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# 1. Solidarity 'at Work' in times of change

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## **Introduction**

The decline of solidarity at work is central to understanding the multiple crises being faced by societies and social order in the current period. Traditional conceptions of post-war western economies saw social solidarity, the trade union organisations and political parties which grew out of it, as underpinning the Fordist accumulation regime during the 1960-1970s. This regime was supported by mass consumption through rising wages and a welfare state that provided basic services of education, health and welfare plus mechanisms for managing transitions between work, unemployment, sickness and old age (Aglietta 2000; Boyer 1990). However, huge transformations in work have occurred since the 1980s which have replaced the Fordist model of production and undermined the role of trade unions, social democratic parties and the welfare state as a protective social settlement. The decline of social solidarity, understood as the willingness and capability to organise with others for collective goals (Heckscher and McCarthy, 2014), has been both a cause and effect of these processes. Whilst empirical instances of this declining solidarity abound in the current era, there has been relatively little scholarly reflection given to the concept of solidarity per se, and its shifting relationship to work and labour in general. Heckscher and McCarthy (2014: 628), for example, argue that "solidarity has been rather neglected as an academic topic because it is very hard to analyse" whilst Godard suggests that it has been discussed mainly through a focus on empirical contextual factors such as shifts in political, legal and market conditions but with limited reference to the concept of solidarity in wider social theory or to its historical instantiation in distinctive institutional environments, societal and organisational norms and cultural traditions (Godard, 2008; also Wilde 2007). The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to interrogate the concept of solidarity and how it can contribute to the analysis of work and labour in the current period.

The chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, we frame our understanding of the concept of solidarity in industrial relations and labour studies. We argue that solidarity requires the bonding and bridging of potential divides between groups and the creation of various levels of shared interest, moral norms and cognitive frames. 'Bonding' elements emphasize sameness and similarity within the group and the strength that this gives the group to act together. 'Bridging' implies the efforts made to convince others outside the initial group that they share more than they do not share, and therefore it is possible to bridge those gaps and create a wider basis of solidarity and potentially a more powerful

collective movement (Putnam 2001). This process of bonding and bridging involves the interaction between on the one hand actors' efforts to build shared ideologies and shared organisations that embed and reproduce shared ideologies (i.e. through trade unions and political parties) and on the other hand the material conditions of workplaces and communities and the degree to which these encourage a shared sense of (collective) identity and solidarity. It is the combination of the two aspects – strong ideological and organisational cohesion on the one hand, and high levels of shared experience and interdependence at work and in communities, that provides the conditions for social solidarity. How this combination develops in practice relates to distinctive institutional legacies. For this reason we narrate the histories of a small number of selected nation states in Europe to illustrate how solidarity has been socially and institutionally embedded in distinctive ways. In the second part, we draw out our more general conclusions on the conditions for solidarity. We indicate three necessary conditions of existence of solidarity: a shared material context (which may bond work and community), an organisational structure, and an institutional frame. Finally, we reconsider the shifting nature of solidarity by applying our conditions and framework to the current era, and in particular reconsidering whether there might be an emergence of new forms of labour solidarity both in the national and in the international arena as new forms of work appear. In the conclusion we discuss possibilities for further research on shifting solidarities.

### **Solidarity in industrial relations and labour studies**

The most recent explicit discussion of solidarity in industrial relations and labour studies has been that of Hecksher and McCarthy (2014). They define solidarity as “a communal sense of obligation to support collective action”. They further distinguish between on the one side the group identity to which the duty is owed, and on the other side the content of that obligation. This leads them to identify the way in which solidarity is constructed by bonding and bridging among people within specific communities, and consequently how it unfolds through two fundamental forms – craft solidarity and industrial solidarity. Craft solidarity is based on shared occupational status where entry to the occupation is controlled by the occupational group itself which defends its position through collective action. By contrast, industrial solidarity is based on factory interactions and forms of conflict with managers over control and wages. Hecksher and McCarthy argue that both of these two forms of solidarity are declining because of the changing nature of work, the decline of traditional factories and the threats to the standard employment contract from part-time, temporary and outsourced employment. They argue that “something new has been rising” which they describe as “collaborative solidarity” based in “a form of interaction and morality structured as something like the relationship of friendship but looser and wider” (Heckser & McCarthy 2014: 649). The focus is on the capacities

and capabilities that are emerging from new forms of social media that facilitate “collective actions different from the ‘brute force massing’ of industrial unionism” and can create coordinated yet decentralised “swarms” of actors that can be “effective in situations that require, as it were, guerrilla action, with rapid adaptation and local innovation” (Hecksher and McCarthy 2014, 649).

Hecksher and McCarthy’s definition of solidarity is, in our view, quite narrow, leading to an over-emphasis on decline on the one side and ephemeral novelty on the other. We therefore argue that it is necessary to explore more deeply the nature of solidarity, its sources and forms as a specific institutional configuration that contributes to a path dependent process of change, as regimes of accumulation, production and consumption themselves evolve. Therefore, we expect the nature and impact of solidarity on institutions to shift when the (material) conditions which have underpinned it change because of wider transformations occurring in the economy and society. Our theoretical assumption is that the more diverse and heterogeneous work situations become, the more difficult it is to develop a shared meaning structure that can activate a sense of solidarity and a form of collective action. Therefore the agency of particular individuals, groups and organisations to make solidarity meaningful in new contexts is crucial. They can do this by drawing new symbolic, discursive and narrative connections between the present and the past, developing new narratives, reviving and sustaining memories (McBride and Martinez 2011; Rowbotham and McCrindle 1986; Spence and Stephenson 2009) that bridge and bond across group boundaries even when workplace and community settings shift to become more diverse, as in the current period. However, we also emphasize that solidarity and the resources available for agents to revive or sustain solidarity are also crucially embedded in organisations and institutions e.g. in trade unions or in laws on collective bargaining, works councils etc.. These may maintain an importance even when material conditions are changing. It is the interaction between existing organisations and institutions, changing material conditions and the significance and power of solidarity as discourse and practice which contributes to framing the social context where actors understand solidarity as grounded in their own experiences of it.

Solidarity is therefore understood as a value dimension reflected in a dialectic between on the one hand the material conditions in which groups are placed (and which offer various possibilities for solidarity and engaging in collective action), and on the other hand the meaning structures within which solidarity is understood by the actors. One aspect of this is that solidarity is both the basis for purposive instrumental action – e.g. to gain rights and benefits at work or to achieve political power and representation and the basis for moral and ritualistic action to reinforce the sense of collective identity, e.g. through the enthusiastic performance of activities, which achieve nothing for the individual but are expressive of the collective, for example in relation to labour movements such as

May (or Labour) Day marches and associated cultural artefacts such as flags, banners, and slogans, referencing and mythologizing past struggles, victories and defeats. Solidarities are therefore often invisible until they are enacted in struggles over pay, conditions, rights etc. or remembered and reinforced by rituals and symbols. Without this visibility being made meaningful across the wider community that is addressed by the discourse of solidarity, the phenomenon may atrophy and dissolve, leaving organisations and institutions emptied of real meaning and social energy. The inter-relationship between material circumstances and meaning structures is therefore mediated through the maintenance of solidarities and the collective institutions which are formed to embed solidarity within particular contexts. The following section illustrates different ways in which solidarities have been produced and maintained in a range of Western European societies; this is followed by an effort to abstract from the cases a more detailed understanding of the forces at work in the development of solidarity as a prelude to considering how solidarity might be being reshaped by current changes in work.

### **Insights of solidarity from Western Europe**

In the first part of the twentieth century, labour unions in western Europe used class solidarity to define and enact themselves as legitimate and meaningful political agents. The idea of class solidarity became the strategy labour pursued to overcome market fragmentation and individualism as well as to supplant alternative sources of worker identification, such as religion, ethnicity or localism and 'early' corporative worker organisations. We use histories of a selection of European countries (i.e. Denmark, Germany, and the UK) in the post-war period to illustrate how solidarity evolved and was shaped. Countries have been selected based on their diversity in capitalist and welfare state systems in accordance to existing typologies (i.e. Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hall and Soskice, 2001) as well as on the diversity in trade union structures and their linkages with social-democratic party and the role of political coalitions between labour, capital and the state as shaping social governance in each country.

The development of the working-class solidarity in Denmark, Germany and the UK arose from workers recognising that they operated under the same pressures of economic scarcity. Building these bridges, however, was complex and they could easily collapse, e.g. in the UK when the 1926 General Strike to support the miners disintegrated as major groups of workers such as railway employees returned to work, leaving the miners to fight on alone. Thus whilst they were able to recognise their differences 'from the other class' (capital) and build organisations on the basis that they could only improve their life conditions by collective action, strikes and mutual aid, 'the *dull compulsion* of economic relations completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist' in Marx's words (Marx,

1985; ch.28). The worker always faced the necessity of earning a wage in order to survive and maintaining solidarity through collective action (strikes, etc.) could mean poverty and starvation for whole households, making long term collective action extremely difficult. Therefore, solidarity developed through 'class' as the common objective (material) position of workers in the production process but it was embedded in particular contexts and particular politics which affected how the organisational and institutional supports for forms of bonding and bridging across groups evolved.

Forms of solidarity emerged out of the 'collective effervescence' (Durkheim, 2013 [1893]) generated by struggles and strikes as well as through painstaking processes of organisation. Strikes and demonstrations created a sense of belonging and an understanding of common interests as well as a sense of common language and identity. Trade unions and political parties created strong subcultures with internal cohesion and solidarity. This is evident in Germany where in the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the Social Democratic Party (SDP) became the most important political expression of Marxism. Solidarity was used by the SDP in Germany with a meaning close to how it was used in the Marxist ideology resembling the idea of unity and association. This was the case at the end of the nineteenth century, when internal struggles risked challenging the very idea of unity and solidarity in Germany. In West Germany, a strong trade union movement re-emerged after 1945 organised primarily by industrial sectors. Through a series of reforms in the following decades and building on past institutional legacies in terms of craftwork and apprenticeships and high levels of employee skill, German manufacturing industry based its competitive strategy around a model of skilled work, supported by a well-developed training system, permanent employment, works councils and consultation. This combination of factors contributed to the strength of German manufacturing in exporting – as described by Streeck (1992) – in terms of diversified quality production. Its ability to continue to export has been dependent on keeping quality high and constraining costs. Part of this has revolved around the planned introduction of new technology as agreed between employers and employees. But it was also crucial that trade unions and employers proved able at key points since mid-1980s to engage in voluntary restraint on wages to keep costs competitive. Also, since mid-1980s there has been a gradual extension of non-standard employment in the German context, not just in terms of the expansion of service sector employment through the legalisation of part-time and temporary contracts but also in terms of a differentiation with German manufacturing firms separating off the core employees from those on limited contracts. This went hand in hand with the increased use of outsourcing in Eastern and Central Europe and China and consequently a lack of growth of employment numbers within German manufacturers and their local supply chains (Streeck 2008).

The extent of segmentation between insiders and outsiders in the German economy has been subject to growing debate as wage inequalities have increased (Baccaro and Howell 2017; Thelen 2014) and although German unions eventually supported minimum wage legislation after years of opposing it (Bosch 2018), the growing heterogeneity within the German labour force has undoubtedly weakened wider notions of solidarity. Since the German reunification in 1990 and the social and economic cost of integrating East German workers, solidarity has been under strain, exacerbated more recently by migration internal to the EU from the Central and Eastern European states and by asylum seekers external to the EU seeking entry to Germany. Arguably, the German unions emphasized bonding by protecting their members sometimes at the expense of those outside their protection. As employers were put under pressure to reduce labour costs, trade unions protected their existing members whilst allowing the gradual expansion of temporary and part-time jobs both inside manufacturing and in the growing service sector, leading to greater inequality in the society overall. By contrast, in Denmark the process of industrialisation started relatively early. Class struggle and worker organisation developed relatively late compared to Germany. Yet, collaboration between trade unions and employers and the first negotiated regulation of conflict followed very soon. The language of the Danish Socialist Democratic Party was radical and socialist, but not revolutionary, and the programmes at the end of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries concentrated on concrete reforms and the need for universal suffrage helping to bridge from the working class movement into the substantial number of smallholders, farmers and independent artisans that existed in the small towns and agricultural communities outside Copenhagen. From the beginning of the twentieth century, social democratic leaders in Denmark (and generally in Nordic countries) gradually developed the idea of bridging not just across different working class groups but also by establishing alliances with smallholders and artisans who also sought state support for aspects of the welfare state (Baldwin 1990). This pragmatic development contributed to establish the basis for a broad concept of solidarity, as including the relationships between different classes in the language and discourse of solidarity. This constituted the basis for the development of 'corporatism', characterised by centralised agreements where strongly organised peak (national) level union confederations could mount solidaristic appeals that influenced the wage structures and social policies (Martin and Thelen, 2007). Social democratic parties and trade unions contributed to the construction of regimes of solidarity in two ways. On the one hand, they helped put in place social policy regimes that, once institutionalised at the level of the state, fostered ongoing support for redistributive solidarity and norms of relative egalitarianism of rewards in society (Esping-Andersen, 1990). On the other hand, as part of an active politics of coalition building, these parties promoted visions of social justice, that left an imprint on national collective imaginaries. For example, as Stjerno (2005) notes prior to the second world war,

social democratic parties in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries used the term solidarity primarily to refer to *class* solidarity but, after, they developed discourses of solidarity, which saw solidarity as a *national* value. As indicated, this accounted for the forming of political coalitions between the two major classes (labour defined broadly and capital identified with a small number of very wealthy families). It also let the two classes embrace a model of social order and economic welfare that provided for rising living standards without fundamentally threatening the very wealthy. In short, differently from Germany and the UK, Denmark moved explicitly to promote generous social programmes and advance ideals of social justice (including gender equality) (Thelen, 2014).

In the UK, wage competition often took precedence over national appeals for social justice during the 1960s and 1970s (Hall, 2017). The failure to establish strong institutions of corporatism (Crouch 1977) combined with the rapid growth of powerful local shop stewards capable of bringing manufacturing plants to a halt and the use of strategic strikes in a range of industries led to a failure to invest in renewing and reinvigorating the material base of solidarity other than in a few places such as defence industries and aerospace. Solidarity had been reduced to very narrow instrumental interests amongst groups that could act together within industries and sectors either through local strategic strikes or through national strikes and there was a lack of wider bridging. Bonds and bridges across similar groups of employees increasingly weakened, leaving workers dependent on the power they could exert directly over the employer. Bridging between groups was no longer much in evidence and legislative changes to reduce trade union power and the ability to show solidarity through secondary picketing was gradually curtailed, beginning with the Wilson Labour government's 1969 White Paper *In Place of Strife* and extended under the Heath Conservative government's Industrial Relations Act. The 1970s proved a decade of crisis and fragmentation for trade unions and the Labour Party as it struggled to develop Prices and Incomes Policies to reduce inflation and manufacturing costs.

The UK government embraced neo-liberalism as an alternative to a failed corporatism in the Thatcher years, removing a range of trade union rights, reducing welfare payments and disciplining unemployed workers back into low paid work, privatising key parts of the public sector, reducing state expenditure on public services and infrastructure, freeing the financial markets from regulation and allowing free movement of capital across borders, cutting personal and corporate taxes. Further reductions in trade union power through legislation were enacted and considerable government support went into ensuring that strikes in steel and mining were smashed. Alongside this, temporary and flexible employment rose in the retail and personal services sector. Contracted out social and public services grew, based on lowering labour costs by providing low paid, low skilled jobs with



irregular hours. The conditions to identify 'sameness' and to develop a sense of solidarity were weakened by these UK work conditions.

The above cross-national comparative analysis illustrates that solidarity takes on distinctive features which in turn contribute to shape the form solidarity actually takes (e.g. collective action, strong welfare programs, strikes, etc.) within distinctive institutional and social national contexts. The evolution of solidarity as described is path dependent according to the nature and form of capitalism, its social relations and distinctive politics within particular national contexts. However this path dependency is also influenced not just by the institutional and organisational forms which retain, at least for a time, their own capacities for sustaining solidarity even when some of the material conditions in workplaces and communities have started to disappear. It is also influenced by how actors can renew and revive solidarity by developing new identities and new definitions of boundaries, inclusions and exclusions. Solidarity depends on a definition of 'us' as distinct from 'them'. The 'us' can be, for example, an occupational group, a factory location, a religious or national identity, distinguished from 'them'. 'Them' in relation to work might be employers or other workers who may take 'our' jobs. These distinctions are socially constructed and institutionally embedded in the social, economic and political forces, which as we have illustrated have affected the histories of different nation states, and thereby they cannot be conceived as pre-given and natural. How is a common 'we' imagined and rooted in discourses, rituals, institutions and social practices? What does this mean in terms of what 'we' want and can achieve in relation to employment and work? And who is excluded from this and what are they excluded from?

In the following section we will draw from the comparative analysis developed in this section and illustrate the conditions under which the institutionalisation of solidarity occurs. We identify three conditions: a shared material context (which may bond work and community), an organisational structure, and an institutional frame.

### **Conditions of solidarity as path dependencies**

Based on our comparative historical analysis of path dependencies in national solidarities, we are now able to be more specific about the conditions underpinning solidarity. Firstly, there are the social and material conditions of solidarity associated with face to face relations, embedded in work and local settings. Durkheim's term 'collective effervescence' (2013 [1893]) captures this dimension of solidarity by describing bursts of intense feelings of shared purpose that bring people together. Effervescence is reflected in the ease and speed with which other actors may be drawn in to feel solidarity and to participate in a movement that has arisen because of an affront to moral expectations. However, as

quickly as people are engaged, they may just as quickly disengage as the passion and promise of a particular movement dissipates over time.

Historically, sociologists have identified the different material conditions of solidarity at work with a number of phenomena that were visible and central in expressions of solidarity and its institutionalisation (see e.g. Bulmer 1975 and also Ackroyd 2015 for a retrospective account of the flourishing of these studies in British sociology in the 1950s and 1960s focusing on sectors such as mining, steel, fishermen as well as communities – pit villages etc). These studies repeatedly show that there is also solidarity amongst some actors accompanied by a strong sense of their degree of separation and difference from other groups in the workplace due to status, gender, work conditions and occupation. The driving force of these material objective and subjective conditions is embedded in the particular forms of capitalist expansion that have existed at certain junctures and their impact on economic activity, organisational structures, technological developments and production processes. As these conditions change, older forms of social solidarity may be put under pressure (Streeck, 2008). The case of the UK is emblematic of this. As we have illustrated above, the conditions to identify 'sameness' and to develop a sense of solidarity were weakened in the UK by the worsening of the working conditions following the increase in the unbalance of power between capital and labour during the Thatcher period.

Secondly, there is the organisational institutionalisation of solidarity when actors from different work and community settings decide that they are part of a collective identity that can act in solidarity over issues at a variety of workplaces. The formation of trade unions linking across localities and workplaces based on industries, crafts or just on 'general' solidarity, is a central part of this. Organisations are sustained by the rise of a cadre of officers and activists who sustain and develop the union through struggles for trade union recognition, closed shop agreements, the check-off system, works councils, collective bargaining processes etc. These organisational forms are not necessarily complementary; indeed they may become conflicting both in terms of relations in the workplace but also more widely in competing for members. The forming of national confederations to represent and articulate social solidarity, therefore, can vary from contexts where there is one main body, such as the TUC (Trade Union Confederation) in the UK, to situations where there are three or four union confederations as in France with differences based on party and/or confessional affiliation.

Thirdly, there are the political movements which are formed to ensure that societal institutions provide support for the expression of solidarities, for example at the level of trade union rights, such as the legal right to union membership, rights of collective bargaining, rights to withdraw labour strike, and at the level of forming a welfare state that builds on and reinforces solidarities. The cross-country

comparison has illustrated that the establishment of workers' rights in Denmark and Germany represented a crucial condition for the democratisation and the institutionalisation of the collective.

The three levels at which the conditions underpinning solidarity lie are independent yet interconnected. For example, during Fordism, in a number of developed economies, including Denmark, Germany and UK, a relatively high integration and interconnection of the various levels with the variants of mass production occurred. Work in large manufacturing plants with assembly line technology defined most of these contexts with some variation in skill levels and in the role of small and medium sized enterprises. There were relatively high levels of unionisation and union organisation supported by institutions which recognised collective bargaining and regulated labour markets, as particularly the Danish and German cases show. From the 1960s, however, this pattern began to change away from mass factories to service sector employment leading to the multiplication of workplaces and occupations yielding to the greater difficulty of connecting workers together. Over the last decades, the rate of change has speeded up by the development of more self-employment, out-sourcing and privatisation together with the development of platform based employment systems. These changes are related to declining trade union membership as core manufacturing industries decline and disappear. Trade unions and their collective organisations have responded by trying to redefine solidarity away from groups, which share the same work location and the same work conditions to become more inclusive of the self-employed by bonding and bridging among the dispersed workforce and temporary and part-time employees (Heery, 2009). They have also sought to broaden the notion of solidarity to include women, young people and foreign workers (Kirton and Green, 2005). These efforts, however, have been hampered by changes at the level of institutions supportive of trade unions and collective solidarities. Rolling back laws which facilitated solidarity and replacing them with systems which maximize employer discretion make it more difficult for existing trade unions to build new forms of solidarity (Baccaro and Howells, 2017; Hyman 1999; Simms 2012). With this caveat in mind, in the following section we will develop a forward-looking perspective on labour unions and industrial solidarity in future European labour markets.

### **Solidarity, national identity and the transnational era**

As indicated in the previous sections, the institutionalisation of solidarity has been underpinned by material, organisational and institutional conditions which evolved within the socio-political and economic context featuring the formation of the nation state. Changes in the nature of work, the decline of trade unions as organisational entities, and the undermining of the institutionalisation of laws supporting solidarity have fundamentally changed the context within which 'solidarity' as a

discourse and a set of practices can be made meaningful to social actors. In this respect, it is important to note that the growth of labour mobility across different nation states in Europe has also been a major factor in the debate on solidarity. In particular, labour migration both from within the EU and from outside creates tensions about the 'we' who are in solidarity. Most obviously, right wing parties and others have labelled migrants as 'outsiders,' not as part of 'our' solidary community. On top of all the other problems of sustaining solidarity with regards to workplace, organisational and institutional changes, this introduces a new dimension into the debate about the meaning of solidarity and who is included or excluded.

The Danish experience is illustrative in this regard. As indicated, the process whereby the welfare state and the rights of labour and of trade unions was built in Denmark can be seen as a distinctive form of bonding groups together in ways which reinforced labour solidarity and national identity. Specific ideals of social justice, which were originally embraced in the common idea of the working-class struggling for a common goal, were in turn used to bridge other divides and were built into the imagery of the Danish nation state at the same time as they were being institutionalised into the frameworks of national social programmes. However, this overlap can be problematic precisely because the bonds and the identities constructed are also exclusionary. Incorporating immigrants into the Danish system, for example, has proved difficult during times and spaces characterised by the ascendancy of a neo-liberal rhetoric, which downplays issues of social justice and emphasises market-oriented values as at the core of contemporary processes of marketisation and financialisation. Similar tensions have emerged in varying ways in the UK and Germany. The problem is not just whether or how solidarity mechanisms can be expanded to include migrant labour; it is also the case that the nationalist and populist rhetoric is employed to argue that migrant labour's presence in varying ways undermines solidarity and therefore the solution is to close borders. The irony is that after twenty years of seeing neo-liberal politicians and thinkers such as Mrs – 'No such thing as society' – Thatcher attack social solidarity in favour of individualism, social solidarity is now invoked by the same right wing supporters of neo-liberalism as a core value that is being undermined – not by neo-liberal policies and austerity but by the presence of migrant labour responding to the incentives of the market.

These tensions play out differently depending on how solidarity has been institutionalised in particular nation states, which indicates again the importance to consider solidarity as evolving in a path dependent way to the nature and forms of capitalism, its social relations and distinctive politics within specific social and institutional contexts. Redistributive solidarity through welfare, a core characteristic of the Scandinavian societies, for example, may be more fragile by virtue of how it sharpens the symbolic boundaries between benefit recipients and other citizens. Conversely, in the liberal economies of Europe, as in the UK, which rely heavily on means testing for social assistance,

support for redistribution has not shifted much despite three decades of raising income inequality. This does not imply, however, that within the UK strong solidarity with immigrants exists (McGovern 2007). On the contrary, migration has been a defining issue in the UK's June 2016 referendum on EU membership, which ended with Brexit. This may illustrate that raising levels of economic insecurity, linked to the loss of jobs for the nationals, may challenge redistributive solidarity too (Oesch, 2013). Indeed, one of the best predictors of welfare chauvinism (also referred to as 'welfare state nationalism' as recalling the political notion that welfare benefits should be restricted to certain groups, particularly to the natives of a country as opposed to immigrants) is the extent to which an individual feels economically vulnerable (Mewes and Mau, 2012). Therefore, it may be argued that the role that solidarity plays in political debate is not only influenced by the political role of the socio-political actors but it is also very much affected by material conditions such as economic indicators measuring the degree of economic growth of the country (see also Uunk and Van Oorschot, this volume; Meuleman, Baute and Abts, this volume). A variety of factors have contributed to undermine solidarity in the twenty-first century: reduction in social spending programs by national governments; raising economic insecurity among workers; backlash against the 'elite' institutions and individuals (see recent summaries of the vast emerging literature on populism, Muller 2017; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017) as well as against groups of precarious 'outsiders'; changes in social identity which is increasingly associated with being a 'self-entrepreneur', a 'consumer' and a 'self-reliant' individual, thereby raising concerns for solidarity as militating against programmes of generous redistribution and collectivism.

Overall, these undermining features of solidarity have moved forward at the expense of institutions and processes supporting solidarity and collective action. They have deepened the 'fissures' in the employment relationships (Weil, 2014). These fissures have taken the form of subcontracting, labour hire, franchising and disguised employment relationships, such as the emergence of digital platforms. In particular, developments around the expansion of the platform economy have spread rapidly in the UK context with relatively little regulatory or other constraints and to different degrees have emerged in Germany and Denmark (Thelen 2014). One aspect has been the creation of a vast army of 'white van' delivery drivers being used by big on-line retailers such as Amazon and Tesco through contractors such as DPD, TNT etc. who spend their days in relative isolation and away from other drivers, often where they are in theory self-employed effectively competing with each other. As self-employed, they have no rights to sick pay or holiday pay even though the discipline exercised over them in terms of how many parcels to deliver and in what time scale is tight. It is also worth noting that employment expansion in small start-ups particularly in IT and creative industries has also emerged. Again, notions of solidarity are unlikely to surface where employees are in small

work places, frequently job-hopping and moonlighting with their own projects. Over the last two decades (and particularly since the 2008 financial crash), employment growth in the UK has mainly come from the expansion of these jobs. Employment conditions have become more diverse and work locations more varied. Large collective workplaces are declining. Organisationally, trade unions have lost members and lost power because of institutional changes. Thus, these new forms of work have rendered labour more precarious by progressively eroding the dominance of the standard employment relationship as the 'typical' contractual form through which social protection, as the result of the dependence to wage labour, was guaranteed in the advanced economies over the past four decades.

Labour unions' struggles to maintain and even extend membership under the current transformations in the organisation of work and the employment relationships have proved unsurprisingly hard but nevertheless not impossible even in those contexts which were classified as particularly hostile to union organising. For example, although solidarity in the UK has almost completely collapsed in the terms we discussed earlier in this chapter, union membership remains in some areas. Some parts of the private sector still engage in collective bargaining whilst the shrinking public sector also retains some areas of trade union membership and bargaining. Moreover, some sense of solidarity amongst zero-hours workers and amongst the growing group of 'fake' self-employed in digital platforms have started to emerge. For example, following Deliveroo's workers manifestation of discontent in August 2016 in London, struggles by Foodora 'bike-riders', denouncing their bad pay and working conditions, have flared up among London, Paris, Berlin and Turin (on Deliveroo workers, see Cant 2019; Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019). These protests indicate that even though individuals in these jobs work alone and may be designated as 'self-employed', a form of solidarity merges from other common features of platform work of this sort. One of these conditions is, for example, that working time is 24/7, meaning that workers do not know whether they will actually work and when, as the management decides to accept, modify or even delete the shifts, at any time. Therefore, we may argue that these material conditions could contribute to solidarity in a limited way.

Similarly, forms of solidarity may be extending as a result of processes of European economic integration since the 1990s, where institutional structures have emerged for the cross-national representation of workers (i.e. European Works Councils) and for social dialogue at both inter-professional, sectoral and company level. These structures have often served as expression of workers' collective responses to transnational mergers and related restructuring measures by allowing some form of consultation and negotiation with the workforce (Pulignano, 2006). Erne (2008) argues that it is only in multinational companies, where labour representatives had known each other before

the merger through European Works Councils, that have witnessed effective cross-border collective action. With the trans-nationalisation of business activities, it is clear that workers are increasingly subject to pressures originating beyond state boundaries. To address these concerns, unions are compelled to enter the supranational arena, supported in this exercise by the existence of some transnational institutions that may foster a sense of collective belonging and identity. Through transnational engagement, however, each union caters in the first place to the interests of its own constituency (Erne 2008). From this perspective, cross-border union cooperation may be regarded as a combined effort to service national workforces rather than an exercise in transnational solidarity. Therefore, the current range of transnational institutions may not suffice. Inclusive forms of workers solidarity are required as an equal essential factor complementing requiring coalition building across unions and among organisations representing workers and their communities (Doellgast, Lillie and Pulignano, 2018). Particularly relevant here are, for example, building inclusive forms of collective action that incorporate migrants and minorities, and other labour market outsiders most at risk of experiencing precarity and exploitation at work. Overall, this suggests that we need labour nowadays looking upwards to closing gaps in the institutions which underpin the material conditions of solidarity. Welfare states, labour markets, and collective bargaining are all important institutions which allow to build inclusive solidarity across the workforce and within the labour movement more generally.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter, we have illustrated that solidarity is underpinned by three conditions: a shared material context (which may bond work and community), an organisational structure and an institutional frame. These conditions emerge from the examination of the distinctive path dependencies in the evolution of solidarity in a selected group of different nation states. It is our contention that whilst recent transformations in work have challenged these path dependencies, this is not the end of solidarity. As we have illustrated in this chapter what is required is both a recognition of what remains and an understanding of what may be emerging. In the latter respect, there are developments around precarious work and around transnational trade unionism that deserve further consideration. Devising meaning structures that will make sense of the diversity of current work settings and the diversity of identities within the workforce will require new inclusive visions of solidarity adhering to renewed and revived principles and patterns of behaviour that support mutual aid and collective action (Doellgast, Lillie and Pulignano, 2018). Solidarity is a contested concept and is often used in ways which conceal how particular groups' interests are marginalised whilst others' interests become the taken-for-granted measure by which solidarity is conceived. In that sense, any reconstruction of ideas of solidarity must examine issues of gender, race and ethnicity and around

issues of intergenerational justice. Organisations such as trade unions have deeply embedded structures that may make it difficult for them to reorient their ideas of solidarity but there are indications that this reform is ongoing. Further work identifying new forms of solidarity and comparing results across different sectors and nation states will be essential to moving this agenda forward.

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