on running values-based communications campaigns that promote new narratives to change minds and behaviours.

12

learn to discern

learn to discern

ORGANISATION IREX	**LOCATION** Ukraine
INNOVATION CATEGORY Established Transformational Innovation	**RECOMMENDATIONS** 1, 3, 4

STRATEGY

Building citizen skills to combat misinformation and fake news.

SUMMARY

This project exhibits creative combinations of tools, tactics and novel approaches to scaling training in order to develop long-term changes in critical thinking skills among brand new public audiences (within a relatively short space of time).

While populism in Ukraine is distinct from that in other parts of Europe (with anti-immigration, anti-Muslim and nationalist ethnic rhetoric less present), it still exhibits the **two core elements**:

anti-elitism: Politicians exploit binary identities hinged on corruption, an issue that has historically defined Ukranian politics. Leading candidates in the 2018-19 presidential campaign advocated for "punishing corrupt elites"[1] in favour of poor Ukrainians, and engaged social grievance narratives around the everyday problems faced by ordinary people, such as low income and high prices, to promote the state's ability to deliver cheaper public services and reduce prices. Unlike many Western European populist contexts, nostalgia for the former Soviet Union (rather than for ethnic nationalism) is the basis for the polarisation of two groups.

anti-pluralism: While the recent election of President Volodymyr Zelensky was widely regarded as a public rebuke of traditional establishment politicians, it is ironic and unsettling that he, as a former comedian, rose to fame due to his popular TV series, "Servant of the People", a parody of the powerful personality cults that have dominated politics in Ukraine.

Other **additional features** of populism in Ukraine are:

anti-debate: According to the political scientist Taras Kuzio,[3] "Ukrainian populists, both "pro-Western" and "pro-Russian", hold authoritarian and undemocratic traits commonly found in European populists. These include making decisions without listening to advice, believing everybody else is wrong, and using populism for the goal of attaining maximum power".

resistant to countervailing facts: Politicians have been questioned about their misrepresentation and distortion of information about everything from gas prices to tariffs, pensions and salaries. Public officials and politicians have also been caught knowingly disseminating false information, undermining citizen's confidence in the media and its role in publicly holding authorities to account.

crisis, breakdown or threat: Populist politicians have also exploited the genuine crisis of the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine in support of their specific agendas.

A recent study[4] which looked at vulnerability to populism found that 84% of Ukrainians support populist messages, and 59% think that the promises made are achievable.

1
http://euromaidanpress.
com/2019/01/15/
fifty-shades-of-ukrainian-popu-
lism-tymoshenko-zelenskyi-and-
the-chiaroscuro-principle/

2
https://www.independent.co.uk/
voices/ukraine-election-volo-
dymyr-zelensky-zelenskiy-land-
slide-comedian-popu-
lism-a8880901.html

3
http://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/
bitstream/
handle/123456789/15111/Kuzio_
Populism_in_Ukraine_and_
Europe_Similar_but_Also_Diffe-
rent.
pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

4
https://ms.detector.media/
mediaprosvita/
mediaosvita/84_ukraintsiv_pidt-
rimuyut_populistsku_politiku_
doslidzhennya/

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Today, disinformation, misinformation and propaganda pollute the information space worldwide. The seismic shift in the volume, speed and reach of manipulated content, facilitated by massive platforms with algorithms designed to maximise engagement, impacts everyone. Research shows that people are biased information-seekers — emotionally wired to crave, believe and share sensational information — and social media platforms are the perfect enabler. Mobile devices deliver continuous information and reinforce confirmation biases and selective reasoning that appeal to basic cravings for reassurance, belonging and recognition. This creates an ideal environment for manipulation by foreign and domestic players. It results in polarisation, emboldened hate speech, trolling and silencing of marginalised groups, pervasive distrust of media and institutions and resulting failures of democracy.

In 2019, 55% of respondents in a 38-country study identified misinformation as a concern and barely 40% trust the news.[5] Ukraine is no exception; Ukrainians' trust in media decreases annually (only one in four trusts the media). While media consumption remains high, disinformation is recognised as a national security issue. Although IREX's Learn to Discern (L2D) Media Literacy Training approach was designed as a response to the sharp increase in Kremlin-sponsored disinformation and propaganda in 2014 (which was aimed at undermining democratic political stability in Ukraine and increasing support for Russia's expansionist aims), its relevance and value in Ukraine's domestic populist context is also clear.

5
https://reutersinstitute.politics.
ox.ac.uk/sites/default/
files/2019-06/DNR_2019_
FINAL_1.pdf

IREX's Learn to Discern (L2D) Media Literacy Training approach helps citizens recognise and resist disinformation, propaganda and hate speech by building practical skills for citizens of all ages through interactive training, videos, games and other online learning experiences.

The main features of the innovation include:

Creative combinations of tools and tactics reached large numbers of citizens who shared what they learned. These included tailored skill-building seminars, gaming resources, public service announcements, billboard messages and print and social media campaigns. The skill-building seminars directly involved more than 15,000 participants of all ages and professional backgrounds — high school teachers and students, professional union members, medical workers, police officers and library patrons — who in turn shared what they learned with more than 90,000 family members, co-workers and peers. The public service announcements and billboard campaign alerted more than 20 million Ukrainian citizens to the danger of manipulation in their informational landscape.

L2D participants developed significantly better news analysis skills, greater knowledge of the news media environment, a stronger sense of agency over their consumption of media sources and were also more likely to identify disinformation, separate opinion from fact and consult a wider range of news sources.

The approach achieved longer and more lasting effects on participants' behaviours compared to other media literacy campaigns. An impact evaluation in 2017 showed the persistence of these skills and knowledge even 1.5 years after participants completed the programme.[6] The effects of other media literacy campaigns, in contrast, typically wane after one year.

By mobilising hundreds of volunteers and leveraging livestreaming technology, IREX delivered the country's largest ever media literacy training programme. Its simultaneous mass lessons drew almost 8,000 people at more than 400 locations ahead of the 2019 presidential elections.[7] *Ne Vir, Perevir*[8] (Don't Trust, Verify), a countrywide series of one hour-long fact-finding lessons, taught thousands of Ukrainians effective and simple techniques for identifying disinformation and manipulation in photos, separating facts and opinions and analysing the data and results of pre-election opinion polling.

The L2D programme has been further adapted to respond to emerging needs. For example, IREX is currently working with the education system through its L2D-Ed programme to integrate key critical information consumption skills into existing school educational and teacher training curricula.

The approach has been successfully scaled to other contexts, such as Indonesia, Jordan, Serbia, Tunisia and the USA.

6
https://www.irex.org/resource/impact-study-citizens-ability-detect-disinformation-15-years-after-completing-news-media

7
https://www.irex.org/news/irex-and-partners-conduct-countrywide-media-literacy-lesson-ukraine

8
https://www.irex.org/news/irex-and-partners-conduct-countrywide-media-literacy-lesson-ukraine

1

The programme taught new audiences critical thinking skills with an emphasis on how to consume, rather than dictating what news to consume. It earned the trust of participants by using neutral examples, building and respecting their own agency, and not overloading them with information. Not only did this leverage and reinforce the power of trust and peer learning, but it also provided the trainers with a practical and flexible curriculum that they could tailor to individual groups.

2

Media literacy campaigns should empower citizens to trust their own abilities of verifying and detecting bad information, rather than creating skeptics mistrustful of all information. The training was directly relevant to participants' daily experiences, with a transformational personal trigger motivating their desire to learn and act, through the initial "shock" of realising the extent to which propaganda was affecting their perceptions.

3

More investment of resources and time is needed to understand how best to inspire demand for good information. We need to show people the positive impact of having access to fact-based information, and understand how to both cultivate and respond to demand for it.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **established transformational** innovation. It has successfully reached new audiences, directly and indirectly, through new and creative use of tools and tactics. The media literacy skills it promotes have had a sustainable impact, and it has been scaled to other contexts.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

IREX is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to building a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world by extending access to information and education, empowering youth, cultivating leaders and strengthening institutions. With an annual portfolio of $90 million and activities in 120 countries, IREX is a thought leader in media literacy, media development, citizen reporting, content production and consumption and journalist safety.

13

operation libero

An image used by Ope-
ration Libero for its
same-sex marriage
campaign, where the
couple holds a sign say-
ing "2009, still unhappily
unmarried".

operation libero

ORGANISATION	LOCATION
Operation Libero	Switzerland

INNOVATION CATEGORY	RECOMMENDATIONS
Established Transformational Innovation	1, 2, 3, 6

STRATEGY

Using new digital tools and tactics to speak to all sections of society.

SUMMARY

This movement has creatively reframed public discourse by skillfully turning the spaces, tools and rhetoric used by populists on their heads to reach broad audiences through emotional, simple and accessible imagery, messages and concepts.

Main features of the populist context:

Switzerland's current context meets all the criteria within our definition of populism. Using the **two core elements** of **anti-elitism** and **anti-pluralism**, the Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP/Swiss People's Party), "arguably Europe's most consistently successful rightwing populist party",[1] has cast itself as the sole defender of Swiss values and true Swiss interests, defining the"real people" as Swiss citizens not of immigrant descent (hence its initiative attempting to deny citizenship to third-generation individuals, even if they were born in the country) who they pit against "the elite" liberals who not only promote universal, European values, but have coddled the immigrant, criminal "other".[2]

With respect to **additional features** of populism, the Swiss context is unique:

anti-debate: There is officially space for debate, but until Operation Libero, the public discourse had been dominated by the SVP for more than 25 years. The SVP has more parliamentary seats and financial resources than any political party in Switzerland.

resistant to countervailing facts: In countless situations, the SVP has been proven to have misrepresented facts or made or reasserted outrightly false claims.[3]

rejects intermediaries: For years, the SVP has opportunistically manipulated the most important symbol of direct democracy (and anti-intermediary tool) in Switzerland — the popular initiative/referendum — knowing that pushing for sensationalised initiatives would attract media attention, and therefore dominance in public discourse.

crisis, breakdown or threat: The SVP has historically promoted a sense of crisis and threat to Swiss society, frequently scapegoating immigrants as the culprits. For example. it has deployed imagery depicting "criminal" foreigners as black sheep being kicked out of Switzerland to guarantee security.

1
https://www.theguardian.com/
world/2019/apr/07/
we-had-to-fight-operation-
libero-the-swiss-youth-group-
taking-on-populism

2
https://voxeu.org/article/
media-coverage-immigrant-cri-
minality

3
https://qz.com/617050/
switzerlands-largest-politi-
cal-party-insists-on-depicting-
foreigners-as-black-sheep/

Operation Libero was started by a group of students in 2014 as a political movement to combat the SVP's populist right wing agenda. Run by a small team of young individuals in Zurich, the organisation has 1,500 paying members paying a CHF50-100 [€45-90] annual subscription, including members of parliament. Moreover, it activates a broad range of individuals and groups across the political spectrum to oppose the populists' anti-immigrant, anti-liberal measures. Today, Operation Libero counts 10,000 donors, most of whom give sums/subscriptions of less than CHF 250 [~€230], and also benefits from 5,000 volunteers.

Using new online and offline methods that target all residents of Switzerland as opposed to certain segments, Operation Libero appropriated the SVP's principle patriotic platform and turned it on its head. Operation Libero cast the party as a destroyer — rather than defender — of traditional Swiss values by eroding its traditional institutions of democracy, rule of law and individual freedoms. In its first referendum victory in 2016, which concerned the expulsion of foreigners who have broken the law (even with minor offences), Operation Libero managed to mobilise a staggering 64% voter turnout, defeating the SVP's initiative by a majority of 59%. Since then, it has consistently defeated all of the SVP's anti-immigrant and anti-European integration initiatives, established itself as a well-known and trusted voice in Swiss affairs and, this autumn, is primed to stir up the national elections with a campaign for progressive candidates.

Operation Libero maintains the same general principles across its wide campaigns and initiatives, but is keenly aware of the need to keep things fresh and continue innovating. Key features include:

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

In this context, Operation Libero has used digital media as a solution. Social media magnifies its messages, and digital engagement has helped it reach a wide audience. Operation Libero even transformed the negative concept of digital "trolling" into a tool to disseminate more raw and authentic messages from everyday citizens. Indeed, Operation Libero's "online warriors" are real individuals who carefully study, believe in and promote their statements, while trolling is often done by paid rumourmongers. Operation Libero's activists are constantly subject to online and offline harassment, but have access to peer support through organised Slack channels.

Reframing public debate on Swiss values in a fresh, accessible and emotionally-grounded way for the majority of the population. It has demonstrated that it is groups and individuals like Operation Libero which are actually the true defenders of traditional and long-treasured Swiss values — rule of law, democracy and individual rights and liberties — and not the SVP. This "reframing" of the definition of Swiss values showed that the party was actually attacking these, through the constitutional changes it was proposing by popular referendum. Operation Libero has connected with new audiences using emotional as well as intellectual tactics appealing to patriotism, but in an "emancipated way".

Ensuring that the populists' false claims are immediately and directly rebutted with facts. Operation Libero has systematically acted as a "bullshit buster",[4] publicly revealing the SVP's lies and destroying its credibility.

Promoting a vision of the future rather than complaining about the present. Operation Libero consistently promotes an appealing and optimistic vision of Switzerland in 2050. The Switzerland of the future is open, dynamic and a land of opportunities for everyone living there. This contrasts sharply with the conservative and backwards looking "open air museum" promoted by right-wing actors, who merely seek to preserve a relic of an idealised yet fictional past.

Appealing to all of society rather than one segment of it. Increased political participation throughout all of Switzerland — and not just in support of its own agendas — is one of Operation Libero's top priorities.

Creating a movement with a low barrier to participation by anyone and everyone. Operation Libero shares its campaign materials on its website and even sends them physically to people who want to organise small meetings or beer gatherings around a given issue. It is funded through membership contributions and small donations, and raises brand awareness by distributing its signature bright pink Operation Libero socks, tote bags, etc.

Using fun, simple, accessible language grounded in popular culture is what grabs people's attention. "Often all you have are five words and one photo to capture people's attention", explains Flavia Kleiner, one of Operation Libero's co-presidents. "So … the way you communicate is as important as the message". Operation Libero's campaigns break down complex technical issues into easily understandable messages conveyed alongside fun and engaging imagery that people can quickly absorb, share and amplify. For its same-sex marriage campaign, Operation Libero depicted a photograph of a gay couple in winter snow scenes accompanied by the caption: "unhappily unmarried", and then the same couple in summer scenes, along with the caption: "still unhappily unmarried".

Using tools that engage the digital space but also promote in-person organising (online and offline). Operation Libero has landed in the front pages of free tabloids available to the masses, not just big recognised newspapers, and has also successfully used memes, GIFs, socks, totes, banners and billboards to reach broad audiences.

Recruiting "online warriors" as well as multipliers/influencers in the media. Defying conventional advice against "feeding the trolls", Operation Libero understands the power of individual statements in comment threads on social media platforms. The organisation has deployed volunteers across the country (including a 93-year old man) to rebut toxic and erroneous comments defending or promoting rightwing arguments with fact-based, responsible statements.

Operation Libero's transformational nature has been recognised around the world, receiving extensive coverage by global media, CSOs, academia and even government agencies (including a tour sponsored by the US State Department and the European Union). Operation Libero has inspired many other groups of activists around Europe, and Flavia Kleiner is frequently travelling to share strategies and tactics to counter right-wing populism.

4
https://www.operation-libero.
ch/de/asylgesetz/bullshit-bingo

1

Using the imagination, "you can be popular without being populist". By using positive emotions, imagery from pop culture, and resonant one-liners that break down abstruse legal concepts, Operation Libero made ideals of democracy, individual freedoms and rule of law accessible to ordinary members of society, bringing them into conversations in cafés, bars and homes. Instead of being dominated by populist discourses, patriotic ideals can, via creative campaigns which stimulate people's imaginations and emotions, be relevant, likeable and worthy of support.

2

"Being popular is hard work, but being populist is easy". Binary populist rhetoric is easy to devise and promote, but being popular requires a long process of trial and error to translate abstract ideas and values into accessible stories and images that gain traction with wide audiences. Being effective in populist contexts requires significant investment in research and iteration, as well as a drive to constantly innovate.

3

"You need to be courageous in being patriotic". Operation Libero has successfully appropriated an over-used populist truism to not only oppose the SVP, but also to rally the majority of the population who love their country and do not want to be associated with racism and bigotry. This exemplifies the benefits of taking a major weapon from the populist arsenal, detoxifying it of negativity, and giving it back to (civil) society for it to own.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised Operation Libero's work as an **established**, **transformational** innovation. It utilises new tools (online spaces, pop culture icons and everyday objects such as socks and tote bags) that are aimed at new audiences. The sheer diversity of its audiences differentiates it from other organisations.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

Operation Libero is a youth political movement, designed as a progressive vision for Switzerland and as a response to right-wing populism.

14

citizens' voice

citizens' voice

ORGANISATION RNW Media	**LOCATION** Burundi
INNOVATION CATEGORY Established Transformational Innovation	**RECOMMENDATIONS** 1, 2, 3, 4

STRATEGY

Creating alternative digital youth-led spaces.

SUMMARY

This project provides the structure and creative framework, tools and tactics to engage young people at scale with complex and sensitive content, and builds inclusive and plural dialogues and positive discourse online and offline.

After emerging from civil war, Burundi faced further political crisis in 2015 with the third term re-election of political "strong man" President Pierre Nkurunziza and his party CNDD-FDD, and a violent failed coup attempt. Subsequent political instability, economic slowdown and withdrawal from international engagement have followed. There have been persistent human rights violations, lack of space for pluralistic and political dialogue and deteriorating trust in the government. The **two core elements** of populism are present:

anti-elitism: The authoritarian populist ideology of the ruling CNDD-FDD party promotes the concept of "one voice, one line". There are either *Abagumyabanga*, those who know how to "keep secrets" or the straight line, or *Abamenabanga*, the traitors who have lost this. The party relies on the support of Burundians living outside the cities and capital, Bujumbura, so its dominant discourse relies on the dichotomy between the "real" Burundians, the rural masses who understand "true" cultural values and are attached to the land, and the "false" small urban elite who are corrupt, support the West and do not represent the country at all. This distinction delegitimises dissent from urban areas, including the political opposition, which can rarely go to the interior of the country thanks to the numerous prohibitions on public assembly and political rallies.

The political opposition has also at times deployed divisive populist discourse with the goal of collectively rallying opponents against President Pierre Nkurunziza and the CNDD-FDD, and to attract the attention and sympathy of the international community. Ruling members of the elite in power have been called *Abanyeshamba*, the "savages" preparing a genocide, mostly after the failed 2015 coup attempt, by opposition or activists in exile who were analysing the crisis through an ethnic, rather than political, lens.

Radicalisation of some opponents has led to sporadic, sometimes deadly, attacks by armed groups on the security forces.

anti-pluralism: Sidelining urban areas justifies the CNDD-FDD party's policies and attempts to maintain its popular support, which since 2010 has declined because of authoritarian rule, economic burdens and strict repression of youth and perceived opponents of the regime. In this environment, the President is the only true representative of "the people", and all other actors and ways of thinking are dismissed. The binary thinking promoted by this populist rhetoric has impeded young Burundians from thinking critically in a society that already believes they are not entitled to have their own or alternative ideas and opinions.

Additional features of populism that are present in Burundi's context are:

anti-debate: Any political opposition is considered as a betrayal. Opponents are referred to as *mujeri,* or "wild dogs to eliminate".[1]

rejects intermediaries: In October 2018, the government placed a three-month suspension on almost all international organisations as part of a wider crackdown, which is seen as an unnecessary intermediary between "the people" and their "true representative", the president. To demonstrate his paternalistic attachment to the "real" rural Burundians, the president directly distributes food parcels and bags of rice every week. He cultivates the image of a humble man, close to his people and rural Burundian values, who is persecuted by an internationally-supported urban national elite that wishes to secure his departure.

1
https://www.frstrategie.org/
publications/notes/
le-burundi-en-crise-pirates-con-
tre-vrais-combattants-11-2017

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Burundi exemplifies the importance of new media when access to pluralistic information and dialogue is limited or suppressed due to lack of financial resources or enforced censorship of the traditional media, such as radio, by authoritative regimes. The majority of private radio stations were shut down in 2015, and several independent media outlets were replaced by propaganda set-ups.

New and digital media have had a slow start, but internet penetration has tripled since 2012 (although still low at 5.3% in December 2018)[2] and mobile phone usage is high (56.3%).[3] From December 2016 to July 2018, Benevolencija Burundi found that Facebook usage grew from 11.3% to 19.7%, and WhatsApp from 7.5% to 18.8%.[3] The 2015 coup revealed popular use of social media on mobile phones to be often the only information and communication channel between citizens and journalists in and outside the country. Social networks are used by journalists as both reporting tools and news outlets, often replacing gagged radio stations. At the same time, the Burundian leadership has also used Twitter to try and characterise its regime as "democratic".[4]

2

Internet World Stats https://www.
internetworldstats.com/africa.htm

3

https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/
Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx

4

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/
pdf/10.1177/1750635217727311

Since 2015, Citizens' Voice has engaged young people in the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and China on issues of civic participation and inclusive governance, creating digital communities to amplify youth voices in restrictive settings where freedom of expression is limited. RNW Media acts as a centre of expertise, helping to apply user-centred and data-driven approaches to building digital communities for social change.

One excellent case study supported by Citizens' Voice is Yaga Burundi, the country's largest blogging community working on active citizenship, freedom of the press and democracy. Yaga brings together Burundi's best bloggers and influential change-makers from across the political and social spectrum. The key features of this innovation are:

Since 2015, the platform has grown to be an alternative civic space in a challenging media environment, enabling young Burundians to express socio-political opinions. It deals with a wide range of sensitive topics, and creates opportunities for politicians and decision-makers to actively participate in Yaga events and engage in dialogue with young people on issues that matter to them.

Yaga Burundi has gained a reputation as a trustworthy non-partisan platform that empowers young people to think critically, express their views freely and discuss their country's issues peacefully with their peers — both online and offline. Yaga also ensures that youth voices in rural areas and places with limited or no access to online spaces are heard, spanning the false divides perpetuated in the populist rhetoric. The engagement rates of young women on Yaga's Facebook page is also higher than average for the platform in Burundi.

Through its digital channels, the Yaga platform currently engages more than one-fourth of Burundians with online access on themes spanning freedom of expression, democracy, youth entrepreneurship and gender equality.

It has the largest Facebook Community Page and third largest Twitter audience in the country (2018).

Yaga's platforms are carefully moderated. While Yaga is dedicated to exploring multiple viewpoints, the platform's community moderators encourage young Burundians to engage in dialogue and move away from populist rhetoric, polarisation and conflict. As young people recognise that there are multiple viewpoints, they increasingly accept and respect diversity while also challenge restrictive norms and prejudices.

Yaga uses fresh and innovative media formats to engage young people and enables them to access relevant and pluralistic views and information. It is the first form of media in Burundi to use motion design videos to address the communal stereotypes and prejudices. Yaga's weekly "infotainment" format — Twittoscopie — reflects the Burundian Twitter landscape, also known as *abatwip*, using humour and social or historical references to sum up the fiercest debates and controversies between key Twitter influencers and their followers.

Yaga has also initiated open offline debates named *Yaga Nawe* around issues that matter to young people, such as social cohesion, youth entrepreneurship and inclusive governance. This has triggered dialogue among Burundian youth and both formal and informal decision-makers. The debates have been an effective way of breaking through (self-) censorship and have provided a civic space where young people dare to express themselves and call for accountability.

Yaga's campaigns have engaged decision-makers and resulted in political action. In 2018, Yaga's most successful campaign tackled the use of the heroin-derived drug "Boost", one of Burundi's most taboo but widely prevalent social issues affecting young people, with public authorities. Since the campaign, the Ministry of Public Security has made the fight against Boost a national priority.

1

Establishing itself as a non-partisan platform has been essential to Yaga's goals of representing the plurality of Burundian youth voices and influencing decision makers to include young people in policy and practice. Yaga has been able to criticise the government while also working with young people to foster critical thinking around issues affecting them, and facilitate constructive dialogue with both their peers and decision-makers.

2

Using alternative animated and "infotainment" media formats that resonate with young people, and through debates, blogs and investigative dossiers, Yaga shows the nuances and complexities of various issues, helping young people to accept plurality, contradiction and diversity of views. Yaga's content was viewed over 1.2 million times in 2018.

3

Careful and strategic moderation on platforms makes alternate civic spaces safe and inclusive in an otherwise repressed and polarised civil society. When applied as part of a holistic engagement strategy, it allows marginalised groups to feel included in conversations, encourages users to come back regularly and creates a safe space where young people can both participate and benefit.

INNOVATION CATEGORISATION

We have categorised this as an **established**, **transformational** innovation, as it has reached new youth audiences at scale, created new connections to politicians and decision-makers and used new digital tools and moderation tactics to increase depth of engagement and inclusion.

INNOVATING ORGANISATION

RNW Media is an international civil society organisations and centre of expertise that builds user-owned digital communities for access to information and active social change for and by young people in restrictive settings, where they can safely engage on sensitive and often taboo subjects: from pleasurable sex to civic participation.

recommendations

Taken together, the case studies suggest the following overall recommendations for other innovators, movers and shakers in civil society working in populist contexts.
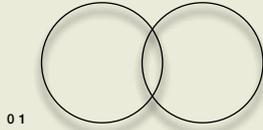
Invest in citizen conversations and capacities.

Invest in communications and marketing capacities and in-house skills to test and develop new narratives — rather than simply promoting your own organisation's brand — and engage new creative talent from within and beyond the sector.

Use modern methods to keep closer contact with your primary constituents, especially young and networked "global villagers". Digital techniques can do more than you might think, and can transform ways of working when incorporated into the core of what civil society organisations do.

Build citizen literacy and information skills creatively. You can achieve a lot very quickly with the right tools, tactics, networks or partners.

Take the time to listen and understand social attitudes and narratives before designing your advocacy strategy. One-off public campaigns or surveys alone are not enough.

Embrace every tool that helps you listen better. Listening helps us do our main job best: better serve our citizens.

CASE STUDIES

02	03	04	05	06
08	10	11	12	13
14				
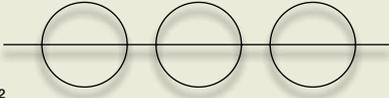
Reimagine partnerships and alliances.

Reaching new audiences often requires forming new alliances or partnerships, including "non-traditional" relationships with informal groups and creative agencies. Engaging more deeply with more traditional partners can also mobilise them to take new kinds of action.

Do what is needed to enable these partners do what they are best at. Evolve the kinds of support, connections and resources you can provide. Don't risk your best assets burning out on the job. Access to psychosocial support may be essential for grassroots partners or groups at the frontlines of gathering evidence or data or leading advocacy or monitoring efforts in challenging political contexts. Providing mentoring and resourcing connections to creative partners can also reveal new ideas and opportunities.

Increase the influence of your allies: Elevate and celebrate those who share your values, vision and big picture goals. If we are on the same side, their success is your success, and their stories are your stories.

Champion the invisible: International civil society partners and staff should speak up about and promote the innovations of their national partners and staff — so long as it does not risk their safety or strategies — so others can get inspired and learn.

CASE STUDIES

01	03	05	07	08
09	10	13	14	
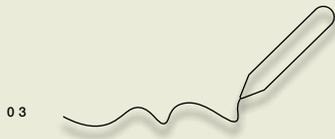
Rewrite the rules, and find fresh formats.

Find fresh formats — for everything. This is a common feature of all our transformational case studies. It ranges from (digital) campaigns and communications to engaging youth audiences and recruiting supporters to delivering training at scale to diversifying organisational governance.

Trial and error, experimentation and iteration — both within an organisation and with key partners — have been critical to many of these successful innovations.

International civil society organisations need to "think and move" more like start-ups, incorporating elements and models from this different kind of organisational culture. For example, organisations could encourage staff to take risks without imposing rules, instead of rewarding the "safe" path. However, new "high reward" tools and tactics, including data and digital use and management approaches, may bring new risks which need to be properly understood and accepted by your organisation.

CASE STUDIES

02	03	04	08	10
11	12	13	14	
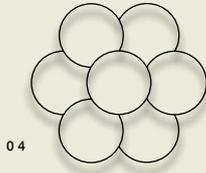
Encourage the enterprise that exists elsewhere...

in citizen democracy and issues–based campaigns, and use the insights from these initiatives for data-driven advocacy. This starts with building an infrastructure — a highway for ideas — while broadening the base for where new experiments and expertise can come from, and providing the boost for good ideas to travel. Young people are powerful agents of change, and often the most impactful work with them is led by them, from ideation to implementation. Putting them in charge of campaigns and initiatives could result in a loss of control for a civil society organisation, but the results are often more sustainable, more empowering for the communities we serve, and the long-term impact is more transformational.

Embrace the informal. International civil society organisations in particular will need to accommodate nimble, adaptive and informal ways of working with their traditionally bureaucratic structures and processes. Organisations may need to fundamentally "rethink their voice and practices" to fully benefit from this fruitful source of innovation and enterprise.

Deploy innovative experiential learning, campaign tools and technology development approaches that are relevant to daily life. Provide participants new skills (the "how") without dictating the content (the "what"). Giving them agency to make decisions for themselves can empower them, and their ability to decide this for themselves encourages them in turn to engage other new audiences.

Creating spaces for experimentation and sharing ideas among civil society groups and organisations can allow cross-border replication, which can be scaled digitally.

CASE STUDIES

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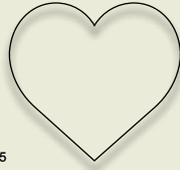
Build your "army of love", and they will "have your back".

Unlike populists, who invoke solidarity defined by exclusion, civil society organisations build solidarity grounded in inclusion. Invest time and resources in proactively building and contributing to solidarity actions. Engage with primary constituents, partner organisations and horizontal networks or hubs, both to build capacity in our sector, but also as a future risk mitigation and resilience-building strategy for your organisation.

If or when opponents target you, make sure you know who to call. If you come under political attack in any country, having an army of supporters who know exactly who you are and what you do will allow them to advocate for you and mobilise their networks to do the same.

Adopt extreme transparency as a default mode of communication so you can easily and quickly rebuff any unfounded accusations of partisanship.

Community builds values, and making people feel like they belong builds community. When people feel cared for and listened to, they will defend your cause more passionately.

CASE STUDIES

01	02	03	06	07
10				
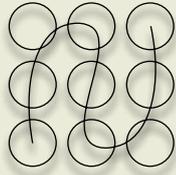
Experiment together with new narratives for and about civil society.

Create common spaces for experimenting with unusual content around universal values. Use play, emotions and cognitive insights to test new narratives for both civil society and human rights.

Either have a very specific target, or be courageous in targeting all sections of the population. What activities will engage your target audience? Which audiences will carry out the activity you want to happen?

Civil society groups should work together to brainstorm new tactics, share results and, crucially, work together to cross-promote content, operating less as separate brands and more as a cohesive multi-faceted movement.

Collectively, we need to find a new common metaphor for human rights, and develop powerful hope-based communications that support our sector as a whole. Remember that making people feel good is a political action, and authenticity will drive attention and engagement.

CASE STUDIES

04	06	11	13

final

Remember that a laser focus on increasing your overall legitimacy and impact, from which most of these innovative "response" strategies originated, is also highly likely to strengthen the relevance and resilience of your organisation in populist contexts. Trying out new ideas, especially bold and daring ones, can be scary for staff, partners and stake-holders, so take people along on the journey, and proceed as a team.

In conclusion, we need to be **utopian as futurists**, rather than retrotopian like populists. We must move beyond reactive mindsets, and not engage with populist framings that aim to reimagine the past or alter the present reality. Responding to populist messages repeats and reinforces them. We should see opportunities and possibilities in world events, not just risks and threats. This report is a call for us to look forward to the future we want to see and shape, articulating our holistic vision of solutions clearly to our audiences. We will need to stay ahead of new political, informational and technological developments, which will inform the evolution of our strategic responses. Our strategies should be informed by what possible futures lie ahead, so we will be ready to maximise our impact no matter what.

Ideas that appear radical or unthinkable can become mainstream, but only if we have the courage to proclaim them boldly, bring them to life through our actions and continue to share them with others. As this dialogue evolves, so will this report. We will revise it with new civil society responses and updates to the case studies as they continue to evolve, so please keep coming back. And if you're doing something that also belongs here, please tell us about it so we can include it in the future.

thoughts