Chapter 6
For a Better Living-Together: Ongoing Meaningful Conversations at Play

Florence Passy and Gian-Andrea Monsch

Abstract This chapter provides two contributions. On the one hand, it argues that morality is a mine field for sociologist as they lack the analytical tools to judge what is moral and what is not. Yet, historical sociology has shown that morality is bound to culture, and accordingly culture and cultural practices should gain the center stage of the sociological work on morality. Further on, we claim that social movements scholars can show that specific contentions directly relate to major political cleavages where major debates about moral issues are staged.

Our second contribution offers an empirical example of such a research agenda. Using original survey and interview data on pro-migrant's rights activists and environmentalists, we show that activists from these two groups form a common community—the moral voicing community. They share an understanding of the social problems they are committed for. Activists from both groups judge as immoral when specific social or cultural groups lack basic rights or suffer from environmental devastations and interpret these assessments through a prism of injustice. Finally, we show that these shared meanings on our living-together are continuously constructed through a specific relational mechanism. Indeed, ongoing and direct conversations are necessary to maintain those shared views and to ultimately sustain their activism.

Keywords Morality · Conversations · Shared meanings · Culture · Pro-migrant · Environmental activism

Lisa, a woman of 30, is highly committed to the defense of migrants' rights. For almost 10 years, she has been involved in an association of jurists who offer legal aid to new arrivals. She also participates in other pro-migrant groups to fight what she perceives as an "obscene injustice" on a political level. "They encounter so many problems when they try to acquire a right to remain or to work elsewhere than in their home country. […] If I compare my situation to theirs, it's clear that there is an obscene injustice: basic rights are denied." Nathan, a 30-year-old man, mobilizes to promote environmental sustainability. Nathan became passionate about

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ecological activism when completing his studies in Finland. On his return to Switzerland, he joined Greenpeace to pursue his commitment, which he perceives as a matter of justice: “I am very concerned with the consequence of human activity on the environment. […] And we are not all equal in terms of environmental destruction. The same goes for global warming: developing countries are much more affected by global warming than first world countries are. Switzerland will have enough funds to cope with floods or hurricanes, but this is not the case for Bangladesh and many other poor countries.”

Lisa and Nathan are two examples among many of what we could label “moral” commitment. Lisa spends time and energy to do unto others, while Nathan fights for our environment. Both struggle to achieve a better living-together. In many cases (not all), contentious politics is engaged in “moral” issues. Political battles to enlarge rights are examples of such issues. To improve the rights for migrants, women, poor people, or LGBT people, all constitute moral battles that aim to promote people’s well-being in society. Similarly, political struggles to secure living conditions, such as peace movements or environmental ones do, are other examples of “moral crusades” carried by contentious politics.[1] Many questions arise when contention and morality are linked. In this contribution we focus on two specific questions. First, what is the work of sociology when it investigates morality? Second, how can we bridge contentious politics to the sociology of morality?

In this chapter, we will argue that morality is embedded in culture. Indeed, morality is a cultural construction embedded in social relations, institutions, and human practices. This means that cultural practices shape meanings available in a specific social site and time period, which fashion the individual toolkit that enables us to think, construct, and act. Along this line, and in a second step, we will argue that political battles, perceived as “moral,” are aligned on social cleavages. Cleavages are constructed around distinct views of our living-together, around distinct “moral” principles. They rely not only on a social and political basis but also on cultural pillars that configure distinct conceptions of our living-together and our understandings of society.

Placing culture at the heart of our sociological work on morality implies that sociologists should investigate morality in its cultural practices, a position that opens several research avenues. For example, how are moral issues culturally framed? How do cultural components partake in the construction of those issues in a specific space and time? More precisely, at the collective level, we could examine what meanings are available in a specific society (or group) that enable the construction of moral issues in a given context. At the individual level, we can ask what “individual cultural toolkits,” to borrow Swidler’s words, and allow individuals to perform joint action to improve our living-together (Swidler, 1986).

Our contribution focuses on this last research avenue. We empirically investigate the cultural toolkits at individuals’ disposal to perform joint action on behalf of migrants, as Lisa does, or to promote ecological sustainability, as Nathan does. This leads us to question *what meanings are present in the activist's head* that enables them to perform political altruism and environmental action in a specific time and society: present-day Switzerland. Our central question can be specified into three interrogations. What meanings do activists committed for migrants and ecology hold onto? To what extent are those subjective understandings shared by activists involved in the same commitment community and on the same side of a political cleavage? And finally, how are these perceptions of the social world constructed in the activist's mind?

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[1] The term “moral crusades” is borrowed from Jasper (1997).

Our data having been collected at one point in time and during the activists' action, we scrutinize the meanings activists hold onto once they are committed, and we examine how talks and ties within a commitment community enable activists to maintain their views about society and serve to sustain commitment over time. This ultimately means that we do not analyze how understandings emerge prior to or after commitment.

Before we launch into an examination of the activists' subjective world, we begin with a brief discussion on morality and the challenges it presents to sociologists. We follow this by considering a research avenue for social movements scholars who tackle issues of morality. Then, after some methodological information about our study relating to data collection and analysis, we present our findings on the activists' minds and the role of conversational interaction within the commitment community on the activists' mental world. We conclude by addressing further research avenues both on the study of the minds of activists and the study of morality for social movements scholars.

Morality Embedded in Culture

We often use the term morality (e.g., moral action, issues, frames, crusades) in sociological research and in the study of social movements. If we look up a definition in a dictionary, morality differentiates action (but also motives, intentions, decisions) judged as proper to those deemed improper. Morality is therefore a set of principles (standards, norms, or codes) that guides human action. These codes of conduct derive from a particular philosophy, religion, or culture and enable judgment between moral and immoral actions. But what is moral and immoral? What kinds of action are assessed as proper or improper? This is a major problem for sociologists, who are ill-equipped to formulate such assessments.

Not surprisingly, after reviewing sociological works on morality, Bargheer and Wilson (2018) rightly argue that we lack a clear and substantive definition of what we understand by morality. Definitions are both vague and not consensual, leading to disagreements about what we are supposed to study when we study morality (Bargheer & Wilson, 2018).

If defining morality is the first problem sociologists encounter, the second relates to a key tension in the studies on the topic: that between universal principles and moral standards embedded in cultural contexts. Are moral principles universal rules of behavior or are they context-dependent and therefore subject to change over time and from one culture to another? In the discipline of philosophy, this contradiction is relevant. For example, for Hume morality emerges from experience and is essentially social. Therefore, morality depends of social and cultural contexts. Similarly, for Hegel morality is thoroughly embedded in cultural context, and he was among the first to relativize the conception of morality and to think about morality as a non-fixed category. By contrast, Kant thinks moral principles should be universal laws that apply to all humans across time and culture, a universalism Aristotle shares. Both consider moral standards, such as kindness goodness, fairness, or rightness, as universal rules that apply to all human beings.

This dividing line is also present in sociology. Historical sociology understands morality as a socially and historically constructed category. Martin (2017) argues that the true, the good, and the beautiful are not universal even within the history of Western thought, but culturally constructed categories that emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Western world. The historical perspective in sociology is rife with studies that emphasize that what is considered as moral is actually a social construction (see Abend, 2011; Joas, 1997; Keane, 2015; Lamont 1992). By contrast, following Parsons' structure-functionalism, studies on human values apprehend beliefs as universal categories. For example, Inglehart's work on values change (Inglehart, 1977, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), Rokeach's (1978, 2008) on human values, and Etzioni's (1988) on moral values rely on a universalizing account of values and morality.[2]

The absence of a common definition "might indicate the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of morality that calls into doubt the possibility of designating such a thing as a static and clearly demarcated entity that can be called the 'moral self' (Chazan, 1998) or the 'moral dimension' (Etzioni, 1988) of social life" (Bargheer & Wilson, 2018, 3). The historical perspective, as well as anthropological work, makes us aware of the notion that universal categories cannot exist in human societies: they are cultural constructions. The way we conceive of common good (Geuss, 2001; Miller, 2004), the human being (Somers, 2008), money (Lamont 1992), or selfhood (Keane, 2015) varies from one society to another and from one historical period to another, and these categories are fashioned by social relations, social dynamics, and institutions.

Historical sociology offers three key findings (Bargheer & Wilson, 2018, 7). First, the relation of moral to non-moral evaluation is contingent over time. For example, during centuries in the Western world, same-sex relations were morally condemned, while today they are not. Second, what it means to be a moral person depends not only on moral evaluations but also on how these evaluations intertwine and structure the self. Finally, the relationship between moral evaluation and the self is structured by and structures institutions. Morality is culturally embedded in social relations, institutions, and human practices. Simply put, *morality is bound to culture*.

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[2] We also find a universal understanding of morality in political theory (Taylor, 1989), in psychology with Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1967), in contemporary social psychology (e.g., Bratanova et al., 2012; Darley & Shultz, 1990; Reed & Aquino, 2003), and in neuroscience (Liao, 2016).

Our work as sociologists, then, consists in investigating morality in its cultural practices. Many avenues for research are accordingly opened for social movements scholars. As stated above, at the collective level, we can examine what are the cultural meanings available in a specific society (or group) that enable the construction of moral issues seized by contentious actors. At the individual level, we can analyze what cultural toolkits individuals possess and that allow them to perform joint action to improve our living-together. We here follow this second research avenue by first investigating what meanings lie behind the performance of contentious action. Second, we examine whether these meanings are shared by activists involved in the same commitment community and whether they rely on what we call a "synchronized mind." Finally, we examine how those mental cultural constructs are maintained and serve to sustain commitment.

Morality, Contention, and Political Cleavages

Jasper (1997) qualified the political battles for human rights, minorities' rights, peace, or for the environment as "moral crusades." As argued above, sociologists are ill-equipped to normatively define those political battles as moral ones. By contrast, social movements scholars know that contentious battles are directly connected to broader social struggles (see Toubøl and Sevelsted in the introduction of this volume). Beyond single-issue protests like the ones just listed, contentious politics stems from social and political cleavages that address "moral" issues. More precisely, we can say that such cleavages are bound to social dilemmas that can metaphorically be called "moral" dilemmas.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) underscore that the European political space is structured along social and cultural fault lines whereby major social conflicts organize the political universe of each society. Following their work, Bartolini and Mair (1990) study class-cleavage and render us attentive to the notion that a cleavage relies on social, cultural, and political bases and generates specific shared meanings on either side of the divide. It mobilizes specific social categories, as the cleavage around the working class has shown in Western political space since the nineteenth century. In brief, the class-cleavage is structed around the redistribution of resources and capital on one side of the cleavage and a free-market economy on the other. Finally, social conflicts are transformed into politics when collective actors politicize the dividing line, leading to the formation of political groups around the defense of their conceptions of society. In the case of the class conflict, this cleavage politically opposes left and right organizations. A political cleavage thus mobilizes specific social segments of society, concepts of living-together, and political groups.

Two major cleavages can be said to structure the political space in contemporary Western societies (Kriesi, 2010). The class-cleavage is one of them. Yet since the 1960s, a new political cleavage has been emerging (Flanagan, 1987; Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Kitschelt, 1994; Kriesi, 2010). This cleavage is referred to through various terminologies, such as "post-materialist/materialist" (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart

& Baker, 2000), “libertarian/authoritarian” (Kriesi, 2010), or “libertarian-universalistic/traditionalist-communitarian” (Bornschier, 2010). It opposes distinct classes and social categories of the middle class and mobilizes distinct views about our living-together (Kriesi, 1993; Passy, 1998a). One side of the cleavage mobilizes individuals who share what Hooghe et al. (2002) call green, alternative, and libertarian conceptions of society, mobilizing people who want to protect and enlarge individuals’ rights, liberties, and self-expression and who advance alternative models to make our living style and economy more sustainable. The other side of the cleavage is embodied by individuals and groups that rely on traditional, authoritarian, and nationalist understandings of society. This new cleavage ultimately mobilizes new left parties and what Melucci (1989) called “new social movements” groups (also termed “left-libertarian” or “post-industrial movements”). Lisa and Nathan, and activists like them who fight for human rights, ecology, and peace, are mobilized on the green, alternative, and libertarian side of this recent political cleavage. Their political battles pit them in opposition to individuals and collective actors who promote rights in relation to a national community and claim that traditional economical models are better suited to social well-being.

As with the class-cleavage, this post-industrial conflict incorporates issues linked to social justice, equality, fairness, and rightness. These are typical social or “moral” dilemmas. Both cleavages deal with questions about how we want to live together as a community, and this living-together can be improved. With the analytical tools of sociologists, we cannot argue whether one side is more appropriate morally than the other. But we can argue that specific contentions, like the one Lisa and Nathan are committed to, relate to those major political conflicts directly.

A cleavage, then, is culturally based on shared meanings that enable people to mobilize and politically engage in battles for what they see as a better society. The political struggles, the aim of activist commitment, are seized with distinct subjective lenses. In this chapter, we scrutinize the shared meanings that enable activists like Lisa and Nathan to commit to a better living-together. And we ask, what cultural toolkits allow them to mobilize on the left of the libertarian cleavage? We also ask how shared views on society and our living-together are linked to contentious politics possible. Indeed, how do interpersonal networks and ongoing conversations that take place within activist commitment communities enable the maintenance and ongoing construction of shared meanings as well as joint action to be sustained?

Meanings and Conversations

The mind is a thinking and perceiving “inner box” composed of interconnected nodes of meanings and complex mental processes such as memorization, attention, or information retrieval (Fiske & Taylor, 2013; Jasper, 1997; Passy & Monsch, 2020; Searle, 2004). Here, we focus on one specific part of the human mind:

meanings.[3] We use the terms meanings, worldviews, perceptions, or understandings interchangeably, while intellectual traditions rooted in other epistemologies would prefer concept such as values, attitudes, or even cognitions. Meanings, as we approach them here, are hence subjective representations that enable individuals to relate to their social environment, to make sense of it, and to orient their actions.

Meanings set human intentionality, which enables action (Searle, 2004; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). As Zerubavel (1997) points out, action is improbable without meanings (see also Weber, 1978; Mead, 1934). The human mind is central to the performance of individual and collective action.

But what kind of meanings enables people to perform contentious action? Social psychologists recognize the existence of domain-specific knowledge necessary to a performance (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fiske & Taylor, 2013). This means that individuals do not rely on general knowledge but on a specific one, delimited by a field of experience (e.g., Fine, 1979; Fine & McDonnell, 2007; Hirschfeld & Gelman, 2004). What is the domain-specific knowledge required to perform contention? *Activists must make sense of the aim of their commitment*: they elaborate mental constructs of the social problem they commit to.[4] To do so, they elaborate specific worldviews about society and common good, and we accordingly argue that activists construct a specific relation to common good mentally.

How shall we define common good for our purposes? We rely on a pre-liberal tradition of common good derived from Aristotle, and that seizes common good as an *objective good* that enhances people's lives and benefits *all members of society*. Common good relies on two analytical dimensions: commonness and goodness (Murphy, 2005). Commonness refers to the possibility that an entire community shares a good. It helps understand how individuals relate to society. Thanks to an inductive analysis presented below, we identify three sub-dimensions that enable people to make sense of commonness: interconnectedness, which seizes how activists perceive the social ties that bind individuals together; humanness, which apprehends the way activists perceive human beings; and finally inclusiveness, which delves into subjective boundaries that individuals may erect between themselves and others. These dimensions allow us to examine whether activists committed in the left-libertarian community, and who struggle alongside the post-industrial cleavage, rely on a communitarian or universalist conception of society (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994; Walzer, 1997; Young, 1990). The second dimension of common good, goodness, pertains to the perception of the goods that objectively improve people's living conditions. Social problems can be seized in two different ways: through an ethics of justice and an ethics of care (Aristotle., 1988; Gilligan, 1982). This dimension enables us to assess whether activists committed in the left-libertarian commitment community seize the good they mobilize for in terms of justice or of care.

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[3] In *Contentious Minds*, we also examine a second part of the human mind: how meanings are tied to action (Passy & Monsch, 2020).

[4] Activists must also make sense of their *means of action*, the means that enable them to bring their claims on the political stage. Due to space constraints, we here focus only on the aim of the activists' commitment. For more information on this political dimension, see Passy and Monsch (2020, Chap. 5).

How do activists in the left-libertarian commitment community make sense of the common good? And do they rely on shared understandings on commonness and goodness? These are the questions we examine empirically. So far, we have used the term "the activist's mind." Yet the individual mind is a social one: the mind is a social optic constrained by social gates that shape our consciousness. As Zerubavel states: "I experience the world not only personally, through my own senses, but also impersonally, through my mental membership in various social communities" (Zerubavel, 1997, 7). Otherwise put, not personal meanings but social ones. Similarly, Tilly (2001, 39–40) states:

> Humans live in flesh-and-blood bodies, accumulate traces of experiences in their nervous systems, organize current encounters with the world as cognitions, emotions, and intentional actions […] However, the same humans turn out to interact repeatedly with others, renegotiating who they are, adjusting the boundaries they occupy, modifying their actions in rapid response to other people's reactions, selecting among and altering available scripts, improvising new forms of joint action, speaking never-uttered before sentences, yet responding predictably to their locations within webs of social ties they themselves cannot map in detail […]. We live in deeply relational worlds. And if social construction occurs, it happens socially, not in the isolated recesses of individual minds.

Relational sociology, at the heart of Tilly's work and our perspective, clearly stresses that we are embedded in ongoing relational interactions and that these shape the minds of individuals. Activists are, like other individuals, embedded in various social spheres, and their interactions therefore take place in various social sites. While the spheres of the personal, professional, and that of friends provide activists with cultural meanings about their commitment (Passy & Giugni, 2001), the commitment community in which they are involved is certainly the key social site in which meanings about the aim of their contentious commitment are elaborated.

But how does it work? How are shared meanings constructed and maintained in the activists' mind? Once activists join contentious activism, they join a specific commitment community and evolve in a particular social environment. Commitment communities are networks of groups, more or less institutionalized, connected to each other through social ties. These ties can be strong or weak, but they assure ongoing interactions among collective actors that create a community of interests and meanings (Diani, 2007). Yet commitment communities are not only structural platforms bound by instrumental ties. They are "islands of meanings," to borrow White's terminology. For White (1992), social networks are composed of stories, meanings, talks, and identities exchanged through ongoing interactions (Mische & White, 1998). White's perspective helps us understand how activists can share common meanings: through talks and ties, the activist's mind is enriched with and transformed by meanings derived from the networks they belong to. Talks and disputes lead activists to synchronize their understandings regarding the aims of activism convey in their commitment communities, including meanings about common good—relative to the aims of activism—which synchronize with those of their peers: a process that allows them to construct shared meanings that, in turn, enable them to perform joint action. Ultimately, these talks and disputes among fellow activists create the network itself (White, 1992).

Integration in a commitment community therefore enables activists to synchronize their minds with their peers. However, these communicational interactions take on various forms, as we will see in the empirical part of this contribution. Indeed, not all social interactions lead to a synchronization of views. Specific relational mechanisms are here at work, and these vary in their effects.

Studying Meanings and Conversations

In-depth interviews and survey data from a comparative study we conducted in Switzerland between 2009 and 2012 allow us to examine meanings and conversations in detail (see Passy and Monsch 2020).[5] We consider them among activists from Solidarity Across Borders (SAB) committed to the defense of migrant's rights and from Greenpeace Switzerland (GP). Activists from these two organizations defend starkly different political issues but belong to the same commitment community. We call it the "moral voicing community" because they are involved in what we could call the defense of "moral" issues (Jasper, 1997) and are both part of the post-industrial movement that mobilizes on the libertarian-authoritarian cleavage (Della Porta & Rucht, 1995).

We have already encountered Lisa from Solidarity Across Borders and Nathan from Greenpeace above. While we illustrate our argument through both cases, systematic data backs up our analysis: a total of 16 interviews or 64 h of conversations with SAB and GP activists, as well as representative survey data.[6] This comparison affords us the opportunity to scrutinize the main questions addressed in this contribution: what meanings inhabit activists in the moral voicing community? Do they have a shared understanding of common good? And how do social interactions sustain shared meanings within the community? Are direct interactions necessary or are mediated interactions sufficient to shape the activist's mind? We further have two control groups to test whether the way activists from the moral voicing community conceive of our living-together in a specific way. The first is constituted by another community: the workers' voicing one, which is concerned by the defense of their workers' rights, here represented by unionists from UNIA, the largest Swiss union for employees in the private sector. The second is constituted by the Swiss general population.

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[5] The Swiss National Science Foundation financed the research project on political altruism "Why Stand Up For Others?" (Nr. 100017-122246).

[6] In this chapter, we restrict the empirical demonstration due to space constraints. First, we only present interviews from SAB and GP activists. We exclude data from activists from the Society of Threatened Peoples mostly for their redundancy with the cases presented. For the same reason, we only present six out of eight possible cases for SAB and GP activists. We excluded two similar cases (one active and one passive member) within each organization. Finally, we use mostly two cases to illustrate our argument with citations: one active member from SAB (Lisa) and one from GP (Nathan). We choose these two cases not because they suit our argument but because they are representative of the activists interviewed. Their citations which illustrate our arguments are therefore based on the whole interview corpus.

We rely on interview data because of the three inherent strengths it presents. First, it enables an in-depth understanding of the meanings altruists have in mind. Interview data reveals complexity, interconnections, and sometimes ambivalences of human perceptions. Second, the qualitative material helps develop the theoretical dimensions related to common good further by enabling induction. Third, interview data allows us to make sense of the relational mechanisms at stake, how conversations work, and what they mean for the activists. In other words, it is to grasp how meanings are transmitted through talks and disputes.

We pre-selected individuals for interviews based on available information from the organization (gender, age, profession, and commitment intensity). The aim of this procedure was to achieve heterogeneity within the target population. We hence opted for a systematic and theoretically inspired sample before data analysis.[7] As with the selection procedure, the interview was standardized. We conducted two interview sessions of about 2 hours with every activist. Inspired by the framework of psychoanalytical interviews (Kvale, 1999; Lane, 1972), both interviews were open conversations with minimal intervention on our behalf. These extensive interviews sought to apprehend the complexity of meanings such as whether the relation to common good matters and to what extent or the part played by social interactions. We then developed a systematic analytical framework inspired by the classical interpretative approach (Denzin, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2005). Finally, we elaborated a fine-grained process that started from the transcribed interviews to progressively rise in analytical generality while retaining the possibility of returning to the interviewee's words.[8]

In addition to the interviews, we gathered original survey data that offers two important benefits: generalization and a systematic comparison between activists of different organizations and the general population. We distributed a self-administered web-pencil questionnaire including questions borrowed from general population surveys[9] and gathered a response rate of between 18 and 44%.[10] Such response rates obviously made us question the representativeness of our data. Socio-demographic indicators (gender and age) obtained from the organizations tell us we produced representative samples for Solidarity Across Borders and Greenpeace. Yet, this socio-demographic control does not tell us whether our samples are representative in terms of activists' understandings and interaction patterns. We assume that activists willing to respond identify with and participate in their organization more than those who refused. This means that our samples are representative for activists who identify with their organization but that we probably have a slight bias for activists who pay only a small annual fee or contribute on an irregular basis.[11]

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[7] This should not be confused with a theoretical sampling using an iterative approach as carried out within the grounded theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kuzel, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2001).

[8] For a more detailed description of our treatment of interview data (selection, interviews, analysis), please refer to Passy and Monsch (2020).

[9] We used indicators from the World Values Survey (WVS 2007), the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP 2004), the Swiss Electoral Studies (Selects 2007), and the European Values Study (EVS 2008).

[10] We work with response rates of 44% for SAB, 25% for GP, and 18% for UNIA.

With this original data in hand, we can assess the cultural toolkit at the disposal of activists. Yet we do not show how these meanings orient the action of activists here.[12]

Shared Meanings for a Better Living-Together

How do activists perceive the society they live in? What meanings enable them to defend migrant's rights or the environment? And do activists of the moral voicing community have a distinct understanding of our living-together? Earlier, we conceptualized their relation to common good as referring both to the notion that inaccessibility to objective goods can be seized either as a social justice or care problem (goodness) and as the idea that an entire society can share a good (commonness). We divide commonness into three further sub-dimensions: interconnectedness, which apprehends the importance of ties within society; humanness, which focuses on the understanding of human beings; and inclusiveness, which looks at the frontiers erected between social groups. Together, commonness enables us to assess whether moral voicing activists develop a communitarian or universalist conception of society.

Pro-migrant's activists like Lisa and environmentalists like Nathan have a strong sense of *interconnectedness* between members of society: both believe in the importance of the social ties that bind us together and stress the interdependence between individuals and groups. In their minds, we are all interrelated, a perception that relies on solidarity and social trust:

> For me, it's crucial to do things for others, but also with them. What one does alone is of no interest. […] For example, post-partum depression is essentially due to the isolation of women. It's really important for our inner equilibrium to be tied to others. In this sense, the organization of family has to be totally rethought; we should reinvent it in a much more open form. (Lisa)

> If you don't trust others, you become an individualist who worries about your own fate and interests. It's important to trust others and show solidarity and we must strive to strengthen bonds regardless of nationality. Pollution in one country has an impact on the environment elsewhere, and advances in protecting the environment in one country benefit us all. (Nathan)

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[11] A more detailed description can be found elsewhere in our work (Passy & Monsch, 2020).

[12] See Passy and Monsch (2020).

Lisa and Nathan not only have a common vision of interconnectedness, but they also share an essentialist view of *humanness*. Human beings share the same needs and desires independently of their country of origin. Lisa illustrates this when she states that all humans must be treated the same way:

> People who come to this country are humans like me. But we don't consider them to be human beings. This drives me crazy! I grew up with the idea that all humans have the same value and the same rights.

Nathan shares this essentialist notion of humanness but, in line with his commitment, includes nature in this view:

> We should connect human and nature together. If we don't bind humans to nature, we will face tremendous problems. For me, it is a major concern. Too often, we oppose human beings to nature. We don't have to choose between saving humans or saving nature; both can go hand in hand.

Lisa and Nathan do not erect boundaries between people, which is the final dimension of commonness: *inclusiveness*. Lisa and Nathan hence share their understanding of commonness, and both rely on a universalist conception of society:

> I have the right to have a visa to go anywhere, to be able to leave a country as I want. For those migrating here, this is impossible. They have so many problems acquiring a right to remain or to work elsewhere than in their home country. As human beings, we have the right to move and live where we want. We live in the same world, we should have the same rights.

> As I see it, we should act against poverty here, in Switzerland, but also everywhere in the world. I think that we should respect people's diversity. We must respect people who are different from us and show solidarity with people who are not from our community, our family, or who are not necessarily like us.

Do they also share a common notion of the good they are committed to (*goodness*)? For defenders of migrant's rights, commitment is clearly a question of social justice, as Lisa explains:

> Settlement right should be granted to any human being. I can settle where I want, easily receive a Visa for travelling, enter and leave a country without problems. For migrants, it's just impossible. They flee their countries and face dramatic situations, then are ejected from wherever they arrive. They have so many problems in getting residence and work permits. If I compare my situation to theirs, it's clear that there is an obscene injustice. Basic rights are denied.

Environmentalists also perceive common good primarily in terms of social justice. With Nathan, this is articulated in relation to waste production:

> I am very concerned with the consequence of human activity on the environment. For example, waste is a serious problem. We solve it by sending our surplus to developing countries. We are told that our televisions and computers are sent to developing countries to be recycled, but that process is a very harmful one for the environment and for people. It's unbearable; we send tons of electronic equipment to landfills in developing countries where people can't afford computers!

Similarly, Nathan mentions the fact that effects of global warming are not felt equally, another major injustice in his view. This is doubled by generational inequality, as the next generations will have to live with the inaction of the present one—a further injustice.

Although committed to different political issues, Lisa and Nathan conceive of commonness and goodness in the same way. They relate to common good as a universal social justice and think our living-together should be organized around equal access to goods for all. Are Lisa and Nathan exceptions? Is it a coincidence that the other SAB and GP activists interviewed share this understanding of common good?

To answer this question, we look at survey data from activists of the moral voicing community, unionists and the general population (Table 6.1). We present one indicator for interconnectedness and five indicators for inclusiveness.[13] We dispose of only one proxy for the interconnectedness dimension: trusting unknown others.[14]

Table 6.1 Commonness perception within the moral voicing community

	Moral voicing activists		Control groups	
	SAB %	GP %	UNIA %	Swiss pop. %
Interconnectedness				
Trusting unknown others	**74**	**55**	**37**	**45**
Comparison with unionists ($\chi 2$)	*169.5****	*43.5****	–	–
Comparison with the Swiss population ($\chi 2$)	*124.5**	*15.4****	*−13.5****	–
Comparison with Greenpeace ($\chi 2$)	*42.6****	–		
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	
(n)	*541*	*569*	*681*	*1'214*
Inclusiveness				
Social trust with distant others	**96**	**82**	**65**	**68**
Comparison with unionists ($\chi 2$)	*167.9****	*38.5****	–	–
Comparison with the Swiss population ($\chi 2$)	*162.5****	*33.5****	*ns*	–
Comparison with Greenpeace ($\chi 2$)	*56.5****	–		
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	*ns*	*ns*	*0.09**	
(n)	*522*	*513*	*622*	*1'161*
Helping others outside Switzerland	**74**	**57**	**44**	**44**
Comparison with unionists ($\chi 2$)	*122.8****	*23.7****	–	–
Comparison with the Swiss population ($\chi 2$)	*145.1****	*29.0****	*ns*	–
Comparison with Greenpeace ($\chi 2$)	*38.8****	-		
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	*Ns*	*Ns*	*0.17****	
(n)	*616*	*627*	*710*	*1'067*
Boundaries with cultural minorities	**6**	**17**	**34**	**34**
Comparison with unionists ($\chi 2$)	*165.0****	*53.0****	–	–

(continued)

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[13] We can only present one proxy for interconnectedness and no indicator for the dimensions of humanness and goodness. The reason for this is that our argument results from both a deductive and inductive approach. Theoretical elaboration helped us conceptualize most of our concepts. However, individuals' narratives allowed to grasp meanings connected to those concepts. Humanness, interconnectedness, and goodness emerged through induction, and we therefore did not operationalize these concepts for the questionnaire.

[14] The exact question wordings of all indicators are provided in the note of Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 (continued)

	Moral voicing activists		Control groups	
	SAB %	GP %	UNIA %	Swiss pop. %
Comparison with the Swiss population ($\chi2$)	*178.8***	*60.4****	*Ns*	*Ns*
Comparison with Greenpeace ($\chi2$)	*40.5****	–		
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	*ns*	*ns*	*0.16****	
(n)	*608*	*638*	*757*	*1′245*
Self-extension scale				
Self-extension	30	63	16	–
Self-extension/boundaries	49	28	35	–
Boundaries/self-extension	18	8	32	–
Boundaries	3	1	18	–
	100%	100%	100%	
Comparison with unionists ($\chi2$)	*114.0****	*336.5****	-	
Comparison with Greenpeace ($\chi2$)	*−144.3****	-		
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	
(n)	*594*	*615*	*497*	–

Note: *SAB* Solidarity across borders, *GP* Greenpeace
To evaluate social trust, we asked the following question: “Could you tell us whether you trust …?” Individuals who trust completely or somewhat their neighbors and people they meet for the first time were merged into the category “unknown others,” and those who trust people of another religion and nationality were merged in the category “distant others” (Comparison with the Swiss population: World Values Survey 2007). The indicator helping others was measured through the question: “How important is it for a good citizen to help others in the world?” On a 7-point scale, only people who found this very important (six or seven) were included (International Social Survey Programme 2004). Boundaries with cultural minorities represent an index of people who are culturally different based on the question: “This list presents various groups of people. Could you please sort out those you would not like to have as neighbors?” Included are Muslims, Jews, Sinti people, and migrants (European Values Study 2008). For the self-extension scale, we used the following question: “Several motivations can characterize your commitment. Maybe all the motivations presented below partially characterized your commitment. However, can you tell us which one constitutes the central motivation of your commitment, and what is the motivation coming in the second position?” Four items, adapted to the organizations, were presented to the respondents where two intended to measure self-extension and two boundaries. Self-extension items were the following: (1) “We live on the same planet, it is normal to act for others?” (SAB, GP), (2) “I want everyone, migrants, and non-migrants to have the same rights” (SAB), and (3) “I want to protect the planet, its environment, and its biodiversity” (GP). Boundary items were the following: (1) “I defend migrants because I (or my family) was a migrant” (SAB). “I, my next of kin, or my family are directly touched by environmental problems” (GP). (2) “I want to improve [the social justice/the environmental quality] of the society in which I live in, i.e., Switzerland” (SAB, GP). *$\chi2$ compares activists with the Swiss population as well as collective actors between each other*
*$p < 0.05$
**$p < 0.01$
***$p < 0.001$

Trust toward unknown people is certainly a basic component of interconnectedness (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005); it hones in on the perception of social ties. As for inclusiveness, five indicators seize the idea that people do not set mental boundaries between their own social groups and others. Two comparative indicators assess activists' trust in people of another religion and nationality, as well as the importance to help people beyond Switzerland. Next, we present an index of cultural minorities (e.g., Gypsy people, Muslims) that respondents would not want as neighbors. In addition to these items that allow for comparison with the general population, we developed a measure for self-extension that was inspired by Inglehart's scale of post-materialism with four items, whereby two measure self-extension and two others the boundaries between activists and the groups they are committed in.

Table 6.1 provides evidence suggesting that we can generalize the findings provided by the interview data. What first stands out is that moral voicing activists perceive interconnectedness in a particular way. More moral voicing activists trust unknown others than unionists and the general population (SAB with 74% and GP with 55% compared to UNIA with 37% and population 45%). Furthermore, active and passive members do not differ from each other (see Table 6.1). A similar perception among activists from Solidarity Across borders and Greenpeace is present; both perceive society as interconnected with individuals that are tied to one another. The survey data hence confirms that activists within the moral voicing community share a common understanding for a better living-together.[15] In addition, we can show that their understanding is specific and differentiates that of the moral voicing community from that held by unionists and the general population.

Table 6.1 also shows that moral voicing activists have a highly inclusive notion of society (inclusiveness), and this perception appears yet again as particular when compared to unionists and the general population. Many more moral voicing activists than people from the control groups think that distant others can be trusted and that helping others beyond Switzerland is important (see $\chi 2$ comparisons in Table 6.1). In addition, very few of them set boundaries with cultural minorities. While a third of all unionists and among the general population (34%) would not want to have Muslims, Jews, Sinti people, or migrants as neighbors, only 6% of defenders of migrant's rights and 17% of Greenpeace activists erect such a mental frontier. Finally, the self-extension scale confirms the higher levels of inclusiveness among moral voicing activists. Almost everyone from this commitment community selected self-extension as a first motive to explain their commitment, whereas this is only the case for half of all unionists.

The survey data show us that moral voicing activists have a specific understanding of common good, one we have described as a universal social justice perception. Activists from the moral voicing community are synchronized in their mental outlook. The survey data systematically shows that active and passive members within an organization do not differ from each other. By contrast, SAB activists seem to be somewhat more homogeneous than GP activists. More defenders of migrant's rights trust and help others and set fewer boundaries than environmental activists. As we have argued elsewhere, a reason for this might be that activists who defend migrant's rights are committed to a more challenging issue than environmentalists at Greenpeace (Passy & Monsch, 2020). Nevertheless, the survey and interview data show that they have a shared understanding of living-together. The moral voicing community can hence be said to constitute an "island of meanings" (White, 1992), offering a distinct cultural toolkit on the libertarian side of the cultural cleavage. In the next section, we will explore how these meanings are constituted through interactions.

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[15] Data on activists from the Society of Threatened People who defend minorities' rights also confirm our conclusion that the moral voicing community relies on a shared meaning of common good (Passy & Monsch, 2020).

Meanings Through Conversations

How is such mental synchronization possible? In this section, we take a closer look at the role interactions play and compare direct and mediated or non-personal interactions. Are direct interactions necessary to shape the activists' mind? Or are mediated ones sufficient? To begin with, we examine the activist's *relational reality* or whether moral voicing activists enjoy other interactional opportunities beyond Solidarity Across Borders and Greenpeace.

First, we consider activists' embeddedness in formal networks in addition to their respective organizations. As shown in Table 6.2, about more than half of all activists participate in other organizations of the post-industrial movement. A large proportion of moral voicing activists therefore enjoy other conversational opportunities within their commitment community. In addition, opportunities for social interactions abound in their interpersonal networks. The second part of Table 6.2 demonstrates that at least 90% of all moral voicing activists state that their interpersonal network is sensitized to the social problems addressed by their commitment community. This testifies to the fact that almost all activists have an environment where they can discuss and deploy the cultural toolkit provided by their commitment community. Friends or family members also provide such opportunities to exchange in a more intimate and frequent manner. Another important finding is that passive members have a similar relational context. While they are not actively committed, their interpersonal network also includes people sensitized to their commitment community. Passive and active members hence enjoy broad conversational opportunities. But do they really exchange meanings and opinions?

Active members organize public events and demonstrations, are part of committees and working groups, or are involved in organizational activities. By making routine use of the cognitive tools available in their respective organization, their minds are nurtured with new ideas and synchronized. As we see in Table 6.3, all active members interviewed have face-to-face interactions with other active members within their respective organization, and all stressed the importance of these conversations in their interviews. Lisa became aware of the plight of migrant through such conversations:

Table 6.2 Current embeddedness in formal and interpersonal networks

Embedded in	SAB	GP
	%	%
Formal networks		
Member of another moral voicing organization	61	48
(n)	*878*	*736*
Commitment intensity (Phi)	*0.13***	*−0.14****
Interpersonal network		
No ties	1	3
Weak ties partly or highly sensitized	2	1
Strong ties partly or highly sensitized	97	96
	100%	100%
(n)	*649*	*659*
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	*ns*	*ns*

Note: *SAB* Solidarity across Borders, *GP* Greenpeace

We measured activists' embeddedness in formal networks with the following question: "Here is a list of associations/groups. Could you tell us if, today, you are committed to these associations?" embeddedness in informal networks is measured with the question: "Would you say that your close friends, acquaintances, and family members are sensitive to, or aware of, the problem of [migrants' rights; autochthonous population rights; environmental protection]?" for each type of network (close friend, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, and relatives), we asked how sensitive people were to the social problem using a 5-point ordinary scale

*$p < 0.05$

**$p < 0.01$

***$p < 0.001$

> I learned a lot when I joined the organization—how to provide legal aid to asylum seekers, for example. But I also became aware of various migration issues, such as the awful living conditions of asylum seekers and state violence against migrants. Actually, I learned, and still learn a lot, from the volunteer lawyers. It's nice, but also extremely informative. Those exchanges obviously shaped, and still shape, my understanding of what the defense of migrants' rights is, and more generally what the real problems of migration and asylum are.

For Nathan, these exchanges are primordial. For example, in relation to protest tactics during organizational trainings:

> I participated in trainings organized by Greenpeace. I took part in a course about nuclear power during which they told us about all the problems generated by this type of energy. I also took part in a course that showed us how to behave during a protest. I learned how to deal with bystanders, the police, etc., how to remain non-violent. The training took place over a week-end.

For active members, communications within their organization are an important sphere of interaction. But all active members enjoy similar conversations in their intimate network (Table 6.3). Nathan tells us how important a friend was to his environmental commitment:

Table 6.3 Current communicational interactions of active and passive members within the moral voicing community

Activists	Committed to	Communicational interactions			Understanding of common good
		In their respective organization	In their interpersonal networks		
			Friends	Relatives	
Active members					
Adriana	SAB	**X**	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Lisa	SAB	**X**	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Simone	SAB	**X**	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Nathan	Greenpeace	**X**	**X**	–	Universal social justice
Pierrette	Greenpeace	**X**	**X**	–	Universal social justice
Margot	Greenpeace	**X**	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Passive members					
Colette	SAB	x	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Wilhelm	SAB	x	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Yan	SAB	x	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Evelyne	Greenpeace	x	**X**	–	Universal social justice
Maria	Greenpeace	x	**X**	**X**	Universal social justice
Yves	Greenpeace	x	–	–	Not synchronized

Note: *SAB* Solidarity across Borders, *GP* Greenpeace
"X" (bold capital letter) highlights direct communicational interactions (or face-to-face interactions), and "x" (lowercase letter) mediated communicational interactions (via the organization newspaper/newsletter)

> I became a member of Pro Natura because a friend of mine who is close to environmental issues talked to me a lot about Pro Natura. So I went on their homepage and checked out what they do and can do. This is the same friend with whom I started my commitment at Greenpeace. I think our exchanges reinforced my ideas. We discussed a lot and progressively we started participating at local Greenpeace meetings, we motivated each other, I guess. It's difficult to explain but we had the same ideas, and this reinforced our ideas and what we wanted to do.

Active members interact regularly and intensively both within the organization and within their interpersonal network. But what about passive members? As shown by the survey data in Table 6.2, most of them have a sensitized interpersonal network. But do they really interact with those friends and relatives on topics related to their commitment? Table 6.3 provides evidence that this is indeed the case. They exchange ideas and practice cultural tools from their commitment community within their interpersonal network. Colette, a passive member of various moral voicing groups, explains how important interactions in her interpersonal network are:

> I met Jacqueline at my workplace; she was a lab technician like me. She and her husband were committed to defending human rights their whole lives. We became friends straightaway. We have many views in common and above all, a concern for justice. Actually, I supported many political battles thanks to them, such as the Anti-Apartheid movement and Amnesty International. Manon and Fernando, another couple of friends, help people in developing countries. And for several years now, they have been committed to improving

> children's education in Colombia. We all share the same ideals. They are really good friends, and we debate politics and our commitments on a regular basis.

Maria, a passive member of Greenpeace, also regularly mobilizes her cultural toolkit with her sister:

> My little sister was an active member of Amnesty International. I can't remember what she did exactly, but I remember her participating in meetings quite often…And she also was a passive member of Greenpeace. She explained this a lot.

Real exchange occurs when passive members have friends or relatives who are sensitive to their commitment. But why then do passive members remain just that, passive? Three possible explanations come to mind. First, a lack of biographical availability. However, statistical findings do not support this hypothesis.[16] Second, as shown elsewhere (Passy, 1998a, 1998b, 2003), active members tend to recruit new active members. But our statistics show that passive members are rarely recruited by active members (Passy & Monsch, 2014). Finally, perceived personal efficacy in bringing about social change increases an activist's level of commitment. The analysis of survey data shows that passive members are less confident than active members in their potential to effect change (Passy & Monsch, 2020).

Most active and passive members are embedded in social networks and specifically interpersonal ones. This embeddedness allows them to practice the scripts available in their commitment community and synchronize their views for a better living-together. We saw that activists are concretely engaged in exchanges, interactions, or quarrels with fellow activists, in their interpersonal network, or both. But are such direct interactions necessary for mental synchronization to occur?

Another path capable of shaping the activist's mind is *mediated interactions*. These interactions are indirect as they comprise a non-personal interaction, as the reading of newspapers and newsletters published by the organization. Direct interactions, by contrast, define interactions between individuals regardless of the means of communication (in presence, by telephone, internet, etc.). The organization's written production diffuses meanings, stories, and collective worldviews that might come to shape the activist's mind. But do such mediated interactions lead to synchronized views with other activists? Theoretically at least, the minds of passive members depend more on such interactions: passive members support the organization through money, but do not engage in direct interactions with active members of the organization (as shown in Table 6.3). However, the interpersonal network of passive members is sensitized or committed (Tables 6.2 and 6.3). The question now becomes whether mediated interactions can also shape the activist's mind or if direct interactions are needed.

To address this, we must first examine whether activists read the written material produced by their organization. Indeed, almost all passive members interact with their community in this way. About 80% of them regularly read the material produced by the organization they support.[17] But do those mediated interactions shape their minds? The role of mediated interactions in shaping activists' understanding of common good cannot be addressed due to the fact that a large part of passive members have discussions within their interpersonal network about their commitment issues (see Tables 6.2 and 6.3). However, one critical case can provide some perspective. As shown in Table 6.3, Yves is a Greenpeace supporter with no formal ties to his community. He is not a member of other moral voicing groups and has no friends, acquaintances, or relatives who participate in moral voicing activities. Yves is hence isolated from his commitment community. Yves' only interaction with the moral voicing community is channeled through Greenpeace written material. We know he regularly reads the organization's newspaper and that this reading enlarges his knowledge about environmental issues:

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[16] Three indicators weaken the argument about the lack of biographical availability. First, only in Greenpeace do active members have fewer children at home than passive members (Pearson's *r*, −0.24***). Second, active members work to the same degree as passive members. Third, only in Greenpeace are there fewer unmarried active members than passive members (−0.25***).

> Before I started reading the Greenpeace newspaper, I wasn't aware of nuclear waste, renewable energies, or about over-fishing and its consequences. I learn many things reading the newspaper.

But do these mediated interactions lead Yves to synchronize his understandings of a better living-together? No, his understanding of common good is not one that can be categorized as in line with universal social justice:

> I travelled a lot as part of my work. This showed me how different we are and that Switzerland is on a top-tier level. India, for example, we gave them modernity without a manual. It's extremely chaotic there. And they have a culture that is really different from ours. The untouchables, they run over one on the street, and don't even stop. In Switzerland, it's really different, we are among the best. We have a good social security system, we have no security problems. And it by travelling that you become aware of that. For example, I was in Cape Town, this was really different, another world.

As the above clearly demonstrates, while other passive member's views are synchronized with the moral voicing community, Yves's is not (Table 6.3). He never engages in direct interactions about his commitment and, consequently, does not have opportunities to practice the cultural toolkit available in his commitment community. The capacity of mediated interactions in influencing the activist's mind hence seems limited. While organizational material can provide knowledge on contentious issues, it is inadequate to synchronize the minds of activists outside of a commitment community. For the latter, direct interaction in interpersonal or formal networks is needed. Public opinion studies confirm this interpretation and emphasize the weakness of mediated information to affect an individual's opinion (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995). Many studies have stressed the role of interpersonal networks in the integration of opinions mediated by newspapers, radio, or television, especially so when interpersonal networks convey ideas, concepts, or worldviews that deviate from one's own opinions (Huckfeldt et al., 2004). Direct communication with peers in an interpersonal network is hence necessary if an individual is to process, accept, and integrate opinions.

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[17] See Passy and Monsch (2020).

Two conclusions can be drawn here. First, *mediated interactions are insufficient* to synchronize an activist's mind. This relational mechanism is unable to synchronize activists' understandings and does not allow enough practice of cultural scripts available in the organization. This remains true even in cases of long-term commitment. Yves has been engaged in mediated communicational interaction for over 7 years, yet his understanding of common good still does not overlap with that of other moral voicing activists. The second conclusion relates to *the crucial role of interpersonal networks*. For passive members, interactions in interpersonal networks are central as they enable these members to synchronize their views with those of other members in their commitment community. Direct conversational interactions allow them to effectively practice cultural scripts from their commitment site and to synchronize their understandings. Direct interaction in informal networks is hence a key relational mechanism that shapes the minds of passive members.

Conclusions

We aimed to provide two main contributions in this chapter. The first was to situate the study of morality within sociology. We came to the conclusion that sociologists are not well equipped to judge what is moral and what is not. Indeed, sociologists lack the analytical tools for such normative judgments. By contrast, historical sociology has shown that morality is bound to culture and consequently that culture and cultural practices should be placed at the heart of sociological work on morality. Next, we showed how social movement studies could be bridged to sociology of morality. Contentious politics mobilizes on social and political cleavages that address "moral" issues and conceptions of living-together. While sociologists cannot show which side of a cleavage is "morally superior," we can demonstrate that specific contentions directly relate to major political cleavages and that common perceptions of our living-together circulate within these. Our first contribution therefore revolves around the way to seize morality with the tools of sociology.

Our second contribution showed an empirical demonstration of how this could be realized. Three key findings guide us: first, activists of the moral voicing community understand the social problems they are committed for in terms of a universal social justice. They judge as immoral when specific social or cultural groups lack basic rights or suffer from environmental devastations and interpret these assessments within a register of injustice. Second, such a relation to common good is shared within the moral voicing community. Moral voicing activists have a synchronized mind and look in the same political direction. This shared cultural toolkit allows them to mobilize on the leftist side of the libertarian cleavage. Finally, we show that these shared views on our living-together are constructed and maintained through a specific relational mechanism. Ongoing and direct conversations in their commitment community, and especially in their interpersonal networks, enable activists to maintain those shared meanings and ultimately to sustain their joint action. Simply put, we showed how ongoing meaningful conversations sustain activists' meanings and enable them to mobilize on specific political cleavages to promote a better living-together. However, we could not here develop the link between mind and action, an issue we have dealt with elsewhere (Passy & Monsch, 2020).

The aim here is to discuss the role of morality for movement studies. We agree that a cultural approach can help us advance the study of individual mobilization and try to show that in the study of activists' minds, examining meanings central to sustain participation is a worthwhile analytical endeavor. Whether this line of research should be called the study of morality or the moral self remains to be seen.

Two avenues for future research are worth mentioning. The first is related to the study of the impact of commitment on the mind in a more dynamic fashion, animated by the following questions: how does commitment shape the mind once activists join a new community? Do activists already join a community with a full-fledged cultural toolkit, or do activists acquire the meanings necessary to sustain commitment incrementally? How long does the synchronization of views take? Such questions cannot be answered with the static research design used here but require a longitudinal one that considers data before and after people start their commitment, as well as variation between organizations and individuals. Variation brings us to the second possible research avenue. This contribution looks at a specific country and is restricted to the libertarian side of this cleavage. Are the same processes at stake in meaningful conversations across countries, time, and between different cultural sites? Or are they universal? A promising research agenda is ahead of us.

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