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Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka (2017) *The Strains of Commitment: The Political Sources of Solidarity in Diverse Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, £65.00, pp. 440, hbk.
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The ties that bind North American and European societies have come in for another round of inspection. The early 2000s saw concern for threats to social cohesion and waning levels of social capital, which became the subject of initiatives that set out to incite pro-social conduct. Today, the focus is on immigration and demographic diversity, social trust and the scope of the redistributive state. The new concern reflects the experience of multiple crises that have come to haunt policy-making as much as academic analysis. There are well-established lines of sociological inquiry into sources of solidarity. But the circumstances for the rising tide of social chauvinism and populist authoritarianism are open to multiple interpretations and not many compelling remedies appear on the horizon.

Against this background, *The Strains of Commitment* – edited by Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka – addresses urgent questions: can diverse societies sustain welfare and redistribution; can growing levels of resentment be politically contained; and what is the prospect for multicultural decency given the chauvinistic pressures that we face? The volume pursues additional concerns in passing, commenting on the boundaries the editors deem necessary to sustain the welfare state and on the socio-political processes that make and unmake social solidarity. Many chapters in the volume reflect a new contextualism in how sociologists and political scientists frame their research into trust and solidarity. This extends to the study of spatial circumstances that shape sociability and trust (although the local complexity of trust-production is underplayed in this volume). There is a new concern for how conceptions of deservingness and worth come about and determine the scope of solidarity. There is an interest in political identities and social imaginaries that has been missing from earlier sociologies of cohesion, capital and trust.

The volume presents a compelling selection of perspectives that work through such considerations. In a substantive introduction, the two editors point beyond the study of sociological and economic circumstances and suggest the need to examine how these are “conditioned by prevailing political discourses and identities, by the actions of political agents, and by policy regimes such as the welfare state and citizenship and integration policies” (2). They outline dimensions of solidarity and highlight the complex entanglement of normative, political and policy challenges in how solidarity gets produced and destroyed. This extends to the study of idealational circumstances for policy-making and political debate, drawing attention to the “pre-existing matrix of collective identities, political opportunity structures and institutionalized policy regimes” (14).

The following three chapters, which form the first part of the volume, conceptualize solidarity along distinct lines. David Miller offers a theoretical discussion in support of his well-known preference for nationally bounded forms of in-group solidarity. The following chapter by Rainer Bauböck presents a thoughtful case for a territorial pluralism that conceives of the

city as a legitimate site of belonging and draws attention to local and transnational solidarities that can add to the national frame. From a different vantage point, Jacob Levy questions the reliance on social, political and moral unity that consensus theories of solidarity presuppose. His advice is to “live with our disagreement” (116) and to pursue solidarity and justice not in relation to a unified social body but among the procedures that distinguish our democratic life.

In a second part, the volume contains three chapters that examine the distribution of public attitudes. Céline Teney and Marc Helbling usefully consider levels of civic and redistributive solidarity among citizens and elites in Germany. Richard Johnston *et al.* draw on fascinating data for the United States, Anglo-Canada and Quebec, highlighting the variability of any relationship between national identity and ethnic parochialism, on the one hand, and redistributive solidarity, on the other. Tim Reeskens and Wim van Oorschot add an additional concern for public attitudes towards civic and political rights.

The third part of the volume turns towards a broad selection of issue- and country-specific themes. In a compelling chapter, Peter Hall adds complexity to the editors’ concern with collective imaginaries, suggesting that “social solidarity flows – not just from national identity *per se* [...] – but from visions of social justice that become prominent in national discourse” (214). Zoe Lefkofridi and Elie Michel explore the overlap between social democratic and radical right-wing parties regarding their orientation towards redistribution. Edward Koning traces the development of Dutch political discourse since the Fortuyn shock of 2002. Bo Rothstein rehearses his well-known argument about the causal importance of good government and welfare universalism for social trust; given the unremitting thrust towards means-testing and activation in social policy-making, he could do more to consider the political conditions of possibility for this prescription. Irene Bloemraad convincingly dismantles myths about the negative impact of multicultural policies on democratic solidarity. Contrasting Denmark and Sweden, Karen Borevi outlines the importance of state- and society-centred conceptions of solidarity that account for striking differences between the two countries’ immigration regimes. Turning to Belgium, Patrick Loobuyck and Dave Sinardet examine the extent to which shared cultural references are required for solidarity in a nation-state context. Philippe van Parijs concludes the volume with remarks on solidarity and deliberative democracy.

The Strains of Commitment does not present a unified theory of social solidarity in circumstances of diversity. But the volume delivers an intriguing showcase of research that is multi-dimensional and politically attuned. This, it is worth emphasizing, is a notable improvement over earlier scholarship on cohesion and trust. As part of this approach, the interest in collective imaginaries is a particularly promising element. However, the editors’ (and some of the authors’) reliance on nation-state imaginations could do with a fuller elaboration that disassembles the nation’s imaginary components and considers the role of local experiences in producing social solidarity.

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The living wage inevitably garners wide support among the public, a backing that crosses all demographic and political groupings. Yet, it remains both controversial and somewhat slippery as a concept.