Appeals for more solidarity within the European Union are ever more frequent in the European public discourse. Well-known philosopher and public intellectual Jürgen Habermas, for example, thinks that we may expect the EU's constitutional process culminated in the Lisbon Treaty, with its emphasis on democratic procedures, to lead to some post-national form of "civic solidarity". The latter could in turn provide fertile ground to the legitimacy of the European project. As he reminds us in his latest volume, one of Europe's key political questions is today to what extent "the populations of the Eurozone now find themselves in a historic setting which calls for 'solidarity'".

Solidarity is a popular concept also among social scientists studying the European Union. Frank Vandenbroucke, for example, advocates what he calls a "European Social Union" as a way to embed pan-European solidarity in supranational institutions, alongside more traditional forms of domestic solidarity.

At the political level, the president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, among others, has publicly supported these appeals for solidarity in Europe as a way to end its current predicament. The concept of solidarity has, finally, also been given some juridical recognition in the European Union: Title IV of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union explicitly mentions this value alongside a bundle of social rights which European citizens should expect.

But what exactly is meant by solidarity? More importantly, are appeals to it realistic? The term has been used in a variety of ways throughout history. It can be traced back to Roman law, in which the expression *obligatio in solidum* referred to the obligation to repay the debts of other member of the family in full. From the start, solidarity hence expressed the idea of individuals being linked together in one moral community. This common tie in turn translates into mutual responsibility, which Max Scheler evocatively recognized as individual co-responsiblity (*mitverantwortlich*) for the actions and desires, and the faults and merits of others.

Organic solidarity

This agreement in conscience among the members of a simple community is what Émile Durkheim called "mechanic solidarity". Durkheim also argued, however, that in the modern world the meaning of solidarity has shifted to a different conception, which he defines "organic solidarity". In complex societies, characterized by a significant degree of division of

labour, individuals acknowledge that they need others in order to obtain what they cannot produce themselves. This economic reality generates a mutual sense of organic belonging, and prompts a genuine—although partly self-interested—concern about other people's wellbeing.

Solidarity, defined as in the foregoing, is scarcely present in today's European Union

This leads us to the most common contemporary meaning of solidarity, namely redistribution of resources in favour of those in need. This idea was formalized in Article 21 of the 1793 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen as the "holy duty" to support the unfortunate members of society. The term solidarity was in fact employed by Pierre Leroux in opposition to charity and compassion: while the latter concepts focused on the personal and voluntary dimension of helping the less fortunate, solidarity was meant to underpin the institution of public and compulsory systems for such purposes.

Solidarity, defined as in the foregoing, is scarcely present in today's European Union. It indicates a desirable direction for the future, but the EU is still quite far from that objective. This, however, should not necessarily be cause for despair. Indeed, another important ideal resource might help Europe support its own transition to a community of solidarity, namely the concept of fraternity.

No matter how much brothers hate each other or want to escape their mutual relationship, they will always be bound

Solidarity is closely connected to the notion of fraternity, popularized by the French Revolution's motto *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. The idea of fraternity, however, is more nuanced than that of solidarity. Whereas the latter implies a generally benevolent disposition

towards others, fraternity does not always mean social harmony. Brothers are certainly capable of love and care for each other, but this is not always the case. Classic examples like Eteocles and Polynices, or Cain and Abel demonstrate that ties of brotherhood can sometimes fuel deep hatred instead of profound affection.

What is broherhood about?

What is then so special about the notion of brotherhood? What characterizes brothers is not the positivity of the relationship that tie them together, but its inevitability. No matter how much brothers hate each other or want to escape their mutual relationship, they will always be bound. They will see each other as brothers and be seen by others as such. In the infamous cases of Cain and Abel, or Romulus and Remus, not even the tragedy of murder was enough to erase their brotherhood from the books of history.

This is why the notion of fraternity in the French Revolution has always been connected with the rise of national ties. Their differences notwithstanding, and even if they do not like it, citizens are all inevitably related to one another. The idea here is that of a common destiny, which affect all citizens independently of their economic status, age, religion or value system.

This is quite unlike what is usually meant by solidarity. Fraternity is not equal to a mutual feeling of likeness, let alone love. It is compatible with difference and distrust. It is a less demanding ideal than solidarity, but one that can still have profoundly transformative effects.

The modest yet powerful idea of fraternity will likely prove a key political resource to draw upon in times of crisis

Some fraternity is already operating at the European level. Germany and Greece, France and Poland, Italy and Sweden are all different nations, with different interests and outlooks. Yet in the above sense they can be considered as "sisters". They may quarrel, experience different problems, propose different solutions and support different policies. And yet, notwithstanding the rise of Eurosceptic populism, direct challenges to the irreversibility of the European Union remain a minority. This suggests that there indeed is a feeling of common destiny uniting

European nations—for whatever reasons: cultural, economic or political.

Consider Greece

Consider the latest chapter of the Greek crisis. While the solution found was harsh for Greece, a solution was found nonetheless in spite of strong centrifugal forces. On the German side, Angela Merkel insisted on a bailout (in exchange for deep reforms), against other members of the German government who wanted to teach Greece a lesson. On the Greek side, Alexis Tsipras eventually accepted the harsh deal against those, like Yanis Varoufakis, would probably have preferred a piloted exit from the Eurozone. It is not hard to see that little solidarity was involved here. However, some fraternity was certainly present. A Grexit scenario was perceived by both parties as an unthinkable outcome that had to be avoided at all costs. While one may (rightly) lament the fact that the crisis could have been handled sooner and more fairly, we should not forget that the determination of EU member states to stick together avoided what could have been a much more catastrophic outcome.

The modest yet powerful idea of fraternity has therefore proven and will likely prove a key political resource to draw upon in times of crisis. Europe is still facing, and will likely face more problems and crises in the near future: from Brexit to the immigration crisis, from the terrorist threat to the rise of the far right. They all threaten to destroy what Europeans so far have built. To avoid this, we ought to cling to the sense of fraternity that we already share. If wisely managed, it can prove a potent ideational resource to weather the storms that are coming.

This article has also appeared on openDemocracy as part of an editorial partnership with EuVisions.

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