

Solidarity in a new world of work, employment and organisations

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ABSTRACT

What is solidarity? How can we conceptualise labour solidarity today? Which solidarity practices will be able to meet the challenges from globalization among these the inclusion of diversity? Challenges from globalization have intensified the problems of the understanding of labour solidarity as based on class, likeness in working conditions and common interests. However, globalization is a heterogeneous and contradictory process, that still makes room for collective action and solidarity among workers although these have to be rethought, reinvented and reimagined. In the paper I discuss the critique of traditional labour solidarity and the alternatives within the IR-tradition. I develop this discussion further by introducing new feminist theory on solidarity. The objective of the paper is to be able to ask adequate, relevant and updated questions about both solidarity practices on the labour market today and theories on labour solidarity in globalization. The concluding questions cover links between the different solidarity terms, the normative foundation of solidarity, aspects of power, and understanding of diversity.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper a new world of work, employment and organisations is understood as changes in the labour force, labour market regulation, and trade union strategies as a consequence of globalization. The overall objective of the paper is to be able to ask adequate, relevant and updated questions about both solidarity practices on the labour market today and the theoretical understanding of labour solidarity concentrating on the development of concepts. To begin with I will discuss the challenges to solidarity in globalization. Next I will introduce the traditional understanding of labour solidarity, the critiques and the alternatives within the IR-tradition. Then I will add theoretical contributions from new feminist theories on solidarity. And finally, in the conclusion, I will make a list of questions to be used in further research. The discussions will be theoretical.¹

CHALLENGES TO SOLIDARITY IN GLOBALIZATION

Globalization often appears in the singular as if it was clear and unambiguous what is meant by it. However this is not the case, both the actual processes and the discourses of globalization *and* the theories and concepts about these are open to a multiplicity of meanings, consequences, changes, actions etc.. One important dividing line is between those who see globalization as mainly neoliberal economic processes that overrule nation-state regulation and complicate all forms of political regulation (or regard political regulation in itself a problem) *and* those who point out that there is a diversity of processes and emphasize how political regulation is still functioning including within nation-states. Nation-states or transnational/international bodies of regulation (IGO's) are most often the focus of the discussion on regulation while other forms of regulation like for example industrial relations models or the influence of the labour movement are left out or only marginally hinted at. In my perspective globalization challenges established values and ways of organisation and regulation and consequently forces states, employers and the labour movement to think and act in new ways. Yet, it is important to notice that globalization is not the only changing and/or challenging force. My interest will be on the diversity and contradictory nature of globalization

processes and on the responses to globalization from workers, trade unions and labour market models. In addition, I regard globalization a dialectical or maybe better a reciprocal process (Yeates 2004) with double-edged prospects (Fraser 2006). Hoffmann (2001, 2002) takes a likely stand as he calls globalization an ambivalent process that contains both risks and allows for 'corridors of political action' (Hoffman in Foden et al 2001:16). In other words the Danish labour market, the bargaining system, the relations between state and market, and the labour movement cannot be seen as closed entities. Furthermore globalization (Beck: globality) challenges and changes the homogeneity of these and the over long time negotiated consensus of values, norms, and rights which make the foundation for the models. Production and companies moves around, labour travels, people flee or get married across borders all bringing different (new) values, traditions, religions, experiences and perceptions of what is right and wrong. These 'collisions' create openings and break-ups that can lead to the transformation of processes, patterns and positions of inequality resulting in a higher degree of (gender) equality *and* to a downfall in rights, to poverty for female care- and service workers, and to a material, cultural, and representative marginalisation from trade unions, in communities and at the labour market.ⁱⁱ

In contrast to a lot of the literature on globalization Hoffmann discusses labour market regulation including the IR-models and the labour movement. Hoffman argues that labour movement action and labour market regulation still are possible and necessary, however the processes of globalization mean that solidarity strategies must develop new ways. Hyman also discusses globalization and includes a trade union perspective. He stresses that it is important not to exaggerate the consequences of globalization. Firstly, it is a heterogeneous and contradictory process. Secondly, it affects trade unions differently both within the same labour market model as between models. Thirdly, trade union responses are shaped by their different cultures and national settings. And fourthly, objective constraints offer alternatives for strategic choice; trade union action is also the outcome of internal debate and conflict (Hyman 2001:169).

The 'new' global labour force is women. This is partly a consequence of globalisation being more disadvantageous to women and men in developing countries and more disadvantageous to women both in developing and in wealthy societies (Cohen in Cohen & Brodie 2007, see also Ledwith 2008). In addition neo-liberalism affects equity seeking groups negatively because of cut-backs in public funding, fewer collective solutions, and the primacy of resource arguments (Cohen & Brodie 2007). My interest is on the female global labour force working in service and care, most often in private households or minor businesses, but also in some cases in public care and service. The research concerning global care- and service workersⁱⁱⁱ are most often carried out within migration studies in which IR-regulation and the labour movement are only very marginal. Consequently, this research lacks an important perspective. On the other hand, migration research includes a gender perspective on globalization which is left out from much IR-literature. For instance when Hoffmann discusses the shift in solidarity and organising strategies away from methods used at big industrial plants he 'forgets' that in many labour markets most women have been working outside these plants in private homes and small business. Moreover, a gender perspective on globalization raises issues of loneliness, isolation, intimidation, absent motherhood, dependence of employer, non-regulated jobs, lack of citizen rights, exploitation, power relations among women, racism etc. . On the other hand it also shows strong and resourceful women (Cohen & Brodie 2007, Lutz 2008, Stenum 2008). Briskin (2002) combines a gender perspective with trade union strategies in globalization. On the one hand her understanding of globalization is very close to Beck's term, globalism, that is it emphasises the supremacy of neo-liberalism and on globalization as a linear process; Briskin's main focus is on how (female) workers, labour movements, and IR-regulation are affected negatively by globalization. On the other hand she discusses how the labour movement can and should act in relation to globalization and make organisations and politics more inclusive of diversity. She argues that neo-liberalist globalization is not gender neutral, '*... race, gender, age and citizenship are deeply inscribed in corporate politics of competition*' (Briskin 2002:32).

TERMINOLOGY, CRITIQUES AND ALTERNATIVES

Solidarity is a key issue in labour movement research; nevertheless the focus is more often on solidarity practices than on conceptualization and theoretical development. Furthermore, the vocabulary of solidarity contains much more than just solidarity: it also includes collectivism, community, coalition-building, and organising, and in addition it touches related discussions on social in/justice, democracy, and mobilization. Consequently, the solidarity terrain is big and with unclear borders. In the following, I will try to outline the main points in the traditional understanding of solidarity, the critique and the alternatives within IR-theory. My prime interest is the ex- and inclusion of diversity.

Labour solidarity

Traditionally, labour solidarity was considered the same as working class-solidarity which should lead to liberation from exploitation and oppression – and in some versions also to socialism. Traditional labour solidarity builds on an understanding of workers belonging to one community built on likeness in working conditions and life experiences consequently leading to a similar uniformity in interest representation. Traditional labour solidarity was regarded as more than just a description of a specific kind of solidarity – it was turned into an ideal. Consequently leading to the understanding that labour solidarity was about to disappear when the crisis of the (European) labour movement started in the late 1980's. During the last decade, the traditional understanding of worker's solidarity has been criticized by both IR-researchers and trade union leaders.

Gendering solidarity

Several feminist IR-researchers (e.g. Briskin, Colgan & Ledwith, Elton, Healy et al, Ledwith) have made a critique of both traditional labour market solidarity and of real and recent trade union practices. They do not so much engage in theoretical discussions on solidarity but rather focus on practices of solidarity in trade unions involving discussions on organising, collectivism, and coalitions. Their critique is very similar addressing different kinds of male dominance in labour movement structures and cultures leading to the marginalisation of women from labour solidarity. Briskin argues that solidarity must mean 'unity in diversity',

'Taking account of differences in power and experience does not create divisions among union members; rather, it acknowledges existing differences. In so doing, the unions build equality in practice, and increase the potential for a transformed, inclusive and activist union which moves beyond 'defensive' solidarity' (Briskin 1999:551).

In order to address problems of diversity and competition, it will not be sufficient to call for solidarity abstractly or to seek a common denominator like class: to create solidarity and to strengthen trade unions it is necessary to address discrimination based not only on gender, but also on race, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, age, and sexuality. And this should be done both inside the labour movement and in the labour market (Briskin 2002:31). Briskin is concerned with the making of inclusive trade union structures which both give women a political base *and* do not lead to separatism. Moreover she discusses coalition-building both among women across trade unions, women's movement, community organising *and* across different equity seeking groups (e.g. women, ethnic minorities, gays & lesbians) within trade unions. She shows how coalition work among women in Canada has redefined both the ideology and the practice of union solidarity. In globalization coalition-building must expand both nationally and transnationally in order to be able to make resistance. Colgan & Ledwith (2002) do not discuss trade union solidarity but inclusionary democracy in British trade unions; they show how self-organisation has increased the feeling of belonging and made women more active also in mainstream structures. Ledwith (2006) shows how women work collectively in trade unions in both separate and mainstream structures as well as across these. In addition trade union women also work together with allied organisations, campaigns and NGO's. The focus is on solidarity practices worldwide touching on how women

contribute to and develop new ways of collectivism, coalition-building, organising, mobilising, and inclusionary democracy. The point is to make visible women's active commitment to trade unions and to the struggle for better pay and working conditions for all workers – also the unorganised. Moreover, she wants to direct attention to how women are developing the way trade unions work so these will be better at meeting both present and future challenges emphasizing that the future is female. Healy et al (2004) take up a related discussion of individualism versus collectivism however they do not only discuss practices but engage in theoretical understandings of collectivism, too.^{iv} They question that diversity challenge collectivism; actually they question whether we at all can see an increase in individualism and a decline in collectivism at most workplaces today. Rather they argue a differentiated workforce may both contribute to union renewal and develop new more creative ways of collectivism. However, they stress that '*Collective orientations are never given, but must be developed, fought for and sustained by individuals*' (Healy et al 1994:464). Healy et al break down the discussion of collectivism into three solidaristic collectivism, instrumental collectivism, and limits to collectivism. During that, Healy et al shed light on the relation between collectivistic values and the differentiation of the workforce showing that ethnic minority women relate to collectivistic values although these are not only class-based but also originate from other types of power relations and collective responses like for example women's movement or equal opportunity struggles. On the whole, Healy et al emphasize the importance of power in relation to ethnic minority women's experience of marginalisation and succeeding commitment to trade union collectivism, but also in the sense of getting power-resources both as individuals and as a collective through trade union involvement. However, they also show how gender, ethnicity and class power relations intersect and influence on equality and diversity strategies within trade unions.

From mechanic to imagined solidarity

Hyman (1999) develops this argument further as he states that '*...what is normally understood as a crisis of trade unionism as such may better be understood as a crisis of a particular model of trade unionism, one based on what I have termed mechanical solidarity (...) Without differentiation there would be no need for solidarity. Solidarity is a project to reconcile differences of situation and of interest...*' (Hyman 1999:99).

So when Hyman explains the shift in solidarity he turns to Durkheim and his concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is a solidarity of uniformity built on the sharing of relative homogeneous conditions, values, norms, and interests. This kind of solidarity is challenged and changed by the new division of labour in modern society. Accordingly organic solidarity arises as a necessity: because of the specialisation of work and the increasing complexity of society each individual gets more interdependent on the others. The awareness about this dependency becomes a part of the collective consciousness and makes up the ethical foundation of social order in modern society – replacing religion (Durkheim 1984, Navrbjerg 1994). To Hyman (1999, 2001) traditional labour solidarity had many features in common with mechanical solidarity since it was built on the understanding of relative homogeneity in working conditions, uniformity in interests and standardization of rules and values among all workers despite with some minor differences between trade unions. However, workers have become increasingly more differentiated, work-processes have changed, and egalitarian ideals have been eroded, all leading to a downfall of traditional labour solidarity. Moreover, traditional labour solidarity is and was imaginary: what was represented as general interests of all workers were often the representation of particular interests decided by strong groups of core workers (typically male and white). Not only did some workers' interests count for most, also some interests were not regarded relevant for bargaining e.g. interests related to family responsibilities; the conception of a worker was a full-time male wage-worker 'in mine, mill or factory' despite the fact that many women were on the labour market, too, and moreover, many men were in more insecure jobs.

So '*If solidarity is to survive, it must be reinvented*' Hyman states (1999:107). To make that reinvention he turns to Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity which he uses to argue for a labour solidarity that is more flexible and in which co-ordination of the more differentiated working

conditions, identities and interests among the membership (workers) is significant: the task is to be both attentive to expectations and experiences of both members and potential members *and* to make an agenda that can unite rather than divide. It is important to be aware that this is not only the case within the individual trade union, but also between unions within the same national context and between workers (labour movements) in different countries. Hyman acknowledges that this is a very difficult task which demands continuous processes of negotiation; neither voting nor top-down decisions can create organic solidarity. However, not only organization and negotiations are needed but also a clear response to the new ideological challenges is necessary – the labour movement has to re-strengthen its ideological base and reclaim the central themes of flexibility, security and opportunity. Moreover, it is important to create structures and mechanisms which support membership participation. Finally, trade unions should become virtual and use the strengths of modern information technologies. *'With imagination, unions may transform themselves and build an emancipatory potential for labour in the new millennium'* (Hyman 1999:112).

Solidarity based on equality, diversity and everyday life

Whereas the feminist IR-researchers and Hyman all point to gender-power relations (and other power relations) inside and outside trade unions as the main obstacle to solidarity, Zoll points to the increasing individualization, differentiation and pluralism as a challenge to solidarity. Thus, he continues the discussion Healy et al raised, however partly taking another position. Zoll emphasizes just like Hyman that it is not labour solidarity as such which is eroding but a specific kind of solidarity, a solidarity which rested on equality. Also like Hyman, Zoll turns to Durkheim to explain the shift in solidarity and to argue for a solidarity based on diversity. However, Zoll turns to other theories on solidarity and community, too, and therefore outlines other problems and possibilities. Firstly, he argues that solidarity has to build on a basic kind of equality, not equality understood as uniformity or sameness, but equality as based on the acknowledgement of belonging to a common humanity; this will be the only way to be inclusive to the 'stranger'. Secondly, he stresses that trade union solidarity has to be practised through everyday life and be based on close relations. Accordingly, trade union leaders must act together with members and policy development be based on dialogue not on top-down communication (Zoll 1999, Valkenburg & Zoll 1995).^v

SOLIDARITY IN A GENDER THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Both Hyman and Zoll have used meta-theory to develop more adequate understandings of solidarity. I will continue this development by introducing late-modern gender (meta-) theory. All three contributions represent a shift away from identity politics.

Becoming a 'we' through dialogue and confrontation

In some ways Dean's concept of reflective solidarity can be regarded as developing further Durkheim's concept of organic solidarity; she emphasizes, too, that *'...the more differentiated we are, the more we depend on each other for recognition and connection'* (Dean 1997:6). However, she also takes us much further than Durkheim would have approved especially when she stresses that confrontation, discussion and critique will create solidarity not dismantle it. She also regards her understanding of solidarity as in opposition to *'...the one commonly associated with Marxism and the labour movement'* (Dean 1997:4). Her critique of labour movement solidarity is very much in line with the critique raised by e.g. Hyman 1999, 2001.

Dean discusses three different forms of solidarity in late modernity: affectional, conventional, and reflective solidarity: Affectional solidarity grows out of intimate relationships of love and friendship; the bond uniting is a feeling of mutual care and concern. Conventional solidarity grows out of common interests and concerns; the bond uniting is shared values and traditions (Dean 1996).

Reflective solidarity is defined as *'the mutual expectation of a responsible orientation to relationship'* (Dean 1996:4). Reflective solidarity arises through dialogue, critique and confrontation

not within a specific group; the 'we' of reflective solidarity is not 'us against them', it is a 'we' in process, constantly produced, reproduced and transformed through dialogue. It builds on two terms: '*...that of opposition to those who would exclude or oppress another and that of our mutual recognition of each other's specificity*' (Dean 1997:4). Moreover, the communicative action has to include a 'third person'; this perspective of a situated third will ensure that not only I and you are included it is a perspective of accountability that '*...enables us to move from our specificities to our interconnections*' (Dean 1997:20). To Dean reflective solidarity is about coalition-building among self-reflective individuals who do not know who 'we' are; it does not presuppose likeness or a stable community of interests rather it promotes disagreement and critique in order to open for more complex analysis and new sites of resistance; and its most distinguished objective is to transform barriers into resources.

Dean argues that we have to work towards reflective solidarity as it is the only way that we can include 'difference' in solidarity. Neither affectional nor conventional solidarities will be able to do that as they '*...have built in limits that prevent their extension beyond a particular group*' (Dean 1996:19). Moreover, the demands to uniformity within conventional solidarity are challenged in late modernity. Dean suggests that we need trust, historical awareness, and to be able to include the perspective of a 'third person' to establish a communicative practice, that will lead to reflective solidarity. On the one hand, this sounds just right, tempting and easy. On the other, struggles of political power and influence cannot be taken away just through dialogue; moreover, gender power systems and other intersections of power embedded in the institutions, organisation and regulation of the labour market (and capitalist society as such) as well as in the organisation, democracy and leadership in the labour movement do not just disappear. Dean's point, that disagreements about interests and politics should not part but rather gather together, is an important and necessary ideal. However, the problem is much more complicated when it comes to changing institutions, organisations, - and to make it even more complicated: taking away privileges from some will also be met with resistance (see e.g. Elton 1997).

Global social justice

Nancy Fraser's theory of justice is just like Jody Dean's theory on reflective solidarity an encounter with identity politics. While Dean turns to individual reflectivity and the inclusion of the 'third', Fraser argues for a normative ideal of 'parity in participation'. This ideal will only be fulfilled if recognition, redistribution and representation are secured for all. Her focus is not on identities and subjectivity, but on institutionalised patterns of misrecognition, on structures of maldistribution, and on excluding decision-processes – and furthermore on how to change and transform these. Fraser does not discuss solidarity, community or collectivism, nevertheless she can contribute to another important part of the solidarity discussion. She is especially concerned with three different effects of political action for social justice in globalization: the problem of displacement, the problem of reification and the problem of misframing. I will focus on the problem of misframing which is concerned with marginalisation and exclusion from decision making processes that is, patterns, structures and processes which systematically exclude some citizens (workers) from representation and democratic influence. The problem of misframing has two sides: the old, the exclusion of some groups e.g. precarious female workers *and* the new, exclusion from decision making because much transnational decision-making has moved out of democratic organs. Actually, this last part of the problem has two sides, too, the growth of non-democratic decision-making *and* the problem that transnational problems often are addressed within a national frame. Representation in globalization requires reframing disputes about justice because they cannot be sufficiently contained within established politics (Fraser 2005:305). Fraser does not say that all problems are transnational, but she emphasizes that we have to '*...determine which matters are genuinely national, which local, which regional, and which global*' (Fraser 2006:14). We need multiple frames to address in/justice, we need to specify the arena of social participation, and to ask who are the social actors among whom parity of participation are needed (Fraser 2006:16).

Action solidarity

In continuation of Dean's emphasis on non-identity coalitions I will introduce the concept of 'action solidarity'. My inspiration to action solidarity comes from Young's discussion of seriality and women as a social collective (Young 1995). In opposition to theories that presuppose a community building on a common identity as the foundation for action and change (e.g. Colgan & Ledwith 2002), I see collective action as the foundation for making community and solidarity. Workers are brought together through a common feeling of injustice that arises from concrete situations of exclusion, disrespect and maldistribution at the labour market, in trade unions and in society in general. Community is created when collective action is directed against those actions that placed the workers in a common situation of injustice. This community is a liquid community that crosses gender, sex, ethnicities, education, jobs, union positions and interests. However, it could also be the basis for a more permanent 'action solidarity'; by which I mean that through taking part in different action communities you will extend your care and trust to a wide range of fellow workers/employees; you will through practice be able to extend reflective solidarity to include the 'stranger'; and you will regard the likeness to other workers instead of just the differences. Yet, neither Dean nor Fraser and Young discuss agency or rather they do, but not in the sense of who will make coalition-building/strategies for change/collective action happen. Apparently in their understanding we are all agents for solidarity and change, which in my understanding bears the risk of no agency. Someone has to pick up the feeling/experience of injustice, to facilitate dialogue, and to support action. It requires good leadership (Colgan & Ledwith 2002, Kelly 1998), and furthermore, it is important to have some kind of superstructure in trade unions which will make up the frame for collective action and coordination.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the paper is to be able to ask adequate, relevant and updated questions to my new research about global female care- and service workers, labour solidarity and labour market regulation. The research engages both in empirical studies and theoretical development of labour solidarity in globalization. I do not consider the succeeding list of questions exhaustive.

As already stated in the beginning of the paper the solidarity terrain is big and with unclear borders however it has also become clear during the discussions in the paper, that the links and the hierarchy between the different terms are unclear. So this will be my first question: How is solidarity, collectivism, community, coalition-building, organising, mobilization, inclusive democracy and social in/justice linked together? Is solidarity more fundamental than the others? Are collectivism and community basis for solidarity or is the opposite the case?

My second question will relate to the different conceptualizations of solidarity: Should labour solidarity rest on diversity or should it rather transcend diversities? Neither reflective nor organic solidarity includes affections and care for each other, but is it not an important part of solidarity? Or is the inclusion of everyday solidarity the way forward? Conventional solidarity building on common interests is criticised for being an excluding 'us against them' community, but should solidarity be without borders? And the only common feature is the equality as human beings?

The third question is concerned with power: Collective power is a very important resource: how should it become ensured? How should critique, disagreements and discussion lead to solidarity instead of being barriers to the same? How should the reflective individual become a resource instead of a problem to solidarity? And furthermore, how can the global workers' strengths and resources become an asset?

In direct continuation of the preceding questions I will ask: What is diversity? Is it patterns of in- and exclusion in relation to identity-groups? Or are patterns of in- and exclusion constructed along much more liquid lines of identity? When will diversity become a barrier? Is it a result of struggles about political power and influence? As for instance when boundaries are set up more or less in order to progress some interests and marginalise others?

As the fifth question I will ask, how we should frame solidarity – both in theory and in practice?

Finally, I will direct the attention to the two-sidedness of solidarity. Hereby I mean that in most of the literature solidarity has both an 'is' and an 'ought to' dimension. The two dimensions are often mixed up in a way which makes it difficult to see what is the one or the other. So my questions are: How should I distinguish between the 'is' and the 'ought to'? Do the 'is' make up the foundation for the 'ought to' – or is the opposite the case? What should be the 'ought to' of solidarity in globalization?

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ⁱ The paper is part of a new research project about female global care- and service workers and social justice, union solidarity and labour market regulation in Denmark (UK and Spain). See also Hansen forthcoming (available on request).

ⁱⁱ The inspiration to my perspective on globalization comes highly from Beck 2000.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the paper I use 'workers' instead of employees because employee implies a regular employment relationship which is not always the case in relation to this type of workers.

^{iv} Their discussion on collectivism builds on a study of black and minority ethnic women trade unionist.

^v Valkenburg (Valkenburg & Zoll 1995) brings the argument even further as he stresses that trade unions should take advantage of the critical reflectivity of the late-modernity individuals in policy -making and organisational development and for that create processes that would generate solidarity instead of dismantling it.