Populating 'Solidarity' in Political Debate: Interrelational Strategies of Persuasion within the European Parliament in the Aftermath of the Brexit

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Abstract

The article examines the various ways in which 'solidarity' is invoked and signified through narrative and categorial devices in a political debate following the UK's vote to leave the EU in 2016. Analysing a floor debate in the European Parliament concerning a white paper released by the European Commission on the future of the EU held in March 2017, we investigate how politicians deploy references to 'solidarity' in service of different political agendas. Our research highlights the strategic use of 'core' values in political debate through the way different speakers appeal to 'solidarity' as a self-evident positive value within the EU, but which is then mobilised through different relevant actors and scenarios to argue contrastive political positions. Our analysis demonstrates how narrative positioning and category-bound normative expectations are harnessed to serve the aims of political persuasion by "populating" a shared principle of governance with purposeful sets of identities and interrelations.

Keywords:
Brexit, European Parliament, European Union, membership categorisation analysis, narrative positioning, parliamentary debate, solidarity.

Introduction
One referendum can shatter the grounds of the whole polity, as happened in the European Union after the Brexit referendum in June 2016 and which continues to reverberate throughout Europe in 2021. Brexit ended up as a win for the 'Yes' vote and for the Britain leaving the union. The situation was both unforeseen as it was unprecedented, with the terms and conditions of separation agreed finally in December 2020 the implementation of the deal remains a significant issue and will continue to influence EU policy in the future. The decision of one Member State to leave the EU shook the core ideas and principles that justify the supranational governance structure of the EU, putting the whole political setting in question and pushing the remaining members to revisit the grounds of the constellation. The European Commission (EC) reacted to the Brexit vote by releasing a white paper on the future of the EU in March 2017, approximately eight months after the referendum. The vote by the UK to leave the EU has since attracted a large amount of research in media and discourse studies (for an overview see Zappettini and Krzyżanowski 2019) and EU Policy (Carta and Wodak 2015) as well as from broader political science interest (Gerhards et al 2021, Verhaegen 2018, Wallaschek 2019, Grimmel and Giang 2017). However little discourse analytic attention has been given to policy debates within the European institutions and particularly the forms of political persuasion exercised in floor debates within European Parliament in the post-Brexit period. In this paper we focus on a debate following the launch of a White Paper where five alternative futures for the union following the Brexit vote are presented. Our interest is in examining the discursive strategies and justifications used by the MEPs in reasoning for the history, current status and future directions of the EU. In particular we focus on the use of the term 'solidarity' in the debate, to examine how this term is imbued with particular meaningful scenes and

scenarios and deployed in service of political positions and polices. The term 'solidarity' is of particular interest as it is taken to represent one of the core values of the EU from both foundational and operational perspectives. Yet there is a mounting discussion on a 'crisis of solidarity' stemming from several shattering events in EU from the financial crisis from 2008 onwards (Gerhards et al 2021, Verhaegen 2018, Grimmel and Giang 2017). In this study we examine how the Brexit crisis was responded to through the discourse of 'solidarity' and how the term was mobilized as an argumentative asset by the Members of the European Parliament, discursively invoking the principle and proposing acts of solidarity in support of their own argument. That is, while 'solidarity' appears as a core principle of the EU and is omni-positively valued, its meaning is not fixed. Instead, the positive valence of the word is harnessed discursively to drive different political and policy ends. Our analysis draws on discourse analytic tools, particularly membership categorisation and narrative positioning analysis, to examine how political actors imbue 'solidarity' through purposefully placed set of identifications and interrelations mobilized to oblige the target of address. Our research illustrates that, no matter how widely accepted norms and values are their meaning is not determined or fixed which allows them to function as versatile cultural resources in political persuasion, contributing to the actor-centred and strategic emphasis of institutional action.

EU and 'solidarity' in the framework of sociological neoinstitutionalism

The word solidarity carries a load of relevance and 'mutual manifestness' in the context of EU (Sperber & Wilson 1986). It appears prominently in ceremonial speeches and public discussions about the Union and is associated with the foundations of the EU (Sangiovanni 2013; Grimmel and Giang 2017; Grimmel 2019). One can indeed find the word mentioned in the foundational treaties of the Union, on the first page of the Treaty of Rome (1958, establishing European Economic Community, EEC) and Article A in the Treaty on European Union (also called Maastricht Treaty, established in 1992).

> "The Union shall be founded on the European Communities, supplemented by the policies and forms of co-operation established by this Treaty. Its task shall be to organize, in a manner demonstrating consistency and *solidarity*, relations between the Member States and between their peoples."

Recently 'solidarity' has become a particular focus of research, in light of a series of subsequent crises (financial, humanitarian and ones of legitimacy) in the EU in the last decade (Di Napoli and Russo 2018; Furness et al, 2020, Gerhards et al 2019, Lahuson and Grusso 2018; Jones 2012; Verhaegen 2018, Grimmel and Giang 2017, McNamara 2017). This rapidly burgeoning research literature perceives solidarity as a founding idea of European integration and at constitutional level of policy without which the EU is unlikely to prevail. Currently, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020 has revived the issue of solidarity in the continuing discussions on EU policies. Institutionally, solidarity seems to possess a 'keyword' status within the EU polity (see Williams 1976). It is a much discussed concept, but which is also a point of struggle in terms of its 'correct' meaning. As recognized in earlier research, the indeterminacy of meaning is not easy to reconcile with epistemological realism (Dieckman 1969). In practice, the link between idealization and materialization of the term often remains contingent (Krzyzanowski 2016; Wallaschek 2019). While the enduring discussion around solidarity and the EU promises to continue (eg. Grimmel 2019) there seems to be less understanding about how the term functions in rhetorical use and how it can be activated to fuel situated argumentative accounts. Rhetorically, the term can be approached as a

floating signifier, which gains its meaning in contextual signification (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). Tracing the situated use of the term reveals the strategic affordances of ambivalence and unclarity around the ideal (Eisenberg 1984).

Literature on values defines solidarity as 'emotionally and normatively motivated readiness for mutual support' (Laitinen and Pessi 2014). In the governance structure of the EU, the virtue of solidarity is interpreted, set in stone and institutionalised in treaties and procedures in particular ways (Karagiannis 2007; Steinworth 2017; Trein 2020). The deeply normative foundations of the EU encourage closer empirical attention to this substantive principle the Union proclaims to build on (Manners 2008). However, this article is not primarily interested in moral, philosophical or legal analysis of the term solidarity, but rather the practical and pragmatic dimensions of the term in communicative use. The limited amount of previous discourse-oriented research on the signification of solidarity has tended to focus of the public understanding and media interpretations of the word (Grimmel 2017), for example in the European press (Kontochristou and Mascha 2014). We build on this line of exploration by examining how the word is imbued with meaning in live debate and in service of differing political positions.

Political action is about making an effort to change and order the world (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). Cultural factors play a relevant role steering social change and policy reforms in modern states (Boli and Thomas 1999). In fact, one core mission of international organizations has been to actively promote normative values and ideals to guide state behaviour (Finnemore 1993; Barnett and Finnemore 1999). The prevalence of norms and values means that apart from self-interested utility-maximation, political actors need to work on institutional legitimacy by following a 'logic of appropriateness' in their action (March and Olsen 1998). This makes relevant the aspects of identity and obligation. From the viewpoint of strategic social construction, normative claims are effective exactly because they entail both evaluative and intersubjective dimension (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891). It is these qualities the norm entrepreneurs work on to get a principle institutionalised and internalised as naturalised element of routine practices (ibid. 897-898). In our analysis we shed light on the strategic organisation of interrelations, however, refuting the claim that norms and values diffuse in packages that fix meaning and start driving the state behaviour (cf. Barnett and Finnemore 711-712). Rejecting an overly mechanistic notion of social change we draw on discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008, Alasuutari 2015) which provides an emic approach to inspect local discursive processes and argumentative struggles whereby the steps towards change are controversial and contingent.

Our analysis focuses on the contextual signification of solidarity as an intentional activity in political debate. In the argumentative use of European politicians, the principle seems institutionalized enough to charge it with consensual rhetorical force to motion political pleas, but the trail and destination materialising in its situated use turns out to be more 'erratic'. Applying Michail Bakhtin's conceptualization and thoughts about the dialogic nature of language (Bakhtin 1981), we show how the meaning of a word is repurposed and 'populated' with its own occasioned intentions. Accounts on solidarity can be approached as responses to the prior line of utterances and they expect a response in return. Our study demonstrates how the prominent principle of solidarity becomes populated by purposeful sets of identities and interrelational scenes in order to mobilise

persuasive appeals to the target audience. It turns out the word and the principled ideals referred to by the speakers may be the same, but the political claims made through the term can differ and be contrastive.

Data and Method of Analysis

Our data consists of a floor debate in the European Parliament after the EC released a White Paper on the future of EU. The debate begins with a presentation given by the President of the Commission who is, unusually, at this time visiting the Parliament and introducing the paper personally, to table it for discussion and debate amongst the Members of European Parliament (MEPs). The debate lasts two hours. The data is taken from the video-recording of the debate which is translated and dubbed into English by EU-translators where other languages are used. In terms of the overall structure, there is first the visiting speech by the President of the European Commission (PEC), then all the chairs of the political groups in the parliament give their responses and comments on the speech, after which the floor is open to other speakers. The President of the Commission makes the concept of solidarity central to the debate mentioning it in the very first sentence of the opening talk. We then found five other speakers using the word in their account. Here we are not so much interested in the frequency of the term appearing but on the ways in which this central principle is invoked and of its discursively built meaning in the six different speeches in response to white paper and the theme of the future of the EU.

We approach the data from the angle of 'epistemic governance', which views political decision-making as a site of continuous contestation whereby actors aim to gain sufficient support for their claims in and through discourse (Alasuutari and Qadir 2014). These local discursive battles are relevant in negotiating and steering social change (Schmidt 2008). Through 'epistemic work' actors aim to convince the hearers and win them over by affecting their perception of the situation at hand on the level of ontological claims, actor identifications and cultural norms and ideals (Alasuutari and Qadir 2014). This interest in local persuasion strategies fits well with discourse analytic approaches developed to capture participants' own reasoning practices as they unfold in intersubjective action (Garfinkel 1967; Sacks 1995). They focus on members displaying their own situated sense making procedures to achieve particular social actions, in this case, through their responses to the White Paper in a political forum.

The method of membership categorisation analysis (MCA) targets analytic attention to the mundane cultural devices actors themselves use in describing and semiotising social reality (Sacks 1972, Hester and Eglin 1997, Fitzgerald and Housley 2015). At the heart of this approach lie members own use of categorisations of persons or other categories as being inference rich which, together with their associated characteristics or attributes, are then examined for how meaning is generated in any particular occasion of their use. This means any categorisation or description is not treated as having a fixed meaning prior to its use by members in situ, or prior to any analysis of their use by analysts. MCA, then, offers a particular analytic lens that focuses on the actual work the speaker does through identifying the methods by which participant's own social (political) realities are organised, configured and reconfigured. Since Sacks' original work, MCA has developed into an empirical approach used across a range of disciplines with a focus on how people use their working

social knowledge about people and their actions both in and about a given context when engaged in social action (Housley and Fitzgerald 2015). In the area of political discourse MCA has been particularly effective in examining media and political debate and discussion through its analytic emphasis on the lived work of politics-in-action as discursively defining a situation to engage in mediated forms of persuasion (Leudar and Nekvapil 2004, Rautajoki 2009, Fitzgerald and Housley 2009, Keel and Mondada 2017, Nekvapil et al (forthcoming). While studies of political discourse in action have examined news interviews and face to face debates to show how political work is enacted within such events (Clayman and Heritage 2002, Housley and Fitzgerald 2007, Keel and Mondada 2017), our focus in this paper is not so much concerned with the interactional work of face-to-face interaction or on the political news media but with the work that 'solidarity' is put to in a series of political speeches in the EU Parliament.

We also deploy tools from narrative positioning analysis (Bamberg 1997), which investigates the positioning of actors made on three levels in the act of narration: positioning of participants in the interactive setting, positioning characters in the accounts, and positioning made in terms of more enduring institutional identities, thus addressing the who-are-we -questions. Narrative positioning analysis is used to complement the principles of MCA in highlighting the purposeful organisation and uses of multiple actor categories in an interrelational setting within a morally organised narrative (Rautajoki 2012). Thus, the talk about solidarity is simultaneously evaluating action, praising, admiring, criticising and condemning the ascribed actors – actors who are already associated with specific institutional expectations, rights and responsibilities (see Jayyusi 1894). In the art of political persuasion, the 'relational scaffolding' of a value-laden argument is accomplished through categorisations, positionings and their evaluative organisation through interrelational casting (Rautajoki in review).

Below we focus our analysis on the persuasive work fuelled by 'scenes' of 'solidarity' in the speeches to advance particular political goals. Within the speeches 'solidarity' is treated as a higher ground that speakers occupy by placing particular actor categories and characterisations in the realm of the principle to make suggestions about the future direction of the EU and its policies. Positionings and identifications accomplished are interrelational in how the mobilization of relevant 'thirds' in the accounts entails obliging appeals to the recipients and institutional actors in situ.
In the analysis we identify various and diverse ways 'solidarity' is put to use; to retain the existing order, to propose governance solutions, to insist on institutional changes, to validate policies, to praise and to challenge the content of the White Paper. We begin our analysis with the opening speech by Juncker in his role of Presidency of the European Commission as he tables the White paper beginning the debate and posits solidarity as one of the foundational principles of the EU. Our analysis then moves to examine subsequent speeches where 'solidarity' is raised through and within temporal trajectories organised in the form of small educational and hypothetical narratives. Each of the speeches highlights how 'solidarity' does not have a fixed or static reference point but rather is engineered and reengineered within the live debate to provide the fuel for diverse policy vehicles.

Solidarity as a Foundational Principle of the Polity
In our first section of analysis solidarity is invoked as a foundational principle to the EU polity and then situated and tied to human relationships as a moral principle acting as a motivational and

aspirational factor for action yet with quite opposite political implications. In the first extract the President of the European Commission (PEC), Jean-Claude Junker introduces the white paper placing solidarity at the very heart of the foundations of the EU and at its 60th anniversary.

Extract 1 - PEC - Solidarity among the states as a foundational value of the EU

> PEC: Mister President, honorary members of this house, ladies and gentlemen, later this month in Rome, 27 of our member states will stand shoulder to shoulder in peace, **solidarity** and friendship to mark the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. --- However, this will not simply be a birthday celebration. It should also be the birth moment of the European Union at 27. And as we turn the page, and commence a new chapter in our history, it is time we sought new answers to a question as old as our union is young: quo vadis Europa at 27? Europe's founding fathers were visionaries. Spinelli and Rossi, imprisoned by a fascist regime, dared to dream of a place where allies and adversaries would unite. --- Writing this manifesto, this new chapter, Spinelli and Rossi decided not to cling to the darkness surrounding them in their Ventotene prison cells. They stretched out their arms to the light instead. They dreamed of a better future and paved the way towards it. 60 years later, this should be an inspiration for us. With nothing to dim our voices, will (we) be forgiven for not speaking up? In 60 years' time, what will our grandchildren say of our legacy? I want them to be proud, as Spinelli and Rossi probably would have been today. Now is our time to be pioneers and carve out a vision so that we may work hand in hand, united at 27, towards our future.

The President of the Commission introduces solidarity as one of the values the union of states was once founded upon. It is mentioned in the very first sentence of the opening words and paralleled with two other values in the form of a three-part list: peace, solidarity and friendship. Solidarity here is first personified as being something that is embodied in action through describing representatives of Member States soon to be expressing mutual solidarity by standing shoulder to shoulder in the upcoming anniversary celebration of the union and paying tribute to the 60 years together since the Treaties of Rome. Solidarity is then something witness-able in the action of standing in the same place. While invoking the solidarity embodied in 'standing shoulder to shoulder' for the upcoming anniversary the President goes on to note that it will also be a new birth, that is the birth of the new union with 27 members rather than 28. This situation is then framed as a point of reflection and consideration of the future of the union using 'us' as a collection device before then going back to the formation of the idea of the EU in the beginning found in the two founding fathers visionary dreams.

The narrative created is of a temporal continuation from historical events to the current day and to the future. At the heart of the continuum is the moral use of the 'family' metaphor in order to frame a story about the origins and inspiration of the founding fathers of the union and who are still symbolically watching over 'us', or at least setting evaluative standards to our action. This is packaged within a generational chain using the family device where the founding fathers are used to invoke a relational pair of family members of 'ancestors – descendants' to build a direct lineage the 'fathers' and the 'children' of the fathers, the Member States, who are making choices over the future path of the EU. Solidarity is invoked within the moral family relationship between the states as family members. In this device, while it is ostensibly up to the family members to decide what to do now that one has decided to leave the family, the common moral imperative of the family acting in 'peace, solidarity and friendship' remains a principled course of action for the remaining family members.

The generational device of ancestors and children within a moral order is then projected forward to consider the next 'generation'. This is again invoked through the use of 'us' and now 'our' grandchildren, where the category 'grandchildren' treats both member states as family members but also individuals as having families and actual grandchildren. With *Spinelli and Rossi'* as the 'fathers' of the EU and the members states as the children the category of 'grandchildren' are then the future members of the EU and the politicians and population that live in the EU. The category of 'grandchild' is used to describe a future interaction where the young child loves their grandparents, the current Member States, but also asks awkward questions about past actions. On the other hand, 'our grandchildren' also addresses each of the individual members of the EU parliament's own grandchildren asking difficult questions. This then invokes an interesting oscillating categorial organisation around the family-based device in which young children are predicated as asking awkward questions of the older generation as both family members and members of the future EU. In projecting this scenario to the future, the speaker also provides the answer. That if the EU members act like a family with peace, solidarity and friendship then they will be able to look their grandchildren in the eye and answer with confidence. Here the predicates associated with membership of the 'family' device organises not only generations of family but of morally ordered family relationships whereby 'solidarity' means sticking together as a 'family', working as a family and acting in the best interests of the family, despite the fact of EU being quite a bureaucratic institution. The narrative combines the what-happened-question? (story level) with the who-are-we? question (identification level) through the inclusive 'us' co-present in the situation (interactional level), where faith, courage and optimism, exist together with solidarity to serve as the motivational factor in the moral lesson history is teaching 'us'.

While in the above extract 'solidarity' was integrated with a family device, arguing that it exists and is the basis for the future, in the next extract the founding principle of solidarity is something to be continually achieved as part of the EU project. In this extract the speaker invokes solidarity as a principle embedded within a list of fundamental priorities as on-going and necessary for the survival of the EU.

Extract 2. MEP, Chair - Solidarity towards the people as a project of the EU system
(GUE, European United Left/NGL, Nordic Green Left)

MEP1: Thank you very much Mr. President. Let us take cognizance of your profession of faith, President Juncker stating the Commission does not impose, does not prescribe. If that's true, then you need, we'll need to listen to the citizens, the working men and women, farmers, young people and organize big citizens' debates at the European level --- (What we're about is not) simply to do some tidying up on the façade, we have got to rethink in depth, we've got to refund, and we've got to take stock of how the treaties are working in practice. The European Union must be (an affair) for the citizens themselves, it must have regard to their aspirations for a better life, it must be a project for justice, for equality, **solidarity,** democracy, and the environment and public health as well. Otherwise, it will be, we'll fail to (rise up to) the challenge. It must not simply be there to police public expenditure and it must not be simply a fortress against refugees, a sanctuary for free movement of capital and money. We cannot simply be in hock to the hedge funds and working to the detriment of ordinary people. If we can't do these things, we will not be respected. We need another scenario, a new one, which is bottom-up, which looks for jobs for people and particularly for young people, we need to convene a conference to democr- have a new Europe, of democracy, of women's rights, of people's rights.

The MEP begins by complimenting the Commission for not dictating the rules this time, implicitly commenting on prior tendencies of the Commission to impose and prescribe. The compliment is, however, equivocated in the second sentence, preconditioning that 'if' the Commission actually lives up to this talk, it needs to listen to the ordinary citizens. This formulation implies a change in the current situation is needed and potentially positions the speakers as opposite to one another. Here solidarity is again invoked as among the core values of the union, but the perspective is societal rather than organizational, and rather than the current EU simply requiring a reenergising around its core principles the speaker calls to use this occasion for more fundamental change involving a fundamental rethink. This rethink is to shift the focus of solidarity from between EU states towards citizens of the EU. Here then solidarity appears as a worthwhile principle to be pursued but which in turn warrants a proper version of 'us' in order to survive institutionally. The formulation is made in juxtaposition with the Commission's positioning as an inward-looking interpretation concentrating only at the state level.

Although the statement places solidarity at the core of the polity and its legitimacy, the positioning of solidarity and the work the term is put to differs from the first extract. Here the speaker places solidarity amongst other policies that are, or *should* be, central to the EU project as it continues and for it to have legitimacy in the future. Together with justice, equality, democracy, the environment and public health, solidarity is placed as an aspiration of the EU in favour of its citizens. Thus, while the previous speaker invoked a family device with the moral order of family values in this extract the speaker relies upon the moral force of 'ordinary' workers across nation states. However, while different in emphasis to Extract 1 the speaker here again invokes an organisational categorial device through which mobilise their argument. Beginning with the use of a three-part list, *working men and women, farmers, young people* the speaker lists a number of membership categories in order to create a collection or category device of 'ordinary people'. The use of the three-part list structure invokes an 'et cetera principle' (Garfinkel 1967), whereby the list of categories given establishes a pattern projecting other possible category members within the membership device ('ordinary citizens'). That is, in listing a small collection of categories the speaker also provides a relationship or attribute that they share that then makes them members of the device 'ordinary' people, to whose justification governance or parliaments are ultimately subjected.

The local work of the device does not explicitly name those *subjected* to the approval of citizens as those in the chamber room but implies an obliging relation between them, thus the story told about ordinary people positions the co-present recipients too. Moreover, the device 'citizens' also works to transcend the nation state or citizens of particular member countries into a morally organised collection of people who are not identified by their nationality but through their common social identity, as both citizens of the EU and of not being part of the governmental structure. From this position the speaker is then 'speaking on behalf of' members of the device, as ordinary citizens in the EU, to argue for the social fairness of the EU beyond the corporate and higher-level system.

In terms of the future of the EU the device works to provide a moral ground for the speaker to be a responsible member of the EU Parliament, speaking on behalf of all the citizens outside the chamber. This then urges the EU institutions to do more to include and represent ordinary people as the current state of affairs poses a challenge to the future legitimacy of the union.

Solidarity as a Transactional Value in Future Policies

In the second set of extracts solidarity is used as an attribute in the role of an adjective. Instead of equating solidarity with the essence of the union and its future prospects, solidarity is used more descriptively to characterize an object, the policy product in the context of political action where it manifests the attainable value and sets the direction for the policies being worked on.

Extract 3. MEP - Solidarity attributed to policies and regulations.
(Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats)

> MEP2: Thank you Mr. President, and also thank you for this White Paper. We need a strong Europe and we need leadership on the challenges and globalisation that no country can deal with by itself. It's clear. We need to harvest the good side of globalisation but we also need to deal with negative side. So I ask you also, we need a **solidarity** pact between European member states and of course the EU as such, to stop the race to the bottom. On tax for example, on corporate taxation, we see that there's a race to the bottom on tax payment, we see that one trillion euro it costs every year on tax evasion and tax avoidance in Europe, 2,000 (Europe) citizen per year, money that could be spent to protect our welfare state. We also need us to stop the race to the bottom on workers' rights, on decent salary, decent worker conditions. So we need a **solidarity** pact that can protect the worker in age of globalisation. And we need leadership of migration crisis, controlling our external borders in the EU but also fighting the root causes for migration and refugee crisis, the biggest refugee crisis since Second World War. Thank you so much.

This statement is markedly weaker than the previous examples in terms of immediate interactional positioning. It does address the White Paper and expresses thanks for the paper, yet it does not really take an explicit stance in the debate. There are many opinions expressed and suggestions made, but they are not opened up, situated or reasoned for, thereby giving the impression of alignment with the paper even though the argument is actually quite contrastive to what the White Paper suggests. The speaker uses need-based argumentation, being future-oriented, compliant yet demanding. The account builds a hypothetical storyline on what needs to be done. The aspiration is to move forward and make things work better and fairer. The claim is lighter on the who-we-are-question, yet it addresses recipients interactionally through the use of we-pronoun with an emphasis is on what 'we' need in order to develop further.

The tone of the argument is instrumental, with solidarity deployed as an essential transactional value. Thus, while the previous speakers placed the role of solidarity as a principle between people and members as the corner stone of the EU mission, here solidarity is used as a policy attribute. Solidarity becomes a quality underlying the policies the speaker is advocating. Thus a 'pact' is premised through the principle 'solidarity' despite the term seeming redundant as the alternative would be a pact not based on some form of agreement or solidarity. However, in placing 'solidarity' before the 'pact' the speaker uses a core principle of the EU to bookend, punctuate and legitimate the policies being advocating. Associating the policies with 'solidarity' lends the assumed positive principle of solidarity to their argument and at the same time shifts the opaque principle of solidarity as existing between 'us' that somehow binds the EU together to one deployed in pursuing concrete active solutions. This is also apparent in the next extract.

Extract 4. MEP – Migration crisis and a system based on solidarity

(Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats)

> MEP3: …My strong vision is like yours: to have Europe that is not divided, to have open and modern Europe, peaceful and have really security and well-being for everyone. And one thing I would like to say: the biggest priority for Socialists and Democrats is asylum system, it's a real true reform of Dublin, and I don't see that as an absolute priority of this Commission. Also when we speak about migration we need a true system that is based on **solidarity** and we have to come back to Schengen, fully restore it and not have border controls that have no grounds to having them introduced. Thank you.

Here again the speaker invokes solidarity as basis for the policy she is advocating for, in this case to build an asylum system that is based on solidarity. The account is centred around a hypothetical vision of an ideal for future Europe, allocating wealth and well-being inclusively for everyone. It then places 'us' in relation to the rest of the world. Through criticising the current priorities of the Commission for neglecting the migration issue and the EU member states on introducing border controls and restrictions on asylum seekers, the speaker argues for restoring the original intent of Schengen agreement and return to a true system based on solidarity, extended to cover people coming from outside of Europe as well. Here solidarity is used to connect back to the premises of a joint agreement that the speaker describes as having been transgressed. Thus, the system of open borders of the Schengen agreement is borne out of the principle of 'solidarity' as something existing in the past but diminishing in the present. A hypothetical narrative form is used to capture a sense of dislocation in relation to potential trajectories (see also Karttunen, 2015). The current state of affairs and policies are represented as an aberration and an obstacle on the way to ideal Europe. The appeal to the recipients in presence then is that there needs to be a return or reset to the 'true' premises of the past. While in the two examples above solidarity is an attribute and a value to be approached through political decision-making, in the next section solidarity is invoked as an object to be repaired.

Solidarity as a Variable Targeted by Responsible Politics
The last two extracts we examine are again slightly different in their take on solidarity, here being deployed as something to repair as a target of political action and governance.

Extract 5. MEP - Solidarity as an acute problem to be tackled institutionally

(Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats)

> MEP4: Mr. President. In Belgium today it is Complimentendag. You don't know what that means? Giving compliments to each other. It's a very special day. So let me start with a compliment. You have written a very comprehensible note, White Paper, something that you can easily understand. I can give that to my mother who is 68 years old or to my daughter who's a 9 year old and she can understand that. And that's good. It's good to start a discussion. But having said that, our group is also disappointed because we especially here in the Parliament all of us are elected to prepare the future of Europe, and that means getting into the concerns of Europe. And you know very well what they are. If you look to the great challenges of Europe, it's migration and security, it's **solidarity** or the lack of **solidarity** and growing inequalities. You mentioned the Social Pillar. And of course climate change. And if you want to do that, and we need to do that, it's our responsibility, our mutual responsibility, then you need a union that is working much closer together. So you don't need all these scenarios, we know which scenario that we need to prepare the future of Europe.

The speaker begins with a direct personal address complimenting the president for 'writing' such a comprehensive paper, and thereby placing responsibility for the paper on the President. However, this praise is then undermined by describing it as a good start that does not go far enough as it is insufficient to meet the acute challenges in Europe. The basis of the argument is a critique of the paper *because* of its accessibility and inclusiveness, that it is *too simple* and so does not deal with the depth of the concerns of the EU. The argument appears almost as a narrative contestation in which the family device and the idea of a generational chain is used ironically. That is, while the paper is accessible to all age-categories and citizens of Europe this is 'irrelevant' from the perspective of tackling the problems and making concrete decisions on them as institutional actors. Solidarity, or the lack of it, is then deployed within a list of concrete *challenges* in Europe, which needs to be addressed. The account is very task-oriented, emphasising the institutional responsibility of preparing the future of Europe. It is the mutual responsibility of 'us the institutions' (exclusively), especially the EUP elected by the people. Comprehensibility, inclusion of citizens and providing different possible scenarios is made irrelevant as there is only one actual scenario to follow and it is the more urgent task of problem solving and clear-minded governance that is crucial. The lack of 'solidarity' then can be fixed only through more close-knit procedure of representative politics that the speaker is advocating.

While similar in structure to the use of lists presented in other speeches where solidarity is populated, here solidarity is part of a list for targets of action, as a category within the device 'challenges'. Also similarly, the list is not exhausted through the categories mentioned but rather creates a device that again implicitly projects and collects other possible categories that people may regard as 'problems' and challenges with and within the EU. In terms of positionings, the speaker is arguing for a kind of 'organizational' solidarity between the EC and the EUP only achievable through their collaborative and clear-sighted policies. The explicit reference to solidarity then is harnessed to a 'real' problem facing the EU out there and as separate from 'us' power holders and our discursive sphere here and now. Thus, the speaker uses the criticism of the ambiguous White Paper to call for an alliance on their terms as the only way to restore the solidarity now lost, and where the solution to the problem is then to be found in institutions acting strongly in the political structure. The criteria of institutional roles is also mobilized in the final speech examined, Extract 6, where strong leadership is the key to policy cohesion and solidarity.

Extract 6. MEP – Affirming solidarty as a governance mission

(Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats)

> MEP5: Mr. President, I speak on behalf of the Socialists and Democrats. The Commission's assessment may be correct but it does worry me. The Commission's prime responsibility is to assume leadership, rather than being a think tank, at one of the most dramatic periods for the European Union, affirming **solidarity** between all the member states is vital. And **solidarity** involves solid cohesion policy. We are against a two-speed or several-speed Europe, and I think it's a very unfortunate time to table this White Paper. I think, greater division and frustration will be caused particularly in, countries which are very much prepared to cooperate fairly and consolidate the European Union such as my own country. So, President, aren't you going to take on this leadership role? You'll just, if not, you'll just create greater dissention amongst member states and you'll have a negative effect on the 2019 European elections. This could be a threat to the future of the EU.

The speaker starts by evaluating the Commission's choice of the way the White Paper is structured and is critical of the decision to offer several alternative futures for the EU. Again, invoking institutional roles, the speaker states that the institutional task of the Commission is to assume leadership which is seen essential at this point in the EU's history rather than operating as a 'think tank' putting forward various scenarios. The White Paper acts *against* strong leadership and thus undermines the institutional responsibility of the Commission to govern the whole decisively. Solidarity between the member states appears as a vital item, but which has weakened and needs to be affirmed by the Commission through a 'solid cohesion policy'. To reinforce this the speaker challenges the President to be a strong leader where indecisiveness increases division and frustration among the member countries and ultimately threaten the future of the EU.

Here the use of solidarity is presented as a social variable, as something to be worked on and that the Commission has direct control over. The speaker's argument is that the EC needs to take decisive action to lead the countries towards stronger solidarity. This puts the principle in quite an arbitrary and manipulative light as it becomes an item of governance validating a responsibility to command and take strong action. Thus, while here too, solidarity is valued and seen as vital for the union, when compared to other extracts, the people, citizens, workers, migrants, or any other bottom-up perspective or discontent towards the 'strong hand of the Commission' are disregarded altogether. Instead, the weakening state of solidarity is harnessed to warrant a more authoritative rule. The account is critical of weak leadership but compliant towards the prevailing political setting, favouring tighter unity and hierarchical dominance and pushing the Commission back up to its tower and organisational distance.

Discussion and Conclusion
The above analysis has focused on the deployment and use of the principle of 'solidarity' within a debate on the white paper on the future of the EU, triggered by the UK voting to leave the Union. In the opening statement and in the subsequent speeches' 'solidarity' was oriented to as a central value of the union motivating the introduction of the paper and referred to repeatedly in the debate. Each of these references raised solidarity as an important and even crucial principle for the survival of the EU on the verge of a new era. The positive valence of the word was not contested. Yet, the accounts in the debate display different constellations of relevant actors and core referents on what solidarity means or entails in practice. The political work solidarity is put to in the debate is mobilised through various discursive configurations where the term is used to collect and configure specific categories of actors and actions, often organised in temporal trajectories and harnessed to advocate particular political goals.

Our analysis identified and examined three different angles through which solidarity was discursively configured and deployed in service of political persuasion, 1) as a principle guiding action and representing the foundational ideal of the polity, 2) as a policy attribute and a value to be attained through political solutions, 3) as a variable on political arena and an acute target of political action justified by the organisation of institutional responsibilities. From the perspective of political persuasion and positioning, the first is associated with institutional identity work ('who-we-are' positioning), the second uses the term as a cultural ideal (what is considered important and worth pursuing, the storyline positioning), and the third is around ontological claims about reality and to

define what needs to be changed and what is the role of co-present participants in the task (the interactional positioning). Different pragmatic translations of the word solidarity can thus be divided into different kinds of political rhetorical devices, each categorizing, positioning actors a bit differently, varying from solidarity amongst us here, solidarity towards them there, and solidarity of those others at the moment.

Underpinning the political devices is the work of personifying solidarity through the pronoun 'we' in order to collect and galvanize groups of actors, family members, citizens who are predicated with the virtue of solidarity. The use of 'we' in relation to the principle of solidarity collects and invokes a moral action to guide, direct and target action, and yet, in each of the speeches leads the institution and its decision-making to completely different paths and destinations. Here then the 'we' device is used deliberately to identify, organise and mobilise groups of people and then allocate actions to those groups as, either stepping up and taking action through 'solidarity', or claiming that action should be taken on their behalf to enhance and ensure solidarity while also functioning as an inclusion or exclusion device depending on the speaker's argument. Along with the use of 'we' each argument also retains the Commission as a central figure and solidarity as a positive value. This three pronged rhetorical structure and multilevel devices of different identifications, intentions and political proposals motivated through forms of narrative positioning highlight the resourcefulness and flexibility of narrative tools in purposeful and consequential political action. It also shows how references to a principle can cover all the corners of political organisation from the institution (polity) to the processes (politics) and end products of decision-making (policies).

Our analysis underlines the reflexive character of norm-related rhetorical work around a particular word. While 'solidarity' involves structure-driven components of commonly shared beliefs it also leaves substantial amount of choice and strategic opportunities to translate the principle into proposals on different political realities. It shows that there is 'ideological polysemy' around the principle: the signification of the term depends on the speaker (Dieckmann 1969). This combination of manifestness and ambivalence allows speakers to use the term in calculative and creative fashion to balance between shared normative expectations and more particular aims (see Engel & Wodak 2013). All in all, the analysis demonstrates that the institutional prominence of a value does not fix its meaning or determine scripts for political behavior. Furthermore, the logic of appropriateness related to institutional responsibility is not only about scanning the institutional appropriateness of one's own action but institutional expectations can be used to push co-actors to obey the rules of the game too (Rautajoki in review). Thus, mutually manifested normative principles, such as 'solidarity', are continually put to work as discursive assets in the service of political positioning and persuasion.

The variability in the uses of the word solidarity demonstrates the contingent nature and versatile applicability of norms and values in political discourse and argumentation. The unilateral appreciation of a value does not then dictate the course of political action neither determine the direction of social change in politics. While the general principle may be positively agreed upon, the specific meaning of terms is not fixed but remains indexical being locally instantiated, negotiated and reclaimed each time. While prior research has portrayed the life cycle of norms advancing from norm emergence to goal-oriented norm cascade to eventual institutionalisation and

internalisation of the norm in an institution (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) our discourse analytic study highlights the locally accomplished strategic use of principles in the service of routine political work. Rather than being *internalized* by actors, a selection of actor categories are *located inside* the halo of the principle, thus populating solidarity with purposeful political positionings in order to promote various political claims in the debate.

Finally, while within the EU the principle of 'solidarity' has lived on sculpturing the grounding ideas of the European Union since its beginning, 'solidarity' is now treated as being 'in crisis' and where the lack of 'solidarity' is feared to be leading towards a *weakening* and even its *extinction*. The White Paper and subsequent debate are an attempt to address this 'crisis' springing up from a set of recent crises and further exacerbated by the decision of one country to leave. However, it could be argued that much nuanced complexity in understanding the current challenges facing the EU are being lost or passed over in the concern and hand wringing around the 'principle' of solidarity when it is clear that it can mean whatever politically kaleidoscopic work the word can be put to. The aftermath of Brexit vote may simply provide another opportunity to circulate and manipulate the principle for 'solidarity' for earthly political goals. However, Brexit has also brought into even sharper focus a continuing strain on the principle and in so doing risks contributing further to potentially eroding the grounds of the union as a whole by drawing attention to and relying on something treated as solid in the face of vague definitions and endless meanings of the term.

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