

Intergenerational Solidarity as a Moral Resource in the Face of Systemic Risks

Lessons (to Be) Learned from COVID-19

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Herrenhausen Conferenc „Climate Related Systemic
Risks – Lessons Learned from Covid-19“
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The long read

'The way we get through this is together': the rise of mutual aid under coronavirus

Amid this unfolding disaster, we have seen countless acts of kindness and solidarity. It's this spirit of generosity that will help guide us out of this crisis and into a better future.
By Rebecca Solnit

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PANDEMIC SOLIDARITY



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The New York Times

We Need Social Solidarity, Not Just Social Distancing

To combat the coronavirus, Americans need to do more than secure their own safety.

March 14, 2020

© The New York Times

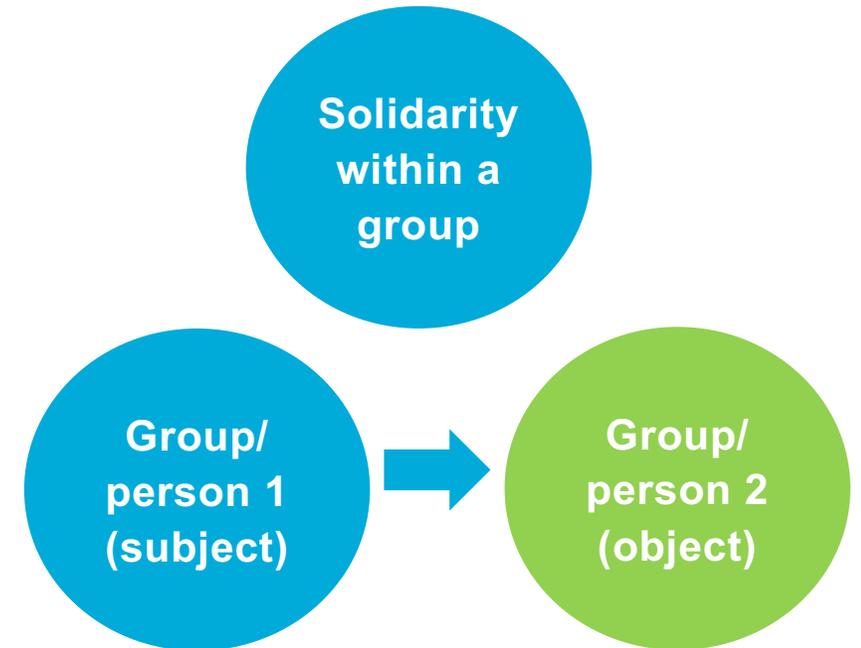
Intergenerational solidarity in the state of moral emergency

- COVID-19 as a “state of moral emergency” (Derpmann 2013)
- Solidarity as central normative reference point in public debates in the pandemic with a focus on solidarity between the generations
- **BUT:** ambiguous and contested (used to justify different and occasionally opposing normative claims)
- **Which notions of intergenerational solidarity were used in public debates during COVID-19?**
- **How can intergenerational solidarity be a moral resource in the face of systemic risks?**

Let's talk about solidarity: Elements of a contested concept

Solidarity means

- 1) making a **contribution**/carrying costs
- 2) in or towards a **group**/person
- 3) based on an **identification** due to a commonality (shared vulnerability etc.)
- 4) to achieve a **normative goal**



(Bayertz 1998, 14; Prainsack/Buyx 2011, 82; Löschke 2015; Forst 2021; Ellerich-Groppe 2023)

Let's talk about you and me: Analysis of the public media discourse



<https://www.die-zeitungen.de/aktuelles/news/article/news/vertrauen-in-zeitungen.html>

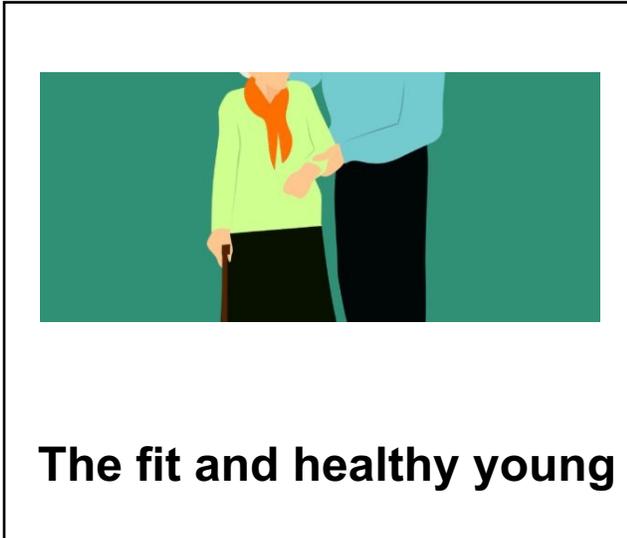
- National newspaper: WELT, Süddeutsche Zeitung & taz
- Search by keyword: “Corona” AND (“solidarity” OR “responsibility”) AND “generation” OR (“old” AND “young”)
- Timeframe: March 2020 – July 2021
- Qualitative content analysis of text documents (n=149) (Kuckartz 2018)

Let's talk about you and me: Solidarity as communal care

"Millions of mostly elder people,
now called 'risk group'"
(taz, 11 April 2020)

"We should help our elderly. [...] It
is time to show that we are also
willing to make sacrifices. That we
are in solidarity. "
(Welt, 15 March 2020)

Let's talk about you and me: Solidarity as communal care



<https://www.praefaktisch.de/covid-19/covid-19-und-die-vulnerablen-alten/>



https://de.freepik.com/vektoren-premium/grossmutter-sitzt-im-rollstuhl-auf-weissem-hintergrund_45246211.htm

identification

those affected from the personal environment

relation

one-sided dependency

contribution

#StayHomeForGrandma

Let's talk about you and me: Solidarity as mutual responsibility

"Young people have [...] a stronger need for intense encounters and for ecstatic experiences than the older generation."
(SZ; 23 October 2020)

"Younger people are less at risk from Covid-19. At the same time, the restrictions in social (night) life hit them particularly hard. It is exactly the opposite with old people. They are particularly threatened by the disease. However, they tend to suffer less from a lockdown of public life."
(taz; 15 October 2020)

Let's talk about you and me: Solidarity as mutual responsibility



The young explorers

<https://www.expat-news.com/life-style/als-junger-mensch-auf-weltreise-auch-in-der-pandemie-verlaesslich-krankenversichert-44565>



The saturated old

<https://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/6477191-young-girl-and-old-lady-antiage-time-comparison-of-old-age-and-youth-the-hourglass-shows-transience>

identification

shared vulnerability, we are all in the same boat

relation

mutual interdependence

contribution

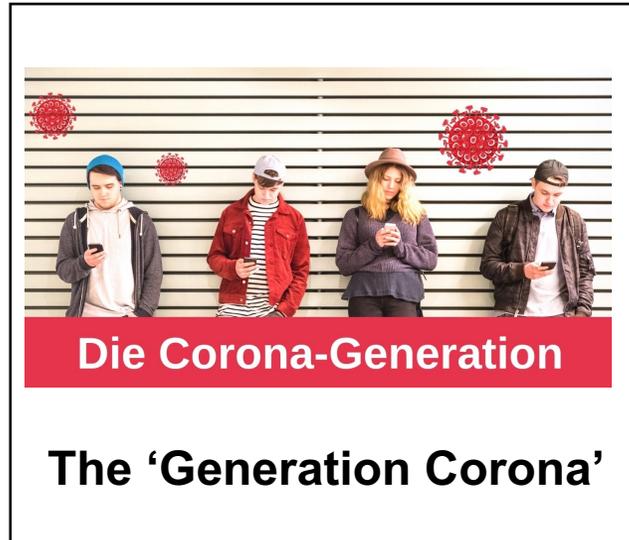
fair distribution of contributions; according to one's own possibilities and life situation

Let's talk about you and me: Solidarity as mutual responsibility

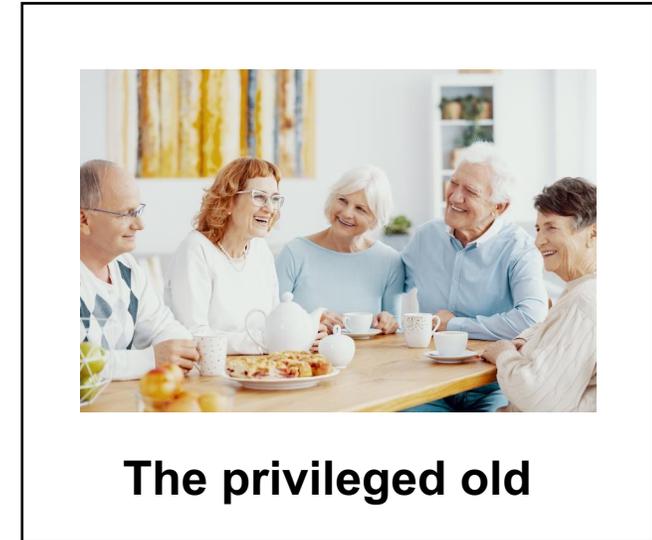
"The latest impertinence: While the vaccinated, so far mainly the elderly, can now celebrate birthdays and coffee parties again, the young continue to wait in isolation for their vaccination. [...] as a young person, one wonders what has become of the politicians' appeals for more solidarity: did they only apply in one direction? "
(SZ 25 June 2021)

"The youth is the loser of the pandemic"
(WELT; 31 March 2021)

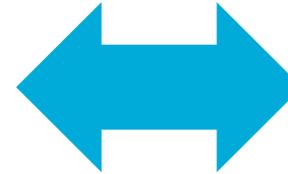
Let's talk about you and me: Solidarity as mutual responsibility



<https://www.intercommotion.de/2020/11/24/corona-generation/>



<https://www.tischdeko-shop.de/tipps-trends/kaffeekraenzchen-veranstalten/>



identification

shared vulnerability, we are all in the same boat

relation

mutual interdependence

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fair distribution of contributions; according to one's own possibilities and life situation

Let's talk about (you and) me: Responsible use of freedom as indirect solidarity

taz

THEMEN POLITIK ÖKO GESELLSCHAFT KULTUR SPORT BERLIN NORD WAHRHEIT

Isolation in der Coronakrise

Sperrt uns ein!

Belasten die Älteren die jüngere Generation in der Corona-Krise über die Maßen? Einige taz-LeserInnen wollen in die freiwillige Selbstisolation.

Die Senioren können sich eigenverantwortlich vor dem Virus schützen: Solidarität mit den Jungen heisst, sich für eine Rückkehr zur Normalität einzusetzen

Die Kosten der Corona-Krise bezahlen vor allem die Jüngeren. Sie sollen wieder frei arbeiten und wirtschaften können. Das fordert eine Petition von Seniorinnen und Senioren. Warum?

Robert Nef und Gerhard Schwarz

17.04.2020, 11.30 Uhr

subject

every mature citizen

object

no concrete personal object; common good

contribution

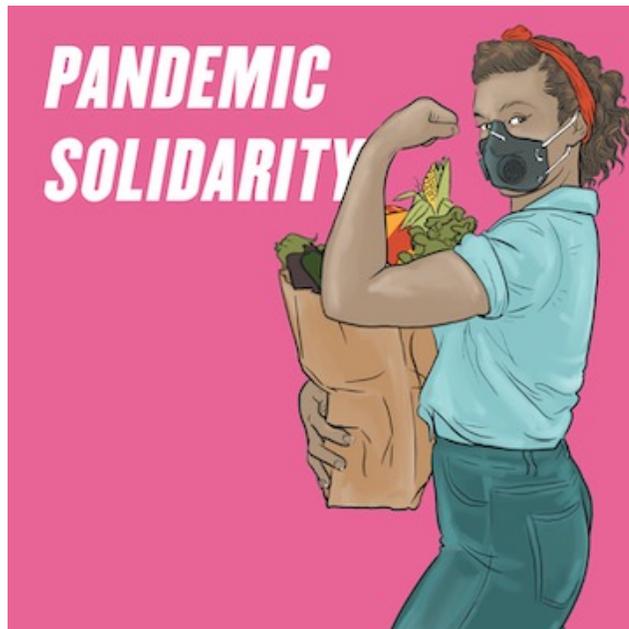
act responsible, e.g., voluntary self-isolation

Let's talk about all the good things and the bad things: Solidarity – An Ambivalent Moral Resource

**Intergenerational solidarity
as a moral resource to fight
the pandemic**



**Re-production of ageisms
and stereotypes / age as an
asymmetric category**



<https://www.plutobooks.com/blog/podcast-pandemic-solidarity/>



<https://www.websteratrye.com/blog/four-reasons-to-fight-ageism-in-2023/>

That may be: The Challenges ahead – Lessons (to be) Learned

- COVID-19 as starting point of a public (re)negotiation of the moral economy in societies (Ellerich-Groppe 2020; 2021)
- Solidarity as an important but contested moral resource
- Clear and justified attribution of responsibilities
- Limits of solidarity have to be considered
(cf. also Zimmermann et al. 2023)
 - Regarding the necessary individual resources
 - In its relation to other moral concepts
- Solidarity as an omnipresent but scarce resource

D I S T A N Z B E S U C H

Der Podcast
über Solidarität
in der Pandemie
und danach

Now on www.distanzbesuch.de
and on all podcast platforms



Literature

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