



Call for Papers

For the 1st International Solidarity Research Conference ISRC

Relational Solidarity and Interdisciplinary Perspectives

24.10.2025, School for Social Work, University of Applied Sciences and
Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW, Olten, Switzerland

In daily life, solidarity is commonly understood as people ‘standing for each other’, whether as individuals, social groups, communities, or national societies. The practices of solidarity are not inherently contingent upon physical proximity; they can occur over considerable distances, often unilaterally, particularly during wars or other crises, and can evolve into reciprocal, mutually focused behaviour. Until recently, the concept of solidarity had received minimal attention in the social sciences, regarded as it was a normative concept. However, since the turn of the millennium, the concept has become a pivotal one in social science analyses, particularly in the domains of family, activist movements, civil society initiatives, and debates about the welfare state.

The notion of solidarity serves, among other things, to explain the cohesion of increasingly disaggregated societies as an imagined or actual basis of social ties, for example regarding collective identities or the welfare state structures of modern societies. Solidarity is conceptualized as a distinct form of moral commitment among individuals, involving the provision of direct or indirect support based on a sense of normative obligation, based on political, social, and cultural relations. Following a relational understanding of solidarity, differences in the power and privilege of various individuals, groups, and institutions, and to the significance of these differences, are important for understanding the complexity of practices of solidarity. Solidarity bonds, experienced and (re)negotiated in efforts to work collaboratively, appear at numerous levels and in diverse contexts, including among individuals or groups, within families, in neighbourhoods, within nation-states, in national and international social movements, and in global contexts. A notable strand in solidarity studies is the exploration of solidarity with nature, understood to be determined by the socio-biological and ecological conditions of life. The discourses and practices of solidarity appear in a multitude of forms in contemporary societies, in multiple domains, including care work, healthcare, social integration, and the sustainable use of natural resources. These practices may be manifest informally within families, social groups, and social movements, yet they can also be institutionalized, legally regulated, and state controlled.

In instances where informal support proves inadequate, specialized professions such as educators, physicians, and social workers assume a role in providing services. Conversely, civil society has been observed to assume the responsibilities of professionals and welfare state institutions during periods of neoliberal policies, crisis, war, or natural disaster, when societal demands exceed the capacity of these institutions. In periods of social upheaval, when people are confronted with new challenges, and when existing relationships of solidarity are foundering or losing efficacy, the need for solidarity becomes clear. Individuals are called upon to offer mutual, individualized support, to assist community or group members in a spirit of solidarity, and individuals and social groups themselves increasingly take the initiative to do so. However, when the foundations of solidarity are eroded at the political or moral level, institutional regulations may become vulnerable, potentially compromising their very existence and functionality.

In this context, the following subjects will be explored during the conference from interdisciplinary and international perspectives:

- What processes of emergence and change can be observed in solidarity bonds and practices in the face of the current crises around the world?
- What is the significance of these processes for the social sciences' conceptualizations of solidarity? How do these processes contribute to those conceptualizations?
- What structural changes are occurring in informal and institutional solidarities? What are the consequences for the professions, especially for social work? What questions and priorities arise for interdisciplinary research?
- What practices of solidarity have developed in diverse social contexts?
- How can practices of solidarity be distinguished from other forms of support?

The proposal for a paper should be assigned to one of the following categories:

1. Theories and concepts of relational solidarity.
2. Methodological and methodical challenges inherent to relational solidarity research.
3. Empirical relational solidarity research.
4. International perspectives on relational solidarity research.

Submission and format of the proposal

1. Proposals must be submitted online via the following website: www.solidarity-research.ch
2. The proposal may not exceed 500 words, including the title of the presentation, a short biography and contact details (email, telephone and postal address).
3. Respondents are requested to specify to which of the categories their contribution belongs.
4. Conference language is English

Deadlines

Submission of the proposal

June 15, 2025

Feedback by

July 1, 2025

General information: www.solidarity-research.ch - the submitted proposals will be peer reviewed.

Organizers

Prof. Dr. Thomas Geisen, Prof. Dr. Roland Becker-Lenz, Maria Jastrzebska MA, Dr. Peter Mozolevskyi

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