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Historicising Geographies of Solidarity

Introduction

The concept of solidarity has been understood in a wide range of sometimes only loosely related ways. As well as a strong connection to the political left, it has a history in Christian thinking. It is sometimes used almost synonymously with community, related in particular to a sense of social cohesion. Particularly in continental Europe, a dominant expression of this approach is to consider the welfare state as a central example of solidarity (Oosterlynck, Schuermans, & Loopmans, 2017; Stjernø, 2005). Such an approach, Kolars (2016, pp. 2–3) has argued, ‘gives up on the solidarity that mans the barricades in favour of the “solidarity” that files the tax return.’ In the mode of ‘the barricades’, solidarity is more closely associated with forms and relationships of activism. It is with this understanding – of ‘solidarity as a relation forged through political struggle which seeks to challenge forms of oppression’ (Featherstone, 2012, p. 5) – that historical geographers have been primarily concerned.

This article evaluates two of the most productive recent areas of research in the historical geographies of solidarity: first, work relating to class and the labour movement; and second, debates clustered around race and colonialism. The two are, of course, not entirely distinct, and there has been much useful thinking at their intersections. Therefore, while the article is structured by these areas, I highlight important overlaps and conversations between the two, not least in relation to methodological debates around oral history and archival practices. I suggest throughout that questions of mobility have been crucial in thinking about the formation of diverse solidarities across geographical and social boundaries. The article looks at how relationships can both be developed across differences of gender, race, and sexuality, but also how solidarities can be used to entrench forms of oppression and inequities of power. Thinking about this issue through the concept of intersectionality, I argue, would be a useful way of engaging with such questions.

In the final section, I suggest three areas which could be developed further. First, there is potential for a greater engagement with theoretical debates around the nature of solidarity itself. Second, historical geographers could pay more attention to the role of individual and collective memory. In conversation with the idea of ‘usable pasts’, such an approach would show how history continues to shape contemporary practices of solidarity. Finally, I argue that rather than isolated case studies, more ambitious historical narratives, framed within wider social processes – from deindustrialisation to decolonisation – would allow us to make broader arguments about how solidarity develops over time. Rather than simply drawing on examples from the past, engaging with these questions of memory, usable pasts, and broader societal processes demonstrates the distinct contribution a historicized geography of solidarity can make.

Labour solidarities

The term solidarity has a complex and diverse history, which includes a clear and longstanding connection to the labour and socialist movements (Stjernø, 2005). It is perhaps unsurprising then that since its development in the 1990s the sub-discipline of labour geography has demonstrated an interest in solidarity. The initial goal of labour geography was to take more seriously the agency of working-class people, critiquing capital-centric analyses of the economy perceived to be prevalent within the discipline (Herod, 1997). Such an approach meant foregrounding solidarity as a key element of labour organisation, although one that is neither to be taken as simplistically determined by class, nor to be romanticised as always straightforwardly progressive (Herod, 1995; Johns, 1998). An alternative route into thinking about the relationship between solidarity and the economy has been to focus less on labour organising as such, and more on the development of parallel economic institutions whose egalitarian principles stand in contrast to dominant capitalist forms (North & Cato, 2017).

Historical geographers have made an important contribution in exploring the relationship between labour, class and solidarity. The solidarity developed through shared work conditions, especially in more dangerous occupations, is an important theme here. Emery's (2018, p. 79) recent work on the north Nottinghamshire coalfield, for instance, has discussed the 'camaraderie produced by the danger of mining work', alongside the social homogeneity of single industry places, in forging solidarities. The politics of affinities formed through dangerous labour can be ambiguous. Davies (2013) has demonstrated how a workplace solidarity among Royal Indian Navy (RIN) workers in the mid-twentieth century was encouraged by their employers to instil a loyalty to their work and the RIN. This backfired during the 1946 mutiny when 'in many of the RIN's bases, the sailors acted in solidarity with their fellow sailors rather than with the authorities, showing that the RIN's disciplinary practices had to some extent succeeded in indoctrinating and forged them into an effective unit' (Davies, 2013, p. 884).

In some accounts, an association is made between spatial boundedness and working-class solidarity (Tomaney, 2013). Davies' work, in contrast, is among those that focus on notably mobile groups of workers, such as seafarers (see also Featherstone, 2015). The role of migration in shaping working-class solidarity is also clearly important, as research into the Grunwick dispute in the late 1970s – largely led by women of South Asian decent – has demonstrated (Anitha, Pearson, & McDowell, 2012; McDowell, Anitha, & Pearson, 2012). Yet even with groups of workers that may be viewed as comparatively static, the history is often more complex. Carl Griffin, for example, shows how the mobility of early nineteenth century rural workers was crucial in developing 'pan-occupational solidarity' (C. J. Griffin, 2015, p. 452). This connection between mobility, boundary crossing, and solidarity has been central to geographical work in a number of areas, as is discussed in relation to transnationalism below. There is the potential here, however, for a more politicised version of working-class mobility – that could look, for instance, at flying pickets or the speaking tours of striking workers – in understanding how labour activists have developed solidarities across space.

In some instances, however, working-class mobility is bound up with more exclusionary practices. The pan-occupational relationships that Griffin describes, for instance, existed alongside attacks on migrant Irish labour (C. J. Griffin, 2015, p. 454). The complexities of the relationship between solidarities rooted in particular workplaces, occupational or wider class identities, and divisions across other social cleavages, such as gender, sexuality and race, are crucial in elaborating a more nuanced understanding of solidarity (Payling, 2017). Paul Griffin's (2015) exploration of Red Clydeside has emphasised the co-existence of transnational labour solidarity and racism. Drawing on Hyslop's concept of 'white labourism' (1999), such an approach makes it clear that solidarity can entrench hierarchies of power as well as challenge them. A historical approach is essential here. Bressey (2015) has argued that the history of black people's exclusion from working-class solidarities is crucial in understanding why anti-racism did not become a core part of the working-class intellectual tradition in England. Moreover, historical geographies are required for understanding 'the structural differences between forms of domination', as Roediger has argued is necessary, so that failures of solidarity are not simply understood as the result of subjective weaknesses (Roediger, 2016, p. 244).

It is, of course, not only class politics that can be used in an exclusionary manner (Ginn, 2012). If such discussions are not articulated explicitly in the terminology of intersectionality, there is clearly an affinity here. While there has been some work in other disciplines on the relationship between solidarity and intersectionality (Roberts & Jesudason, 2013; Tormos, 2017), it is relatively undeveloped in historical geography (although see G. Brown & Yaffe, 2017; Kelliher, 2017a). There has, of course, been a significant engagement in geography more broadly with the concept (M. Brown, 2012; Mollett & Faria, 2018; Reid-Musson, 2017; Valentine, 2007). Thinking about intersectionality and historical geographies of solidarity

together could be mutually productive, allowing us to develop a more sophisticated appreciation of the dynamics of power, privilege and oppression at work in relationships between particular individuals and groups.

Geographers engaging with intersectionality have tended to highlight complexity, often connecting the theory to strong forms of anti-essentialism and a particular emphasis on difference (see for example Dowling, 2009). One response to such an approach can be to question whether such a focus is paralysing for political organising (McDowell, 2008). Considering solidarity and intersectionality together, however, suggests a way of thinking through the articulation and lived experience of commonalities and differences simultaneously. In addition, Brown (2012) has argued that there has been a particular emphasis on the role of place in bringing together different identities and subjectivities, but a comparative lack of work on intersectionality across space. As discussed below, transnational analysis has been a strength of historical geographies of solidarity, so such work could help us think about more stretched geographies of intersectionality.

If mobility has been important for understanding how working-class movements have developed relationships beyond particular localities, it is also necessary to think about how activists root themselves in place. In this regard, both contemporary and historical geographers have unsurprisingly been interested in the sites in which solidarity is enacted (Kelliher, 2017b). Work on resistance to austerity in Greece, for instance, has emphasised the centrality of urban squares in this process, while research on the anti-apartheid movement has explored the picket of the South African embassy in 1980s London (Arampatzi, 2017; G. Brown & Yaffe, 2017; Karaliotas, 2017). Both the anti-apartheid picket and the squares movements were comparatively short-term. McFarland's (2017) historical geography of trade union halls in twentieth-century USA highlights attempts to develop more lasting spaces in which to develop class organisation. He explains how the founders of the CIO trade union federation 'recognized that dedicated interior spaces – union halls – would be crucial in developing an infrastructure of working class culture and solidarity adequate to the tasks of securing and building on workplace victories in the Fordist era' (McFarland, 2017, p. 19).

The historical development of such infrastructures of solidarity could be an important area for wider research, both within and beyond the labour movement. Such an approach is suggested in sections of Brown and Yaffe's (2017, p. 68) work on the anti-apartheid picket, which points to how the protest was advertised in radical bookshops and community centres, 'aspects of London's urban geography that are now seriously depleted' (G. Brown & Yaffe, 2017, p. 68). Connecting these local infrastructures with transnational solidarities emphasises the overlapping scales at which such activism exists. The sense that such infrastructures 'are now seriously depleted' also demonstrates the need for historical accounts of both the opening up and the closing down of such spaces of solidarity (Kelliher, 2017b; Navickas, 2016).

Considering the sites in which solidarity is organised can also draw attention to the significant overlap between labour and transnational forms of solidarity. For instance, Featherstone's (2012, pp. 141-145) account of the 'blacking' of jet engines in a Rolls Royce factory in East Kilbride, intended for use by the Chilean air force during the Pinochet dictatorship, highlights the workplace as a potential site of both labour and transnational solidarities. Featherstone's (2012) research has been important in exploring this intersection, and more broadly in developing the current interest in the historical geographies of solidarity. His book draws on a range of case studies and examples, from early twentieth century maritime labour organising, through the European Nuclear Disarmament movement, up to recent climate justice campaigns. Featherstone (2012, p. 5) argues for paying attention to solidarity 'from below', challenging 'assumptions that subaltern groups, those subject to diverse forms of oppression, lack the capacity or interest to construct solidarities'. This approach foregrounds a conversation between historical geographies of solidarity and the 'history from below' tradition (Featherstone & Griffin, 2016).

Perhaps more importantly for the concerns here, however, is that Featherstone argues centrally for a 'focus on the generative, transformative character of solidarity and how solidaristic practices can shape new relations, new linkages, new connections.' This stands in contrast to 'accounts where the practices and identities through which solidarities are enacted are seen as primarily "given"' (Featherstone, 2012, pp. 18–19). Such an approach can have a particular relationship to space, moving away from 'assumptions of spatial boundedness that have shaped understandings of solidarity and its supposed links to communities of similitude' (Wilson, 2017, p. 64). Featherstone argues that solidarity can have long-term impacts that go beyond the specific aims of a campaign. He describes the continuing effects of solidarities developed during the 1984-5 British miners' strike, for example, in challenging antagonisms between the labour movement and Welsh nationalism (Featherstone, 2012, p. 33). This sense of solidarity as a 'transformative' relationship is a powerfully historical one, which is often understood more effectively in a wider time frame (Kelliher, 2017a).

Race and colonialism

The intersections between working-class activism and transnational organising emphasised by Featherstone in some instances took specifically anti-colonial forms. He discusses actions by seafarers against coal ships going from Cardiff to Italy in the 1930s in protest against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Solidarity here was 'constructed through political imaginaries that linked different parts of the world through anti-colonial organizing', and rather than relying on abstract ideologies or identifications, it intervened 'in the material relations between places' (Featherstone, 2012, pp. 18–19). This section considers work around transnational black, anti- and post-colonial networks, which has been perhaps the most productive area of recent historical geographies of solidarity has been

Brown and Yaffe (2014, 2017), in their research into the non-stop picket against apartheid outside the South African embassy in 1980s London, build on the sense in Featherstone's work of international solidarity intervening in material relations. They situate the campaign in the long history of connections between Britain and South Africa, rooted in colonialism, emphasising the campaign's attempt to contest the continuing economic relationships between the two countries. International solidarity, Brown and Yaffe argue, should not be conceptualised 'as an asymmetrical flow of assistance travelling from one place to another.' Instead, their account of the anti-apartheid movement demonstrates how 'relations of solidarity can travel in more than one direction, building complex webs of mutuality and reciprocity over time' (2017, p. 33). This sense of mutuality is one element that distinguishes solidarity as a relationship from charity (see Arampatzi, 2017; Baughan & Fiori, 2015).

Brown and Yaffe also develop the notion of solidarity as transformative by relating it to processes of 'growing up' for what were often young activists on the picket. In particular, they demonstrate how many activists learned practical skills and methods of organising that they took into a broad range of campaigns later in their lives. Rather than focusing narrowly on the goal of solidarity, this wider historical lens allows us to understand the complex impact it can have on individuals and wider political cultures (Featherstone, 2012, p. 33). As Koenigler (2016, p. 349) notes in the context of relationships in Palestine-Israel, 'beyond the impact on the participants themselves, acts of solidarity can also stimulate change in broader political discourse, opening new opportunities for activism'. Ross's (2002, 2015) work on the Paris Commune and May '68 is particularly interesting here in tracing the afterlives of these iconic events in shaping transnational political imaginaries. Among the exiles spreading the ideas of the Commune were Reclus and Kropotkin, figures who are central in recent work on the historical geographies of anarchism. As Ferretti et al. (2017, p. 3) have explained, these two early geographers 'were the inventors of a solidaristic interpretation of evolution, known as the theory of mutual aid'.

The sense of London as a hub of anti-colonial exiles, present in Brown and Yaffe's research, emerges even more clearly in McGregor's (2017) account of Zimbabwean students in Britain during their country's independence struggle in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on Gilroy (2005), McGregor's work explores the interactions between Zimbabwean exiles, black Britons, and white solidarity activists, 'in the development of youthful "convivial metropolitan cultures" grounded in "cosmopolitan solidarity and moral agency"' (McGregor, 2017, p. 63). She argues for situating these relationships in the specific historical configuration of race in Britain in this period (McGregor, 2017, p. 71). This gives a much stronger sense of the historicity of such relationships than some other attempts to theorise the connection between blackness and solidarity (Shelby, 2002). Moreover, while Zimbabwean exiles could find it easier to develop close relationships with black British people than white solidarity activists, McGregor also describes how class distinctions – seemingly articulated through educational differences – could interrupt these solidarities. For an earlier period, Bressey (2014b, p. 256) argues for the need to open up 'networks of black solidarity to internal scrutiny, particularly around issues of class and gender'. This, again, suggests the utility of an intersectional approach.

There is a recognition then, as Hodder (2016) has argued, that international connections should not be fetishized. What is required is 'closer attention to the geographies of black internationalist encounters themselves—their specificities and particularities—to fashion a fuller understanding of the spatial practise and solidarities forged through them' (Hodder, 2016, p. 1374). By focusing on Bayard Rustin – whose activism spanned the civil rights movement, pacifism, the labour movement and gay rights – Hodder demonstrates the variety of black internationalisms that coexisted in the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast to a black internationalism centred exclusively on Africa, Rustin found inspiration in Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah, and Mandela for 'a racial solidarity that drew on the shared experience of colonialism and nonviolence among the wider Afro-Asiatic world' (Hodder, 2016, p. 1368). Shared experiences matter in the construction of solidarity, then, yet such relationships must be actively produced, and can be developed in a multiplicity of ways.

Such nuanced historical geographies, attentive to the context of political activism and the diverse forms solidarities can take, help open up what can often be quite flattening abstract theorising around solidarity. Work in political theory has attempted to unpick the relationship between identity, experience and political attachments as the grounding of solidarity relationships, frequently prioritising one over another (for example, hooks, 1986; Scholz, 2008; Shelby, 2002). There are, however, limitations in attempting to develop a general theory of solidarity from geographically and historically specific political movements. Rather than arguing for the primacy of one factor in explaining the construction of solidarities, historical geography can show the multiple, overlapping and sometimes contradictory ways in which such connections are built. Historical work gives a dynamic sense of how solidarities are constructed. This places an emphasis on the activity of solidarity, rather than focusing on how it is articulated (G. Brown & Yaffe, 2014, p. 40).

Geographers and others concerned with 'decolonizing solidarity' have sought to understand how such practices of solidarity can be developed in ways that allow for more equitable relationships, particularly across racialized differences (Land, 2015; Mott, 2016; Sundberg, 2007). There has been an emphasis in some of this work on support from whites/settlers for indigenous peoples in the Americas, Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa, considering how to negotiate relationships which 'are fraught with power asymmetries' (Sundberg, 2007, p. 114). Historical geography can make an important contribution here in understanding the roots of these asymmetries and the mobilisation of indigeneity as an anti-colonial category (Marchesi, 2014). Negrín (2018, p. 4), for instance, has argued that non-indigenous environmental activists seeking to construct solidarities with indigenous people are likely to be more successful if they are 'attentive to the ways in which historically sedimented

understandings of race are reactivated'. Engaging with Habermas' conception of solidarity as 'standing in for one another', Negrín (2018, p. 17) argues that understanding the 'historical legacies behind this standing, becomes essential for enabling more symmetrical acts of solidarity across racial, ethnic and spatial differences.' Black et al.'s (2016) work on alliances in Atlanta, Georgia between undocumented students and climate activists draws on some comparable ideas. The possibility for such solidarities are 'strongly shaped by the historical geographies and political economies of white supremacy', as well as the distinct local traditions of organising, notably the legacy of the Civil Rights movement (Black et al., 2016, p. 285).

Similarly, for Mott (2016) it is necessary to counteract the purposeful forgetting of Native American genocide if settlers are to act in solidarity. Mott argues for a topological approach to understanding divisions among solidarity activists, which she describes as 'an understanding that phenomena which might appear distant in time or space in a Cartesian paradigm are actually localized in the subject through memories, lived experience, and emotional attachments.' As a result, 'as activists struggle to work together despite social differences, topological connections to things outside individual experience or understanding become intimately personal, such as white supremacy and the history of Native American genocide' (Mott, 2016, p. 194). The past, then, is not dead. Yet we cannot take history as given; it must be reconstructed by historical geographers and others. Perhaps more importantly, there is a need to understand how history, memory, and contemporary political organising shape each other.

Oral history methodologies have the potential to be particularly useful here, and there has been some historical geography work on solidarity that has engaged in this area. For instance, McGregor's (2017) and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Brown and Yaffe's (2017) oral histories demonstrate how disillusionment with the subsequent trajectories of some national liberation movements in southern Africa have shaped memories and narratives of earlier solidarity campaigns. To return to the more labour focused literature, Emery's (2018, p. 78) work on the north Nottinghamshire coalfield employs 'psychosocial interviewing methods to investigate the emotional and affective dimensions involved in remembering work and deindustrialisation'. Such memories recall both the solidarity of the mining industry, but also the fracturing of solidarity during the 1984-5 dispute, and Emery explores the way deindustrialisation inflects how the industrial struggles of the 1980s are remembered. At the same time, he argues for the importance of combing archival research with oral testimony in understanding the relationship between memory and historical processes (Emery, 2018, p. 80).

Oral methodologies have a wider appeal in responding to some of the limitations of earlier work on solidarity. Sundberg (2007) suggested that the experience of solidarity was often missing from research on the topic. She argued that we need to understand 'what solidarity looks and feels like from the insiders' perspective' (Sundberg, 2007, p. 145). For Sundberg, accounts of solidarity in geography had infrequently included the narratives of activists, except where this included the researchers themselves. This could mean that 'the researcher is in the awkward position of authoring and even authorizing these movements, while the activists' voices are muted' (Sundberg, 2007, pp. 148–9). Sundberg (2007, p. 146) argued for critical methodologies to overcome this absence, highlighting the collaborative manner in which she worked with solidarity activists through all stages of the research process.

Work has been done since Sundberg's article in addressing the absence of activists' voices within historical geographies of solidarity, although perhaps not in as collaborative a manner as she suggested. Oral testimony is again potentially important here, as Craggs' (2014, 2018) work on the Commonwealth has demonstrated. Craggs (2018) argues for the need to look more closely at the role of post-colonial elites in the Commonwealth for understanding 'subaltern geopolitics'. Solidarity is here placed alongside friendship as active

processes in fashioning connections between individuals, rooted in shared geopolitical visions, histories, and enemies. Craggs (2018, p. 48) has argued that oral history evidence provides 'insights into political cultures, everyday practices, and structures of feeling that shaped geopolitical relations in the past'. There is a strong sense here that oral testimony allows access to the emotional registers of solidarity in a way that may not be possible from textual sources.

Focusing on post-colonial elites, Craggs' work is somewhat removed from the association of oral history with the 'history from below' tradition of foregrounding voices that would otherwise never be heard (Lynd, 1993). This association often comes with a related argument about the limitations of archival research. It is now a relative commonplace in historical geography and other disciplines to emphasise the archive as a site of power rather than a neutral repository. Such a claim often highlights the dominance of the state and elites in shaping archives (Chaudhuri, Katz, & Perry, 2010; Ogborn, 2003). Pandey offers perhaps the starkest version of this argument, insisting that 'the narratives preserved by the state in archives and other public institutions – that is, the narratives most commonly used by historians – belong overwhelmingly to the ruling classes, and owe their existence to a ruling class's need for security and control' (Pandey, 2000, p. 282). This suggests that the archive is a poor place to look for solidarity from below.

Without denying the important ways in which power and resources shape what is in archives, how they are structured, and who has access to them, it is necessary to recognise the diversity of resources and institutions that exist. The state itself is not a homogeneous body; local archives, for example, often hold records of trade unions, trades councils and other labour movement bodies. More broadly, librarians, archivists and activists, in many cases also motivated by the impulse of history from below, have frequently challenged the dominance of elites in the archives. Within Britain, the establishment of institutions as varied as the South Wales Miners' Library, the Hall-Carpenter Archives and the Black Cultural Archives reflected an attempt to broaden the scope of history in the 1970s and 1980s (Donnelly, 2008; Francis, 1976). Such work continues: from MayDay Rooms in London to the Spirit of Revolt in Glasgow, important efforts have been made to archive histories of dissent (P. Griffin, 2017; MayDay Rooms, 2011). Not only does this make it possible for historical geographers to use archives in recounting solidarity, this archival activism can itself form part of the narrative (Kelliher, 2014).

Conclusions and future directions

As this article has demonstrated, there is a wealth of important work being done in historical geography that demonstrates how solidarity can cross both social and geographical boundaries. It is no surprise, in this sense, that the focus of much of this research has been on the development of transnational relationships. While geographies of labour remain important, there is an important emphasis here on how class intersects with gender, sexuality, race and other forms of social difference to help us understand both the construction and the absences of solidarity. A historicised approach, I argue, is essential for the wider debates in the discipline about the nature of solidarity. There are three particular areas which I would highlight as having the potential to be developed further: theory, memory and usable pasts, and historical frameworks.

Theory

Aside from a few examples, there remains a notable division between sustained theoretical engagement with the concept of solidarity itself, and empirically grounded and historicised research. As Featherstone (2012, p. 5) has argued, the term is invoked frequently but rarely subject 'to sustained theorization'. One suggestion I have made is that, considering the

ongoing concern with the relationship between solidarity and the complex interactions of class, race and gender in particular, a clearer engagement with intersectionality would be useful. Work on the relationship between solidarity and intersectionality already exists in other disciplines (Tormos, 2017), but it is an underdeveloped area in geography. As well as being a useful approach to better understand the complexities of solidarity, it would help provide a stronger sense of the development of intersectional identities and relationships as a historical process.

More widely, there is a strong potential for interdisciplinary engagements here, notably with the significant amount of work being done broadly in the field of political theory (for example Gould, 2007; Kolers, 2016; Scholz, 2008; Wilde, 2013). Some of the questions raised in this work have already begun to be addressed by historical geographers, such as the relationship between solidarity and mutuality (G. Brown & Yaffe, 2014; Kelliher, 2017a). Other issues, such as how solidarity relates to violence (Scholz, 2007), or the argument for solidarity as fundamentally a deferential relationship (Kolers, 2016), would benefit from a historical geography perspective.

Memory and usable pasts

A theme running through work on contemporary forms of solidarity is how various histories continue to shape relationships between activists (Black et al., 2016; Mott, 2016). The focus on oral histories discussed above can play a particularly important role in thinking about individual and collective memories, and how these inform identities and broader cultures (Selway, 2016). Other historians have explored specifically how collective memories have shaped political struggles (Gibbs, 2016). As discussed above, historical geographers have begun to make a contribution here (Emery, 2018; Kelliher, 2017a). Further engagement in this area would emphasise the distinct contribution thinking historically can make to how we understand the formation of solidarities.

Historical geographers themselves can of course directly seek to shape contemporary understandings of the past for political purposes. Such an approach is often understood in terms of 'usable pasts' (P. Griffin, 2017). McDonagh and Griffin's (2016) work on enclosures for instance, engages with contemporary campaigns around the commons, suggesting that they often mobilise a misleading historical narrative. This is not merely a myth-busting exercise however; they hope that a more nuanced history 'can open up spaces for new solidarities in the contemporary world. That the commons never did belong to the people, does not mean they should not' (McDonagh & Griffin, 2016, p. 10). Bressey (2014a, p. 102) sees her research and engagement work on the black presence in Britain as 'part of a broader anti-racist project that feeds into traditions of developing radical "histories from below"'. There are important lessons to be learned here from earlier incarnations of 'history from below', notably the History Workshop movement, which had some success in developing collaborative relationships between university-based historians and a range of activists. The workshops 'were devoted to the study and development of "history from below" for use as a weapon in left-wing political campaigns' (Davin & Parks, 2012). Historical geographies of solidarity therefore should be understood as having the potential to engage in powerful ways with ongoing political organising.

Historical frameworks

For Oosterlynck et al. (2017), solidarity should be understood as contingent, malleable, and struggled over, not structurally determined. There are, however, risks in replacing a deterministic conception of solidarity with one that is excessively contingent. A generative conception of solidarity should not preclude attempting to understand the basis on which such relationships have been developed, and the wider contexts and structures that can both

encourage and restrict the possibilities of solidarity (Roediger, 2016). Much of the historical geography work on solidarity focuses on particular case studies. These have given us rich accounts of the development and impact of solidarity. The wider framings of such accounts, however, are frequently present more as backdrop than subject to sustained interrogation.

There is potential for us to work in broader frameworks to think about the formation of solidarities in a wider context. This means moving beyond case studies to more ambitious historical narratives. Building on the existing concerns of historical geographies of solidarity, the obvious examples of wider framing narratives would be deindustrialisation and decolonization. Work on deindustrialisation, for instance, could usefully explore a longer-term history of how profound economic shifts have impacted on the dominant modes in which solidarity is organised. Historical geographers could, as I have suggested above, explore how infrastructures of solidarity are built up over time in particular places, or how cultures of solidarity are constructed (Kelliher, 2017a). An approach which explores the contexts in which solidarity is developed and restricted, and is attentive to how it develops and changes over time – together with a consideration of the role of memory and tradition as discussed above – would move beyond simply using past examples to illustrate our debates, towards a more thoroughly historicized account of the geographies of solidarity.

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