

Affective and Calculative Solidarity:

The impact of Individualism and Neoliberal Capitalism

The research SOLIDUS leading to these results received funding from the H2020 Programme of the European Commission under Grant Agreement n° 649489.

Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which the self-responsibilised individualism underpinning contemporary concepts of the ideal European citizen on the one hand (Frericks 2014), and the inequalities and anti-democratic politics that characterises contemporary neoliberal capitalism on the other, are co-constituent elements in creating an antipathy to forms of solidarity that are affective as opposed to calculative. The active citizenship framework lacks a full appreciation of the interdependency of the human condition and is antithetical to universalistic, affectively-led forms of solidarity. The deep relationality that is endemic to both social production and reproduction, and that impels an affective, morally-led form of solidarity needs to be recognised academically and intellectually, and politically sustained, if we are to move beyond a narrow calculative self-interested vision of solidarity in Europe.

Key words: self-responsibilisation, individualism, neoliberal capitalism, affective solidarity, calculative solidarity

In normative terms, solidarity is a macro-level expression of collective caring, a politicized form of love. It involves the regulation of desires and is a deeply emotional, moral and personal matter (Boltanski 2012: 109-110). Given its ontological origins in nurturing and supporting vulnerable others, solidarity is closely aligned with secondary forms of caring (as expressed through publicly supported health, education and welfare programmes), and with

Pre-publication version

primary care relations within families, friendships and households (Author 1 2007). People are relational and ethical, as well as calculative (Archer 2000; Midgley 1991). As living to be with and for others plays an important role in the structuration of social life (Vandenberghe 2018) it is a matter of political import. Its political salience is evident in the way love-as-solidarity finds political expression, even among those who are most oppressed (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 179-180). Given its embeddedness in social life, the commitment and capacity to collectively nurture and contribute to the welfare of others, can, however, be both culturally and politico-economically fostered or undermined (Author 1 et al., 2009; Crean 2018).

This paper analyses how contemporary cultural forms of individualism and the political economy of neoliberal capitalism co-join to have a profound impact on the forms of solidarity that are being embedded in Europe. At the macro-political level, neoliberalism endorses a form of entrepreneurial individualism which is antithetical to solidarity, not least due to the ways it promotes inequality. Responsibilised individualism is not solely a product of neoliberalism however, it has deep roots in liberalism and in particular strands of Christian thought. It is the deep interpellation between these traditions that make it more unassailable than it first appears. The political economic forces of neoliberalism and the cultural forces of responsibilised individualism align to promote particularistic welfare regimes that are strongly calculative while delimiting commitment to universalistic welfare systems that are based on more affective normative dispositions.

The paper opens with a brief analysis of the policy and practice of solidarity in the European Union; it then examines different perspectives on solidarity and distinguishes between calculative and more affectively-driven universalistic forms of solidarity. The paper illustrates how both religious and secular intellectual traditions promote a self-responsibilised interpretation of solidarity that is easily aligned with neoliberalism.

As the move towards responsibilised individualism is not simply a by-product of cultural processes, the following section focuses on how the political economy of neoliberal capitalism undermines all but the weakest forms of solidarity. In particular, it shows how

Pre-publication version

three processes that are endemic to neoliberalism, namely, individualisation, inegalitarianism and anti-democratic practices, promulgate the responsibilised individualism and weak forms of calculative solidarity that are increasingly popular in Europe today (Frericks 2014; Mau 2015; Van Gerven and Ossewaarde 2012).

The paper closes by discussing the importance of moving outside liberal (and neoliberal) models of the human person that are implicit in much of the social scientific analysis of the politics of solidarity and social change (Alexander 2014; Jeffries 2014). By default, if not by design, these cognitive frames peripheralise the analysis of morally-led political activism that could promote affective as opposed to narrow calculative forms of solidarity.

Solidarity in Europe

Solidarity is a widely invoked value in European politics (Juncker, Tusk, Dijsselbloem, Draghi and Schulz 2017). It is an over-arching principle underpinning the framing of all the major Treaties of the European Union from its inception in 1951, including the Single European Act (1986), the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Treaty of Lisbon (2006). In the latter case it is framed as a value binding together both citizens and member states (Sangiovanni 2013). Solidarity is not just a generalized principle of moral guidance as it also has 'legal substantiations in EU primary law which can be made effective in court proceedings' (Kotzur 2017: 44). The fact that Chapter IV of *The Charter of Basic Rights*, approved in Nice in 2001, is titled 'Solidarity', and that it has subsequently established individual and collective rights in the labour market, and rights to different forms of social protection, indicates that solidarity has legal substance at EU level.

However, there is no agreed understanding of the concept within Europe: it may refer to solidarity within and/or between nation states, or it may be used prescriptively to encourage social solidarity, when solidarity may be absent or failing. It is also used analytically to distinguish the boundaries of solidarity, to identify who is included or excluded (Takle 2018). While solidarity is often referenced with respect to redistribution in

Pre-publication version

welfare terms (Baldwin 1990), especially in the European Union (Eriksen 2017), it is also used to refer to forms of recognition (Kymlicka 2015). Stjerno (2015: 13) claims that, within the EU, the concept of solidarity is an ideological hybrid that is stretched and strained to meet the demands of different political situations. It is used instrumentally for political purposes but has neither been clearly defined nor realised in practice within the European Union (Grimmel 2017).

Politics and Practice: Limits to Solidarity in Europe

The limitations of the fluid and flexible framing of solidarity in EU law was exposed during both the financial and refugee crises when the ‘self-interest’ of member states became apparent (Kotzur 2017: 44). While leaders of the European Union claimed that Europe showed solidarity with periphery countries of the Eurozone during the financial crisis, the imposition of austerity as a result of bailout agreements disproved this (De Grauwe 2013).

The appropriate solutions to the crisis required supranational co-ordination and cross-national collaboration; in short, pan-European solidarity (Wolf 2010). Nevertheless, the EU response to this unfolding sovereign debt crisis was a largely individualized, nation-state centered one; the crisis was interpreted as a product of periphery state profligacy, irresponsible national management, and declining competitiveness. Economically powerful nation states conceived of financial assistance in terms of ‘moral hazard’, making bailout funds available on condition that debtor countries immediately undertook fiscal contraction and structural reforms (i.e. liberalization and privatization across markets).ⁱ

When the ECB did occasionally intervene to protect states in financial difficulty, it did so only on condition that austerity targets were agreed and structural reform commitments were firmly locked in (Henning 2017). Other supranational reforms, broadly beneficial to the cause of intra-European national solidarity, such as establishing a Banking Union and structural banking reforms have been impeded by individualized national interests and concerns (Merler and Wolff 2014).

Pre-publication version

The divergent economic fortunes of core and periphery nations over the last ten years are stark, and indicative of a severe lack of substantive interstate European solidarity. This is reflected in the sustained high levels of youth unemployment several years after the financial crisis in Greece (47.4%) and Spain (44.5%) compared with Germany (7%) (OECD 2017). The terms of bailouts for countries in crisis can only be considered solidaristic in a distinctively calculative sense. The situation in relation to the refugee crisis in 2015 was equally telling. Although Europe's own deeply racialised colonial history (Fanon 1963; Walter 1981) had played a significant role in generating the war and conflict that led to refugees fleeing to Europe, there was little reference to the moral obligations that colonization imposed on member states in 2015. The refugee crisis was framed as a burden, a problem to be resolved by quotas (Knodt and Tews 2017; Takle 2018). Plans to relocate asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other EU states under the European Commission's own relocation plan failed: only 15,000 of the 160,000 asylum seekers had been relocated by March 2017 (Nielson 2017).

While EU institutions cannot enforce solidarity on member states, not least due to their lack of legal and political powers under the Open Method of Coordination, the role that politico-economic and ideological forces play in undermining strong universalistic forms of solidarity need to be analysed in more depth. This paper focuses on two of these factors: the cultural processes of individualism and the inegalitarian, undemocratic and self-interested norms endemic to the political economy of neoliberal capitalism. Before discussing these, it is necessary to examine the framing of solidarity in academic discourse, not least because there is an iterative relationship between academic, policy, and political framings.

Perspectives on Solidarity

Solidarity is commonly interpreted as involving some binding or bonding between individuals and groups (Putnam 2001). It may be exclusionary or inclusionary, confined to those of the same kinship group, culture, politics and values/beliefs, or inclusive of anyone who is suffering and in need of solidarity (Bayertz 1999). It may be limited to citizens within

Pre-publication version

a given nation state or be regional or global in scope. Or it can be a combination of the above, at a given time and for a given group.

Solidarity also varies in its manifestations and motivations. It can be expressed at the macro level by simply voting for political parties that support the redistributive provisions of the welfare state, or it can be expressed by actively promoting solidarity through individual or group action in response to an injustice or oppression (Scholz 2008: 43). It is simultaneously an object or goal of politics, a set of socio-political practices realising such politics, and a disposition towards practice; and its interpretation varies across disciplines.

Solidarity across disciplines: normative, conditional and integrative interpretations

Within philosophy, solidarity is regarded as a normative concept, a disposition of mutual recognition of shared needs and concerns (Rorty 1989: 189). It is defined as a feeling for 'consociates', those who 'share the same form of life' (Habermas 1990: 244), a form of 'benevolent motivation towards certain others' (Halldenus 1998: 335), because 'to feel solidarity is to be morally motivated' (ibid: 346).

The focus in politics is on the conditionality or contingency of that moral motivation (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2003; Bayertz, 1999; Van Oorschot 2006), as it is in psychology (McGarty and Mavor 2009), although the calculated self-interested view of solidarity is also contested within that field (Tomasello 2008). Sociology takes the contingency and conditionality of solidarity as a given. It has focused instead on how solidarity operates in maintaining political stability and social integration (Stjerno 2004: 25-41, 288-291).

In sum, while solidarity is generally defined as a contingent and conditional social disposition, it is also recognised as a positive and affective disposition driven by the desire to alleviate or prevent the suffering of others (Rorty 1989; Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2003). As people have moral as well as self-interested motivations, values and norms are not only regulatory but are constitutive of social life (Vandenberghe 2018); they predispose people to be more or less solidaristic. Distinguishing between different forms of solidarity matters

Pre-publication version

analytically therefore to enable us to conceptualise its operation politically not least because of the way certain forms of solidarity can be exclusionary (Alexander 2014).

Calculative and Affective Solidarity

There is a large body of empirical evidence substantiating the claim that the calculative model of solidarity is dominant in Europe (de Beer and Koster 2009; Mau and Burkhardt 2009; Paskov and Dewilde 2012, Paskov 2016, Taylor-Gooby 2011). Within the calculative frame, solidarity is most often defined as a type of reciprocal insurance system within, rather than between, nation states (Baldwin 1990; Ciornei and Recchi 2012; de Beer and Koster 2009; Mau and Burkhardt 2009; Stjerno 2004); it is defined as a form of reciprocal giving, a system of mutualised risk and benefits (Bowles and Gintis 2000). This interpretation of solidarity is implicitly conditional: what is given is expected to be reciprocated, should the need arise.

Because people are relational and ethical, as well as calculative, solidarity also has normative and empathetic dimensions (Paskov and Dewilde 2012). People are reflective and capable of working out of ultimate concerns that include their obligations to others; they can and do have an external moral referent that directs social actions beyond self-interest (Archer 2000; Honneth, 1996; Sayer 2011). Even in a neoliberal capitalist society people are 'often moved by a quite different set of motives, arising directly out of consideration for the claims of others. They act from a sense of justice, from friendship, loyalty, compassion, gratitude, generosity, sympathy, family affection and the like ...' (Midgley 1991: 5), though these latter motives are not necessarily dominant at any given time. People are also mindful of the reputational and status gains that accrue from being solidaristic (Paskov 2016; Willer 2009); the moral acclaim that comes with being strongly solidaristic impacts on behaviour (Stets and McCaffree 2014).

Given these dynamics, solidarity cannot be analysed as a singular undifferentiated principle. The tensions between more other-centred, affective, and self-interested, calculative (and exclusionary) dimensions of solidarity are real, even if the boundaries between them are

Pre-publication version

fluid. Moreover, as both cultural and political economic institutions either undermine or endorse different forms of solidarity, the role that these play in framing solidarity in Europe needs to be investigated.

Cultural Processes: Individualism

Research from cognitive science shows that deep-seated cognitive schemas frame political attitudes and values (Lakoff 2009; Leyva 2018). Given this, solidarity values cannot be examined in isolation from culturally-pervasive ideological framings in which they are embedded.

While allegiance to different forms of solidarity varies by politics (Taylor-Gooby 2005), individual attributes (Mau and Burkhardt 2009) and gender (Finseraas 2009), it also varies by the kinds of ideals and values people hold (Ciornei and Recchi 2017; Jamie-Castillo 2013). Values that are historically embedded (Cortois and Laermans 2017), including those emanating from the religious and political traditions of Europe (Brunkhorst 2009; Kapeller and Wolkenstein 2013), impact on how solidarity is conceptualised and enacted.

Currently, individualisation and individualismⁱⁱ are pervasive values of Western European cultures (Beck 1992; Mau 2015). Individualisation upholds individual choice and autonomy as priority values, albeit in ways that are market-led and standardized in many respects (Beck 1992: 127-137). The advance of an individualized model of society, where a given person must 'conceive of himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography' (ibid: 135) leads to the promulgation of an individualised responsabilisation approach to their own and others' welfare. It is not surprising therefore that there is a growing belief in many European countries that solidarity should be contingent on individual responsibility (Taylor-Gooby 2011).

This begs the question, however, how did people come to define the ideal citizen as self-sufficient, governed by individual responsibility? Where did the moral approval for pervasive forms of 'possessive individualism' (MacPherson 1962) come from? Without understanding

Pre-publication version

the foundations of what Archer (2000) has termed 'atomized' citizenship, it is not possible to fully understand the conditionalities on which solidarity is granted.

Religion, Individualism and Solidarity

The concept of solidarity has its origins in three major intellectual and political traditions in Europe. It was a core concept in classical sociology, and has been extensively analysed in philosophy, politics and psychology. It is also a normative ideal in labour/class politics, and an espoused principle in Judeo-Christian theology, particularly in Catholic social teaching since the late 19th century (Stjerno 2004).

Although religious ideals may have little direct bearing on contemporary political choices, nonetheless, the values and presuppositions that underpinned prior religious thinking live on in a more secularised political form (Brunkhorst 2009). The loss of secular power by the Christian churches in Europe '...does not mean that secular principles of welfare state provision are not now rooted in Christian postulates' (Kahl 2005: 122-123).

While love and *caritas* underpinned secularised Christian solidaristic thinking, political ideologies were also informed by a 'pessimistically inclined individualism' deeply rooted in the Puritan tradition of Calvinism in Europe (Weber: 1976 [1930] 105-106). A spiritual isolationism was promulgated that warned 'against any trust in the aid of friendship of men'. The command that 'Only God should be your confidant' was antithetical to any concept of relationality as a means to realising 'grace' and being chosen by God. When 'individualistic motives of rational legal acquisition by virtue of one's own ability and initiative', became a virtue, a proof of God's calling (Weber 1930: 179), there was little scope or encouragement to seek salvation through collective solidaristic action. As Tawney (1922: 121) observed, Calvin's insistence on 'personal responsibility, discipline and asceticism' demonstrated that one's worldly achievements in this life was proof of one's election to the heavenly kingdom in the next. The individual's duty was directly to 'God' and her/himself, not to fellow human beings. While Catholic social teaching differed in that the route to salvation was less individualistic, focused on realising the 'common good' through

Pre-publication version

‘integrating individuals and separate parts of society into an organic totality’ (Stjerno 2004: 212), it also endorsed a concept of personal responsibility that aligned its socio-political concept of subsidiarity with family, voluntary and local solutions to society’s injustices rather than collective state-led solutions (Stjerno *ibid*: 62-73). Moreover, both Catholic principles of subsidiarity and the individualism of Reformed Protestantism attributed a negative role to the state in the securing of welfare (Kahl 2005: 120).

Because Christian teaching on solidarity was less rights-based and more person-centred than either labour-led social democratic or Marxist thinking, this has had a profound and lasting impact on how solidarity is understood in Europe’s welfare states. The religious traditions that framed Christian Democratic thinking in Germany and Italy in particular emphasised responsibility in return for, or as a condition of, solidarity. While there was ‘a political will to use government power to redistribute and give priority to collective values’ within the labour-led social democratic traditions, in the Christian democratic traditions there was more ‘reluctance towards public engagement in social services’, and a belief in using ‘tax policy to stimulate personal initiative and responsibility’ (Stjerno 2011: 169). Within the Calvinist tradition in particular, as poverty was defined as a moral failing, punishment and correction were imposed on the poor (Kahl, 2005: 117). Once asceticism ‘undertook to remodel the world and work out its ideals in the world, material goods [have] gained an inexorable power over the lives of men (*sic*)...’ and ‘victorious capitalism’ no longer needed to call on religious values for moral justification (Weber 1930: 181): proof of moral election was evident in the ownership of worldly goods and in personal achievements while moral failing (and correlatively the need for penance, punishment and purification) was evidenced by poverty.

Given the moral endorsement of rational-legal acquisition as proof of God’s calling, it is not surprising that self-responsibilisation became a powerful norm in relation to the operationalisation of the welfare state, exemplified most recently in the institutionalisation of forms of ‘active’ and ‘responsible’ citizenship (Frericks 2010; 2014; Frericks, Maier and De Graff, 2009; Van Gerven and Osssewaarde 2012).

Pre-publication version

Christian postulates also persist, albeit in secular form, within welfare state labour activation practices evidenced in the manner in which the unemployed are subjected to moral appraisal and punishment when they fail to activate and become valuable employed citizens (Boland and Griffin 2017). They move from being citizens-with-rights to welfare to customers who are disciplined if they fail to follow the moral coda of their professional welfare-state overseers (Sowa, Staples, and Zapfel 2018).

The self-responsibilised view of solidarity is not confined to individuals however. While there were frequent reference to the need to avert ‘moral hazard’ by limiting support to profligate and ‘irresponsible’ citizens (who took out banks loans and were now unable to pay them) during the financial crisis of 2008, ‘irresponsible countries’ were also admonished, with Greece being particularly likely to be placed within this frame (Eriksen, 2017).

Political Liberalism and Responsibilised Individualism

To recognise the role that secularised religious principles played in promoting responsabilised individualism within the welfare state is not to deny that there were and are other ideological forces at play. While most often associated with Anglophone countries, especially in its utilitarian form (Cortois and Laermans 2017), liberal political individualism, has a long history in European thinking (Stjerno 2004: 132-140). From Hobbes and Locke, to Rousseau and Kant, and up to and including Rawls, Western liberal political theorists have upheld a separatist view of the person and an atomistic perspective on society, largely ignoring the reality of human dependency and interdependency across the life course (Benhabib 1992; Kittay 1999; Vandenberghe 2018). They have tended to regard fraternity and solidarity as subsidiary values with Rawls (1971: 105) formally attributing a lower status to the idea of fraternity within democratic theory than to either liberty or equality. Moreover, there has been an overriding focus on the state and formal contractual relations between the citizen and the state. Consequentially, contractual models of social relations between strangers tend to inform dominant moral theories (Held 2006: 80). The role of moral judgment and concern for others is

Pre-publication version

marginalised within these conceptual frameworks as relations are implicitly defined in utilitarian terms.

In so far as it disregards relationality, liberal political thinking has framed politics within a concept of the person that is separated rather than connected. This peripheralises the conceptualisation and analysis of the human work required to create and sustain people in their inter/dependency; in political terms that means peripheralising solidarity work.

Furthermore, the manner in which political liberalism creates a false dichotomy between the public and private spheres leads to a dualistic thinking that allows *homo economicus* (governed by self-interest) and *homo relationalis* (governed by fellow-feeling) to live comfortably within the one person (Muehlebach 2012: 20-22). Compassion and care remain defining features of the intimate personal world while calculation and instrumentalism are the governing legitimated ethics of the public sphere. When private love ethically accommodated a cold public heart, the solidarity that liberal thinking commanded was calculable and restricted (ibid). Liberalism did, as Muehlebach suggests, accommodate forms of benevolence in the public sphere through charitable and philanthropic actions, but these were conditional and based on deservedness. Liberalism de-emphasised relationality and accommodated a dualistic ethics of care/carelessness between private and public life that enabled self-responsibilised individualism to develop.

There is therefore an intellectual continuity between liberalism and neoliberalism. Although the new 'spirit of capitalism', that offers individualised forms of security, excitement and merit-based opportunities to those who succeed (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 163-4), may appear very remote from the form of individualism that provided moral endorsement for capitalism in the post-Reformation period, it is much more closely aligned with it than is commonly assumed. Both are based on the moral presumption that the pursuit of individualised self-interest is justifiable as a means to realising the liberal ideals of self-realisation/salvation. In both, the good citizen/Christian is entrepreneurial and self-

Pre-publication version

responsible; each offer 'security', one in relation to 'eternal life' and the other in this life.

Acquiring worldly goods is the symbol of being chosen/successful in both traditions, thereby enabling people to choose particular life styles and values that are enabling of capitalism.

Solidarity with others more vulnerable than oneself, and from whom there is no reciprocation, is not central to either narrative, except in the form of private charity.

Solidarity and the EU in the neoliberal era

Although Christian religions and liberal utilitarian politics play a key role in promoting self-responsibilised individualism that is antithetical to universalistic, affective forms of solidarity, the role of the dominant political economic institution of the modern era, capitalism, is also a crucial consideration. While the precise forms of capitalism employed in Western democracies differs, both with regard to a time-series analysis of 'regimes of accumulation' (Jessop 1990), and in relation to a cross-sectional analysis of 'national varieties' (Hall and Soskice 2001), over the last 30-40 years, advanced capitalist economies have, to a greater or lesser degree, been reorganised to reflect a distinctly neoliberal model of socio-economic (re-)production.

While neoliberalism can often be a 'slippery' concept (Dunn 2017), for present purposes, we utilise the term in its most fundamental and uncontroversial sense: the prioritisation of market-based economic activity, as opposed to state-directed involvement. In this manner, the neoliberal era signifies the erosion of a post-war 'Keynesian consensus' and the rise of a thoroughly liberalised global economy. The EU is a prime example of this macroeconomic transformation: member-states joined together to form a single market, abandoned trade barriers and capital controls, adopted widespread privatisation and deregulation of key sectors, and implemented deep financial integration. Most importantly, state control over fiscal and monetary policy was ceded to the dictates of the Stability and Growth pact and the inflation targeting of an independent central bank. In the post-crisis era, the austerity and structural reform demands of 'ordoliberalism'—a German, rule-orientated variant of neoliberalism—have exacerbated these trends whereby contemporary EU economic

Lync, Kathleen and Kalaitzake, Manolis (2018) Affective and Calculative Solidarity: The impact of Individualism and Neoliberal Capitalism, *European Journal of Social Theory*, <https://doi-org.ucd.idm.oclc.org/10.1177%2F1368431018786379>

Pre-publication version

governance broadly reflects the pursuit of a 'Hayekian' growth regime (Deutschmann 2014; Streeck 2016: 154-155).

To the extent that EU member states continue the path of neoliberal restructuring, the potential to foster universalistic and affective expressions of solidarity will be substantially restrained and more difficult to achieve. This is because neoliberal development is contingent on a form of social organisation that is fundamentally more compatible with particularistic and calculative expressions of solidarity. This can be conceptualised at both a micro and macro level of analysis, such as in Figure 1, which indicates four 'ideal type' expressions of solidarity, corresponding to different forms of capitalism.

Pre-publication version

Figure 1 Four Expressions of Solidarity within Capitalism

		Form of capitalism	
		<i>Embedded Liberalismⁱⁱⁱ</i> (Keynesianism)	<i>Neoliberalism</i> (Hayekian)
Level of analysis	<i>Macro-Political economic</i>	Universalistic welfare regimes	Particularistic welfare regimes
	<i>Micro-Individual</i>	More Affective Value Orientations	Strongly Calculative Value Orientations

Figure 1 is a highly stylised representation of the conditions under which solidarity becomes activated; it is not meant to imply that affective values are impossible to cultivate under neoliberalism. Similarly, welfare regimes across different European countries typically involve a mixture of universalistic and particularistic elements, thus constituting hybrid institutional configurations, albeit with increasing neoliberal tendencies (such as activation policies, increased privatised pension schemes, health care and elder care). Nevertheless, it does accurately highlight the conceptual interplay suggested by our analysis and illustrates the kinds of solidaristic expressions that are more *probabilistic* (through material incentivisation, cultural learning, dominant ideational and discursive frames) given the prevailing underlying political economic structures. In what follows, we examine three specific developments that are the result of neoliberal reforms that impact directly on the kinds of solidarity expression that manifest within Europe. These developments are individualisation, inequality, and anti-democracy.

A more individualised Europe

Various authors stress how the values of ‘rugged individualism’ promoted by neoliberalism undermine the sustenance of community relations and large-scale political unity (Giddens 1991; Wright 2010). Atomistic market relationships tend to cultivate social connections

Pre-publication version

rooted in terms of risk-reward calculations, as well as encouraging individuals to be highly competitive, be it in relation to job security, material wealth, social status or moral worth (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Similarly, while empathy and trust are central to the promotion of solidarity (Putnam 2001), these traits are not easily nurtured in a cultural context of ubiquitous consumerism and a strict normative ideology of self-responsibility. To the extent that neoliberalism promotes a strategic and reciprocal mistrust of others, due to the fear of being exploited for someone else's benefit, it is reasonable to infer that it has a tendency to inhibit solidaristic behaviour.

As neoliberalism valorises the entrepreneurial market self (Harvey 2005), unsurprisingly, it is associated with 'disassociation' from various forms of civil interaction, particularly in relation to membership of trade unions and political parties (Mair 2006), and, relatedly, in the increased lack of protection for workers (Standing 2011). Security and social protection is increasingly perceived as being realised through exercising opportunism as 'individualised individuals' (Streeck 2016: 14) and consumerism becomes more central to identity formation (Bauman 2007).

An especially salient feature of the growing individualisation emerging within a neoliberal EU has been the widespread perception, among the European middle classes, that negative socioeconomic outcomes are more a result of individual shortcomings and personal responsibility, rather than the effect of oppressive and/or unequal external circumstances (Mau 2015: 18-21). According to Mau, it is the majoritarian-based middle classes that have assented to this shift of neoliberal market-based norms to the detriment of solidaristic, welfare-based modes of social cohesion. This is realised through extensive middle-class engagement in stock-market investments, financialised-driven growth of asset purchases (especially housing), declining support for high-taxation, private pensions, and personal indebtedness to support educational 'self-enhancement' and the satisfaction of consumerist-driven spending habits. The net effect of these shifts has been to more deeply enmesh and habituate middle class lives into the norms of competitive market processes, and a corresponding withdrawal from collective institutions.

Pre-publication version

While these processes have been realised differentially across member states since the late 1970s, persistent welfare-state retrenchment, and a decline in redistributive solidarity is a salient European development (Korpi 2003). Social protections are increasingly marketised and outsourced, with an attendant lack of protection for those who are most vulnerable in a pay-as-you-go system (Frericks 2011). What has emerged is a new 'post-industrial welfare support coalition' predominantly rooted within the professional and managerial middle classes (Gingrich and Häusermann 2015). State supports have shifted from traditional social policies such as compensating for income loss and other transfers towards labour activation policies and human capital investment programmes. This represents a move to commodify welfare supports that link protections to market processes. The individualisation of responsibility for one's own welfare is central to this process.

Solidarity is also lacking in (privatised) changes to pension schemes, that not only require high levels of individualised investment management and financial expertise, but that are also premised on the assumption of the ideal of life-long paid employment, something that most women do not have, especially migrant women (Frericks 2011). The self-responsibilised individualisation that propels activation policies is no different to the individualisation of nation-state welfare: those who are unable to help themselves are held accountable for their own failure.

A more unequal Europe

The arrival of what Streeck has termed 'oligarchic inequality' is perhaps the defining consequence of the neoliberal era (2016: 28-29) with a persistent trend of wealth and income concentration at the top of virtually all national economies (OECD 2011), exacerbated since the crisis of 2008 (Piketty 2014). Because rising inequality is a core feature of neoliberalism, it is a fertile breeding ground for social conflict and anti-solidarity developments, particularly under simultaneous conditions of stagnant wages and job precarity (Standing 2011). Inequality generates feelings of suspicion, anger and resentment

Pre-publication version

that fuel detachment from the body politic and undermine the trust that underpins social solidarity.

A European Parliament report on the issue of wage and income differentials shows increases in inequality across approximately two-thirds of the EU countries from 2006 - 2011 (European Parliament 2015). Unsurprisingly, countries that retained solidaristic welfare protection and collective labour institutions (the Nordic region, but also Belgium and the Netherlands) avoided these growing disparities. However, the polarisation between the very wealthy and the poorest has increased in most other member states, particularly in those most severely hit by the economic crash (Spain, Portugal, Italy), as well as most countries within Eastern Europe. Furthermore, as a directly legacy of the crisis, Oxfam reports (2015) that 25 per cent of European citizens (approximately 123 million) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with almost 50 million living with 'severe material deprivation'. The failure of EU leaders to devise 'acceptable redistributive compromises' for those most affected by the downturn has resulted in a full-blown political and legitimisation crisis which has undermined support for further integration (Ferrera 2017: 14). It has also provided space for xenophobia to flourish within political parties across Europe.

Besides the crisis, the primary reasons identified for continuously rising inequality include the decline of union density and bargaining coverage rates across EU countries, the declining real purchasing power of minimum wages, the impact of globalisation and technological change, and growing rates of capital income, including higher returns on stocks, bonds and property sales. Crucially, this last driving factor of inequality has also been a direct result of conscious policy decisions by EU governments to prop up the value of capital assets after the crash through bank bailout and recapitalisation programmes, as well as monetary support for the financial sector by the ECB.

More generally, the growing centrality of finance—'financialisation', a primary component of neoliberal reforms—is deeply implicated in intensifying the long-term trend of social polarisation. An exclusive focus on 'shareholder value' has facilitated growing wage disparities between senior management and workers, and encouraged profit reinvestment

Pre-publication version

into financial trading rather than production and job creation (Davis and Kim 2015).

Furthermore, financial investors—primarily through pension funds with access to enormous pools of capital—can pressurise companies into job rationalisation and down-sizing through their disproportionate effect over share prices. As real wages decline, this is offset by growing indebtedness, which simultaneously represents a transfer of income upwards to financial rentiers. Not surprisingly, European countries with the greatest levels of inequality had a strong positive association with higher household borrowing before the crisis of 2008, leaving them exposed to major consumption falls and disproportionate levels of unemployment and poverty in the context of a sudden credit freeze (Bruegel 2016).

A more undemocratic Europe

A knock-on effect of rising economic inequality is how it adversely impacts on the ability of those who are resource-poor to have their political voices heard and attended. As inequality rises, there is a tendency for better-off groups to consolidate political power given that they are better educated, more likely to vote, and more likely to engage in the political process. Thus, the resourced middle classes are in pole position to define political agendas in ways that promote forms of self-responsibilised welfare that are in their own interest.

More importantly, however, is how corporate actors have come to enjoy disproportionate political power in the neoliberal era. First, businesses and their lobbyists use their considerable financial resources, media connections, and access to privileged information, to influence policy debates in ways from which most people are excluded (Johnson and Kwak 2013). Second, business actors' professional knowledge of how specific markets function (especially financial markets) is coveted by policymakers, further facilitating corporate agenda setting and regulatory capture (Underhill 2015). Third—and perhaps the most consequential mechanism in the context of liberalised financial markets—corporate owners have the ability to influence policy decisions by virtue of *having the legal right to deploy (or withhold) productive activity and resources* as they see fit (Gill and Law 1989). As such, investors can pressurise states to capitulate to their preferences through the threat of

Pre-publication version

‘capital flight’ and discipline the demands of labour. These ubiquitous constraints of neoliberal globalisation have been central to undermining the willingness of nation states to advance universalistic welfare regimes and Keynesian fiscal expansion.

Throughout the Eurozone crisis, EU policymakers chose austerity as the primary means to recovery: Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Cyprus were compelled to sign up to structural adjustment programmes, while Spain, Italy, and France (among others) *voluntarily* committed to similar austerity measures in an effort to ward off financial speculation. These programmes were undertaken with little democratic deliberation and were extremely unpopular with large segments of the population, igniting frequent protests across the continent. At various points throughout the crisis, EU policymakers resorted to the installation of temporary technocratic leaders who would fast-track unpopular austerity measures against the wishes of a majority of the population (e.g. in 2011, Lucas Papademos of Greece and Mario Monti of Italy). As such, EU post-crisis austerity politics has often displayed an authoritarian cast in its efforts to restructure solidaristic welfare regimes built up in the post-war decades (Giannone 2015).

A final ominous development is the creation of *supranational surveillance initiatives* designed to ‘lock-in’ austerity measures as a permanent feature of EU economic policymaking. The 2012 ‘Fiscal Compact’ is a legally binding law committing member states to maintain a debt-to-GDP ratio of under 60%, and requiring governments to immediately combat ‘structural deficits’ once they arise. The measure effectively outlaws the kind of interventionist (Keynesian) economic management needed to resuscitate universalistic forms of social insurance and welfare. It is buttressed by a range of other legislative initiatives, including the ‘six-pack’, which strengthens the Commission’s monitoring of national budgets, and the ‘Euro Plus Pact’, which involves political commitments to labour market flexibility and the abolishment of wage indexation. The motivation behind such initiatives is intimately linked to the fiscal and monetary conditions expected by mobile investors and can be interpreted as an intensified phase of ‘constitutionalist’ reforms designed to homogenise and automate economic management in a world of liberalised

Pre-publication version

financial markets (Bieling 2014: 354). Such initiatives depoliticise key governance decisions, insulate those choices from open democratic discussion, and thus restrict political challenge to the seemingly irrevocable drift towards a deepening neoliberal future and the weak forms of solidarity to which it corresponds.

Conclusion

Europe is experiencing the conflating impact of ideological and politico-economic forces that are anti-solidarity in the strong normative and affective sense of that term. The understanding of solidarity that prevails is built on a model of self-responsibilisation, (Frericks 2014), premised on a form of individualism, that is strongly calculatively-led on the one hand, and a system of neoliberal capitalism that is anti-pathetic to all but the weakest forms of solidarity on the other. The net outcome of these cultural and political economy processes is the growing ascendancy of an ideal-type European citizen whose primary allegiance is, per force of necessity and survival, to their own competitive advantage (Streeck 2016).

The rational egoism of neoliberalism is not a new phenomenon however as it is built on the foundations of a self-responsibilisation thesis that has deep roots in both Christian (Stjerbo 2011; Tawney 1922; Weber 1930), and classical liberal political thinking (Kahl 2005). The dualistic ethics of liberalism that allows for the substitution of public solidarity with a private morality of compassion and philanthropy (Muehlebach 2012), combined with a secularised Christian ethics that endorses individual 'salvation' through private virtue and competitive consumption, have also facilitated a disengagement from collectivistic and solidaristic solutions to social injustices that are affectively as opposed to calculatively-led. This is compounded by the 'winner takes all mentality' of neoliberal capitalism that propels the upper classes and the aspiring middle classes to discredit forms of solidarity that are universalistic and affectively endorsed. If Europe is to develop new conceptualisations of solidarity beyond a narrowly calculative (self-interested) frame, it needs to recognise the significant barriers involved both culturally and politically.

Pre-publication version

The academy itself has a central role to play in addressing this challenge, not only in recognising the difference between affective and calculative solidarity, but also in recognising the salience of relationality in theorising about political and social life.

Although social scientists do not generally engage in ontological debates about personhood, they often incorporate unarticulated assumptions as to the nature of the human person that impact on how they interpret findings and frame theories (Mooney 2014: 21). Whether recognised or not, theoretical frames are simultaneously descriptive and value laden (Sayer 2011: 55). They are based on presumptions about human needs and human nature regarding what enables people to flourish or suffer. Among these unexplored presuppositions is the one that modernity's human relationships are atomised and hierarchical, with self-interest being asserted as the fundamental principle governing contemporary human relations (Jeffries 2014). This has created a sociological model of 'the lonely stranger of modernity who selects his (*sic*) relationships in the same manner as his other purchases and who can know no loyalty because all his loyalty is vested in his own internal desires' (Archer 2000: 54).

While the salience of self-interest for social scientific investigations is paramount, it conceals the role that moral motivations and other-centredness can play in directing human behaviour politically, particularly if mobilised and organised. The net impact of this academic framing is that the normative or moral dimensions of social life are neglected in social scientific analysis.

There is a need to move beyond a utilitarian concept of individuals and an atomistic perspective on society in theoretical imaginings and empirical research. The deep relationality that is endemic to both social production and reproduction, a relationality that impels an affective, morally-led form of solidarity, needs to be theorized and investigated more systematically within the social sciences.

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ⁱ German officials ignored the question of moral hazard when it came to bailing out their domestic banks in 2008. See Author 2, 2017, for details.

ⁱⁱ *Individualization* as a historical process is defined by Beck (1992) in terms of severing people from pre-determined roles and norms. While ‘individualization can be understood as the social-structural and cultural-normative precondition of individualism’... ‘individualism consists in the pursuit of self-interest above all other considerations’ (Mau 2015: 20)

ⁱⁱⁱ Derived from Polanyi (2001 [1944]), the notion of ‘embeddedness’ refers to the degree to which market activity is enmeshed within and constrained by non-economic social relations. To the extent that neoliberalism tilts towards the ideal of producing unfettered, self-regulating markets, it subjugates social actors and institutions to the principles of market rationality.