

V.2: REVIEWS

David Featherstone: Solidarity. Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism, London-New York, Zed Books, 2012. 304 pp. – ISBN 9781848135956.

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Through his innovative work on transnational solidarities, David Featherstone has contributed to a significant rethinking of the history of internationalism. Transnational solidarities have all too long been perceived as given, whereas they should be perceived as constantly articulated, constructed and contested in political struggles spread over uneven geographies. Solidarity has often only been perceived as a means to securing rational economic interests of workers. In Featherstone's treatment, transnational solidarity is made into an inventive process and a way of producing and finding 'hidden' relations between places that have been obscured in the dominating histories of the left. The study also reveals the limits and contradictions within solidarity processes, including the shaping of solidarities across racial and gender lines, but also highlighting sometimes racist and sectarian solidarity formations.

The book is divided into four parts. Firstly, it offers a seminal theoretical discussion on solidarity; secondly, it analyses the intersections of black internationalism, anti-colonialism, and anti-fascist internationalisms during the 1930s; thirdly, it looks at solidarity articulated in the context of the Chilean coup in the 1970s and the European nuclear disarmament movement during the 1980s, and, lastly, it explores the counter-globalisation movements and the debate on 'climate justice' in the context of neo-liberalism, including the Battle of Seattle, the actions of the World Social Forum, and the protest movement at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2010. The diverse themes are united by Featherstone's efforts to contribute to the history of internationalisms from below. The great strength of the book is established by Featherstone's ability to deliver 'hidden histories' of solidarity and to reveal its long transnational traditions. The focus of the book is thus directed to particular events and movements when solidarities were produced and contested.

Featherstone has the ability to (re)introduce a number of relevant approaches to the study of solidarity. First, solidarity is defined as a 'transformative relation', which places focus on the relation between places, activists, and different social groups. Second, the importance of studying the practice of solidarity as something that can be forged from below is highlighted. By altering the focus from political elites of the left, it makes it possible to scrutinise various subaltern and marginal groups as significant shapers of solidarity practices, both past and present. Thirdly, the book actively questions the primacy of methodological nationalism and highlights instead the relevance of diverse exchanges, networks and linkages that can not be limited to national borders. Finally, and most significantly, Featherstone combines the study of solidarity with the study of uneven power relations and geographies. These 'hidden

geographies' form in Featherstone's presentation an integral part of the 'subaltern geographies of connection in constructing internationalisms'.

Looking at the key concepts of the study, Featherstone makes a strong case for describing internationalism as a form of 'subaltern cosmopolitanism'. Whereas internationalism and cosmopolitanism are usually seen as opposites, Featherstone argues that they instead should be viewed as being in a significant relation to each other especially in the case of 'cosmopolitan experiences' of subaltern groups that, Featherstone contends, significantly have shaped the practices of internationalism. Consequently, it is suggested that the concept of subaltern cosmopolitanism could be useful in the analysis of various forms of labour mobility such as migration, exile, and seafaring.

In the spirit of Doreen Massey and David Harvey, Featherstone highlights the significance of looking at place-based politics as not merely a form of local articulations and struggles, but to see them as part of global and transnational processes. Places are here not perceived as isolated or bounded, but the product of a variety of connections and relations. Significantly, these place-based relations across national and continental boundaries are created in order to contest and alter the terms of already existing relations in forgotten 'geographies of connection'.

By especially looking at the role of maritime workers and port cities during the 1930s Featherstone is able to deliver a convincing image of not only ports as places of radical articulations against faraway atrocities, but also as places where the international relations between different countries are directly challenged. This becomes explicitly clear in the case of Italy's war against Abyssinia/Ethiopia in 1935 when especially black maritime workers could through their solidarity actions contest the established relations e.g. between Britain and Italy through boycotts of Italian ships in British ports. The solidarities articulated were not only concerned with the construction of political identifications, but described by Featherstone as direct 'interventions in the material relations between places'. Featherstone's further treatment of the intersection of black internationalism, anti-colonialism, and international anti-fascism during the 1930s is of especial significance.

In another example, Featherstone notes how such acts as singing anti-apartheid songs in Glasgow not only produced a political connection to South Africa, but also led to the contestation of place-based relations in Glasgow as local (white) South Africans were enraged by the expressed solidarities. The traditional focus on solidarity has been that of a rational relation. This rather crude notion is forcefully contested by Featherstone through his emphasis on connections of a more emotional character and the way that passionate links of solidarity are mobilised through the evoking of strong feelings.

In conclusion, the study brings in a very prolific way the latest theoretical insights into the study of transnational solidarity. Featherstone's inclusion of emotions, places and spaces, networks and political imaginaries in the analysis of solidarity is of crucial importance. Featherstone's definition of transnational solidarity as a form of subaltern cosmopolitanism seems especially useful and hence revitalises the contemporary study of internationalism in a form that maintains a healthy distance to the traditional histories of the left.

On a more critical note, the emphasis on analysing flows, networks and translocal imaginaries of activists and subaltern groups risks to overlook the significance of hierarchies, structures and formal organisations that regulate and steer the forms of action. For example, in the chapters dealing with black internationalism and anti-colonial solidarities of the 1930s

the presentation would have benefited from including the latest research that more clearly shows the strong linkages and influence of Moscow on activists such as George Padmore and subaltern groups working in Europe and beyond since the passing of the 'Wilsonian moment' in Versailles 1919 that steered many of the anti-colonial activists and activists of transnational solidarity to Moscow instead. On the other hand, Featherstone's theoretical advances and focus on place-based politics opens precisely this opportunity for future research: A feasible method to analyse the intersections of the flows, emotions, connections and imaginaries together with the hidden geographies of international organisations and hierarchical institutions. It seems vital that both sides are included in order to see what really originates 'from below' and how they are influenced by other forces that also shape the subaltern experiences of cosmopolitanism and internationalism.