Fragmentation and Solidarity

Introduction to the Special Issue

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Efforts to create stable, responsible, and economically productive polities, especially during the first two decades of the 21st century, are being challenged by simultaneous manifestations of fragmentation and solidarity, both within and among individuals, groups and integration spheres (Engbersen, 2003) of long-established democracies, as well as more recent democracy projects. By design, modern democracies should be progressively inclusive and differentiated (Durkheim, 1960) meaning allowing for increased participation by a diverse array of groupings, institutions, values and worldviews within society. However, as the institutional mechanisms and processes for participation have attempted to take root and expand, an unintended consequence of these democracy projects reflects a heightening of societal cleavages and a radicalization of differences (perceived and otherwise) among groups from diverse institutions and social spaces, such as family, economy, the state and the public sphere. These differences are intensified along several logics and normativities, including economic, religious, psychological, moral, racial and ethnic, and ideological (Bright 2018).

Thus, rather than the continued internalization of beliefs and values, and the shared consciousness of norms that enable social integration, political socialization and organic solidarity between citizens and different subgroups (Almond & Verba 1963; Habermas, 2008), evidence suggests a simultaneous pattern of antagonisms and norm contestations that widens social fissures, resulting in processes of disintegration and fragmentation within these polities.

Moreover, while these fragmentation processes may indeed reflect the contradictions inherent in the promises of liberal democracy and market

economies, they are accompanied by processes of local, national, regional and international group value-reaffirmations. Utilizing the various digital media technologies and platforms, extremist ideological positions, built on antagonistic relations with opposing groups, exacerbate these naturally occurring internal differences. As a result, the organic solidarity once expected among differentiated groups and institutions within political communities, despite their worldviews, is being transformed into exclusionary and antagonistic solidarities.

Structural and global transformations that began by the end of the 20th century, such as the informational revolution, along with the end of the Cold War and the crises in the global financial system and welfare policies, seem to play a huge role in the patterns of fragmentation and solidarity witnessed across the world. What was once a more or less stable international order grounded on liberal economic imperatives and human rights institutions is now being challenged by reactionary ideologies, which find resonance in countries, and between and among groups that suffered more severely the contradictions and exclusions of globalization. On the other hand, this western order is also being more widely questioned by decolonial, antiracist and diversity-oriented ideas and movements, which expose the contradictions and strain the present limits of democratic inclusiveness. Thus, when analyzed in international and comparative perspectives, what might at first appear to be paradoxes within democracies may be parts of a wider paradox of globalization (internationalization), which, as Rodrik (2011) argues, has produced a 'trilemma' in which these countries are attempting to achieve the impossible: the simultaneous pursuit of economic globalization, national development imperatives, and democracy.

Within the internal institutions and social settings of democracies, fragmentation and solidarity become evident through radicalizations of various modern dichotomies, such as rural and urban; educated and less-well-educated; religious and non-religious/agnostic; race, ethnicity and class; partisanship and ideology; developed and un/underdeveloped; global north and global south; local and global. They are also manifested in overlappings of the logics of different social action systems: familial relations are pressed by economic and state imperatives; there is more instability and precariousness in work and market sectors, with cases of mass dismissals due to technological changes and legal issues, as well as burnouts and exhaustion. In the realms of politics there are radical polarizations and antagonisms between more traditional and more universal ideologies, as well as economic and military imperatives that override values such as diversity, equality and dignity. The areas of culture, religion and identities are impinged by traditional political and moral imperatives, and

in the areas of science and information, severely struck by digital and social medias, we witness strong tensions with emotional, cultural and political imperatives, leading to isolation, cynicism, forgery and deceit.

Examples of fragmentation and solidarity in the global level are: the rise of alternative economic powers and the growth of illegal economies, new social movements and transformations, from the Arab Spring and occupy movements and the backlashes against those movements to the global immigration flows and antiracist protests in several countries. These transformations and movements have witnessed oppositions from anti-establishment, anti-immigration and anti-globalization agendas with reactionary tendencies, as well as an increase of social, ethnic and state violence and hatred, fueled by political, social and economic crises. Reaching positions in power in the last years, these agendas have led to increasingly manifestly exclusionary policies, despite, and in the face of conditions such as war, drought, industrial pollution, desertification, or the confounding impacts of global climate change.

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic only intensified these conflicting dynamics of fragmentation and solidarity. On one hand, it revealed the great social divide and the paradoxes between fragmentation and solidarity in the economic level. While many lost their jobs and small enterprises, a few were able to work from home, but this social isolation was only made possible by those who had to circulate in order to provide the isolated ones with all kinds of services. The political dimension of fragmentation and solidarity also manifested the radical antagonisms between divergent groups and stronger ideologies within group members. The politicization of the pandemic debate invaded public health and scientific fields, boosted by social media, disinformation and communication bubbles.

On the other hand, the pandemic has also forced us to understand that solidarity has a deeper level. It is not only a social and political good, but also a biological necessity because it guarantees individual and social life. This is clear in terms of public health, but it is also crucial for mental health, producing meaning and new bonds between different individuals and groups in aid campaigns, as well as between those who have lost their family members.

This context pushes us to address the following questions: what are the main features, dimensions and effects of these fragmentation and solidarity processes? Can social integration hold within and between countries? What is the resilience of the social and state institutions of democratic rules of law in Europe and Latin America? These are some of the issues discussed in the workshop “Fragmentation and Solidarity: challenges to the normative integration spheres in Europe and Latin America”, and which comprise the studies present in this special issue of *Comparative Sociology*.

The Articles and Their Contributions to the Debate on Fragmentation and Solidarity

The articles that comprise this special issue of *Comparative Sociology* identify fragmentation and solidarity as social phenomena in different sectors and levels, from psychological and more private realms to social spaces of language and communication, and from the sectors of production and exchange in the area of social work, to the level of international relations. The texts also mobilize fragmentation and solidarity as analytical tools that help interpret and evaluate normatively how these processes are taking place within each sector and level in different countries.

1 Fragmentation and Solidarity in Private and Public Spheres

Processes of fragmentation and solidarity are present in psychological and social realms. In these dimensions, a pressing question is if it is actually possible to bring about solidarity among different individuals and groups in scenarios of structural discriminations and inequalities. How can solidarity take place without leading to homogenization and moralization? How can differentiation maintain its social and moral reciprocities without leading to fragmentation? These are the questions faced by **Mariana Fischer**, professor of the Federal University of Pernambuco Law School, in the article *Is it Possible to Connect Recognition with a Post-Identitarian Notion of Solidarity?*. With a discussion on Axel Honneth's and Judith Butler's conceptions of subjectivity, identity and recognition, Fischer seeks a way to formulate a conception of solidarity that would maintain its cohesiveness in contexts of fragmented identities and structural inequalities, without leading to exclusion and misrecognition.

According to Fischer, both Honneth and Butler have unorthodox approaches to Hegelian philosophy and psychology, although with relevant distinctions. Honneth's conception of subjectivity presupposes an innate demand for reciprocal recognition with a different other, which could lead to solidarity through attitudes of "self-restriction", and sharing of different cultural backgrounds, narratives and world images. For Butler, however, the subject can only recognize the other by acknowledging the limits and vulnerability of the body, and by losing herself in a transformation with the other that is not controlled or rationalized, and that may reveal the limits of reciprocal recognition. This would lead not to an affirmative, but a negative notion of solidarity, when

subjects share different vulnerabilities, exclusions and foreclosures, or in a way, fragmentations that are beyond their conscious will.

In this sense, with the aid of Levinas's ethics, Fischer draws a notion of solidarity as a "coalition" among people and groups who knowingly are ontologically vulnerable, fragmented, and thus inevitably "estranged" from themselves. This notion brings out the negative normativity of fragmentation and solidarity as moments of critique, which may lead to a politics of coalition. This politics accepts a common position of vulnerability and the ontological limits of the body, which can be used by social movements and in more institutional settings.

Solidarity and fragmentation, however, have historically produced meanings and effects over democracy projects and global power disputes. It is only by assessing these historical tensions that we can understand what has happened, and renew the principle of solidarity in social practices. This is how **Olivier Voirol**, professor at the University of Lausanne and researcher at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt (IfS), introduces his article whose title is *Solidarity as Social Reconstruction: Against "regressive communities", beyond the neoliberal agenda*.

Voirol's argument is that for the last 40 years or so, neoliberal politics have put into question, and even destroyed forms of solidarity in social and legal settings. This agenda was directed against practical and political organizations in order to avoid new practices of solidarity, such as the world social justice movement, which has been defeated by political repression. This is why right-wing politics have now more space to set their agendas.

Two main features of neoliberal politics are key to understand its opposition to solidarity, alerts Voirol: the first is its plain refusal of the social, in both empirical and normative forms. This means that individual conditions and actions are not bound by social structures, and societal arrangements are purely artificial, not reflecting the best political projects. The second is the centrality of the self-sufficient individual as a philosophical ground, from Hobbesian to liberal philosophies. Given that individuals are egoistic and atomized creatures, they should only bond through the negative constraints of the liberal state or the free market.

Aside from the neoliberal agenda, another challenge of reconstructing solidarity in contemporary democracies is what Voirol calls "regressive communities". These communities have gained space and power after the crises of the neoliberal agenda and the globalization process, with new appeals to nationalisms and localisms. Because they are in favor of the "inner community", and of targeting specific groups and persons as causes of all problems, they go against

the ideas of openness, tolerance and diversity that ground solidarity. This is why rethinking solidarity means reactivating a public inquiry that criticizes permanently the divisions between “us and them”, “insiders and outsiders” defended by regressive communities, as well as the social and economic structures that set the conditions for the present crises of capitalism and democracy within and beyond the nation-state.

One of the ways to rethink solidarity in present day democracies is to transpose its elements of cohesiveness and diversity to articulations of public and political discourses. This is what proposes **Vitor Blotta**, professor of the School of Communications and Arts and researcher of the Centre for the Study of Violence of the University of São Paulo, in the text *Selective Solidarity and Discursive Modulation in the Brazilian Public Sphere*.

After accounting for solidarity in political theory as a way of bonding the modern claims to democracy, and thus keeping the interconnected differentiations of rationality and value spheres, Blotta arrives at a notion of selective solidarity, which occurs when forms of solidarity exclude, or allow for exclusive relations between their conflicting normative principles, when one form of solidarity overrides others. Examples are the prevalence of economic over social and human interests in the spills of mining waste by companies in Brazil, and the difficulties of relating free speech with religious freedom after attacks against Charlie Hebdo's cartoonists, and against a school teacher in France, paired with the reactions to them.

With this more pragmatic and discursive notion of solidarity, Blotta uses the concept of modulation, in analogy with music theory, in order to understand the selectivities and shifts of forms of solidarity that lead to exclusion, and prevent relations and “harmonization” between their founding principles. Discursive modulations of solidarity, on the contrary, would occur when these shifts become transparent, and the relations of the principles are justified to interlocutors in public debates.

With this theoretical framework in mind, Blotta interprets three cases of local public debates in Brazil: in the first, covert modulation of discourses prevented the formation of personal solidarities in a scientific focal group comprised by representatives of different political actors; in the second case, exclusive modulations of solidarity in a debate over racial issues in the University of São Paulo hindered possibilities of bridging principles and reaching solidarities between different groups; and in the third case the transparent and justified modulation of opposing perspectives on gun policy in Brazil enabled the creation of a common space where covert modulations could be dismantled, allowing for fair disagreement between participants of a podcast on the issue.

2 Fragmentation and Solidarity in Work

Expressions of fragmentation and solidarity are also present in the relations between societal areas that share instrumental and moral principles and imperatives, such as the economy and the sphere of work. The crises of welfare policies and the incapacity of the neoliberal agenda to guarantee a balance between economic and social developments in contemporary democracies have led to precariousness and insecurity in different economic sectors, with negative impacts over the corresponding institutions, such as national and international companies, workers' unions and States. The articles in this section of the special issue reveal problems of fragmentation and solidarity in these areas through analyses of present conflicts between their principles, values, policies, and the outcomes for democratic states and their international relations.

In the text *Meaningful Work*, **Stephan Voswinkel**, professor of the University of Jena and researcher of the IfS, argues that understanding how people view and relate to their work is connected with the dynamics of fragmentation. After contesting liberal theories that view work only as an instrumental means to obtain wealth, Voswinkel argues, following social theories of work, that its meanings are ambivalent. Work is at the same time seen as self-realization and suffering, as social recognition and alienation.

In order to understand people's current feelings of meaninglessness towards their work, as well as how neoliberal capitalism instrumentalizes moral and social meanings attributed to work, Voswinkel redresses the social theories of alienation and meaning, drawing back to Marx and Weber. He sees alienation as a social process of meaninglessness produced by work relations and institutions that demand workers to value their work with basis on individual evaluations of how they expect themselves and others to act. But because these social expectations contrast with their subjective evaluations over their work, the results are psychological suffering and difficulties of appropriating work as socially meaningful.

Moreover, with an individualistic approach focused on the exercise of work, as it is the case in Germany (Hürtgen, 2013), social values such as cooperation, collegiality and recognition tend to be instrumentalized and transformed into notions such as "team work" and "success", which favor deeper processes of competition, exploitation and alienation of workers and work relations, in several economic sectors. Thus, rather than contributing to a Durkheimian organic solidarity within differentiated work relations of contemporary societies, individualized and institutionalized social meanings of work are leading to deeper processes of individual and social fragmentation.

On a more international approach to economic and work relations, **Stefanie Hürtgen**, professor of the University of Salzburg and researcher of the IfS, addresses the issue of fragmentation and solidarity in the article *Structural Heterogeneity in Europe: The Arrival of an Apparent Developmental Problematic in the Global North and the Question of Transnational Solidarity*. According to Hürtgen, structural heterogeneity is an important critical category connected to social and economic theories of development, which explains why the integration into the world market and modern transnational production does not lead to more social cohesion but on the contrary: to massive social disintegration.

Hürtgen argues that structural heterogeneity gains new relevance once the formation of economic blocks in the Global North are not leading to “structural homologies” or “socio-economic cohesion”. On the contrary, the rhetoric of “underdevelopment” is increasingly losing ground, given that the European mode of economic integration is producing fragmentation and marginalization inside and outside economic blocks.

As responses to structural heterogeneity, Hürtgen defends that practices of solidarity in international economic relations should be more transnational and interconnected, with less hierarchy and co-dependence between parties. In this sense, solidarity, seen as “radical coevalness”, may problematize narratives about the limits of marginalized economies to adapt to the changes and flexibility of contemporary economies, and oppose structural imperatives that hinder the formation of collective organizations in work places.

3 Fragmentation and Solidarity in International and Transnational Realms

What role do the institutions of globalization play in fostering fragmentation and solidarity in political, economic and cultural spheres? How did the predominant policies and paths for development affect economies and identities in countries of the Global North and South? What are the impacts of these international structures and forces over local and regional integration forces? What are the pre-political conditions and institutional settings that may harness transnational solidarities between different countries and peoples, against tendencies of reified fragmentation?

The paradoxes of fragmentation and solidarity are particularly affecting countries on the Global South, such as the Caribbean Community and Common Market. In the article *Geography and Caribbean Integration: The Paradox of Fragmentation and Solidarity in CARICOM*, **Clifford Griffin**, International

Relations professor at North Carolina State University, addresses the concurrent pressures suffered by Caribbean countries to produce regional integration, and at the same time commitment with the world market order.

Griffin indicates that these tensions faced by the Caribbean countries have increased after the crisis of European economic integration, making them more vulnerable to several social and policy problems associated with climate change, security and transnational criminal organizations, border security, the demise of regional industries, food safety, transparency and anti-corruption strategies.

These issues pose paradoxical challenges to the Caribbean Community and Common Market. Given the region's interdependency with global economic forces, for example, pressures for greater anti-corruption and transparency policies in the banking sector have been leading to a decrease in the circulation of money, threatening local economies and forms of life. Thus, Griffin structures the problematic of fragmentation and solidarity in the current tensions between the "crises" and demands for stability, viability and security within the Caribbean region, where geography, history and memory play significant roles.

In the last article of this issue, *Between Affects and Norms: On the emotive limits of constitutional patriotism*, **Filipe Campello**, philosopher and professor at the Federal University of Pernambuco, proposes a normative discussion on solidarity as a transnational political emotion, which would demand overcoming the basic structure of solidarity as a patriotic feeling that is attached to a nation.

Campello begins his argument by criticizing the concept of constitutional patriotism, and suggests reframing it in "post-national" contexts. He does this by recovering the Hegelian concept of patriotism as a value that can be used in a transnational framework. In the last part of the article, the author proposes that solidarity can be seen as a transnational political emotion once we take into account its formation process and its contingency. With this shift in mind one can begin to understand how the affective contents of social praxis are institutionally and symbolically mediated.

In the end, this affective content of politics that stems from social praxis can provide not only an internal critique of nationalism and nation states, but also of the uncontested normative contents of international institutions and its shortcomings in bridging the contemporary tendencies of fragmentation and solidarity and its consequences for national and transnational realms.

The last section of this issue is hence able to synthesize the background objectives of the international scientific workshop in which they were presented, that is, establishing a transnational space of scientific and academic solidarity in which the exchange of different research and experiences can

contribute to shed greater light on the challenges of fragmentation and solidarity. For this, we would like to thank our colleagues and the institutions that supported the workshop, such as the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), as well as the journal *Comparative Sociology* and its editor-in-chief, Prof. David Weakliem, for the continued support and hospitality. We would also like to thank Paulo Winterstein for the language review, and Nora Hassan for proof reading and formatting the articles.

Institutional and Academic Background

The workshop “Fragmentation and Solidarity: Challenges to the Normative Integration Spheres in Europe and Latin America” was held at the Institute for Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo on December 13 and 14, 2017.

The initiative originates from a partnership, established in 2009, between the Center for the Study of Violence of the University of São Paulo (NEV) and the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt (IFS). The goal of the partnership is, according to its letter of intent signed by Directors Sergio Adorno and Axel Honneth, to foster exchanges in research, mobility initiatives, and access funding opportunities for common projects within thematic areas such as Social Research and Philosophical Reflection, Economy and Labor, Family and Socialization, Political Public Sphere and Law.

The first academic meeting of the partnership occurred in April 2010 in at the J. W. Goethe University of Frankfurt. In the occasion the participants decided that instead of attempting to apply directly theories originating from one country to the social context of the other and vice versa, the institutes should make efforts to reconstruct the normative foundations of social integration spheres in each country's modernization processes. These efforts would possibly result in dialogues and learning experiences, leading later on to more specific comparative studies.

The scientific workshops of the partnership began in December 2012 at the University of São Paulo, with the workshop “Multiple Modernities, Normative Integration Spheres and Experiences of Violence: Brazil and Germany Compared”. The resulting reflections of the several presentations from researchers of the NEV and the IFS, and other invited scholars were that each country has diverse modernization processes and normative integration spheres, which should be studied in non-hierarchical and non-developmental approaches.

The second workshop, “Modernizations, Emancipation and Intersections of Normative integration Spheres: Comparative critical studies between Germany and Brazil” was held in Frankfurt on December of 2013. The studies also highlighted non-hierarchical movements of emancipation and domination within different integration spheres of each country. In some cases, for example, processes of emancipation in a country with a more liberal economic system can result in relations of domination in the other, such as with home and care workers in the sphere of family.

By 2013, NEV initiated a new comprehensive research program called “Building Democracy Daily”, with support from the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), which offered conditions for enhancing international collaborations and comparative studies. In this new context, the first discussions on the workshop Fragmentation and Solidarity began in early 2015. Some of the social tendencies in national and international contexts that led to the proposal were: precarization of work in different economic sectors; increase of intolerance and hatred, new conservatisms and antagonisms between groups and value spheres, as well as cyclic movements of tightening and loosening tensions within and between the normative integration spheres.

After obtaining support to organize the workshop, the organizations invited colleagues from different countries and research institutions. As a result, the workshop was the most diverse from the partnership yet, with nine contributors from four different countries, namely Germany, Brazil, United States and Austria.

The continuity and extension of the NEV-IfS partnership are crucial to the demands for internationalization of the involved institutions and to the production of comparative studies. This is one of the ways in which the humanities can help broaden the understanding of pressing issues in their internal, international and transnational expressions.

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