7. Göttingen-Hildesheim-Workshop
zu Computerlinguistik und Digital Humanities

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Discourses on solidarity in times of crisis. Analyzing and explaining the understanding of solidarity in contexts of migration

Solidaritätsdiskurse in Krisen.
Analyse und Erklärung von Solidaritätsvorstellungen in Migrationskontexten

As we are at the very start of the project, the focus of this short note is on the theoretical and methodological approach of the SOLDISK consortium which combines social sciences (political science and sociology) and computational linguistics.

We present an interdisciplinary research cluster (or: a consortium) of in total four projects at the University of Hildesheim. The project is financed by the research program of Lower Saxony with the sponsoring of the VW Foundation (VW-Vorab). We just recruited the scientific collaborators and the coordinator of the cluster. Thus, what is presented here is preliminary in the way that at this time we basically can reflect conceptual and methodological ideas but, of course, no first insights and even less, any results.

What is our puzzle, our main subject or goal of analysis? And what is our methodological basis? And where is the connection to computational linguistics and digital humanities?

To briefly sketch the puzzle: Much has been said already about the heterogeneity of the notion of solidarity and the lack of conceptualization. There is broad consensus about the multidimensionality of the notion of solidarity, and that various disciplines address the concept of solidarity with quite different normative premises, conceptual or methodological approaches. This led to the situation that we have a legion of normative proposals on solidarity from different perspectives, but we rarely find systematic empirical analytical or even comparative studies. Our point of departure and main intention therefore is to present and test an approach that makes it possible to capture solidarity in an empirical way, namely reflected in the empirically identifiable and

traceable understanding of solidarity. The way to capture this empirical dimension of the understanding of solidarity is by means of a reconstruction of solidarity discourses. As our research cluster considers solidarity in times of crisis, we are especially interested to trace shifts and changes in the understanding and the discourses on solidarity that could be provoked by crises.

Our theoretical basis is that ideas on social and political principles like solidarity or justice or the common good are reflected in communication (Münkler/Fischer 2001; Münkler/Bluhm 2002). Given that principal elements of political orders are constructed in a communicative way and that central notions of politics can be defined as well as transformed in a communicative process, we postulate that social sciences should address the discursive dimension of the concept of solidarity. This kind of approach also constitutes the added-value of our research cluster.

Thus, we conceive solidarity not as a normative or ethical concept, but as a descriptive-analytical one. In this sense, we follow a theoretical approach that captures solidarity as a type of action (according to Lindenberg who states „it is not clear at all under what conditions solidarity is supposed to arise and why" (Lindenberg 1998: 103). Our research cluster therefore focusses on the citizens' and the politicians' motivational dispositions which we aim to examine by the analytical reconstruction of discursive actions and decisions.

A central element of our concept is that we distinguish three levels and in consequence we will address solidarity discourses on these three levels in order to have a more fine-grained picture. At the same time, we can compare these three levels and their possible interaction, to understand, for example, if one level influences the other.

The levels of analysis are addressed in the different projects, and thus also define the structure of the project clusters:

| Project 1 | Macro-level | Prof. Dr. Hannes Schammann |
| | Analyzing the discourse of state and political actors like the government, the chancellor, members of the parliament, ministers, opposition leaders | Political Science |

Project 2	Meso-level	Prof. Dr. Michael Corsten
	Social actors like unions, religious communities and civil society groups on national and local level as a reflection of the social capital	Sociology
Project 3	Micro-level	Prof. Dr. Marianne Kneuer
	Citizen-citizen and citizen-politicians-communication; online and offline	Political Science
Project 4	Automated discourse analysis, corpus analysis	Prof. Dr. Ulrich Heid
		Information science, computational linguistics

Our sample:

We analyze two different migration contexts in Germany: firstly, the debate on the so called ‚poverty migration' referring to EU citizens – especially Romanians and Bulgarians – into German big cities between 2012 and 2014; and secondly, the migration of third country citizens during the so called 'refugee crisis' between 2014 and 2016.

Two basic assumptions:

1) Existing understandings of solidarity can shift towards a stronger or weaker direction;

2) Existing understandings of solidarity can differentiate, for example, according to the scope: like f.e. national, European, transnational, or according to the concerned group of persons: EU-citizens or third countries, EU or outside EU.

Thus, we are interested to trace such shifts in the solidarity discourses, and the points where such differentiation takes places.

Research questions:

(1) Which understandings of solidarity can be identified?

(2) Does the communication on solidarity indicate a trend of solidarization, of desolidarization or of pluralization of solidarity concepts?

(3) On which patterns of argumentation are findings of solidarization or desolidarization based? This points to the motivational dispositions.

(4) Which scope and which references do understandings of solidarity have? Do they address a close range (local or national) or a rather a distant range (european or global)?

Research interest:
- To trace shifts of understandings of solidarity on the three levels. Do ideas of solidarity remain stable during crisis or not?
- Do the different discourses on solidarity influence each other?
- The motives of shifts of solidarity: identity-based, security-based, or economy-based. How convergent are the motives on the three levels.

Computational linguistic aspects:

Earlier empirical insights had to be quite limited so far, as they were mostly based on single-case descriptions. We expect to capture solidarity empirically and in a systematic way, across the different levels of actors and over time. If our method proves to be successful, this will open a perspective for a broader comparison between different countries, which is, according to Wallaschek (2016: 100f), a major research desideratum.

We collect texts from individual, community and policy-making actors from the three levels from the period 2012 to 2016. We adopt a mixed-methods approach where a detailed analysis of individual texts and a computational linguistic analysis of larger quantities of texts interact; a first step will be to identify contexts that can be interpreted as indicators of a given understanding of solidarity, of solidarization or desolidarization; alongside, we search for textual correlates of the motivation given by certain actors for changes in their solidarity concepts.

To understand possible shifts over time, all texts will be annotated with metadata on authors, actor groups, medium and date of publication, so that the discourses can be correlated with events from the analysed period.

Indicators in the above sense may be lexical, but also at the level of discourse construction; thus, a range of computational linguistic techniques will be employed to identify such indicators, for example the extraction of key terms and phrases, sentiment analysis, or the identification of argument patterns.