

Social solidarities: the search for solidarity in sociology

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DieGem working paper – 24/04/2013
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This paper surveys the sociological literature on the concept of solidarity. Ever since the inception of the scientific discipline of sociology in the turbulent 19th century, solidarity has been among its founding concepts. As modern societies developed and were transformed through broad societal trends such as industrialization, individualization, globalization, migration, etc. , sociologists have rethought and reformulated the concept of solidarity over and over again in a continued attempt to grasp the sources of social cohesion in rapidly changing societies. Sociologists have analysed and theorized the foundations, causes, circumstances and consequences of solidarity. The result is a rich treasure chest of concepts, theories and insights on solidarity. Therefore we prefer to use the term solidarity in plural: 'social solidarities'. In this paper we present the conceptualisation of social solidarities in different sociological traditions and we position these concepts into an overarching analytical framework made up of different fields of tensions in order to cover the most important distinctions and similarities between these concepts.

1 – The pre-modern roots of the concept of solidarity

As Stjerno argues “the phenomenon of group loyalty and sharing resources existed long before the idea of solidarity developed” and “the term was in general use before its modern meaning had developed”(Stjerno, 2004, 25). The etymological roots of solidarity are situated in the 'in solidum' concept in Roman law. The 'obligation in solidum' referred to the “unlimited liability of each individual member within the family or other community to pay common debts” (Bayertz, 1999, p. 3). This common responsibility was adopted by French lawyers in the 16th century as 'solidarité' and included in the Code Napoleon in 1804 (Stjerno, 2004, p. 27).

In the early Christian era the concept of fraternity or 'brotherhood' played a significant role. In early Christian theology some teachings are to be found that inspired later ideas of solidarity. The love of God for all humans implies the universality of the demand to 'love thy neighbour', expressed in acts of charity. Christians should be prepared to share with others as brother and sisters of the one God, just like the close relationships within the family. The universal and egalitarian impetus of the ideal of fraternity in Christian social ethics implied a critical potential against both secular and ecclesiastical authorities (Stjernø, 2004, p. 62). Throughout history this was a legitimation for engagement in collective action in the catholic and protestant traditions.

Central to the idea of fraternity was a preoccupation with social integration, formulated in the 13th century - long before it was elaborated by classic sociologists - by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*

Theologica. In his universal understanding of fraternity, Aquinas stressed the community between all human beings and charity as a key mechanism for integration. Assisting the needy was a duty of charity for wealthy Christians who could gain their reward in heaven as a consequence of their own good deeds. Not only individuals but also society had a responsibility to impose taxes to finance measures to enhance social integration (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 63, 73). The Christian act of 'love thy neighbour' was made permanent through the charity institutions of the church. This solidarity concept was vertical, because humility and acceptance of the existing social hierarchy was expected from the recipient (Metz, 1999, p. 192).

Stjernø explains that during medieval times, the concept of fraternity gradually lost its religious connotations. Feelings of belonging and close relationships existing within the family were no longer identified solely in religious communities but were also taken to operate in the more mundane settings of professional groups such as merchants (Stjernø, 2004, p. 27). As beggary more and more disturbed the Ancient Regime in the late Middle Ages, philanthropists reacted in the critical spirit of the Enlightenment against the church charity and the state repression with new humanistic attempts to combine help with a pedagogical aim of self-improvement. In Great Britain liberal social reform was a reaction against the oppressive 'Poor Laws' introduced since 1601. These laws, distinguishing between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, were criticized as pure social control. Scientific charity and the social work developed in the slipstream of this reform movements (Metz, 1999).

Philanthropy did the groundwork for the 'fraternity' of the French Revolution. The revolutionary program for minimum wages (1790) and a civil right of aid for all citizens in need (1793) characterized the political redemption of 'fraternité' (Forrest, 1981). Although this universal political right proved not to be sustainable and was soon replaced by 'bienfaisance publique' and by a more liberal notion of solidarity as 'mutual insurance' in the *Code Napoleon*, fraternity definitively acquired a socio-political meaning. The Jacobins made fraternity a key concept together with freedom and equality. Fraternity was mobilized first to describe the social bonds within 'societies of revolutionaries' and later within 'political communities'. The inclusion of 'fraternity' in the Revolution's most famous slogan probably owed its place to the role of fraternities – guilds, associations and secret societies – whose members might be sworn to 'brotherhood', by ties of loyalty, obligation and commitment (Spicker, 2006, p. 119). The promise of universal fraternity became difficult to sustain as the Revolution progressed and excluded more and more people. It was recognized that only patriots could be brothers, that fraternity was not for today and that coercion was needed to 'fraternize' the people. Fraternization became a tactic of radical revolutionaries in their battle against the moderates. Closure became indispensable to fraternity and exclusion

constituted a fraternity of combat against external and internal enemies (Furet & Ozouf, 1989, pp. 697-698). Despite this, Ozouf argues, the word brothers “introduces a dynamic rectification of the equality of rights” (Ozouf, 1989, p. 703). These different meanings and expressions of fraternity during the French Revolution would resonate in early sociological theorizing on solidarity.

2 - Solidarity in early social theory

As argued before, during the French Revolution *fraternité* became a political concept and, following one of the rallying cries of the French Revolution ‘*Egalité, Liberté et Fraternité*’, one of the founding values of Western modernity. During the 19th century, the term ‘fraternity’ was gradually replaced by the term ‘solidarity’. As modern societies took shape and religious explanations for its functioning and organisation were increasingly rejected, Western social science emerged as an integral part of Enlightenment thinking. The organization of society was no longer seen as reflecting God’s will, but as manmade. Social science developed as an attempt to understand the human laws according to which society functioned. Whereas the discipline of economics sought to explain the allocation of scarce resources, the discipline of sociology was (and still is) concerned with the question how social order is at all possible given the scarcity of material resources. The answer of classical sociologists to this question revolved around the concept of solidarity. Their understanding of solidarity varied however dependent on their theoretical approach. Before sociology constituted itself as a self-standing discipline with its own object of research, its founding theoretical approaches and typical methodologies, early social theorists already wrote about solidarity. Following Stjernø (2004), we single out Fourier and Leroux as the most significant authors here. As will become clear from the following, their understanding of solidarity is rather eclectic, as they encompass diverse elements which would later crystalize in distinctive sociological traditions and associated conceptions of solidarity.

In *Theorie de l’Unité Universelle*, the utopian socialist Charles Fourier developed an early socio-political concept of solidarity (Fourier, 1822). His thinking on solidarity is reflected in his utopian project of the *Phalanx*. The *Phalanx* is a group of buildings where some 1.500 people have chosen freely to associate, live and work together in common households. The *Phalanx* presupposes a harmonious community, where each of the members (but only the members) can draw on the solidarity of the other members. Solidarity is hence restricted to the members of the common household. However, Fourier recognised the tension between collective organisation and individual freedom, a tension that would go on to shape the modern experience, and argued that the private property of the members of the *Phalanx* would serve as a basis for the necessary personal autonomy.

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Next to this rather restrictive, exclusive and community-based understanding of solidarity, Fourier also developed a universalistic conception of solidarity with his *garantie familiale solidaire* (Stjernø, 2004, p. 28). This publicly guaranteed minimum income already bears clear traces of the institutionalized solidarity of the 20th century welfare state. Fourier also used the term solidarity to refer to the preparedness to share resources with people in need and the principle of common insurance.

Some two decades later, Pierre Leroux, another early (pre-Marxian) socialist equally developed solidarity in his book *De L'Humanité* (1840). Leroux was concerned with finding a new and modern basis for community in an age of rampant capitalism and corrosive individualism. Leroux opposed the liberal notion that a community could be formed solely on the basis of a social contract between atomized individuals or the Christian idea of charity (Stjernø, 2004). His conception of solidarity was social rather than political in focussing on the social relationships of interdependence and reciprocal identification that bind people together in a society (Leroux, 1985; Wildt, 1999). Leroux replaces charity by solidarity because "the ensurance of material existence is the basis for all forms of social and political cohesion"(Metz, 1999, p. 194). Leroux distinguished the 'solidarité mutuelle des hommes' from Christian charity because it was more animated by 'true love' and 'harmony and identity of mankind with man' than by duty towards the objects of love with respect to God. Solidarity is not a rightful claim but "a 'direct' and altruistic feeling, as opposed to an 'exterior' duty" (Wildt, 1999, p. 212) This, according to Leroux, forms the basis for a new form of socialization which he terms 'socialistic' in opposition to individualistic (Metz, 1999, p. 194; Schmelter, 1991, pp. 11-12). This social relationship based definition of solidarity brings Leroux closer to the discipline of sociology that would constitute itself later in the century, while his insistence on the material basis for solidarity positioned him squarely in the tradition of socialism. For Leroux, socialism strives towards the enlarging of solidarity by including ever wider groups in society.

3 - Social solidarities in classical sociological theory

3.1 – Looking for the source of social order

Notwithstanding the early conceptualisations of solidarity by utopian socialists such as Fourier and Leroux, it were the authors that would later be canonized as founding fathers of the discipline of sociology that would make the most definitive contributions to our modern understanding of sociology (Crow, 2002; Prainsack & Buyx, 2011; Silver, 1994; Stjernø, 2004). Authors like Weber, Simmel and Durkheim were all in their own way concerned about the social and political

consequences of urbanisation and industrialization in the 19th century, particularly as they caused social and political upheaval and the breakdown of traditional patterns of social relations. Many, though not all, of their contributions were informed by a sustained search for social reforms that countered the socially destabilizing effects of urbanization and industrialization, thus also seeking to avoid the more radical changes advocated by revolutionary thinkers of all kind.

Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between communal and conventional relationships characterizes the problem of classical sociology quite well. Tönnies found that social entities are held together not only by individual members having rights in common, but also by "being bound to others", which is "the exact opposite of freedom, the former implying a moral obligation, a moral imperative, or a prohibition"(Tönnies, 1957, p. 8). He captured the dramatic shift he witnessed in his era in the dichotomy between *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) – ahead of his contemporaries Durkheim and Weber who elaborated similar dichotomies. For Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft* referred to the community feeling and the intimate relationships in medieval or rural societies, bound together by ties of kinship, fellowship, custom, history and communal ownership. By contrast, Tönnies used *Gesellschaft* to describe the impersonal, restricted and contractual relationships in the modern urban societies. In this time, Tönnies observed the weakening of traditional social ties and the replacement of traditional feelings of 'community' by a cold and impersonal economic rationality. Personal ties were increasingly made subordinate to the claims of an abstract principle of individual freedom. Tönnies showed himself pessimistic about this development. He argued that the unity of *Gesellschaft* is precarious because it is founded on 'conventions' and the rational calculations of individuals, instead of the former principle of tradition, which offers a more stable foundation for social order. Tönnies feared that by destroying *Gemeinschaft*, the modern state was letting loose a boundless and ungovernable popular desire. Tönnies claimed: "the entire culture has been overturned by a civilisation dominated by market and civil Society, and in this transformation civilisation itself is coming to an end; unless it be that some of its scattered seeds remain alive, so that the essential concepts of Community may be encouraged once again and a new civilisation can develop secretly within the one that is dying" (Tönnies, 2001, p. 257).

Tönnies writings reflect the concerns of sociologists of the 19th century, although most authors were less pessimistic than Tönnies about societal developments. It is in this context that the emphasis on social order became a central theme in classical sociological theory. The concept of solidarity became an important concept in this search for a renewed social order in the turmoil brought about by the modernization of Western societies. The proto-sociologist August Comte, thus named for his contribution to the formation of the discipline, is a good case in point. Comte was strongly concerned with how society could be integrated in the aftermath of the political upheavals of the French

revolution and in the face of the corrosive individualism associated with modern capitalism. In opposition to rising individualism in the economy and the society, he formulated a 'religion of humanity'. Religion here refers to a natural state of harmony in which egoistic instincts are tamed by a set of values and norms propagating altruism. Comte introduced the concept of solidarity in this search for social mechanisms that could produce social order and cohesion in modernizing societies. Continuity, i.e. solidarity in time (rather than just in space between beings living simultaneously), is central in Comte's theory of society. For Comte, humanity is unique in its capacity to transfer collective experiences and resources from one generation to another. Comte generalizes this intertwining of continuity and solidarity to the social order in society. One crucial aspect of the social order was the family which taught the importance of love as the basis for self-improvement. This love was transferred later to one's family and finally to humanity as a whole (Pickering, 2003). It is exactly awareness of this interdependence on human resources and insights developed in the past that creates social bonds in the present. But human beings are not only dependent on past generations, according to Comte. Just as classical sociologists like Durkheim would do later, Comte observed the far reaching implications of the division of labour on modern social life. The ever increasing complexity of the division of labour made human beings living at the same time dependent on each other for the goods and services they needed to sustain themselves in life¹. Thus, grounded in these interdependencies, social solidarities are produced, which remedied the atomization of society, suppressed egoistic instincts and put collective well-being centre stage in social life. This accent on interdependence between generations would become highly influential and is reflected in particular in the social ethics of the Catholic church in the late 19th century (Stjernø, 2004, p. 32)

In what follows, we analyse the different responses classical sociologists have elaborated to the question of how a (modern) society is possible. We do not survey the authors in chronological order, but group them into four broad categories, which also roughly correspond to political-ideological streams. Firstly, there are authors like Spencer and de Tocqueville who ground solidarity in the mutual interdependencies between individuals pursuing their private interests and the free association of individuals in civil society to counter excessive state interference. Although these authors are not as central to the canon of sociology than Durkheim, Weber and Marx, this more liberal orientation on solidarity has grown more prevalent in contemporary sociological thinking. Durkheim also highlights the increasing interdependencies between individuals in modern, industrial societies, but in his later work he does not see this as a sufficient condition for the social solidarities holding societies together, which is why we categorize him in the second category of authors. For this

¹ For Comte, the division of labour could also lead to the disintegration of society.

second category of sociologists, solidarity is rooted in shared norms and values. Solidarity grounded in shared norms and values is seen as a source of social integration. It is associated with a more conservative and communitarian outlook on society. Thirdly, classical sociologists as Marx and Weber relate solidarity to unequal relations of power and social struggle. Solidarity is nurtured through the struggle between different social groups and hence does divide people as much as it integrates them. This perspective is most commonly associated with the social-democratic and socialist tradition. Fourthly, and lastly, there is a micro-sociological tradition of thinking about social cohesion in modernising societies, which is most often associated with Simmel and the classical urban sociologists of the Chicago School. They look for social cohesion in everyday, informal interactions (called 'sociation') in urban contexts. We will now discuss each of these four currents in the classical sociological literature.

3.2 - Solidarity based on interdependency and association between free individuals

The early British sociologist Herbert Spencer is perhaps most known for his approach of society as a biological organism and his evolutionary perspective on the development of human societies. Just like several other early social scientists, he borrowed perspectives and concepts from biology in his search to develop a general system theory (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 35-39; Turner, 2003). Spencer offered an evolutionary theory of the development of society, going from simple and homogenous to complex and differentiated social entities. To illustrate this evolution, he distinguished militant societies as an example of the former from industrial societies as an example from the latter. Militant societies were structured for warfare. Co-operation between its members was based on coercion and compulsion. In more complex, industrial societies co-operation takes place between specialized and disciplined individuals and on a voluntary basis. The role of the state is diminished and maximum freedom is given to individuals (Turner, 2003, pp. 73-79).

According to Spencer, solidarity in industrial societies is founded on a shared interest in voluntary co-operation. Voluntary entered into contracts between free individuals in order to pursue mutual benefits are the sole basis for solidarity. The only state activity needed is the development and maintenance of a legal framework for these contracts between free individuals. For Spencer, greater individual freedom and growing solidarity-cum-interdependency go well together. Spencer advocated a *laissez-faire* policy and a morality based on the 'social atom-man' (Crow, 2002, p. 15; Spencer, 1892).

Spencer's concept of a society evolving spontaneously towards a perfect moral state was perfectly understandable in the context of the wide-spread optimism in the first industrialized and prosperous British nation in the 19th century. At the end of the 19th century, when British international political-economic hegemony declined, this optimism gave way to a more pessimistic tone. The proclaimed convergence between capitalist individualism and social progress in the whole of society became difficult to sustain (Crow, 2002, p. 15). In this context, Spencer developed his (in)famous concept of 'survival of the fittest' (Spencer, 1969; Turner, 2003, p. 76). Believing that the process of natural selection also occurred in the social world, he coined this term several years before Darwin. This 'Spencerian' selection differs from the 'Darwinian' selection because individuals and social collectives can think, plan ahead and experiment with new social forms to address challenges to their survival. On the individual level Spencer's 'Social Darwinism' meant that people who are 'fit' survive and proliferate whereas the 'unfit' eventually die. As Crow observes: "Spencer's Social Darwinism, encapsulated in his phrase 'survival of the fittest', carried with it a harsh message about the limits of solidarity, particularly when it was applied to those sections of the population referred to by Spencer.. as 'the incapables' and 'good-for-nothing'." (Crow, 2002, p. 15)

Some liberal thinkers also accorded an important role to civil society in creating social cohesion in individualized societies. The writings of Alexis De Tocqueville, an early observer of American independence, reflect this position. He found in the nascent civil society the answer to the centrifugal tendencies inherent in a political system based on individualism and a very liberal definition of freedom. For De Tocqueville horizontal solidarities between citizens in civil society, created by the free association of citizens for mutual purposes, formed a counterbalance for selfish individualism and the possible vertical authoritarian power of the developing modern state (De Tocqueville, 1971). This opposed De Tocqueville's thinking amongst others to the vision of Comte, who followed Hobbes in according to the state an important role in underpinning social unity and regulating social life.

3.3 – Solidarity based on shared norms and values

The most elaborate treatment of the concept of solidarity is to be found in the work of the French classical sociologist Emile Durkheim. Social solidarity was a central concern in the first book *De la division du travail social* (1893) and it remained a main issue throughout his career. He addressed the basic question of sociology, namely what keeps societies together, with a broad approach of solidarity as "the totality of bonds that bind us to one another and to society, which shape the mass of individuals into a cohesive aggregate" (Durkheim, 1984, p. 331). In his approach of solidarity Durkheim challenged other intellectual traditions of his time (Crow, 2002, pp. 11-18). He criticised the liberal perspective, although, as we will see later, he did recognize the importance of

interdependency as part of the foundation for solidarity in modern, complex industrial societies. However, for Durkheim, society is not and cannot be the product of rational individual interest or social contract because social relations based on self-interest are not stable. Durkheim argued that “if mutual interest draws men closer, it is never more than for a few moments” (Durkheim, 1984, p. 152). Durkheim also objected to the role Comte allocated to the state as a regulator of social life, because solidarity could not be imposed from above in the context of a modern division of labour. His objection to Spencer was that common interests were a too tenuous basis for social solidarity. Contra Tönnies, Durkheim claimed that relations in the *Gesellschaft* were no less ‘organic’ than those constituting the *Gemeinschaft*.

As one of the founding fathers of the new disciplines of sociology, Durkheim challenged the individualism of other disciplines with a study of social forms and processes as primary phenomena. To Durkheim, the human individual is fundamentally the product of social relations (Ritzer, 2010). As the object of the new discipline of sociology, he proposed to study empirically social forms and processes as social facts (*le fait social*). He studied the social forms and bonds of modern society from the perspective of social cohesion. Durkheim wanted to open up an alternative, truly sociological perspective on the conventional wisdom about solidarity: not just the state and the market, but also non-economic and non-governmental institutions and forms of association were crucial in the sociological understanding of (the lack of) solidarity in modern society.

Solidarity, according to Durkheim, is an enduring feature of social life. However, large-scale societal changes such as industrialization and modernization fundamentally transform the nature of solidarity (Prainsack & Buyx, 2011; Veldboer, 2010). The basic question in *De la division du travail social* (1893) is: what is the basis of social solidarity in modern societies, in which there is a great diversity of people living in very different settings? He identified two possible sources for solidarity: “social life is derived from a dual source, the similarity of individual consciousnesses and the social division of labour” (Durkheim, 1984, p. 172). The two key variables of solidarity are hence the extent of differentiation of distinct functions or roles in society and the extent to which members of a society share a collective consciousness. Durkheim argued that solidarity develops in specific forms in different historical periods. To capture the broad shift in the type of social bonds that glue societies together, he developed the dichotomy between mechanical and organic solidarity (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 84-88).

Mechanical solidarity occurs in small, simple societies, where people live in small groups with no or little differentiation of functions or social roles. In pre-modern societies with low levels of specialization, solidarity is grounded in a feeling of sameness (doing the same job, fighting the same

natural threats, etc.). 'Mechanical' refers to the conditions of living, thinking and acting being very much the same for everyone. Homogeneity both in material living conditions and in immaterial values and rituals result in a strong '*conscience collective*'. This collective consciousness includes everyone in the traditional society. The idea of individuality does not exist in the sense that individuals do not have a strong sense of having a separate identity. Mechanical solidarity "can only be strong to the extent that the ideas and tendencies common to all members of the society exceed in number and intensity those that appertain personally to each one of those members"(Durkheim, 1984, p. 84).

Organic solidarity on the other hand occurs in complex societies in which people take up various roles and functions². The evolution from mechanical to organic solidarity is driven by the increase of physical and social density. Increasing density stimulates competition for jobs and other valued resources, which in turn leads to a more complex division of labour. People develop new jobs, functions and labour market specializations, firms find new market niches and different geographical areas specialise in different trades and production processes. In modern, industrial societies with a high division of labour, higher levels of social mobility occur, which puts pressure on traditional social forms such as the extended family. These kind of societies, Durkheim argues, are not held together because people feel the same (they do not), but because of an increased awareness of being dependent on one another. Strong differences in living conditions and views lead to a shift from collective to individual consciousness, while at the same time the factual division of labour gives rise to the need for more interaction and cooperation. It is this increased need for interaction and cooperation, which according to Durkheim, forms the foundation for a new, organic solidarity. As Durkheim claims: "even where society rests wholly upon the division of labour, it does not resolve itself into a myriad of atoms juxtaposed together, between which only external and transitory contact can be established. The members are linked by ties that extend well beyond the very brief moment when the act of exchange is being accomplished. Each one of the functions that the members exercise is constantly dependent upon others and constitutes with them a solidly linked system"(Durkheim, 1984, p. 173).

For Durkheim, solidarity entertains a strong link with equality and justice (Stjernø, 2004, p. 35). His functional approach of solidarity in modern society implies equality. Organic solidarity through the spontaneous development of a division of labour presupposes the free development of individual talent. The established order had to allow lower social groups access to the new functions and roles in society. If some groups in society are prevented from taking up positions in the societal division of

² Note that Durkheim's depiction of pre-industrial societies as founded on mechanical solidarity and industrial societies on organic solidarity turns Tönnies dichotomy upside down.

labour, the organic solidarity that Durkheim claimed would hold society together would not extend them, this undermining social cohesion in society at large. Even the practice of inheritance threatens this necessary equality. According to Durkheim: “if one class in society is obliged, in order to live, to secure the acceptance by others of its services whilst another class can do without them, because of the resources already at its disposal, resources that, however, are not necessarily the result of some social superiority, the latter group can lord it over the former. In other words, there can be no rich and poor by birth without their being unjust contracts” (Durkheim, 1984, p. 319). For Durkheim, justice is hence the necessary accompaniment to every kind of solidarity. Grave social inequities compromise solidarity and the equality of citizens within modern society should be developed to support solidarity.

This meritocratic vision also explains why for Durkheim growing individualism in modern society does not necessarily undermine solidarity. A more elaborate division of labour produces at once more individual autonomy and more dependence on others. But as specialisation and interdependence grow, solidarity is and can no longer be secured by a prior value consensus. Instead, it has to be cooperatively achieved through individual efforts. Durkheim claims that the growing awareness of interdependence and mutual obligations in complex societies leads to a ‘moral individualism’ that counteracts the danger of what he calls ‘egoistic individualism’, which needs to be kept under control as it threatens solidarity. This moral individualism underpins a moral solidarity by fostering the awareness of and empathy for individual differences. For Durkheim law is an integrating force in society. The distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity is reflected in different forms of law. Solidarity based on shared consciousness results in a conventional morality enforced by strong sanctions, while the new forms of association in modern societies produce a form of self-regulation requiring no external sanction.

For Durkheim, social interaction is a necessary condition for solidarity. The extensiveness and intensity of the social bonds between the individual and groups, organisations and society determine how in- or exclusive solidarity will be. Importantly, Durkheim already noted an inverted relation between the strength of solidarity and the openness towards foreigners, an observation which is very much at the order of the day in contemporary research on social cohesion and diversity. The specialisation inherent in a complex division of labour meant that solidarity grounded in similarities weakened and homogeneity gave way to heterogeneity and “the cult of the person and individual dignity” (Durkheim, 1984, p. 333).

Durkheim originally thought that he could explain organic solidarity as an effect of the social division of labour but later, in the preface to the second edition of *De la division du travail social*, he revised

this view and moved from a more liberal focus on interdependence to a more conservative communitarian position. He feared that the social bonds achieved through the mutual dependence of differentiated roles were not strong enough to contain egoism. He claimed that modern societies could not sustain themselves without some kind of system of common beliefs, which he called '*conscience collective*'. This led him to be interested in the symbolic and emotional components of social life that bind groups and societies together (Collins, 1994, pp. 190, 204). Durkheim's last great work, *The elementary forms of the Religious Life* in which he elaborated on the unifying force that common beliefs about what is sacred have on members of a collective is testimony to this interest. In his explanation of social life and of solidarity, both the material foundation of the differentiation of social roles in society and the cultural dynamic of the *conscience collective* now shaped individual behaviour (Durkheim, 1976).

Although his interest in mutual interdependencies and moral individualism certainly imply a more liberal outlook on social solidarities, it is for his subsequent argument on the limits of mutual interdependencies and the importance of the collective consciousness and the moral integration of society that Durkheim's contribution to our understanding of solidarity in modern societies is here categorized in the 'shared norms and values' approach. Access to solidarity implies the adoption of the dominant culture. Durkheim's conception of solidarity has influenced the French republican tradition in which the social bond between the individual and society is created and maintained through the collective consciousness that is embedded in national state institutions (Silver, 1994, p. 541). Given its emphasis on moral integration and cultural assimilation, Durkheim's contribution most closely aligns to what we call here communitarian thinking about social solidarities.

The influence of this communitarian way of thinking about solidarity and social cohesion in the discipline of sociology is clear from the role it played in the work of Talcott Parsons. Parsons was influenced by German idealism but he asked anew the basic sociological question: how is society possible? He was less optimistic about the effects of the increased functional differentiation than Durkheim and stressed even more the importance of shared basis values and norms for the social integration in society (Stjernø, 2004, p. 289). With his structural-functionalist theory of social action, Parsons was one of the most prominent figures in Western sociology during the first post-war decades. Parsons was primarily concerned with the challenge of social integration and social order (Bourricaud, 1981, pp. 240-252; Ritzer, 2010, pp. 240-252). In his theory of social action, Parsons argued that: "a social system consists in a plurality of individual actors *interacting* with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the "optimization of gratification" and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared

symbols" (Parsons, 1991, p. 3). The most elementary social system is constituted by the interaction between ego and alter at the micro level. It is in this context that Parsons briefly discusses to solidarity. Solidarity, as far as Parsons is concerned, is the institutionalised integration of ego with alter. In Parsons' own words: "the loyalty between ego and alter becomes institutionalized and is thus shifted to solidarity" (Parsons, 1991, p. 51) .

For Parsons, shared values and norms, which are provided for by the cultural system, support the order and harmony of society. Shared value patterns are integrated in actors mind sets and actions through processes of internalisation. The social integration in society rests on a society-wide agreement on basic norms and values. As Parsons claimed: "the value-standards which define institutionalized role-expectations assume to a greater or lesser degree a moral significance. Conformity with them becomes, that is, to some degree a matter of the fulfilment of obligations which ego carries relative to the interests of the larger action system in which he is involved, that is a social system. The sharing of such common value patterns, entailing a sense of responsibility for the fulfilment of obligations, then creates a solidarity among those mutually oriented to the common values" (Parsons, 1991, p.26). Culture for Parsons is the major force binding the elements of the action system: in the social system culture is embodied in norms and values, in the personality system it is internalised by actors. For Parsons, as for the classical sociologists, solidarity was not self-evident in modern, complex societies. He argued that the increasing differentiation and pluralisation of roles in modern society produces many groups with a partial solidarity. As community integration becomes more difficult to institutionalize, the motivational bases for social solidarity weakens (Parsons, 1971; Stjernø, 2004, pp. 289-290).

3.4 –Solidarity, social division and social struggle

Durkheim's approach of solidarity privileged a vision of society as unified or at least in need of unity. This vision plays down the role of relations of power and domination in structuring modern societies. This, of course, shaped a definition of solidarity as grounded in mechanisms that produce integration of some kind. But in sociology as well as in the sphere of social movements, there was another, very different tradition that focusses on the relationship between solidarity and the deep internal divisions within modern societies (Crow, 2002, pp. 23-28). Their greater awareness of the potential for differences within society to generate conflict rather than value consensus produced a contrasting vision on solidarity, one *also* highlighting the necessarily divisive and exclusionary dimensions of solidarity. For Marx and Engels, solidarity was related to class positions under capitalism and their capacity to give rise to collective action. Weber broadened the concept of group solidarity to status groups as agents for collective action. These different approaches show how

solidarity is constructed through group formation and hence not only to inclusion, but also exclusion and domination of other groups in society. Solidarity then is intrinsically related to structural relations of power.

3.4.1 - Unity in the class struggle: Marx

Marx developed his theories in constant interaction with the emerging labour movement and its struggle against the capitalist bourgeoisie (Stjernø, 2004, p. 42), but he also had an important influence on sociological thinking about solidarity and conflict (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 43-75). The term solidarity is not often explicitly mentioned in his work (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 44-45). Marx preferred to refer to the 'unity' of the working class, because he felt that the term '*fraternité*', the predecessor of 'solidarity', could obscure the real interest of working class people. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels declared that the struggle of the workers would create unity: "the real fruit of their battles lie not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers" (Marx & Engels, 1948). The unity of the working class was of tremendous importance in his work and was seen as a powerful antidote against the individualism on which bourgeois democracy was predicated.

According to Marx, solidarity as the product of the political practices of the workers expresses itself through class consciousness (Bottero, 2009). It is through political practices of engaging in a joint struggle that workers, which share objective economic interests (a 'class in itself'), become aware of their shared class interests and develop relationships of class solidarity (a 'class for itself'). The development of class consciousness required specific conditions. In *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Marx analysed the peasantry in mid-nineteenth century France, concluding that a common economic position does not necessarily lead to effective class solidarity. The peasant mode of production in France isolated peasants from one another in geographical terms. They only form a collective like "potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes". To the extent that "the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class", Marx and Engels wrote (Marx & Engels, 1969, pp. 478-479). In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels argued that increasing competition under capitalism will result in society "splitting up into two great hostile camps, two great classes, directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (Marx & Engels, 1948, p. 3). Capitalism thus breaks down old social bonds, while it eliminates skill divisions among workers, homogenizes the proletariat and concentrates them in ever larger factories. Ever more people would join the ranks of the proletariat as competition between capitalists caused the *Verelendung* of the proletariat and reduced the number of capitalists. The capitalist mode of production thus forms the precondition for the homogenisation and unity of the

working class making the working class a 'class for itself', i.e. a group of people who entertain strong relations of solidarity amongst one another in the face of the class enemy.

For Marx and Engels, solidarity and social divisions (in case class divisions) are two sides of the same coin, at least under capitalism. However, under communism these structural class divisions would disappear as would the state as an instrument in the hands of the dominant classes when each and everyone would engage in political decision-making and there would be no conflict between the self-interest of different individuals and between individual interests and the collective interest. This idea about solidarity in communist society is little clarified in his writings, so it should not further concern us here (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 45-46). Suffice it to say that for Marx solidarity develops out of a social structure with a high degree of homogeneity (e.g. objective class interests) and as a result of political practice, which necessarily revolves around structural divisions in society and hence is divisive as well as integrative.

3.4.2 - Instrumental or normative solidarity: rivaling traditions in socialist theory

The Marxist concept of solidarity is grounded in class interests. Class solidarity is based on the recognition that by acting together the class members will obtain more than they could by acting in isolation from one another (Elster, 1985, p. 347). There is, however, no guarantee that individuals will put class interests first. Like Durkheim and other critics of liberalism, Marx acknowledges was convinced that interests alone do not provide a stable basis for solidarity (Crow, 2002, p. 25). His solidarity concept therefore combines instrumental and normative aspects. The former are the 'objective' interest that workers share with each other, the latter are the common values and norms and fraternal feelings that are nurtured through joint political practices and struggle. While Marx combined these two elements, each of them inspired two different traditions in socialist theory on solidarity: the Leninist tradition developed the instrumental dimensions of the Marxist concept of solidarity, whereas the social democratic approach stressed its normative and affective aspects.

The road to social democratic theory was prepared by Karl Kautsky, the influential theorist and contributor to the Erfurt program (1891) of the German SPD. In *The Class Struggle* (1892) he wrote extensively about the idea of solidarity (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 47-49). For Kautsky socialism meant plain and simply a society built upon solidarity. He used solidarity in a double meaning: on the one hand communal feelings among working class people grounded in the joint struggle for shared objective interests and on the other hand a more general feeling of togetherness. This latter meaning opened up the possibility for the widening of the concept in the social democratic tradition, including groups outside the working class. Eduard Bernstein developed the idea of solidarity further in an ethical

direction (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 49-52). In *Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* (1899) he claimed that Marx's predictions on the proletarianisation of the working class in society and the immanent breakdown of capitalism had remained unfulfilled. Instead, the labour movement had won important victories and political influence, which worked against the need for socialist revolution. Rather, Bernstein argued, socialism could and should be realized by incremental reforms pursued through parliamentary activities (Cox, 2009). The increasing differentiation in the class structure and unclear boundaries between the working class and other social groups made a broader concept of solidarity necessary, if the aim was to find enough support for a future socialist society. Searching for a normative basis for solidarity, Bernstein developed a theory on the ethics of the labour movement (Bernstein, 1910). Solidarity developed, according to Bernstein, "when workers understood that they could reduce their dependence on employers voluntarily, by uniting with fellow workers and by pooling their strength in trade unions. This voluntary act is the expression of an ethical commitment" (Stjernø, 2004, p. 50). Solidarity is not absolute however and needs to be balanced against freedom, which Bernstein introduces in social democratic thought as an ideal of humanity. Although coming from the Marxist tradition, in his emphasis on values and the ethical basis of solidarity and the acceptance of individual autonomy, Bernstein ends up much closer to Durkheim than to Marx. His solidarity concept had a strong influence on social-democracy, labour movements and the development of western welfare states.

In opposition to social-democratic theorists, Lenin stressed the instrumentalist dimension of the Marxist concept of solidarity and elaborated on the role of 'objective' interests in creating unity among the workers (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 53-55). In *The State and Revolution* (1917) he aimed to unite the working class on a politically correct platform under the banner of the revolutionary communist party (Lenin, 1964). He emphasized the need for discipline in the working class struggle against capitalism. Lenin avoided sentimental and normative language as these were of no interest to the struggle of the working class: 'community' and 'solidarity' are hard to find in his work. His ideas on the need for ruthless struggle of the united revolutionary forces against the class enemies and on the dictatorship of the proletariat had both theoretical and practical implications, as the permanent abolition of personal freedom in communist societies was institutionalised through the dictatorship by and for the communist party.

Within this authoritarian tradition, the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci developed a complement to the solidarity concept. Gramsci enriched the Marxist approach of solidarity with normative, cultural and psychological accents, as a part of his reasoning on culture and cultural hegemony (Davidson, 2009; Stjernø, 2004, p. 56). After the defeat of the workers' council in Turin in 1919, Gramsci looked for the cause in the inability of the working class to develop solidarity with other

exploited groups. In his opinion the working class had not only to conquer the state apparatus but also to create an alternative 'cultural hegemony' in civil society. 'Cultural hegemony' means the success of the dominant classes to present their definition of reality as the only sensible way of seeing the world and having it accepted as 'common sense' by other classes in such a way that alternative views are marginalized. For Gramsci, "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'" and "the 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent." (Gramsci, 1971, p. 215)

In a field of shifting alliances between different social classes there is a continuing struggle for dominance between the definitions of reality which serve the interests of the ruling classes and those which are held by other groups. For Gramsci "the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 216). To become a hegemonic force as an alternative for capitalist domination the working class should create bonds with other social groups and develop an alternative culture based upon attitudes and values that differ from the hegemonic culture. Culture is hence the product of vigorous class struggle.

A specific tradition within socialist theories on solidarity is developed by the anarchist thinkers in the context of the rising trade union movement. While Leninists did not provide any room for the normative aspects of solidarity, it became a core concept in the anarchist theory and practice (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 57-58). For Mikhail Bakunin, solidarity was a necessary element in every society and the guiding principle for the proletariat. The foundation of solidarity is found in the human nature and makes the individual join with others and create a community. For Bakunin solidarity is "the confirmation and the realisation of every liberty, having its origin not in any political law whatsoever, but in the inherent collective nature of man, in virtue of which no man is free if all the men who surround him and who exercise the least influence, direct or indirect, on his life are not so equally. This truth is to be found magnificently expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man drafted by Robespierre, and which proclaims that *the slavery of the least of men is the slavery of all.*" (Bakunin, 1950, p. 40 - emphasis in original text). For anarchists solidarity develops as the spontaneous product of social life, as a result of free federation of common interests and aspirations, based on equality, collective labour and collective property. The anarchist approach had little political influence (only in Spain before and during the Civil War) but a strong influence in the trade union movement in France, Italy and Spain and in cooperative movements and practices of activism till now.

3.4.3 - *Social action based on material and ideal interests: Weber*

In sociological research on social stratification, Weber and Marx are often seen as antipodes of each other. However, both saw society as shot through with power differentials. This has implications for their perspective on solidarity. Just like Marx, Weber acknowledged that solidarity does not only unite, but also divide. Weber's economic analysis of the formation of social groups and solidarity showed a lack of straightforward connection between class location and class consciousness and solidarity (Bottero, 2009). This inspired him to analyse economic classes as only "possible, and frequent, basis for social action" (Weber, 1978, p. 927). Weber argued that social classes are internally differentiated and other bases of social consciousness – status and party affiliations - cross cut economic location, thus developing contra Marx a multi-dimensional understanding of social stratification. Hence, for Weber class position is just one possible potential basis for collective action and solidarity. Solidarity is not only relevant for social classes but for all kinds of social groups such as status groups and political parties. This does not make it less divisive. Weber was convinced that people do not perceive the world through abstract notions like class, but believed that collective identities develop easier against opponents who are visible and confronted directly (Weber, 1978, p. 931).

For Weber, solidarity stems from the feeling of being part of one particular group that is involved in a struggle with other groups. Take for example 'status groups', which Weber argued forms an independent foundation for social stratification. Such a status group ('Stand') appears "when persons share a style of life, consumption patterns, common conventions, specific notions of honour, and, conceivably, economic and particular status monopolies" (Kalberg, 2003, p. 158). Status groups combine honour and the monopoly of an ideal and material interests to both strengthen the internal solidarity and distance themselves from others (Weber, 1978, p. 927; 935). As this conception was partially influenced by Marxist thinking, Weber's ideas on solidarity, conflict, class consciousness and his focus on power and domination bring him closer to Marx and the working class movement than to Durkheim. Although the term solidarity is not omnipresent in his writings, Weber stresses the political dimension of solidarity (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 37-39).

Typical for Weber's perspective on solidarity is his interest in solidarity as a type of social relation on the micro-level. Unlike classical sociologists like Durkheim who conceived society and solidarity in macro-structural terms, Weber focused on the meaning actors attach to their social actions within specific social-historical contexts and the social relationships in which individual people are enmeshed. Weber's premise is that human conduct was governed by material and ideal interests. This offers a wider sense of the potential basis of solidarity. Drawing on Tönnies' distinction

between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Weber made an analytical distinction between communal and associative relationships (Crow, 2002, pp. 25-26). *Vergemeinschaftung* refers to communal actions based on a sense of community shared by family members, friends, colleagues or other social groups with an internal code of conduct. The sense of community in communal solidarity is rooted in traditions and emotions. Associative solidarity, on the other hand, is based on rationality. *Vergesellschaftung* refers to actions based upon rational considerations of material interests and utilities.

Although both types of relationships are in reality mixed, Weber focused his analysis on communal relationships because they are based on the emotionally charged feeling of belonging together. The feeling of being part of a 'we' is a strong characteristic of the inward-looking relationship of solidarity, but it also implies a closure to outsiders. This exclusivity of communal solidarity was of great significance to Weber because of his concern with the distribution of power and the reproduction of domination in society. Solidarity in social groups is strengthened by the identification of a recognisable opponent. It can be expected that one group will take an "externally identifiable characteristic of another group of (actual or potential) competitors – race, language, religion, local or social origin, descent, residence, etc. – as a pretext for attempting their exclusion. It does not matter which characteristic is chosen in the individual case: whatever suggests itself most easily is seized upon". In turn, such closure "may provoke a corresponding reaction on the part of those against whom it is directed". (Weber, 1978, p. 342)

3.5 - Solidarity and sociation

The three previously described perspectives are concerned with solidarity as a phenomenon that pertains to macro-level social structures or forms of collective action. Apart from this perspective, there was also a sociological perspective that put premium importance on the lighter and more informal mechanisms through which some kind of solidarity and social order was generated. This perspective emerged from booming American metropolises, which were confronted by huge migration flows and hyperdiverse populations. The basis for this perspective lies however in the work of the German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel. In an article that became the first chapter in his *Soziologie* (1908), he asked the question "how is *Gesellschaft* possible?". Sociology, for Simmel, was a method for exploring processes of 'social interaction'. Data of everyday social life were used to describe and explain processes of 'sociation'. His primary interests was interaction among conscious actors on a small scale.

In his formal sociology Simmel wanted to categorize the forms of interaction (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 165-171; Simmel, 1950). Through the description of *forms* of interaction, Simmel analysed processes of sociation. The concept of sociation is contrasted with society. 'Society' consists of permanent interactions and their embedding in definable, consistent structures. 'Sociation' refers to the more contingent forms of human action, conscious or unconscious, that bind people together in the informal ordering of social life (Savage, Warde, & Ward, 2003, p. 12; Simmel, 1950, p. 10).

For Simmel, sociation can be divided into categories like exchange, conflict, sociability and domination. In the social form of domination the reciprocal relationship of superordination/subordination is revealed: in the relation between leaders and followers, the follower is essential for the existence of the interaction as is the leader for the form of interaction. The universality of this form made absolute equality impossible. Simmel stressed the diversity of social processes that unite people and of the social forms this unity can take. "We find superiority and subordination, competition, division of labor, formation of parties, representation, inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness toward the outside, and innumerable similar features in the state, in a religious community, in a band of conspirators, in an economic association, in an art school, in the family. However diverse the interests are that give rise to these sociations, the forms in which the interests are realized may yet be identical." (Simmel, 1950, p. 22).

In his social geometry, Simmel was also concerned with the issue of distance, as in, for example, his essay on the "stranger," including "strangeness" in social life (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 167-169). Simmel argued that at the micro level of urban neighbourhoods, the social distance was made visible and palpable by the spatial proximity. In his view the overwhelming city bustle strengthened the need for individual mental distance "but also created an environment for reducing social distances. He saw the city as a crossroads of social spheres ('Kreuzung sozialer Kreise'). The city was like a stage of many new confrontations and encounters between people. Not only collision arose, but also new associations based on affection or shared interests. Spatial proximity resulted in the eyes of Simmel therefore simultaneously in an enlargement and a reduction of social distances" (Veldboer, 2010, p. 16, author's translation).

The American urban sociologist Robert Park was inspired by Simmel's conviction that cities would become the most important spaces for research on social bonds in modernity. In the University of Chicago, Park developed an urban sociology focusing on the heterogeneity of subgroups - especially migrating minorities - and producing a series of ethnographies about diverse social groups. The empirical research concern of the Chicago School was to understand how processes of sociation changed under the specific social and spatial context of modern, industrial, fragmented cities. These

cities were considered as the most important emanation of 'modernity', "the specific experience of living in a modern world where any overriding social customs and values have been swept away" (Savage et al., 2003, p. 17). Enquiries of the Chicago School revealed how traditional social bonds were eroded by the division of labour and the weakening of family attachments, and replaced by neighbourhood solidarities in the context of growing informal social relations. This research was intertwined with a social reform political concern: how could cooperative kinds of interaction be developed to overcome the disorienting and disembedding conditions of life in modern industrial cities? This reform concern is evocated by the idea of Park that cities were a 'social laboratory' (Savage et al., 2003, pp. 12-17).

The focus on sociation introduced the question of spatial proximity in the solidarity debate. Following the perspective of spatial proximity developed by Simmel, later sociologists would develop hypotheses on diversity leading to 'hunkering down' (see Putnam further) or, on the contrary, to forms of growing distant habituation between strangers (Sennett). The idea of Park that spatial proximity leads to avoidance strategies of higher social groups founded the popular sociological and policy position that a small social distance is a favourable condition for interpersonal solidarity. With growing social distance, recognition of 'the others' would diminish and social exclusion would become more probably. Social homogeneity would stimulate interpersonal empathy and foster the preparedness for help and support, whilst light forms of vertical solidarity from higher situated social groups would develop better in a context of spatial distance³.

In a period of drastic societal transformations and the fundamental recasting of social arrangements, classical sociological theorists were concerned about the implications of all this for the social order. They further developed and elaborated the notion of fraternity and solidarity and gave it a modern meaning in order to explain how society was still possible. In many conceptualisations of solidarity, the problem of order and social integration under new circumstances was the focus. In our overview of classical sociological understandings of solidarity, we distinguished four different perspectives on solidarity: solidarity as interdependency, solidarity as rooted in shared norms and values, solidarity as nurtured through social struggle and division and solidarity as developed through sociation. In what follows we look at contemporary conceptions of solidarity. Most the classical notions will re-appear under a different guise, albeit not all to the same extent.

³ This assumption of commitment based on homogeneity is challenged by Veldboer argues. He argues that a large social distance is less of an obstacle to solidarity and that on the contrary increased vertical solidarity between unequal social groups has even largely compensated the decline of solidarity between peers (Veldboer, 2010).

4 - Contemporary sociologists on social solidarities

Up until today, solidarity remains an important concept in sociological theory. Just like the founding fathers of sociology, contemporary sociologists are searching for that which makes living together among human beings possible. Of course, this question is asked in different terms, taking into account the structural processes that shape contemporary societies. Some of these processes, such as urbanisation, capitalism, individualisation and democratisation, were already present in the times of the classical sociologists. Other processes, such as the establishment of the welfare state (as an attempt to institutionalise solidarity on the level of national states), the rise of consumer society and the transition to a knowledge-intensive and service-based economy, are new. Both old and new processes challenge the way social bonds in contemporary societies are forged and pressure contemporary sociologists in capturing this in their sociological theories.

Although most sociologists hold on to the notion of solidarity, some sociologists reject the notion all together because it harks back to a pre-modern past that one cannot and should not attempt to recover. Niklas Luhmann is a prime example here. Luhmann combined elements of Parsons' structural functionalism with general systems theory to develop a new general sociological theory. Like Parsons Luhmann is concerned with the increasing differentiation in modern society. Luhmann replaces Parsons' view of a static hierarchical ordering of systems with a polycentric view of society shaped by the process of horizontal functional differentiation. According to Luhmann, functional differentiation is the most complex form of differentiation in modern societies. Contra Parsons, he is convinced that in a society differentiated in autonomous subsystems, social systems cannot be defined by a unified structure of value orientations. Hence, for Luhmann, the classic idea of solidarity in modern sociology is highly problematic. Luhmann sees societies as extensive systems of communication. Interactions are only possible through and also limited by the co-presence of human beings that are aware of one another. In modern, highly differentiated societies this condition, and hence interaction as well, is no longer possible on the scale of society as a whole. Without co-presence, as the pre-condition for communication, solidarity can no longer exist. For Luhmann then, the concept of solidarity is no more than an ideological reaction against the evolution in modern society and cannot be used as an analytical tool for the sociological understanding of society. The continued use of the notion of 'solidarity' should be understood as a nostalgic longing for the former *Gemeinschaft* (Luhmann, 1984, 1996).

However, as already said, most contemporary sociologists hold on to the notion of solidarity but revise its understanding to make it consistent with the highly differentiated nature of late modern Western societies. It is not our ambition here to analyse in detail how these contemporary theories

of solidarity review, adapt and revise classical sociological theories but to show the variety of contemporary thinking on solidarity. It is difficult, and perhaps not very useful, to put contemporary sociologists in the same categories as we did for classical sociological theorists, but we will, where relevant, highlight how contemporary theories of solidarity build on classical notions of interdependence, communities of shared norms and values, conflict and division and sociation. It is significant though that the social struggle tradition has not yielded many new theoretical insights on solidarity (although that does not mean the notion of solidarity is no longer used in this tradition), while many contemporary authors explicitly built a revised or new notion of solidarity on the basis of interdependence and communities of shared norms and values. Below we discuss four contemporary ways of thinking about solidarity. Two of these ways of thinking are rooted in liberal notions of individualism: one in American rational choice theory, the other in European thinking about the demise of class and status as factors determining people's identity and behaviour. The third way of thinking builds on the classical notion of communities of shared values and beliefs. The fourth tradition, finally, is informed by critical theory, but does not so much stress struggle and division, but dialogue and recognition.

4.1 - Solidarity as a rational choice

For rational choice theorists the occurrence of solidarity is a theoretical challenge. They consider individuals as bearers of clear preferences who aim to maximize their interests when choosing between alternatives. From their perspective, social behaviour is nothing more than the aggregated actions of rational individuals. Individuals are rational in the sense that, given a specific set of values and beliefs, they calculate the relative costs and benefits of alternative actions and make a choice that maximizes their expected utility (Coleman & Fararo, 1992). The rational choice perspective, which is a theoretical expression of a strong liberal belief in individual autonomy and rationality, does not seem to be in need of a concept like solidarity. For rational choice theorists, it may not be rational for individuals to engage in acts of solidarity as others may free ride (Olson, 1965). Olson suggested that a rational individual will not act collectively because his personal interest is better served by staying passive while others realize a common goal.

The rational choice theorist Hechter concerned himself with this apparent tension between the occurrence of solidarity and the expectation of free-riding behaviour of rational individuals. The starting point for his book *Principles of Group solidarity (1987)* is the empirical observation that groups belonging to the same society exhibit different degrees of solidarity. Hechter explains this

difference by looking in detail at the specific processes through which individual actions combine to produce a particular social outcome (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 417-420). Hechter argues that individuals form groups of solidarity in order to maximise their interests. In their joint pursuit of common goals, they produce material goods or social welfare that benefit each member of the group more than is possible to arrive at through individual behaviour. However, in order to avoid free riders behaviour, their solidarity is restricted: resources are allocated only to group members that contribute. For Hechter, solidarity crucially depends on communication and visibility within the group and on the development of rules for the coordination of behaviour and the allocation of resources. It follows that smaller groups can generate solidarity more easily than bigger groups because contributions and benefits are more transparent and group members can monitor and sanction each other to prevent free-riding. Larger groups require more formal and bureaucratic control systems, but this is costly and brings alienation (Hechter, 1987).

But Hechter observes that his group solidarity theory does not suffice to explain all the occurrence of solidarity in real social life. He observes the frequent occurrence of pro-social or altruistic acts. In order to explain this without having to drop the assumption that individuals act rationally to maximize their interests, he uses behavioural learning theory. On the basis of this theory, he claims that the adoption of pro-social values results from learning experiences (Hechter, 1987, pp. 59-68). Socialisation is here introduced as complementary to pure instrumental rationality. As Hechter claims: “the very prevalence of socialization mechanisms in society attests to the severity of the problem of rational egoism. Groups whose members are not rational egoists —bees and other social insects—have no need to socialize them. *Far from being an alternative to formal controls, socialization is itself a product of these controls*” (Hechter, 1987, p. 69- emphasis in original).

Hechter’s theory on group solidarity, which concludes that solidarity is easier to realize in small groups, is challenged by the empirical observation that welfare states and their institutionalized mechanisms of solidarity operate in large, heterogeneous societies (Stjernø, 2004, p. 294). The historian Peter Baldwin provided a rational choice theory inspired answer to this, but in order to do so had to go beyond rational choice theory as well. In his comparative study of western welfare states *The Politics of Social Solidarity* (1990), Baldwin examines that the form and degree of solidarity through the welfare state is the outcome of battles between antagonistic interests, changing only “when a coalition of solidaristic interests that was strong and motivated enough to shift burdens to other groups was negotiated in social insurance’s redistributive calculus” (Baldwin, 1990, p. 293). Criticizing both self-interest and altruism as explanations of the logic of solidarity in welfare states, Baldwin stressed that “solidarity exerts a potentially universal appeal prompted by an awareness of mutual dependence” (Baldwin, 1990, p. 25). “Interdependence is to solidarity as dependence is to

charity”, claimed Baldwin (1990, p.35), thus echoing one of the core insights of classical sociologists on solidarity. But Baldwin also noted that interdependence and interests are not a sufficient basis for solidarity. Referring to the thought experiment of John Rawls (Rawls, 1971) of rational actors working behind a ‘veil of ignorance’, Baldwin explains that without “some sense of collective identity, of community or ‘sameness’, even a shared predicament is unlikely to prompt mutual aid. Nevertheless, a willingness to pay attention to the needs of others that both goes beyond the tenuous one-sidedness of charity or altruism and yet is not the fruit of some form of interest-based, bilaterally advantageous reciprocity seems hard to envisage. [...] Only when those who, in different circumstances, would have regarded themselves as self-reliant change their minds, only when sufficiently many see themselves as potentially at risk is a distribution according to need acceptable, is solidarity possible” (Baldwin, 1990, p. 33). Baldwin integrated the rational pursuit of interest in a “broader frame where, interdependence, collective identity and normative elements are included as well”, thus moving beyond individual interest based rational choice theory (Stjernø, 2004, p. 295).

4.2 – Solidarity grounded in reflexivity and active trust

In European sociology, rational choice theory is less popular than in American sociology. The impact of individualization on the forging of social bonds was hence not so much studied from the perspective of the self-interested rational *homo economicus*, but from the perspective of the reflexive individual. The two most important authors here are Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck describes the shift from what he calls simple and industrial modernity to reflexive modernity (Beck, 1992; Ritzer, 2010, pp. 556-559). Industrial modernity is characterized by the idea that industrialization is controllable through institutions such as markets and competitive democracy (Beck, 1997). Life chances and behaviour in industrial modernity is stratified along class and status group lines. Individualization, driven by capitalist labour market, and globalization have led us from industrial to reflexive modernity. The side-effects of industrial modernity such as ecological deterioration have shattered the illusion of controllability. The accent of Western welfare states on the rights of individuals to welfare erodes the classic solidarities within the nuclear family, the working class or traditional forms of community. Individualization, driven by late modern capitalist labour markets, further individualizes social inequality. In reflexive modernity, social inequalities continue to exist but are no longer seen and experienced through the prism of class or status group, but in individualized terms (Beck, 2005).

The institutions of industrial modernity like the gender division of labour, the nuclear family, the parliament and normal standard biography are, according to Beck, no longer able to address the insecurities and risks of late modern societies. For Beck, modern western welfare states provide a

distinctive context for the reshaping of social solidarities. They are like “an *experimental arrangement for conditioning ego-centred ways of life*” (Beck, 1997, p. 97) and nurture ‘comprehensively insured individualization’ by offering individuals opportunities for self-realisation within the framework of social protection. Central in reflexive modernity is the individual and his capacity for reflexive behaviour. This reflexive individual fashions his own life, not according to structural positions of class and status, but as a self-assembled biography constituted through personal choices based on continuous reflection on the social relationships and interdependence with others. The erosion of traditional class- and status group-based solidarities in late-modern societies does not necessarily mean that solidarity is no longer possible. Beck distances himself from the complaint of the lost community or uncontrolled egoism and develops a more forward-looking concept of solidarity. His new conception of solidarity implies a revised relationship between individuals and society. In reflexive modernity, solidarity is founded in the active engagement of individuals working on their own biography through a process of reflexivity. For Beck then, individualization does not necessarily rule out the possibility of solidarity, hence his firm disagreement with the communitarian view on the negative effects of individualisation and the need for community to protect social cohesion. For Beck the real challenge is to reconcile autonomy and interdependence in late modern societies.

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens thinks solidarity in contemporary societies very much along the same lines. Fundamental changes in the social world force us “to question today the old dichotomy between ‘community’ and ‘association’ – between mechanical and organic solidarity. The study of mechanisms of social solidarity remains as essential to sociology as it ever was, but the new forms of solidarity are not captured by these distinctions” (Giddens, 1994a, p. 13). Giddens summarizes these fundamental changes by referring to time-space distanciation, disembedding and reflexivity (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 549-561). The first refers to the shift away from face-to-face interaction between people to more distanced forms of social interactions. This has an immediate impact on solidarity. As Giddens claims: “globalisation processes weaken place based solidarities” (Giddens, 1994a, p. 96) and “new forms of social solidarity might often be less based upon fixed localities of place than before”. Time-space distanciation is the prerequisite for what Giddens calls ‘disembedding’. Disembedding means that social relations are lifted out of their local context and become dominated by abstract systems. Distanciation and disembedding create the need for trust. Like Beck, Giddens puts great faith in the expansion of social reflexivity, where social practices are constantly examined and revised in the light of incoming information about those very practices (Giddens, 1994b).

This reflexive attitude extends to the core of the self (Giddens, 1991, p. 32). For Giddens the increased individual autonomy necessarily implies responsibility for continuous self-realisation and reflection on the development of social relationships and interdependence, both in the intimate and the broader social context. Solidarity is hence a question of building active trust in other human beings. For Giddens then the challenge is not to protect social cohesion by restoring traditional communities and repairing 'damaged solidarities' by the revival of civil society, as communitarians would have it. He claims that "the renewal of social solidarity is a conservative problem ... but it does not admit of conservative solutions" (Giddens, 1994a, p. 125). Giddens advocates a 'Third Way' where damaged solidarity is repaired by active trust and the commitment to and responsibility for others. Public policy must support this newly found solidarity by empowering citizens to arrange their lives and stimulate responsible relationships, which implies a shift from 'redistribution politics' towards 'generative politics'. However, despite his criticisms of the communitarian tendency towards conformity, coercion and exclusion, with his emphasis on the important role of the family and voluntary organisations in developing solidarity Giddens ends up close to their position (Stjernø, 2004, pp. 301-302).

4.3 – Communitarianism: reciprocity in the community and social capital

Although the stress of contemporary authors like Ulrich Beck on reflexivity seems rather at odds with it, Durkheim's notion of a solidarity grounded in a collective consciousness is still very popular among sociologists today. Perhaps the most renowned group of authors that today defend the classical idea of solidarity grounded in shared norms and trust are the communitarians. For this pre-dominantly North American group of scholars, solidarity is founded on common values and moral commitments. They steer a middle course between market and state and oppose their concept to the idea of solidarity as the mere aggregation of individual's rational pursuit of self-interest and to the expression of solidarity into state-controlled rights. This middle course is very much based on the reinvigoration of community as an alternative to market and state and the sphere where, according to them, social integration is fostered (Crow, 2002, pp. 43-48; Prainsack & Buyx, 2011, pp. 12-14; Stjernø, 2004, pp. 295-299).

In *After Virtue* (1982), the founder of modern communitarianism and social philosopher Alastair MacIntyre calls for 'moral rationalities'. For MacIntyre, the Enlightenment project failed in providing these moral rationalities because it made the individual the central bearer of morality. Ethics thus became an individual enterprise in a liberal capitalist "society where there is no longer a shared conception of the community's good" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 215). For communitarians like MacIntyre, ethics should neither be guided by individual preferences and interests nor by abstract universal

principles. Morality, according to MacIntyre, is grounded in the shared beliefs and practices of communities. Communities develop common goals and their shared virtues and rules are derived from these common goals. This implies that morality is always and everywhere developed in the very specific historical context of a community, hence the communitarian critique of the universal pretensions of some moral philosophies. The actual meaning of solidarity then has never any universal validity but is constructed by and in a specific community. With this return to the community MacIntyre revives both Comte's idea about historical continuity and the Durkheimian idea of collective consciousness (Stjernø, 2004, p. 295).

In communitarian thinking the term 'solidarity' is not very central. Instead, references are frequently made to a concept of social justice based on reciprocity in the community. In *The Responsive Communitarian platform*, a key document for the communitarian approach, Etzioni explains that reciprocity rather than solidarity is the foundation for social justice (Etzioni, 1998). The core idea is restoring the balance between rights and responsibilities. Stjernø summarizes the communitarian position as follows: individuals are responsible to take care of themselves and their families, and "societies must feel a responsibility for communities when they are not able to secure welfare for their own members. This way of reasoning is close to the Catholic conception of subsidiarity" (Stjernø, 2004, p. 296). The communitarian key concept of community and the relationship between community and solidarity lacks clarity. Etzioni defines community in terms of "a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals ... and second, a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings and a shared history and identity" (Etzioni, 1997, p. 127). Bellah emphasizes a broader community concept, based on common values and history. These 'communities of memory', like families, neighbourhoods and religious organisations "can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole and see our efforts as being, in part, contributions to a common good" (Bellah e.a., p. 153).

Communitarians focus on micro-level interactions and participation within communities but are often sceptical about institutionalised forms of solidarity and social policy. This is particularly evident in the discussion about how a withdrawal of the welfare state can be related to an increasing moral commitment among citizens. Progressive authors like Bellah have a positive appreciation of the welfare state as an expression of solidarity in a broader concept of a sense of interconnection, shared fate and mutual responsibility. For Bellah, this sense of solidarity/community can enlarge, finally embracing all human beings. Other communitarians like Alan Wolfe argue that social policy undermines the moral attitudes of solidarity in the community. The institutional response to social

needs by professionals in the welfare state displaces personal practices of spontaneous solidarity in civil society, based on ethical or religious commitments (Wolfe, 1989)⁴.

Communitarians have little to say on solidarity in diversity. Indeed, a fundamental critique on the communitarian understanding of solidarity is that it does not fully consider the changing circumstances of modern social life with geographical and social mobility, globalised communication and increasing plurality and diversity. Sennett attacks the unrealistic desire for the order and coherence of the 'purified community' and argues that this hampers the development of constructive relationships. If diversity is regarded as betraying the community, solidarity within the community goes along with distrust, and fragmentation, not cohesion is the result. Communitarianism "falsely emphasizes unity as the source of strength in a community and mistakenly fears that when conflicts arise in a community, social bonds are threatened" (Sennett, 1998, p. 143).

The communitarian re-assertion of the community of shared beliefs and values as the foundation for solidarity has sparked off a whole body of research on social capital and the related concept of social cohesion, which often seem to have replaced solidarity as the core concept of the discipline of sociology. Although the social capital approach can by no means be reduced to a communitarian perspective, its wide popularity cannot be understood apart from the attraction of the latter. Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam is one of the leading thinkers on social capital and a communitarian thinker. He defines social capital as "a set of horizontal associations among those who have an effect on a community, and these can take the form of networks of civic engagement" (Robert D Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993, p. 35). For him, social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness are as valuable as economical capital (Robert D Putnam, 2001). These networks have important social value. As Putnam claims: "where levels of social capital are higher, children grow up healthier, safer and better educated, people live longer, happier lives, and democracy and the economy work better" (Robert D. Putnam, 2007, p. 138)⁵.

In the theory on social capital the distinction is commonly made between 'bonding' social capital – ties to an in-group of people who are like you in some important way(s) – and 'bridging' social capital – ties to an out-group of people who are unlike you in some important way(s). Putnam notes that most research assumes that bridging and bonding social capital are inversely correlated. In his

⁴ Against this position Stjerno argues that it underestimates the normative function of existing welfare states. Health, social work, welfare and educational institutions develop and spread an ideology of more empathy, care and struggle for emancipation and dignity (Stjernø, 2004, p. 298).

⁵ The French sociologist Bourdieu has developed an entirely different understanding of social capital, which is closer to 'solidarity as divisive' approach discussed earlier. He stressed how social capital served to reinforce class division in society, rather than unite people.

research on the implications of ethnic diversity for social capital, he starts from the hypothesis that diversity might reduce both in-group and out-group solidarity. His most important conclusion is that diversity seems to trigger not in-group/out-group division, but social isolation. Putnam writes: “people living in ethnically diverse settings appear to ‘hunker down’ - that is, to pull in like a turtle” (Robert D. Putnam, 2007, p. 149). Based on these findings Putnam develops the ‘constrict’ theory of hunkering down. In the short to medium run, according to this theory, growing diversity will challenge social solidarity. In the longer run, this problem can be met by reconstructing a broader social identity that enable ethnic groups to see themselves as members of a shared group with a shared identity – like previous assimilation processes in American history. Bonding social capital can be a prelude to bridging social capital.

The overwhelming attention for the role of diversity for social cohesion obscured the important conclusion of Putnam that individual characteristics provide by far the strongest explanation for differences in social cohesion. In predicting trust in neighbours “not surprisingly, the strongest predictors ... are individual-level variables: age (younger people are less trusting), ethnicity (black and Hispanics are less trusting) and socioeconomic class (the educated, the well-off, and homeowners are more trusting)” (Robert D. Putnam, 2007, p. 152). Research in the Netherlands revealed that the lower degree of social cohesion in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods can be explained by the higher amount of people living in a disadvantaged position in these neighbourhoods (Gijsberts, van der Meer, & Dagevos, 2012). In the highly politicised UK debate on immigration and social cohesion, Letki interpreted the negative effect of ethnic diversity on trust and informal help as a pseudo-effect. The main problem is poverty and countering social-economic disadvantage should be the main policy focus (Letki, 2008).

4.4 - Critical theory: solidarity as recognition

Although arguably contemporary Marxism has not contributed a lot to the conceptualization of solidarity, a strand of neo-Marxism known as critical theory has reflected on the question of solidarity. Critical theory is the product of a group of neo-Marxists who found that Marxist theory was disturbed by economic determinism and the disregard of non-economic aspects of social life. They reoriented Marxist theory away from this economism and paid more attention to the subjective and cultural dimensions of social life under capitalism. They attacked mainstream sociology for legitimizing the existing society instead of being a means of critique that could lead to a just and humane society. Besides Marx, their analysis of contemporary society derived insights from Weber,

most notably in the focus on rationality as the dominant development in the modern world (Ritzer, 2010, pp. 282-290).

The German social theorist Jürgen Habermas, one of the most well-known figures in the critical school, elaborates on the classical Durkheimian question how solidarity can underpin social integration. Habermas sees a lot of potential here in the possibility for what he calls 'communicative action', i.e. co-operative action based on a shared understanding of the situation that is arrived at through a rational dialogue between human beings. He argues that: "only in and through communicative action can the energies of social solidarity attached to religious symbolism branch out and be imparted, in the form of moral authority, both to institutions and to persons" (Habermas, 1985, p. 61). Communicative action occurs in people's lifeworld. As Habermas says: "the structures of the lifeworld lay down the forms of the intersubjectivity of possible understanding. [...] The lifeworld is, so to speak, the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world [...], and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements" (Habermas, 1985, p. 126). According to Habermas, by participating in a rational dialogue aimed at mutual agreement individuals would transcend their own private interests and community and evaluate the issue adopting the perspective of all other participants in an inclusive and public discourse among free and equal partners (Habermas, 1993). Only this kind of rational dialogue in a functioning democratic state can legitimate choices in a situation of radical diversity of views. Justice and solidarity represent two sides of the coin in his universal ethic that is binding for all individuals (Stjernø, 2004, p. 302).

For Habermas, solidarity does not have a particular normative orientation, because he is mainly interested in how the concept of solidarity can through rational dialogue and argumentation acquire a meaning that allows it to encompass all of humanity. His conception of solidarity is procedural. There is a tension, however, between the narrowness of discourses predicated on the empathy of close interaction and the universalizing ambition in Habermas' project. Universal solidarity would concern abstract and absent others rather than those who are concrete and present in the lifeworld people inhabit. Moreover, solidarity as an expression of an ever more encompassing rational dialogue might lose its political substance (Mouffe, 1999; Stjernø, 2004, pp. 304-307).

Axel Honneth, a student of Jürgen Habermas, picked up on this weakness in Habermas' theory and further developed the idea that the everyday lifeworld of people is the site where normative orientations are developed (Honneth, 1990). But for Honneth people do not understand their problems in terms of Habermas' abstract communicative ideals, but rather as a lack of recognition in their everyday life. The central idea of 'struggle for recognition' starts from the feeling of individuals

or groups in their everyday life that they do not receive the respect they deserve (Honneth, 1996; Juul, 2010). Honneth sees people as needing three forms of recognition. Solidarity or social appreciation for a person's social achievements leading to self-esteem is one of these three forms of recognition. From this perspective, solidarity can be seen as organizing society in such a way so as to provide everyone with equal possibilities to gain self-esteem through recognition for his social achievements. Solidarity refers to "a society which minimizes the different forms of disrespect and provides everybody with the chance (as far as possible) to pursue their visions of the good life" (Juul, 2010, p. 259). Just like Habermas, and contra the communitarian position, Honneth strongly believed that integration in a pluralistic society is not secured by substantial values in homogeneous communities but by an open social value horizon. Solidarity as recognition hence requires an active engagement. As Honneth himself writes: "in this sense, mutual esteem consists in our viewing each other in the light of values that cause the capacities and characteristics of other persons to appear significant for our common activity. Relationships of this kind are to be considered instances of solidarity because they elicit not mere passive tolerance with respect to other persons, but emotional participation in their individual particularity. It is only to the degree to which I actively bear responsibility for another person's ability to develop qualities that are not my own that our shared goals can be realized" (Honneth, 2007, p. 261).

5 – Positioning ourselves in the sociological legacy

This broad survey of notions of solidarity in the discipline of sociology makes one thing very clear, namely that the answer to the question 'how is society possible?' varies from one historical period to another. Sociological theorizing on solidarity was inspired and challenged both by continuities and changes in the societal circumstances. We have shown how the classical sociologists have transformed the pre-modern concept of fraternity and turned it into a modern concept of solidarity that became one of the founding concepts of the new discipline of sociology. Different classical sociologists have developed different understandings of what exactly produces solidarity. Summarizing the different perspectives one can say that four possible sources of solidarity were identified: interdependence (whether in the division of labour or more generally the need for co-operation to maintain particular forms of human social life), shared norms and values, social struggle and social division and informal forms of social interaction in dense urban contexts ('sociation').

It is our argument here that these sources of solidarity remain as relevant today as they were before, albeit that changed circumstances have pushed contemporary sociologists to reformulate them and that each of them of course has its limits and shortcomings. Looking at contemporary sociological

theory, it is further notable that the notion of solidarity as grounded in social struggle and division has not really been further elaborated in theoretical terms (which does not mean it is no longer used as a category in empirical sociological research), whereas the Durkheimian tradition of solidarity grounded in shared norms and values has been revived by communitarian thinking and its offshoots in the social capital literature. Another important shift between the classical sociologists and their contemporary counterparts is the greater stress on interdependence. While sociologists such as Durkheim and Spencer observed the importance of interdependence for generating solidarity, contemporary sociologists such as Beck and Giddens refer to on-going processes of individualization and the disintegration of classes and status groups to put interdependence, the awareness of it and the creation of an active trust and reflexive engagement with it central to their theories.

From a much more American perspective, rational choice theorists equally start from a highly individualized perspective on society and wonder how group solidarity is at all possible. Their explanations refer to the maximization of personal interests through collective action and to the control over free-riding behaviour that is possible in smaller groups. This perspective was much less present in classical European sociology. Finally, out of critical theory has emerged a perspective on how solidarity, like other normative orientations, emerges from rational dialogue in everyday life situations, where people search for recognition of their social achievements. This focus on everyday life, concrete human action and social relations on the micro-level was already present in the concept of sociation of the first wave of urban sociologists, but seems to have gained much more currency in contemporary sociology, whereas the integrative potential of macro-level structures has been less focussed.

What can we make of all these sociological insights? How can we follow the dictum that new societies require new forms of solidarity? What building blocks do we have now to radically rethink solidarity for the 21st century? Central in our endeavour to rethink solidarity is the question of solidarity in diversity. As Vasta claims: "in societies where enduring diversity will continue, cohesion has to include respect for and engagement with difference and dealing with inequality, which incorporates the social justice theme of the conflict theorists" (Vasta, 2010, p. 509). We agree with Vasta that the continued attempts to ground solidarity in a community of shared norms and values, as is the case in communitarian thinking, tends to set up a false dichotomy between solidarity and diversity (Parekh, 2008).

Looking at the legacy of classical and contemporary sociology in order to find answers to the question of solidarity in diversity, it seems unfeasible and undesirable to choose for one or the other understanding of solidarity and its roots. We therefore propose to situate different conceptions of

solidarity and its roots in a field of tensions and then propose to analyse how these tensions play out in actual practices of solidarity in diversity. In the focus on actual practices of solidarity in diversity in everyday life settings, the DieGem perspective however already comes closer to some of the theoretical positions described above. It is a position that is closer to the sociation perspective in classical sociology, with its emphasis on fleeting and informal contact in diverse and dense urban context, the recognition perspective of critical theory and the active trust and reflexivity perspective that dominates European sociological thinking today. All of these approaches focus on micro-level situations, where diversity presents itself in its most concrete form.

However, we do want to take into account some of the crucial insights of classical sociologists that solidarity cannot just be a micro-level phenomenon, but does have a macro-level dimension. In European terms, this tension can be framed as the tension between structure and agency. Veldboer describes how solidarity in modern societies is embodied at the same time in ‘warm’ small-scale, informal and even temporary light communities *and* in ‘cold’ large-scale institutions. Both forms of solidarity represent a challenge for further research, Veldboer argues, because “the assumption that the enlarging of identification circles results in increasing formal solidarity and decreasing informal solidarity (‘crowding out’) is poorly substantiated. At the same time, the meaning of light communities for informal solidarity is barely explored” (Veldboer, 2010, p. 48).

Furthermore, the tradition of thinking about solidarity in social struggle, social division and antagonism, which – at least in sociology – has not produced many new insights on solidarity recently, is worth recovering. This perspective pays close attention to forms of social exclusion and asymmetric relations of power and should not be absent from any conception of solidarity (Vasta, 2010, pp. 509-510). Contra rational choice theory and following critical theory, we also think that solidarity should appeal to some kind of public interest that is more than the aggregation of private interests but that does not follow from some pre-given set of norms and values, which newcomers have to assimilate in (as communitarians would have it).

We finish this paper by listing the field of tensions that we have identified through this literature review of classical and contemporary sociological thinking on solidarity. We believe that this should result in a heuristic device for the empirical study of solidarity in diversity in the DieGem research project. Specific inspiration is taken from Stjerno’s history of the idea of solidarity (Stjerno, 2004).

- Social integration versus social division

This field of tension refers to the extent that solidarity is seen as the basis for social integration and order in society or, to the contrary, is considered as divisive as well. This tension is reflected for example in the different positions of Durkheim and Weber, where the former has an

integrative conception of solidarity, while the latter also sees the divisive dynamics of group solidarity. The integrative conception has been most notably further developed by Parsons, the communitarians and the associated social capital approach. The divisive dimension of solidarity has no important contemporary spokespersons.

- Homogeneity versus heterogeneity

This field of tension refers to the question whether homogeneity is necessary or desirable to establish solidarity. Solidarity concepts were often connected with notions of the homogeneity of the working class, the local community, the nation, etc. In this understanding of solidarity, increasing diversity is a threat for it. The need for homogeneity is, for example, constantly present in the communitarian approach, starting with the collective consciousness of Durkheim, the danger of partial solidarities referred to by Parsons and the stress on shared values and the building of new common identities brought forward in contemporary communitarian research on social cohesion and social capital. Homogeneity both as a causal force and a desirable unity in the political struggle of the working class is strong in the classic Marxist conceptualisation. On the other hand, growing heterogeneity is not seen as a threat but as a positive challenge in the sociation approach, contemporary theories of reflexive modernization and in critical theory, where it is seen as the context for concrete claims for recognition of very different individuals and groups.

- Collective orientation versus personal autonomy

The consideration of the relationship between individual autonomy and the need to subordinate personal choice and interests to a collective interest or choice is a third field of tension within solidarity concepts. To which degree does solidarity require individuals to submit to collective interests or values? And prior to this question: do all conceptions of solidarity recognise that solidarity and individual freedom might conflict with one another? Classic Marxist theory for example has a strong emphasis on the collective with little consideration for how personal autonomy and collective solidarity are to be reconciled, while social-democratic approaches seek a balance between collective interests and individual freedom, with the latter equally recognized as an ideal of humanity. In the reflexive solidarity concept of Beck and Giddens, the reconciliation of individual autonomy and interdependence in the context of (socially) secured individualisation in modern welfare states is a key issue. For rational choice theories, there is no problem here, because group solidarity is merely the product of the aggregation of actions of rational actors maximizing their individual interest.

- Social struggle versus encountering

For Weber and Marx, solidarity emerges from social struggle. It is the creation of a 'we' and a 'they' that creates solidarity. Others, however, see solidarity as emerging from small-scale forms of social interaction through which mutual empathy begins to develop. The latter is the case for the sociation approach, which sees informal and 'light' forms of interaction in diverse and dense urban environments as important to well-functioning urban communities. Habermas' focus on rational dialogue or Honneth's belief in recognition of others in everyday life also put a premium on encountering others for producing solidarity.

- Universalistic versus particularistic?

This fifth field of tension concerns the question how encompassing solidarity is. Is solidarity predicated on the distinction between 'we' and 'the others' (and hence particularistic)? Or does it have the potential to include all of humanity (universalistic)? Weber, for example, recognized that solidarity resulted from social struggle or social divisions and hence necessarily excludes some people. The same particularistic orientation towards solidarity can be found in the Leninist concept of solidarity, while the social democratic tradition of Kautsky and Bernstein sees solidarity as a phenomenon that can transcend social classes and is hence less particularistic. The communitarian position is (at least potentially) more inclusive than the Weberian position, but given the existence of different communities of norms and values, it is still rather particularistic. The possibility of universal solidarity, is strongly defended by critical theorist Habermas. In the recognition theory, solidarity is also inclusive in that it is potentially ever enlarging through the mutual esteem of individuals against the background of an open value horizon.

6 - Bibliography

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