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Abstract

In dieser Arbeit fokussiere ich mich auf sechs verschiedene Positionen zu struktureller Ungerechtigkeit. Der erste Teil meiner Arbeit beschäftigt sich damit, wie wir Verantwortung für struktureller Ungerechtigkeit zuschreiben sollen. Ich befasse mich mit vier Positionen in der Literatur zu struktureller Ungerechtigkeit und analysiere diese, indem ich drei Beispiele auf deren Modelle anwende. Die drei Beispiele sind die folgenden: das Wohnungsnot-Beispiel und das Beispiel der textilen Ausbeutungsbetriebe, beide Beispiele wurden von Iris Marion Young eingebracht, und das Beispiel des Widerstands gegen Diskriminierung und Segregation durch Rosa Parks, eingeführt von Mara Marin. Die vier Positionen, die ich durch diese Beispiele analysiere, sind von Iris Marion Young, Robin Zheng, Mara Marin und Jude Browne. Im zweiten Teil meiner Masterarbeit untersuche ich die Verbindung zwischen struktureller Ungerechtigkeit anhand von Iris Marion Youngs Arbeit „Five Faces Of Oppression“. Außerdem präsentiere ich zwei weitere Positionen in der Debatte um strukturelle Ungerechtigkeit, von Maeve McKeown und Alasia Nuti, welche beide verschiedene Arten von struktureller Ungerechtigkeit kategorisieren. Schließlich gebe ich meine Einschätzung ab, welches der präsentierten Modelle strukturelle Ungerechtigkeit am besten mildert.

In this paper I focus on six different positions on structural injustice. The first part of my paper is concerned with how we should attribute responsibility for structural injustice. I look at four positions in the structural injustice literature and analyze them by applying three examples to their respective models. The three examples are the following: the housing problem and the sweatshop example, both introduced by Iris Marion Young and Rosa Parks' resistance against segregation introduced by Mara Marin. The four positions I'm analyzing through these examples are by Iris Marion Young, Robin Zheng, Mara Marin and Jude Browne. In the second part of my thesis, I explore the link between structural injustice and oppression through Iris Marion Young's work "Faces Of Oppression". Furthermore, I present two additional positions in the structural injustice debate by Maeve McKeown and Alasia Nuti, who both categorize different types of structural injustices. Finally, I will give my assessment which of the presented models fares best in alleviating structural injustice.

Introduction

This paper is structured along the lines of the following questions¹: 1. How should we attribute responsibility for structural injustice? 2. But what is structural injustice, anyway?

The first part of my thesis concerns four different positions of how to attribute responsibility to structural injustice. I will compare how each model in respect to how it deals with three examples of structural injustice from the literature: the housing problem (Iris Marion Young's example), the sweatshop example (Young's example) and Rosa Parks' resistance against discrimination and segregation (Mara Marin's example).

Considering the scope of this paper I see it as a necessary restriction to divide the structural injustice debate into two groups of positions. The first group consists of positions by philosophers like Iris Marion Young, Mara Marin, Robin Zheng and Jude Browne. The common denominator of the first group is that although they give different examples for structural injustices, they are not different in type.

The second group of positions categorize different types of structural injustice and are represented by philosophers like Alasia Nuti and Maeve McKeown. Nuti focuses mainly on the historical context of structural injustices and differentiates between three different structural groups: historical structural groups (e.g. people who are gay, lesbian or women), non-historical structural groups (e.g. homeless people or veterans) and historical groups with structural dynamics (e.g. nations) (cf. Nuti 2024, 221). McKeown categorizes three types of structural injustices: pure (e.g. climate change), avoidable (homelessness) and deliberate (sweatshop conditions) (cf. McKeown 2024a, 80-82).

In the first chapter I will discuss four models which deal with structural injustices and show how they would work through applying them to three examples of structural injustice. These models are alternatives to the current model of attributing blame and responsibility in a legal context (which Iris Marion Young coined the liability model, cf. Young 2011, 97, 105).

In section 2.1. I will contrast the liability model with Iris Marion Young's social connection model. Young claims that the liability model consists in the practice of assigning responsibility for harm to agents (either a person or a collective agent, like a corporation).

¹ I thank my supervisor Paulina Sliwa for suggesting that structure.

The agent is considered guilty, if it can be shown that their actions are causally connected to the harmful outcome and that the agent acted voluntarily and with a reasonable amount of knowledge about the situation.

If the agent can show, that although his actions contributed to or even caused the harm inflicted, but they name reasons, why they were either to be excused for being ignorant (e.g. limited knowledge) or that their action was not voluntary (reasons like these: they were being coerced, forced, enticed or simply in a state, where they could not make a rational decision), their responsibility will be mitigated or the case against them will be dismissed after all. (Cf. Young 2011, 97.)

However, Young is convinced that the liability model is not sufficient, when it comes to structural injustices, because with structural injustices we cannot pinpoint exactly who is solely responsible.

Secondly, I will present Robin Zheng's model of moral criticism. Zheng makes a distinction between formative and summative criticism. Summative criticism is sanctioning or rewarding certain agents for meeting given standards (forms of sanctions would be: expulsion or failing and forms of rewards: certification, better placement for future positions) (cf. Zheng 2021, 511). Summative criticism is for Zheng tied to our judgements of blameworthiness: Only if we are confident that someone is blameworthy and has violated a moral standard we can sanction him (cf. Zheng 2021, 512).

Formative criticism on the other hand, takes the form of feedback on a performance, where the goal is not to determine whether an agent failed or succeeded to reach a certain threshold or standard, but rather give the agent advice on how to improve even though she is limited by outside factors and cannot live up to the ideal standard (cf. Zheng 2021, 511). Robin Zheng is convinced that only formative criticism should be employed in cases of structural injustice (cf. Zheng 2021, 531.)

I will explore Mara Marin's commitment model and her notion of a plurality of publics. Marin's concept of commitment is based on open-ended actions and obligations, which are not clearly defined at the outset, but develop and change over time (cf. Marin 2017, 14). Marin compares her account of commitment to close relationships, like friendships or spousal relationships (cf. Marin 2017, 25).

The second part follows Young's characterization of structural injustice in virtue of the term domination in her work "Five Faces Of Oppression" and then discusses Alasia Nuti's and Maeve McKeown's categorization of structural injustice.

In my concluding remarks I will sum up how Young, Zheng, Marin, Browne, Nuti and McKeown deal with structural injustice in their respective models and give my assessment which of these models fares best in alleviating structural injustice.

2. How to attribute responsibility for structural injustice?

2.1. Liability model vs. social connection model

Young describes the liability model as a model with which someone can ascribe blame and responsibility to an agent, who meets the conditions of having caused harm through his actions without having justified excuses. On this account valid excuses for causing harm would be limited knowledge and thus being excusably ignorant. Another excuse would be that the actions were not taken voluntarily. (Cf. Young 2011, 97.)

I thought of these two examples: An example for an action that is excused, because there was coercion involved, comes up in life-threatening circumstances. When someone threatens your life with a gun and tells you he will kill you, if you do not steal something for him, you are not blameworthy even if you steal, because you were blackmailed to do so. An example for an action, which is excused because of limited knowledge, in the area of car accidents. If you did not realize that someone tampered with the breaks of your car and you then cause an accident, where someone else gets hurt, you are not blameworthy for the damage and the injuries, because you could not have been expected to know that your breaks had been tampered with.

Following quote sheds a light on Young's characterization of the liability model:

Under what I call the liability model of responsibility I include all such practices of assigning responsibility under the law and in moral judgement that seek to identify liable parties for the purposes of sanctioning, punishing, or exacting compensation [...]. Despite their differences these practices share an interest in identifying particular agents as the liable ones and are generally backward-looking in their purpose. (Young 2011, 98)

Young makes it clear that she subsumes every practice in moral and legal judgement, which shares the common aspect of trying to find liable agents (no matter whether the goal is just to punish, to compensate victims or both), under the term liability model. Usually that means that this sort of practice is backward-looking, because an agent has to have inflicted harm already in order to be sought out and punished for it. One could argue though that it is forward-looking too, because the punishment by the judge should not only sanction the crimes committed, while compensating the ones already harmed, but also prevent the agent from committing crimes in the future. Although this would be the ideal case and it often does not turn out that way, the success or failure rate of the justice system in particular is not really part of my topic.

I agree with Iris Marion Young when she emphasizes that the underlying concept of the liability model as attributing guilt, blame or liability is invaluable to the justice system and for a sense for what is morally right in society in general. This is important, because we have to treat agents with respect, meaning to acknowledge the autonomy of the individual, while at the same time expecting every individual to not abuse their power or authority and showing respect to the other agents. When it comes to putting this concept of responsibility and liability into action Young is convinced that clarity in rules of evidence is essential in justifying a causal connection between the agent, but also in the evaluation of intentions, motives and ramifications of actions. (Cf. Young 2011, 98-99.)

While the liability model is still the main model which is used in law enforcement as well as politics, which is appropriate in many cases where blameworthy agents are rather easily identified, the liability model is ill-equipped to account for structural injustice, precisely because in structural injustices there are no agents to be identified, who are solely to blame for the injustice inflicted (cf. Young 2011, 99f). Iris Marion Young illustrates this with the following example (cf. Young 2011, 43f):

Sandy, a single mother, decides to move because the developer who bought the apartment building, where Sandy's flat is in, wants to turn the apartment building into a condominium complex. The rent was too high anyway and the building was in poor shape in general, so Sandy has very good reasons to move. Even someone who works at the apartment finding service puts in a lot of effort to help Sandy find an apartment. Although she initially had planned to rent a flat not too far away, so that the bus line that gets her to her work place (a suburban mall) wouldn't take up too much of her time every day, unfortunately most of the apartments are either on the other side of the city or she deems them to be in a neighborhood that is dangerous to her children. She realizes that her best option is to invest some of the money she wanted to spend on rent for car payments. She then applies for a housing subsidy program but gets told the average time she has to wait for a flat is two years. After searching for two months and already in fear of being evicted soon, finally she decides to take a one-bed room apartment, 45 minutes driving distance from work. The problem is that she has to pay the rent of three months upfront. She was not aware that paying several rents in advance was a common policy of landlords and cannot afford it, because of the car payments. Now she and her kids not only cannot live in the new flat, but probably will end up homeless, because they will get evicted from their old home. (Cf. Young 2011, 43-44.)

The point of this example is to show that although we would say someone like Sandy suffered an injustice, it was not because a certain agent or several agents acted in a reckless, malicious or negligent way, it is an injustice which is structural. Although in the case of the developer Young does not go into much detail, let us suppose he is also not blameworthy for the following reasons: He has enough capital to buy the building, but not enough capital to maintain all the flats of the building to a satisfactory standard. That is, if he leaves the flats for rent. His best option it seems is turning the building from an apartment building into a condominium complex, where his clients can buy the flats he could not otherwise maintain.

The real estate agent, who helped Sandy find a home, was very eager to support her. He made sure to arrange meetings that would work for her (cf. Young 2011, 43) and he was even putting in extra time at his own cost to find an apartment for Sandy and her children (cf. Young 2011, 46). Sandy's old landlord has to maintain several buildings and due to the rise of the financial costs, he cannot maintain them the way he should. In order to maintain the other buildings, he owns, he thinks his best option is to sell one building (cf. Young 2011, 46). That is why he is selling the building Sandy lives in.

Sandy's new landlord is not blameworthy for Sandy's plight, because the policy of asking for several rents in advance is a useful insurance policy, which was set in place a long time before. It usually helps both parties involved to cover the cost for potential damages occurring in the first few months of the tenants living there.

The city housing administrator has no real play here too. She told Sandy that the average time to wait for a flat is two years, but not out of spite or ill will, but because this really is the waiting time. Additionally, she does not get to change or abandon the rules. It's not up to her to decide who should get the next flat. It takes a lot of time, effort, money and resources to create an apartment complex. Depending on which flats are available and how long the architects are already planning, an average waiting time of two years for a new flat seems reasonable. Sandy is not blameworthy, because she has an overload of burdens. She does not have a lot of time, money or resources and it is too much to ask of her to be knowledgeable about every detail of landlord policies. Given her limited time and knowledge her investment in car payments is reasonable, because she cannot take the bus from the flat she chose to her work place. Moreover, her decision in choosing the flat was justified, insofar as she had to consider her two top priorities: keeping her children safe from danger and having limited capital.

I showed that none of the agents involved are directly blameworthy for Sandy's imminent eviction. However, Sandy is also not just unlucky. It is an unjust structure which puts people like Sandy in jeopardy. Or as Young put it:

In principle, moreover, structural injustice may be ongoing even when some of the participating actors have done nothing that existing practices of criminal, legal, or moral blame or fault-finding would identify as wrong. Those who participate by their actions in producing and reproducing structural injustice are usually minding their own business and acting within accepted norms and rules. They bear responsibility for unjust outcomes, which they may regret, without being specifically at fault. [...] When we judge that structural injustice exists, we are saying precisely that at least some of the normal and accepted background conditions of action are not morally acceptable. (Young 2011, 106–107)

Young's answer to the problem of socially accepted "background conditions of actions" justifying actions, which turn into and solidify structures which are unjust, is the social connection model.

The social connection model is based on a notion of shared responsibility. Young believes that because we are contributing with our actions to unjust structures, even if not intentional, we are to be held accountable to do our share to transform the structure. Whereas in the liability model there has to be a direct line from an isolated action to the harm that is done by one or several agents in order to prove that agents are responsible and blameworthy, in the social connection model the agents are obliged to consider and anticipate future harms resulting from the structure they are establishing. Additionally, they also have to try to avoid or at least mitigate the harm as much as possible, otherwise they are blameworthy. (Cf. Young 2011, 109–110.)

The developer contributes to unjust structures by turning the apartment building into a condominium complex. Instead of making sure that all people have flats to rent, he contributes to an unjust structure, which favors those who already have a lot of money. It might not be his intention, but now that the building is a condominium complex, investors will come in and use their money to buy condominiums without really living there. They will see the condominiums just as an investment to increase their capital. This in turn will gentrify the area and prices will rise for everyone who is living there.

The real estate agent who went out of his way to help Sandy find an apartment might contribute to an unjust structure, by spending more time (even his free time) on looking for apartments for Sandy. This is unfair, because surely there are other clients of his, who are in a very similar situation to Sandy and do not get the same kind of attention and help.

Sandy's old landlord is similarly blameworthy as the developer. By selling the building to a developer, who turns the building into a condominium complex, he contributes to the worsening of inequality in the housing market. Most, if not all his former clients will be forced to move, because they cannot afford to buy the flat, they are currently living in. Additionally, investors will come in to buy condominiums as investments and the area will eventually become gentrified.

Sandy's new landlord contributes to the unjust structure by continuing to stick to a policy of asking for the payment of several rents upfront, even though this favors those, who have more money than others. By assuming everyone knows about this policy and not offering help for those, who don't have the means to pay several rents upfront (by pointing to information on possible subsidization or government assisted funding), he makes his flats less accessible to lower-income families and thus contributes to the inequality in the housing market, even though that is not his intention.

The city housing administrator doesn't contribute to the unjust structure. As already mentioned, she doesn't do anything wrong by telling Sandy that the average waiting time for a flat is 2 years. On the contrary, if she had given Sandy false hope and promised her a flat in an unrealistic time frame, she would have contributed to Sandy's plight. By promising something, which she could not control, she would have worsened Sandy's situation, because if Sandy decided to rely on that promise, the outcome would have been that Sandy, and her kids would have eventually ended up homeless even earlier.

Young's social connection model is based on a form of shared, political responsibility, which is distinct from the notion of an inner moral compass or juridical responsibility. We should not confuse shared responsibility with collective responsibility either, because as Young pointed out, while collective responsibility is usually used as a concept, where a group (e.g. a corporation or enterprise) is responsible, without every group member necessarily being responsible, shared responsibility addresses every member of a relevant group and asks of each

member to do their fair share (cf. Young 2011, 110). Even those who are affected by unjust outcomes of the structure are not excused and have to take responsibility. Young goes even further and suggests that those who are directly affected by the unjust structure could be great candidates for leading positions in working to find improvements to an ongoing injustice for two reasons: their interests are most affected and thus they are in a unique position, which allows them to have access to a better understanding of the situation than the rest of the agents (cf. Young 2011, 113). There is another reason, why I think that those directly affected agents should not be just seen as victims, is that this form of pity can be dangerous, because it can rob them of their agency.

Moreover, often these agents who live under poor conditions have helpful strategies when it comes to counteracting the effects of structural injustices. People, like Sandy who know what it's like to lose their home, have helpful insights concerning what's going wrong and what would change things.

Furthermore, Young claims that it is a mistake to view institutions of state and government as separate entities, working independent from us agents, instead we should see these institutions as intermediaries, which can only set in motion real changes, if the public contributes to those desired transformations (cf. Young 2011, 112).

Her social connection model is built around a specific notion of solidarity, which Young based mainly on Jacques Derrida's work *Politics of Friendship*. The kind of solidarity Young has in mind, is one where the agents involved strive for just social institutions and practices. These agents share a responsibility to one another. I understand Young's notion of solidarity as having three main aspects: The agents strive for an ideal, they give a promise to continue to refine and work towards that ideal and they engage in a mutual exchange. (Cf. Young 120f.)

While Derrida focuses on the relationship between political and legal institutions and the agent, who has to answer to these authorities, Young deviates from this by giving the priority to the foundation of a public with members who hold each other responsible for their actions and omissions (cf. Young 2011, 122). What Young seems to suggest is that it should not be the first choice to settle every conflict of interests between agents in a court hearing. Instead we should focus on creating a public, in which such conflicts can be settled without filing charges or having to bear the costs of a trial.

In Sandy's case I can think of roughly three ways how Young's line of argumentation in applying the social connection model could go. The first and second option of argumentation are similar to each other. They both involve agents agreeing on terms of how to prevent homelessness. The first option would be that agents agree on a policy where people who are being evicted or are in danger of being evicted get a higher priority or rank when it comes to housing subsidy programs. The second option would be that a group of agents could invest in an institution which provides financial support, for people in need like Sandy and her kids, so that they can afford the deposit of three rents upfront. I am confident that the first and second option are very much in line with Young's understanding of solidarity, which involves improving the status of social institutions.

Another option could be to encourage friends, family and close acquaintances of Sandy to start taking political action, organize a demonstration or even better start a petition (e.g. via a website) which would draw attention to Sandy's situation and those in similar circumstances. Money could be collected too, but most importantly enough signatures should be collected, so that the housing problem cannot be ignored by the government.

There is another illuminating example, Young gave us for structural injustice: the sweatshop example. Young pointed out that the global clothing industry is structured in a way which obscures who is responsible for sweatshop conditions, because the big companies have no legal obligation towards the smaller ones, while there are a lot of smaller companies, who have a big workload to fulfill due to orders by the big companies (cf. Young 2011, 129). Moreover, they have to compete against other companies and work with a small budget (cf. Young 2011, 129).

I agree with Young's claim that the sweatshop example is such a case, where agents are already involved and can get involved to alleviate the struggle of people who work in the apparel industry by initiating and continuing public discussion and thus improving institutions and practices (e.g. through applying pressure through political action) (cf. Young 2011, 125). In Bangladesh some progress was made concerning the fire and building safety in the garment industry.

The Bangladesh Accord, signed by over 220 corporations as a response to the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in 2013, which left 1,134 people dead and even more people getting injured. Despite these efforts, while around 220 companies signed the 5-year contract from 2013 to 2018, only around 190 companies signed the Transition Accord in 2018 (cf. Bangladesh Accord). What makes it worse is that as McKeown says, the Accord reveals the double-sided face of power:

The Accord demonstrates the Janus-faced nature of power. On the one hand, [...] it effected structural change by improving fire and building safety across the industry, improving workers' safety. On the other hand, it allowed retailers to appear to be doing good, when they continued to exercise episodic power for ill. [...] [T]hey paid less to Bangladeshi suppliers than before the Accord and expected faster lead times. The Accord only addressed fire and building safety, not working hours, wages or workers' rights to unionize. (McKeown 2024b, 86f)

The Accord changed the lives of millions of workers when it came to fire and building safety. However, it also enabled retailers to improve their image, while they worsened the conditions for workers concerning wages, unions and working hours. Although the Accord helped to keep the workers safe from fire and collapsing buildings, the same cannot be said about safety and rights of the workers in other respects (safety from sexual harassment, abuse, child labor). Also, the Accord only applied in Bangladesh, no other country, where clothes are produced and not even every corporation which produced in Bangladesh signed the Accord. For example, Walmart and Gap did not. Walmart and Gap established their own initiative called the Alliance, which was much more lenient concerning fire and building safety (cf. McKeown 2024b, 87).

In conclusion, although there have been some improvements of the working conditions (like around fire-safety-regulations) many workers still face the same issues that Young described as typical for workers in the apparel industry:

The factory workers, who are mostly female and often underage (kids of thirteen or fourteen years) suffer sexual harassment, work ten-to-sixteen-hour days, often do not have access to clean water and very few bathroom breaks. If they try to complain or organize a protest, they are being blacklisted, beaten and sometimes even killed. They work under intense heat, with no ventilation and with sparse electric light. (Cf. Young 2011, 127.)

Female workers thus often prefer working from home, despite getting paid less and working more hours. The three main reasons for this are that they do not have to travel to get to work, they can stay with their kids and the men can pretend that their wives do not work. In addition to this, the other family members (kids and parents) help with the work too. (Cf. Young 2011, 128f)

Young sees that there are different kinds of responsibility at play when it comes to the sweatshop example: Some agents are directly responsible for the sweatshop conditions, because they are in a position of power and thus are blameworthy for their contribution to structural wrongs in a liability sense. Others who are only indirectly responsible (e.g. by buying items produced under poor working conditions) have a political responsibility to call for action to improve the situation of the workers but are not blameworthy in the liability sense (Cf. Young 2011, 126).

Candidates for agents who are directly responsible for the structural injustice of sweatshop conditions are the bosses of higher up companies as well as those of the smaller companies and local government officials. The bosses of the companies are blameworthy because they are the ones who should be legally obliged to look after the well-being of their employees. The government officials should provide guidelines under which these companies should operate and impose sanctions if they do not follow the rules. Additionally, both the government officials and the heads of the companies should be in exchange with worker unions and thus listen to the wants and needs of the workers, instead of engaging in ‘anti-union activity’ as Young called it (cf. Young 2011, 127). The customers of these companies who buy T-shirts, shoes and other clothing, should create a public discussion about human rights violations which occur in the production of these items. They should support the worker unions by signing petitions, donating money and informing themselves about how the clothes that they wear every day are produced and how to spread the word on social change.

Another example which was introduced by Mara Marin is the resistance of Rosa Parks (cf. Marin 2024, 42). Rosa Parks did not give up her seat for a white person, which the majority of the white population in the US at the time considered a violation of segregation. Back then, in the 1950ies USA, black people and white people were segregated in almost all areas of everyday life, even on the bus. The back of the bus was designated for black people, the front for white people. Rosa Parks resisted the segregation and sat down in front.

As more and more white people got on the bus, the bus driver told Rosa Parks to leave the bus. However, Rosa Parks refused to leave. She was later arrested and lost her job. However, her resistance and her involvement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott eventually cost the bus company a lot of money and paved the way for social change. It led to the integration of public transportation in Montgomery. (Cf. Norwood 2017, “Rosa Parks”.)

Young would call Rosa Parks’ action, which was an intentional omission, an exemplary action which contributed to the improvement of how the US society is structured as a whole. Her insistence on her right to equality was not only recognized by her supporters, but also paved the way for other civil rights activists. Although Parks faced adversity herself, she took a leading role as part of a group who faced and still faces structural injustice. By committing to not give up her seat to a white person, despite that it was deemed obligatory by the white majority, she challenged the power structures and ignited a public discussion.

Furthermore, Young would emphasize that her supporters also played an important role by living up to what I earlier mentioned as Young’s ideal of solidarity. One might object that expecting Sandy, or the textile workers to lead the movement for change is too much. Why burden them any further when they are already the ones carrying the biggest workload? Why burden them when they are victims of structural injustice? Instead, we should focus on those in power (company bosses and landlords) and those who have more room for deciding otherwise (customers of cheap clothing). I grant that this argument has a lot of pull, and I see its benefits. If we instead manage to put pressure on those who are already in charge, we not only shift the focus on those who are most responsible for the ongoing injustice, we also have the best chances of stopping the injustice. I would respond that I agree with the argument overall, but I still maintain that it is vital to listen to the testimonies of victims of structural injustice to be able to set change in motion. That doesn’t mean that I don’t think the landlords and company owners should lead the movement for change, it just means that the testimonies of factory workers and people facing homelessness are key to understand what went wrong and what changes are most helpful.

2.2. Robin Zheng's model of moral criticism

In contrast to Young's social connection model, Robin Zheng's model of moral criticism is at its core aspirational. This means it is mainly concerned with ideals that we should strive for, not with obligations. While Young's social connection model is action-oriented and rooted in obligations to take part in social change, Zheng's approach is to give formative feedback on how to improve one's behavior in respect to structural injustices. The difference between obligations and aspirations is that the former are binary in terms of whether someone managed to meet the obligation, while aspirations come in degrees². According to Zheng, the main problem with structural injustices is that there are so many of them, so that we are not able to discern where our individual failures lie. Every time we decide on what to eat, which clothes we buy or how to properly take care of family members who are in need, we use and acquire resources, which we can only obtain, if we rely on exploitative structures on a global scale. Moreover, Zheng seems to suggest that there is an overload of burdens, because even if we tried to try find our particular failures in this complex system of interconnected factors, we would not succeed. These different forms of structural injustice seep in, even if we intend to fight them, because we strengthen structural injustices by participating in an unjust structure through our everyday actions:

[...] [I]t is simply not possible to keep track of the number of culpable failures to discharge responsibilities here. There exist so many structural injustices and virtually every one of our everyday actions would need to be performed differently to prevent them, that it is nonsensical to try and isolate a particular failure such that addressing it would count as 'discharging' our duty. Homelessness, hunger, unemployment, exploitation, discrimination, not to mention war, occupation, imperialism – all of these are structural injustices that command our moral attention. Each of us is causally implicated in these injustices through the ineluctable everyday actions we perform to provide for ourselves and others: the very acts of feeding, clothing, sheltering and caring oblige us to participate in globally exploitative structural processes. (Zheng 2019, 111)

The example 'war' seems misplaced, because except for a civil war, the agents who are the most blameworthy are rather easily identified (presidents, advisors of the government, heads of state, high ranking military officers). Although I do not think all the examples Zheng mentions could count as structural injustices, her claim still holds for homelessness, hunger, exploitation. I agree with Zheng that the world we live in right now is structured in a way that our everyday actions of caring, clothing and feeding are embedded in exploitative processes on a global scale.

² I thank my supervisor Paulina Sliwa for this contribution, because she mentioned it in her seminar Structural Injustice in the summer semester of 2023.

We should not shy away from our moral obligation to fair distribution of responsibility, which means that although there are many agents involved, that some agents have more responsibility to bear than others. I would argue that those people who contribute most to exploitation and global warming through their demanding lifestyle, should be encouraged to make larger contributions in order alleviate the struggle of others, who either have to flee their country because of climate change or already cannot afford to satisfy basic needs.

Zheng differentiates between two different kinds of moral criticism: summative and formative. Zheng took this distinction, which was originally introduced by Michael Scriven and was used to describe two kinds of evaluation (cf. Scriven 1968, 43) and applied it to morality.

While summative criticism consists essentially in concrete criteria for success or failure, like standards for writing a paper for a course, completing exams or receiving final grades. Summative criticism comes in the form of sanctioning, like failing students or expulsing them, if they do not meet the necessary criteria or if they are successful reward them with a certificate. Formative criticism on the other hand is there to convey to the students how to improve their craft, writing or skill without any sanctioning or rewarding attached to it.

(Cf. Zheng 2021, 511.)

Applied to the problem of structural injustice, Zheng suggests that only formative responses are appropriate for structural wrongs, because our agency is limited by forces out of our control and thus it is not called for to invoke the category of blameworthiness but focus on feedback which can enhance our performance instead (cf. Zheng 2021, 531). In cases where forces out of control diminish our capacity to act and where there is no clear reason why someone should be blamed, formative criticism is all that is left to do (cf. Zheng 2021, 527).

Zheng names another benefit of formative criticism: We do not have to establish a connection between blameworthy agents and structural injustices, because the goal of formative criticism is not to figure out, if someone is blameworthy, but comes in when someone fails to achieve an ideal. Thus, we should also be able to avoid accusations of hypocrisy and uncertainty, if we stick to formative responses. (Cf. Zheng 2021, 525.)

Moreover, these formative responses can help us work on our moral aspirations by giving us goals for which we can strive for, not only guiding our actions, but by showing us how to grow and be motivated in the right way (cf. Zheng 2021, 513).

When applying Robin Zheng's concept of moral criticism to Young's housing example, I see several options how formative criticism could come in. One could give the real estate agent the feedback, that although he did well, he could improve his service by telling every client that a deposit of about three months' worth of rent is a common policy among landlords. It may seem trivial to him, but it could save many clients a lot of trouble. Another option would be to inform the landlord of Sandy's current apartment that a little more patience and caution would make the life of his clients much easier. If Sandy's landlord would postpone their threat of eviction to a later date, for six to eight months, Sandy would probably have enough time to find a new home for her kids and herself.

Although Zheng's model of criticism works well for the housing example, it does not work as well for the other examples. In the case of the sweatshop example, it is not merely a question of performance, but of how power and influence are distributed asymmetrically. The company bosses in the garment industry profit from the low costs of the wages by workers of the smaller companies. The customers in turn profit too, by being able to buy cheaper clothes. The workers of the smaller companies basically carry the biggest workload and face serious consequences if they cannot deliver in time (losing their job, being threatened or attacked). Thus I would argue that not only power and influence are distributed in an unfair way, but also moral responsibility is not attributed to the agents most blameworthy. In case of the customers, it could be convincing to tell them to improve their performance, when they are looking for cheap clothing. Especially if one was to tell them, how the company bosses manage to keep the prices so low. If the customers knew the humiliating, dangerous, even life-threatening conditions which the workers of the smaller companies had to face just so that the prices are kept low, they would consider buying from other brands.

The problem with this is two-fold though: Firstly, in a system where it's obscured which sub-company works for which big company, it's often hard for the consumers to find companies, which do not participate in some form of violation of worker's rights. Secondly, even if one does not buy the remark that most companies engage in some sort of worker's rights violation through a supply chain of subcompanies, we would let the company bosses off the hook. They are not motivated or interested in receiving formative feedback, they want to be competitive and increase their profit. And even if they were open to formative feedback, it would not be enough, because it would neither address their blameworthiness for their actions nor move them to change their behavior in a way which would lead to fair wages and working conditions for the smaller companies.

On the one hand applying Zheng's model of moral criticism to the resistance of Rosa Parks could come in handy, because we could advise bus passengers to show courage and not just stand by when someone is discriminated against. We could motivate them to interfere next time they witness an act of discrimination. On the other hand, the problem still remains that it is not just some abstract ideal that we strive for that will motivate the bus passengers to actively get involved and stop an ongoing injustice. There will be roughly three groups amongst the passengers: the ones, who are oblivious to the injustice, because they are racist and think segregation is justified, the second group of passengers who believe in equality and are ready to demonstrate their commitment through civil courage and political action and the third group of passengers, who do believe in equality, but are not ready to interfere, because they want to avoid conflict or fear the consequences of their interference. What it needs is a change in policies and most importantly a law which sanctions discrimination against black people.

2.3. Mara Marin's commitment model and her notion of plurality of publics

Mara Marin's notion of commitment is similar to Young's social connection model in that it relies on social connection and transforming unjust structures. However, the way Mara Marin frames it is quite different. Marin likens the responsibility we have as individuals to transform unjust structures to personal obligations in relationships (cf. Marin 2017, 11–12).

Marin argues against Christopher Kutz's characterization of individual moral agency, in particular his three principles, the Autonomy Principle, the Control Principle and the Individual Difference Principle. According to Marin these principles are to be explained in the following way: the Autonomy Principle postulates that an agent is not to be held accountable for another agent's harmful deed, except when the agent blackmailed or enticed the other agent in any way. The Control Principle claims that one is only accountable for actions that one has control over, meaning that one should have the capacity to prevent them on their own. The Individual Difference Principle says that an agent is only blameworthy for damage, if the action she took made a difference whether the harm took place or not (enabling or causing the harm). (Cf. Marin 2017, 8.)

The reason why this is important and why Marin argues against this conception is that she is convinced that these three principles end up producing two different kinds of challenges that we need to overcome: the powerlessness challenge and the denial challenge. The powerlessness challenge is the worry that because discrimination like racism or sexism are not merely based on beliefs, but on subconscious thought patterns and unreflective behaviors, we are powerless in relation to those patterns, because even when we are making them visible, they still structure our thoughts and actions without us noticing. (Cf. Marin 2017, 2.)

The denial challenge is two-folded: One part comes down to traceability of actions to particular individuals. While we might agree that we all contribute to the existing structure through our actions, the problem is that we cannot attribute blame to an individual, because structural injustice occurs through many uncoordinated actions and cannot be traced back to all the actions of a single agent or several agents alone. The other part is the intention. Because nobody would claim that they intended to put an unjust structure into place, we assume that we are all relieved of the burden of taking responsibility for structural injustice, because if we did not intend the bad outcome, we don't seem to be responsible for the negative consequences (framing it like a side effect or collateral damage). (Cf. Marin 2017, 2.)

Marin believes that both challenges support each other (cf. Marin 2017, 3). At the core of Marin's account of commitment are two features: chains of open-ended actions and responses to those actions and shared vulnerability. A chain of open-ended action is a long-term relationship of obligations between two or more people, where there is no set time frame for when these obligations end or even a precise content of these obligations (cf. Marin 2017, 3). It might seem hard to accept that we commit to such long-term relationships of obligations. However, I do think it is common that we find ourselves having those obligations in close relationships, like friendships and spousal relationships. For instance, when I promise to return a book I borrowed from my friend and we neither agreed on a time frame nor meeting point, it is still clear that I have to return the book at some point. Otherwise, I broke a promise, which could lead to my friend questioning my character and in the worst case refraining from trusting me (with her things) in the future.

Marin gives an apt explanation, why there is no fixed number of open-ended actions that make up a commitment, it is because it is similar to the usage of the word "heap" – we all have a pretty good intuition, when a couple of apples make up a heap, but there is no rule for a defined number of apples. In the case of actions that make up commitments it takes at least two interactions, and a lifetime of interactions certainly amounts to a commitment, but everything in between is up to the intuition of the agents involved. (Cf. Marin 2017, 37–38.)

It is important to point out that the chains of open-ended actions and responses are not fully unlimited or arbitrary, but that there are limits to the open-ended obligations. Marin gives two sources of limits for obligations, the first source contains the three criteria for distinguishing and evaluating situations in relationships (cf. Marin 2017, 42).

The three criteria are: 1. the kind of relationship matters (parent-child relation, friendship or spousal relation), 2. the significance of the relationship to the agent, 3. sphere of activity or the range in which the relationship develops (cf. Marin 2017, 41).

The second source of limits is internal to commitments: Commitments are constituted through chains of actions and response and the responding action has to reference and take into account the previous actions in a fitting and measured way. Meaning the response should be neither inappropriate nor out of proportion. Marin gives two negative examples. The first one is if she was visiting her friend in the hospital and afterwards her friend sends her a check, this would obviously be inappropriate. Similarly, if she was offering her friend coffee and her friend then decided to respond by handing over her entire estate to her, this would be, despite being generous, a disproportionate response. (Cf. Marin 2017, 42-43)

In order to overcome the loop of powerlessness and denial and challenge the unjust structure, we have to build commitments. However, according to Marin, we can only build these commitments, if we embrace our vulnerability to each other:

To answer the challenge of powerlessness we need to acknowledge the fact and value of our mutual vulnerability. In doing so, we will be able to see ourselves as persons who are essentially connected to each other, but have the freedom to shape their own relations in response to their shared vulnerability. This begins to answer 'the circle of powerlessness and denial.' Our actions are not only the individual, discrete actions mandated by the structure but also our contribution to the joint, collective action constituted by the accumulation of individual actions that can challenge structures [...] We create commitments over time, through a process of open-ended action and response to that action. (Marin 2017, 14)

What I think Marin is suggesting when she speaks of shared vulnerability comes down to this: It is vital to our understanding of shared vulnerability that our judgements are linked to our laws, instead of viewing the law and judgements as completely separate entities. Additionally, we should not see our vulnerability to others as a weakness that the institution of the law has to protect us from, rather we should see it as a chance to embrace our commitment to others. We are vulnerable to others' actions and interventions, because they can alter the course and result of our actions.

What Marin points out is that by holding the belief that our judgements are separate from our laws, we render our vulnerability to these laws invisible. But if our vulnerability to our laws is invisible, we cannot fully grasp group-based injustices, because our vulnerability to laws is key to understanding what these laws contribute to these injustices. By sacrificing private judgement for the protection of the law, we should at least all benefit from the laws, which should make our vulnerability more predictable. Instead of asking whether we should submit to these laws separate from their social context, Marin asks whether the social relations that these laws constitute are worth defending or not. According to Marin our allegiance to laws should depend on the latter question. (Cf. Marin 2017, 85.)

However, if we frame this issue in the form of a reciprocal relationship, instead of an individualistic picture, we might be able to transform unjust structures by committing ourselves to anticipate the consequences of our actions and which responding actions could and should follow, instead of primarily acting in our self-interest.

Marin wants to motivate us to maintain and further promote those laws, which work against oppression and do not uphold unjust hierarchical relations. It is not only because a law fails to provide reciprocity that we are entitled to not follow it, Marin says. It is also because we can at least get rid of parts of an ongoing injustice. The example she gives is domestic violence. Although there are laws which protect the privacy of individuals, we should not comply with these laws when we have reasons to suspect that we witness an act of domestic violence. That means, if we hear our neighbor hitting his wife or girlfriend, we can and should infringe on their right of privacy by entering their home or calling the police:

Thus, the reason why I am entitled to act contrary to the law is not [...] that I am at liberty to act on the demands of the law, because the law fails to embody reciprocity. The reason is that in acting contrary to the law I can unmake (some) of the injustice of oppression. [...] The purpose of this action is [...] to transform the inescapable social reality that constitutes one's subordination. For instance, to comply with a legal arrangement that protects privacy is to acquiesce the terms of women's oppression. There is no obligation to do so. Therefore, when I am confronted with a case of domestic violence, I am justified in violating the laws that protect the right of privacy in its current institutional implementation. I am justified not only in reporting the case to the police, but also in entering the private home of the victim. (Marin 2017, 88)

Although I don't think that we should call that a violation of a law which protects privacy, if we enter the home of a victim of domestic violence victim, I agree with Marin's overall sentiment. If I can bring an end to some of the damage incurred in an ongoing injustice, I should act, even if it means going against conflicting interests (in that case privacy). However, I do maintain that in cases of domestic violence it might be safer to first call the police and at least

ring up other neighbors or friends, instead of entering the home of the victim alone. If you choose the latter course of action, you risk getting injured yourself. In some cases (depending on the time of day) there might be a third option, like ringing your neighbor's doorbell and asking for flour (or some other item or ingredient you can expect a neighbor to have). Sometimes the third option can also de-escalate things.

Another observation that Mara Marin made was that many philosophers working in the field of structural injustice focus too much on how severely the actions of people participating in a larger structure are constrained by said structure. Marin thinks this picture of structural injustice is too deterministic. Instead, we should focus on how we can use our resources, our knowledge of the structure and our different perspectives on social meaning to act and change the structure from within. The driving force behind Marin's argument is that we do not need aligning intentions to transform the structure, because social change and transformation is rooted in contingency and unpredictability:

Theorists of structural injustice have a tendency to overemphasize the constraining effects of structures on action and to gloss over the enabling possibilities for action inherent in the [...] interplay between social meaning, resources [...] and human action. As a result they assume that transformative action has to come from outside the structure. Against this tendency I have argued that actions are socially structured and plurally public. Structures are not deterministically reproduced. Rather, they can be disrupted or transformed in the course of the structures normal functioning. (Marin 2024, 46, 47)

Marin gives several historical examples for social change and transformative action, which show how change was brought about. One of them was Rosa Parks' refusal to stand up and leave her seat on a bus. Marin argues for a plurality of publics by that she means that there are different types of groups in a society, which hold different views and values. Also, Marin states that social transformative actions can only succeed, if there is a public that recognizes these actions as transferring an already existing schema to a new context that challenges the current system of power. There was a public (the white majority in the South), who viewed Parks' action as a wrongful violation of segregation and a public, which saw her action as a rightful demand of universal equality, which would challenge the power dynamic at the time. Parks' refusal to leave her seat to a white person and go to the back of the bus was thus only successful, because there was a public that saw her action as demanded by universal equality. Her intention did not play a role, because it did not cause the resistance to the views justifying segregation, the reaction and interpretation of the publics did. (Cf. Marin 2024, 42.)

Marin modifies William Sewell's account with her notion of agency as consisting of the two aspects unpredictability and inventing something new. The unpredictability comes in because even agents, who currently hold a powerful position, cannot control how their actions are interpreted by different publics in society. Whether their power is solidified or diminished is not up to the powerful agents, but to those who interpret their actions. However, the agents have the power to create something new through their actions, which has the potential to restructure and reimagine common ideas and practices by giving them a new perspective. (Cf. Marin 2024, 45f.)

Similar to the example of domestic violence, one could imagine that Marin would say that in the case of evictions and homelessness our judgements should be linked to our laws too. This would mean that if we think that our laws do not represent our judgements, we should abandon those laws, instead of letting our judgements be clouded or swayed by the already existing laws. In Sandy's case this kind of help would likely come too late, because it can take a while until laws come into effect, even when they are passed relatively quickly. Additionally, I wonder whether, considering Marin's view on agency defined as being unpredictable, contingent, but creating something new, it is a good implication of Marin's picture of agency, if agents who are at a disadvantage anyway, depend on the mercy of certain publics, because their actions and intentions do not really matter, what matters is how they are interpreted by the publics (cf. Marin 2024, 42). Although it seems like a good representation of how social change works at first, introducing unpredictability into our understanding of agency would have severe side effects. Marin wants to avoid the problems we run into when we focus on intentions, but by avoiding the problems related to intentions, we might run into a different worry: We lose sight of what is a good action and what is a bad action in a normative sense. This would be problematic, because if we cannot have a grasp on how a good or bad action given a certain set of circumstances looks like, we cannot come up with a sensible alternative in light of what has already happened.

2.4. Jude Browne's model of switching between imperfect responsibility and liability

Jude Browne focuses on the untraceability aspect of Young's definition of structural injustice. According to Browne it is the most important aspect of Young's definition, because it is most integral to what constitutes a structural injustice. The key things that Browne argues for as being untraceable in Sandy's case are the private interests of all the agents involved that sometimes lead to blameworthy actions, but some do not lead to any actions for which blame

could be attributed. Although most of those actions have an accumulative effect, meaning they do contribute to structural injustice, it is not traceable which actions lead to which outcome. There are many factors to consider, besides people's preferences, like the high costs of childcare and commuting, higher rents, the stagnation of wages and less job opportunities (cf. Browne 2024, 88).

However, Browne claims that we can sometimes develop tools over time, which help us trace and identify structural wrongs. Thus, we can in some cases recategorize these wrongs as injustices of the moral and legal kind, which means that agents can be identified who are blameworthy for these harms (cf. Browne 2024, 103).

“Sandy stands in relation to hundreds of thousands of other people who are apartment-renters, house-buyers, landlords, employers, commuters, and so on, all in pursuit of their private interests - some of which may be blameworthy but some of which will not be.” (Browne 2024, 88)

An example of an untraceable wrong would be the action of the developer in Sandy's case. Recall the developer mentioned in my chapter on Young: The developer buys the building Sandy lives in. His goal is to turn the building into a condominium complex. *Prima facie* there is nothing wrong with what the developer does on the liability model. It is his right to buy the building. However, if you look more closely at the background conditions of this action, the wrong becomes traceable. He was only able to make this kind of move, because he was already in a position of power and by taking this course of action, he does not only solidify his position, but also puts those people at a disadvantage, who are already worse off.

Another example of how to make harmful actions traceable would be to monitor the actions of company bosses in the garment industry. If it can be established that their main goal is choosing profit over the safety and well-being of their workers, they are clearly blameworthy for their actions and actions become traceable. Such monitoring is often time-consuming and costly, but it is not impossible to achieve and if enough people contribute to this cause (through signing petitions, supporting NGOs and so) on, it can be achieved even faster. One should not underestimate the possibilities the internet gives people in terms of connecting and sharing information to achieve a greater cause.

Concerning the Rosa Parks' example Jude Browne's way of attributing responsibility would probably involve first making sure that we find the right tools in our methods and language to make the injustice traceable and explicit. This can be done by collecting testimonies by Peo-

ple of color like Rosa Parks and by encouraging them to come forward, tell their stories and put into words what wrongs they experienced. Furthermore, one should encourage them to protest and take political action so that in a final step, those moral responsibilities can be transitioned into legal requirements (cf. Browne 2024, 102), like the ban of segregation.

Browne stresses though, that even if this is not the case and we cannot trace the injustice back to certain individuals, we should not let the absence of liability in the proper sense prevent us from striving towards establishing political goals (cf. Browne 2024, 103). Browne is convinced that imperfect responsibility encapsulates what Young called political responsibility (cf. Browne 2024, 100). Browne is basing her notion of imperfect responsibility on an approach by Jeffrey Reiman, who used the term ‘imperfect duty’ to describe an agent, who is not subscribing to fulfilling a given set of duties but to doing what she is capable of given her circumstances (cf. Reiman 2012, 743). The reason why Browne prefers to call it an imperfect responsibility instead of an imperfect duty, is that she wants to capture the action-oriented aspect that Young had in mind. Although Browne admits that sometimes fulfilling one’s imperfect responsibility leads to little or no change, she emphasizes that sometimes it leads to discrete actions which address the issues at hand (cf. Browne 2024, 99).

Browne sees the imperfect responsibility not as distinct from the common moral responsibility (in the sense that we are blameworthy) unlike Iris Marion Young. Browne sees the imperfect responsibility as an earlier stage that can lead us to act and find a way to deal with injustices. (Cf. Browne 2024, 100.)

3. But what is structural injustice, anyway?

3.1.Sandy’s plight in light of Young’s “Five Faces Of Oppression”

The five faces of oppression Young introduced are exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness and violence. I’m now turning to the five faces of oppression, because structural injustices are linked to a structural form of oppression. Young uses the structural definition of the term oppression by leftist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, as opposed to the traditional definition, which determined oppression as (colonial) domination by tyrants. This structural form of oppression results from everyday practices in a modern liberal society. Oppression understood in terms of structural phenomena is built into the basic fabric of this society. This form of oppression is systematically reproduced in all institutions of society (political, economic and cultural) (cf. Young 1988, 271).

Exploitation

Exploitation consists in one agent profiting from other agents' work, because their work is undercompensated. The goods don't match up in value. Those with capital exploit their employees by giving them less money than their labor is actually worth. The investors and company owners profit from the added value, which results from the difference between the price for which they bought the workforce and their actual value of the labor. (Cf. Young 1988, 277.)

Young emphasizes that there are forms of exploitation which specifically women experience:

As a class [...] women undergo specific forms of gender exploitation - ways the energies and powers of women are expended, often [...] unacknowledged to benefit men by releasing them for more important and creative work, enhancing their status or the environment around them, or providing men with sexual or emotional service. (Young 1988, 279)

In short, women's work often goes unseen, because it is not labeled as work. The tasks of raising children, providing care for sick and old people, or simply investing time and energy in being there for another person in need - all those tasks are as if not more essential than most paid occupations. And even tasks which at first glance seem mundane like domestic work (cleaning, cooking, tidying up etc.) should not be reduced to a low status activity, just so that women can be continued to be exploited. However, because these tasks are seen as a private matter, they are reduced to a low status. Despite them being such a vital part of our lives, because their completion satisfies some of our most basic and elementary needs, which concern all people in society and enable us to achieve our goals. Moreover, what often is glossed over, is that most women do these tasks on top of the work that they put in, in their paid jobs. Men often don't realize how much of women's work is not noticed and not appreciated, because they are used to benefitting from the gap between what they contribute to the unpaid workload and what women contribute. And because it is easy to invoke the distinction between private matter and work matter (or the private-political distinction), this form of injustice is often ignored. What makes matters even worse is that women not only have a much bigger unpaid workload than men, this in turn also means that they more often don't get their needs met.

Marginalization

Young pointed out that many people, who belong to different groups in society are marginalized in the US and not only those, who face racism are marginalized, but others too:

Marginalization is by no means the fate only of racially marked groups, however. In the United States a shamefully large proportion of the population is marginal: old people, and increasingly people who are not very old but get laid off from their jobs and cannot find new work; young people, especially black or Latino, who cannot find first or second jobs; many single mothers and their children [...]. (Young 1988, 280f)

Although it would be shameful enough, if only racially marked groups were marginalized, Young makes it clear that this is not the case. Various groups in society are marginalized. Old people, single mothers and their kids, young people who are unable to find first or second jobs. What those groups have in common is that they either cannot find jobs or are excluded from certain services and social activities, because they are no longer capable of working or at least are perceived as being incapable of working. What makes marginalization so vicious and pervasive is that those affected are not only excluded from work, what they lack is a sense of meaning and confidence in their own capabilities, while at the same time often being deprived of most basic material goods. Even if a marginalized person has the luck of having a system of good caretakers and can benefit from welfare institutions, there is still the injustice that they are excluded from properly participating in society.

Powerlessness

Young uses the distinction between “non-professionals” and professionals interchangeably with the distinction between “working class” and “middle class”. She describes it as not simply a difference in modes of working (a difference between mentally and physically demanding work), but she argues it designates a separation of two groups in almost all aspects of life (cf. Young 1988, 284). At work professionals have a lot of work-autonomy, are oriented towards progressing in their career through their education while non-professionals lack that kind of creative, self-actualizing quality and autonomy. People who are in the so-called “working class” usually only socialize with people who have the same status and the same applies for people from the “middle class”.

The separation does not stop there, however. The two groups have different tastes in all matters of lifestyle (food, vacations, clothes, music etc.). They speak, behave and dress differently. Young implicitly calls out the privileges and double standards concerning status in society. While members of the working class often are faced with disregard and suspicion, if they voice their opinion or make a statement, members of the middle class are treated much more fairly and respectfully. This is worsened through sexism and racism. While white men are respected until it's revealed that they are working class, black people and especially black women have to prove their respectability and don't have the privilege of being treated respectfully in advance. Because society is directed at professional culture, even those who are not part of the middle class try to appear professional in many important situations, like job interviews or when they buy a car. The lack of autonomy combined with the lack of orientation towards progress and the mistreatment through others who judge them to be not as respectable as middle class people, is what makes working class people powerless in comparison.

Cultural Imperialism

Unlike to the previous "faces" or factors of oppression (exploitation, marginality and powerlessness), cultural imperialism is not concerned with how work relations are defined (who works on what and who does not work, what content one's job has compared to those of others and which social and material implications come with that), but it's concerned with what it means if the culture and experience of a dominant group becomes the norm of what is considered good and normal in society (cf. Young 1988, 285). This leads to a devaluation of the experiences and cultures of other groups in society. Because the experiences of the dominant group are generalized as the norm, everything which is different from that norm is seen as less good. Not only that, in addition to the devaluation of other group's experiences, they also lose their visibility, because the dominant group's views are the norm. Or as Young put it:

The dominant group saves its position by bringing the other group under the measure of its dominant norms. Consequently, the difference of women from men, Native Americans or Africans from Europeans, Jews from Christians, homosexuals from heterosexuals or workers from professionals thus becomes reconstructed as deviance and inferiority. [...] Since the dominant group's cultural expressions are the only expressions that receive wide dissemination, the dominant groups construct the differences which some groups exhibit as lack and negation to the norms and those groups become marked out as the Other. (Young 1988, 285)

The implications of cultural imperialism seem paradoxical at first, but it is something which many marginalized groups experience - not being seen, having their voices ignored, because it

doesn't fit with the norm. They may even question themselves, because they internalize the dominant group's judgements, values and world view.

Violence

The most important aspects about violence as a face of oppression are that it is systematic and that it is legitimized through silence (cf. Young 1988, 287). The systematic aspect is that group membership suffices to be a target of violence. The silence aspect is that the public often does not view this kind of violence as surprising and thus legitimizes it through downplaying the immorality and injustice of these acts. Often violence against oppressed groups still goes unpunished, as we can see in many cases of police brutality against black people in the US, Germany and elsewhere. Or as we can see in cases of rape, where women are silenced and their testimony is being questioned, rather than supported by the justice system.

Judging from the example Sandy suffers from three faces of oppression at least. Sandy faces gender exploitation, because she is a woman and a single mother. In the original example by Young there is no indication or mention of whether there was a partner or whether Sandy just decided to raise kids on her own. Of course, one might say, it would give more context, if one would know these details about her life. However, I would argue that these nuances don't really matter for the sake of the argument, although they often matter in real life. I argue for this, not because Sandy's case is a fictional one, but because no matter whether she adopted on her own, had the kids with a partner who left her or conceived the kids by consulting a fertility clinic, the bottom line is that she is by default worse off than a man, because she has a bigger unpaid workload, she gets fewer job opportunities, not only because the job market favors men, but also because single mothers like Sandy often can only take part-time jobs which are paid less, because they have to look after their children.

Sandy also suffers from powerlessness. Firstly, judging from her job as a cashier in a shopping mall, she probably has no college or university degree, which means she belongs to the working class. This would be perceived as a lower status in society and at work and would come with a lack of work autonomy. Secondly another source of her powerlessness is that she might face biases at work regarding her capabilities and expertise, because she is a woman. Homing in closer on Sandy's particular situation, it's also important to mention that Sandy suffers from the effect of the decisions of three agents especially: the developer, her old landlord and her new landlord. All three use their position in a way which leads to an outcome which is detrimental for Sandy and her kids. The developer buys the building in which Sandy and her kids live. The old landlord sells the building to the developer. The new landlord asks for a deposit of three months' rent in advance. Even though at first glance, these actions seem perfectly fine, with some spelling out, it becomes clear, what makes them so dangerous to Sandy's goal of finding a flat. All three agents are certainly in a position of power. They can afford lawyers to represent their interests, an advantage which Sandy doesn't have.

Although Sandy is not marginalized at the outset of her journey, she becomes increasingly vulnerable to marginalization as her story unfolds. As a single mother she has fewer job opportunities than the average white male, because there is a gender bias in the way the job market is structured. Instead of incentivizing and encouraging behavior that would help single mothers and people with kids in general, the state and company heads basically punish those who look after their children by deciding to pay them less and creating hurdles when it comes to their paternity leave³. Young's housing problem example doesn't indicate that Sandy suffered from violence or cultural imperialism.

3.2. Alasia Nuti's model of structural groups

The main reason Alasia Nuti gives for justifying her endeavor of categorizing different structural groups, is that she wants to prevent the term structural injustice becoming too vague, standing for everything and nothing at the same time (cf. Nuti 2024, 221). In order to arrive at a sharper definition of structural injustice, Nuti suggests taking into consideration the histori-

³ For a further discussion of this topic, I suggest these two papers: "Who cares? Assessing generosity and gender equality in parental leave policy designs in 21 countries" by Rebecca Ray, Janet C. Gornick and John Schmitt, as well as "Working Women Worldwide. Age Effects in Female Labor Force Participation in 117 Countries" by Janna Besamusca et. al.

cal context of different forms of structural injustice, while at the same time defining structural groups which are a part of a spectrum (cf. Nuti 2024, 221).

Nuti defines three types of structural groups: historical structural groups (e.g. women, gay and lesbian persons), nonhistorical groups (e.g. the homeless and the veterans) and historical groups with structural dynamics (e.g. nations). Nuti emphasizes though that this list of structural groups is not exhaustive. (Cf. Nuti 2024, 221.)

Historical structural groups

Structural groups which Nuti defined as groups with an unjust history of exclusion and discrimination and although it's now acknowledged by society that it was unjust, the injustice is reproduced by using other means (cf. Nuti 2024, 224).

While indirectly quoting Judith Shklar's book *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* Nuti names three past injustices, which liberal democracies now reject, but which are candidates for being (among other injustices) the origin of historical structural groups: 1. denial of voting rights and the denial of political participation, 2. exclusion from paid jobs or being forced to stick to menial work, 3. being marked as morally deviant or physically or mentally repugnant (cf. Nuti 2024, 225).

The denial of voting rights and political participation has two dimensions. The first dimension consists in preventing some people from expressing their political preferences and affiliations. The second dimension has a symbolic aspect as those people who are not allowed to vote are basically turned into second class citizens. (Cf. Shklar 1991, 39.)

The exclusion of some people from paid jobs or the fact that they were constrained to do menial work also has a symbolic dimension, because suddenly they are seen as dependent and subordinate. Shklar emphasizes the historical substitution of public virtue with the notion of independence by earning money and producing goods:

This vision of economic independence, of self-directed "earning" [emphasis in original], as the ethical basis of democratic citizenship took the place of an outmoded notion of public virtue and it has retained its powerful appeal. We are citizens only if we "earn" [emphasis in original]. [...] If a citizen was to gain he had to produce, and the more the better, both for himself and his family and for the republic as a whole. [...] In the past it had been almost universally believed that physical work defiles us, that those who labor are impure. [...] Of all these inducements to look at labor as a disgrace and a curse, none has lasted longer than aristocratic and intellectual disdain. The atavistic contempt for physical work has never died out. (Shklar 1991, 67-69)

Shklar points at a crucial point in this quote, if we swap virtue with independence and tie citizenship to non-physical work, then we create a reductive and elitist notion of citizenship, which basically excludes those who do physical work. Moreover, it creates a rift in society between those who earn a lot and those who don't. What makes matters even more difficult is that, as Shklar mentioned, although all US citizens are allowed to vote nowadays, they are still not equal in terms of independence, and many don't earn anything (cf. Shklar 1991, 62).

Coming back to Nuti's portrayal of historical structural groups, Nuti points to the stigmatization of women, lesbians and gay people and this stigmatization was unfortunately legitimized by authorities (philosophical, political and religious authorities). Examples of crimes against these people sanctioned by authorities range from blacklisting, forced registration as sexual offenders, sterilization, forced hospitalization, torture to murder. This type of crime was often committed to justify the marginalization of those groups of people, which was already in place. (Cf. Nuti 2024, 225.)

Nonhistorical structural groups

When defining nonhistorical structural groups, Nuti was inspired by Young's formulation of the homelessness example (cf. Nuti 2024, 227). Nevertheless, she then abstracted from Young's fictional Sandy example, to focus on the groups of veterans and homeless people. The main thing which Nuti drew from that inspiration was that like in the homelessness example by Young, the unjust condition of veterans and homeless people results from lawful practices and decisions, which have bad consequences, but they are unintended for the most part (cf. Nuti 2024, 227).

Nuti argues that though Young acknowledged the importance of past decisions and actions, she did not account for differences in structural injustices concerning different group membership (cf. Nuti 2024, 228). The main difference between structural groups and historical structural groups being that non-historical structural groups (like homeless people and veterans) do not have an unjust past, while historical structural groups (women, gay people and lesbians) do (cf. Nuti 2024, 228). Like McKeown and Browne pointed out in the introduction to *What is structural injustice* Nuti combines a structural understanding of history with a structural concept of injustice (cf. McKeown/Browne 2024, 9).

Nuti makes it clear that self-ascription of one's own identity and group membership is never sufficient for one's membership in a structural group (cf. Nuti 2024, 223).

Historical groups with structural dynamics

Nations are constituted by boundaries and boundaries require that a putative difference be identified between those who can be included within them and those who cannot. The process of mutual recognition that, for liberal nationalists, characterizes and legitimizes national communities is less reciprocal than it may seem. [...] In other words, membership in national groups is inherently structural, in that belonging to groups like nations hinges upon external categorization by existing members or outsiders. (Nuti 2024, 232)

Nuti focuses on nations as historical groups with structural dynamics and points out that even in this category self-ascription and external categorization often come apart. While explaining why self-ascription and external categorization come apart, Nuti refers to a term used by Margaret Moore in her book *The Ethics of Nationalism* called “cultural markers”, describing a mechanism by which co-nationals differentiate between group members and outsiders. Cultural markers can take many forms, like an accent, a gesture or behavior or even how one dresses (cf. Nuti 2024, 231). She wants to address the phenomenon that even though theoretically one can renounce his former nationality and take on a new one, this is very much complicated by cultural markers which are invoked, even when a person manages to transition.

Nuti mentions the case of Cecyle Kyenge, the first minister of color in Italian history, who faced racist attacks by other politicians, who said she should go back to Congo (her country of birth), had bananas thrown at her and even slogans like “immigration kills” were directed at her (cf. Davies 2013).

Nuti wants to demonstrate the similarities between historical groups with structural dynamics (e.g. nations) and historical groups (e.g. lesbians and gay people) to come to a better understanding of what historical structural groups are in general and why it helps to consider their past, when thinking about their unjust state now (cf. Nuti 2024, 230). There is certainly a link between historical groups with structural dynamics and historical structural groups, as in that to be considered as a member of a certain nation, people in historical structural groups had to prove that they don’t threaten the concepts behind these nationalities, Nuti names as an example for this gay marriage. In many cases gay and lesbian persons had to fight for their right to marry by showing their co-nationals that by incorporating their historical and structural memberships into the national identity they don’t threaten said identity (cf. Nuti 2024, 233).

The main problem I have with Nuti’s concept of structural groups is that it does not seem to make the definition of structural injustice much sharper. Although Nuti leaves room for a spectrum of structural groups, this concept appears wanting, because Nuti does not explain how we should treat individuals who fall into several structural groups. There will be many

examples of this, but let's just consider these three first: black women, black veterans and homeless women. In many cases, like these three, unfortunately it will seem obvious that one will be worse off the more structural groups she is in. However, how is there a way to qualify these differences in experience and how should we differentiate? And how fine-grained should our definitions of groups be? What about the difference between the experience of black female veterans and black male veterans? Or the difference between the experience of heterosexual homeless women and homeless lesbians? There is not always a need to go more fine-grained when it comes to group memberships, but more often than not it shows a different and more nuanced perspective.

Another issue I have with Nuti's conception of structural groups concerns the last group, historical groups with structural dynamics. Her example for that group are nations and I suspect there is a naturalistic fallacy, which Nuti overlooked when she constructed the example. Following claim supports my concern:

Although appealing, this account of national membership [an account where one can change her nationality at will by renouncing her old one and taking on a new one, my remark] only partially captures how that membership actually works. First, even if I badly want to renounce my membership [...], I may still be positioned into such a category. This is because I may still [...] display certain traits (for example, an accent, [...] a style, a gesture or behavior) that are externally recognized as typical of members of a particular national group. [...] I may deliberately disown my Italian nationality, [...] [h]owever, my Italian accent may be enough for me to be categorized as an Italian and [...] be associated with the corruption taken to characterize Italian politics and society. (Nuti 2024, 231f)

I find that Nuti puts too much emphasis on cultural markers, because just judging from the fact that many people get discriminated against and are thus not accepted as members of a certain nation by a large group in society, one should not conclude that this cannot change or that believing in a liberal account of national membership is naïve. I think we should not give room for racism and prejudice as a legitimate way to decide whether someone should belong to a certain nation, just because those are unfortunately phenomena which are quite prevalent in society today. This would mean conceding that the vices of humanity are so strong that fighting them, would be futile and all we can do, is just hope for the best. Moreover, we would not only make a descriptive claim about how things are, but we also implicitly make a normative claim about how things can be and will be. Instead, we should focus on striving for an ideal, which says that those who are able to respect basic humanity and decency are welcome to become members of any nation.

3.3. Maeve McKeown's three-folded structural injustice model based on critical realism

Maeve McKeown chooses critical realism as the most promising account for structural injustice: the debates she mentions are collectivism versus individualism and then structurationism versus critical realism. The collectivists are convinced that society and the actions of the people in society have to be looked at separately, because society is not reduceable to these actions, while individualists claim that a study of society is only possible by looking at people's actions. Margaret Archer goes on to criticize that both positions have basically the same problem on different ends of the spectrum: they both focus only on one factor to explain how causality works. While the collectivists are too deterministic and basically deny or at least drastically underestimate the impact of the agency of people in society, the individualists are too optimistic concerning people's agency and neglect their constraints (other people's actions or factors out of their control). (Cf. McKeown 2024, 65f.)

The claim critical realists make is that we cannot understand the relationship between structures and actions of individuals, if we do not accept two main premises: Firstly, structures have a huge impact on the conditions under which we act. Secondly, we have the capacity to change said structures through our actions (by interacting with the structure). (Cf. McKeown 2024a, 67.)

According to critical realists structures are basically social positions and their associated powers, which exist and are in place prior to the agents' actions (cf. McKeown 2024a, 70). Critical realists believe that structures have emergent properties, meaning properties which have a causal impact that is different from the causal impact of their separate parts (cf. McKeown 2024a, 67). Sandy's landlord is in a position of power by being a property owner. This power is legitimized by the state through a legal framework (cf. McKeown 2024a, 70).

Structurationism, introduced by Anthony Giddens and William Sewell, and later also adopted by philosophers like Iris Marion Young (cf. Young 2011, 60), Sally Haslanger (cf. Haslanger 2024, 55) and Mara Marin (cf. Marin 2024, 45f) is based on the view that structures consist of rules (or schemas) and resources.

The rules are immaterial, because they only exist in people's minds. They are nevertheless important, because they are the basis of their capacity to act. Resources can be both immaterial (information) and material and contribute to people's success in interactions. (Cf. McKeown 2024, 66.)

Resources are anything useful in a context of social exchange (nonhuman resources are material objects, human resources include physical strength, knowledge, specific abilities and emotional commitments). Schemas on the other hand are not tied to certain social interactions but are also applicable to new circumstances. Schemas comprise a variety of things like notions, metaphors and assumptions. There are two illustrative examples that Sewell gives, why structures and resources support each other and are even rendered meaningless without the support of the other: First the number of soldiers in an army does not determine the amount of military strength the army as a whole generates, because factors like the training of the soldiers and the knowledge and expertise available to generals are vital when it comes to the power of an army (cf. Sewell 1992, 11). The second example is a factory: A factory is not just a building out of metal and bricks, but a realization of schemas (cf. Sewell 1992, 13). In both cases the schemas need to be regenerated by the resources to survive. Resources enforce the rules of certain schemas by giving them meaning through material features or human abilities. Like the factory gate and the punching-in station actualize the rules of the capitalist labor contract, so is the power generated by an army dependent on conventions of warfare, the strategies and knowledge on tactics available to generals and the training of the soldiers.

McKeown introduces three kinds of structural injustice: avoidable, deliberate and pure. McKeown categorizes homelessness as an avoidable structural injustice, mainly because according to her, the government does not deliberately contribute to homelessness, but according to a study by Matthew Desmond which McKeown cites, the government could prevent homelessness in most cases if it assisted in the trials of people who are on the brink of being evicted (cf. Desmond 2016, 303f). The reason for this is that almost any landlord can afford a lawyer, while most tenants cannot. By providing free legal support to the tenants the problem of eviction could be resolved for most tenants. Additionally, Desmond argues for government assistance on an even larger scale, by providing housing vouchers which would cover 70 per cent of the rent of low-income-families (cf. Desmond 2016, 308).

In her book *With Power Comes Responsibility: The Politics Of Structural Injustice* McKeown argues for global poverty as a form of avoidable structural injustice. She claims that global poverty features three of the five faces of oppression Young described: marginalization, powerlessness and violence and McKeown also mentions material deprivation as a separate face of oppression (cf. McKeown 2024b, 89f).

McKeown emphasizes Archer's point that structures give incentives and thus favor certain actions, but do not cause them directly. The point being that an agent could still choose a path, which would still be in their interest and minimize the harm done to other agents or even when this is not possible, work against their interest to ensure that the harm done is mitigated. (Cf. McKeown 2024a, 80.)

McKeown qualifies Young's sweatshop example as a case of deliberate structural injustice. She claims the difference between avoidable and deliberate structural injustice lies in the intention. While in the case of avoidable structural injustice the powerful agents are oblivious to their ability to change the situation for the better, in case of deliberate structural injustice they actively and deliberately take steps to keep this kind of injustice in place. McKeown names Young's sweatshop example as a form of deliberate structural injustice, because multinational corporations, as well as global businesses, international corporations and consumers form a bond to keep the status quo, leaving the power to the multinational corporations. This leaves the sweatshop workers with much less power and fewer options to act. (Cf. McKeown 2024a, 80f.)

McKeown concedes that it is debatable whether there are any pure structural injustices, but she claims that climate change is a candidate for pure structural injustice (cf. McKeown 2024a, 82). She makes her case for climate change as a pure structural injustice by saying that in contrast to the other two types of structural injustice, it would not suffice, even if the powerful agents who either fail to do the right thing (avoidable structural injustice) or on top of that deliberately maintain the structural injustice (deliberate structural injustice) would change their behavior for the better, because the root cause for climate change is capitalism (cf. McKeown 2024a, 82). Which means that to solve or at least alleviate the effects of climate change there needs to be a global systematic change, a shift in how the world is structured. If it's true that the root problem of climate change is the system of externalization of production and the prioritization of profit, meaning prioritizing an increase of capital over sustaining the planet and thus destroying the livelihoods of the majority of people (especially those living in the Global South), then we cannot prevent further damages through climate change just by relying on individual changes by powerful agents alone.

McKeown writes that she is in favor of blaming people, even in cases of structural injustice. She says a call for political responsibility is not enough in cases of deliberate structural injustice, because in these cases agents use their power and influence to sustain their position. (Cf. McKeown 2024b, 88f.)

Although I agree with McKeown that these agents, who deliberately maintain structural injustices should be blamed, I disagree with her in terms of her interpretation of Young's concept: Young is not just calling for political action with her social connection model, I think she would agree with McKeown that these agents should be blamed. The clash between Young's concept and McKeown's concept only makes sense, if we assume that Young wants to say that agents, who are blameworthy for deliberately maintaining structural injustice are only indirectly responsible and should only be held accountable in a sense that they should promote social justice by demonstrating, signing petitions and so on. I think that is not all what Young means when she writes that agents should be aware of the structure they are establishing and should try to prevent harm that might come with this structure as much as possible, because otherwise they are blameworthy.

Firstly, I claim that this picture of agency would be much too reductive, if we only considered what is stereotypically seen as political activism as Young's main concern. I think her notion of social connection demands to restructure how we act in general, not just in those times when we decide to partake in a demonstration or ponder if we should sign a petition (cf. Young 2011, 109-110). Secondly, even if one grants that the assumption McKeown seems to make is true and the social connection model is built around a kind of reductive notion of political agency, I assume that Young would still say that those agents who are actively trying to hold on to and preserve a structure which is unjust should be blamed according to the procedures of the liability model. This is the case, because Young made it clear that she doesn't want to abolish the liability model, she just did not see it fit to deal with structural injustices, where no agents who are blameworthy can be identified (cf. Young 2011, 98-100).

However, as already mentioned, what complicates things is that Young and McKeown have different notions of what structural injustices are. Young is convinced that the term structural injustice denotes a phenomenon where on the outset no agent or group of agents can be singled out who is responsible, but the accumulation of accepted practices, laws and rules leads to an unjust outcome for certain agents.

On the one hand, this is happening because of background conditions (cf. Young 2011, 106f), which are accepted, but should be revised or rejected, on the other hand this because even without intending to do so agents do contribute to the unjust structure in various degrees. McKeown thinks only what she calls pure structural injustices work like that (cf. McKeown 2024a, 82).

I still conclude that McKeown's model fares best of all six models dealing with structural injustice I encountered. Although it is not always clear from looking at different kinds of structural injustice, which structural injustice fits into which category (avoidable, deliberate or pure), this to me speaks to the difficulty in evaluation, not to the flawed nature of the categorization itself.

I think it helps in making the definition of structural injustices sharper, if we categorize them the way McKeown does. By focusing first on whether there are powerful agents, who either fail to do something or deliberately maintain an unjust structure, we can address who is responsible on a fairer and more realistic base. If it can be proven that there is no foul play and major oversights by powerful agents and that even if powerful agents are making significant changes there is no major improvement, we can still treat it as a pure structural injustice. The main reason I claim that McKeown's model fares best, is that she puts an emphasis on attributing the responsibility to the agents most powerful, not those who are already victims of structural injustice. While Young doesn't exactly say that victims of structural injustice should be blamed, she attributes a lot of responsibility to them, when she says that they could be great candidates for leading positions, because of their insights (cf. Young 2011, 113). I'm convinced we can still retain the picture of forward-looking action Young had in mind, apply her characterizations of different forms of oppressions and at the same time, stay in McKeown's categorization of different kinds of structural injustice.

4. Concluding Remarks

In the first part of the paper, I compared four different models, Young's social connection model, Zheng's model of moral criticism, Marin's commitment model, Browne's model of switching between imperfect responsibilities and liability. I asked, how responsibility for structural injustice should be attributed according to each model. I took three examples already existing in the structural injustice literature (the housing problem or Sandy's case and the sweatshop example by Young, Mara Marin's example of Rosa Park's resistance against discrimination and segregation). I applied them to each of the four models.

In section 2.1. I demonstrated Sandy's case, and I used Young's social connection model combined with her notion of accepted, but questionable background conditions to show which agents contributed to the structural injustice even though it was not intentional. In section 2.2. Robin Zheng's model of moral criticism, I showed that formative criticism can work in context of the housing problem, but not in the case of the sweatshop example or the Rosa Park's example. In section 2.3. I presented Mara Marin's commitment model and her notions of plurality of publics and creating something new. I showed that it did not work when applied to the housing problem and the sweatshop example, while it was helpful to understand the dynamics in the Rosa Parks example.

When I started writing this paper, I had the impression that Mara Marin's model had the best means to alleviate structural injustices. I was intrigued by her notion of responsibility framed like obligations in relationships, as well as her notion of a plurality of publics, which came with the introduction of unpredictability (and thus the rejection of intentions as focal points) and the notion of creating something new. However, in the course of analyzing Marin's model and applying it to the three examples I chose at the beginning, it became clear to me that it was not the model with the best means. The implications of Marin's model would be that because of the unpredictability introduced in her model, victims of structural injustice would be dependent on the mercy of the publics and we could lose sight of the normative difference between good and bad actions. Considering these negative implications, I decided to reconsider my initial position.

In section 2.4. I presented Jude Browne’s approach. Browne emphasizes the untraceability aspect in Young’s conception of structural injustice. Browne sees private interests as the main concern when it comes to untraceability. Applied to the housing problem, I argued that one could make the action of the developer traceable by looking at the background conditions of his actions and thus expose his powerful position. Applied to the sweatshop example one could make the harms traceable by monitoring the actions of company heads. If they choose profit over worker safety and worker well-being, they are blameworthy. Applied to the Rosa Parks’ example one could make the actions traceable by collecting testimonies from victims and encourage them to protest and demonstrate. This could lead to the implementation of better laws.

In section 3.1. I looked at Sandy’s case again, but this time under the lens of the “five faces of oppression” introduced by Young. I found that Sandy suffered from three faces of oppression: exploitation, powerlessness and marginalization. In section 3.2. I introduced Nuti’s model of structural groups. By differentiating between historical structural groups (women, gay and lesbian people), nonhistorical structural groups (veterans and homeless people) and historical groups with structural dynamics (nations), Nuti aimed at making the definition of structural injustice clearer (cf. Nuti 2024, 221). However, my assessment was that Nuti’s conception didn’t make the definition of structural injustice much sharper for two reasons. Firstly, she didn’t present tools for how to deal with people who fall into several structural groups. Secondly, I spotted a naturalistic fallacy in her argument for cultural markers. Just because people are sometimes perceived as outsiders or members of a nation based on racist criteria, we should not see this as a legitimate way to tell whether someone should be able to take on a different nationality.

Section 3.3. was on McKeown’s three-folded structural injustice model. I presented McKeown’s categorization in avoidable (housing problem, global poverty), deliberate (sweatshop example) and pure structural injustices (climate change). I concluded that McKeown’s model with three different categories of structural injustices has the best means to alleviate structural injustices. By taking a critical realist approach McKeown takes into account that we, as agents, occupy different positions in society and that these social positions and their associated powers basically make up the structures that we live in (cf. McKeown 2024a, 70). However, although the structures under which we live have a considerable impact on our life and agency, we can change the structures by interacting with them.

What I find most convincing about McKeown's approach is not only her categorization of different types of structural injustice, but her concreteness when it comes to the application of her model to different examples.

Concerning Sandy's case, she used a study by Desmond to demonstrate that the housing problem is avoidable. If we change the power structure behind the tenant-landlord-relation by simply offering government assisted funding to cover the cost of lawyers for tenants, most cases of eviction could be avoided (cf. Desmond 2016, 303f). Even more cases of evictions could be resolved, if we followed Desmond's suggestion of government funding on a bigger scale, by offering vouchers which cover 70 per cent of the rent of tenants in need (cf. Desmond 2016, 308). In regard to the sweatshop example, McKeown introduced the category of deliberate structural injustice, because she was convinced that the company bosses are deliberately maintaining the injustice (McKeown 2024a, 80f). McKeown admits that it is debatable whether there are any pure structural injustices, but she claims that climate change is a candidate for pure structural injustice, because according to her it would require a radical system change – the abolishment of capitalism (cf. McKeown 2024a, 82).

Whether one agrees with McKeown on the last category, pure structural injustice or not, I maintain that McKeown's categorization fares best out of the six models I looked at, for three reasons: she puts the emphasis on attributing the blame to those agents who have power, she gives concrete examples which fit her model and her categorizations contribute to a sharper, and more realistic notion of structural injustice. What makes McKeown's model different from the other models is that she frames the notion of structural injustice in a way which allows for attributing responsibility and blame to powerful agents. This in turn alleviates the structural injustice for the victims, because the injustice is addressed with the right measures and the powerful agents who are blameworthy are those who are expected to lead the change.

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