



DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD FOUNDATION

What Next?

Draft thematic paper

Visions of Global Solidarity, as Seen from Sweden

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When the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation asked me to reflect on the future of solidarity, my first response was to think about the history of that idea in Sweden. As an American anthropologist who had once written a study of "existential solidarity in a globalizing Sweden," I was fascinated by the society that year after year has ranked number one on the United Nations Development Program's Human Poverty Index -- the country with the least poverty and social inequality in the world.

My enthusiasm for the place led me to begin to formulate the lessons of the Swedish model for a possible social democratic globalization process. This raised the eyebrows of my social anthropologist colleagues, as they saw me commit the cardinal sin of ethnocentrism -- assuming that the perspectives of one culture apply to others. And my Swedish hosts rolled their eyes as they heard their American guest recite the virtues of a society that they felt had reneged on its egalitarian commitments and become much like any other neoliberalizing land. (I'll return later to the Swedish tradition of anti-nationalist self-criticism.)

Humbled by these responses, I still found myself wondering whether there was not some wisdom about the future of solidarity to be salvaged from the beleaguered edifice of this famously progressive society -- this land that had once been a pilgrimage site for foreign journalists, academics, trade unionists and wandering idealists who came "to study the frontiers of social modernity" (Ruth 1986:254; cf. Hall 1998:843).

I was reminded of the salience of ideas of solidarity in recent Swedish history when I watched a news broadcast that had rested in the broadcasting archive for three decades. On the last day of 1975, the state-owned Swedish Television company -- equivalent to Britain's BBC -- presented its customary one-hour overview of the year's news. The woman who narrates the program began by covering strikes by cleaning workers and loggers, then turned to environmentalist protests. The bulk of the program was devoted to political struggles around the world and Sweden's connections with them: a U.N. women's conference in Mexico City, ridiculed for not being radical enough; Swedish and Chilean demonstrations against Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship; the CIA's malefactions in Angola, Cuba, and Europe; the fall of the American puppet government in South Vietnam; uprisings in Portugal and the liberation of its former colonies Mozambique and Angola. Having noted that popular struggles are interlinked, the narrator went on to lament that other liberation movements that year had been forgotten by the rest of the world -- "the Palestinian people had to pursue their struggle by themselves, like the people of Oman, [East] Timor, Eritrea" The program ended with a long poem celebrating the Vietnamese victory in the war with the USA.

It would be hard to imagine a more trenchant program if Michael Moore, Arundhati Roy or Noam Chomsky had been assigned to the anti-imperialist beat. But this hour-long lesson in global solidarity was not the product of a radical film collective working under Che Guevara posters in a Stockholm basement. It was the annual news roundup of the national television company, broadcast across the land on New Year's Eve.

Something special must be going on in such a society. How do we explain the internationalist energy, as well as the comparatively egalitarian politics at home? What is the significance of the labor movement, which today remains the world's most robust as measured by the percentage of workers who are unionized? What about the class structure, with Sweden together with Denmark and Japan enjoying the least polarized income distribution among industrialized countries? And what emerges from the unrivaled strength of Swedish women's movements?

The witch's brew of Swedish progressive politics may yet yield some secrets for those who dream of global solidarity. But there are no blueprints for future political developments, and an egalitarian world with an organic tofu chicken in every pot will come about only through the interactions of social struggles in every part of the globe. Global solidarity may emerge from global conversation -- from the sharing of experiences and debating of possibilities across boundaries.

My hope with this essay is to sift through Swedish developments and identify ideas that may have relevance as contributions to that global conversation. I focus on seven themes:

- 1) Conceptualizations of solidarity
- 2) The distinction between solidarity and charity
- 3) The representation of equality
- 4) Internationalist patriotism
- 5) Shared security
- 6) Collective constraints
- 7) Intellectual self-defense

1) Conceptualizations of solidarity

The word "solidarity" has multiple resonances. As a starting point, we may wish to think of it as the habits, customs, and institutions of mutual care through which individuals make sacrifices for the good of a group. The group in question may be local or national ("we Singaporeans"), an imagined transnational alliance ("we Singaporeans and East Timorese," "we Muslims"), or a universal category ("we human beings").

Solidarity often involves collective protection against harm, as epitomized in the classic labor-movement slogan, "an injury to one is an injury to all." Solidarity thus connotes a pooling of risk, a system of social insurance. The word seldom appears outside contexts of injury and vulnerability. It would be uncommon, for example, to speak of "the solidarity of New Yorkers in building a great city," but one would readily refer to their solidarity in the days after September 11th, 2001.

In the discourse of today's global-justice movements, solidarity is often the generic descriptor of a good society, a society of mutual concern and equality. But solidarity is not always a moral good. It can be considered chauvinistic: the solidarity of nationalist groups in a civil war, for example, or the solidarity of the inheriting classes in defending their wealth, or the solidarity of gangsters in

avenging their insulted fellow gang member. Even universal human solidarity is open to charges of chauvinism, as one may celebrate the unity of the species while neglecting non-human animals.

The juridical idea of solidarity can be traced to ancient Greece and Rome. In these societies, as J. E. S. Hayward recounts, solidarity meant shared responsibility for debts. Each member of an extended family "was held responsible for the payment of the whole of the debt contracted by any member, and had the right to receive payment of debts owed to the collectivity" (Hayward 1959:270). The term traveled from Roman law through the Napoleonic legal codes and into nineteenth-century French political discourse. It was important to such social philosophers as Charles Fourier, August Comte and Emile Durkheim, and to Roman Catholic theologians. In early twentieth-century France, the term was favored by reformers who advocated "mutual aid and cooperation" and desired "harmonious unity" within society (Hayward 1959:282; see Liedman 1999:5-9). By 1937, a major international exposition in Paris included a "Pavillon de la Solidarité," whose guidebook called the concept "the fundamental stance of all French social policy" (Hayward 1959:282-283).

In Sweden, solidarity gained ground as a salient concept in political discourse during the early decades of the twentieth century. A 1924 syndicalist tract used the word as a call to arms for collective action by militant workers (Sjöström 1924:5). Already by this time, there was a partial divergence between two senses of solidarity: the Durkheimian sociological notion of solidarity as a description of societal cohesion, and the more normative labor-movement use of the word as an affirmation of unity in struggle.

The labor movement remained the principal political home for the concept. A 1936 congress of the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisationen), for example, considered a motion from the metal-workers union for a solidaristic wage policy. Such a policy -- later adopted -- required better-positioned workers to forgo wage gains while the wages of those in less-favored sectors were brought up.

The concept of solidarity remained important in Swedish domestic politics for the rest of the century, first as a goal of the builders of the general-welfare society (roughly from the 1930s to the 1980s) and more recently as a rallying cry of persons protesting the retrenchment of that society. The word also gained currency in foreign affairs. During the 1950s, the poverty and instability of the developing countries was widely discussed in Sweden, and international solidarity was seen as a part of the remedy. In a 1964 essay, literary critic Lars Gustafsson (1964:116-117) observed his youthful generation's "feeling of responsibility and solidarity with the world around us." The practical efforts arising from that "new feeling of solidarity," Gustafsson asserted, formed a significant part of Sweden's "spiritual climate." During the same decade, "solidarity became a key word," ethnologist Tom O'Dell (1997:188) writes, "as youths took up the fight against 'USA imperialism' and asserted themselves as supporters of the weak throughout the Global Village." Swedes provided assistance through such activities as fund-raising, journalism,

educational campaigns, demonstrations at embassies, the creation of non-governmental organizations, efforts to push the Swedish government to take action, and the promotion of speaking tours by liberation-movement representatives. They also did volunteer service in war-torn lands, sometimes offering what Abraham Lincoln a century before had called "the last full measure of devotion" (Lincoln 1953:23).

The idea of solidarity continues to be debated today, even as for many Swedes the word sounds outmoded, an echo from the radical 1970s. Often the argument is about separating a genuine from a pretended solidarity, as when journalist Kristina Hultman (1999) asserts that "a solidaristic society is measured not in crocodile tears but in how power, rights and money are distributed." Many argue that the word has been cheapened through overuse, and that it ought to be reserved for endeavors that meet a high standard of mutuality (e.g. Rist 2004: 13-14).

During interviews with Swedish social activists in the mid-1990s, I asked them what they meant by solidarity, and how they would explain the concept to someone who had never heard it before. One of the more comprehensive answers came from Åsa Geivall, then treasurer of the Sweden-Philippines Solidarity Association. Solidarity, she told me, is

"together to build a society where the point of departure is all people's equal worth; that all people should have the possibility to be able to live a good life, without the condition of [receiving] charity; that there should be extra resources for those with special needs; to not oppress other people; that all people need each other in one way or another; to have understanding for one another's different sides, and to see one another's equal worth; a society of general welfare."

Åsa's impromptu formulation reveals the way in which the notion of solidarity condenses a particular social philosophy. For her and others, the word evokes 1) a normative vision of social interdependence (requiring empathy as well as material sharing); 2) an understanding of the human condition (characterized by vulnerability and equality); and 3) a diagnosis of the sins of their opponents (market mentalities and condescending charity).

Åsa made clear that this was a vision not only for Sweden but ultimately for the whole world. Only a spirit of solidarity would promote the empathy and mutual care that a humane world would require.

Like most other Swedes I interviewed, Åsa was convinced of the value of solidarity. But it may be worth considering the arguments against solidarity. Is solidarity, in the language of ethics, "a good"?

I have already noted one potential objection: solidarity can be chauvinistic, can draw the circle of care too narrowly. This argument would not apply to Åsa's

vision -- and that of most global-justice movements -- of universal human solidarity, often coupled with sympathy for non-human creatures.

A second argument goes the other way: the notion of solidarity, at least in its universalist form, asks us to attend to too wide a world. Our moral concern begins locally and becomes utterly attenuated if expected to encompass too many people, according to this communitarian argument. A possible response is that the dream of pan-human solidarity can readily be combined with projects allowing for more local contact -- as when a high school in Brooklyn and one in Managua declare themselves to be "sister schools" whose members then learn to know one another.

Third, one can argue that sentiments of solidarity are unnecessary -- the world would do just fine without them. Bryan S. Turner asserts that "societies are held together" less by shared beliefs than by "a multitude of 'material' factors -- force, economic coercion, economic dependency, legal compulsion, economic scarcity, habituation and the exigencies of everyday life." In other words, he feels that solidarity is not needed as a "social glue." (Turner 1991) And two centuries before, Adam Smith had argued for the benign results of selfish motives: "By pursuing his own interest [the individual] frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it." [(1776) 1937:423] Is solidarity thereby unnecessary for human flourishing?

It is not hard to counter Smith's line of reasoning by looking at empirical evidence of where individual self-interest does not promote the public good. Even Thomas Friedman -- who celebrates the globalized economy in partially Smithian terms -- writes that "you dare not be a globalizer today without being a social democrat" (Scialabba 2005). The sum of individual strivings that Smith believed would produce shared flourishing also leads to lethal problems of inequality and environmental destruction, and egalitarian political movements (Friedman's "social democrat") are necessary in order to tackle these problems. Thus the need for solidarity.

2) The distinction between solidarity and charity

Intellectual historian Sven-Eric Liedman argues that the support of the dispossessed brought with it a shift in the meaning of solidarity. Among the builders of the Swedish general-welfare society in the 1930s and 1940s, solidarity was an expression of reciprocity, an ideal of mutual aid. By the 1960s, solidarity had come to mean giving help to the impoverished inhabitants of what was usually called the Third World. The element of mutuality was no longer present and the "boundary line between solidarity and charity [was] erased" (Liedman 1999:88).

Economist Kenneth Hermele (1992:31-33) traces a related but later shift in the meaning of solidarity. In the 1960s and 1970s, Sweden had "a solidarity movement which was one of the strongest in the West" and which participated in "a world-wide struggle against imperialism." There was an element of expected reciprocity: "the struggles in distant countries would contribute to our efforts to overthrow capitalism at home. . . . People's power promised to be more democratic than the

formal democracy which we enjoyed at home" (Hermele 1992:31). It was partly for this reason that many militant Swedes allied themselves with popular movements in such countries as Vietnam, Mozambique, South Africa, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Chile, Zimbabwe, and Nicaragua. Their efforts were enlivened by several victories, not least the American defeat in Vietnam.

By the 1980s, Hermele argues, the historical tide had turned: the Thatcher-Reagan era achieved the restoration -- symbolized by a strengthened World Bank and International Monetary Fund -- of a global order in which the wealthy countries controlled the poorer ones. The liberation struggles that Swedes had supported had in many cases been crushed; a few had won power but had then been transmogrified into mere "agents of state-led modernization and development" or worse (Hermele 1992:33). As a consequence, the solidarity movement shifted from shared anti-imperialist struggle to the provision of development aid. It lost some of its social-critical edge and became one of the channels, together with religious groups, through which the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) distributed international aid money. Hermele is skeptical of this role as "intermediaries in the aid business" and "executors of the official aid policy." He prefers a solidarity of mutual alliance with "trade unions, peasant organizations, women's groups, professional organizations, cooperatives, etc." (Hermele 1992:33).

Hermele and Liedman thus both lament the erosion of a distinction between solidarity and charitable aid. Solidarity entails a collaboration of equals, a co-fashioning of "our common future" (Hermele 1992:33); charity, by contrast, assumes a moral hierarchy.

This distinction is important to Swedish social thought. "There is no country where charity has a worse name" than in Sweden, former bishop Krister Stendahl told me. The comments of those I interviewed supported his assessment. "I feel that charity is some sort of subordination," social worker Rickard Sollman reflected; "it is rather humiliating . . . because it builds on [the notion] that someone must be a victim and the other shall be a helper." In like manner, Johan von Schreeb of Doctors Without Borders said, "for my part, charity is just hypocrisy . . . [it involves] no feeling that one brings about a change."

Charity has long been one of the demons that the champions of solidarity have sought to exorcise. The conceptual confrontation dates back to nineteenth-century France, where among the "Solidarists," as Hayward (1959:281-282) calls them, "it was maintained that merely to aid [destitute] individuals through the traditional Christian channels of charity was approaching impertinence because they had a claim of right, as belonging to a community striving to be both rational and ethical in its conduct towards its citizens."

The transformation of assistance "from a gift to a right" takes place when "all are recognized as potentially needy [and] dependence is no longer the curse of one particular group" (Baldwin 1990:31). This shift of perspective is hard to achieve: far easier is it "to treat the unfortunate person as though catastrophe were his natural vocation" (Weil 1956:35). But by repudiating the legitimacy of charity, the

champions of solidarity insist on such a shift; they speak a proleptic language of human equality, anticipating the day when soup kitchens and foreign aid will no longer be necessary.

In a world of gaping inequalities -- a world in which the two richest Americans were a few years ago reported to have more wealth than the entire population of Africa -- it is hard to imagine solidarity in a strict sense. What sort of alliance for common goals is possible across such divides? Is not one partner sure to be the victim, and one the helper? Today's liberal humanitarians often dress charitable aid in a smooth language of mutuality, to present themselves as democratic and egalitarian. But the Swedish debate reminds us of the distance between charity and solidarity.

3) The representation of equality

The practice of distinguishing solidarity from charity is a way of insisting on human equality, refusing the hierarchy presumed by the charitable giver. Across the chasm of differing resources, it is sometimes possible for people to act as though theirs is a collaboration between equals, devoted as they are to a common cause. One might say that such collaboration entails a staging of equality. By "staging," I mean carrying out activities "for dramatic or public effect" (Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary 1997:1854). Progressive Swedes stage equality by acting as if people are equal, even when enormous power differentials make the claim look absurd in the eyes of the larger world. Put differently, they recognize and represent a fundamental moral equality hidden behind gaping economic inequalities.

For example, equality was staged in a Swedish-Filipino "friendship project" that brought together young Filipinos and Swedes to do community-service work and social criticism in both countries. These international endeavors were conscientiously reciprocal: the group investigated possible democracy-enhancing measures in Manila shantytowns, for example, but also in Stockholm suburbs. It was assumed that the Filipinos could help the Swedes as much as the Swedes could help the Filipinos. Such mutuality sought to obliterate the stereotypes that prevail across the economic chasm: that the people of the rich world have far greater knowledge and expertise, which they should give to or share with the people of the poorer, post-colonial world.

I had absorbed that stereotype of a transfer between the savvy and the unsophisticated during my years as a teacher at Harvard, as I witnessed the procession of my idealistic former students who exited the gates of the university each June to offer their insights in such places as the Philippines and the Gambia. Before meeting the members of the Swedish-Filipino friendship project, I had never seen a consistent enactment in practice of the clichéd but momentous claim that the citizens of the less-capitalized world have as much to teach us (in super-capitalized Cambridge or Stockholm) as we have to teach them. I had never really believed that claim.

This insight also characterizes an ongoing study commissioned by the Swedish Foreign Ministry. Entitled "Reversing the Gaze: Global Perspectives on Nordic Approaches to Gender Equality," the project asks two reciprocal questions: "What can an analysis of the Nordic experience of gender equality have to offer for those working in developing and transitional economies? What experiences in these latter contexts might contribute to the efforts of Nordic policy-makers, researchers and activists?" Once again, the presumption is that those with more economic power can learn from those with less, and not simply vice versa. This is a particularly challenging assertion in matters of gender, for advancement in gender equality is a key Swedish national self-stereotype; other parts of the world are often seen as wrongheaded and backward in their patriarchal values.

Another example of the staging of equality is found in a comment by a Swedish peace activist named Per Herngren. In an interview concerning refugee policy, he declared: "Immigrants are not better people than Swedes, it would be racist to believe some such thing. They lie just as much as we do" (Möller 1995:78). Here Per turns on its head the common if unspoken assumption that many immigrants are not as well-socialized and reliable as native Swedes are. By raising the unexpected possibility that immigrants lie less often than native Swedes do -- and then protesting against it on grounds of equality -- Per pushes people to rethink their own prejudices.

On a global plane, human equality is publicly dramatized in such settings as the World Social Forum, where landless peasants and well-supported western NGO leaders can debate together on the same panels. A proposed global people's assembly would similarly enable a staging of equality, as would the expansion of widely participatory media initiatives such as the Indymedia network. Such undertakings may eventually strengthen the voices of those with fewer resources, thereby helping to build a world in which equality is material and no longer needs to be staged.

4) Internationalist patriotism

In many societies, a spirit of solidarity has emerged partly as a component of nationalism. Members of a nation, Benedict Anderson (1991:6) observed, "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion." Such images of communion crystallize in newspapers and other media, Anderson notes (1991:32-36), encouraging citizens to feel engagement with and concern for their co-nationals.

Every nationalism is buoyed by the representation of outgroups -- the others in contrast to whom the members are defined. In Sweden, for example, the imagined Mediterranean region has been a frequent rhetorical counterpoint to an imagined Sweden: the latter has often been portrayed as a "bulwark of neo-feudalism, papism, patriarchy, hierarchy, disorder, and inequality" (Trädgårdh 1999:18).

Yet Swedish national self-understanding is unusual in suppressing certain nationalist sentiments and generating instead a high degree of international engagement. For me as a foreign anthropologist, it was intriguing to observe the tradition of self-critical anti-nationalism in the land in which calling something "typiskt svenskt" ("typically Swedish") has long been a condemnation. Arne Ruth (1986:255) argued that in the decades after World War II, Swedish internationalism became an "ersatz patriotism," an alternative outlet for patriotic feelings.

Such internationalism was evident in 1959, when Sweden became the first nation to consider flight from South African apartheid to be a sufficient ground for political asylum. The same year, Sweden stood alone among Western nations in a United Nations vote supporting Algerian independence from France. Prime minister Olof Palme was one of the first prominent voices against America's war in Vietnam, and Sweden was the first western state to recognize North Vietnam. The land has nurtured countless internationalists, from the heroic diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld to the many young Swedes who today serve as peace witnesses in the occupied territories of Palestine.

The tendency to displace nationalism with internationalism has arguably waned since Sweden joined the European Union in 1995; EU membership and globalization processes have rekindled nationalism in many lands. The nation-state as a societal form will not disappear anytime soon -- and it is unclear that it should, given its usefulness as an organizer of general-welfare systems. But the Swedish example suggests that a broad internationalist patriotism is already possible.

5) Shared security

The political opposite of solidarity is neoliberalism, a movement that Pierre Bourdieu described as being "aimed at putting into question all the collective structures capable of obstructing the logic of the pure market" (Bourdieu 1998:96). Bourdieu recognized that the "pure market" is a fantasy, and he showed how the "neo-liberal utopia" generates individual insecurity and a "moral Darwinism which, with the cult of the 'winner,' establishes the struggle of all against all and cynicism as the norm of all practices" (Bourdieu 1998:102).

Neoliberalization is closely entwined with individualization. This is the process of societal change whereby each individual is left to work out more and more of life's challenges on her or his own, for better or for worse. As fewer risks are socialized (due in part to the privatization of social services), citizens must make a greater portion of fateful choices alone.

This situation leads to increased demands for individual competence, as well as a social ethic that values strategizing and, as in card games, playing one's hand well. Differences in inherited resources, skill and chance lead some individuals to flourish, and some to fall, in the all-against-all competition. The distribution of social outcomes thereby widens, with a generalization of insecurity across most social strata and a secession of the successful away from the rest of the population.

Individualization brings certain liberative elements, at least for the savviest players of the social game. But it should not be mistaken for a general trend toward increasing freedom. Rather the contrary, as sociologists Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002:4) contend: "Individualization is a compulsion, albeit a paradoxical one, to create, to stage manage, not only one's own biography but the bonds and networks surrounding it and to do this amid changing preferences and at successive stages of life, while constantly adapting to the conditions of the labor market, the education system, the welfare state, and so on." Our life journeys become "tightrope biographies," in the sense that even a single misstep or misfortune can send us tumbling off our tightropes toward unemployment and poverty (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002:3). Moreover, we are left to seek individual, private remedies to collectively produced problems and risks: "How one lives becomes a *biographical solution to systemic contradictions*" (Beck & Beck Gernsheim 2002:xxii).

The only brake on individualizing tendencies is the effort to defend or rebuild collective solutions. In Sweden, this has meant seeking to maintain and improve a comprehensive general-welfare system in the face of pressures for retrenchment. Despite substantial cutbacks, that system still shields individuals from being solo players in the social game, by de-commodifying healthcare, education, eldercare, and (to a diminishing extent) housing; by active labor-market policies; and by extensive health and safety initiatives, among other endeavors. Such collective efforts comprise every general-welfare state, but nowhere are they undertaken more successfully than in Sweden: the country is ranked first in the world on a number of international composite measures of social welfare, including the already mentioned UNDP Human Poverty Index as well as the Weighted Index of Social Progress developed by Professor Richard Estes at the University of Pennsylvania (Burke 2004). Sweden thus provides a working model of how a general-welfare state can diminish the precariousness of daily life in an age of neoliberal individualization.

Other solutions are also possible. Most of the world's people have no choice but to rely on family members for informal social insurance. Such reliance leads to dilemmas: the risk-pool is very small, and whole families can sink; women and girls are subordinated in the unpaid labor of caring for children, the ill and the elderly; family-based security increases women's dependence on male breadwinners and sex-for-security exchanges; and individuals lacking nearby family members may not receive the support they need. Reproduction may also be affected: in industrialized societies without a strong general-welfare state (notably the USA), the financial risks of family-building have been found to discourage marriage and reproduction; while in poorer agrarian settings, the hope of financial security may raise birthrates.

Should global solidarity entail some sort of global general-welfare society? Can one imagine all the world's people enjoying the same level of social security as today's Swedes? One possibility might be a closely interlinked network of nationally administered welfare systems -- for which the European Union may one day provide a model. Arguably we should settle for nothing less, as other possible solutions to global social needs -- familism, humanitarian aid, commercial providers

-- have not demonstrated the same professionalism, efficiency, equality, and comprehensiveness in covering all members of a society.

At the same time, a global welfare network should allow space for cultural difference and intercultural learning. Health care, for example, is effective or not in a particular cultural context, and what works in Lappland may not suit Senegal. Moreover, it should be possible to mix and match the successful practices of different societies. How has Cuba, with very little money, managed to organize a healthcare system so effective that Cubans are often healthier than poor citizens of the USA? How do hospitals in India draw strength from family solidarity by allowing several relatives to sleep in the same room as the patient? Could such arrangements be coupled with the technological and hygienic efficiency of northern European hospitals? Many fruitful new hybrids are possible, without giving up the egalitarian ambition of general welfare: that everyone should be protected.

6) Collective constraints

When degrees are conferred at Harvard Law School, graduates are told: "You are ready to aid in the shaping and application of those wise restraints that make men free." Such "wise restraints" are particularly necessary for a society of solidarity, to rein in those who would bully others, to prevent wasteful interpersonal competition, and to assemble resources for shared endeavors. "Any society imposes normative standards on its members," anthropologist Mary Douglas (1996:35,41) maintains, and "accountability [is] the context of community solidarity."

Sumptuary standards -- a type of collective constraint -- can solve important conflicts between individual and collective benefits. For example, women collectively would gain in mobility and orthopedic health from a norm proscribing high heels; but lacking such a norm, an individual woman is likely to lose in status competitions with her sisters by unilaterally declining to wear high heels (Frank 1999:157-158). Collective pressures can preempt costly competition, particularly with respect to goods that index social status. A lack of such pressures has enabled the sport-utility vehicle (SUV) arms race in the USA, in which Americans today are buying bigger and bigger urban jeeps, to protect their families against their neighbors' jeeps. The purchase of an SUV is "smart-for-one, dumb-for-all," as the economist Robert Frank (1999:146) put it.

Sweden has had stronger sumptuary constraints than its neighbors, leading Danes to stereotype Sweden as a land of prohibitions. Religious, temperance, labor and cooperative movements all contributed to this development. Historian David Gaunt describes a pair of sawmill workers who, during the 1890s, together purchased an expensive overcoat but did not dare to wear it for several years, for fear of arousing envy. Meanwhile, moneyed women in the south Swedish countryside did not put on their fashionable hats until they had boarded the train to the city of Malmö (Gaunt 1985:103). In the 1930s, cooperative merchants disallowed buying on credit and eschewed marketing gimmicks like sale pricing.

Today the Stockholm city government debates ways of regulating SUVs. Swedish executives are routinely criticized in the mainstream media for their high salaries and severance-pay packages; a major newspaper recently published photographs of the sixty-six ordinary citizens whose paychecks would be required to match that of Ericsson's chief executive. Such public pressures have occasionally forced corporate heads to lower their employment benefits and bonuses. Economist Bo Södersten (2000) complained that it is "only in Sweden that successful corporate leaders are pilloried and forced to apologize for having done their jobs too well."

One can read these debates over executive compensation as part of a struggle to affirm egalitarian principles by imposing collective constraints -- thus a struggle over the nature and demands of solidarity. The ideal of solidarity contains both a voluntaristic element (attentiveness to the needs of others) and a compulsory element (social pressures and laws, including taxation). In Sweden, the weight of collective constraints has traditionally fallen heavily on those who seek dominant status, those who would lord it over others. But such ambitions are hard for any society to constrain. "People are not . . . terribly anxious to be equal," James Baldwin (1985:371) once wrote, "but they love the idea of being superior."

The example of Sweden reminds us that collective constraints are indispensable to solidarity, and that the imposition of such constraints is a matter of popular strife. At a global level, solidarity will not be "a hippie paradise where the heart is the only passport and we all live happily together inside a John Lennon song," to borrow Arundhati Roy's (2002) words. It will rather require political struggle to establish an increasing density of international norms and laws, on matters ranging from the taxation of financial transactions to working conditions to war. As at the national level, solidarity at the global level will require robust regulations -- "those wise restraints that make us free."

7) Intellectual self-defense

To the extent that solidarity requires a reining in of the rich and mighty, it provokes powerful opposition. During the past three decades, that opposition has expressed itself in critiques of the welfare state, and in the ideology of "structural adjustment" imposed on post-colonial societies daring to express egalitarian social-welfare ambitions. In the United States and much of Europe, conservative foundations and think tanks have led the debate, purchasing ideological change with money from corporations and wealthy families. These organizations hire relevant intellectuals to write books, articles, and speeches, while also facilitating media access. Progressives have often succeeded in out-arguing the right wing in university settings, but usually not in the popular media. Conservative-owned media conglomerates limit access, and progressive social critics lack the public-relations infrastructure of their rivals.

The defense of a society of solidarity depends on education, media, and public political culture. In the United States, for example, there has been little popular ability to preserve the remnants of the welfare state grounded in the 1930s, because underfunded public schools generate a disempowered populace, conservative

tycoons such as Rupert Murdoch dominate the news media, and the political culture has atrophied in a self-reinforcing spiral of corruption and cynicism.

Sweden fares better in most respects, thanks to well-funded public education; lively publicly supported radio, television, and alternative media; and vibrant (if diminishing) public debate about societal choices. An important role is played by adult education, which is a child of the Swedish labor movement and of independent evangelical churches and temperance campaigns in the early twentieth century. No society invests more, per capita, in adult education; roughly one-third of Swedish adults participate annually, via study circles, municipal programs, and 150 residential folk colleges.

Only an intellectually engaged and knowledgeable populace can defend itself against the torrents of persuasion raining down from the likes of Rupert Murdoch's television satellites. That may be the single biggest challenge facing those who dream of global solidarity: how are we to counterbalance the persuasive power of economic elites intent on continued hegemony?

A sustained defense of the general-welfare society would involve mapping its successes in achieving widely shared well-being; narrating the history of the neoliberal revolution and concomitant social divestment, with attention to who bankrolled the changes; and publicizing the polling data that show wide support for general-welfare institutions in much of the world -- from South Africa, where residents oppose privatization of water resources, to even the USA, where a majority wishes for a comprehensive national healthcare system. An expanded investment in public intellectual struggles could counterbalance the idea-selling organizations of the right. On this point, a small but promising example in Sweden is the Nordic News Network (www.nnn.se), a web-based initiative to champion egalitarian institutions by assembling analyses by scholars and activists.

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Thus is solidarity born, in the interplay of thought and practice, of consciousness and institutionalization. Solidarity entails, as we have seen, a vision of mutual care and self-sacrifice for shared well-being. Champions of solidarity in Sweden distinguish it from the condescending attitudes of charity; they insist on and seek to symbolize human equality. Swedish nationalism has sometimes been transmuted into internationalism; general-welfare endeavors partially counteract neoliberal individualization; and certain collective constraints rein in those who are in a position to dominate others. Such practices face elite opposition and require continual defense in public debate. More broadly, we can say that the Swedish example points to the importance of building attitudes, habits and institutions that perpetuate a solidaristic society: solidarity needs to be materialized.

Only broadly based popular power could materialize solidarity on a global scale. As the French philosopher Simone Weil ([1955] 1973:184-185) once observed, people do not usually acquire power in revolutions; a revolution merely formalizes a shift that has already taken place gradually, such as the rising influence of the bourgeoisie vis-a-vis the nobility before the French Revolution. Institutions of solidarity in

Sweden were the long-term product of workers' mobilization and other social movements. Global solidarity, to the degree that it one day comes into being, will similarly be a harvest of hard popular labor.

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