

BRIDGES A **toolkit** for **diversifying knowledge** and **tackling discrimination**
through **civil society participation** in universities.

SOLIDARITY

D E F I N I T I O N

Solidarity is a collective practice of political alignment across fault lines of power with the intention of contesting hegemonic divisions between social groups creating a common struggle based on shared decolonial, anticapitalist, antiracist, and/or feminist political principles.

P R O C E S S

The PAR* group comprised of researchers at the Feminist Autonomous Centre for Research and at the University of Brighton chose to add the concept of solidarity to our toolkit because we thought it was important to highlight resistance in the face of oppressive power relations embodied in the other concepts herein. This came out of conversations around the contradictions that were accelerated in and through the various declared crises (financial, refugee, climate, and pandemic). On the one hand, in many places around the world, the crises were experienced as crushing defeats to, or abrupt ruptures with waves of mounting resistance around the world immediately previous to their manufacture. On the other hand, in response to crises and their material effects, people came together across lines of power in practical solidarity. By engaging the concept--and the practices and histories--of solidarity, in classrooms and in community spaces, we can envision alternatives that already exist to the dominant order of things. As we wrote this, we were ourselves under lockdown in Athens, Greece and in Brighton, England--making PAR group meetings impossible (hence our reflections on PAR*). Moreover, under pandemic conditions, our own priorities shifted away from ordinary research activities and toward enacting practical solidarity with people whose survival was at greater risk than our own: in particular, people attempting the crossing to Fortress Europe, facing the murderous indifference of authorities in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean; people confined to camps and hotspot islands, prisons, and detention centres; women and LGBTQI+ people facing violence in their own "homes" or in those of their employers, in which they were forced to "shelter in place." So, in the background of the literature review that forms the elaboration of the concept of solidarity you'll find below, and through which we synthesised its definition, is our own intense anxiety about the possibilities of enacting solidarity under lockdown, when people's lives and deaths hang in the balance.

ELABORATION

The concept of solidarity has been articulated alongside decolonial, anticapitalist, antiracist, and feminist political analyses. In its political bases, solidarity differs from abstract notions of "sisterhood" grounding feminist politics, or "shared humanity" grounding left-wing progressive politics. Solidarity understood in this way is characterised by mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests (which, more often than not, need to be forged rather than found). It is not based on "assuming an enforced commonality of oppression" but rather the active constitution of a community of struggle, in which diversity and difference are "acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances."

Source:

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003).

Solidarity is a practice of political alignment intertwined with affective attachments. Solidarity is a relationship of resistance that emerges through crises and conflicts, which bridges lines of difference (e.g., geographical distance) and dominance (e.g., privilege and oppression), to unite people around shared political goals. Reviving prior forms of left internationalism, as social movements become increasingly transnational (or anti-national, e.g., no borders movements), solidarity gains importance as a way of bridging geographical and other material and ideological gaps and distances. Solidarity, in this sense, is a normative political horizon, which, although it animates a great deal of activism and organising, remains difficult to reach, grasp, or fulfil.

Source:

Natalie Kouri-Towe, *Solidarity at Risk: The Politics of Attachment in Transnational Queer Palestine and Anti-Pinkwashing Activism*. Ph.D. dissertation. Department of Sociology Justice Education and Women's and Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto, 2015.

Solidarity in Crisis

Solidarity is the "other side of the crisis" that captures an "apparent paradox": that in uncaring times (due to neoliberal austerity or bordered nationalisms) it is "at once bolstered by precarity and raised against it" (147). It is an emic concept, emerging from and not exogenous to people's social mobilisation and everyday life in contexts of crisis (142). Solidarity is "a concept that bridges -that is, captures loosely and yet in tension" various, "diverse modes of practice, forms of sociality",

and ways of "envisioning future prospects for people's lives" (142).

Source:

Theodoros Rakopoulos, "Solidarity: The Egalitarian Tensions of a Bridge Concept." *Social Anthropology* 24(2): 2016, 142-151.

Solidarity (in the context of intersecting crises of austerity and displacement) signifies the shared struggle or convergence of struggles of subjects located along a "precarity continuum". Solidarity has a horizontal character, in that it bridges hierarchies between "givers" and "receivers" and undermines the "intersubjective borders" between them in the redistribution of material resources. In this sense, as a practice it differs from humanitarianism and from philanthropism, charity, and volunteerism.

Source:

Heath Cabot, "The European Refugee Crisis and Humanitarian Citizenship in Greece." *Ethnos*, 4 October 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2018.1529693>

In contrast to bureaucratic management of and hospitality to the Other, solidarity "emphasises lateral and anti-hierarchical relatedness" (189). As evinced by the creation and widespread adoption of the neologism "solidarian" (αλληλέγγυος), initially emerging from anarchist movements, solidarity has become constitutive of struggle identities: "in recent years [in Greece the solidarian has turned from an adjective into a noun; the grammatical shift signifies the radicalisation of solidarity that took place in austerity-ridden Greece" (189).

Source:

Katerina Rozakou, "Solidarians in the land of Xenios Zeus: Migrant deportability and the radicalisation of solidarity." In Dimitris Dalakoglou & Georgios Agelopoulos, eds. *Critical Times in Greece: Anthropological Engagements with the Crisis* (London: Routledge, 2018), 188-201.

Solidarity and NGO-fication

Solidarity is understood by activists to be characterised by "common struggle against oppression, direct and democratic participation and mutual recognition across difference" (13). Solidarity is marked by an "ethos" of "direct, democratic, and non-hierarchical participation of people of diverse backgrounds in relations of interdependence and resource-sharing" (6). This ethos, in the context of successive and intersecting solidarity movements against austerity measures and migration management in Greece, stems from an anarchist commitment to autonomy from the state and capitalist market, self-development, self-education, and self-sufficiency (6).

However, "the conversion" of solidarity activists [particularly those of the "lost generation", young

people who came of age post-2008] into NGO workers in the Greek refugee regime--which was a function, first, of their own extreme precarity (in a context of 60% youth unemployment), and second, of “the state’s discipline (and criminalisation) of forms of solidarity that exist outside the refugee regime”--may have “undermined solidarity”: “the refugee regime converts solidarity established through political struggle into a form of human capital that permits former activists’ social mobility ... [E]xisting relations of solidarity between former activists and migrants have been undermined in this process” (2-3).

Source:

Katherine Pendakis, “Migrant advocacy under austerity: transforming solidarity in the Greek-refugee regime.” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18 January 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez113>

Solidarity and grassroots communities

Solidarity may be seen as an “empowering” counter-narrative to the hegemonic rationality of austerity (to which There Is No Alternative) produced ‘from below’ within self-organised grassroots spaces.

Source:

Athena Arampatzi, *Resisting Austerity: The Spatial Politics of Solidarity and Struggle in Athens, Greece*. Ph.D. Dissertation, School of Geography, University of Leeds, 2014.

“The idea of community is essential to the moral vocabulary of solidarity ... But what is, or should be, the basis of the community to which solidarity is owed? Is this community based on identity? On shared experience? Shared interests?” And to what ends or with what goals is solidarity enacted? These can be deliberately vague or open-ended.

Source:

Shefali Chandra & Saadia Toor, “Introduction.” *Special Issue on Solidarity*. *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 42(3-4): 2014, 14-24.

Solidarity Economy

The solidarity economy, narrowly understood, refers to a network of third-sector activities that seek to replace capitalist market relations of exchange with relations of reciprocity within a general call for political mobilisation (165).

As a “third pole” between economy and democracy, solidarity economy is based on a critical stance toward the capitalist market, on the one hand, wherein commodification is a precondition of production, exchange, and redistribution, and the collapsing or shrunken welfare state, on the

other (175).

Source: Theodoros Rakopoulos, "Solidarity Economy in Contemporary Greece: 'Movementality,' Economic Democracy, and Social Reproduction during Crisis." In Keith Hart, ed. Economy for and against Democracy. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 161-181.

More broadly understood, however, if solidarity is a relational political alignment premised on affective attachments, the economy of solidarity can be understood as an "affective economy" that articulates racialised and gendered modes of belonging in and estrangement from the political community. [1] Who becomes constructed as the imagined subject of solidarity in an austere and hostile affective economy? How do nationalism, xenophobia, misogyny, racism, transphobia, homophobia, and ableism intersect in the construction of "the valid subject of Left solidarity"? [2]

The circulation of affects conducive to solidarity, just as those conducive to exclusion, "produces rather than merely describing 'the differentiation between 'us' and 'them': 'they' are constructed as the cause of 'our' feeling..." [3]

In other words, the affective alignment in and through solidarity creates an imagined subject, a seemingly prior collectivity that it constitutes as its effect. Normativity informs and structures this affective alignment.

Sources:

[1] Anna Carastathis, "The politics of austerity and the affective economy of hostility: racialised and gendered violence and crises of belonging in Greece." *Feminist Review* 109: 2015, 73-95.

[2] Shefali Chandra & Saadia Toor, "Introduction." *Special Issue on Solidarity. WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 42(3-4): 2014, 14-24, p. 15

[3] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 48.

Solidarity is not a Crime

If communities in struggle call for solidarity from people in diverse locations with whom they seek political alignment and from whom they seek political support, powerful states have also been known to invoke solidarity: calling for or lamenting the failure of "European solidarity between member states" in "managing the refugee crisis"; or seeking to justify the offloading of "care functions" of the state onto civil society or onto particular social groups charged with social reproduction. At the same time that states call for solidarity when it is directed toward them, they criminalise solidarity when it is directed toward groups of people they systematically oppress. We contend that only people, not states, can stand in relations of solidarity, and solidarity is not a crime!



This document is part of the BRIDGES Toolkit, a set of tools and strategies for addressing and dismantling structures of exclusion in Higher Education curricula. The Toolkit has been developed in the context of the Erasmus+ project **BRIDGES: Building Inclusive Societies: Diversifying Knowledge and Tackling Discrimination through Civil Society Participation in Universities**, whose working team consists of the following entities:

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