



Lars Magnusson / Bo Stråth (eds.)

European Solidarities

Tensions and Contentions of a Concept

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When Europe was Western Europe and socially rather cohesive, the question of economic integration through free market exchanges for labour, commodities and services was not a major problem. The integration of markets was hardly recognised as a real threat to social cohesion.

Europe became EU27 and may become EU30: the economic market integration underpins the social problems because of the much bigger differences in Europe in terms of social standards. Capital looking for cheap labour could of course mitigate the differences over time. Job opportunities in low wage parts of Europe might imply unemployment in the high wage part, but in the long run standard differences will decrease. Hence the theory. However, such a scenario will include difficulties which affect the legitimacy of building a European polity.

What are – against the backdrop of these difficulties – the prospects of a European social polity where the growing European inequalities are confronted politically at a European level? This is the key question of this book.

The book discusses the tensions between a market Europe and a social Europe, between politics of social dumping and politics of social protectionism, and between Europe as a possibility and as a threat. It examines the tensions and contentions of the concepts of solidarity and social Europe against the backdrop of the perceptions of dramatically growing social differences after the enlargements to EU25 and 27. And it reflects on the prospects of political management of the European economy.

Contents: Lars Magnusson/Bo Stråth: Introduction: A Social Polity? Challenges to European Inequalities – Martin Heidenreich: The Development of Social Inequalities in Europe – Iain Begg: Is Stability Necessary for Growth? – Ramón Peña Casas: European Integration and Social Inequalities from an Empirical Perspective – Marie-Ange Moreau: European Solidarity and Labour Law. Some Thoughts Stemming from the Question of Restructuring in Europe – Niklas Bruun: The Vaxholm Case and Its «Solidarity Lessons» from a Swedish and European Perspective – Thomas Fetzer: European Works Councils as Carriers of European Trade Union Solidarity? The Cases of Ford and General Motors – Céline Lafoucrière/Lars Magnusson: Social Dialogue. The Last Guardian of European Solidarity? – Béla Tomka: Social Solidarity in East Central Europe. Strong Welfare and Weak Labour? – Herwig Reiter: The Post-Communist Triangle of (Non-)Solidarity and beyond. Youth and the Perception of Unemployment in the «NewWest» – Katarzyna Gajewska: Common Market - Common Labour Interests? – Annika Zorn: Bringing Solidarity back in. Solidarity Actions in the Contentious Field of Unemployment – Ulrike Liebert: The Politics for a Social Europe and the Lisbon Process – Jenny Andersson: Solidarity or Competition? Creating the European Knowledge Society – Fred Block: An End to Solidarity? The Case of the United States.

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Both editors have published widely on the issue of a social Europe.

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