

Solidarity at the Crossroads: Concepts, Practices, and Prospects from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

Veranstalter BMBF Research Project “Practices of Solidarity” | Rottendorf
Research Project “Global Solidarity”

Veranstaltungsort Hochschule für Philosophie München

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Joint Conference of the BMBF Research Project
“Practices of Solidarity” and the Rottendorf Research
Project “Global Solidarity”, Munich School of
Philosophy, October, 7 - 9, 2020

Both in the public debate and the scientific discourse, reference is increasingly made to ‘solidarity’. The popularity of the term can be understood as a response to global social, political, cultural and economic upheavals: From the increasing precarisation of certain communities, the unease regarding a neoliberal world economy, the escalation of the ecological crisis, the growing success of right-wing populist movements, to the potential collapse of the European Union. Against the background of this globalized dynamic of change, different practices of solidarity have emerged in the recent past, in the contexts of which people develop collective forms of being, feeling, and acting cooperatively.

Importantly, the various research paradigms investigating these practices imply both different conceptualisations of, and different ways of reflecting, justifying and employing solidarity. From the perspective of the history of ideas, ‘solidarity’ analytically and empirically captures the mechanism of social integration somewhere between cohesion and fragmentation. Most research paradigms share

the attempt to explain or problematize how social collectives of different sizes and objectives cohere. Conceptually, however, the analysis often remains fixed on the 'social bond' as a shared, habituated feeling of unity and obligation. In light of this, it seems theoretically more promising to focus on the practical dimension of solidarity and to investigate how shifting, solidarity-based initiatives interact with different institutional structures. That way, practices of social solidarity beyond the welfare state come into focus. It also provides the possibility to improve our understanding of the role temporal change plays in historical processes of negotiation, in everyday experiences, but also in conflicts involving gender-specific codes, colonialism, the environment, the interests of animals or the far future. This practice-based approach also promises to shed light on how problems are collectively perceived and processed, on the conditions of cooperative action as well as on power and resource differentials.

The conference is interdisciplinary and brings together philosophy, sociology, history, and political science.

Conference questions

- What is the conceptual core of solidarity in the different research paradigms and historical episodes?
- What are the preconditions of solidarity, i.e. who can be in solidarity with whom or what?
- What are the (geographical, temporal, systemic) limits of solidarity?
- To what extent is solidarity conceptually distinguished from 'justice', 'altruism', 'loyalty', 'community of interests', 'cooperation', 'humanitarian aid' etc.? To what extent is it related to any of these?
- Can there be a unified concept of solidarity that provides equal insight into local, national, and transnational practices of solidarity?
- How can solidarity be understood with respect to the tension between exclusion and inclusion?
- Is there a duty of solidarity, or must it be voluntary?
- To which current and historical problems do practices of solidarity react? To what extent do they become effective as alternatives to existing modes of action or institutions?
- What is the relationship between agents who act in solidarity?
- How can practices of solidarity be criticized? Does this necessarily require an external normative framework, or can criticism evolve from within the (respective) concept of solidarity?
- What role do practices of solidarity play for lived democracy?
- What contribution do practices of solidarity make to the generation of new moral norms?

Keynotes

Invited keynote speakers:

- Prof. Dr. Frank Adloff (University of Hamburg),

- Dr. Alasdair Cochrane (University of Sheffield),
- Prof. Dr. Carol C. Gould (Hunter College & CUNY), Dr. Benjamin Möckel (University of Cologne),
- Prof. Dr. Sally Scholz (Villanova University).

Organisers

The conference is part of the interdisciplinary research project “transnational practices of solidarity”, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). This project is a cooperation between Prof. Dr. Stephan Lessenich (LMU Munich), Prof. Dr. Michael Reder (Munich School of Philosophy), and Prof. Dr. Dietmar Süß (University of Augsburg). Further information: <https://praktiken-solidaritaet.de/>

The second partner of the conference is the research project “global solidarity” at the Munich School of Philosophy. It is currently led by Dr. Mara-Daria Cojocaru (Munich School of Philosophy). Further information: <https://www.hfph.de/forschung/drittmittelprojekte/laufende-projekte/rottendorf-projekt>
