

This is a pre-copy-editing, author-produced PDF of an article accepted following peer review for publication in *Planning Theory*.

Reframing postmodern planning with feminist social theory: Toward “anti-essentialist norms”

Ihnji Jon, Cardiff University

Abstract

This article is concerned with the current developments in planning theory literature, with regard to its extensive focus on flexibility and process. When emphasizing the open-endedness and procedural validity of planning, planning theorists do not seem to consider ethical considerations about the results of planning outcomes. This is understandable given that postmodernism and its ardent defense of “open-endedness” is often considered to contradict any prescriptive nuances. However, I argue that normativity of planning is possible within the postmodern paradigm and that postmodern concepts and theoretical standpoints can propose a basis for normativity. To demonstrate this, I adopt the works of political theorists who have addressed normativity and political solidarity within the postmodern paradigm (anti-essentialist, anti-Cartesian), most of whom are inspired by the future paths of feminism. To be clear, what I refer as “feminism” is about not only defending the status of women as a legal category, but also how to construct political solidarity against inequalities—without essentialist categorizations or a priori conceptualizations. Using the ideas of Young (second-/third-wave feminism), Laclau and Mouffe (post-Marxism), Mouffe (post-Marxism/third-wave feminism), and Butler (third-wave feminism/body politics), I outline what could be considered “anti-essentialist norms.” Based on these norms, a planner can judge which people and whose voices—which social groups or “serial collectives”—should be prioritized and heard first, in order to promote a more inclusive and just urban space. The three anti-essentialist norms that I propose are (1) taking into account the

historicity of social relations, (2) having a modest attitude toward what we claim as the representation of “the public,” and (3) recognizing a human interdependency that leads to pursuing future-orientedness in a political project.

I believe that the task facing all theorists committed to social change is that of working to construct some theoretical bases for political solidarity.

-- Nancy Hartsock, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited* (1998)

Introduction

The two keywords in recent development of planning theory are “flexibility” and “process.” Planning theory writers argue that, given the limitation of positivist planning, planning should focus more on open-endedness (i.e. flexibility) and procedural validity, in order to weather the highly contingent future that we face today (Balducci et al., 2011; Hillier, 2008, 2011; Nyseth, 2012). This trend is not new. The communicative turn in planning theory (Forester, 1999, 2006; Healey, 2003 [1996]; Innes and Booher, 1999), and especially “consensus planning”—a modified version of Habermasian-inspired planning theory (Innes, 2004)—was born by embracing the ideas of pragmatism, which actively rejected modernist, essentialist ideas of truth. As pragmatist philosophy marks the beginning of postmodernism, such a planning tradition may ultimately be based upon postmodern ways of thinking (anti-Cartesian). On the other hand, the theories of planning in the recent decade (2000s) are philosophically grounded in continental postmodern philosophy (or anti-modern; for example, actor-network theory), emphasizing all the more the impossibility of rationalist control and what it means to “plan” in times of uncertainty and contingency.

One major characteristic of postmodern planning is the assertion that planning should be an “open-ended” activity, where the planner’s role is limited to mediating different conflicting interests. Such attitude, I argue here, is problematic because it fails to address ethical considerations in the actual planning outcomes. This critique is essential to the heart of this project: how to address normativity in planning? Can postmodern concepts and theoretical standpoints propose a basis for normativity? Eventually, I became concerned with

the political implications of the planning outcomes, because they can never be neutral—despite good intentions or the inclusive procedures that are assumed to result in “good” outcomes. Winners and losers will result from planning decisions; flexibility and open-endedness cannot justify political outcomes that are disadvantageous to certain segments of the population. How can planning be responsible for unintended outcomes? Based on what criteria planning should be held accountable?

My main objective is, therefore, to outline certain ideas on how to reframe postmodern planning theory and eventually to suggest a version of the “anti-essentialist norm” in planning. In doing so, I argue that feminist social theory offers very important insights on how to establish the direction of “where we want to go” (i.e. some kind of normative framework) without relying on transcendental or essentialist values or concepts. Feminist social theory has evolved over the last four decades, and its development was centered around the issue of where to find political solidarity without a priori concepts, groups, or categorizations. While the ideas of second-wave feminism in the 1960s have been effective in providing a moral ground for defending equal rights for minority groups, they have also been heavily criticized for being quasi-fundamentalist. Due to second-wave feminists’ emphasis on achieving social justice and fighting against inequality unjustly placed on different groups, their political standpoint had to maintain the essentialist idea of “fundamental/inherent differences” in the legal categories, such as gender or race. In other words, they were unable to let go of the essentialist categorization between “men” and “women” or “Black” and “White,” for they firmly believe that acknowledging the existence of these categories (and thus recognizing inequalities across such categories) is a major source of political solidarity—without which a normative political standpoint (e.g. what should be done) cannot be established. However, do we need groups and categorizations, or emphasizing “fundamental differences,” to achieve a political action against social injustice? We must ask if sticking to the strict notions of “us” and “them,” or grouping according to inherent characteristics, is a condition for any political solidarity. It is counterintuitive that the eventual political aim of feminist social theory was to remove the barriers that create inequalities in our society, yet it attempts to do so by putting up strict boundaries between the different groups. In addition, the emphasis on fundamental or inherent differences is at odds with postmodernism, which rejected the very notion of timelessness or the context independence of a priori and from which feminism was able to initiate its anti-Cartesian philosophy.

This debate on political solidarity or the question of where we should find the basis of our political solidarity—if we were to move beyond a priori concepts/groups/categories—remains at the heart of contemporary feminist social theory. I consider this debate useful and inspirational for reframing postmodern planning theory in a way that provides some normative pointers for planning practices, without being fixated on modernist, context-free norms or ethics. I draw the main ideas from third-wave feminist theorists, such as Mouffe and Butler, who are theoretically grounded in post-Marxist radical democracy, psychoanalysis, and body politics. I examine their ideas, focusing on their efforts to find postmodern theoretical ground for political solidarity. After summarizing and pointing out their major theoretical insights, I outline what could be considered “anti-essentialist norms.” Based on these norms, a planner can make judgments concerning who and whose interest—which social groups or collectives—should be prioritized and heard first, in order to promote more inclusive and just urban space. The three anti-essentialist norms that I propose are (1) taking into account the historicity of social relations, (2) having a modest attitude toward what we claim as the representation of “the public,” and (3) recognizing a human interdependency that leads to pursuing future-orientedness in a political project.

The era of uncertainty and current development of postmodern planning ideas

Postmodern planning ideas have been under development since the late 1990s, a process that began by recognizing the pluricentric nature of metropolises and increasingly divergent social groups that constitute urban space (Allmendinger, 2001; Sandercock, 1998; Soja, 1997). Writers such as Soja (1997) and Sandercock (1998) have noted how planners today need to work with the unpredictable multiplicity that the technocratic, modernist, problem-solving approach to planning finds difficult to control or manage. However, given their concern about the cases in which the “flexibility” or “openness” of postmodern theory can be abused or hijacked to justify neoliberal and right-wing policies, both Soja and Sandercock have warned against a pro-market/postmodern alliance—suggesting broad postmodern planning principles that could help retain the progressive potentials. Their normative nuance, in return, was subject to “postmodern” criticism, notably from Allmendinger (2001). In his book, *Planning in Postmodern Times*, Allmendinger argued that Soja and Sandercock’s theoretical stance suffers from a logical error—they refuse a modernistic, objective-driven approach while simultaneously imposing particular goals and priorities (e.g. social equality) suited to their

own choice of political direction (i.e. left-wing ideals). If we were to extend the logic of radically embracing multiplicity and diversity, Allmendinger asserted, planners should also be able to accommodate the needs of populations whose priorities are not necessarily aligned with the politics of the Left. With such a criticism of the Soja-ian model of postmodern planning, what seems to have taken hold as a prevailing alternative is a communicative/consensus planning model, which focuses on the planning process instead of judging the outcome. Drawing from Habermasian pragmatism, which has a “leap of faith” (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 192) in an “ethical process that leads to ethical outcomes,” communicative planning theorists (Forester, 1999, 2006; Healey, 2003 [1996], 2009; Innes, 1995) have worked extensively on how to impose procedural norms instead of attempting to regulate the actual outcomes—comparing their approach to court procedures where people should compromise and accept the outcome if the process that led to the verdict was transparent and fair (Healey, 2003 [1996]) Communicative planning often refers to itself as the representative of a “pragmatic approach” to planning (Forester, 1999), and the influence of pragmatism on planning can be traced back to anti-essentialist, anti-technocratic movements associated with postmodernism (Allmendinger, 2001; Fainstein, 2000; Hoch, 1996).

While communicative planning or a consensus approach to planning has achieved sufficient momentum to be a mainstream (Bacqué and Gauthier, 2011; Brownill and Parker, 2010), several scholars in the discipline have suggested new ideas that go beyond the current planning practices. These scholars argue that the increasing uncertainty of today’s era calls for a new approach to spatial planning, outlining how those new approaches would look in practice or how planners can shift their attitudes and practices in response. It can be said that this trend of planning for uncertainty was initiated by Hillier’s (2008, 2011) multi-planar planning. She argued that “spatial planning requires both redefinition and a new theoretical foundation in order to be relevant to the dynamic complexities and contingencies of today’s world” (Hillier, 2008: 25). Accordingly, she suggested that “we need to re-invent planning as a strategic future-oriented activity, taking into account the unknown, open up for new possibilities, toward a planning as becoming instead of planning as fixing” (Hillier, 2007: 17). Balducci et al. (2011) and Nyseth (2012) followed a similar track, calling for a new shape of planning that is not fixed. They demonstrated examples of what that would look like in practice. They focused on the ideas of fluidity and flexibility, drawing theoretical concepts mainly from Deleuze and Guattari (lines of flight or fluidity) as well as Latour (actant-network theory).

The limitation of this emphasis on fluidity and flexibility becomes clearer in Boelens (2010) actor-relational approach (ARA). ARA underlines the importance of acknowledging the planning initiatives led by actors that exist beyond traditional governmental structures—which could be summarized as “associative democracy” (Webb, 2011). The most problematic aspect of this approach is that it is unclear which kind of citizen initiatives should be prioritized and why. As Latour (2005) says “follow the actors,” Boelens (2010) says “follow the networks” if we are to deliver actor-relational results. According to these ideas, planners should be open-minded enough to take in the goals and visions set up by external actors (networks, associations, organizations, and groups that exist in civil society), instead of imposing their own. From this perspective, a planner is a quiet observer, a neutral, cool-minded assistant, who explores what kind of networks exist and the activities/projects that these networks aspire to achieve and then provides the conditions for the networks can prosper on their own. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) noted that their outside-in approach—unlike the conventional inside-out approach—implies that “planners adopt an open, unbiased and un(pre)structured view to deal with upcoming socio-spatial initiatives ‘on the outside’” (p. 117); “planners should consistently trace and follow those initiatives with an open and unbiased mind, trying to become a respected member of those heterogeneous associations” (p. 118).

However, the question remains as to whether all the activities of these (citizen-initiated) networks should be respected as they are. In other words, it must be determined if all bottom-up initiatives are “good.” The main example that Boonstra and Boelens (2011) discuss as a demonstration of the ARA in planning is the Business Improvement District (BID), self-organized by business owners in the neighborhood. However, BID network initiatives may mean, for instance, that actors mobilize themselves to evict the homeless population from their district for the purpose of business improvement or to attract only the right kind of people (who have purchasing power; for example, for the case of San Francisco, see Selbin et al., 2016). Is that kind of project also one that planners should accept when supporting these citizen-driven networks or initiatives? What if there is an advocate group that opposes such initiatives on the grounds of citizens’ rights in public space (e.g. the Western Regional Advocacy Project recently organized a march on the Union Square BID in San Francisco to protest that businesses use city police to banish homeless people)? It is necessary to identify the standards by which planners (1) ask themselves whether certain bottom-up initiatives are aligned with public values or elements of social justice and (2) take

sides with a certain network or network initiative when there are conflicting interests or values. In other words, we must ask what normative perspective a planner should be equipped with.

Actor-network theory can be empowering in the sense that it attempts to acknowledge and respect the existing citizen networks and initiatives. Nevertheless, without a clear identification of the normative angle to which planners should adhere, it is subject to the same criticism for requiring that planners be neutral or “in the middle” that communicative/consensus planning is. Due to the absence of discussion on the valorization of particular planning ideas or directions, the question of the accountability of planning outcomes also remains. Leaving everything, including the consequences of certain decisions on the rest of population, up to the networks can be detrimental to those who do not possess the power or resources to defend their rights and interests, let alone form a network that is legible to government agencies. A similar critique applies to recent planning theory ideas’ focus on “process” and “becoming” (Balducci et al., 2011; Hillier, 2011; Nyseth, 2012). While these ideas, framed as “fluid planning,” attempt to open up potentialities for ideas and initiatives that come from divergent actors, the “openness” can become in turn the source of its lack of potency to ensure the outcomes have elements of social justice and change.

Why feminist social theory can inspire norms that touch on ethics without fixating on essentialist ideas

Feminist theory, at its foundation, already benefited greatly from postmodernism and pragmatism that rejected “objective,” “transcendental,” or “the right” knowledge. The implication of that rejection provided feminist theorists a theoretical ground to argue against the imposition of masculine ways of knowing. The validity of localized and situated knowledge based on shared experiences, wisdom, and other ways of knowing—which have been advocated by postmodernism and pragmatism—became the basis of feminist theory and activism. Feminist pragmatist Kruks (2001) argued that effective feminist politics requires “hold[ing] onto the concepts of experience and must attend to the ways in which experience can exceed discursivity” (p. 133). She presented domestic violence as an example that is “not only discursively constituted by also lived ‘from the inside out’” (p. 138).

But at times, their political agenda “to emancipate women,” in the face of reality, was often predicated on the idea of a predetermined categorization of gender. That categorization

sometimes imposed the idea of “femininity” in an attempt to consolidate a political position against “masculinity.” In advocating “politics of difference,” feminists have claimed to justify “special treatments” for oppressed and underrepresented groups (Young, 1990), based on egalitarian values that see equality as the participation and inclusion of all groups (and, therefore, sometimes requiring different treatments for oppressed or disadvantaged groups). This politics of difference, however, relied for its theoretical basis on predetermined, a priori categories that advocated the existence of “inherent differences,” which has become politically problematic for two main reasons:

1. Categories inevitably exclude people in the margin (cf. lesbians or Black-Asian people); it is never possible to capture the perfect representation of particularities (i.e. “[e]xclusionary effects of the category from within feminist discourse;” Butler, 1990).
2. Political solidarity based on fixed categorizations does not have future in articulating different social movements (i.e. coalition politics)—which is needed to fight against a particular issue that concerns all categories. There are issues that we have to fight together, regardless of the categories to which we are supposed to belong (e.g. freedom of speech; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001 [1985]; Mouffe, 1995).

Above all, as categories are a representative label based on commonalities, it is impossible to include every single particularity that differentiates one from another within the group. As Butler (1990) puts it, “the category reflects the restricted location of its theoreticians and, hence, fails to recognize the intersection of gender with race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality and other currents which contribute to the formation of cultural (non)identity” (p. 325). For example, the challenges that queer women face must differ from those faced by straight women, due to the differences in their collective experiences. Different challenges lead to different political agendas that each particularity needs, so the imposition of categories—in an attempt to protect the identity of “women”—can be totalizing, undemocratic, and un-postmodern because it results in exclusion and subsequent political closure. This point has been brought up very clearly in the works of Black feminists on intersectionality, which elaborated on how the struggles of White, heterosexual women do not and cannot represent the totality of struggles that confront the divergent groups within “women” (see Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984). The introduction of intersectionality to feminism has shed light on the populations subject to different forms of subordination, or

those who suffer inequality and social injustice not only because they are women but also because they are of certain color, class, or sexuality.

On the other hand, the second problem with category-based politics lies in reflecting on what happens in the future, or in anticipation of political agendas to come. Mouffe (1995) has argued that feminist politics should not be understood as designed to pursue the interests of women as “women,” since it will only lead to foreclosing political the process of articulation (i.e. the linkage) of the social movements (or fighting for common political agendas) across different predetermined groups or categories. According to Mouffe (1995: 329), the pursuit of feminist goals and aims should be within the context of a wider articulation of other societal demands (that come from different types of subordination, which concern race or sexuality. Mouffe was concerned how essentialist, foundational categorization of women can cause exclusivity and hence fail to hear the concerns of other social groups.

In the end, what feminist movements realize is that the categories (e.g. essentialist definitions of “women”) are the legacy of modernist framing and dichotomization—and that their task is to find a theoretical basis for a political solidarity that moves beyond that. Butler (1990) notes how going beyond the binary dichotomy of gender in feminist politics can acknowledge and empower women’s agency, implying the possibilities of coalition politics:

The loss of that reification of gender relations ought not to be lamented as the failure of a feminist political theory but rather affirmed as the promise of the possibility of complex and generative subject positions as well as coalition strategies that neither presuppose nor fix their constitutive subjects in their place. (p. 339)

Accordingly, moving on from political solidarity based on essentialist categorization, third-wave feminists seek their normative ground by even more fully embracing postmodernism. They focus on translating how the openness, flexibility, and post-reasonness can lead to emancipatory agendas for not only women but also other minority groups. Drawing from psychoanalysis, post-Marxism, and body politics, feminist social theorists expand their theoretical ground toward a social postmodernism that attempts to show how postmodern openness and post-reasonness guide their project of democracy and egalitarian imagery.

Feminist social postmodernism moves from category-based, second-wave feminism (whose solidarity still relied on essentialist categorization of gender) to more future-oriented, third-wave feminism (whose solidarity advances beyond gender categories). Its theoretical insights illustrate why essentialist norms are eventually limited and how to pursue a more future-oriented politics that reaches beyond solidarity based on enclosed social identity. Above all, essentialist norms are limited because no categorization is complete or fully comprehensive. Political solidarity based on essentialist categorization will always misrepresent or underrepresent certain minority groups. The problem with the second-wave feminist agenda was that their essentialist categorization failed to represent the interests or needs of all different groups of women, such as the challenges faced by women who are homosexual or belong to other ethnic minorities. What Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]) pointed out as the fundamental flaw of political solidarity based on Marxist “class” was also similar: a fixed notion of “working class” does not represent the fact that there are different kinds of working class coupled with different needs and challenges for these different groups (e.g. across different generations, races, or gender). Therefore, I argue throughout this article that we can learn from a tradition of scholarship (feminist social theory or feminist social postmodernism) in order to model a landscape by which to evaluate which social collective is normatively better.

Feminist social theory: how postmodern concepts lead us to a more liberal agenda in planning

Before explaining how and why I use feminist social theory to model normativity in planning, I would like to briefly discuss the influence of feminism in planning theory and how my approach differs from the previous use of feminist ideas in the planning literature. Feminist writers such as Snyder (1995) and Roy (2001) rightly argued that pursuing social justice elements in urban planning can benefit from applying feminist theoretical frameworks, which have pioneered in addressing inequality and the issue of representation in public policy. Notably, Snyder (1995) observed that while much of the postmodern movement remains apolitical, the feminist postmodernists are decidedly not (p. 96). They reject planning activities as value-neutral or apolitical and believe that planning is about bringing about social change; the point of planning, according to feminist critique, is not to understand the conditions of the oppressed but to change them. What is really needed today is therefore “a

transformation of processes, structures, institutions which limit the power and access of subdominant group” (Snyder, 1995: 99; see also Benhabib, 1995 on feminist critique on postmodernism).

I fully agree with their political standpoint and the potential role that feminist theory can play in finding normativity in planning. However, the theoretical inquiry that I intend to delve into in this article is slightly different. While the application of feminist theory in planning has conventionally been used as a rightful justification for “social justice” as a given, unquestioned, common value—therefore injecting a sort of a priori principle— what I am interested in instead is how the openness, or anti-essentialist aspects, of postmodernism itself can lead to the kinds of ethics or normativity that we attempt to grasp. In other words, in the era of uncertainty and flexibility, as we can observe from the theoretical struggles of current planning theorists (Balducci et al., 2011; Hillier, 2011; Nyseth, 2012), it is extremely difficult to project or proclaim up-front about certain ethics or values or the question of what should be done. Such assertions are often subject to criticisms that have been well articulated by Allmendinger (2001), who argued that the imposition of certain ideals, even in the case of social justice, can be interpreted as limiting the diversity of opinions. Therefore, in lieu of using the works of feminists that express a higher degree of certainty about the “should” questions, I am choosing to engage more with the feminist writers who carefully navigate the difficult border between normativity and openness (e.g. Judith Butler, Iris Young, and Chantal Mouffe). As a result, what I hope to learn from feminist social theory is less about its immediate defense of social justice and more about how feminists were able to maintain its normativity (i.e. political advocacy for social change) while simultaneously applying the postmodern openness to broaden their social movement. The latter point is specifically with regard to how thirdwave feminists’ anti-essentialist attitude, which broke down the essentialist conceptualizations of what “should” be classed under “women,” now serves as a strong theoretical ground that opens doors to different kinds of struggles and subordinations (other than those of “women”).

In other words, in attempts to find a theoretical ground for normativity in postmodern planning, my interest lies in how feminist political theorists find a way to move beyond identity politics while still remaining firmly rooted in their initial political motivation for addressing social inequalities. More specifically, the starting point of thirdwave feminism is the acceptance of “radically unfixed social identity,” which aims to find a new theoretical ground for political solidarity, one other than inherent/fundamental femininity. This argument

was pioneered by Butler (1990, 1993, 1999 [1990]), who projected a future of feminism that no longer relies on a modernist obsession with the biological categorization of sex. Her well-known argument on “gender as performativity” through the example of drag¹ was largely accepted and popularized as empowerment of independent self-agency. On the surface, this performativity argument seems almost detached from the politicization of gender, because its innovation (as a political theory of the 1990s) lay in introducing post-structural possibilities and radical acknowledgment of human agency that frees itself from the weight of structures. However, what is often overlooked in Butler’s work is that her theorization is a carefully layered political argument toward a progressive rearticulation of gender and sexuality.² Butler (1993: 228; 1999 [1990]: xxvi) has repeatedly shown her concern that “gender performativity” can wrongly be conflated with a naive presentist voluntarism that underestimates the historicity of discourse and power.³ This differentiation between performativity and presentist voluntarism is crucial because she emphasizes that her work is not merely about acknowledgment of human agency but eventually aims to address its political motivation toward a progressive rearticulation of power. To draw a more political implication from her work, one should focus on two key axes: (1) how not to underestimate the historicity of discourse and power and (2) how to go beyond enclave politics loaded with historicity. For the second point, we must also consider where to find the “right” or “good” direction of human agency and political articulation. These two issues are not merely “feminist” but an essential part of the common quest for any political theorist who attends to social inequality and justice. Therefore, discussing them in depth would eventually lead us to understand how postmodern political theorists find their theoretical ground for a political solidarity that no longer relies on modernist categorizations or grouping of social collectives (e.g. gender, race, class). While I used Butler’s work to identify these main themes, I also build my argument by drawing ideas from other political theorists working with similar topics.

Acknowledging the historicity of discourse and power

Butler’s (1999 [1990]) *Gender Trouble* not only celebrated the potentialities of agency via deconstructing “the given” gender but also argued for a political project that does not underestimate the historicity of existing discourse and power. More specifically, she noted the necessity of acknowledging the historical conditions (and the existing collective,

repetitive actions) that define and limit what is considered to be “normal” for “a style of being,” “a stylistics of existence,” or “styles of flesh.” These cannot suddenly be reshaped by a single individual action (pp. 189–191): “[t]hese styles are never fully self-styled, for styles have a history, and those histories condition and limit the possibilities” (p. 190). In that sense, “gender as performativity” is not merely an individual initiative to dress or act like the Other but a “sustained and repeated” political project that can become effective only when (1) it considers the accumulative character (i.e. historicity) of gender norms that have been produced/reproduced over time and (2) it possesses the elements of collectivity and repetition that renders it a social, collective strategy. In Butler’s words,

[t]here are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public character is not inconsequential ... Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. (p. 191, emphasis added)

It is not that an individual wakes up one day and cross-dresses, and that alone revolutionizes the social perception of gender. This performativity does not merely emphasize a matter of individual initiative and agency. It is equally concerned with the possibility of collective politics that we can enact together, because the real change in addressing injustices/inequalities—against any social category—can only come from collective and repeated performances that effectively challenge the established social notions of that category:

The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; “Agency,” then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. (p. 198, emphasis added)

Butler connected the idea of locating agency in a temporal and collective milieu of a political project with a psychoanalytic approach to gender (more detailed in Butler, 1999 [1990]), with which she demonstrated how our individual, conscious “will” or “freedom” for change cannot control our own subconscious self’s identification of gender (i.e. “interior fixity”), which is unavoidably influenced by the historicity of already established gender norms and social perceptions (pp. 136–137). The only way to break free of this domination of the subconscious is to translate this radical individual will into a collective political project that can effectuate a real societal change. Butler’s (1993) later work, *Bodies That Matter*, implies a few options for engaging with such a political project and strategy. One idea, in relation to acknowledging the historicity of discourse and power, is the genealogical approach to what is currently considered to be the “given” social categories or concepts, in order to critique and uncover the historical interests and power relations behind these categories. The genealogical critique of the subject “is the interrogation of those constitutive and exclusionary relations of power through which contemporary discourse resources are formed,” such as by questioning “who is represented by which use of the term, and who is excluded?” (p. 229).

Butler’s argument remains largely theoretical, insisting that postmodern political activism, to avoid the naïveté of presentist voluntarism, needs to acknowledge the historical, accumulative aspects of power relations and social identities that cannot be suddenly uprooted. The task at hand is therefore to analyze, document, and better understand the historical process by which particular power relations have produced and maintained the current norms of social identities and relations. This argument, in practice, may merely translate into a better understanding of the state of things—not necessarily a collective, political project. Butler does not specifically address the key question of where to find a political solidarity that is not based on fixed categories. However, her work can also be linked with that of other feminist social theorists considering how to reinvigorate feminist political activism that is postmodern (i.e. anti-essentialist) and yet also fully acknowledges the role of collective, historical, shared experiences that become the basis for political solidarity.

For instance, Young’s (1995) later work used Sartre’s “seriality” approach to demonstrate how to imagine feminist politics that go beyond modernist identity politics, which are based on fixed categorization of gender. Young attempted to provide a postmodern theoretical ground for political solidarity that is based not on particular foundational characteristics (e.g. “women”) but on the historical experiences of people who underwent a certain form of subordination (regarding them as a certain “series” of persons). In essence,

her work here was a theoretical effort to acknowledge the historicity behind the formation of current identity politics while simultaneously expanding the inclusivity of “the groups.” To do so, these groups would need to accept the flexible and fluid notion of labeling that is based on shared, collective experiences rather than strict categorization based on foundational characteristics— for instance, “inherent femininity.” However, although we can no longer rely on essentialist labeling of “women,” it is still necessary, from a pragmatic point of view, to recognize women as a serial collective in order for us to recognize the structural conditions of oppression whose solutions are beyond individuals:

One reason to conceptualize women as a collective, I think, is to maintain a point of view outside of liberal individualism ... Without conceptualizing women as a group in some sense, it is not possible to conceptualize oppression as a systematic, structured, institutional process. If we obey the injunction to think of people only as individuals, then the disadvantages and exclusions we call oppressions reduce to individuals in one of two ways. Either we blame the victims and say that the disadvantaged person’s choices and capacities render them less competitive, or we attribute their advantage to the attitudes of other individuals, who for whatever reason don’t “like” the disadvantaged ones. In either case structural and political ways to address and rectify the disadvantage are written out of the discourse, leaving individuals wrestle with their bootstraps. The importance of being able to talk about disadvantage and oppression in terms of groups exist just as much for those oppressed through race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and the like as through gender. (pp. 192–193, emphasis added)

But to consider women as a collective, it is important that we do not fall back on the modernist essentialist paradigm—of women as “women,” a group that is based on the a priori biological sex. So here Young asks, on the formation of political solidarity, “on the basis of what do they come together? What are the social conditions that have motivated the politics?” (p. 197). The key conceptual work is to differentiate “(voluntary) groups” and what Sartre called a “series”:

Unlike a group, which forms around actively shared objectives, a series is a social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the others. (p. 199, emphasis added)

One needs to take notice of the seriality's emphasis on passivity. The political solidarity of a series comes not from a voluntary will but from the external situation in which one finds oneself because of the already established social relations in existence long before one was born. One is not responsible for the particular social milieu in which one is located, but one has no choice but to be engaged with a political project that enhances the status quo of the series of people (which includes oneself) who also share that particular condition of suffering (e.g. social inequality, injustices, forms of subordination). In that sense, Sartre's seriality is useful for rethinking the basis of political solidarity of social categories that we often perceive to be constituted by their foundational characteristics, such as skin color, biological sex, or immobile social status determined by the existing economic structure. The point of such rethinking is ignited by the radical acceptance of unfixed social identity and, therefore, the fact that these categories are merely different forms of seriality that are flexible and mobile, which neither necessarily define the identity of individuals nor name attributes they share with others: "[t]hey are material structures arising from people's historically congealed institutional actions and expectations that position and limit individuals in determinate ways that they must deal with" (p. 207). In this way, "women" as a series resolves the dilemma that developed in feminist theory: here, women can claim themselves as a social collective without falling into a false essentialism. They can find the collective solidarity of their political project not from internal attributes of femininity but from their external institutional circumstances:

[t]here is a unity to the series of women, but it is a passive unity, one that does not arise from the individuals called women but rather positions them through the material organization of social relations as enabled and constrained by the structural relations of enforced heterosexuality and the sexual division of labor. (p. 208, emphasis added)

As a political project, serial collectives—that are dedicated to a political project of changing the status quo—would challenge a set of structural constraints and relations that condition the collective experiences of individuals with the world in which they are situated. To do so, valuing of historical, collective, shared experiences is necessary, since the unity of the series derives from the shared experiences that have been conditioned by historical social structures that materialize certain oppressive environments and backgrounds against a particular series of people (see also the works of Black feminism and its emphasis on the collective experiences of subordination—hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984). Circling back to Butler’s emphasis on how not to underestimate the historicity of discourse and power, Young’s conceptual reframing of women as a series—with its valorization of collective experiences caused by historical social structures—also underlines the limits of presentist voluntarism. We cannot suddenly ignore the muddy situation that we are in simply because we one day decide to do so. As Butler (1993) states,

Performativity describes ... turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a “pure” opposition, a “transcendence” of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (p. 141, emphasis added)

What this means for a postmodern political project is that (1) we need to consider how our will and freedom are inevitably conditioned by the historicity of social structures— which necessitates a collective political action rather than liberal individualism and (2) the basis of such political solidarity should come not from already established a priori categorization but rather from shared experiences—which, in turn, allows our project to be wider and ever-expanding.

Going beyond “melancholia”: where to find the “good” or “right” direction of human agency and political articulation—toward a more inclusive, positive, future-oriented articulation of the social

One problem with this historicity approach is that, because we try not to forget the experiences of oppression and suffering, we may risk of slipping back into “collective

melancholia” or enclave politics (such as that of identity politics), which can cause a pessimistic outlook on politics or closing their door of solidarity against other social groups. The notion of collective melancholia was initially formed by Wendy Brown (1995), who was primarily concerned with some feminists’ orientation toward a rigid version of identity politics. She posed the danger of identity politics and that a feminism that insists on “femininity” can lead to resentment-laden exclusion rather than forward-looking solidarity: “Politicized identity thus enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics; it can hold out no future—for itself and others—that triumphs over this pain” (Brown, 1995: 74).⁴ On that note, Butler’s (1990, 1993, 1999 [1990]) significant contribution is that she projected a future of feminist politics that moves beyond such “melancholia,” by proposing possibilities of human agency in forming a collective political articulation that effectively counters the domination of existing power. Her concept of performativity precisely advocates for such a potential political rearticulation or “affirmative resignification” (Butler, 1993: 240), which emphasizes that while individual submission to the historical forces causes melancholia that leads to paralysis and self-destruction, collective and institutional actions from that shared memory can trigger political action (p. 236).

So, let us presuppose that agency is granted and that there is a definite possibility of change with which we can break free from historical and structural forces—when we act collectively. But if we consider ourselves finally free from these structures, who decides where we go? Who decides what is a meaningful, legitimate, affirmative political articulation and movement? Who decides the “right” kind of collective political action or motivation behind it? As Butler asks, “How will we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose?” (p. 241). Butler’s early works do not provide a clear answer. Her later work, *Precarious Life* (Butler, 2004), offers some suggestions to address these questions of ethics in formation of political solidarity. As the title suggests, the point is to recognize the vulnerabilities that we all share as selves, communities, cities, countries, or humans. This recognition leads us to think about our interdependency on and mutual responsibilities with one another—my action, my possession, and my privilege can have consequences for you, and yours for me. There is an emphasis on interdependency that legitimizes and justifies why each of us needs to care about the differences, the undervalued, or the deficiency of the Other: we should care because these differences are caused by the very action of valuing ours (over the others) and maintaining the sufficiency on our side. In that sense, *Precarious Life*

also draws attention to the value of emotional qualities and abilities with which we can empathize with the Other, who is often considered feminine, irrational, and illogical. Although it is not enough in itself, the ability to understand and sympathize with the Other's positions and situations is a starting point of political movements. One can take those emotions, such as grief, as a source of power to imagine a future that could address their cause rather than disregarding them as a sign of weakness or inaction. As Butler (2004) notes, grief may be understood as "a point of departure for a new understanding consideration of the others," which leads to critically evaluating and opposing the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others. At the same time, however, it should not merely invoke melancholia. As Butler points out, the real political movement and action driven by grief can be possible only when

the narcissistic preoccupation of melancholia can be moved into a consideration of the vulnerability of others ... then we critically evaluate and oppose the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, thus certain human lives are more grievable than others. (p. 30)

Recognizing the interdependency of human lives using the emotional qualities to sympathize with the situations of the Other—renews a humanist perspective that essentially asserts that all lives are important and each of our lives is dependent on another. What would be the implication of this perspective to political movements, and more specifically, what does it say about finding the ethically correct and good direction of political articulation? Let me be more specific with where I am going with this. The recent US 2016 presidential election brought our attention to how difficult it is to address the question of "who decides" or "on the basis of which we decide" on a good direction of political solidarity. White, blue-collar people led political movements in rural parts of America and voiced themselves as the minority and victims of the current knowledgebased economic structure, which did not allow them enough time or resources to make a timely industry transition. To what extent this is true is a topic for another day. What I mean to point out is that political solidarity is not inherently ethical or good, and if we can agree that such movements are not good for our society as a whole, we must ask the difficult question about the basis by which we can claim such an ethical judgment. Butler's (2004) answer to this question is somewhat vague. She does hint at a normative perspective in that we need to revalue the lives that have not been

previously recognized, represented, or considered to matter, which goes back to the issue of acknowledging the historicity of current struggles (p. 43). But the implication of this is somewhat too weak to apply to establishing an ethical ground for judging whether a certain political solidarity, movement, or articulation as “good” or “bad.”

This problem is certainly not new, and I draw insights from Laclau and Mouffe’s (2001 [1985]) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, which specifically addressed it. Although this may not necessarily be categorized as feminist social theory, they used examples from feminism to clarify their point on the normativity of political solidarity, which later influenced Mouffe’s (1995) work on third-wave feminism. While Mouffe (1995) was precise with regard to how the future feminism’s political solidarity should not come from the physical attributes of biological sex, Laclau and Mouffe’s concern focused on how the future socialists’ political solidarity can go beyond the Marxist categorization of “fundamental” classes. In doing so, they discussed the rise of the New Right and their successful political articulation (pp. 169–175) as well as the future strategies for how the Left’s political solidarity can differentiate itself from that of right-wing populism (pp. 176, 182–189). Political solidarity and articulation are available for all series of people;⁵ the novelty of the “New Right,” according to Laclau and Mouffe, lies in its successful articulation of neoliberal discourse as a series of “democratic resistances” against the welfare state. Their emphasis on individual liberty and freedom articulates a kind of political solidarity among the people who defend traditional values and freedom of enterprise, contesting the welfare state and all the perceived “subversives” (feminists, Black people, young people). So, say that the New Right achieves a successful political articulation. How can progressives differentiate their own political articulation from that of neoconservatives? The strategy that Laclau and Mouffe suggest is to embrace the radicalism of unfixed social identities, to accept that all of these articulations are mere signifiers, and that there is no real enemy or adversary based on fundamentally fixed identities. The Left’s edge, so to speak, is that it does not have definite frontiers that divide “us” and “them,” which then allows it to expand the movement and integrate all different series of people:

the alternative of the [L]eft should consist of locating itself fully in the field of the democratic revolution and expanding the chains of equivalents between the different

struggles against oppression. The task of the Left therefore cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy. (p. 176)

Their argument speaks cogently on where to find an ethical compass in the postmodern era. It implies that the logic of equivalence (that of the Left) should no longer be based upon the fundamental characteristics of subordinated groups (e.g. attributes of gender, class, race) and that it can only be augmented by embracing the unfixity and openness (characteristics of postmodernism) that rely on relative aspects of social identity. Based on this, our social movement and political project can reach out to a wider audience and expanding to represent more diverse needs and interests of different groups. What makes progressives ethically correct—as opposed to the neoconservatives—is that they pursue a more inclusive, more future-oriented political project that aims to connect with different social movements to oppose all varieties of subordination. The ultimate goal is to join all these different forms of struggle one by one, although this process should not be forced (as in the Habermasian “all as one group” consensus approach)—precisely because each has its own historicity and particularities of shared experiences and discourses that must be respected along the way.

Achieving a positive, more inclusive, and future-oriented articulation of the social is definitely in line with the implications of Young’s use of Sartre’s seriality. The implication of Sartre’s seriality is more than acknowledging the historicity of external conditions that formulate a group. The conceptual switch of the source of group solidarity from “a common set of attributes” to “collectively shared experiences conditioned by historical and social structures” changes the direction of feminist politics in practice. The direction of their project is no longer about advocating only the rights of a certain group through finding foundational commonalities within women alone and thus drawing boundaries between us and them. Instead, it is to be more about expanding their boundary of series via attending to similar collective experiences of oppression and subordination. This transforms feminist politics from a narrow, exclusive agenda to a coalition that is concerned with all forms of subordination.⁶

Laclau and Mouffe's stepping away from the Gramscian socialist agenda (p. 137) is also because they acknowledge class as a temporary social category, as opposed to fundamental class, which permanently determines a group's identity. For instance, the working class is composed of workers of older and younger generations, and the antagonism and political agenda of each group can diverge (e.g. the political agenda of the young blames the older generation for unemployment and job insecurity). The same is true of feminism; the political agenda of "women" can never achieve the totality of all women's agendas, which differ across generations, races, and classes. Thus, all social identities are floating and never fundamental, always temporary and partial—since historical moments would at any moment change one's identity, the social collective to which one belongs, and the agenda for which one fights. Simply put, in any future moment, the series that I temporarily belong to might end up in an unforeseen situation of subordination. I might consequently form a new series with others from whom I previously differentiated myself. In a certain sense, if Laclau and Mouffe proposed something essentialistic, it would be this somewhat cautious vision of the future (or the condition of uncertainty) in which people will eventually be in need of each other and the shared human interdependency will never be able to forsaken due to this very anticipation of a future moment that nobody can predict or prepare for. That is precisely why we should always consider how the pursuit of rights of our group is situated within/in association with the matrices of the other groups' pursuit of rights and their own interests, which then leads us to seek "relative autonomy" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001 [1985]: viii).

If we accept this underlying assumption that comes from a cautious take on uncertainty, the utility of seriality becomes clearer. Only after accepting temporary character of any political solidarity/identity, can we imagine a wider (and more inclusive) political articulation that is able to join the different social movements. This linkage would connect us to a larger social agenda and transformative project for a larger audience—for a "positive reconstruction of a new social order" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001 [1985]: 189) that can address future challenges. Mouffe's (1995) projection of the future of feminism is precisely to surpass feminism as enclave politics. She rejected the feminism based on a priori, foundational categorization of women because it is not inclusive or future-forward enough to attend to the concerns of other social groups. In other words, if feminism flourishes at the expense of impeding the rights of the working class, it is detrimental to the ultimate goal of achieving a wider democratic equivalence—which will be needed to address all forms of inequality and subordination.

Implications of feminist social theory in developing antiessentialist norms for planning in practice

In this section, I discuss how these ideas can inspire anti-essentialist norms for planners. I present three major themes from the evolution of feminist social theory. I translate them into a suite of norms that can help planners to judge which social groups, networks, or serial collectives should be prioritized or taken into account first, especially when planners find themselves in the midst of conflicts of needs or interests among different groups.

Valuing the historicity of collective experiences: can these groups' solidarity be justified by historical experiences and relationships that currently result in negative material consequences for their present socioeconomic condition?

What we can learn from Young's (1995) use of Sartre's seriality is that we need to valorize the historical background behind the formation of a particular series of people.

Acknowledging the historicity of shared experiences and social structures (that have caused those experiences of oppression) is also consistent with Butler's careful argument for performativity (which is different from "naive voluntarism"). Butler's assertion that performativity and human agency should be located within the impurity of ongoing historical and social structures implies that we cannot merely ignore the current political struggles, and, more importantly, how those struggles are caused by historical social structures that have unjustly prioritized the rights and interests of certain groups. Hence, our work as planners remains in addressing the historicity of ongoing social, economic, and political movements and struggles that are present in our cities. To be invested in this historicity means that the planning agenda should be dedicated to addressing structural and more fundamental causes behind the current social problems of inequality and everyday social justice issues. We must remind ourselves that the present relations among different social groups (e.g. unequal distribution of resources, unjust relations of subordination) are a product of historical events and experiences. In this context, "doing justice" to the historicity of collective experiences means taking them into account when addressing the current conflictual relationship among different social groups. When confronted with determining whose political project should be

prioritized, planners can ask whether the involved group's solidarity can be justified by its historical, collective experiences that currently result in negative material consequences for its present socioeconomic condition. For instance, the slogan of "Black Lives Matter" is justified because African Americans' collective, historical experience of subordination—highlighted by continuous unjust treatments during US law enforcement processes—still continues today. Despite of it being temporarily exclusive to African Americans, their voice and their pursuit of a political project should be respected and prioritized given that their present experience of injustice is caused by historical relationships and experiences. As Butler argued for the legitimacy of Black Lives Matter:

When we are talking about racism, and anti-black racism in the United States, we have to remember that under slavery black lives were considered only a fraction of a human life ... One reason we chant "Black Lives Matter" is so important is that it states the obvious but the obvious has not yet been historically realized. So it is a statement of outrage and a demand of equality, for the right to live free of constraint, but also a chant that links the history of slavery, of debt peonage, segregation, and a prison system geared toward the containment, neutralization and degradation of black lives, but also a police system that more and more easily and often can take away a black life in a flash all because some officer perceives a threat. (Butler, 2015, in an interview with New York Times)

Looking for underrepresentation of the social: have these groups' rights or interests have been underrepresented in the current definition of "the public"?

However, on the other hand, we should also be cautious of category-based social movements or political projects driven by fixed social categories or social identity. Secondwave feminism's fundamental flaw was that its essentialist conceptualization of "women" prevented recognition that there are different groups within the category, different challenges and struggles that cannot be represented as merely one, unitary agenda. We find the legitimacy of "Black Lives Matter" not in the category of race itself but in the historicity of members' collective experiences because this highlights that their political solidarity is formulated by a temporary external condition, rather than an essentialist, fixed concept that is too sure of its comprehensiveness. This differentiation is important because it underlines the

temporality of any political solidarity, that it is always partial and, therefore, subject to challenge by those who have been underrepresented in the current labeling and categorization of a group (e.g. gender, race, or any other legal categorization). Third-wave feminism originated precisely in the moment that feminists realized that their previous political agenda, based on the fixed categorization of “women,” was far from grasping/representing all the challenges and issues that different groups under the label might face. Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxism begins in the recognition that a fundamental “class” does not exist and that the labor class is in fact composed of many different types of workers’ groups that have different challenges (and therefore different political agendas).

Let us place this theoretical insight in the context of planning in practice. Any policy decision or action that a planning department embarks upon is intended to represent and pursue the interests and rights of “the public.” In a way, it is also an attempt to form a political solidarity, as planners try to define whose interests and rights we aim to represent and protect, and claim that everyone has to come together to pursue certain policy agendas that are based on those definitions and understandings. If we can agree that making planning decisions—which can come from either planners’ expertise based on their experiences or citizen engagement efforts (i.e. public round tables/meetings)—is also a kind of forging political solidarity, we should equally recognize that these decisions can only partially and temporarily represent the rights and interests of the public. Planners should acknowledge that any planning process driven by the government will have limitations in its perspective.

No matter how much effort we put into being inclusive and all-embracing, it is not realistically possible to represent the totality of identities and pursue the rights/interests of all plural groups. They all rely on their own collective experiences, which are sometimes known or felt only within that group and so temporarily unknown to planners. For instance, it has been suggested that emergent groups after disasters are often the result of social and political inequalities, which led to underrepresentation of certain groups’ rights and interests (Lindell and Perry, 1992). Dominant groups that produce plans based on their own cultural norms, values, and expectations may fail to address the needs of minority groups within the community (Neal and Phillips, 1995). This can lead to neglected groups organizing themselves (i.e. emergent groups) to provide their own assistance to group members or advocate for their rights (Jon and Purcell, 2018). Such incidents remind us to always seek to identify underrepresentation of the social: who is being underrepresented, whose lives/interests have been neglected in the current frame of “the public.” When faced with the

conundrum of whose side they should be on, planners should ask whether the emergence of a group's political project is caused by its underrepresentation in "the public." If there could arise an understanding that the collective movement of a certain social group (or network) is driven by the lack of recognition or acknowledgment from planners and the public sector, we should be ready to learn from its stories and prioritize its needs over those of the groups that have been conventionally well represented.

Evaluating the future-orientedness of a political project: can these groups' political agenda attempt to create a new positive direction—positive articulation of the social? Do these groups, eventually, attempt to reach out to other groups and create coalition with those who share similar experiences and stories of underrepresentation and subordination?

Another important lesson that we can draw from the evolution of feminist social theory—from essentialist, category-based, second-wave feminism to a more future-oriented, thirdwave feminism that aims to expand the beneficiaries of their political project—is the limitations of identity politics. For instance, "Black Lives Matter" is a powerful political project to bring about material changes in the everyday lives of Black Americans, and its strength may derive from the specific collective experiences with which they can identify or personally relate. However, one should also recognize the limitation of such an approach; as we learned from the third-wave feminists, a group's attachment to particular identification can easily lean toward enclave politics or collective melancholia. If a political movement driven by a certain group (or series) starts to discount the rights/needs of other groups in the name of advocating only for its own rights/needs, it would be difficult to differentiate the righteousness of its normativity from that of movements based on possessive individualism (e.g. right-wing populism). The question then becomes how to project the ideal future orientation of a political project, going beyond enclave politics, which may be useful in the short term and can also create exclusivity against other groups in the long term.

To move beyond enclave politics, we would need to acknowledge the proposition of "radically unfixed social identity" and how that can contribute to the further expansion of a progressive agenda. By blurring the frontiers that divide "us" and "them," we can achieve a wider social movement that reaches a larger audience and creates more beneficiaries. The way Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]) differentiated the Left's social movement from that of neoconservatism was to emphasize that the Left's project avoids exclusive prioritization of

“our rights” over “their rights.” In the end, such an approach fails to address the future-orientedness of a political project, because the creation of exclusive groups hinders our ability to weather through the uncertainty of future challenges that may necessitate solidarity across all series. In any future moment, we might be required to form alliances/solidarity with the Other from whom we previously differentiated ourselves. Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]) took an example of the condition of an oppressive regime (or “monopolization of economic power”), against which all different series will form solidarity with one another for a greater goal (p. 132). In the end, the uncertainty of the future—which prevents us from fully knowing or planning for what will happen—becomes an occasion for us to recognize our interdependency on one another or that we will eventually be in need of each other despite the current historical condition (of inequality) that may temporarily create barriers between us.

Therefore, to maintain this future-forward perspective while staying “political,” we should be able to foresee how to achieve a wider articulation of different political projects and solidarities for a “positive organization of the social” or “positive reconstruction of the social fabric” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001 [1985]: 189) that can be as inclusive as possible. Subsequently, they argue how the normative orientation of progressive politics should not merely be based on “a set of anti-system demands.” Rather, it should be based on a capacity for proposing a wider, systematic, “hegemonic direction” and “positive reconstruction” that could address and respond to all different forms of subordination or the issues that different subordinated groups undergo.

If we situate this insight into how to prioritize one group, planners can investigate the future-orientedness of the political projects that different groups propose. The criteria for evaluating groups can then be based on these questions: can these groups’ political agenda attempt to create a new positive direction—a future-oriented vision that is broad enough to address different experiences of subordination? In other words, do these groups, eventually, attempt to reach out to other groups and create coalition with those who share similar experiences and stories of underrepresentation and subordination? These question scans provide a normative perspective through which planners can gauge the legitimacy and ethical appropriateness of a political project, eventually differentiating progressive social movements from collective lobbying based on possessive liberal individualism (e.g. NIMBY-ism or right-wing populism). When planners encounter the kinds of political projects or movements that perpetuate exclusivity rather than proposing an inclusive, future-oriented vision that

could achieve a wider articulation of the social, they should be more cautious of how such movements may negatively affect the rights of other groups. Eventually, planners can play a role in patrolling these exclusive groups.

Conclusion

This article presents an ambitious outline of a normative perspective for planning—yet a norm that is anti-essentialist, in that it is not based on fundamental or a priori concepts. The necessity of embarking on such an initiative was predicated on the idea that current developments of planning theory, by placing more and more emphasis on flexibility and open-ended aspects in postmodern planning, are abandoning the question of normativity or related accounts of social justice.

Indeed, this battle between flexibility and normativity in postmodern planning is not new. The works of postmodern planning theorists such as Soja (1997) and Sandercock (1998) demonstrated a theoretical struggle where they attempt to embrace radical openness and plurality while at the same time trying to fend off neoliberal or pro-market intentions of hijacking that very notion of openness. Similarly, the major criticism on communicative planning concerned the Habermasian “leap of faith” in planning processes; the emphasis on transparent process itself—and hence “flexible” in the sense of not imposing any fixed values—fails to ensure the kinds of directions or outcomes that address the issues of social inequality, injustice, and oppression (Hillier, 2003; Purcell, 2009). Feminist planning writers such as Snyder (1995) and Roy (2001) have been at the center of this debate, arguing how the postmodern openness should not be considered as an invitation to value-less planning (see also Benhabib, 1995). However, the assertive character of such normative standpoint has been subject to criticism; notably, Allmendinger (2001) accused Soja and Sandercock of “using” postmodern concepts to “force” a politically progressive agenda, taking such a progressive direction itself as an a priori position (see Allmendinger, 2001 for more detailed criticism). In response to this type of “postmodern criticism” on normativity of planning, in this article, I suggested that postmodern concepts themselves support or even direct us toward striving for democratic/egalitarian values. In that way, pursuing democratic/egalitarian values are not only a baseline that we begin from (a priori) but also a kind of “a priori” that can be deduced and theoretically/logically driven by the adoption of postmodern concepts.

The main thrust of this article was therefore to demonstrate how postmodern concepts can be the basis of political solidarity and, subsequently, a normative direction of a planning agenda. I studied the works of political theorists who focused on normativity and political solidarity within the postmodern paradigm (anti-essentialist, anti-Cartesian)— most of whom are inspired by envisioning the future paths of feminism. I investigated how feminist political theorists, by using postmodern radical acceptance of the unfixed social identity, find a way to move beyond identity politics while still remaining firmly rooted in their initial political motivation for addressing social inequalities.

Two major themes were identified from this investigation. The first theme is to recognize the historicity of the shared experiences of subordination caused by the current ongoing limitations of social structures. This recognition then leads us to acknowledge the necessity of social collectives for political movements and actions asking for a concrete, material social change. However, to find the source of solidarity not from essentialist categories or conceptualization but from a temporary, external, historical condition, I adopted Young's use of seriality in legitimizing political solidarity for feminism. The second theme is to achieve a more inclusive and positive articulation of the social, which attempts to connect different social movements by proposing a future-oriented vision. This perspective concerns the efforts to go beyond the risk of identity politics falling into collective melancholia or enclave politics that proliferate the idea of exclusivity, or the division between "us" and "them." In fact, this second theme is closely tied to the first theme's use of "seriality," in that such an inclusive, positive linkage across different political projects can be possible upon acknowledging the temporary character of any political solidarity. In other words, if we can agree that political solidarity does not come from fundamental or internally fixed attributes but from an external condition that necessitates collective movement, articulating or connecting different political projects via a more inclusive social vision becomes a true possibility.

Drawing from these theoretical lessons, I provided three criteria for planners to judge which networks, groups, or series should be prioritized. The first criterion is whether these groups' solidarity and political agenda could be justified by historical experiences and relationships that currently result in negative material consequences for their present socioeconomic condition. The historicity approach reminds us that the present relations among different social groups are a product of historical events and experiences and that we should take them into account when prioritizing certain groups' needs. The second criterion is

whether the emergence of a group's political project (i.e. collective action or movement) is caused by its underrepresentation in the current frame of "the public." Acknowledging the partiality of any political solidarity would help planners to realize that there could be needs, interests, or rights of certain groups that are neglected in the current definition of "the public." Planners would then need to pay more attention to listening to the groups whose needs and rights have been underrepresented. Finally, the third criterion is whether these groups' political agenda has a broader, inclusive vision that proposes connecting with other political projects or collective initiatives. According to this criterion, if a group's political project promotes exclusivity, planners might control or limit it.

The openness and unfixity that postmodernity defends does not call for a relativistic position in planning. Postmodernism has been an inspiration for third-wave feminist politics and its social movements because its defense of openness and unfixity (of social identities) opened up another terrain for feminists to explore and to find political solidarity without the modernist categorization of gender. However, more importantly, the openness of postmodernity also provided an opportunity for feminist theorists to widen their basis of solidarity by reaching out to other marginalized series who share similar historical experiences of subordination. I propose that planning, as a form of political action that calls for political solidarity within the public it aims to represent, can draw insights from these ideas in order to find some normative directions toward a more inclusive and just city. In that regard, postmodern planning theorists should not only be concerned with the openness and flexibility of planning process, but also actively create the linkage of how anti-essentialist ideas can inspire the kinds of planning practices that do not step away from social justice issues—which is closely tied to achieving planning's purpose of serving a wider public.

Notes

1. "Gender as performativity" refers to Butler's (1990, 1999 [1990]) pioneering articulation of a post-structuralist argument that legal categories and labels (e.g. gender, race) are socially constructed via repeated, collective performances (or "styles of act") rather than being essentialist, fundamental characteristics of our physical or material existence.
2. Whether post-structuralism is politically detached or engaged is a discussion that should be addressed in another article; but in case of Butler, her work is built around the political engagement of post-structuralism.
3. "Presentist voluntarism" refers to an overly positivistic attitude that one

can change one's identity or struggle on one's own, disregarding both the surrounding environment and the historical layers of custom and education that have constituted the very acting-self. For instance, one individual cannot suddenly revolutionize the collective struggles of queer people by wearing drag; instead, greater collective articulation and movement would be needed to tackle the social perceptions and prejudices that have accumulated with history and time. 4. Indeed, one could also see this as a diagnosis given from an external point of view, by those who are not currently experiencing the similar kinds of oppression—and hence failing to recognize its inexorable effect. 5. From here on, I will be using “series” whenever I want to emphasize the external conditions that form political solidarity of “groups,” inspired by the Young's (1995) work on Sartre's seriality that I noted earlier. 6. Such a theoretical stance is indeed pioneered by the Black feminists' work on intersectionality, from which one can learn why and how feminist movements should extend the ground beyond the needs of “women”—encompassing the social struggles of age, race, and class (Crenshaw, 1989; Lorde, 1984). In this article, however, I choose to work more with Young's theory on seriality because it explicitly indicates the passivity of groups located in such struggles, as well as the temporary character of their political solidarity. As I explained in detail in section 4.1., the concept of seriality crystallizes how the solidarity of certain “series” are formed due to their common external condition rather than their internal characteristics; this theorization is extremely helpful in understanding the anti-essentialist approach to constituting a source of political solidarity, which does not rely on one's inherent identity (or material characteristics of one's existence) but more on one's temporary relationship with the given external surroundings (in a particular historical moment in time—which is therefore subject to change).

References

References

- Allmendinger P (2001) *Planning in Postmodern Times*. London: Routledge.
- Bacqué MH, Gauthier M (2011) Participation, urbanisme et études urbaines. *Participations* 1: 36–66.
- Balducci A, Boelens L, Hillier J, et al. (2011) Introduction: Strategic spatial planning in uncertainty: Theory and exploratory practice. *Town Planning Review* 82(5): 481–501.
- Benhabib S (1995) Feminism and postmodernism. In: Benhabib S (ed.) *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. New York: Routledge, 17–34.
- Boelens L (2010) Theorizing practice and practising theory: Outlines for an actor-relational-approach in planning. *Planning Theory* 9(1): 28–62.

- Boonstra B, Boelens L (2011) Self-organization in urban development: Towards a new perspective on spatial planning. *Urban Research & Practice* 4(2): 99–122.
- Brown W (1995) *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brownill S, Parker G (2010) Why bother with good works? The relevance of public participation(s) in planning in a post-collaborative era. *Planning Practice & Research* 25(3): 275–282.
- Butler J (1990) Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse. In: Nicholson L (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 324–340.
- Butler J (1993) *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler J (1999 [1990]) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler J (2004) *Precarious Life: The Powers of Violence and Mourning*. London and New York: Verso.
- Butler J (2015) Interview with *New York Times*: What's Wrong With "All Lives Matter"? January. Available at: <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/12/whats-wrong-with-all-lives-matter/>
- Collins PH (1990) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Crenshaw K (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 8.
- Fainstein S (2000) New directions in planning theory. *Urban Affairs Review* 35(4): 451–478.
- Flyvbjerg B (1998) Empowering civil society: Habermas, Foucault and the question of conflict. In: Douglass M, Friedmann J (eds) *Cities for Citizens: Planning and the Rise of Civil Society in a Global Age*. New York: Wiley, 185–211.
- Forester J (1999) *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.
- Forester J (2006) Making Participation Work When Interests Conflict. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 72(4): 447–456.
- Hartsock N (1998) *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 228.
- Healey P (2003 [1996]) The communicative turn in planning theory and its implications for spatial strategy formation. In: Campbell S, Fainstein S (eds) *Readings in Planning Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 237–255.
- Hillier J (2003) Agonizing over consensus: Why Habermasian ideals cannot be "Real." *Planning Theory* 2(1): 37–59.
- Hillier J (2007) *Stretching Beyond the Horizon: A Multiplanar Theory of Spatial Planning and Governance*. London: Ashgate.
- Hillier J (2008) Plan(e) speaking: A multiplanar theory of spatial planning. *Planning Theory* 7(1): 24–50.
- Hillier J (2011) Strategic navigation across multiple planes: Towards a Deleuzian-inspired methodology for strategic spatial planning. *Town Planning Review* 82(5): 503–527.
- Hoch C (1996) A pragmatic inquiry about planning and power. In: Mandelbaum S, Mazza L, Burchell R (eds) *Explorations in Planning Theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: CUPR, 30–44.
- hooks b (1984) *From Margin to Center*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Innes J (1995) Planning theory's emerging paradigm. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14(3): 183–189.
- Innes J (2004) Consensus building: Clarifications for the critics. *Planning Theory* 3(1): 5–20.
- Innes JE, Booher DE (1999) Consensus building as role playing and bricolage: Toward a theory of collaborative planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65(1): 9–26.

- Jon I, Purcell M (2018) Radical resilience: Autonomous self-management in post-disaster recovery planning and practice. *Planning Theory & Practice* 19(2): 235–251.
- Kruks S (2001) *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Laclau E, Mouffe C (2001 [1985]) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London and New York: Verso.
- Latour B (2005) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lindell MK, Perry RW (1992) *Behavioral Foundations of Community Emergency Planning*. Washington, DC: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.
- Lorde A (1984) *Sister Outsider*. New York: Crossing Press.
- Mouffe C (1995) Feminism, citizenship, and radical democratic politics. In: Nicholson L, Seidman S (eds) *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 315–331.
- Neal DM, Phillips BD (1995) Effective emergency management: Reconsidering the bureaucratic approach. *Disasters* 19(4): 327–337.
- Nyseth T (2012) Fluid planning: A meaningless concept or a rational response to uncertainty in urban planning? In: Nyseth T (ed.) *Advances in Spatial Planning*. London: InTechOpen, 27–46.
- Purcell M (2009) Resisting neoliberalization: Communicative planning or counter-hegemonic movements? *Planning Theory* 8(2): 140–165.
- Roy A (2001) A public muse: On planning convictions and feminist contentions. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 21: 109–126.
- Sandercock L (1998) The death of modernist planning: Radical praxis for a postmodern age. In: Douglass M, Friedmann J (eds) *Cities for Citizens: Planning and the Rise of Civil Society in a Global Age*. New York: Wiley, 163–184.
- Selbin J, Campos-Bui S, Feldstein S, et al (2016) *California's new vagrancy laws: The growing enactment and enforcement of anti-homeless laws in the golden state*. UC Berkeley Public Law Research Paper No. 2794386, 11 June 2016.
- Snyder MG (1995) Feminist theory and planning theory: Lessons from feminist epistemologies. *Berkeley Planning Journal* 10(1). Available at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8fs581r1>
- Soja E (1997) Planning in/for postmodernity. In: Benko G, Strohmayr U (eds) *Space and Social Theory: Interpreting Modernity and Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 236–249.
- Webb D (2011) The limits of associative democracy: A comment on an actor-relational approach in planning. *Planning Theory* 10(3): 273–282.
- Young I (1990) *Justice and Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Young I (1995) Gender as a seriality: Thinking about women as a serial collective. In: Nicholson L, Seidman S (eds) *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 187–215.