

# Everyday spaces for solidarity among and across young people

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# Solidarities in flux

## Conventional solidarity

- Solidarity emerges from shared values that unite a group or a community
- Traditional conceptualizations of solidarity assume people's emotional attachment to a single community: solidarity is based on similarity, shared values and mutual goals
- Social life in 21st century:
  - the fragmentation of communities and the complexity of contemporary social life
  - people are simultaneously members of several groups, diverse communities and multiple social categories
  - communal identities are built on and expressed as togetherness, reciprocity and support but also on differentiation, othering, and control
  - certain types of solidarities are likely to cause polarization of people and ideas and, hence, reproduce inequalities

# Solidarities in flux II

Discussion on solidarity today is often limited to **solidarity as activism**

- We do not know what 'solidarity in practice' is for different people:
  - Where is solidarity performed?
  - How individual choices and decisions related to solidarities are made?
  - How are the borders and boundaries of solidarity expressed?
- How is solidarity embodied and enacted in practice in (young) people's everyday encounters with others?
- What constitutes 'everyday solidarity' for young people (in general) and how their solidarities are constructed and negotiated in relation to communities, spaces, belonging, togetherness and otherness?

# The SoliPro project

## Solidarity in Practice - Young people's everyday communities as sources of recognition and spaces of preventive social work (SoliPro)

2022-2026, Research Council of Finland

Research team: Professor *Riikka* Korkiamäki, Postdoctoral Researchers *Tiina* Määttä, Ayesah Emon and Elina Vaahensalo, Doctoral Students *Annika* Lehtonen and *Maaro* Niskanen, Research Assistant Nina Vanhatalo

- What 'solidarity' means to young people (15 to 18 years), and
- How is solidarity constructed
  - at school?
  - on street?
  - online?
- 'Traditional' as well as 'creative' methods: ethnographic observation (in Tiktok and on the street), interviews, story completion; in co-operation with professionals in the field
- The aim is to increase understanding of contemporary young people's solidarities and how they can be developed in professional work with youths

# Identifying various forms of solidarity

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# Identifying various forms of solidarity

- Pre-existing solidarity
- Reflective solidarity
- Affective solidarity
- Spatial solidarity
- 'Everyday lived solidarity'

# Pre-existing solidarity

- ‘easy’ solidarity, based on familiarity, established mostly in close relationships
- previously learned solidarities
- limited to concrete others to whom we are emotionally connected; typical between family members and friends

*“I would choose only my closest friends so we can put our tiny brains together”*

# Reflective solidarity

- developing new alliances rather than relying on pre-existing allies
- ‘rationalized’ solidarity, based on interdependency and diversity, allying with individuals with skills and abilities different from their own in order to build a ‘good society’
- “mutual expectation of a responsible orientation to relationships” (Dean 1995: 123)

*“First me and my friends were thinking if we should not save anyone else. We could take over the world between the three of us but then we realized that it would be good to have wise people in addition to us dummies.”*

- It is precisely difference that forms the basis of ‘us’ as a community; solidarity comes into being because of difference.

# Affective solidarity

- a struggle between alignments and misalignments
- based on differentiation and othering as well as belonging and togetherness
- looking for those who make us/me feel less vulnerable

*“I would cure two of my friends so they can be on my side and defend me if I am betrayed”*

# Spatial solidarity – the way forward?

(Oosterlynck et al., 2016, 2017)

- Solidarity starts with how we react to others with whom we share a common space with
  - it is not (necessarily) confined to shared values or a common cause as traditionally understood
  - it is an experience of togetherness when individuals are united by action
- “..solidarity not that much in sharing the cause chosen, as solidarity in having a cause; I and you and all the rest of us (‘us’, that is, people on the square) having purposes, and life having a meaning” (Bauman 2012, 13)

# Potential for 'everyday spatial solidarity'

- Solidarities as stemming from a myriad of connections that simply are everywhere
  - Everyday solidarities are experienced and expressed through negotiating belonging (in space and time)
  - This may be particularly meaningful with young people who experience 'thrown-togetherness' (Massey 2008) in their peer communities
- When aiming to build solidarities, place can be the center of focus as it reveals constant struggles about alliances and loyalties and against inequality in the relationships located in that place. These struggles are shaped by solidarities, but they can also shape solidarities.
- Solidarities are drawing from the feelings of togetherness, sympathy, help, social support, reciprocity, trust, loyalty, and also from hurt, resentment and inequality (but not so much on similarities).

# References

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**KIITOS! THANK YOU! DAKUJEM!**

**Comments, questions, ideas?**

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