

Political Practices as Performances of Political Responsibility

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1. Introduction

In her 2004 paper *Responsibility and Global Labor Justice*, Iris Marion Young spells out the criteria for a conception of political responsibility that is distinct from a liability model of responsibility.¹ One of the major differences between these two conceptions lies in the fact that political responsibility is forward-looking in the sense that it manifests itself in actual performances of political practices. Accordingly, oppositional, performative political practices embody political responsibility by actually fulfilling the actions required to change complex structural processes that are in need of improvement and change.

The paper aims at a deeper understanding of a conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility. Through a distinction between an explicit and an implicit dimension of the normativity of practices, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the normative forces at work at the micro-level of political interaction, ranging from habitual rule-following and compliance to conscious protest. Relations of responsibility are maintained and updated through micro-level interactions between people occupying different institutional or social positions in society.

The practice-based approach presented in the paper reflects the constant challenge to substantiate normative principles, like the principle of responsibility, in actual political practice. In addition, the paper points out how an elaborate conception of political practice, based on the proposed two-dimensional understanding of normativity, is able to corroborate Young's version of political responsibility as shared responsibility.

As a first step, the paper outlines the key features of Iris Marion Young's conception of political responsibility. A second step introduces the distinction between two dimensions of the normativity of practices, the explicit and the implicit dimension. The third and final step attempts to integrate Young's model of political responsibility and the two-dimensional version of normativity into a conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility.

2. Young's Conception of Political Responsibility

In the context of her analysis of global labor justice (Young 2003, 2004, 2006a, 2007), Iris Marion Young introduces a conception of responsibility that is distinct from a liability model of responsibility. The aim of this conception is, as Young puts it, to make sense of "any claims of responsibility that members of a society might be said to have toward harms and injustices of distant strangers" (Young 2004: 366). Young convincingly outlines that within a "dominant conception of responsibility as liability" (Ibid.), these claims make little sense. Therefore, she elaborates a conception of responsibility that she refers to as political responsibility.

The distinction Young introduces between the model she calls the *liability model of responsibility* and her own conception of *political responsibility* can be spelled out as follows:

The liability model of responsibility "derives from legal reasoning to find guilt or fault for a harm" (Ibid.: 368). Under this model, as Young explains, one

¹ Young further elaborates this line of thought in chapter 9 of her book *Global Challenges. War, Self-Determination, and Responsibility for Justice* (Young 2007; see also Young 2003, 2006a).

“assigns responsibility to particular agents whose actions can be shown as causally connected to the circumstances for which responsibility is sought. This agent can be a collective entity, such as a corporation, but when it is that entity can be treated as a single agent for purposes of assigning responsibility [...]. The actions found causally connected to the circumstances are shown to be voluntary. If a candidate for responsibility can successfully show that their causal relation to the circumstances was not voluntary, that they were coerced or otherwise did not evince free choice, then their responsibility is usually mitigated if not dissolved. When these conditions do exist, however, it is appropriate to blame the agents for the harmful circumstances. A concept of strict liability departs from the fault or blame model in that it holds a person liable for an action that caused a harm even if they did not intend the outcome, or holds a person or institution liable for a harm caused by someone under their command [...]. I include both fault liability and strict liability in the liability model of responsibility, because they share other features that I will use to distinguish this model from the model of political responsibility. The liability model is primarily backward-looking in its purpose; it reviews the history of events in order to assign responsibility, often for the sake of exacting punishment or compensation” (Ibid.).²

The last point of this characterization of the liability model of responsibility is especially relevant for the conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility I would like to suggest, following Young’s conception of political responsibility. The liability model, as Young conceives it, relies on a consideration, interpretation and evaluation of past events. The actions undertaken to promote responsibility are *reactions* to specific actions by specifiable agents that can be shown to be causally connected to harmful outcomes.³ The *reactions* consist in assigning responsibility for past actions to specific agents. Furthermore, they usually have the function of “absolving other agents who might have been candidates for fault” (Ibid.).

In addition, the fact that liability model of responsibility is grounded in legal reasoning brings about a strong connection to explicit rules and norms. As I will outline later, an understanding of the normativity of actions that restricts itself to conduct in the sense of rule-following is too narrow. Political practices as performances of political responsibility incorporate an implicit dimension of normativity that constrains and enables agents in their actual performances of those practices.

Young’s alternative conception of responsibility is more comprehensive in the sense that it extends the scope of responsibility to the actual day-to-day practices of agents, to the normative accountability of everyday actions and routines: “In this meaning, finding one responsible does not imply finding one at fault or liable for a past wrong, but rather refers to agents’ carrying out activities in a morally appropriate way and aiming for certain outcomes” (Young 2007: 175). By integrating the implicit moral appropriateness of everyday actions into her conception of responsibility, Young introduces a forward-looking element to the concept of responsibility that does not only imply the requirement to act according to explicit rules like laws, but also according to implicit norms of appropriateness.

² In chapter 9 of *Global Challenges*, the definition is slightly different: “The actions found causally connected to the circumstances are shown to be voluntary and performed with adequate knowledge of the situation. If candidates for responsibility can successfully show that their action was not voluntary or that they were excusably ignorant, then their responsibility is usually mitigated if not dissolved. [...] A concept of strict liability departs from a fault or blame model in that it holds an agent liable for a harm even if the agent did not intend or was unable to control the outcome, such as when one person’s property accidentally causes damage to another person’s property.” (Young 2007: 172-173).

³ “The liability model of responsibility causally connects the circumstances for which responsibility is sought with specific actions of particular agents. In this sense the liability model individualizes even when the agent it identifies is a corporate entity” (Young 2004: 375).

Although the liability model derives from legal reason, Young's critique of this model is not restricted to a way of thinking about responsibility in terms of imposing legal sanctions on individuals that caused harm. The target of her critique, in a broader sense, is the whole idea that it is always possible to identify specific, individualizable perpetrators. In the case of structural injustice, this approach is not only insufficient because of its backward-looking character, but also because it is based on oversimplification. To blame specific agents for structural processes that produce injustice, accordingly, seems to be nothing more than an easy way out.⁴

It is important to point out, though, that Young's model of political responsibility does not aim at replacing the liability model.⁵ On the contrary, Young underscores the importance of this first layer of responsibility:

“A concept of responsibility as blame or liability is indispensable for a legal system and sense of moral right that respects agents as individuals and expects them to behave in respectful ways toward others. When applying this concept of responsibility, there must be clear rules of evidence, not only for demonstrating the causal connection between this agent and a harm, but also for evaluating the intentions, motives, and consequences of the actions. By proposing a social connection model of responsibility, I do not aim to replace or reject the liability model of responsibility.” (Young 2007: 174).

Therefore, some criticisms expressed regarding Young's model seem to be based on a misunderstanding.⁶ Young introduces her social connection model of responsibility because “where there is structural social injustice a liability model is not sufficient for assigning responsibility” (Ibid.: 175).⁷

Young develops her alternative conception, her conception of political responsibility, also referred to as the *social connection model of responsibility*, along the lines of the example of the so-called *anti-sweatshop movement*.⁸ She identifies five main features of the social connection model of responsibility: 1) not isolating; 2) judging background conditions; 3) more

⁴ The act of blaming, in this sense, is also studied as a psychoanalytic phenomenon: “To blame is not the same as the discovery of defects or inefficiencies within a causal network, or the discovery of faults or breaks in the system. To blame is magically to short-circuit the recognition of multiple determinants or actual defects in the system itself. To blame is a leap to ‘discover’ simple causes which are thought to be acts of intentional evil. In the sense that psychoanalysis sees events as psychologically determined, the search for single sources of evil is absurd. But in the sense that psychoanalysis retains concepts of freedom of choice, then, of course, one can imagine choices by individuals which at least most people would regard as evil. Perhaps this apparent antinomy can be resolved if traditional concepts of morality itself can be rethought. Perhaps blaming systems can be replaced by responsibility systems.” (Spruiell 1989: 245).

⁵ “Political responsibility adds to rather than replaces this first layer of responsibility.” (Young 2004: 382).

⁶ Regina Kreide, for example, defends the importance of the liability model against Young's conception of political responsibility and bases her critique of Young's conception on the assumption that Young *rejects* the liability model (Kreide 2009: 98). In contrast, Young herself points out that her argument “is not that the concept of political responsibility should replace that of a fault or liability model, but should supplement that model in analyses of responsibility in relation to structural processes” (Young 2004: 368).

⁷ “The liability model relies on a fairly direct interaction between wrongdoer and wronged party. Where structural social processes constrain and enable many actors in complex relations, however, those with the greatest power in the system, or those who derive benefits from its operations, may well be removed from any interaction with those who are most harmed in it. While it is usually inappropriate to *blame* those agents who are connected to but removed from the harm, it is also inappropriate, I suggest, to allow them (us) to say that they (we) have nothing to do with it. Thus, I suggest that we need a different conception of responsibility to refer to the obligations that agents who participate in structural social processes with unjust outcomes have. I call this a social connection model.” (Young 2007: 175).

⁸ “Although I believe that the social connection model of responsibility applies to every case of structural injustice, whether local or global, relationships in the global apparel industry offer a perspicuous example through which I will explain the logic of the social connection model of responsibility” (Young 2007: 164); see also DeWinter 2003.

forward looking than backward looking; 4) shared responsibility; 5) discharged only through collective action (Young 2007: 176-180; see also Young 2004: 388).

1) As already mentioned, the liability model of responsibility is based on the assumption that it is possible and necessary to isolate those who are responsible for specific harms and to distinguish them from others who are not responsible. But, as Young points out, in cases in which “harms result from the participation of thousands or millions of people in institutions and practices that produce unjust results, [...] such an isolating concept of responsibility is inadequate” (Young 2007: 176). In cases of structural injustice, responsibility may vary in degree, but it is not possible to absolve others entirely from blame or responsibility.

2) As Young outlines, the liability model of responsibility implicitly assumes a “normal background situation that is morally acceptable, if not ideal” (Ibid.: 176). Crimes or wrongdoings for which specific agents are held responsible are interpreted as deviations from normality. The reactions to those crimes or wrongdoings, i.e. forms of punishment, are, therefore, attempts to restore normality. A model of political responsibility, on the other hand, that focuses on the connections that agents have to structural injustices “does not evaluate harm that deviates from the normal and acceptable, but rather often brings into question precisely the background conditions that ascriptions of blame or fault assume as normal” (Ibid.: 177). The model of political responsibility, thus, reflects on our ‘normal’ day-to-day practices and routines that contribute to structural injustices.⁹

3) Although, as Young states, assigning responsibility, “whether under the liability model or the social connection model, always has both backward looking and forward looking aspects” (Ibid.: 177-178), the liability model, at least on most occasions, is considered by her to be primarily backward-looking. Sanctions and punishments are applied in reaction to a specific past action.¹⁰ The model of political responsibility, on the other hand, is forward-looking in the sense that it answers to structural injustices by enjoining “those who participate by their actions in the process of collective action to change it” (Ibid.: 178).¹¹

4) As already mentioned in the context of the first feature of the social connection model of responsibility, it “does not isolate those liable in ways that implicitly absolve others” (Ibid.: 179). This leads to the conclusion that “all those who contribute by their actions to the structural processes producing injustice share responsibility for these harms” (Ibid.). Shared responsibility is defined by Young not in the sense of collective responsibility, but in the sense of “a personal responsibility for outcomes or the risks of harmful outcomes, produced by a group of persons. Each is personally responsible for outcomes in a partial way, since he or she

⁹ “When we judge that structural injustice exists, we mean that at least some of the normal and accepted background conditions of action are not morally acceptable. Most of us contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the production and reproduction of structural injustice precisely because we follow the accepted and expected rules and conventions of the communities and institutions in which we act. Usually, we enact these conventions and practices in a habitual way, without explicit reflection and deliberation on what we do, having in the foreground of our consciousness and intention immediate goals we want to achieve and the particular people we need to interact with to achieve them.” (Young 2007: 177).

¹⁰ “To be sure, such backward-looking condemnation and sanction may have a forward-looking purpose; we may wish to deter others from similar action in the future, or we may wish to identify weak points in an institutional system that allows or encourages such blameworthy actions, in order to reform the institutions. Once we take this latter step, however, we have left a liability model and are moving toward a conception of political responsibility.” (Young 2004: 378).

¹¹ Rainer Forst comments on Young’s claim that the social connection model, unlike the liability model of responsibility, is forward- rather than backward-looking, in the following way: “I would, however, think that this is only a difference of degree; for one of her main insights was, I take it, that injustice has a name, i.e., that it is identifiable, even if only roughly. And to construct justice as she does, on the basis of a critical analysis of existing structures of powerlessness and exploitation, does not just mean ending injustice but also addressing it retrospectively. And even though this can never be done in the detailed way that ‘absolute justice’ would demand, a historical account is an essential part of the story of (in)justice we tell, and it implies demands of redress and compensation. If justice is situated in a social-historical and structural context, narratives of injustice have to be the basis of the construction of just institutions, it seems to me.” (Forst 2007: 263).

alone does not produce the outcomes; the specific part that each plays in producing the outcome cannot be isolated and identified, however, and thus the responsibility is essentially shared” (Ibid.).

5) This essentially shared nature of responsibility leads to the fact that “forward looking responsibility can be discharged only by joining with others in collective action” (Ibid.). Structural processes that produce unjust outcomes can only be altered if “many actors in diverse social positions work together to intervene in them to produce different outcomes” (Ibid.). And this means that, although to a different degree, even “many of those properly thought to be victims of harm or injustice may nevertheless share [...] political responsibility in relation to it” (Ibid.: 180), since their actions contribute to the structural processes that produce injustice as well. They share responsibility for “helping to bring about change” (Young 2004: 387). The idea of political responsibility, therefore, rests on the assumption that agents occupying different institutional and social positions coordinate their actions in order to achieve change:

“What might be required from one’s position is doing something different from or additional to the tasks normally assigned to that position, but different persons nevertheless stand in differing positions in structures that produce unjust outcomes, which afford them different opportunities and capacities for influencing those outcomes” (Ibid.: 385).

Although Young disagrees with Hannah Arendt on the question of whether the ground of political responsibility “lies in being members of the same nation-state” (Ibid.: 377),¹² her conception of political responsibility is based in some way on Arendt’s concept of collective political responsibility (Arendt 2003):

“As does Arendt in many contexts, I mean by ‘political’ something broader than government. In addition, by politics or the political I am referring to the activity in which people organize collectively to regulate or transform some aspect of their shared social conditions, along with the communicative activities in which they try to persuade one another to join such collective action or decide what direction they wish to take it. The sort of responsibility that anti-sweatshop activists claim that they, their fellow consumers, and specific institutions of manufacture or distribution of goods have is political responsibility in this sense.” (Young 2004: 377).

It is, of course, obvious that not every agent involved in interactions that lead to structural injustice has the same opportunities and capacities to bring about change. In this sense, although those who share responsibility are all in some sense responsible, the responsibility varies in kind and degree. Different agents have “different kinds of responsibilities in relation to particular issues of justice, and some arguably have a greater degree of responsibility than others” (Young 2007: 183). These differences correlate, as Young puts it, “with an agent’s *position* within the structural processes. By virtue of this structural positioning, different agents have different opportunities and capacities, can draw on different kinds and amounts of resources, or face different levels of constraint with respect to processes that can contribute to structural change” (Ibid.). Young identifies four parameters along which agents can reason about their actions in relation to structural injustice: *power*, *privilege*, *interest*, and *collective ability* (Ibid.).

If one connects the five main features of political responsibility emphasized by Young with a conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility, it becomes clear that within a framework of shared responsibility and collective action, relations of responsibility are maintained and updated through micro-level interactions between people occupying different institutional or social positions in society.

¹² In Young’s view, the “scope of issues of justice corresponding to political responsibility derives not from the boundaries of a state or political jurisdiction, but from the connections generated by the structural processes” (Young 2004: 388).

For Young, *politics* in the context of political responsibility means, first and foremost, “public communicative engagement with others for the sake of organizing our relationships and coordinating our actions most justly“ (Ibid.: 179). As Young was able to show on a broader level in *Inclusion and Democracy*, political communicative action is dominated by power asymmetries resulting from structural positioning (Young 2000). The degree to which engaging in public communication constrains or enables specific agents depends not only on compliance with explicit laws or rules of conduct, but also on acting according to implicit norms of our everyday practices.

As Young outlines, the model of deliberative democracy, for example, “expresses conditions that often operate as implicit regulative norms guiding social co-operation, but which are never perfectly realized” (Ibid.: 33). Aspects of power and privilege are, first and foremost, always already incorporated in political practices because they originate from more basic structural characteristics of social co-operation. One example Young provides in this context is the norm of articulateness that implicitly determines practices of public communication: Agents who exhibit “such articulate qualities of expression are usually socially privileged. Actual situations of discussion often do not open themselves equally to all ways of making claims and giving reasons” (Ibid.: 38-39). As Young points out, many agents “feel intimidated by the implicit requirements of public speaking; in some situations of discussion and debate, [...], many people feel they must apologize for their halting and circuitous speech. While all of us should admire clarity, subtlety, and other excellences of expression, none of us should be excluded or marginalized in situations of political discussion because we fail to express ourselves according to culturally specific norms of tone, grammar, or diction” (Ibid.).¹³ This is only one example of implicit norms guiding political practices, which often lead to performances that perpetuate asymmetric structures with respect to race, gender and social status. Therefore, the norms inherent in political practice have to be addressed at a broader level and cannot be reduced to mere compliance with laws or rules. A way of addressing and overcoming the acts of exclusion described in Young’s articulateness-example would be to take up a stance of openness to others and to learn something from their different perspective and way of expression (Young 1997: 354; James 2003: 162).¹⁴

If one interprets political practices as basic elements of an understanding of forward-looking, political responsibility, agents who engage in public communicative interactions are faced with a constant challenge to redefine and to justify their respective commitments and entitlements within the political process. Political practices, in this sense, are performative actualizations of norms, and in the case discussed here, they can be interpreted as performative actualizations of political responsibility.

3. Explicit and Implicit Normativity

In political theory, the grounds of justification for political actions, i.e. the sources of normativity, are often characterized in terms of governance by rules or standards in a community’s behaviour, values, or preferences. As already mentioned, what is described by Young as the liability model of responsibility can be understood in this sense: explicit rules, i.e. laws, guide our actions, and in cases in which specific agents violate the law, reactions follow in terms of sanctions. Compliance with those explicit rules is interpreted as a state of normality, deviations are exceptions that have to be addressed by performing specific reactions, i.e. sanctions. The way to understand the normative status of a practice in the sense of correct and incorrect is constructed through a relation to an explicit rule. But, as already mentioned, if the normativity of practices is perceived exclusively as manifesting itself in references to explicit rules,

¹³ On this point, see also Conradi (Conradi 2009: 106).

¹⁴ From a theoretical perspective, approaches based on the model of deliberative democracy should include alternative forms of communication and not restrict deliberation to rational argumentation (Young 2000: 52-80; James 2004: 76-77).

a crucial feature of the normative forces at work at the micro-level of interaction is neglected: the procedural actualization of implicit norms that guide our everyday actions through the concrete performance of significant political practices. A distinction between an explicit and an implicit dimension of the normativity of practices may provide a comprehensive understanding of the normative forces at play.

While the explicit dimension of political normativity can be outlined by presenting a typology of explicit normative resources agents refer to in order to justify their actions, the implicit dimension comprises the procedural perspective that can be identified at the level of actual performances of practices.

3.1. Explicit Normativity

If we think of the grounds of justification for actions, i.e. the sources of their normativity, laws and rules are the first things that come to our mind. Agents justify their actions and decisions by explicitly referring to laws and formal regulations. Existing laws and regulations, laws and regulations that are in force at the time actions are performed and decisions are made, exert a normative force that is somehow conferred upon newly established regulations or performed actions. A regulation gains its normative force through the act of referring to other, previously made regulations. But this seems to be only one – although the most obvious – case of what we might think of under the heading of *explicit normativity*.

The term *explicit normativity* as I understand it comprises a range of sources agents refer to in order to support a claim or to justify an action, to substantiate a claim if challenged, to normatively underpin a proposed option to act. Explicit references brought forward in discourse serve as argumentative backing for a position; they support objections in favor of or against a certain option. By explicitly referring to a source, agents promote the establishment of a common basis of commitment.

Following Christine Korsgaard (Korsgaard 1996),¹⁵ a suggestion would be to identify a range of fundamental sources of normativity agents explicitly refer to. A preliminary suggestion for a typology of explicit normative resources consists of the following elements: will, institution, world, reason and transcendence (Pritzlaff/Nullmeier 2009: 19-20). While the notion of *will* comprises individual and collective agents and their interests and aims that are considered to be preeminent and legitimate, *institution* refers to socially prevailing laws, rules and principles. A reference to institutions like rules or laws, as described above, ‘transfers’ the normative force of previously made regulations to newly established regulations. References to conceptions of the *world* relate to conditions of the world, to “objective facts” or state of affairs that seem to lie outside the agents’ will or attitudes. The normative source of *reason* encompasses references to logic, rules of argumentation, cognitive competences, judgment, sapience and rationality. A reference to sources of *transcendence* may imply a relation to god or to forms of the extramundane (Ibid.).

The outline of a typology of explicit normative resources opens up a broader perspective on the sources agents might refer to as grounds of justification for their actions, a perspective that exceeds a mere reference to legal norms or laws. These fundamental sources, as suggested in terms of the notions of will, institution, world, reason and transcendence, are normative resources agents *explicitly* refer to in order to support and to justify a claim or action, and to substantiate a claim if challenged. They are located in the dimension of explicit normativity.

¹⁵ “We live under the pressure of a vast assortment of laws, duties, obligations, expectations, demands, and rules, all telling us what to do. Some of these demands are no doubt illicit or imaginary – just social pressure, as we say (as if we knew what that was). But there are many laws and demands that we feel we really are bound to obey. And yet in many cases we would be hard pressed to identify the source of what I call the *normativity* of a law or a demand – the grounds of its authority and the psychological mechanisms of its enforcement, the way that it binds you.” (Korsgaard 2009: 2).

But although explicit rules and principles can be identified as sources of normativity, they constitute only one component of a more comprehensive structure.

Conceptions that characterize normativity solely in terms of laws, rules or regularities seem to identify normativity with a “special kind of entity” (Rouse 2007a: 48). As Robert Brandom puts it, Kant’s model of how to understand the normative status of correct and incorrect rests on the assumption that “what makes a performance correct or not is its relation to some explicit rule” (Brandom 1994: 18-19):

For Kant, “explicit rules and principles are not simply one form among others that the normative might assume. Rules are the form of the norm as such. This view, that proprieties of *practice* are always and everywhere to be conceived as expressions of the bindingness of underlying *principles*, may be called *regulism* about norms. [...] According to this intellectualist, Platonist conception of norms [...], to assess correctness is always to make at least implicit reference to a rule or principle that *determines* what is correct by explicitly *saying so*” (Ibid.: 19-20).

What Brandom describes as regulism about norms might, in this context, be characterized as a one-dimensional conception of normativity, a conception incorporating only explicit sources of normativity.

Political practices are often characterized in this one-dimensional way. This finding also designates a crucial point in the debates about so-called “practice theories” (Schatzki et al. 2001; Reckwitz 2002; Stern 2003; Rouse 2007b). Stephen Turner, the most prominent critic of this school of thought, argued against conceptions of social practices as “rule-governed or regularity-exhibiting performances” (Rouse 2007a: 46; Turner 1994). In contrast, Joseph Rouse, one of the most prominent advocates of practice theory, points out that “Turner’s criticisms overlook an alternative, ‘normative’ conception of practices” (Rouse 2007a: 46).

3.2. Implicit Normativity

On Rouse’s conception, “a practice is maintained by interactions among its constitutive performances that express their mutual accountability. On this normative conception of practices, a performance belongs to a practice if it is appropriate to hold it accountable as a correct or incorrect performance of that practice” (Ibid.: 48).¹⁶ Rouse characterization of practices rests on the assumption that their performances are integrated within the practice by “complex relations of mutual interaction” (Ibid.: 50), and these patterns of interaction “constitute something at issue and at stake in their outcome” (Ibid.).¹⁷ What is at stake in those practices is, as Rouse puts it, “perspectively variant or open-textured” (Ibid.):

“On such accounts, the normativity of practices is expressed not by a determinate norm to which they are accountable but instead in the mutual accountability of their constitutive performances to issues and stakes whose definitive resolution is always prospective. [...] Performances of a practice are intentionally directed toward and accountable to “something” (an issue and what is at stake in that issue) that outruns any particular expression of what it is. To be sure, we often make explicit judgments about what is at stake in various practices. Such judgments, however, are typically efforts to express what is already at issue and at stake in the practice. Moreover, we make such judgments while also acknowledging that alternative, inconsistent formulations are also attempts to formulate the same issue or stakes. Efforts to stand outside of an ongoing practice and definitively identify

¹⁶ Rouse introduces his alternative conception of practices as a normative conception of practices, “in contrast to the ‘regulist’ and ‘regularist’ conceptions of practices that Turner criticized” (Ibid.: 47).

¹⁷ As Rouse puts it, “what is at stake in those practices is the difference it would make to resolve the issue one way rather than another. But that difference is not already settled, and there is no agreed-upon formulation of what the issues and stakes are. Working out what is at issue in these practices and how the resolution of that issue matters is what the practice is about.” (Rouse 2007a: 50).

the norms that govern its performances are assimilated within the practice itself as one more contribution to shaping what it will become and how that future matters to present performance. [...] Normativity on such a conception is an essentially temporal phenomenon. It amounts to a mutual interactive accountability toward a future that encompasses present circumstances within its past.“ (Ibid.: 51).

Rouse’s underlying understanding of normativity is a very broad one.¹⁸ He conceives normativity in terms of “how we hold one another accountable to what is at issue and at stake in ongoing practices” (Ibid.: 54).

The implicit, procedural dimension of normativity has, as Rouse describes it, to be maintained and updated in the actual processes of social interaction through “complex patterns of mutual responsiveness” (Ibid.: 52). Performances respond to one another through acts of correction and repair, through the drawing of inferences, through acts of translation, feedback loops, reward or punishment of a performer, by trying to replicate an act in different circumstances, mimicking it, and so on (Ibid.: 49). If one adopts this idea of an implicit, procedural dimension of normativity, a typology of explicit sources of normativity has to be complemented by a conception of political practices as performative actualizations of implicit norms. This idea of a two-dimensional conception of normativity can be elaborated in analogy to Young’s two-layered conception of responsibility, as consisting of rule-based liability and practice-based political responsibility.

A two-dimensional conception of the normativity of practices has to address the relation between sources agents explicitly refer to when justifying their actions and the implicit normative force that becomes apparent in what they actually do, the norms they observe and perpetuate in their actual engagement in political practices, like for example in public forms of communication.

Explicit normative resources constitute, in this sense, only one dimension of the normativity of political practices. Agents refer to explicit norms, but at the same time, and in the way they actually do this, they maintain, preserve and renew the normative forces at work at a second level, in the implicit, in-process dimension of normativity. By referring to sources of explicit normativity, like will, institution, world, reason or transcendence, agents provide options or positions stated or defended in discourse with argumentative backing. But they do not only refer to those sources in an abstract, regulist way. They also act in accordance with implicit norms that are actualized within a specific context.

These – although very preliminary – ideas suggest that a comprehensive understanding of political normativity has to encompass two dimensions of normativity: an explicit and an implicit dimension. In this conception, the reference to explicit norms is complemented by an implicit dimension that is expressed through “complex patterns of mutual responsiveness” (Ibid.: 52). By picturing political normativity in this way, the reductive conception exhibited by a regulism about norms (Brandom 1994: 20) can be underpinned by a normative base that is located in our actual political practices.

¹⁸ “I have in mind the whole range of phenomena for which it is appropriate to apply normative concepts, such as correct or incorrect, just or unjust, appropriate or inappropriate, right or wrong, and the like.” (Rouse 2007a: 48). Rouse’s ideas about a normative conception of social practices are heavily indebted to the philosophy of Robert Brandom. Following Robert Brandom’s approach, normativity is located at the level of discursive practices. Discursive practices as actual performances constitute changes of normative statuses – in the sense of social statuses – within the dynamic interactional relations of political agents and processes. For Brandom, normativity lies at the heart of our day-to-day interactions, of our engagement in the use of language. His conception, therefore, rests on the assumption that “it’s normativity all the way down” (Brandom 1994: 625 ff.). The relation between explicit rules or norms and their application in practice can only be understood in a pragmatist order of explanation that locates the fundamental grounds of normativity in the actual practices themselves, an order of explanation that develops our understanding of the *meaning* of norms and concepts by an understanding of our *use* of those norms and concepts.

4. Political Practices as Performances of Political Responsibility

Following Iris Marion Young's model of political responsibility, a conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility can be outlined that comprises the above-described two dimensions of normativity as well as a more inclusive understanding of forms of political action, ranging from habitual rule-following and compliance to conscious protest. As Young points out, implicit norms like *articulateness* or *orderliness* – norms that can be characterized as exclusionary (Drexler 2007: 3) – often guide our ideas about the range of moderate or decent ways of engagement in political discourse. In Young's view, deliberation should not be restricted to rational argumentation, since alternative forms and dimensions of communication, like for example the "affective dimensions of communication" (Young 2000: 7), contribute important features to the actual performances of political practices. Furthermore, creative acts of protest or other alternative modes of expression can contribute to a more inclusive form of communicative engagement.¹⁹ In the sense of *changing society through society* (Ibid.: 178), Young suggests to adopt alternative norms and social practices to the political sphere. Politics, therefore, should take an open stance towards learning from successful forms of social practices (Conradi 2009). Especially political practices that aim at transforming oppressive social and political structures – in the sense of oppositional, performative political practices (Drexler 2007: 2) – often express themselves in these alternative ways.

At a very fundamental level, our everyday communicative interactions are guided by implicit norms, and these implicit norms, therefore, do also affect the way political practices are performed. If one includes alternative forms of communication and expression into a conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility, it is important to base this conception on an understanding of normativity that comprises not only norms in the sense of explicit rules, but also in the sense of implicit, in-process norms.

One of the main aims of including alternative forms of communication into a conception of political practice is, following Young, to enable "communication across differentiated structural positions" (Young 2006b: 98). A conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility, therefore, has to promote an understanding of political practices as acts that integrate and function against the background of structurally asymmetrical positions. The idea of political practices that bring about change has to incorporate the idea of functioning against the background of an asymmetric allocation of power and other resources, i.e. knowledge and communicative skills.

Furthermore, an elaborate conception of political practices as performances of political responsibility has to incorporate the idea of, to rephrase Drexler's formulation, political action that performs responsibility rather than asks for it (Drexler 2007: 14). Political responsibility, in this sense, is actualized and comes into being through the performance of significant political practices.

5. Conclusion

Political practices cannot be sufficiently understood if they are conceived as actions that comply with or violate explicit rules or laws. Political practices are also actualizations of implicit norms that guide our day-to-day interactions and routines. Following Young's distinction be-

¹⁹ "Not infrequently those who assume a stance of rational deliberators in public discourse invoke a narrow image of 'civility' that rules 'out of order' forms of political communication other than prepared statements calmly delivered. On this view, rowdy street demonstrations where thousands of people carry funny or sarcastic banners and chant slogans directed critically at powerful actors, which disrupt normal traffic and force bystanders to listen and look at their signs, go beyond the bounds of deliberative civility. Such an attitude that equates deliberation with orderliness similarly condemns and excludes actions like unfurling banners or displaying symbolic objects with the intent of disrupting bureaucratic or parliamentary routines in order to call attention to issues or positions that those performing the acts believe have been wrongly excluded from a deliberative agenda." (Young 2000: 47). On this point, see also Low and Gleeson (Low/Gleeson 1997: 25) and Young 2001.

tween a liability model of responsibility and a model of political responsibility, the liability model conceives the norm of responsibility in an explicit, backward-looking, reactive, law-like sense. In contrast, Young's model of political responsibility perceives responsibility in a forward-looking, active sense, in the sense that it performs responsibility rather than asks for it. Responsibility is actualized through significant political practices. In the case of structural injustice, shared responsibility is actualized through collective political practices that bring about improvement and change. Following Young's conception of complementing a liability model of responsibility by a model of political responsibility, I suggest to integrate the above-described two-dimensional version of normativity into a conception of political practices as performances of political normativity.

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