

# Trade Unions between State and Global Market: The challenge of transnational solidarity

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# Structure of presentation

1. What is (transnational) solidarity?
2. Globalisation and the challenges for labour
3. Possible strategies of transnational solidarity
4. Moving towards alternatives to neo-liberalism: the experience of SIGTUR and its Futures Commission;
5. What chances for the left?

# 1. What is (transnational) solidarity?

Ingemar Lindberg (2014):

- mutual self-interest: workers do not underbid each other;
- common identity as the result of a shared position in the organisation of production;
- solidarity is created in action; it is the result of struggle;



## 2. Globalisation and the challenges for labour:

- structuring conditions of global capitalism:
  - (1) focus on competitiveness;
  - (2) crisis tendency: crisis of overaccumulation;
  - (3) uneven and combined development: search for cheap labour, re-commodification of public sector, privatisation;

## Globalisation and the challenges for labour:

- transnationalisation of production: the rise of TNCs and the competition between different national labour movements;
- increasing fragmentation of production: outsourcing and the development of global value chains;
- increasing informalisation of work: the spread of precarious labour;
- the development of an expanded free trade regime: tensions within the global labour movement;

# Globalisation and the challenges for labour:

However:

- fragmentation of the working class is nothing new: there have always been divisions along ethnic, gender and national lines: solidarity as an outcome of struggle;
- capitalism is crisis prone and the expansion of exploitation is always contested;
- old and new power resources: (1) structural power; (2) associational power; (3) institutional power; (4) social power; (5) symbolic/moral power; (6) logistical power;



# 3. Possible strategies of transnational solidarity:

Different possibilities and strategies for different sectors:

- transnational manufacturing – GM plants in Europe: successful one-day strike in 2001 preventing forced redundancies in Luton plant, but competition between different sites over closure of Opel plant in 2014;
- services: broad alliances in struggles against water privatisation;
- large construction sites – 90000 workers from all over Europe in Berlin during the 1990s: challenge to organise workers on one particular site;
- informal workers: different forms of organisation being better at organising precarious workers, e.g. [StreetNet International](#) organising street vendors and co-ordinating them across different countries;



## Possible strategies of transnational solidarity:



### Concrete examples I: ECI on Water as a Human Right.

- (1) unique quality of water;
- (2) broad alliance of trade unions, social movements and environmental groups;
- (3) multi-scalar dynamics of struggle;



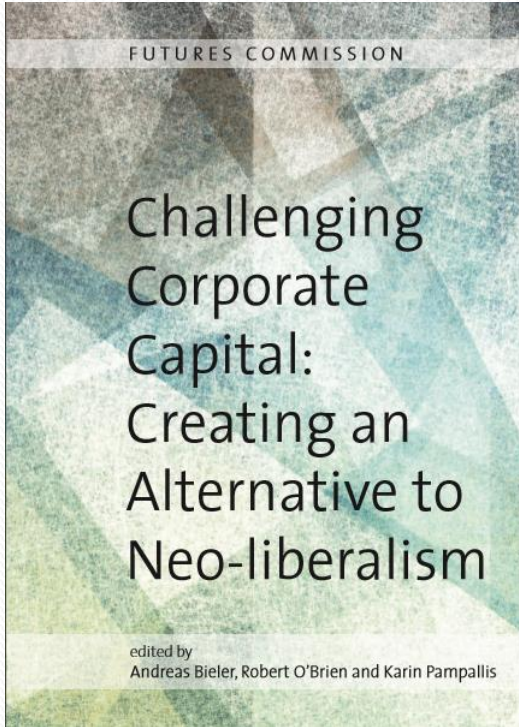
## Possible strategies of transnational solidarity:

### Concrete example II: Stop-TTIP

- (1) participation by main trade unions except for Scandinavian metalworking unions;
- (2) more than 500 participating groups;
- (3) different dynamics in different countries;



## 4. Moving towards alternatives to neo-liberalism:



### The Futures Commission of SIGTUR:

- 1) labour and tax justice,
- 2) a fair trade regime,
- 3) a democracy-driven, public sector transformation;
- 4) labour's response to the climate crisis.

## 5. What chances for the Left?

- Capitalist exploitation is always contested;
- There are new power resources available to labour movements;
- There are examples of successful transnational solidarity;
- However, effective in view of current challenges and situation?