We, the European Union. Together but… far Apart

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Note of Editor-in-Chief

This is the first Special issue of the journal Culture e Studi del Sociale-CuSSoc. The idea behind the special issue comes from this consideration: around the world, individuals are facing a critical moment, the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences require some reflections on many topics, often forgotten by scholars. This is the reason why many Italian and foreign scholars have been invited to give their contribution. Furthermore, now more than ever, it is crucial to share knowledge coming from multiple disciplines and that's why it was decided to write an entire issue in English.

For scientific and intellectual correctness, the contents of single articles refer to the situation as in mid-May 2020. It is necessary to clarify that because this Special issue was published when many countries were starting to reduce their emergency measures to cope with the pandemic.

We, the European Union. Together but… far Apart

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Abstract

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be an issue, the retaliations on nation-states' political, socio-cultural and, more than ever, economic structures are deemed to be- or are they yet- dire. The paper aims to broadly discuss the reaction of European leaders to the emergence of COVID-19 and the undercurrents in terms of power and discourse on the European Union -EU-. The first part introduces chronologically the diffusion of the virus from China to Europe and, specifically, Italy. Later, it focuses on the first reactions of EU politicians to the growing epidemic until the international recognition of the emergency as global pandemic. It, then, moves to the second most damaged country inside the EU sphere, Spain. It lastly compares the state's reactions by methodologically employ comparison of units and discourse analysis as pillars for this research. The final aim is to explore patterns in the EU leaders' communication of emergency due to COVID-19 within the framework of the Union and bearing in mind the differences between the EU as a Union and the EU as a compound of sovereign nation-states.

Key word: EU politics, Covid-19, Political emergencies.

Introduction

It's easy to talk when there's nothing to cover up for. Starting to write this article on the 27th of March, when the leader -Boris Johnson- of the new ex-EU nation-state has been tested for COVID-19, and has resulted positive, is a compelling and, unexpected in its nature and reactions, task to endure.

The emotional backlash this pandemic brings to us, citizens of the world, is no doubt immense. Presidents, Prime Ministers, leaders and people in a position of political power across the world are showing their strengths and weaknesses all at once. More than ever in the recent history of Europe, discourse pervasively changes our perspective on issues and emergencies. Contingent words to ordinary and, mostly, extraordinary events shape multiple cultural environments. Language molds it all (Foucault, 2005).

Some International Relations scholars would argue that despite time has passed since the world wars at the beginning of the last century, state-centered politics and the role of nation-states to create, and maintain, stability is still there, stronger than ever and leading as always. Others would -perhaps-see the different actors on the scene, the presence of the civil society and non-governmental actors to intertwine and shape current socio-political scenarios. Still, others would be agnostic in understanding the power of values and ideas in shaping contemporary global politics and world (Mazzei, Marchetti and Petito, 2010). Where the truth resides, is still unclear.

In detail, aware of the chronological radar of the events, and by adopting a socio-political perspective of priorities, the first paragraph of the article presents a brief overview of the virus and its spread from Asia to Europe. The second part deepens the reactions of EU leaders and major politicians to the pandemic. A spe-

cial section of case studies focuses on Italy and Spain, the two most affected countries by the pandemic in Europe. The last paragraph before the conclusions, briefly presents some of the reactions of other European leaders to the COVID-19 emergency so as to provide an overview of conglomerate of emotions, political discourse and practical policy scenarios around Europe.

For the methodological part, we employ a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to explore the way politicians reacted to the spread of the pandemic all over Europe, specifically the European Union. Furthermore, we consider discourses as corpus of statements which, engage discontinuity over time and space in order to foster the problematization of the issue in terms of technology of power (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2008; Foucault, 1981, 2000).

1. Background of the emergence of COVID-19 - January 2020

In January 2020, people were freely taking trips around the world, moving from one corner of the world to the other. Or, for those who experience adventure in other ways, they were enjoying alternative walks to free themselves in post-modern or pre-modern ways (Le Breton, 2000).We could, no matter if we wanted it or not, leave our houses and see the outside.

However, things changed very quickly and they are completely different now.

February 2020 saw the explosion and the tragic diffusion around the globe of the first cases of COVID-19 which, stopped from being a Chinese issue and became an Italian first, and later an EU emergency. News announced that most of the cases started in one region of Italy, that of Milan (Lombardia), in the north of the country and, then, spread first to the nearby regions and, later, to the vast majority of the national territory. Both Italy and Spain reported the first cases at the end of January. However, there are some differences in the places where cases appeared, the Canary and Baleares islands in Spain and Lombardy in Italy. The true common point is its fulcrum of the movements of tourists that were proceedings from China in the first place and, then, from Italy to the Spanish exotic islands.

This is the publicly known version of the events.

Nevertheless, as argued by Fuchs (2020), some insights into the communication of the ideology behind the context of coronavirus can be revealing of future international scenarios. For instance, media coverage of the event was only following the main pathways of transmission and media were predominantly giving the fault to specific targets. In the beginning, it was the Chinese people and, then, the Italians. As time passed by, it was also the Spanish people. Never have we ever heard of the Middle Eastern people of Iran as "*untore*". Indeed, it was never the Iranians, who are harshly suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic, they were already outside of our western cultures and societies. War regimes, as a visa in their passports, a permit of entrance and residence, are its distinctive mark, a mark that only quarantine allowed us to speculate on and empathize with, now, at the beginning of the new decade (Teller, 2015).

So China, Iran, Italy, Spain, the USA. How did leaders react to the spread of the pandemic in Europe? Where are we now? Shall we talk about a globalized world? An EU environment? Or shall we look for antagonistic/egoistic lanes, remain in our neo-realistic vision and opt for nation-states priorities inside the structure of the international system?

Before presenting the EU reactions to the spread of the virus, we introduce some of the references about the challenging events related to the COVID-19 pan-

demic that we consider significant in the narratives based on discourses made by different leaders around the globe. Specifically, one statement made by the current President of the United States of America and the other two made, respectively, by the president of France and the Prime Minister of Spain.

> We have been in frequent contact with our allies, and we are marshalling the full power of the federal government and the private sector to protect the American people (President Trump, USA - March 11, 2020) [1].

> Jamais la France n'avait dû prendre de telles décisions - évidemment exceptionelles, évidemment temporaires - en temps de Paix (President Macron, France - March 16, 2020)[2].

> Para combatir esta emergencia de salud pública, haremos lo que haga falta, donde haga falta y cuando haga falta. Y juntos superaremos esta crisis (Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, Spain - March 10, 2020)[3].

The sentences quoted above present different elements: *the warfare language and framing* used in the first case (Pillar, 2020); similar discourse narrative in the second declaration which, although it seems the opposite because the French president quotes the word *peace* is analogous to the first statement's imaginary. However, the intentions might be different since for geopolitical reasons- as we have been witnessing throughout history- peace, contrary to war, does not make noise (Kupchan, 2012). And this might be true also when the *crisis* is different, and the *enemy* is the COVID19 pandemic. Last, but not least, the importance of *resilience and social solidarity, welfare state, and spirit of communion,* as in the last sentence with reference to the Spanish case.

The narrative and narratives are important for the FDA analysis of this article. Indeed, although often considered far from the field of political science and International Relations, the narrative, with all its implications, bases its power on the fact that, most of the time, he/she who builds the story, is the same to tell it (Patterson and Monroe, 1998). Technologies of power, and self, intermingle in the analysis of discourses, body of knowledge based on relations between things (Foucault, 1988). Additionally, in its two forms of *mode of knowing* and *mode of communication* (Czarniawska, 2004)[4], the narrative has inherent a very high degree of rhetoric (Polletta, Chen, Gardner and Motes, 2011; Polletta and Lee, 2006). The choice of specific forms of communication certainly accentuates it (Fuchs, 2019) and the narrative has the role to promote debate on a specific issue. However, it puts in place a sort of selection, it does not cover all the issues that echo the pandemic and certainly not all the places.

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[1] Retrieved from https://fr.usembassy.gov/covid-19-presidential-declaration/

[2] Retrieved from https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/03/16/adresse-aux-francais-covid19

[3] Retrieved from https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/Paginas/2020/100320-comparecenciasanch.aspx

[4] Narration presentes two forms: *mode of knowing* (a set of meanings and interpretations that the individual processes and attributes to the data and information collected in the context in which he or she lives); and *mode of communication* (a system of symbols and meanings shared by a certain community that thinks of itself and the surrounding world through these symbols and meanings).

2. **First EU reactions**

The European Union, as a Union, despite the differences, of diverse but *united* nation-states, was the first its citizens expected to react. Unfortunately, it did not happen. EU leaders, and chiefs of the most relevant organizations of the Union, absorbed the issue and the speeding out of the epidemic in a way that we could refer to as *thought-provoking mediatic frames with despairing consequences.*

Ranging from underrating the dimension of the issue to the culprit tactics and 'leave them isolated' quite long-term strategy, we were, and are, witnesses of the way language interacts, and combines, with the world and humans in expressing its true essence of social phenomenon (Bo, 2015; Iyengar and Kinder, 2010).

On March 12th, Christine Lagarde, the president of the European Central Bank, made a very controversial and unanimously criticized declaration. In contraposition to what her predecessor evangelized during his mandate, she opened the debate on the issue by recognizing the impact that the spread of the Covid19 has on the economic activities of the countries inside the Eurozone. She later added that:

> We are not here to close spreads, this is not the function or the mission of the ECB. There are other tools for that and there are other actors to actually deal with those issues[5].

She retreated her statement in a subsequent interview by admitting she misspoke and she did not want to promote fragmentation inside the Eurozone. However, such a declaration, made by the main authority of the ECB, and considering the way markets work, meant that in one day the Italian bond yields reached the highest pick as never before in history. The event was internationally relevant and it triggered the immediate reaction of both the Prime minister and the President of the Republic of Italy, respectively Giuseppe Conte and Sergio Mattarella. They both reassured the Italian people but they also reinforced the bonding ties with the EU and the Eurozone, by acting beyond the logic of global solidarity over national isolation.[6]

The second reaction we consider relevant for the present investigation is the one made by Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission. She was definitely more cautious than the president of the ECB in her statements. Already in march 10th she proposed 25 billion euro initiative in order to fight COVID-19 and called upon coordinate action among, and between, member states. Nevertheless, what appears clear is that she underestimated the undercurrents of the virus and focused on specific matter in a compelling diplomatic way. After having criticized Trump's decision to stop EU-USA connections because of the "*foreign virus*"[7], she proposed to other countries of the EU to close up flights and connections, as well as travels which were not intended as fundamental, as a first measure to stop the pandemic to grow stronger. Nevertheless, she stressed for the need and the willingness to repatriate all Europeans who were resident outside the Union or in another country. On March 26th, she made a very communal speech by repeating "*Europe owes you all a debt of gratitude*" to all Europeans[8] and she added a very EU note by asserting:

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[5] Retrieved from: https://www.ft.com/content/11ab8f84-6452-11ea-b3f3-fe4680ea68b5

[6] Retrieved from: https://www.ft.com/content/19d90308-6858-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75

[7] Retrieved from: https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-trump-foreign-virus-anti-migrant-policy-blame-china-europe-2020-3?IR=T

[8] Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_20_532

We must look out for each other, we must pull each other through this. Because if there is one thing that is more contagious than this virus, it is love and compassion. And in the face of adversity, the people of Europe are showing how strong that can be.

She adopted the strategy of shared responsibility and resilience among EU member stated and launched "*the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative to help direct EUR 37 billion mitigate the impact of the crisis, to save lives, jobs and businesses*". She focused on shared values and she concluded: "*Let us do the right thing together – with one big heart, not 27 small ones*".

Employing a FDA, we can grasp at some of the ways discourses are set of rules and practices that create narratives of realities about one body of knowledge (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Foucault, 1981, 2005). The two protagonists of the segments analyzed express relations of force in terms of technology of power and self, considering their position when they opt for specific words to pronounce. Indeed, as leaders of two different European institutions they both use contextualized power relations to express their personal position, abiding by the one of the institution they represent, respectively the ECB and the EC. By doing that, they produce two diverse narratives and communicate opposite messages in the historical developing of their discourses about the role of the European Union during the pandemic. Both reactions are economy-led but the attitude of superiority of Christine Lagarde wins over the one of declared solidarity and sense of community made by Ursula von der Leyen. Their words create a contrasted idea of the Union, unable to make its own bodies to talk, and therefore, work jointly.

These were the two main declaration the EU leaders made at the beginning of the pandemic in the Union. We will now focus on the Italian case, the first hardest-hit country in the pandemic.

2. The Italian government's reaction to Coronavirus

Giuseppe Conte, the Italian President of the Council of Ministers, reacted with a very decisive statement. He took position by approving a decree of law and isolated one region first and, then, the whole country. He took strong measures from the beginning of the epidemic and in march 1st he declared the state of emergency[9]. Decrees by decrees the situation in Italy has become very complicated, economically and socially speaking (Fig. 1). The words of the premier as "*torneremo presto ad abbracciarci*[10]" and similar declarations are reassuring the people of the Italian peninsula, but only partially. Since March 10th Italy is suffering from enduring moral, physical and emotional pain and the pandemic doesn't sound like it's beginning to stop. Despite in April 1st some media announced that Italy reached its peak, bewilderment seems the password to our lives as people populating the earth.

Considering statements as units of analysis, as in the logic of Discourse Analysis (Foucault, 2005; Hall, 1997; Laclau, 1997), the speech approving the quarantine[11] gives a good example of what discussed in the introduction on the power of language, and the dissemination of ideas about realities made by individuals.

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[9] For updates on the COVID-19 emergency see: http://www.governo.it/it/media/dichiarazioni-alla-stampa-del-presidente-conte/14274

[10] In English: "*We will hug each other again, and soon*".

[11] Retrieved from: http://www.governo.it/it/media/dichiarazioni-alla-stampa-del-presidente-conte/14274

Figure 1- Premier Giuseppe Conte signs the decree on measures to fight COVID_19 9/20/2020

Source: http://www.governo.it/it/articolo/firmato-il-dpcm-9-marzo-2020/14276

During the discourse, Conte urged for the need to renounce to things, together as Italians, in a collaborative way. The Prime Minister used pervasively strong words by announcing: "Italy protected area/zone" in its totality. He called upon the need to act together and to make efforts in order to stop the pandemic, to stop its spread out even more. The motto he pointed out was, consequently, clear thanks to the hashtag: "#iorestoacasa"[12].

In his declarations, Conte did not make direct reference to the damage of the social fabric. In Italy the choice of general measures of domestic nature prevails in words more than action, especially in the beginning of the pandemic, the emergency hit the country in an unexpected way. Indeed, in the first weeks, there were no visible measures of international cooperation, the power of Conte was in its domestic appeal and in the usage of some war references to get the attention of the online audience. For instance, during the first discourse on quarantine he stated that we should all thank our "*medici in trincea[13]*" and, in a few sentences before this one he was '*condemning*' young people will to moments of sociability, to "*fare aperitivo[14]*" and whatsoever, by later stating "*we need to give up to something for a higher good, the one of our country*". The Italian Premier used scenarios of death and life as huge contraposition. He also embraced the concept of responsibility and mutual responsibility, moving from individuals to national levels. For instance, he declared:

> Oggi è il momento della responsabilità, il futuro dell'Italia è nelle nostre mani, che devono essere responsabili.[15]

By listening to the words composing the discourse on quarantine in Italy, we notice that they reflect some of the elements inside Foucault's view. Among them,

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[12] In English: "I stay home".

[13] In English: "doctors in trenches".

[14] In English: "enjoy a pre-dinner drink"

[15] In English: "Today is the moment of responsibility, the future of Italy is in our hands, which must be responsible".

the usage of contrapositions in order to deliver a message of emergency to a specific audience, in this case to the people of the country, clear in the exact moment when the leader declared the emergency. In a certain way, Conte gives his personal, the one of his cabinet and the broader presidential perspective, on the situation of pandemic inside the country and, by precisely doing that, he produces new knowledge on the issue (Foucault, 1988).

Using specific words and sentences he portrays a certain vision of the nation to two different listeners: the insiders- in the hearts and minds of the people of Italy suffering from the disease and its spread to every corner of the territory; and to the outsiders- those who do not live in Italy- by depicting a dramatic situation of the country thanks to his dialectics. Specifically, he starts by choosing a framework of war language in combination with the present and then moves to peace imaginary and future perspectives of solidarity. Significant to mention, Conte represents the personification of its country and his speech means truth and reliability to institutions. In this context, words become practices and they produce a snapshot of the historical power-political moment which, in turn, can change only if another discourse comes into play.

Certainly, in the overview of the discourse in terms of *Foucauldian discourse analysis* (FDA) and construction of reality by means of language and power, polymorphism should not be a stranger. As a matter of fact, this brief paper presents only one way to read into EU leaders and their speeches from a socio-political perspective.

3. The Spanish government's reaction to Coronavirus

Among the conundrum composing the Spanish case, political power positions had a significant role in the decisions which lead to the proclamation of "estado de alerta[16]" on March 14th . And, no doubt, all political forces in Spain underestimated the situation.

Indeed, there is something to notice in the way Spain reacted to COVID-19 pandemic. Its fulcrum it's the "it's not my business" attitude from Madrid and the Palace of Moncloa. For example, considering, the escalation of the emergency already in the beginning of March, and having as a reference the Italian, one point to discuss is: Why manifestations were not suspended, as the 8M (Feminist demonstration during Women's Day, 8 March) or the strikes all over the country? - For example, protests by the farming sector in Zaragoza. However, we could only speculate on the reasons behind these decisions and point out that the UpToDate situation demonstrated that Madrid has the majority of cases in the whole country[17].

It was only on Saturday the 13th of March, that the President of the government declared the state of emergency and locked down the whole national territory from Sunday the 14th of March. Let's see what were the focal point of his address to the Spanish nation-state.

During his speech (Fig. 2), the Spanish prime minister defined the *enemy* of the country. He said:

[16] In English: "State of emergency"

[17] Reference to real-time and visibile data on the institutional website of the Spanish Government (https://www.mscbs.gob.es/).

…Our true enemy is the pandemic and the virus, it's an enemy of everyone and our collective task is efforts and sacrifices and what we need to do is to lower down the evolution of the pandemic and reach collective achievements…

Figure 2 - Declaration of the lock down in Spain (13/03/2020)

Source: https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/multimedia/galeriasfotograficas/presidente/Paginas/2020/130320-declaracion.aspx

Moreover, he clearly mentioned the economy since the beginning and he focused on the prevention of future pandemics.

He continued with insightful words on the meaning of solidarity and community:

Estos días aparecen mensajes inspirados por la confusión, por la rabia y por la angustia. Y es comprensible, porque no hay nada más que dañe el ánimo de una persona, que la amenaza de lo desconocido es una reacción humana. Pero debemos actuar con unidad, con responsabilidad y con disciplina social. Como presidente del Gobierno os pido vuestra colaboración. Sé que la tengo… Paremos los bulos, las especulaciones, las FIGC News con información contrastada. Actuemos con responsabilidad, con disciplina social y con sentido de comunidad. Sé que somos capaces de hacerlo unidos. Sabemos que en cada casa de España ahora mismo se necesita un mañana, una certeza de que mañana esto habrá pasado. Y así es…"unidad, responsabilidad y disciplina social—os pido vuestra colaboracion y paremos las fake news- con sentido de comunidad—se necesita un manana[18].

The Spanish leadership faced Covid-19. To in different ways. In a discourse analysis context, we can start by commenting on a few elements of the main body of words used by Pedro Sánchez.

In the main discourse to the nation announcing containment measures to face the pandemic, sense of community- evident in the hashtag #estevirusloparamosjun-

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[18] In English: "These days messages appear inspired by confusion, anger and anguish. And it's understandable, because there is nothing more damaging to a person's mind than the threat of the unknown being a human reaction. But we must act with unity, with responsibility and with social discipline. As President of the Government, I ask for your collaboration. I know I have it... Let's stop the hoaxes, the speculations, the FIGC News with contrasting information. Let's act with responsibility, with social discipline and with a sense of community. I know we can do it together. We know that in every house in Spain right now a skill is needed, a certainty that tomorrow this will have happened. And so it is... "unity, responsibility and social discipline - I ask for your collaboration and let's stop the fake news - with a sense of community - we need a tomorrow"

tos[19]-, resilience, union, solidarity and language of humanity by the president of the government came as front-line items. Pedro Sánchez choose neither war language, nor dichotomies, nor criticism of the current lifestyle. His discourse merged together power and self when narrating the new reality caused by the pandemic (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Foucault, 1981, 1988, 2005).

This is already a huge different if compared to the reaction of the Italian prime minister. For sure, they both opt for the main idea of protection, summarized in the hashtag #mequedoencasa[20], but if we compare these two different leaders we can argue that their styles, and the consequences of their words, were different.

In the speech announced by the Spanish prime minister, the rhetoric of war is a latent element, as for the warfare frame. Pedro Sánchez and the whole Spanish government, have directed their campaign against the virus by mostly focusing on social policies. In a globalized world, the sense of community by the Spanish presidency plays a very important role and this is clear since the first statements and declarations of Sanchez and his ministers (Sarason, 1974; Tartaglia, 2006).

The situation continues to be dramatic in the country. However, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel. The focus on social services and people's needs is strong in the vision of the present Spanish government and the usage of metaphors is an efficient linguistic device in this context. It allows Pedro Sánchez to deliver a specific message inside a flow of touching narratives, narratives that have a great amount of empathy and desire, followed by concrete actions, to get out of the current, shared dramatic situation. It seems a narrative of hope for a better tomorrow because we all need "a tomorrow".

4. Comparing and merging experiences - What keep us together? Are we really?

Europe has been through a lot with the spread of coronavirus and the European Union- both as a Union and a compound of sovereign nation-states- saw variegate reactions. We briefly present other cases which, followed the reactions of Italy and Spain and help toward the understanding of the strategies and tools of communications employed by single states in the broader context of the European Union.

The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, with his discourse on the lockdown in France declared war on the new enemy. He clearly defined the enemy to be the coronavirus and took example from Italy and Spain on what to do next. He choose a warfare language and gave to the French people one very clear image of the situation, one which was similar to the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015 (Romania and Tozzo, 2017). Contrary to others EU leaders and members, he recognized the gravity of the issue since the beginning and reshaped his words creating different power relations and, therefore, social realities on language and practices. These latter ones gave him strength as both the representation of the nation and as a demonstration of self- relation to the spread of coronavirus.

On the other side what Boris Johnson, the UK leader, did was to reject the spread of the pandemic and opt for a diverse strategy of language and power. In the first place, he adopted a laissez-faire approach (Fuchs, 2020). He commented by saying:

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[19] In English: "we will stop this virus together"
[20] In English: "I stay home".

> We have all got to be clear, this is the worst public health crisis for a generation….It is going to spread further and I must level with you, I must level with the British public: many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time.

He did not react by taking precautionary measures since the beginning. He truly made us ponder-again- on these words by Harari,

> In this time of crisis, we face two particularly important choices. The first is between totalitarian surveillance and citizen empowerment. The second is between nationalist isolation and global solidarity (Harari, 2020).

In Germany, Angela Merkel had a public national address to the nation where she clearly demonstrated her level of concern by stating "Es ist ernst" (This is serious). She mentioned German history, present and offered a concrete plan of action to deal with the future. She focused more on shared responsibility and the willingness to act together as a country. The leader of Germany asserted that in order not to experience, again, lack of freedom, as for moving and travelling, like it was in Germany from the second world war to the east-west Germany division during the Cold War, we all need to act as a collective body. Mentions were mostly focused on a national level and this has sparkled some forms of criticism by other EU countries. The latter ones have criticized Germany of being too egoist and to look for hegemonic power in the region, in times of grief for the Union. It should be noted, however, that the national level of interest is present in all leaders' speech. One might argue that this is just a manifestation of the still in vogue neo-realistic approach to globalized regions. Adopting FDA, we could argue that the usage of power, technologies and relationships allows Angela Merkel's discourse to employ 'history to portray a new story' and to set up the variables of new social realities in Germany, and inside the entire EU (Foucault, 1981; Kickbusch *et al.*, 2020).

Last but not least, on March 30th, the Hungarian parliament gave full powers to Victor Orbán, an escalation of populism and nationalism. A thin centered-ideology and a stronger bulk of theories came together again in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and became practice (Kaltwasser, 2014; Mudde, 2004, 2016). Indeed, the decision of the country was to give Orbán total, indefinite power to manage and take all types of decisions as commander in chief, without any limit, without any date of expiry. This event expresses a hegemonic view and the domination of the debate on the topic by only one part of the society, actually one person which, in turn becomes the only "true", reality (Foucault, 2000; Waitt, 2010). Hungary does not fear or listen to the EU discussion and reaction on the issue and appears in a similar situation to the one a country might experience during terrorist attacks (Romania & Tozzo, 2017) or the migration crisis.

So what about the EU?

Thanks to this brief overview, we argue that differences and higher desire for a better world made up of cooperation and measures of collaboration. And to answer the second question mark in the title of this paragraph: "Yes, we are!".

Kissinger's words in "Who do I call if I want to talk to Europe?" were and, still are not, an explanation of the EU dilemmas and internal issues of responsiveness to problems and, in the present case, emergencies.

Moreover, in plenty of domains where the EU has power, actions are in progress. For instance, when discussing implementations in the health sector, the Union is putting forward measures to finance scientific research, to invest in public

funds, to buy government bonds and to use funds in situations of emergency and programs to avoid the same. [21]

Joseph Borell, High Representative of the European Union, used the expression "battle of the narratives" debating on what the media are reporting about EU actions compared to China or Russia, supported by conscious-unconscious media and communication. Moreover, Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, on March 26th said: "*stop egoism*"[22]. She aimed to create a more collaborative environment for the Union to act as such, respecting also the European Union made up of different nation-states.

On the same path, Antonio Costa, the current president of Portugal, stressed the importance for Europe to act together or the fears it will soon end could become a reality.

As the time being, it seems necessary that the EU should have a well-planned and effective strategy of communication in order to keep the Union safe and hamper already existing pro-exit movements. With the spread of the pandemic, renewed discourses on the EU and its range of possibilities for both single-nation states and for the Union are historically, politically and socially decisive.

Conclusions

> After all, the desire for a resilient European home which is worth living in is something that unites us all: North and South, East and West[23] (President von der Leyen - 26 March, 2020).

These words are a good way to start the conclusions of this brief article. In this paper we have argued that politicians play a pivotal role in framing segments of history, their words, their gestures, their mistakes. Their speeches have enduring effects, they are expressions of power which, dominates language and structures policies and politics.

Furthermore, we have focused on how narratives and its rhetoric modify meanings and cultural-attached circumstances in a collective way. They grasp on and feed one narrative instead of another (Entman, 1993; Snow and Benford, 1988; Turner, 1982).

And, in this paper, FDA helps to compare warfare language and communal/solidarity language in the broader understanding of how, within collected statements about one issue, a piece of knowledge becomes dominant and begins to be part of common sense (Waitt, 2010). This produces a silencing of all other interpretations of reality, as the one about cooperation among EU countries, beyond the mere rhetoric of single nation- states which, seem to be in constant attention of the "social" security dilemma.

In the end, through speeches and statements of different EU leaders, the paper reminds us of the fact that: "Language is studied for what it tells one about society, and linguistic method should be open to theoretical insights into the structure of societies" (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000, p. 459).

We have seen the importance of national politics and domestic constraints in shaping reality and we have compared different units of analysis. But what about

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[21] Retrivied from https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en
[22] Retrivied from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_532
[23] Retrivied from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_532

the EU? What is it then? What's its future? It's us and we should support it for the future and for the present of our communities and as a protection against far too reaching nationalisms. EU actions are pivotal in this historical moment to stop the emergence of populists, which base their claims on the nationalist blaming of the distanced decision-making process at the EU level (Lovec, 2019).

To conclude, we should all wash our hands in these times, but the EU should not wash its hands of the COVID affair when it comes to acting together and jointly. More than ever we are reminded of one of Dickinson's poems" "*Forever – is composed of Nows*" and We (EU member states) will soon meet again.

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