

Solidarity on the Modern Labour Market: Rethinking Institutional Design (Arbeitstitel)

In public discourse the concept of solidarity is regularly invoked to point out certain obligations people supposedly have towards each other. Yet, any such moral demands require sufficient grounds, which often are not provided comprehensively. Which forms can or should solidarity amongst citizens take? And if there exists such a relational ideal of civic solidarity, then which obligations for citizens towards each other does it motivate? Which demands does it make for the design of our political background institutions?

In the paper for Track #10 (or 7) I want to investigate which kind of solidaristic ideal should guide our thinking about citizenship today. Specifically I will focus on how the institutional structure of the current labour market shapes how we, as citizens, relate to each other, and in which way this would stand at odds with such a solidaristic ideal. I will first start by outlining the analysis of citizenship by Hussain and his relational ideal for society: the solidaristic association. (Hussain, 2020). Then I will extend his approach to incorporate the idea of recognitive solidarity, drawing on Honneth. (Honneth, 1995, 2001; Connolly, 2016; Kapeller & Wolkenstein, 2013; ter Meulen, 2015) This enables me to elaborate more precisely a critique of the structural tendencies of the modern labour market. Furthermore it allows us to derive some general guidance on how to think about the future of work in the face of various challenges due to climate change, demographic transformations or migration.

Hussain understands citizenship as a form of non-voluntary partnership based on shared membership in a political community. Standing in such relation to another imposes requirements on how citizens behave towards each other, that is, they are morally obliged to act in the spirit of civic solidarity. Furthermore, Hussain deduces requirements regarding institutional design from this moral demand: Any so-called background political institutions that induce competitive behaviour between citizens may not do so to the extent that the solidarity, as required by their shared membership, is seriously obstructed.

It is hence crucial, according to him, to design institutions in such a way that the realisation of the relational ideal and its demands on citizens is enabled. Institutions that do not induce competition between citizens are generally not problematic as to the obligation of solidarity. But there are other kinds of competitive institutions, which he calls *rivalry-defining arrangements*, which can lead to estrangement between citizens as they foster mutual disregard and incentivize people to act strategically against each other. This is problematic in the case of background institutions, which determine the rules and framework according to which the primary social goods in society are distributed. Such primary social goods refer to abstract goods such as liberty, opportunity or income and may come in the concrete form of, for example, access to health care. Every citizen is morally obliged by the ideal of civic solidarity to care about other citizens' possession of these goods. Hence, a moral limit is required regarding the level of competition to allow citizens to gain access to these goods.

This limit should be integrated into the design of the rules and framework of the respective political institutions, i.e. the healthcare system or the labour market.

I want to draw attention to one specific type of solidarity, recognitive solidarity, to strengthen Hussains moral demands. Recognitive solidarity builds upon the notion of social liberty, as developed by Honneth. They assume that liberty requires not only the freedom to pursue one's interests without external constraints, but also that other individuals grant one to do so. This intersubjective condition of liberty motivates the idea of recognitive solidarity, where to be recognized as a person by others is essential to self-realisation and -formation and provides one with the capacities to recognize others as persons in return. Recognitive solidarity manifests itself in the shared struggle to gain social and political recognition. It focuses particularly on the mutual dependency between humans within social groups, as their personhood is constituted by their respect for others. Solidarity is hence understood as the mutual recognition of individuals as persons, which promotes their and one's own self-esteem against the context of a shared value horizon. Because individuals rely on others' recognition to achieve the social and political status of a person as well as on the act of recognizing them as persons in return, any institutional set-up that systematically hinders this constitutive mechanism must be problematic from this perspective.

I want to apply these ideas to the labour market, to analyse and discuss how some of its current tendencies, like increases in platform work or the weakening of unions, undermine the solidaristic ideal, also linking back to the concept of rivalry-inducing institutions. Furthermore I aim to discuss, and ideally extend this discussion into the track group, the role of rivalry and individualisation on the modern labour market and which institutional changes could promote the realisation of recognitive solidarity despite these phenomena.

References

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