Solidarities in and through work in an age of extremes

Vanessa Beck, University of Bristol UK
Paul Brook, University of Leicester UK

Abstract

This article introduces a special issue of *Work, Employment and Society* on solidarities in and through the experience of work in an age of austerity and political polarisation. It commences by discussing the renaissance of studies of solidarity in the workplace - and beyond. Debates on solidarity as a concept are reviewed in relation to moral economy, labour organising-mobilisation, emotional labour and public sociology. Each of special issue articles are introduced in turn. These re-evaluate solidarity as a concept; explore solidarity among gig-economy delivery riders (Italy and UK), special needs teachers (England), volunteer lifeboat crews (UK and Ireland) and international 'social factory' activists. Two articles examine solidarity within organised labour; first, internationalism among dockworkers and second, North American police unions' construction of a divisive 'blue solidarity'. The article concludes by calling for continued study of different forms of solidarity in and through work, especially among migrants and individualised workers.

Keywords

activism, collective labour, emotion, individual workers, injustice, labour process, moral economy, public sociology, solidarity

Why solidarity, why now?

We agreed the topic for this special issue on solidarity in late 2016. The timing was significant, especially for those of us in the UK. It was just months after the Brexit vote and a mere few weeks after the election of Donald Trump as the President of the USA. Both events marked a fissuring of a long-standing politico-economic status quo with profound ramifications reaching far beyond the USA and UK. This was further – and closer to home – evidence that in the wake of the Great Recession and accompanying neo-liberal austerity that began a decade earlier, we are living through an era of socio-economic rupture and political polarisation, which we characterise in the title of this special issue as an *age of extremes*[1]. We want to use this special issue of *Work, Employment and Society* (WES) to counter, in a small way, the resulting feelings of vulnerability and anxiety, even despair, by focusing on solidarity as an elemental, pervasive phenomenon that is synonymous with the experience of work, but also beyond the workplace where it *social solidarity* is a core principle underpinning state provision of universal healthcare, welfare and education within inclusive democratic polities (Wilde, 2007). This

is because solidarity is commonly understood as collectively-oriented action, on the side of social justice and potentially transformative for participants and recipients alike. To highlight and celebrate solidarity at work, therefore, is to pose an alternative vision of society to that portrayed by the rising reactionary politics of division, intolerance and blame practiced, as we write, by the leaders of a growing number of countries, notably USA, UK[2], Brazil, India and Hungary.

Another, more local experience, also marked our own renewed interest in solidarity. One year after the call for papers announcement in February 2017, over forty-thousand academic and academic-related members of the University and College Union (UCU) in most UK universities went on strike for 14 days across February and March 2018. We along with tens of thousands of colleagues experienced solidarity in action. This took a range of different formats: standing on the picket lines, much of it in bitterly cold, snowy conditions, and having time to talk to colleagues and get to know them; meeting up with colleagues from other parts of our own university or other universities at rallies; or comparing experiences and sending messages of support via social media, to name just a few. At least temporarily, participation in the strike became an affirmative and positive experience, reinforcing the desire to work with, support, and encourage those around you. The celebratory spirit led to large increases in union membership, a substantially improved bargaining position, and even alliances with some university leaders. For a while, it seemed possible to change not only the pension issues that were the cause for the strike but also the way in which we work as academics in often isolated and competitive formats. To us, these events were further proof of how solidarity is possible and powerful in and through work.

It is because we are in an era of uncertainty that we wanted to place solidarity as a focus of study within the broader context of dislocating social, economic and political change:

> As we reach the end of the first decade of the long crisis that began in 2007-8, what does solidarity mean and how does it manifest itself in and through the manifold forms if work? Within the context of a shrinking and constricting state, of turbulent political developments and their implications for social structures, and of the long-term extensive implications for austerity politics, we are encouraging authors to considers acts of solidarity that are undertaken in and through work by individual and social actors. (Beck and Brook, 2017)

In making this call, we were aware that primary studies of solidarity, particularly as a work-based phenomenon in the three decades since Fantasia's (1988) seminal *Cultures of Solidarity – Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers* have been rare. Despite there being little evidence of a decline in worker solidarity within trade unions in OECD-level economies during this period the lack

of scholastic interest appears to express a common assumption that solidarity among organised labour diminishes in tandem with the general decline in trade union membership (D'Art and Turner, 2002; Kelly, 2015). Indeed, WES' own publication record bears out this lack of interest. Between its launch in 1987 and until this special issue, it had not published a single research article containing the word solidarity in the title and only four where it was a keyword. This does not mean that solidarity was forgotten as it has had plenty of 'minor role' mentions in WES - and elsewhere - as a shared sentiment and activity but without specific examination. Nevertheless, there have been significant exceptions over the last three decades that have focused on solidarity as a concept and phenomenon, such as Atzeni's (2010) monograph, *Workplace Conflict – Mobilization and Solidarity in Argentina*.

We were not alone in wanting to revive interest in solidarity as an idea and social phenomenon in the current economic and political climate. In 2017, the ESA's biennial conference theme was *(Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities* whose call for papers echoed our own by stating, "solidarities are fragmented in and between societies across Europe. The new world economic crisis formed a context for both the constitution and the undermining of solidarities" (2017: 3). A few months later, a significant new edited collection on work-based solidarity was published, entitled *Reconstructing Solidarity: Labour Unions, Precarious Work, and the Politics of Institutional Change in Europe* (Doellgast, Lillie and Pulignano, 2018). We believe that these and the 60 papers considered for inclusion in this special issue are evidence of a timely, hope-filled renaissance in the study of solidarity in and through work.

In the remainder of this foreword we assess the state of solidarity as a concept and the variety of studies of different forms of solidarity in and through work. We then introduce the seven articles in this special issue highlighting how each one builds on and expands our understanding of solidarity in a diverse range of work and work-related settings, befitting Glucksmann's (2005) call to think of work in terms of a *total social organisation of labour*, which was the brief for this special issue (Beck and Brook, 2017). We conclude by suggesting that the current renaissance of interest in solidarity presents those of us who study work and employment the opportunity to extend and deepen our understanding of it in an era of global and digital connectivity, albeit one that is marked by protracted politico-economic dislocation and uncertainty.

Understanding solidarity today

Solidarity may mean different things to different people and is used liberally within and outside the academy to describe a wide range of individual and collective acts in a myriad of social contexts, not just in and through the experience of work. For example, the European Union commonly refers to state welfare as 'social solidarity'. This diversity of application and approach to solidarity is evident in

the seven articles brought together in this special issue as they each draw on varying aspects, interpretations, work-related contexts and locations to uncover and explore solidarity as a concept, process and social phenomenon.

The original publication of Emile Durkheim's (1997) *The Division of Labour in Society* in 1893 ensured that solidarity occupies a place in the foundational canon of sociological enquiry even if it has had a shaded presence for much of the time. Durkheim's conceptual distinction between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity and its central role in his account of the transition from traditional pre-industrial communities to modern industrial societies still provides a common point of departure (see Wilde, 2007) for many contemporary debates on the concept, as Bolton and Laaser (2019; this issue) demonstrate. In Wilde's (2007) reprise of solidarity as a concept, he argues it is a social phenomenon that harbours an abiding political idea of a common humanity, especially in the context of a globalising world, but one that is framed as a huge challenge in the rallying phrase m*any cultures, one humanity!* In this contemporary sense, acts of solidarity in their basic form are understood as the manifestation of a shared sense of injustice and common purpose across different groups and/or societies. These are normally enacted collectively, commonly in support of affected others whose detriment is perceived to be unjust and damaging to them and often others, even humanity itself (e.g. support for climate change activism).

Solidarity is closely related to the notion of *moral economy* (Thompson, 1991; Sayer, 2007), if distinct as Bolton and Laaser (2019; this issue) argue in their study of the interrelationship between the two phenomena among special needs teachers. This close relationship is clear from EP Thompson's pioneering description of moral economy as the "*mentalité, …* the political culture, the expectations, traditions… of the working population most frequently involved in actions in the market" (1991: 260). He further explains that a moral economy "cannot be described as 'political' in any advanced sense, nevertheless it cannot be described as unpolitical either, since it supposes definite, and passionately held, notions of the common weal" (1991: 188). As Bolton and Laaser (2013) argue, a moral economy approach offers a powerful way to think about workers' *lay morality* (see Sayer, 2007) that stresses their "moral agency and fellow-feeling" (p. 520) and revitalizes "a social justice agenda where human dignity and flourishing are ends in themselves" (p. 521). In this way, solidarity is understood as an active expression of a commonly held moral economy, imbued with moral agency, that is built from a shared sense of injustice and emancipatory purpose.

The articles in this special issue demonstrate that the occurrence of solidarity in and through work, like other solidaristic phenomena, is contingent, contested and situated (Routledge and Driscoll Derickson, 2015), whether this be as part of gig work, voluntary work or community campaigning, all

of which are addressed in this special issue. While not all acts of solidarity occur in and through work they are rarely disconnected from or unrelated to workplaces and workers. This is because workplaces are commonly located within local communities (e.g. supermarkets, offices and hospitals) in which workers live with their families and friends. Irrespective of how close workers live to their place of work, they belong to a myriad of social groups, organisations, campaigns and movements outside of the workplace that increasingly rely on digital networks of supporters/members to debate, disseminate and organise, especially campaigns and movements (see Wood, 2015; Upchurch and Grassman, 2016). It is because workers belong to thick, multiple social networks that they take-out and bring-in to their workplaces' ideas, passions and activity that can speak-to and foster a diversity of solidarities within and via the workplace.

Within the workplace, solidarity has traditionally been considered as foundational and integral to organised labour in the form of trade-union based collective action (Simms 2011, Hyman 2015). The idea of organising and forming a collective is here enabled via membership in a union and facilitated by the organisational structures of that collective body. Solidarity occurs between workers because they are workers with common material interests tied to their employment and/or because many will tend to share, debate and reinforce – often through being a union member - a wider set of ideas, grievances, aspirations that are popularly identified within organised labour and social movements as *working class* interests (Fantasia, 1988; Ilkeler and Crocker, 2018). Therefore, organised labour-based solidarity is not restricted to or by the terrain of the workplace. It often deepens and extends to become overt working-class consciousness (Ilkeler and Crocker, 2018), albeit one that is uneven, contested and uncertain, even when it takes the form of militant action by workers (Fantasia, 1988).

Where workers belong to or have contact with trade unions in their workplaces, they have immediate access to a primary collective means to channel and build solidarity not just over employment related issues but also when pursuing social and politico-economic justice beyond the workplace (Fantasia, 1988; Atzeni 2010). This is evident on a large-scale in the ongoing American-wide *Fight For $15* and *Our Walmart* mass campaigns for a living minimum wage and union rights for all low-paid and precarious workers (Wood and Pasquier, 2018). While the campaigns are ostensibly industrial struggles by and for waged labour, national labour unions tend to play a supportive rather than directive role. Instead, the campaigns are primarily led and organised by workplace and community-based activists, with strong links to the wider network of social justice movements (Rolf, 2015) that mobilise inside and outside of workplaces in local areas and through digital networks (Wood, 2015). Both the *Our Walmart* and *Fight For $15* campaigns point to the emergence and nurturing of a solidarity that challenges the tensions between unions' structured organisation and less formal grassroots social movements

(Engeman, 2015), which can be exacerbated by union-led community-based organising campaigns (see Holgate, 2015)

Another importance source for developing understanding of labour solidarity has been the flourishing debate on labour mobilisation sparked by Kelly's (1998) seminal *Rethinking Industrial Relations.* Kelly (1998: 27) commences by arguing that collective action is born of a sense of injustice, not just dissatisfaction, where there is "the conviction that an event, action or situation is 'wrong' or 'illegitimate'. By making workers' notions of justice and injustice a core determinant, he explicitly theorises a central role for workers' moral agency and therefore speaks to the importance of a moral economy lens for understanding the emergence of workers' solidarity and collective action (see Bolton and Laaser, 2019; this issue). However, Atzeni (2010) argues that Kelly's use of injustice is not specific about the sources of injustice and solidarity in the workplace. Atzeni (2009) argues that workers' sense of injustice is an inevitable, systemic product of the subordination, exploitation and inherent antagonistic relations with management that underpin the capitalist labour process (see also Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2019; this issue). Equally, he highlights that the labour process also fosters mutual dependence among workers and encourages them to share their successes, failures, rewards, punishments, fears and aspirations, The labour process , therefore, is fertile territory for solidarity but it remains a dormant potential until activated by 'moments of collectivism', sparked by a sense of injustice and/or crisis (Atzeni, 2009: 7), which can take the form of spontaneous action, often with little organisation, such as a 'wildcat' strike or a workplace occupation by its workers (Fantasia, 1988; Atzeni, 2010).

The flip side to being part of such a collective is, as Morgan and Pulignano (2019; this issue) point out, that it can be exclusionary, especially where unions were traditionally male dominated or actively excluded women, for example. Yet work and employment is changing and with it the types of work that may be undertaken (e.g. gig work), the way in which work is organised and, with it, the forms of solidarity that are required and possible. Strauß and Fleischmann (2019; this issue) contextualise this as going beyond the total social organisation of labour (Glucksmann 2005) which itself had already broadened the lens for considerations on work and employment. Volunteering (RNLI), cultural activism (social factory) and, to some extent, gig work require extensively different activities to allow collective action and solidarity to emerge. Tassinari and Maccarrone (2019; this issue) outline embryonic and active solidarity that ranges from not participating but not actively boycotting strike action all the way to the emergence of common awareness and action. Depending on individual restrictions (e.g. legal status) and opportunities, the articles in this special issue describe different forms of 'communities of coping' (Korczynski, 2003) emerging from below among workers in workplaces and even across national borders (see Fox-Hodess, 2019; this issue). Despite all being in

and through work, each one is not necessarily evidence of a nascent form of trade unionism in the waged workplace, as with the case of volunteer workers (O'Toole and Calvard, 2019; this issue) and *social factory* cultural activists (Strauß and Fleischmann, 2019; this issue). Even if there is trade union-based solidarity in the waged workplace, it is not necessarily socially progressive in content and purpose, as is commonly the case with police trade unionism (see Thomas and Tufts, 2019; this issue).

Despite the importance of multiple forms of solidarity, which is not reducible to organised labour and trade union working, solidarity is thus a form of identification which depends on individuals knowing, engaging with and, potentially, supporting other individuals around them. As Morgan and Pulignano (2019; this issue) point out, such alignment or non-alignment reflects the social capital (Putnam, 2001) that individuals may draw on in bonding with similar individuals within their group or in bridging and networking across groups. Essential and fundamental to both processes is that they are reciprocal and mutually reliant on each other, which distinguishes solidarity from charity. This is an important differentiation when considering solidarity in broader settings that include volunteering and social activism. With solidarity and injustice going hand in hand, anger and resentment at the unjust treatment of others in work, wider society and globally by the more powerful and the powerful remains the age-old catalyst to mobilise to right a wrong, support others in struggle and aid the victims of injustice. This in turn highlights the importance of understanding how and why solidarity is 'made', especially the processes whereby its 'producers' strive to garner the resources necessary to mobilise and act. In doing so, solidarity is revealed as a myriad of ideas, emotion, responses and effects, from outrage, impatience and resistance to reciprocity, generosity, compassion and joy.

The prominence of debates on emotional labour and emotion in the workplace, following Hochschild's (1983/2012) ground breaking, *The Managed Heart*, has been extended recently to a call by McKenzie et al. (2019) for research that prioritises looking at the relationship between workers solidarity and their emotion management. While the call is welcome, work in this area has begun to emerge in recent years with several studies focusing on the importance of workers emotion work in building workplace cultures 'from below' and worker mobilisation. Notable contributions include Baines' (2011) study of resistance among Australian and Canadian social workers and Taylor and Moore's (2013) exploration of British Airways cabin crew collectivism and mobilisation. On the theoretical side, Brook (2013) offers a labour process theorisation of the interrelationship between workers' emotional labour and the formation of a self-conscious *collective worker* based on solidaristic values, such as those underpinning 'communities of coping' (Korczynski, 2003). Another notable contribution is Cotton's (2017) argument for an emancipatory model of trade union education to promote the development of solidaristic relationships at work.

The renewed interest in solidarity has also been matched by a reignited debate, led by Bourdieu and Burawoy (Brook and Darlington, 2013), over the importance of academic scholars working in explicit solidarity with labour and other social justice movements. This resurgence of *public sociology* in recent years, a tradition within which WES locates itself and seeks to foster (Beck et al., 2016) includes encouraging scholars' active participation in labour and social justice struggles as *scholar activists* (Routledge and Driscoll Derickson, 2015) or *committed scholars*, to use Bourdieu's term (Brook and Darlington, 2013). By adopting such a standpoint, the resulting scholarly work takes a partisan position on the side of the disadvantaged and oppressed while maintaining a critical distance (Beck et al., 2016). Such situated solidarity by scholars of work can evolve into a deep, enmeshed practice, which Burawoy calls *organic public sociology*, where the scholar activist emerges as a Gramscian-style organic intellectual for a labour or social movement having won the trust of their co-activists to be a spokesperson, educator or analyst, even a strategist, for the group or movement in which they participate (Brook and Darlington, 2013). Rick Fantasia (1988) offers a compelling account of his own experience of giving active solidarity to a corn processing workers' strike in Clinton, Iowa in which the strikers made him a spokesperson.

Multiple solidarities in and through work

The articles included in this special issue are testament to this range of ways in which to consider solidarity. In our first article, Morgan and Pulignano (2019) consider solidarity as a contested concept which requires re-examination and theorisation for the transnational era. In this conceptual piece, a clear distinction is made to differentiative three sets of resources used by actors to explain and enact solidarity. First is the language of morality, which goes beyond calculation of benefits and costs, and where solidarity is engaged in because it is the right thing to do. Second, solidarity emerges through language and practice of political alliances: it is a political calculation based on existent relationships and possibilities for defending or improving them based on collective action. The third way in which solidarity is enacted and reinforced is via the use of rituals, symbols, rhetorical appeals and vocabularies, with examples including marches, flags and banners, or slogans. These different types of solidarity are underpinned by collective action and solidarity at three levels: the workplace and the community; the organisational level including trade unions; and the institutional level.

Morgan and Pulignano (2019) consider this framework in light of its application to the current transnational era to argue that solidarity is a contested concept which depends on particular contexts. An understanding of these concepts is essential, especially when considering the pitfalls and potentialities of solidarity. They hint at the 'dark side' of social capital and the potential exclusionary nature of solidarity, drawing on examples such as the gendered and racialised nature of employment, but also show that solidarity can 'emerge in spaces where the contradictions of capitalism are evident'.

Such contradictions are investigated in Tassinari and Maccarrone's (2019) study of gig economy couriers in Italy and the UK. Locating their study within the individualised labour process, they compare Deliveroo drivers in the UK with Foodora drivers in Italy and intentionally set out to include research participants involved in mobilisation. Despite this deliberate strategy, the extent of emergent solidarity within cases defined as unlikely instances of mobilisation, is noteworthy. The article differentiates between embryonic solidarity (collective feelings of reciprocity and responsibility towards one another) and active solidarity (preparedness to act on the basis of embryonic solidarity) and considers how the former can be turned into the latter in cases of unlikely mobilisation among gig workers. The possibilities range from low-key, day-to-day forms of conflict, resistance and mutual support to strikes. They can emerge in response to sources of antagonism in the labour process (e.g. shift to piecework) and an overcoming of individualisation which in the gig industry is enforced via the online platform used to allocate work. The development of consciousness and experience of taking action together led to emergent active solidarity.

Tassinari and Maccarrone (2019) demonstrate empirically how solidarity can emerge within the gig economy, whilst arguing for the crucial attention to inherent contradictions within the capitalist labour process as these create some of the conditions for the overcoming of individualisation. The specific forms of control within the gig economy are met by new forms of agency, turning controlling devices and apps into possibilities to organise both independent from and within collective organisations. The article equally highlights the demand that this places on (new) unions to develop novel means of organisation.

Bolton and Laaser (2019) in our third article, address the moral economy dimension of solidarity through a longitudinal study (2003-2017) of teaching staff in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in England for children excluded from mainstream schooling. They focus on how a community of teachers and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) is created through a bond of solidarity between themselves centred on their common commitment to caring for the children in the PRU. This is done despite their experience of working in the PRU where the service is systemically underfunded and marginalised at the official level, and the children and their care is stigmatised by the public. Over the years of the study, the teaching staff's sense of being besieged intensifies as they become subject to an increasingly alienating performance management regime driven by targets and cost-cutting.

Bolton and Laaser use their study to argue that central to the making of the teaching staff's solidarity is their morality of care for the children, which they prioritise over succumbing – by leaving - to the hostile environment they experience working for the PRU. For Bolton and Laaser, traditional labour-

based concepts and explanations of solidarity, such as Fantasia (1988) Kelly (1998) and Atzeni (2010), have a too narrow focus on work-based injustice and shared economic interests, which give insufficient weight to workers' moralities of justice, care and dignity for society, not just in the workplace. In doing so, they commence the process of integrating a moral economy dimension into contemporary concepts of solidarity drawing on the extensive work of Andrew Sayer (2007) on moral economy. Just such an approach, and one based on a significant longitudinal study, begins to address the concern of Morgan and Pulignano (2019) that we need to map and explore what remains of solidarity and what new forms are emerging under conditions of a rising neo-liberalism and associated changes to the ideological terrain and experience of work.

For some occupations and workplaces, a formal codified solidarity is in-built into the routine practice and discipline of job tasks. These are often dangerous jobs in which the nature of the work is frequently hazardous for individual and collective health, safety and security. Some of the most obvious examples being firefighters, police officers and combat military personnel. In these cases, the formal health, safety and security practices required by the organisation and/or statutory regulation in response to hazardous events is in a dynamic inter-relationship with workers self-forged, informal workplace cultures of 'looking out for each other' solidarity. While jobs that contain personal and collective risk tend to encourage the building of cultures of solidarity among close-knit groups of workers (e.g. miners and trawler fishing crews), many of these jobs are not just dangerous but are experienced as more meaningful, even solidaristic, by dint of having the purpose of protecting and saving lives. However, as Scarborough (2017) demonstrated in his study of firefighters, in such jobs a series of meshed tensions can be generated around the value workers put on their own lives, co-workers lives and the lives of the public. Such solidaristic tensions are also evident in the fourth article, a study by O'Toole and Calvard (2019) of lifeboat crews in the UK and Ireland, but in this case, there is a significant difference, the crew members are unpaid volunteers.

O'Toole and Calvard's (2019) study extends our understanding of solidarity among workers doing dangerous work by drawing on Lyng's (1990) concept of *edgework* to explore voluntary risk-taking in extreme work contexts. They in turn build on Granter et al.'s (2018) edgework-framed study of ambulance crews' negotiation of work intensity – and risk - by reprising edgework's original focus on the voluntary aspect of risk-taking. They highlight that while all dangerous paid work is to a degree voluntary, it is underpinned by the exigencies of the wage-labour effort bargain. However, this is not the case for the lifeboat crews' as unpaid, voluntary workers. Therefore, their individual and shared meaningful purpose for doing dangerous work takes on added importance compared to those workers who are also subject to paid employment contracts, such as other emergency services workers. O'Toole and Calvard (2019) show how crew members are tied into an explicit and tight-knit solidarity

by their training and routine safety-first work practices, shared experiences of rescues – and loss - and their common meaningful purpose of safeguarding human life, including the lives of other lifeboat crew members. However, their volunteering does not occur in a social vacuum. Crews tend to be drawn from small coastal communities, often from kinship networks with a history of lifeboat volunteering dating back several generations, highlighting how lifeboat volunteering and its solidaristic culture is produced in part outside of the workplace.

In the fifth article, Strauß and Fleischmann (2019) consider yet another aspect of solidarity by investigating cultural work in the Social Factory and by focussing on underpinning political action that an Arendtian (1998) distinction between labour, work and political action encourages. Their research setting is a summer school that brings together a diverse group of international attendees, mainly architecture, design, engineering students, and beneficiaries who come together to refurbish a house privately-owned by an individual without the economic resources to sustain their home. The research investigates how a temporary group of individuals can develop group cohesion as part of a summer school in which solidarity with socially, economically and aesthetically de-valued and marginalised positions was actively encouraged. Individual expectations, requirements and political perspectives provide added complications to the development of group cohesion, let alone solidarity, within this temporary group and between the group and the house owner. These positions were also made public in attempts to influence public opinion and local housing policy. The article thus considers solidarity in work and non-work as well as the political mode of human activities. Such changing notions of work also require changing notions of solidarity and demand a focus that goes beyond merely considering a redistribution of resources. Solidarity is thus conceptualised as a precarious and temporary phenomenon that interconnects socio-economic and socio-political spheres.

Since the formation of large-scale trade union organisation in the late nineteenth century, internationalism has commonly been a foundational aspect of the labour movement's approach to solidarity. At the institutional level, there is a long-established network of international trade union federations designed specifically to co-ordinate international co-operation and solidarity among member unions and between industrial sectors. In the next article Fox-Hodess' (2019) examines an innovative attempt by the International Dockworkers' Council (IDC) to foster long-term internationalism 'from below', which she compares with the traditional bureaucratically mediated approach of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). Fox-Hodess (2019) acknowledges that there have been plenty of examples of 'one-off' global solidarity campaigns organised in a non-bureaucratic fashion and driven by workplace activists but the institutionalisation of rank-and-file internationalism into the routine work of the IDC is a distinct and novel organisational form for global trade unionism.

Fox-Hodess (2019) explains how the IDC's removal of bureaucratic layers mediating routine contact between workplace dockworkers in different countries allowed them to communicate directly and quickly with one another, especially when they wanted to build on-the-ground solidarity for a labour dispute or other campaign. The means to communicate directly generated greater agility, militancy and shared culture across national borders resulting in the building of an international solidarity network potentially involving tens of thousands of dockworkers across the globe. Fox-Hodess (2019) acknowledges that the downside results in a messy and uncertain, even 'unprofessional', form of solidarity when compared to the orthodox bureaucratic internationalism - managed by expert union officials – generally practiced by other international trade union organisations, such as the ITF. In addition, for the activists building international solidarity the work, travel and responsibility places an extra burden on their personal and family relationships. Nevertheless, Fox-Hodess (2019) argues that the significance of the IDC's success for building effective organic internationalism across borders is that it was fostered through a flexible, participatory democratic organisation that allowed a culture of militant solidarity to emerge. This highlights how the nurturing of solidarity, unfettered by national frontiers and top-heavy bureaucracies, requires allowing grassroots participation and organisation, which social media and digital communication makes easier, not least for organised labour and other social movements (see Wood, 2015), even if the terrain is contested (Upchurch and Grassman, 2016).

The final article by Thomas and Tufts (2019) examines a dystopic example of work-based solidarity which is evidence of Morgan and Pulignano's observation that the nature of solidarity means it is not automatically a progressive phenomenon. It also possesses the potential to be regressive by being exclusionary and used as a divisive weapon by the powerful and to protect their interests against the less powerful. Thomas and Tufts (2019) explore the building of a 'blue solidarity' (aka *blue lives matter!*) movement in recent years by North American police unions primarily to counter the large and influential American *Black Lives Matter* movement that uncovers and opposes police violence against people of colour. The authors dissect the recent history and nature of police unions to argue that their construction of blue solidarity produces division with progressive labour and social justice movements and is used to undermine their support for movements like Black Lives Matters. This in turn assists police unions in their quest to produce a more privileged status for their members in terms of gaining extra resources, greater powers and leniency towards police violence and illegality.

Thomas and Tufts (2019) highlight how police unions adopt or support campaign tactics that use racialised 'othering' to stigmatise and discriminate against workers of colour and their communities. Their conclusion is that the example of blue solidarity demonstrates police unions are not like other labour unions by virtue that police officers are not ordinary 'workers in blue' but, members of the

state's front-line coercive force for defending the status quo against all manifestations of combative working-class resistance to inequality and injustice, not least by organised labour. Not surprisingly, Thomas and Tufts (2019) conclude by calling for other labour unions to keep police unions at a critical distance.

While the case of blue solidarity is a sobering examination of the dark side of solidarity, it is an invaluable contribution to our understanding that solidarity is not a neutral idea and social form but one that is constructed in both progressive and regressive forms within and through work. Thomas and Tufts (2019) study shows that the deepening process of social and political polarisation of the last decade is also manifesting itself in 'extreme' forms of solidarity.

Solidarity at work moving forward

As highlighted by the articles included in this special issue, the act of standing or working in solidarity with others is of relevance to different sectors, occupations and social contexts. Importantly, the discussions in this issue have thus progressed the research agenda on solidarity in and through work to move beyond traditional understandings that locate solidarity primarily within the domain of organised labour (Fantasia, 1988) and within class politics (Simms, 2011). Whilst these are important loci for solidarity to emerge or be built, considerations about links into the discussions on the moral economy or the dark side of solidarity – to name just a couple of issues raised here – are more nuanced accounts of what encourages or sustains solidarity in specific settings. It is this underbelly of social relationships where this issue has contributed but also where further research is required, especially "as public goods and services are no longer performed by the neo-liberal state" (Beck and Brook, 2017).

There is evidence of potential responses to such withdrawal by the state from Greece (Teloni and Adam, 2018) where Solidarity Clinics were set up in response to austerity measures to provide free primary medical care and social care, often by volunteers, to individuals excluded from the health insurance system, including undocumented migrants. Solidarity Clinics emerging out of social movements have the explicit aim to develop solidarity whilst also agitating for a universal public health system. Similar systems are in place in the UK with the network of food banks, though these are not usually located within a solidarity discourse (Caplan, 2016), and the development of community-led libraries (Pateman and Williment, 2016). Such emergent systems of solidarity can support and, potentially, include into society individuals most affected or even made scapegoat by current political and social developments, including refugees, migrants, Muslims, the homeless and young precarious workers. Morgan and Pulignano (2019; this issue) indicate how gendered traditional solidarity has been, making Craddock's (2017) warning that austerity targets those perceived as powerless, in her

case women who bear the brunt of austerity measures, even more stark. The divisions and power distributions within groups engaged in solidarity work thus requires further and detailed attention.

The need for such attention to detail and for solidarity action is evident all around us. According to Beck (1992), individualisation became a central feature of social structures as early as the 1970s and it has since become enshrined in welfare and employment contexts. The experiences of where and how solidarity was used or failed within these past developments would form important learning for future developments and are thus worthy of further research. Looking towards a potential future of work in the gig economy, Tassinari and Maccarrone (2019) consider the individualised labour process for gig workers whose main link to their employer is an app on their phone and demonstrate that solidarity is possible even where individualisation is the norm. Yet it is important to consider that this requires considerable emotional labour. In considering the teaching profession, McKenzie *et al.* (2019) highlight individualising pressures to perform and contain emotions, which can result in disconnect among workers and therefore lack of social support, and overall, a lessening of power and bargaining position of workers. As such, solidarity requires more than the right set of circumstances and opportunities, many of which were outlined by the papers in this issue, with additional demands placed on individuals involved in solidarity work. Returning to our current context of an *age of extremes*, , the development of solidarities in and through work thus also requires all our attention and effort – individually and collectively - to pose an alternative hopeful, emancipatory vision of society based on an inclusive solidarity of the less powerful to counter the rising reactionary politics of division, intolerance and blame.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the authors who submitted papers for this special issue and to the reviewers. We would also like to say a big thank you to Sophie Jaques, BSA Publications Assistant, for her invaluable professional and friendly support throughout the three years it has taken to produce this special issue.

References

Arendt H (1998) *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Atzeni M (2009) Searching for injustice and finding solidarity? A contribution to the mobilisation theory debate. *Industrial Relations Journal* 40(1): 5-16.

Atzeni M (2010) *Workplace Conflict: Mobilization and Solidarity in Argentina.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baines D (2011) Resistance as emotional work: the Australian and Canadian non-profit social services. *Industrial Relations Journal* 42(2): 139-156.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society, Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage.

Beck V, Brook P, Carter B, Clark I, Danford, A, Hammer, N, Kanji S and Simms M (2016) Work, employment and society sans frontieres: extending and deepening our reach. *Work, Employment and Society*, 30(2): 211-219.

Beck V and Brook P (2017) *Call for Papers: Solidarities in and through Work in an Age of Extremes*. British Sociological Association. Available at www.britsoc.co.uk/about/latest-news/2017/february/call-for-papers-solidarities-in-and-through-work-in-an-age-of-extremes/

Bolton S and Laaser K (2013) Work, employment and society through the lens of moral economy. *Work, Employment and Society* 27(3): 508-525.

Bolton S and Laaser K (2019) The moral economy of solidarity: a longitudinal study of special needs teachers. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(6):

Brook P (2013) Emotional labour and the *living personality at work*: Labour power, materialist subjectivity and the dialogical self. *Culture and Organization* 19(4): 332-352.

Brook P and Darlington, R (2013) Partisan, scholarly and active: Arguments for an organic public sociology of work. *Work, Employment and Society* 27(2): 240-251.

Caplan, P (2016) Big society or broken society? Food banks in the UK, *Anthropology Today*, 32(1): 5-9.

Cotton E (2017) Constructing solidarities at work: Relationality and the methods of emancipatory education. *Capital and Class*. 4 August doi/10.1177/0309816817723284.

Craddock E (2017) Caring about and for the cuts: a case study of the gendered dimension of austerity and anti-austerity activism. *Gender, Work and Organization* 24(1): 69-82.

D'Art D and Turner T (2002) The decline of worker solidarity and the end of collectivism? *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 23(1): 7-34.

Doellgast VL, Lillie N, and Pulignano V (eds.) (2018) *Reconstructing Solidarity: Labour Unions, Precarious Work, and the Politics of Institutional Change in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Durkheim E (1997) *The Division of Labour in Society.* New York: Free Press.

Engeman C (2015) Social movement unionism in practice: organizational dimensions of union mobilization in the Los Angeles immigrant rights marches. *Work, Employment and Society* 29(3): 444-461.

ESA (2017) 13th Conference of the European Sociological Association (Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities: Abstract Book. Paris: European Sociological Association. Available at www.europeansociology.org/sites/default/files/ESA-2017-Athens_Abstract-Book_final.pdf

Fantasia R (1988) *Cultures of Solidarity*: *Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers.* Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Fox-Hodess K (2019) Building labour internationalism 'from below': lessons from the International Dockworkers Council's Working Group. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(6):

Granter E, Wankhade P, McCann L, Hassard J and Hyde P (2018) Multiple dimensions of work intensity: ambulance work as edgework. *Work, Employment and Society.* 19 March doi.org/10.1177%2F0950017018759207.

Glucksmann M (2005) Shifting boundaries and interconnections: extending the 'total social organisation of labour'. *The Sociological Review* 53(s2): 19-36.

Hobsbawm E (1995) *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*. London: Abacus.

Hochschild AR (1983/2012) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. London: University of California.

Holgate J (2015) Community organising in the UK: A 'new' approach for trade unions? *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 36(3): 431-455.

Hyman, R. (2015) The very idea of democracy at work. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research* 22(1): 11-24.

Ikeler P and Crocker J (2018) The continuity of work: class consciousness in service and non-service jobs. *Economic and Industrial Democracy.* 19 April: doi.org/10.1177%2F0143831X18769411.

Kelly J (1998) *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*. London: Routledge LSE.

Kelly L (2015) Trade union membership and power in comparative perspective. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 26(4): 526-544.

Korczynski M (2003) Communities of coping: collective emotional labour in service work. *Organization* 10(1): 55-79.

Lyng S (1990) Edgework: a social psychological analysis of voluntary risk taking. *American Journal of Sociology* 95(4): 851-886.

McKenzie J, Olson R, Patulny, Bellocchi A and Mills K (2019) Emotion management and solidarity in the workplace: a call for a new research agenda. *The Sociological Review* 67(3): 672-688.

Morgan G and Pulignano V (2019) Solidarity at work: concepts, levels and challenges. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(6):

O'Toole M and Calvard T (2019) I've got your back: danger, volunteering and solidarity in lifeboat crews. *Work, Employment and Society. Work, Employment and Society* 33(6):

Pateman, J. and Williment, K. (2016) *Developing Community-Led Public Libraries. Evidence from the UK and Canada.* London: Routledge.

Putnam, R. (2001) *Bowling Alone*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rolf D (2016) *The Fight for $15: The Right Wage for a Working America*. The New Press: London.

Routledge P and Driscoll Derickson K (2015) Situated solidarities and the practice of scholar-activism. *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* 33(3): 391-407.

Sayer A (2007) Moral Economy and Employment. In: Bolton SC and Houlihan M (eds) *Searching for the Human in Human Resource Management*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 21-40.

Scarborough RC (2017) Risk a lot to save a lot: how firefighters decide whose life matters. *Sociological Forum* 32: 1073-1092. 31 July doi:10.1111/socf.12363.

Simms, M. (2011) Imagined solidarities: where is class in union organising? *Capital & Class* 36(1): 97-115.

Strauß A and Fleischmann A (2019) Reconceptualising solidarity in the Social Factory: cultural work between economic needs and political desires. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(6).

Tassinari A and Maccarrone V (2019) Riders on the storm: Workplace solidarity among gig economy couriers in Italy and the UK. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(6).

Taylor P and Moore S (2014) Cabin crew collectivism: labour process and the roots of mobilization. *Work, Employment and Society* 29(1): 79-98.

Teloni D and Adam S (2018) Solidarity clinics and social work in the era of crisis in Greece, *International Social Work* 61(6): 794-808.

Thomas MP and Tufts S (2019) Blue solidarity: police unions, race and authoritarian populism in North America. *Work, Employment and Society*. *Work, Employment and Society* 33(6).

Thompson EP (1991) *Customs in Common.* London: Penguin.

Upchurch M and Grassman R (2016) Striking with social media: the contested (online) terrain of workplace conflict. *Organization* 23(5): 639-656.

Wilde L (2007) The concept of solidarity: emerging from the theoretical shadows? *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9(1): 171-181.

Wood AJ (2015) Networks of injustice and worker mobilization at Walmart. *Industrial Relations Journal* 46(4): 259-274.

Wood AJ and Pasquier V (2018) The power of social media as a labour campaigning tool: lessons from Our Walmart and the Fight for 15. *ETUI Policy Brief, European Economic, Employment and Social Policy* 10. ETUI: Brussels. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3219307.

[1] We borrow the term from Eric Hobsbawm, a renowned Marxist British historian, who entitled his history of the short twentieth-century (1914-1991) *The Age of Extremes*.

[2] At the time of writing in mid-September 2019, Boris Johnson is the UK prime minister of a minority Conservative Party government. There is a high probability of a general election taking place before this special issue is published in December 2109.