

FLORENCE PASSY AND GIAN-ANDREA MONSCH



# CONTENTIOUS MINDS

*How Talk and Ties Sustain Activism*

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To Doug, a guide, a challenger, and a trustworthy friend

“The operation of the mind—conscious and unconscious, free and unfree, in perception, action, and thought, in feeling, emotion, reflection, and memory, and in all its other features—is not so much an aspect of our lives, but in a sense, it is our life.”

Searle (2004: 10)



# Acknowledgements

Writing a book is comparable to a long journey. An adventure made of twists and turns, of travels down narrow country routes where the road signs often disappear. This challenging and exciting journey is impossible without support and guidance. We have been extremely lucky to benefit from intellectual and friendly guides along the way. Without them, the expedition would have been more sinuous, perilous, and far less engaging!

The philosophy of the mind was our first guiding star. Turning our minds upside down to apprehend activist's understandings of the social and political world—and we admit having been initially lost facing the many possible intellectual roads—we encountered John Searle's book *Mind, A Brief Introduction*. This work accompanied us along the steep paths that led us to rethink the concepts of mind and intentionality. Colleagues have asked us why we opt for the term mind, rather than values, attitudes, perceptions, or cognitions. But Searle's work makes us aware that those terminologies only bring the tip of the iceberg into sight. Simply put, he made us aware that the mind is central to our lives. We think, feel, imagine, remember, and act thanks to it. It is central to our lives, as Searle's quote emphasizes. The philosophy of the mind was hence essential as we set out to apprehend activists' subjective and qualitative comprehension of the social and political world.

A second guide, who accompanied us since our very first steps in social science research, was Charles Tilly, whose work broadened our perspective by helping us conceptualize social movements as contention. Politics and conflict are central to understand protest dynamics. Tilly's work also helped us to understand contention in a relational perspective and his contribution was key in grasping how talks and ties shape the activist's mind and enables action. We have always been aware of the privilege it has been to have crossed Chuck's path, both as a social scientist and as a person. Chuck was a generous man with exceptional human qualities and we will always remember how his eyes lit up when he said: "Let's go to the seminar". Chuck was a man who gave you the taste for social science research, and did so with passion and generosity.



Doug McAdam was also essential to our journey. We can honestly say that without him this book would not exist. When we met in Lausanne a few years ago, we discussed several papers related to our research. He put the matter to us quite plainly: “Why not write a book with such rich empirical material?” The following day, and certainly due to Doug’s legendary enthusiasm, we said: “Why not?” Everything began then. Doug’s intellectual support has been crucial since: He has challenged us when it came to methodological problems, conceptualizations, and findings. His concept of cognitive liberation was also a starting point when considering the importance of the activist’s mind, as he made us aware of the notion that cognitive processes are at work in the initiation and sustainment of contentious politics. He is also a key thinker about the relational processes in the study of social movements and was among the first to invite scholars to specify relational processes at work in contentious politics. Specifying the influence of interaction is a key concern in this book. More than anyone, Doug’s intellectual and personal guidance provided us with the necessary confidence to pursue the study of the activist’s mind. Conversations on the shores of Lake Geneva, as well as on campus in Lausanne and Stanford, whether in front of a good meal or a fresh beer, were sublime moments of exchange. Thank you Doug for your trustworthy friendship.

Pierre Birnbaum also played a central role in our work. Years ago, in a café in Montparnasse, Pierre offered feedback on a new research project we began on citizens’ minds. At the end of a long conversation, Pierre said: “The project is well constructed, and professionally done, but it’s not interesting. Research should handle innovative and teasing social problems”. Imagine our faces. He went on: “Why not go back to your first interests: Altruism. Why do people stand up for others, that’s an extraordinary question; a real problem that social science research should address.” After a long walk in the Luxembourg Garden, we took the decision to rewrite the project and to orient it towards explaining why activists act on behalf of others. The present book does not focus on altruism per se, but tackles the topic by scrutinizing how activists perceive and make sense of common good. Other publications centered on altruism and plural motivations are in progress. Thank you Pierre for encouraging us to go after the more interesting problems.

The activists we surveyed and interviewed for many hours were a critical source of inspiration and this book would evidently not exist without their collaboration. Research, at least in social science, is a relation. This study on activists’ minds is a typical example. But enrichment was not merely

intellectual, but also human. We in no way forget the long conversations in which activists took the time to talk to us about their commitment, their relation to the social world, and their lives. Those unforgettable moments were often extended by cups of tea or good meals. Thank you for opening your homes and sharing your life stories with us. Thanks also to Greenpeace, Solidarity Across Borders, the Society of Threatened People, Unia, and Caritas for enabling us to reach their activists and supporting us from the onset.

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Writing a book in a language that is not your mother-tongue is not easy. In fact, it is a source of endless frustration. Especially when you love language and writing but are constantly aware of your inability to express your thoughts. Fortunately, we met Anas Sareen, a craftsman who fashioned our rough sentences into elegant English. His investment spanned the entire editing process and was doubled by perceptive comments on all chapters. We therefore sincerely view Anas as a co-author of this work.

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# Contentious Minds



# 1

## Contentious Minds in Action

The true revolution is the one of the mind.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Margot is a seventy-year-old with a lifelong commitment to political activism. As a university student in the early seventies, she helped migrants coming from southern Europe settle in Switzerland, notably by delivering classes in French. She has pursued her social commitments since: joining labor unions, social workers organizations, migrants' right contention, and various new left groups. Twenty years ago she joined Greenpeace, which now constitutes her sole political commitment. At Greenpeace, she dedicates her time to sensitizing students at public schools to ecological problems, participates in the organization's national council, is involved in the ongoing construction of strategies and selection of thematic priorities, and engages in what Greenpeace calls "activists" groups—small intervention groups that undertake illegal actions to protect our environment. Her life has been one dedicated to the improvement of society.

Why has Margot been this committed? A number of explanations come to mind. She possesses the necessary resources: Margot is a highly educated member of the new middle class, typically overrepresented in post-industrial movements (Kriesi 1993). Another key factor is: the social networks. Having begun her activist career during her student days, she forged particular formal ties that bound her to contentious groups at an early stage. She is also embedded in an extensive network of friends—including her husband—who are committed socially and politically. Now retired, she is able to devote most of her time to ecological advocacy. These are the most probable explanations that we, social movement scholars, would think of. However, the focus of this book is on Margot's mind, and that of other activists. We aim to show that the manner in which Margot perceives her social and political environment



helps explain how she is able to participate and sustain her commitment to environmental protection.

Margot conceives of her commitment as an action that objectively improves people's lives. In her view, pollution, excessive consumption, the exhaustion of natural resources, and global warming starkly impact human living conditions. Environmental destruction threatens the livelihood of those who will follow in our wake, and Margot perceives this as a major injustice: "We inherited the earth, a place full of life. We use portions of those elements, and destroy others. But the earth is a common good and we are diminishing both our inheritance and our legacy." The main object of her commitment—environmental protection—is to preserve a common good that affects everyone. In this respect, Margot understands society as a highly interconnected and interdependent ensemble: "Society exists thanks to social ties and human relations. Without such ties, societies can develop only in an imbalanced fashion. . . . We exist, as persons, because of those ties; we are merely fractions in a whole." Margot's action is construed as an action for fellow citizens; her commitment goes beyond her own interests. Her picture of society is one that relies on a universalist dimension. For Margot, we all belong to the same world, and for society, this space is devoid of boundaries or lines between groups of people. As she asserts: "We should work toward a more open world: A world without social, faith-based, or cultural distinctions. This is an imperative for me." Crystallized here is Margot's perception of her social environment, or as we label it, her understanding of common good.

Margot further relies on a specific understanding of politics, including key actors in the domain. While economic actors are perceived as responsible for the destruction of our environment, state actors are viewed as chiefly accountable when it comes to regulating society as well as protecting and bringing about common good. Regarding environmental protection, Margot delegitimizes state actors on grounds of a lack of accountability: "I entertain a difficult relationship with state actors. They don't go far enough because they are profit oriented. What we need are measures that seriously reduce futile consumption, but I doubt they will act in this direction." Civil society actors are hence crucial in influencing political decision making and challenging state actors when they fail to protect the common good. For Margot, it is only through protest action that people can voice their concerns and place pressure on state actors: "I think civil society actors are absolutely necessary if one considers the political decision-making process. . . . Civil society actors

create a world carried by ideas and therefore have a crucial role in forming opinion and troubling political authorities.” To sensitize and inform the population appears a necessity, in addition to contesting state action. For Margot, this twin strategy is relevant for environmental protection and the protection of other types of common good. Margot thus understands politics as a field in which political intervention is required to increase state accountability.

Margot sees common good and politics with specific cognitive lenses. This brings a central question to the fore. Are these understandings strictly personal to Margot or are they synchronized with the understandings of other activists committed to Greenpeace? After all, Margot’s lifelong commitment could have given her a unique view. However, it could also be plausible that she shares these meanings with active and passive members of Greenpeace and even with activists from the same commitment community, namely, those committed to the defense of migrants’ rights and to the improvement of collective rights of minorities. And what about activists in other communities dedicated to providing social care to the deprived and who labor for better rights for workers? If all rely on similar specific worldviews regarding the common good and politics, we can consequently expect activists to be concerned about these issues, and this concern should translate to a particular conception of their role as political citizens within a democratic regime. What notions of democratic cultures—which circulate through society as a consequence of their action—do activists hold? We will seek to answer this core question by comparing activists engaged in contentious politics,<sup>1</sup> volunteering, and unionism through survey and interview data.

A wider theoretical question follows from this discussion: What role does the mind play in enabling activist action? As we will see, social science is not silent on this issue. Yet more knowledge is required to grasp it in detail. Activists are embedded in commitment communities and are therefore exposed to interactional opportunities that enable them to put into practice the cultural scripts<sup>2</sup> available in these sites. Those interactions shape their

<sup>1</sup> For Tilly and Tarrow (2007, 4), “contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics.”

<sup>2</sup> Cultural scripts capture values, norms, templates, guidelines, or models for ways of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting in a particular cultural context. As Goddard and Wierzbicka (2004, 153) underline: “Cultural scripts refers to a powerful . . . technique for articulating cultural norms, values, and practices in terms which are clear, precise, and accessible to cultural insiders and to

minds and enable them to participate and maintain their commitment. Questioning *the influence of the activist's mind on the participation and sustenance of commitment* lies at the heart of this book.

### Synchronized Minds

The central aim of this book is to demonstrate that *activists rely on synchronized minds to perform joint action*. During action, a process of synchronization occurs, one that enables activists to develop shared meanings about the aim and means of activism. This process leads them to perceive common good (aim) and politics (means) through similar cognitive lenses. We show the extent to which activists' minds are synchronized within a commitment community and the depth of variation between activists' worldviews across distinct commitment communities. To assess synchronization within, and the variation between, communities constitutes the first important element related to the central aim of this book. The second is to explain how this process unfolds. How do activists synchronize their understandings of common good and politics? What are the relational mechanisms that enable their minds to be synchronized, and what are the cognitive mechanisms that ensue and allow them to participate in and sustain activism?

The perceptions of common good and politics held by activists is crucial to the empirical consideration of understandings of political citizenship. The second aim of this book is to assess whether *activists construct community-specific democratic cultures*. Through a close examination of activists' understandings of political citizenship, both within and between communities, we show that different democratic (and undemocratic) cultures are imagined and enacted in our societies, thereby entering the public sphere through collective action.

Our two aims matter for four main reasons. First, we need to provide more knowledge about the activist's mind in order to explain *why the mind matters for action*. Compared to other factors of influence, the role of the activist's mind in the mobilization process has been understudied. Piven and Cloward stressed "the necessity of cognitions" to participate in contentious activities and stated that "the emergence of protest entails a transformation

cultural outsiders alike." Individuals involved in a specific community (and whatever the community is; e.g., family, work, activism, sport, etc.) use those cultural scripts to interact with each other. They actually practice cultural scripts

of both consciousness and behavior” (1977, 3). For McAdam (1982) too, the emergence of the civil rights movement would not have been possible without a process of “cognitive liberation.” Their claims echo San Suu Kyi, who declared: “The true revolution is the one of the mind.” Activists’ minds should therefore play a pivotal role in the activists’ participation in contentious politics. While pioneering work has rightfully put effort into understanding the importance of collective meanings—such as frames, identity, or narratives—it unfortunately undermines the importance of the activist’s mind and fails to recognize how perceptions, among other factors, operate in commitment.

Furthermore, existing studies on activists’ minds yield controversial results about the causal link between mind and action. Jasper (1997, 10) stresses: “We often protest because our systems of meanings are at stake.” He thereby shows that specific views and understandings are essential for one to protest and enter into contentious politics. Worldviews are one of the key elements behind people’s impulse to join activism. Gamson (1982, 1992, 1995) and Klandermans (1997) found similar evidence: The mental world of activists intervenes in their joining protest actions. Studies that stress the importance of activists’ values also indicate as much (e.g., Abramowitz and Nassi 1981; Dunham and Bengtson 1992; Marwell, Aiken, and Demerath 1987; McAdam 1989, 1999; Sherkat and Blocker 1997; Whalen and Flacks 1989). Meanwhile, Munson’s study (2009) reverses the causality others have established. In a comparative study of pro-life activists and non-activists, Munson showed that activists hold ambivalent or even pro-choice positions once they join pro-life groups. It is only over time that their views on abortion change as initial ambivalence and pro-choice beliefs turn into pro-life sentiments. Thus, most of the activists Munson studied developed specific worldviews about the aim and means of their protest action only once they had committed.

These controversial results show that the role of activists’ worldviews in the process of commitment in contentious politics is far more complex than we initially thought: More research on what occurs in the activist’s mind is required.

In this book, we do not seek to untangle the problem of causality. Nor do we ask whether specific worldviews are key to a person’s becoming an activist, or whether these views develop once individuals engage in contentious action. Empirical evidence suggests that both causal links are present: Some people join activism because their systems of meanings are at stake while others develop specific understandings during action (Monsch and Passy

2018). Our focus here falls on what occurs during action. First, we show that once activists are involved in commitment communities, they rely on shared understandings that enable them to perform joint action and to sustain their commitment. Second, we highlight how those shared meanings are constructed in activists' minds by underscoring how various cognitions are interrelated and enable activists to perform action. Our contribution stems from the knowledge we provide on the role and importance of activists' minds during commitment.

We rely on one-shot data in this study. As a result, we cannot empirically identify the synchronization process of activists' minds that occurs during action. Our data show that once activists are involved in commitment communities, they rely on *synchronized minds*. This result suggests that a synchronized mind is needed to perform joint action at a specific point in time. Our comparative research design also enables us to suggest that the activists' mind is different from the mindset of the general population and varies from one commitment community to another. Those findings come from data collected at one point in time—that is, when we interviewed and surveyed the activists.

We also show that activists who rely on synchronized minds are embedded in specific relational settings. Our data underscore that conversational interactions occur in activists' formal and interpersonal networks. We also know from both interviews and survey data that embeddedness in those social networks precedes our data collection. We are therefore empirically aware that activists discuss and dispute ideas with their peers during their commitment and that this occurred prior to their being interviewed. This means that conversational interaction, a process that shapes the activist's mind, occurred before our interviews. We thus have one empirical indication that conversational interaction occurs before we underscore that activists rely on synchronized minds to perform action. In addition, as we will discuss, knowledge from sociological theory clearly explains how and why interactions shape the human mind (e.g., Collins 2004; Emirbayer 1997; Mead 1934; White 1992; Zerubavel 1997). Therefore, both our data and social theory enable us to highlight how those shared meanings develop in activists' minds by highlighting that *a process of synchronization occurs during action*.

We are nonetheless aware of the limits of our data. As tempting as it might be to use the life histories of activists collected in a longitudinal way to bring the development of activists' understandings to light, they will always remain a reconstruction, influenced by the very moment and situation in which the

interview takes place. Consequently, we cannot identify when synchronization occurs and whether synchronization takes place before or after an individual joins a commitment community.

The second reason behind our interest in the activist's mind is that we want to examine cognitions in the making, or *during action*. Social movement scholars have produced numerous studies that seek to explain the recruitment process at work in protest politics (e.g., Chong 1991; Gould 1995; Jasper 1997; Klandermans 1997; Kriesi 1988; Marwell and Oliver 1993; McAdam 1988; Nepstad and Smith 1999; Opp 1989; Opp and Kittel 2010; Passy 1998a; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). Initial engagement undoubtedly constitutes a pivotal first step in a citizen's commitment. However, personal trajectories in activism go far beyond this. While scholars acknowledge that initial engagement is simply the initial phase in contentious participation—and some of them have conceptualized what comes after early recruitment (Klandermans 1997; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013)—we still know little about what happens afterward. Yet the sustainment of participation is equally important when it comes to understanding contention. Contention is not a single event or performance. As Tilly demonstrated in his seminal work, contention is made of a series of performances sustained in time (Tilly 1978, 1998a, 2004). Contentious politics exists through the presence of sustained interactions between people with common purposes and solidarity with opponents and authorities (Tarrow 1994). Although broad processes and macro-dynamics are crucial to sustaining contentious episodes (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), processes that occur at the level of individual activists play a significant role too. Without sustained participation, contention is improbable.

Sustaining commitment is not rare. In her study on patterns of protest, Corrigan-Brown (2012) showed that sustained participation can take various forms: persistence in the same group; commitment to other activist sites; or individual abeyance, whereby commitments are abandoned for a period of time and then resumed. Taking this variety of behaviors into consideration, Corrigan-Brown found that 56 percent of the citizens committed to activism in the United States sustained their participation over time. We found similar evidence in our study of mobilization in two organizations in Switzerland—the Bern Declaration and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)—where only 10 percent of those activists declared themselves to be newcomers who had committed within the year or two years before. Half of the other activists had been committed for four to ten years, and another half had sustained

their commitment for over a decade (Passy 1994, 1998b). Another study conducted with a representative sample of the Swiss population showed that of people involved in activism about 50 percent sustained their collective effort over time (Monsch and Passy 2018). While sustaining commitment is frequent, exactly what occurs once activists participate in collective endeavors remains obscure. We hope here to provide a unique insight into what goes on during action and how action impacts the activist's mind.

A third reason for studying activists' minds is that *the interplay between commitment communities and activists* is worth scrutinizing. Activism takes place in activists' groups and is based on worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC, Tilly 2005). These groups can be highly organized and formalized (like those studied here) or informal and made up of low numbers. Even in the latter case, however, activists are not isolated but tied to fellow members (Blee 2002). Once a citizen joins in contentious action—as a formal member, sympathizer, active or passive member, or by any other form of action—he or she joins a commitment community, a network of collective actors and campaigns (Diani 1995, 2003, 2007). Although structures and shared interests organize a commitment community, it is also a world made of meanings, stories, and identities, and is therefore a space prone to the development and circulation of cultural scripts (Diani 2015; Diani and Pilati 2011; Tilly 2005). Activists who evolve in a commitment community practice the cultural scripts available in that community (Polletta 2008).

Many studies separately examine individuals who join and leave activism and groups (but see Mische 2007 and Auyero 2001 for exceptions). However, as the definition of commitment community already indicates, the individual and group levels are intimately bound to one another. We therefore cannot make sense of individual participation without taking into consideration the collective site where they evolve. Basically, we need a better grasp of the interplay between the micro- and meso-levels of activism. Mische (2007) has gone some way in illustrating this, as she scrutinizes how cross-talks enable individuals to bridge different networks and communities, to travel from one network to the other, with the potential to transform or change existing networks. In this book, we do not focus on processes between communities but on what goes on within communities. We examine how interactions among individuals within a specific community shape its members' minds. While the empirical emphasis is on interactive and cognitive processes at work during action, these processes also have a bearing on the commitment community itself. These processes nourish the network with worldviews that



enable action and allow networks to distinguish themselves from others. A neat separation between both sociological levels is therefore counterproductive if we want to make sense of contentious participation and activism at large. Individuals and communities are tied together and influence each other during commitment.

An empirical example of the interplay between commitment communities and the activists we describe is the fourth reason behind our study of activists' minds. We will show how types of embedded *comprehensions of democracy* exist in commitment communities and how varied they can be. This empirical endeavor allows us to consider culture in another light: not only as a structure bearing on individuals' worldviews but as a dynamic and multifaceted entity. Examining things in this way doesn't come at the expense of considering how cultures shape minds, but it stresses how minds simultaneously shape cultures. Collective understandings evidently exist within commitment communities and bear on activists' minds. Yet these same collective perceptions are continuously challenged, adapted, and sometimes transformed through the interaction of activists who never cease to create meanings. By studying activists' understandings of political citizenship, we want to bring a dynamic and changing idea of culture into social movement studies. It must be said that these understandings do not circulate only between activists' minds and within commitment communities. Rather, they are concretely lived by activists and enter the public sphere through collective action. Activists thereby disseminate their idea of citizenship—their democratic cultures—within and across countries through their action. Hence, to assess activists' comprehensions of democracy is to reveal one facet of how commitment communities contribute to ongoing processes of (de-)democratization through the creation of spaces where (non-)democratic cultures are constantly constructed and modified (Tilly 2007).

### **Mind, Action, and Interactions**

As we have seen, Margot relies on a specific understanding of common good, articulated in universalist terms. For her, goods are meant to objectively improve people's lives and should be shared by the whole population regardless of social groups. No citizens should be excluded from benefiting from goods that can improve their lives. Margot also conceives of politics in specific terms. She understands politics as a field of political intervention in order to



increase state actors' accountability toward the common good. According to her, political conflicts carried on by civil society actors are essential to challenging state actors to promote, secure, and strengthen the common good. But how do those meanings enable her to act? How do meanings allow action to be maintained within a commitment community? To answer these questions, Chapter 2 will develop our theoretical proposal, which aims to show how the mind affects action and how (inter)actions shape the mind. We simply outline it briefly here.

The *mind orients an individual's action*.<sup>3</sup> The mind is an important element in human action. But what is the mind? Philosophers, sociologists, and social psychologists define the mind as a thinking and perceiving "inner box" composed of complex cognitive processes. Beyond this very broad definition, however, perspectives on the human mind differ across disciplinary boundaries. Relying on the epistemology of interpretative sociology, we consider individuals as "voracious meaning makers" (Weber 1978). Meanings permit individuals to perceive social realities, to make sense of them, and to act in their social environment. Without meanings, we cannot order a chaotic world and we are unable to act. However, apprehending the links between the mind and action requires us to consider the work of cognitive psychologists. As several sociologists have underscored, contributions by psychologists are key to understanding the individual's mind (e.g., Cerulo 2010; P. J. DiMaggio 1997; P. DiMaggio and Markus 2010; Zerubavel 1997). Sociologists who have investigated the influence of the mind on an individual's action face one major shortcoming: They admit that a substantial bond exists between mind and action rather than investigating how meanings and action relate to one another.

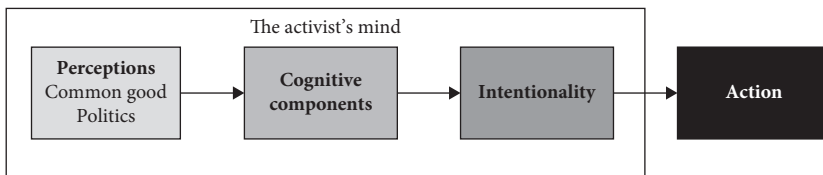
Two main axes of contributions by social and cognitive psychologists are relevant to conceiving of the manner in which the mind is tied to action. First, emphasis is placed on the notion that cognitions are *domain-specific*, tied as they are to a specific field of experience. This means that we need to specify the cognitive dimensions at work to investigate a specific action like activism. As we show throughout this book, understandings of aims (common good) and means (politics) of activism constitute two essential pillars of knowledge for committed individuals. To subjectively construct a sense of the aim of activism and to mentally elaborate on the means to act constitute two crucial

<sup>3</sup> We use the terms "mind," "meaning," "understanding," "perception," and "worldview" interchangeably.

dimensions of the process of joining in, maintaining, and disengaging from collective endeavors.

Second, psychologists urge us to specify *the cognitive paths that bridge the mind to intentionality* and which ultimately enable action. Perceptions and subjective constructions of our surroundings provide us with a motivational component that orients human action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). The mind therefore sets intentionality and delineates the possible and preferable from the impossible. As shown in Figure 1.1, we disentangle the cognitive mechanisms that link the mind to action as follows: Broad perceptions of common good and politics enable individuals to elaborate specific cognitive components that set their intentionality in a specific way, eventually orienting their action toward particular political and social issues and forms of activism. Cognitive components span from broad understandings to a concrete intentionality required to perform action. The content of those cognitive components, as well as the way in which they intervene between understandings and intentionality, will be inductively identified through activists’ narratives like that provided by Margot. This cognitive path can be envisioned as akin to a funnel, where broad understandings guide action through more specific cognitive elements that set individuals’ intentionality. In our case, the latter is constituted by concrete answers to these questions: For whom, for what, and in which field do activists intend to mobilize, and what form of action do they choose?

Our theory not only suggests how the mind is tied to action but also elucidates how *social interactions enable the construction of shared meanings*. This is necessary because, with a few notable exceptions (Vygotsky 1978), most psychologists pay little attention to the cultural context in which cognitions are elaborated and transformed. As contributions from the field of interpretative sociology highlight, however, cognitions are always particular, contingent upon cultural contexts in which individuals evolve. Individuals hence possess a social mind rather than a singular mind (Zerubavel 1997).

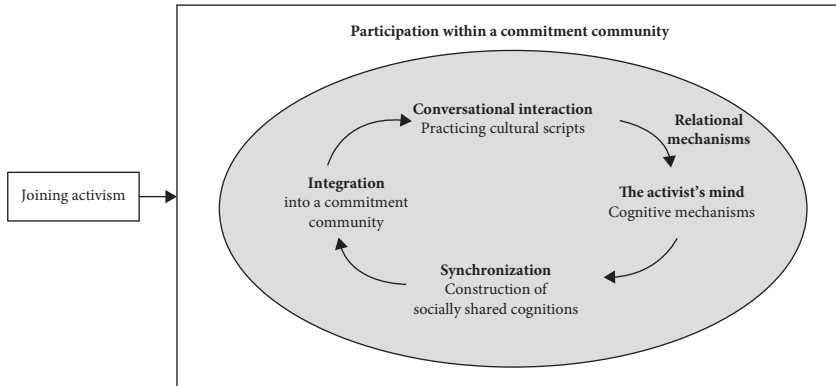


**Figure 1.1** Cognitive mechanisms at play in the specific domain of activism

They rely on socially shared meanings fashioned in concert with others through conversational interactions (Mead 1934). Interactions shape people's minds, and such constant fluxes enable them to develop shared meanings. As we will show in our study, these interactions allow activists to elaborate shared understandings regarding the aim and means of activism, that is to say, about common good and politics. Joint action is improbable without these shared views and the related cognitive components behind the orientation of an activist's action. Building on White's (1992) idea that networks are "islands of meanings" we will demonstrate how conversational interactions enable activists to develop shared understandings. Talks and disputes lead activists to synchronize their understandings regarding the aims and means of activism. Conversational processes are as complex as cognitive ones: Not all types of conversational interactions have a part in shaping an activist's mind. We will identify which relational mechanisms do help synchronize minds, as well as those that do not. A majority of the interactions that have an impact on the activist's mind take place within commitment communities, leading to their inclusion in this study. By contrast, we do not examine how this interplay continuously shapes the scripts that circulate in the commitment community, preferring instead to focus on one element of White's theory.

Finally, not only does the mind orient an individual's action, but action itself reinforces or modifies the human mind (Albarraçín et al. 2001; Boster et al. 2014; Fishbein and Ajzen 2010). We therefore are faced with a *non-recursive link* between the mind and action whereby influence between the two elements is reciprocal. Actually, performing action in commitment communities tends to reinforce activists' understandings about the commitment itself. Previous understandings are strengthened and legitimized, with the consequence that commitment is stabilized over time. However, when action does not resonate with activists' understandings, a dissonance between their action and their worldviews is created, inviting them to modify their views through peer interactions and to harmonize their action and thought; if the gap between action and worldviews is too wide, activists will tend to leave the commitment community.

In this book, we argue that a *cognitive-relational process* occurs during action, leading to a process of mind synchronization among activists. The interplay between the mind, action, and interaction takes place during action and we will show that this cognitive-relational process is essential to the performance of joint action: in our case, activism. This process is also central



**Figure 1.2** Mind synchronization during activism

when it comes to sustaining commitment, thanks to the reinforcement of shared meanings that ensure commitment is stabilized over time. The probability of leaving the commitment community thereby increases whenever the synchronization of minds does not occur.

Figure 1.2 highlights the process of mind synchronization. Once activists join activism, they actually integrate a commitment community. Participation in activism, regardless of its form, above all entails evolving in a community and entering in a process of conversational interaction. Through talks and disputes, activists practice cultural scripts available in the community that allow their minds to undergo a process of synchronization. Their meanings about common good and politics—about the aims and means of activism—synchronize with those of their peers. Yet this process of synchronization involves specific relational and cognitive mechanisms, which we explain in the next chapter. This synchronization process allows participants to construct shared meanings that, in turn, enable them to perform joint action and to continue the process of integration into a commitment community.

### Common Good and Politics

Having briefly outlined our theoretical model, we now turn to the operationalization of our key concepts: common good and politics. As cognitions are tied to a specific field of experience, we now need *to specify the cognitive*

*dimensions* that partake in the performance of activism, which is the aim of this section.

Specific meanings linked to the aims and means of activism are behind an individual's motivation to voice dissent, to care about others, or to fight social and political injustices. Activism is the sustained intervention of a group of individuals with the aim of achieving social, cultural, or political change (e.g., to improve citizens' rights, to enlarge democracy, to advocate better working conditions, but also to restrict the right of minorities or to reinforce authoritarian regimes), to avoid the deterioration of a specific situation (e.g., the environment, rights withdrawal), or to provide specific populations with social care (e.g., deprived or sick people, migrants, or native people). Each case of activism is therefore about a particular aim within a particular domain.

We assume that activists construct a specific meaning about the aim of their commitment, which we call their *relation to common good*. For example, activists who mobilize against radioactive material stored in the English Channel may have two specific conceptions of common good in mind. Either they perceive mass pollution as a threat to the survival of human beings and our planet, and mass pollution is viewed as a universal threat which concerns everyone. Or they perceive mass pollution as a threat to the health of the population living on contaminated coastlines, meaning that mass pollution is a collective good but one restricted to a specific group of people. Hence, while the activists' relation to common good is intimately tied to activism, the way activists perceive a common good can vary. Actually, common good constitutes the primary aim of activism, and activists develop a particular notion of common good either before joining an action or during it.

In addition to constructing specific meanings about the aim of activism, these groups also think about the particular means suitable to their action. Intervention can happen either through the enrollment of activists in politics in which state holders are challenged through a variety of tactics, or through the avoidance of politics all together. In both cases, however, activists construct a specific meaning regarding the means of their commitment, which we call their *relation to politics*. For example, activists mobilized against radioactive material stored in the English Channel may have two specific conceptions of politics in mind. Either they conceive the issue in terms of a political conflict and confront governmental passivity as a consequence, or they conceive the issue as one they can take care of, thus deciding to provide

social and health care to the contaminated population themselves. Whatever activists decide to do, they must think about the means through which they intervene in society and construct what we call a specific relation to politics accordingly.

To grasp activists' understandings of common good and politics requires conceptual work. And the concept of common good is not an easy one to define. First, common good has undergone important reformulations from ancient Greek times to the present day (Geuss 2001; Miller 2004). Second, it overlaps with other related concepts, notably "the commons," "public good" also labeled "public interest," and "collective good." As a historian of ideas, Geuss (2001) emphasizes history as "a continuing series of transformations in which the old is not simply obliterated and utterly deleted, but is taken up and preserved in a modified form" (p. xii). Said otherwise, the concept of common good, the commons, and public good overlap to a certain extent, as all possess semantic, material, and evaluative traces due to their genealogical roots. Nonetheless, Geuss highlights a major divide in the way social science and philosophy have understood common good. The concept's revision by liberal theorists turned it into a "public good" (e.g., Hobbes [1668] 1994; Locke [1660] 1959; Rawls 1971). Nowadays, we face two distinct understandings of common good: a pre-liberal definition that draws on Aristotelian thought, to which the notion of the commons is associated, and a liberal definition that draws on the concept of "public good" (Douglass 1980; Smith 1999).

The pre-liberal definition of common good relies on the idea that goods should be accessible to all members of society. Those goods can be natural (e.g., land, water, air), cultural (e.g., mathematics, laws, art), or social (e.g., peace, education, rights). And the specificity of such goods is two-fold: First, they are goods that objectively improve people's well-being. Second, all social members should be able to share them: They are indivisible. For Aristotle, common good is "a good proper to, and attainable only by the community, yet individually shared by its members" (Dupré 1993, 687). It consists "in a number of specific objectives designed to promote general human well-being—such as peace, order, prosperity, justice, and community" (Douglass 1980, 104). In Aristotelian thought, common goods are conceived as *objective goods* that enhance people's lives and benefit *all members of society*.

This Aristotelian conception clearly departs from the liberal definition of common good. And the conceptual move from "common good" to "public

good” can again be said to be twofold: First, the term “public” refers to an aggregation of private interests and in the liberal tradition, the aggregation of individuals’ interests is thought of in terms of a majority (Barry 1964; Douglass 1980; Hobbes [1668] 1994; MacIntyre 1990). The “majority” is not an all-inclusive category and departs from the pre-liberal notion of commonness: Only a majority of people benefit from the common good. Second, the notion of “good” relates to personal preferences that are subjectively defined (Douglass 1980; Murphy 2005). Public good depends on the mood and preferences of individuals; therefore, in the writings of liberal theorists, common good is a good that is *subjectively defined and shared by the majority*.

We rely on the pre-liberal definition of common good based on Aristotle’s thought in our study and follow in the wake of contemporary thinkers who urge social scientists and philosophers to depart from utilitarian notions of common good, with the aim of restoring it as an all-inclusive category and heralding its objective definition (Barry 1964; Douglass 1980; Geuss 2001; MacIntyre 1990; Smith 1999). Relying on Aristotle’s definition of common good helps us grasp what a common good truly is: a good that effectively and objectively enhances people’s lives and that all individuals can equally access. Each individual benefits, or can potentially benefit (as in the case of public schools), such indivisible goods. Yet, relying on Aristotle’s definition of common good does not imply that all activists perceive common good in this pre-liberal sense.

NIMBY groups (“Not in my backyard” groups who protest against nuclear plants in their region, for example) are a typical example of a group that defends a collective good. The individuals involved in the group do not care if this good, which is objectively dangerous for inhabitants of any region, could be implemented in another part of the country. They simply say: “Not in My Backyard.” The principle of equality toward the good—in this instance, the protection of health conditions and the viability of a given territory—is not taken into account. Activists in these groups therefore do not defend a common good but their own interests. Similarly, groups mobilized for personal interests—like the construction of a public park only for one neighborhood’s children—are not committed to a common but to a collective good where only a happy few can enjoy the green space. Again, the principle of equality is neglected. By opposition, we can imagine similar groups as committed to the development of a common good when they aim to build a green space in the neighborhood that is open to everyone.

The dimensions of common good must be distinguished before we can grasp the activist's understanding of common good empirically. The Aristotelian definition of common good relies on two analytical parts: *commonness* and *goodness* (Murphy 2005, 134). Drawing on this distinction, we will explore how activists perceive common good. First, we examine how they apprehend "commonness." We ask whether activists consider all society members as the beneficiaries of common good, or if they see the benefit as restricted to specific groups. Second, we examine how they understand "goodness." We consider how goods are apprehended in general and how this relates to the specific good they are committed to.

Three sub-dimensions are required to grasp the tricky notion of *commonness*. Commonness refers to the possibility that an entire community shares a good. The concept helps us understand how individuals relate to society, how they conceive of fellow human beings, and whether they erect boundaries outside their social spheres. The first sub-dimension, labeled *interconnectedness*, enables us to see how activists relate to society and refers to the social ties that bind people together. We therefore examine whether activists perceive individuals in society as linked and dependent on one another. With the second sub-dimension, *humanness*, we focus on the manner in which activists perceive how individuals evolve in society. Do activists make sense of others in universalist terms, ontologically, or as socially constructed (e.g., class, religion, nation)? The last sub-dimension, *inclusiveness*, delves into cognitive boundaries that individuals create between their own social circles and others. We can therefore evaluate whether divisions between social spheres are perceived or whether a shared humanity is imagined. These sub-dimensions allow us to question whether individuals rely on a communitarian or universalist conception of society (Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1994; Walzer 1997; I. M. Young 1990).

The second dimension—*goodness*—pertains to the perception and assessment of the good that objectively improves people's living conditions. For Aristotle, common good strengthens collective well-being. He points out that common good has various facets, one of them pertaining to justice (Smith 1999). Aristotle viewed injustice as a persistent feature of our societies, depriving people of their rights. Closer to our time, Gilligan (1982) argues that social problems can be seen in two different ways: through *an ethics of justice* or an *ethics of care*. The problem of poverty illustrates this distinction aptly. It can be seen as a social problem, through the lens of social justice, which considers that living under the social minima violates a



fundamental human right, or as a question of social care, whereby the poor require protection to survive. We accordingly examine whether activists perceive social problems in terms of axes of social justice or care.

Combining the perceptions of “commonness” and “goodness” pries open a conceptual space where four possible understandings of common good can be articulated, as shown in Figure 1.3. First, activists can rely on a perception of common good in terms of social justice for all. Common good is then perceived as a matter of rights and those rights pertain to all social members without restriction, leading to a *universal social justice* understanding. Second, activists can see common good as a social justice for a specific group. As with the former, common good is above all construed as a question of rights. However, those rights are restricted to a specific social group. Those activists possess a *communitarian social justice* understanding. A third possible understanding of common good is that of social care for all. Activists who view common good with this mental lens rely on a universalist perception of the beneficiaries of common good, nonetheless understood as a question of care, which we call a *universal social care* understanding. The fourth and final possible view of common good entails that an indivisible good is seen in terms of social care for a specific group, and this view can be called a *communitarian understanding of social care*.

Besides common good, the second central cognitive dimension we attend to is an activist’s relation to politics. In the political space, the central actor is the state. According to Tilly (1992, 1), states are “coercion-wielding organizations” implying that they are usually the most important and

		Commonness	
		Perception of the beneficiaries of common good	
		Universalism	Communitarianism
Goodness	Justice	<b>Universal social justice</b> Social justice for all	<b>Communitarian social justice</b> Social justice for a specific group
	Care	<b>Universal social care</b> Social care for all	<b>Communitarian social care</b> Social care for a specific group

Figure 1.3 Distinct understandings of common good

powerful actors within a given political space. However, in a democracy, multiple actors are present and try to voice their interests within a given political field by defending their position as incumbents or by contesting incumbents as challengers (Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Multiple actors with diverse interests and different hierarchical positions hence interact in a political space, the locus where ongoing conflicts are regulated and interest negotiation takes place. Consequently, an understanding of politics is about the way activists perceive the actors who manage political interests and ongoing conflicts in any given political field. Two major actors are central in the field of activism: the state and civil society. We therefore examine an activist's understanding of politics with the aid of two dimensions: the person's perception of state actors and his or her understanding of civil society actors.

In the assessment of an activist's perception of *state actors* we differentiate between two sub-dimensions. On the one hand, we consider how activists judge state actors' *accountability* for common goods, and on the other, whether this judgment lends legitimacy to state actors. The distinction is therefore one made between state actors' role and its evaluation by activists. In terms of the state actors' role with regard to the accountability for common good, one can roughly establish a continuum that comprises two extremes: accountable states that are responsible for common good, and, by contrast, containing states that are not accountable. Activists who judge state actors to be accountable for common good desire a state that intervenes and assumes responsibility for the production and maintenance of common good, as opposed to activists who favor state actors' containment and who wish for a state that promotes economic freedom and personal responsibility. In the latter view, state intervention must obviously be limited.

The second sub-dimension relates to how activists evaluate state actors. Social movement scholars have stressed the relevance of the concept of *(de-)legitimization* in this regard. Piven and Cloward (1977) have noted that protestors undergo a process of cognitive transformation. More precisely, activists do not accept the authority of rulers anymore and accordingly delegitimize state actors. Similarly, Gamson et al. (1982) have described how legitimacy is undermined when authorities act unjustly. More recently, Klandermans (2010) has found that activists who demonstrated against the war in Iraq also delegitimized state actors by displaying feelings of opposition against the general mechanisms of democracy, emitting doubts about

political efficacy, and expressing low levels of trust in their national social and political institutions. Contentious activists here delegitimize state actors. But is this the case for all activists? Moreover, do activists delegitimize state actors solely regarding the issue they are concerned with, or do they develop a more generalized form of delegitimization? While the state is a set of multiple actors, activists are likely to have it figure as a heterogeneous actor (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). State actors could either be delegitimized (or legitimized) solely for the issue activists are mobilized for or generally delegitimized (or legitimized).

Alongside their perception of state actors, activists also develop a perception of *civil society actors*. Activists channel their action through collective actors and develop a sense of this community or, at least, of the specific organization they are part of. Two different *action types* of civil society actors can be envisioned: Either there is a contentious understanding, whereby civil society actors intervene in politics to urge state actors to produce, maintain, or enlarge common goods, or the emphasis is placed on the capacity of civil society actors to substitute and minimize state intervention. In addition, the *legitimization* of civil society actors will be assessed. Piven and Cloward (1977) have stressed that activists not only undergo a process of delegitimization of the ruling authority but also come to understand organized protest as a means of changing their own situation. Gamson et al. (1982) call this process “loyalty-building to the challenger,” a process through which challengers legitimize the protest action they are involved in. It seems reasonable to suggest that activists who are not challengers legitimize the civil society actors they are part of. Because different forms of civil society actors exist—either contentious or substituting—we also take the range of legitimization into account, that is to say, we ask whether activists legitimize different types of civil society actors.

As a summary of activists’ perception of politics, Figure 1.4 crosses activists’ perception of state and civil society actors, resulting in a conceptual space with four possible ideal types. Starting at the upper left corner, individuals could understand politics as a field of *intervention for accountability*. For them, state actors are accountable for common good and are delegitimized whenever they do not fulfill their responsibility. In addition, the role of civil society actors is to intervene in political decision making, which is a legitimized role. Thus, they perceive politics as a field of political intervention in which state accountability can be increased. In the lower left corner are shown activists who perceive state actors as accountable for common good.

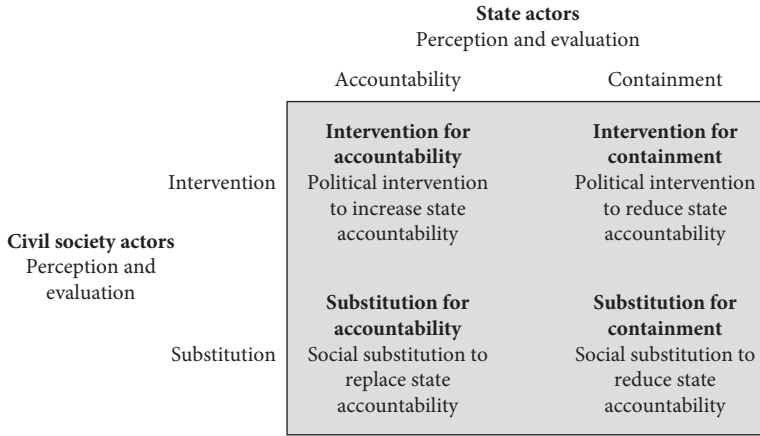


Figure 1.4 Distinct understandings of politics

By contrast to the first category, they legitimize civil society actors who substitute state actors. Having lost faith in state actors, they perceive politics as a field of *substitution for accountability*. Activists with such a worldview perceive politics as a social substitution to replace state accountability. Turning our attention to the right side of this conceptual space, we have individuals for whom state actors are not accountable for common good. They legitimize state actors’ containment and want civil society actors to intervene in politics to advocate less state intervention. They perceive politics as a field of *intervention for containment*. Politics then becomes a field of political intervention where the aim is to reduce state accountability. Finally, individuals who perceive politics as a field of *substitution for containment* also desire a weak state. In order to accomplish this, they do not want civil society actors to intervene in politics but would rather see them substitute the state actors’ intervention.

The relation to common good and politics not only represents the aims and means of activism, but it also enables us to assess how activists conceive of *political citizenship*. These understandings are important because they represent democratic cultures imagined in activists’ minds which are transformed through interactions in commitment communities, which are experienced by activists, and which enter the public sphere through collective action. Simply put, activists disseminate their notion of political citizenship within and across society through their actions. Democracies are living entities that can be strengthened or weakened in many ways, and one

way they are shaped is through civic participation, in and beyond institutional politics. Democratization and de-democratization are therefore ongoing (and sometimes parallel) processes (Tilly 2007). We question what types of democratic cultures activists—committed to contentious politics, volunteering, or unionism—have in mind. At least theoretically, activism is a form of action that allows ordinary citizens to be active in society in the promotion or strengthening of common goods. To a certain extent, activism partakes in the model of participative democracy which relies on politically active citizens who get involved beyond electoral politics (Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). Can activists all be characterized as “strong citizens” concerned by both common good and politics?<sup>4</sup> In other words, do all activists in this study place common good before their private interests, deliberate, and take part in politics?

To understand how these democratic cultures play out in the activist’s mind, we consider how they relate to the question of political citizenship. We examine whether activists are concerned by the aims and means of activism, that is to say, by common good and politics. The first dimension is an activist’s *concern for common good* where we consider whether activists are citizens who adjust their own life plans to the exigencies of a shared world. However, as all activists already defend a specific type of common good through their commitment, we assess the range of their concern to evaluate their concern for common good. We underscore whether activists are concerned by multiple common goods, or rely only on a limited concern.

The second dimension addresses whether activists are *concerned by politics*. Individuals who are concerned by politics consider politics as enacted by state actors but also by citizens. This entails citizens being politically vigilant and participative. Rather than rely on a representative idea of democracy, they prefer participatory institutions that allow them to fully partake in the democratic process. Accordingly, we consider whether activists are politically vigilant by being watchdogs who monitor political elites and events, as well as whether they are willing to participate beyond institutional politics and challenge state authorities whenever necessary. We therefore scrutinize whether activists express a willingness to control state action, to monitor governmental actors when they do not fulfill their roles, and to enter the political sphere by means of contentious action.

<sup>4</sup> The term “strong citizen” developed in this book is one inspired by the work of Barber (1984) and his notion of “strong democracy.”

Figure 1.5 combines the two dimensions of strong citizenship—the concern for common good and politics—into a conceptual space with four possible combinations. Activists who are concerned by common good and politics are *strong citizens*. They are concerned by multiple types of common good and are politically vigilant, ready to partake in contentious politics. They are citizens who are aware of the importance of common goods such as migrants’ and minorities’ rights or ecological issues, and prioritize such goods that objectively improve people’s living conditions. *Social citizens* also place multiple common goods before their private interests. But by contrast with strong citizens, they are not concerned by politics and are therefore not concerned with the importance of political vigilance and participation in political life. Rather, they trust the government and are confident that a blend of state, civil, and economic actors can work together to provide common goods. *Resistant citizens*, the third ideal type, are concerned by politics but not by common good. These individuals are vigilant and participate in politics but only to promote a collective good pertaining to a specific group of the population. Finally, *weak citizens* are concerned neither by multiple common goods nor by politics. According to these two dimensions, four different democratic cultures are conceivable. Do activists of the commitment communities examined in this book all share a similar type of political citizenship? Or do different types of political citizenship exist, thus enabling the dissemination of various democratic cultures through collective action, and, by extension, contribute to democratization processes in different ways? We answer these questions in the empirical part of this book.

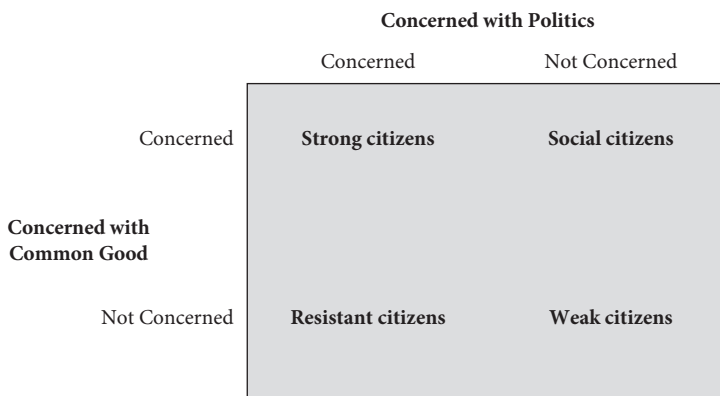


Figure 1.5 Distinct understandings of political citizenship

## Comparing Commitment Communities

We have specified the cognitive dimensions at work behind the performance and sustainment of activism. In Chapter 2, we elaborate on how broad understandings of common good and politics set an activist's intentionality. Before doing so, we discuss methodological points. For this study, we surveyed and interviewed activists at one point in time.<sup>5</sup> We used the member lists of five distinct organizations to identify them, a strategy that has implications for the *scope of our study*. All the activists in this study are members of at least one organization. While one could imagine that activists may work on their own or participate at protest events without being a member of a group, the activists studied here are all involved in more or less formally organized collective groups. They are engaged in collective action and try to achieve a common objective. We further divide this type of activist into two broad categories: active and passive members. Passive members invest money only while active members invest time. The distinction between these two types is crucial to our research, as passive members lack opportunities to enter into direct communicational interactions with fellow activists. Consequently, we wondered whether a similar process of mind synchronization could be observed among passive members of a particular commitment community. And if this is indeed the case, how is it achieved if passive members do not directly interact with other members?

Surveying and interviewing activists during action only once further oriented our study. The research design we opted for is appropriate to the examination of how an activist's mind is synchronized at a specific point in time and highlights the impact of meaningful interactions. However, this means that we are not arguing that an activist's mind allows the individual to join collective endeavors. Rather, we argue that the minds of such individuals enable them *to be committed and to sustain* their commitment. We do not want to suggest that causality exists between activists' understandings and their engagement in contentious politics, unionism, or volunteering action as we simply do not have the appropriate data to back such a claim. During the long interviews we had with activists, most of them recounted their life stories and the narratives behind their commitment, referring to past events, experiences, and thoughts. As attractive as such past accounts

<sup>5</sup> All data used in this study stem from the research project "Why Stand Up for Others?" financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Nr. 100017-122246).

can seem, we cannot make use of them to subject to scrutiny a person's entrance into activism. Retrospective accounts do not provide appropriate data to analyze this process. As we all know, we talk about our past with the lens of the present. We reconstruct it and reshape the meaning of events (e.g., Schacter 1995). Consequently, without a longitudinal research design, we do not know the extent to which the activist's mind is transformed after commitment has begun. Similarly, we are unable to highlight whether particular cognitions are necessary for a person to engage in activism.

Hence, we examine the understandings of activists who have already committed to varied causes. *Comparison* is accordingly a crucial element in our study. We compare the minds of activists involved in contentious politics with those of ordinary people who devote their time to institutional and volunteering action. Why opt for such a comparative analysis? As previously highlighted, we suppose that activists who enjoy conversational interactions in their commitment community relate specifically to their social and political environment, that is to say, to common good and politics. We therefore postulate that participants engaged in a specific commitment site should possess a specific mindset. A comparison is necessary to put this conjecture to the test.

But why do we compare distinct forms of activism? Social science has become more specialized and, some might say, fragmented into sub-fields that fail to communicate with one another. Social movement studies are no exception. In the last thirty years, scholarship in the field has witnessed an extraordinary growth but has increasingly developed into an enclave (McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012; Walder 2009). Protest lies at the center of the research cosmos. Although we acknowledge that this focus enlarges our knowledge of social movements, it also presents important drawbacks. One major problem of this autocentric research practice is the presumption that this form of activism is specific and distinct from other types of commitment.<sup>6</sup> We are actually unable to support or discredit this conjecture as long as we do not compare contentious participation with other forms of political and civic commitments systematically.

In this book, we focus on the mental world of activists. Comparing three distinct (and important) forms of civic commitment in Western democracies,

<sup>6</sup> The neglect of other players in contentious games and the overestimation of the presence of social movements in the political arena are further shortcomings of this autocentric research practice (McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012).



we investigate whether the mental world of social movement activists is specific enough to depart from that of unionists and volunteers. We question whether the understandings of common good and politics of contentious activists are particular, setting a specific intentionality that orients them toward contentious politics rather than other forms of activism. Moving away from the centric view of social movements studies and toward a comparison of activists mobilized in contentious politics, unionism, and volunteering action, our research design aims to produce two types of comparison: within a community, and between communities.

We therefore chose to compare activists across five separate organizations. Three groups of activists are committed to contentious politics: *Greenpeace*, *Solidarity across Borders*, which defends migrants' rights, and the *Society for Threatened Peoples* which promotes human rights, and the rights of autochthonous populations in particular. This comparative strategy enabled us to pay attention to variations within a commitment community. The second comparative perspective, between communities, lies in our study of activists mobilized for *Unia*, the most important syndicate in Switzerland, in charge of the promotion of labor rights in the private sector, and *Caritas* volunteers, who support the poor. The selection of these five cases was directly related to the size and importance of these organizations. They have enough members to carry out a survey and, due to their size and their nationwide scope, also incorporate a representative character for the particular commitment communities under scrutiny.

However, forms of activism—contentious politics, unionism, and volunteering—do not overlap with the notion of commitment community. Indeed, various commitment communities exist in contentious politics, and this remains true for unionism and volunteering action, too. For example, people committed in the post-industrial movement do not evolve in the same contentious community as skinheads do. For these two groups, there is no overlap in their network of commitment and their network of meanings. The activists studied here are hence not only committed to distinct forms of activism but act in distinct communities as well. *Greenpeace*, *Solidarity across Borders* (SAB), and the *Society for Threatened Peoples* (STP) are all protest actors who operate in the same contentious community. They are part of the huge protest network that emerged in the sixties in Western democracies, under the banner of the post-industrial or the left-libertarian movement (Della Porta and Rucht 1995; Jasper 1997). As these activists are mainly

engaged in the defense of moral issues (Jasper 1997), we labeled this network of collective actors *the moral voicing community*.

Comparing activists within this community allowed us to question the extent to which they rely on shared understandings of common good and politics. While Greenpeace, SAB, and STP activists belong to the same commitment community, they are engaged in struggles for distinct moral causes, and the nature of the political challenge they are confronted with varies: Their concern is modulated by the different forms of common good they pursue and the variety of state actors that regulate them. Different political constellations hence arise. Here, we compared two mainstream or consensual causes (environmental protection and the rights of minorities) with a highly challenging political issue (migrants' rights). This comparison sought to question whether moral voicing activists perceive common good and politics through the same lenses and whether conversational interactions within this community shape a specific contentious mind.

*Greenpeace* activists are committed to environmental protection. With more than 150,000 members, they form one of the biggest social movement organizations in Switzerland and are mobilized for one of the most consensual protest issues in the country. Even when it comes to energy policies, arguably the most challenging sub-field within environmental politics nowadays, the Swiss authorities support alternative energy forms and have rejected a proposal to construct new nuclear plants (Swiss Federal Office of Energy 2014). Thus, state actors are supportive of challenging actors when it comes to environmental protection (or at least more so than in other domains).<sup>7</sup> Activists who engage in this kind of protest action are therefore involved in a mainstream cause that reduces the risk of political conflicts with state actors and the general public.<sup>8</sup>

Individuals committed to the *Society for Threatened Peoples* in the human rights sector are similarly positioned. These activists provide social and political support to persecuted minorities worldwide. Given the prominent place of the Swiss humanitarian tradition within the public discourse (Fanzun 2003), it is unsurprising to observe that activists of the Society

<sup>7</sup> Evidence from a public opinion survey shows that a majority of the Swiss population is rather anxious about environmental problems in general (more than 70 percent) and more than half of them think that no cause is more important (Stähli et al. 2014).

<sup>8</sup> More information about the organizational characteristics and history of all organizations of this study can be found in the Appendix A.1.

for Threatened Peoples are mobilized on a mainstream issue that is usually supported by the public and state actors. Moreover, activists of the Society for Threatened Peoples challenge Swiss state actors less than they do those of other countries. Consequently, activists who join the Society for Threatened Peoples mobilize for a mainstream issue that involves low levels of political conflict, like those Greenpeace activists face.

*Solidarity across Borders* is the third organization in the moral voicing community. It is the umbrella organization in Switzerland for the defense of migrants' rights, a field otherwise composed of small groups active in their respective regions. People who defend migrants' rights are mobilized in one of the most challenging protest fields in the contemporary Swiss context (Giugni and Passy 2004). Over the last decade, the rights of migrants were repeatedly reduced and the only political party that places migration issues on the political agenda is situated at the right of the political spectrum and is the strongest party in the country in terms of constituency. In addition, public opinion on the matter is harsh.<sup>9</sup> These factors ensure that the position of defenders of migrants' rights with regard to the state and public opinion is far more challenging than is the case for activists of the two other organizations.

Comparing three organizations within the same community that vary with regard to the common good at stake, and the level of political challenge faced, offered a prime opportunity to test whether these differences have a bearing on an activist's relation to common good and politics. For example, activists who defend migrants' rights may have developed a stronger political opposition and challenging relation to state actors. Or Greenpeace activists engaged in environmental protection may entertain other relations to common good than those of activists who defend particular social groups. The challenging question here was whether the moral voicing community shares a similar perception of common good and politics.

After comparing activists within a community, we compared different communities with each other. Caritas is a volunteering organization of the so-called third sector (Anheier and Seibel 1990; DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). In Switzerland, the sector is split into secular groups having no relevant ties to confessional actors, and organizations that are either embedded in, or close to, religious actors. Volunteering actors therefore evolve in two

<sup>9</sup> More than half of the Swiss population thinks that immigration numbers from former Yugoslavia and Albania are too high and that young immigrants contribute to increased levels of violence and vandalism in the country (Selects 2011).

distinct communities. Caritas's history is one tied to Catholicism and other Christian aid organizations.<sup>10</sup> Caritas activists are hence not representative of all types of organizations included in the third sector but rather of a specific case in terms of volunteerism in Switzerland. The organization's volunteers evolve in a commitment site we have labeled *the Christian aid community*, which departs substantially from the moral voicing community. It is an aid community because it provides help to individuals who face life difficulties. Within the Swiss third sector, Caritas belongs to the group of non-profit organizations that endorse the principle of subsidiarity, which means that they carry out state actors' responsibilities and are supported by the state (Salamon 1981). This can therefore hardly be called a challenging cause. We included activists from the organization's three regional branches: Caritas Geneva, Luzern, and St. Gallen.<sup>11</sup> It is important to distinguish these activists from activists of the better-known Caritas Switzerland because they are committed to different ends. Indeed, while activists in Caritas Switzerland are engaged in international humanitarian aid, the Caritas activists in this study provide help to the poor locally. They offer concrete social and legal support, give emergency relief, assist with the integration of problematic youth, provide companionship for the sick and people in mourning, and organize leisure activities for the elderly (Caritas Geneva 2014).

In addition to the moral voicing and Christian aid communities, we included the *radical workers' rights community* represented by the activists of Unia. Comprising around 200,000 members, Unia is the largest union in Switzerland specialized in the defense of working conditions and labor rights in the Swiss private sector. In particular, they negotiate collective labor agreements, strengthen rights of employees, and take a political stand for a more sustainable model of social security (Unia 2015). Unia was founded in 2004 after a merger of the unions of engineers and watchmakers, construction and industrial workers, and transport and foodstuff workers (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008). This composition remains visible in Unia's membership base: 21 percent from craft, 29 percent from construction, 48 percent from industries, and 12 percent from the service sector. Unia is composed mostly of blue-collar workers from the private sector, but the union is expanding its membership base to include white-collar workers.

<sup>10</sup> Such as the organizations of the Protestant Social Centers, the Emaüs or Bread for All.

<sup>11</sup> We relied on these three regional sections of Caritas because they work on similar issues, ensured a sufficient number of active members, and allowed an assessment of whether there are differences between German- and French-speaking activists of the same organization.

While Unia is the largest union in Switzerland, it is not the only one, and therefore the minds of their activists do not necessarily encompass the views of all Swiss union members. Although many mergers took place over the last twenty years, the union landscape remains fragmented. A sectorial division exists between the left-wing organizations and the more moderate unions with a Christian background. Unia belongs to the radical workers' rights community, a markedly leftist syndicate engaged in the defense of employees in the private sector.

As far as Unia's relation to politics is concerned, we can safely assume that Swiss state actors support unionists far less than they do Caritas. However, in contrast to challengers from the moral voicing community, they are not complete outsiders either, relying on access to political decision making through tripartite institutions. Yet unions are in a weak position due to the specificities of Swiss corporatism. They face a powerful business community and must bargain for collective labor agreements at the level of each industry and company (Calmfors and Drifill 1988; Fluder and Hotz-Hart 1998; Kriesi and Trechsel 2008). As with the defenders of migrants' rights, Unia activists are committed to a challenging political issue. They defend their defiant claims with both contentious politics strategies (e.g., petitioning, sit-in, street demonstrations) and institutional means (e.g., negotiation with their economic partners and state actors) in order to stand a chance in tripartite negotiations.

The comparison between the moral voicing, radical workers voicing,<sup>12</sup> and Christian aid communities allowed us to investigate whether activists who operate in distinct commitment sites possess *distinct minds*. Do those activists perceive common good and politics differently? Do they rely on distinct cognitive paths that set their intentionality to perform joint action, and to sustain it? Do they have similar understandings of political citizenship in mind? This comparison allowed us to highlight the plurality of an activist's mind. However, the research design did not allow us to cover the whole spectrum of activism, or politics, in Switzerland. Activists studied here remain mainly of a leftist bent. But our aim was not to be representative of the variety of activists' minds that exist in Switzerland. Rather, we sought to underscore the cognitive-relational process that leads activists to commit and sustain their commitment in collective endeavors.

<sup>12</sup> With voicing, we want to stress that this group speak up for workers' rights.

## Swiss Understandings of Common Good and Politics

In order to limit the variation of contextual influences, the comparison of these three communities is located in one single national context: Switzerland. Yet collective understandings exist within a nation and have a bearing on activists' mindscapes. We therefore briefly outline in this section the understandings of common good and politics available to activists living in Switzerland through interactions that occur within the national context. While we expect activists to depart from these worldviews and to construct specific shared meanings within their commitment communities, some common features may exist, as activists evolve in a particular national context in which specific cultural scripts circulate.

When it comes to the relation to politics, *Swiss democracy and political authorities in particular are deemed trustworthy*. Switzerland is a small central European direct democracy. The Swiss population generally displays high levels of political trust compared to other European countries (Bauer, Freitag, and Sciarini 2013).<sup>13</sup> This is rather exceptional given global political and economic crises. However, four reasons might explain why the Swiss maintain relatively high levels of trust in national political authorities. First, direct democratic institutions offer repeated opportunities to influence political decision making (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008). As we will see, activists frequently mention this point in their narratives: Most perceive direct democracy as a major advantage of the Swiss political system. Second, the nature of Swiss federalism weakens the notion of the nation-state, which allows political implementation to be adapted regionally (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008). This further results in an acute proximity regarding political issues and politicians. Indeed, it can be said that structures of direct democracy and federal institutions permit the population to evolve in a rather open and accessible state. A third reason for high levels of political trust is

<sup>13</sup> The most recent instance of the European Social Survey (ESS Round 7, 2014) confirms results obtained by Bauer, Freitag, and Sciarini (2013), who based their findings on the ESS data from 2010 (Round 5). Based on a score of 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust), Switzerland (6.2) figures among the European countries that place the most trust in their national parliament together with Scandinavian countries (Sweden 6.2, Norway 6.7, Denmark 5.7). Other European countries (Central Europe: Germany 5.0, France 4.0, Austria 4.8; United Kingdom 4.4. Southern Europe: Spain 3.7; Portugal 3.2. Eastern Europe: Czech Republic 3.9, Hungary 3.9, Poland 2.8) score considerably lower. The averages were weighted by post-stratification and population size weights. While difficult to compare, the population of the United States also shows low trust levels in their Congress. According to World Values Survey data (2011, Round 6), only a little more than 20 percent claim to be very or somewhat confident in Congress (Dalton 2017).

the relatively low levels of perceived corruption. In that regard, Switzerland scores fifth on the corruption perceptions index compiled by Transparency International.<sup>14</sup> Finally, political trust can be understood as related to the political performance of governments (Mishler and Rose 2001). Compared with other Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries, Switzerland scored high on indicators for economic performance, such as unemployment rates, inflation rates, and the general government debt (Schmidt 2014).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the opportunities to delegitimize state actors remain rare. The president of the Federal Council in 2015, Simonetta Sommaruga, clearly expressed as much in an interview:<sup>16</sup> “For me, Switzerland is tantamount with reliability. . . . I am proud of our direct democratic political system, of the fact that four times a year, citizens can have their say on important aspects of our country’s future.”

In addition to relatively high levels of trust in state actors, a strong *opposition to state intervention* is another important perception broadly apparent in the Swiss national context. Swiss federalism means that the notion of a centralized state remains rather weak. However, this does not necessarily mean

<sup>14</sup> The corruption perceptions index established by Transparency International (2016) considers Switzerland to be a very clean country. Based on a score of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), Switzerland (86) scored fifth, neighbored by Scandinavian countries (Denmark 90, Finland 89, Sweden 88, and Norway 85) and New Zealand (90). The variation in other European countries is quite high (Central Europe: Germany 81, France 69, Austria 79; United Kingdom 81. Southern Europe: Spain 58, Portugal 62. Eastern Europe: Czech Republic 55, Hungary 48, Poland 62). While Canada also obtained a high score (82), the United States (74) scored somewhat lower.

<sup>15</sup> The OECD data (2016) showed that Switzerland presented an unemployment rate of 4.9 percent. In international comparison, this is low when compared to Scandinavian countries (Sweden 7.0 percent; Norway 4.7 percent; Finland 8.8 percent; Denmark 6.2 percent), similar to other central European countries (Germany 4.1 percent; Austria 6.0 percent; United Kingdom 4.8 percent) with France figuring as an exception (France 10.1 percent). Countries of Southern Europe showed higher unemployment rates (Spain 19.6 percent; Portugal 11.2 percent) and the rates in Eastern Europe were similar to rates in Switzerland (Poland 6.2 percent; Czech Republic 4.0 percent; Hungary 5.1 percent). Finally, the United States showed the same unemployment rate as Switzerland (4.9 percent).

We also use OECD data to compare inflation rates (measured by consumer price index). In 2016, Switzerland had a very low inflation rate (−0.4 percent). This seems to have been a common feature across Europe (Scandinavian countries: Sweden 1.0 percent; Norway 3.5 percent; Finland 0.4 percent; Denmark 0.3 percent. Central Europe: United Kingdom 0.7 percent; Germany 0.5 percent; Austria 0.9 percent; France 0.2 percent. Southern Europe: Spain −0.2 percent; Portugal 0.6 percent. Eastern Europe: Poland −0.7 percent; Czech Republic 0.7 percent; Hungary 0.4 percent), as well as in the United States (1.3 percent).

Finally, according to OECD data, Switzerland has a very low general government debt (measured as a percentage of its GDP) of 45 percent. Only half of the Scandinavian countries come close to this percentage (Sweden 60 percent; Norway 43 percent; Finland 76 percent; Denmark 53 percent). The other European countries (Central Europe: United Kingdom 123 percent; Germany 78 percent; Austria 101 percent; France 120 percent. Southern Europe: Spain 117 percent; Portugal 146 percent. Eastern Europe: Poland 72 percent; Czech Republic 54 percent; Hungary 97 percent), as well as the United States (128 percent) showed substantially higher general governmental debt.

<sup>16</sup> Published in *Le Temps* on October 3, 2015. Translation ours.



that cantonal political actors are strong. They operate with few administrative resources, hardly intervene, and rely on civil society actors when possible. In fact, Switzerland has been described as a “coordinated economy in which policy consultation has played an important role in the elaboration of public policies” (Afonso 2010). Switzerland can therefore be said to belong to the group of nations characterized by democratic corporatism (Katzenstein 1985). However, what distinguishes the country from typical forms of corporatism is the fragmentation of political consultation between different policy sectors and the veto power conferred by direct democracy (Afonso 2010; Mach 2006). Civil society actors, and employers’ associations in particular, therefore play an important part in political decision making and reduce the capacity for unilateral state intervention. A consequence of this corporatist setting is the organizing principle of subsidiarity, characterized by a strong civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are viewed as crucial actors when it comes to the production and maintenance of the common good. An example of this subsidiarity principle is the domain of HIV prevention. Civil society organizations have played a tremendous role in fighting the epidemic and even managed to shift their position within this political field—from challenger outside the political regime to subsidized actor responsible for policy implementation (Bütschi and Cattacin 1994; Kübler 2001). Regarding activists’ understanding of politics, few cultural resources are available for an accountable state. By contrast, there is a firm belief in substitution, meaning that the conception of civil society actors as capable of solving social problems without state intervention remains strong.<sup>17</sup>

Turning to the relation to common good, the Swiss population generally has a *communitarian view of society*. We could even say that a communitarian identity exists, pertaining both to cultural differences within the

<sup>17</sup> To assess the level of support for state accountability, we considered the ratio of people who “strongly agree” that the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels (one out of five categories: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree). The Swiss population does not lean toward an interventionist state with regard to income distribution. Only 18 percent strongly agree that the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels. The Swiss share this perception with the populations in Scandinavian countries (Sweden 20 percent; Norway 18 percent; Denmark 8 percent). By contrast, the populations of other European countries favor a more interventionist state (Central Europe: United Kingdom 20 percent; Germany 22 percent; Austria 39 percent; France 35 percent. Southern Europe: Spain 50 percent; Portugal 44 percent. Eastern Europe: Poland 39 percent; Czech Republic 23 percent; Hungary 49 percent) Source: European Social Survey (ESS Round 7, 2014) weighted by post-stratification and population size weights. To compare with the United States, we looked at an indicator based on a score of 1 (government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for) to 10 (people should take more responsibility to provide for themselves). The result was an average of 6.4. Source: World Values Survey (Round 6, 2011).



country and beyond. Within the country, the canton constitutes an important identity factor. Cantonal identities were historically constructed around religion and not, as one might assume, around language (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008). Indeed, the establishment of Swiss federalism was a compromise between Catholic and Protestant cantons and as such can be seen as a product of nation building, an attempt to “transcend class and linguistic boundaries” (Wimmer 2002, 246). This process was only possible through a transfer of power to the cantons. With secularization, the relation between religion and cantonal identities has diminished. Nevertheless, the canton remains a strong cultural identifier “to a community with a common culture and a common origin” (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008, 11). Moreover, a strong national identity is grafted onto the communitarian view of cantonal difference, and a number of scholars have demonstrated that Swiss nationalism is based on a communitarian understanding of citizenship (Eugster and Strijbis 2011; Giugni and Passy 2004; Koopmans et al. 2005). Civic institutions are regulated by a restrictive and assimilationist access to the nation, an example of which is the initiative against mass immigration approved in 2014, heavily supported by nationalist arguments. Hence, there is largely a communitarian understanding of society within the country.

These elements stress how the minds of Swiss activists can be shaped by the national context, which various interactions in the Swiss context enable them to integrate. Indeed, they surface in their narratives as understandings that are both to be appropriated and challenged. To what extent do activists’ understandings adapt to the national context they evolve in? Do activists also trust state authorities, oppose state intervention, and hold a communitarian view of society? Or does their participation in commitment communities influence their minds toward acceptance of other understandings of common good and politics? Will specific mindsets accordingly emerge? We begin answering these questions in Chapter 3. But we need to explain how we went about studying activists’ minds beforehand.

### **Studying Activists’ Minds**

Our comparative research design depends on the study of activists in action through *interviews and surveys*. Such a strategy follows the logic of a convergent mixed methods design with a QUAL/QUANT approach involving quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis at similar times and

with the same priority (Creswell 2015; Morgan 1998; Morse 1991). Why choose these types of data collection? Why are interviews and surveys more appropriate than ethnography doubled by participant observation? While an ethnographic approach would be adequate for studying activists in action and over time, this technique overlooks the most common and most invisible of activists: passive members. In Greenpeace, for example, 99.7 percent of members are passive. And even Solidarity across Borders, the organization with the largest share of active members in our study, includes 82 percent passive members. A better understanding of the commitment processes of passive members was needed given that they represent such a huge share of all activists and that their support guarantees the organizations' financial survival. Despite this, they remain neglected in the literature. Here, we systematically examined, in our analysis of both the interview and survey data, whether our argument applies to passive members within commitment communities. That said, the examination of passive members was not the only reason we opted for interviews and survey data.

The main reason is that the combination of their intrinsic strengths enabled us to tackle our two main aims: namely, to examine the process of mind synchronization during action, and to assess activists' understanding of common good, politics, and political citizenship. *Survey data* present two key advantages. On the one hand, they allow for the collection of representative samples of case studies and let us draw inferences on the populations under study. Simply put, quantitative data enable generalization. On the other hand, survey data with standardized questions permit a systematic comparison between activists of different organizations and the wider population. This allows us to assess whether activists entertain a specific relation to common good and politics.

Indicators do what they are meant to do: They indicate. Even a battery of indicators prevents us from comprehending the complexity of an individual's understandings in detail. For example, we measured an activist's relation to state actors by two indicators: the level of trust, and the perceived willingness of state actors to improve on a given common good. While these two indicators are certainly valid and cover a substantial part of the concept, they do not capture the entire spectrum of meanings individuals construct. It is also difficult to reveal cognitive paths with quantitative measures. Survey data are simply insufficient to reveal the full complexity of the human mind, and *interview material* is hence necessary to gain a fuller grasp of activists' meanings (Monroe 1996). We therefore conducted in-depth interviews in

a conversational format with activists from the five groups. These data were useful for three research aims. First, they provided a deeper view of the activist's understandings of common good and politics. Second, they allowed us to sort out the cognitive mechanisms that link an activist's understanding to that person's intentionality. In other words, they highlight the cognitive paths that let activists elaborate the cognitive components that orient their action. Finally, narratives allowed us to home in on the conversational interactions in a commitment community. If networks are indeed "islands of meanings," we needed to examine how talk and ties shape activists' minds in detail. Narratives fulfill these purposes. Interview and survey data hence crucially complement one another.

Despite these strengths, interviews are not without their difficulties when the aim is to produce a deeper understanding of activists' cognitions. Indeed, the information provided may be biased through several mechanisms. First, an interview is a speech act (Searle 1969): a particular performance within a specific context. In our case, the activists' thinking, their understandings, is biased through language and through the particular context of the interview setting in which the activist has to recount his or her life to an academic. Second, the data we collected may only reflect the organizational frames and not the individual's own thinking. Finally, we risked not accessing participants' deeper understanding and remaining with superficial perceptions. These difficulties necessitated the development and execution of an interview technique that comprises several measures that guard against such pitfalls. The outcome is the collection of information pertaining to the manner in which activists perceive the world and the cognitive dimensions that matter to their activism.

We conducted two interview sessions with each interviewee. Each interview session lasted around two hours, adding to a total of four hours with each interviewee. For the participant's convenience, both interviews were conducted at his or her home. We also made sure that the interviewee was alone to avoid third party influence. We tried to instill a convivial and intimate atmosphere in which the interviewee felt comfortable sharing deep understandings. We always began with a positive verbal and non-verbal attitude, demonstrating our interest in the participants as individuals, ready to listen to their personal history without judging their perceptions. At the same time, we were professional, explaining our affiliation to the university and informing them about our procedure for ensuring anonymity for all respondents. As both authors conducted half of the interviews, it is possible

that differences in the interviewer's age and sex might have led to slight variations in respondents' narratives.<sup>18</sup> However, we had established guidelines that helped to standardize our interviews.<sup>19</sup>

Inspired by the framework of a psychoanalytical interview (Kvale 1999; Lane 1972), both interviews were open conversations with minimal intervention on the interviewer's behalf. The main task of the first interview was to produce a *life history* (Bertaux 1997; Denzin 1989) and activists narrated their lives in relation to their political commitment. The instruction given conformed to the genre of life history: "In this first meeting, I would like to get to know you and your personal history. Who are you? Where are you from? What led you to your commitment?" The interviews were then open conversations and did not impose questions or suggest answers.<sup>20</sup> Most activists had enough time to tell their stories as they chose, and we steered the conversation back on course only if the response deviated too far from our main questions. When we intervened, it was using the words of the interviewee and with the insistence that we were interested in their words. For example, activists repeatedly told us that they viewed institutional politics as useless. We then asked: "For you, what do you mean when you say that politics is useless?" Three main research questions drove the first interview: How do activists make sense of the world around them? Do the cognitive dimensions theoretically postulated emerge without the interviewer's intervention? And, do other cognitive dimensions emerge? The most impressive aspect of the first interview was that all activists talked extensively about their relation to common good and politics without any prompts on our behalf.

The second interview was an *in-depth interview* that took place about a week after the first one. It was somewhat more structured with two main purposes. It allowed us to elaborate on points barely touched on during the first interview, such as matters we wanted to clarify, and life periods and understandings the interviewee scarcely talked about. We always picked up the words of the interviewees and asked them to provide examples. For instance: "During our last interview, you said that common goods are important to you. Can you give an example for this? What type of common good is of particular importance to you and why?" The second aim was to ask

<sup>18</sup> All the interviews (as well as the collection of the survey data) were done by the two authors. This certainly helped a lot to standardize the collection as well as the analysis of these data.

<sup>19</sup> The interview guideline is attached in Appendix A.2.

<sup>20</sup> All the interviews were conducted in French because both authors are not fluent in German. In addition, the quantitative data suggest that there are no systematic differences between the two language regions.

open-ended questions related to the research, centering on the participants' understandings of common good, politics, and their social interactions. We therefore attempted to delve deeper into their minds and collect useful information for the analysis. Regularly, the interviewee also wanted to address topics they had forgotten to discuss in the first interview. Often, the interviewees had reflected on the first session during the following week and gave us information that provided a more refined understanding of their minds.

To select individuals for interview, we chose our cases *ex-ante* following a content analysis strategy. The logic behind case selection was to achieve heterogeneity within our target population. Therefore, within commitment communities we *selected activists* by applying what Patton (2001) called a "maximum variation strategy" based on available information (gender, age, profession, and commitment intensity) prior to contacting the interviewees. We thus opted for a systematic sample strategy to select the activists interviewed, and this selection was carried out before data analysis. This strategy should not be confounded with a theoretical sampling using an iterative approach as it is done in the grounded theory tradition moving back and forth between sampling and analyzing data and where the analytical findings inform further sampling choices until saturation as explained below (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Kuzel 1999; Miles and Huberman 1994; Patton 2001).

With a theoretically inspired strategy such as this one, we aimed to interview four passive and four active members per organization, resulting in large sample of eight interviews per organization, or *forty interviews in total*. Indeed, we ended up with forty interviews, but these were distributed slightly differently. We conducted ten interviews with activists from Solidarity across Borders because we carried out two pre-tests to evaluate our interviewing techniques and guideline. Unfortunately, we only managed six interviews with activists from the radical workers' community. Convincing Unia members to do an interview was extremely difficult. The main reason for this is probably the challenging nature of their activism, as their professional lives are at stake: they must conceal their commitment out of fear of losing their jobs. In addition, the majority of unionists work full-time in demanding sectors like construction work, which meant they were reluctant to consent to four-hour long interviews. Despite this small asymmetry, we ended up with a sufficient number of interviews.

As we interviewed all forty activists twice for about two hours for one interview, we ended up with roughly 160 hours of interview material.

Conducting forty interviews was a manageable amount for the two of us to handle.<sup>21</sup> More important, we determined the number to be sufficient. The aim of this large selection was to make sure that we had enough cases and variation in our qualitative sample. To stress the existence of synchronized minds within a specific commitment community, we opted for variation to better examine this hypothesis. Using variation as the criteria for selecting activists in our sample (see our discussion above), we strategically relied on a conservative research approach. If, with this strategy, we found that the interviewees shared similar understandings, it would mean that they really do synchronize their views to perform joint action. In addition, we had to keep in mind that the main feature of interviews is to produce a high quantity of information for a small number of participants. Yet the risk with a small number of interviews is, of course, that one selects only particular cases, so-called outliers. As we had survey data to test whether we were examining a general pattern or outliers in our interview cases, we did not run this risk.

However, this large body was not adapted to allow a fine-grained interpretative analysis. The study's *feasibility* was challenged (we should keep in mind that we also had a huge set of quantitative data to analyze). Thus, once conducted, we transcribed all the interviews and carried out a pre-analysis of the entire data set. We carefully read all interview transcripts and started to identify activists' understandings of common good, politics, and citizenship. The next step was then to proceed to a deeper and detailed analysis we describe below. To analyze one case, or four hours of interviews, took about two weeks. To keep this type of meticulous analysis feasible we reduced our body of interviews.

We made use of a clear *strategy to reduce the number of interviews*: variation. This strategy was aimed at avoiding the analysis of similar cases and to ensure the heterogeneity of our target population. We could rely on this selection strategy for two reasons. First, with the pre-analysis of our data we had a clear idea of the content of each interview and how the variety of activists interviewed perceive common good, politics, and citizenship. Second, we selected our interviews in a deductive way. Our work is not situated within a grounded theory logic of theory-building but in a deductive logic where each choice is inspired theoretically. Therefore, both our sampling strategy based on theory and empirical findings from our pre-analysis guided our selection

<sup>21</sup> To maximize the standardization of the interviews, the two authors conducted (and analyzed) all of the interviews.

of the cases for a fine-grained interpretative analysis. This becomes very clear when we look at how we excluded cases.

We first excluded all interviewed activists of the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP). These activists belong to the moral voicing community together with the members of Greenpeace and Solidarity across Borders (SAB). Both the quantitative analysis in Chapter 3 and the pre-analysis of the qualitative material showed that these activists share a common understanding of common good, politics, and citizenship with Greenpeace and SAB members. For the fine-grained qualitative analysis, we decided to keep only members of Greenpeace and SAB because they commit to two different issues (environment and human/migrants rights) while STP activists are engaged on a similar issue as SAB activists: human rights. We further reduced our data for analysis by excluding two out of eight interviews per organization. We systematically excluded one active and one passive member for each organization with considerable overlap with cases included in the final analysis. This amounted to a total of twenty-four cases for in-depth analysis.

Table 1.1 gives an idea of the diversity among the twenty-four interviewees.<sup>22</sup> They are evenly split on levels of commitment intensity and gender, with a relatively wide distribution in terms of age and professions. We also took seriously systematic use of all cases, and all are equally represented throughout chapters 4 and 5.<sup>23</sup> To bring the reader into the activists' inner world, we applied a strict "one plus three" formula: We illustrate activists' understandings through the story of one activist per group drawn from the six narratives systematically analyzed. We then discuss the activists' relation to common good and politics in more depth by using excerpts from three out of the five remaining people interviewed. The selection was made not because it serves our argument but because their narratives allow us to illustrate and deepen the results of the survey data. Whenever relevant, we explicitly emphasize differences.

Not only did we conduct all the interviews, but we also analyzed all of them ourselves. To assure inter-coder reliability, we analyzed the first two interviews together and each of us continued to get the co-author's opinion when needed. The analysis did not rely on classical content analysis but rather required the use of a classical interpretative approach (Denzin 1989; Paillé and Mucchielli 2012) inspired by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss

<sup>22</sup> A table with all forty interviewees can be found in the appendix A.4, Table A.2.

<sup>23</sup> A table with a count of each case used can be found in the appendix A.5, Table A.3.

**Table 1.1** Twenty-Four Interviewees, Different Characteristics

Name	Gender	Age	Profession	Commitment intensity
<b>Solidarity across Borders</b>				
Adriana	Woman	63	Housewife	Active
Simone	Woman	65	Housewife	Active
Lisa	Woman	34	Political work for a peace NGO	Active
Colette	Woman	62	Retired laboratory assistant	Passive
Wilhelm	Man	87	Retired theologian	Passive
Yan	Man	45	Nurse	Passive
<b>Greenpeace</b>				
Margot	Woman	72	Professor of social assistance	Active
Nathan	Man	27	Computer scientist	Active
Pierrette	Woman	18	Apprentice in a jeweler's store	Active
Evelyne	Woman	41	University teacher	Passive
Maria	Woman	22	Telephone saleswoman	Passive
Yves	Man	38	Unemployed	Passive
<b>Caritas</b>				
Christine	Woman	73	Retired tailor	Active
Elisabeth	Woman	80	Retired secretary	Active
Mathieu	Man	75	Retired engineer	Active
Jérémie	Man	88	Retired engineer	Passive
Edwige	Woman	82	Retired librarian	Passive
Emmanuelle	Woman	58	Librarian	Passive
<b>Unia</b>				
Eva	Woman	44	Clothes-saleswoman	Active
Joao	Man	50	Balm manufacturer	Active
Nuno	Man	60	Mason, Taxi driver	Active
Tiago	Man	33	Foreman	Passive
André	Man	31	Mechanic	Passive
Sarah	Woman	53	Secretary	Passive

*Note:* All information was accurate at the time of the interview.



1967). And we developed a *systematic analytical framework* that allowed for comparisons to be drawn between activists. The main challenge of the analytical process was to remain close to the words of activists during the various interpretative steps and to avoid overinterpretation. To do this, we moved carefully from the interviewee's words to common themes, from themes to categories, and finally, from categories to concepts, such as the activist's perception of common good and politics. Five distinctive steps progressively helped us rise in the level of abstraction. First, the recorded interview material was transcribed using a rather simple technique whereby only the content of the interviews—devoid of intonations, pauses, and emotional conduct—was transcribed. Second, we coded the transcriptions with the aid of a theoretically inspired codebook.<sup>24</sup> At this point, the coding strategy involved the systematic coding of large parts of the narration including the interviewer's question (if there was one) and coding some sentences before and after the section of interest. We applied this method to avoid losing the context in which interviewees dealt with a particular theme. This provided narratives in which the interviewee's statements are linked to each theme. These include their relation to state actors, to goodness, or to their social interactions about commitment shared with friends or fellow activists. Third, we elaborated a descriptive summary of activists' statements for each theme using our own words but remaining close to what activists had said. Fourth, we wrote an interpretative summary organizing different sub-themes into a coherent framework labeled with short titles. Finally, we used the titles within this framework to create more abstract categories and sub-categories that helped us compare and describe the content of the activists' perceptions and interactions. This process allowed us to gain in analytical generality while keeping the possibility of returning to the interviewee's words. We hence possess a rich and detailed body of data to describe and understand webs of social interactions, activists' understandings of common good and politics, and the contingency between perceptions and intentions. This analytical strategy also leads us to differ from grounded theory, as our intent was not to build a theory. Rather, we relied on a deductive approach to derive our main analytical categories. Once we identified those categories in our data, we then made use of an inductive approach to define the content and the meanings provided by the interviewees about said categories. This approach

<sup>24</sup> The coding procedure was based on Atlas.ti software to organize the qualitative material thematically. The codebook is available in Appendix A.3.

was essential to our work and yields important findings. For example, the relation of activists to human beings (humanness) and to community (inter-connectedness) derives from the interviewees' interpretation. Likewise, the way activists differentiate types of action carried out by civil society actors stems from our inductive approach. We therefore began our analysis with predefined concepts and categories and then examined how activists interpret and perceive those categories inductively.

While this systematic interpretative technique reduces overinterpretation within the cases, survey data limit overinterpretation across them. To collect *survey data*, we distributed a standardized questionnaire with comparative indicators to activists from the five organizations. The questionnaire included multiple questions borrowed from general population surveys to test our assumption that activists possess specific understandings when compared to the general population.<sup>25</sup> We selected random samples in two stratification layers: one for language (French and German) and one for commitment intensity (active and passive members). The stratification for language follows the organizational structure, which is usually divided between the French- and German-speaking regions in Switzerland.<sup>26</sup> One can therefore assume that interactions and meanings differ between these two regions. However, the analysis of differences between French- and German-speaking activists did not reveal systematic differences and we therefore did not feel the need to introduce a weighting for language to correct the overrepresentation of French-speaking activists.<sup>27</sup> In addition, active and passive members are never equally distributed among members. And, as active members always feature in smaller numbers, we introduced a second stratification layer to overestimate this category.<sup>28</sup> We also decided against introducing a weighting for commitment intensity, as it would have led to ridiculously small weightings for active members and extremely large ones for passive

<sup>25</sup> 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).

<sup>26</sup> We excluded the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, which makes up 5 percent of the population if one considers the four official national languages as the main criteria (de Fluergues 2016), in order to avoid translating the questionnaire into a third language.

<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, we note that activists evolving in the French-speaking regions have somewhat more trust in state actors compared to their German-speaking counterparts.

<sup>28</sup> Distribution for commitment intensity within all organizations: Solidarity Across Borders: 18 percent active members, 82 percent passive members; Greenpeace: 0.3 percent, 99.7 percent, Society for Threatened Peoples: 0.1 percent, 99.9 percent, Caritas: 9 percent, 91 percent, Unia: 5 percent, 95 percent.

members. Yet each analysis monitors differences in commitment intensity, and the distinction between active and passive members is taken seriously.

After an invitation and two follow-ups for each activist, we gathered a low *response rate* of between 10 percent to 44 percent.<sup>29</sup> Three main reasons help explain this result. First, surveys are overused in our society. Public opinion, consumer, and satisfaction surveys abound and lower an individual's willingness to respond. Second, respondents received a letter of invitation to participate in the survey. The letter offered them the possibility of filling out the questionnaire online or calling us to ask for a paper version. The procedure had the advantage of being inexpensive, but it lowered response rates considerably. Finally, the questionnaire was rather long, including fifty-six questions from the research. We also provided each participating organization the chance to ask questions of their own members, which resulted in an additional section, comprising around ten questions. Respondents needed an average of forty-five minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The low response rate required that we question whether the data collection procedure had an impact on the *representativeness* of the data. We controlled the socio-demographic indicators (gender and age) obtained from the organizations first. Based on this information, we produced representative samples for Solidarity across Borders (SAB), Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia.<sup>30</sup> However, the sample from the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) made us realize that young activists were underrepresented. We then compared the social profile, values structure, and social networks of STP activists with that of activists who belong to the same movement sector. The analyses show that STP respondents are comparable to activists of other post-industrial organizations in terms of their sociological profile. Yet this socio-demographic control does not provide any information pertaining to our research question: Are our samples representative in terms of activists' cognitive profiles?

To answer this, we needed to know which types of activists were most willing to respond to our questionnaire. As is the case with every survey, we expected some bias within our samples.<sup>31</sup> While we cannot offer a final answer to these questions, we assume that the activists willing to respond identify

<sup>29</sup> We worked with response rates of 44 percent for SAB, 10 percent for STP, 25 percent for Greenpeace, 24 percent for Caritas and 18 percent for Unia.

<sup>30</sup> A table with these numbers can be found in Appendix A.6, Table A.4.

<sup>31</sup> Electoral surveys, for example, are often confronted with samples that are biased in the sense that respondents are more interested in politics and participate more in politics than the general population (Sciarini and Goldberg 2016).

with and participate in their organization more than those who refused. For example, STP relies extensively on street recruitment, allowing the organization to advertise specific political campaigns. Whereas this resulted in a tremendous increase in their activists' base, the downside seems to be that an important part of their activists (especially youth and women) do not know which organization they are members of. We also noted that active members are generally more inclined to respond than passive members.<sup>32</sup> As a result, we feel confident stating that the samples used are representative for *activists who identify* with their organization. We nevertheless acknowledge that we probably have a slight bias for activists who pay only a small annual fee or contribute on an irregular basis.

Do activists in the same commitment community rely on synchronized minds to perform joint action? Do they share their understandings of common good and politics, and their mental conceptions of democracy? And what are the cognitive and relational mechanisms that bind activists' minds to action? To come to a conclusion on the questions we ask here we triangulated quantitative and qualitative methods on the same problem (Tarrow 1995). Our methodological approach is characterized by an iterative process, a systematical comparison between interviews and survey data.

## Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature and deploys the theoretical toolkit with the purpose of explaining why the mind and conversations enter into play in sustaining activism. We start by clarifying why the mind is central to our study and for human life in general. We then highlight our contribution to the social movement literature, which is twofold: broadening the set of meanings to explain commitment and sustaining participation, and specifying the cognitive paths that link broad understandings to action. With the help of the contributions from the field of psychology, we are able to grasp how the mind sets activists' intentionality concretely. Returning to sociological considerations, we underline that the mind is formed by social interactions. We continue by specifying the relational mechanisms that

<sup>32</sup> Response rate for active and passive members for all organizations: SAB (active members: 55 percent, passive members: 29 percent), STP (10 percent passive members), Greenpeace (34 percent active, 21 percent passive), Caritas (47 percent active, 13 percent passive), Unia (17 percent active, 18 percent passive).

shape the activist's mind and expound why these cognitive and relational mechanisms both enable activist action and help sustain it. Chapter 2 hence details the nexus between an activist's mind and conversational interactions to maintain action, thereby resulting in the thesis that a cognitive-relational process is at play in the sustainment of commitment.

In Chapter 3, we begin to assess our theoretical assumptions empirically. With statistical support, we begin by presenting the activists' social and political profile before providing a first empirical appraisal of the synchronization of activists' minds. Whether activists rely on socially shared meanings to perform joint action and to sustain it constitutes the chapter's driving question. We proceed in three steps: first, we show that activists rely on a specific understanding of common good and politics that departs from that held by the general population. Second, we consider how their inclusion in a specific commitment community provides them with a particular understanding of common good and politics. Comparing the activists who partake in the moral voicing, Christian aid, and the workers' voicing communities, we show that each type of participant sees both common good and politics through specific cognitive lenses. Third, to subject our hypothesis to a final test, we examine whether activists who evolve in the same commitment site, but who are mobilized in distinct organizations and on different social problems, rely on shared meanings to perform joint action. Comparing the activists committed to Greenpeace, Solidarity across Borders, and the Society for Threatened Peoples, we observe that moral voicing activists rely on similar views about common good and politics. Similarly, active and passive members involved in the same organization apprehend common good and politics through the same cognitive lenses. From these primary analyses, we demonstrate that activists rely on socially shared meanings that are distinct from one commitment community to another. Their minds are synchronized with those of their peers and enable them to perform and sustain joint action.

Chapters 4 and 5 develop the topic of mind synchronization further. Based on activists' narratives, we delve into their minds in more depth to see this synchronization in its complexity and to trace the cognitive processes that bind broad understandings to intentionalities. First, we scrutinize activists' understandings of common good and politics by offering a fined-grained analysis of the way they comprehend both cognitive pillars of activism. The statistics of Chapter 3 provide a representative picture of the activist's mind but one that is rather cursory due to raw measurements of common good

and politics. In chapters 4 and 5, we investigate the intricate ways common good and politics are understood inductively. In a second step, we examine how activists' broad understanding of common good and politics enables them to develop mental constructs that orient their action specifically. We highlight the cognitive paths that set activists' intentionality and orient their action on a number of aspects: toward certain groups of people; and to act on particular social problems, in a specific field of action, and with particular forms of action. Finally, the in-depth analysis of the activists' understanding of common good and politics enables us to grasp the types of democracy activists adhere to. Chapter 4 delves into understandings of common good, while Chapter 5 investigates activists' views about politics.

Chapter 6 proposes an explanation of the findings advanced in previous chapters. Why does an activist's mind differ from one commitment site to another? And why are people's minds synchronized when they are engaged in the same commitment community? More specifically, the chapter adds a relational layer to the cognitive mechanisms dealt with in chapters 4 and 5, in that we show how conversational interactions shape the meanings activists construct about common good and politics. The chapter also shows that not all interactions shape the activist's mind and that specific relational mechanisms are at work to synchronize activists' understandings. First, we demonstrate that face-to-face interactions are the key mechanisms behind the construction of socially shared meanings. By contrast, mediated interactions (through discursive outcomes of the organization such as newspapers or newsletters) are insufficient to shape an activist's mind. Second, we highlight how face-to-face interactions in interpersonal networks allow passive members to construct socially shared meanings with fellow activists. Third, we show that redundancy and abundance of interactions are not essential to nourish the activist's cognitive map. Finally, the density of interactions is a crucial relational mechanism for cross-committed activists. This chapter ultimately shows the importance of conversational interactions to the synchronization of the activists' minds.

Chapter 7 wraps up the book's main findings. Our study is motivated by a theoretical agenda: to highlight the interplay between mind and social interactions that helps explain the process behind the sustainment of commitment. This concluding chapter returns to this theoretical agenda and highlights its implications for the study of social movements and activism more generally. We begin by emphasizing the necessity to bring the mind back in, and its inherent complexity. Second, we argue for the necessity of

taking into account considerations on the interpretative dimensions of social networks. More generally, we call for an integrated relational perspective that rests on the structural, instrumental, and interpretative dimensions of social networks. Third, we advocate a better integration of culture in the study of social movements that effectively values the role of culture in shaping a person's mind, and argue that the integration of this aspect provides finer theories of mobilization. Finally, as with any research, this study faces limits that we expose in this final chapter, providing us with the opportunity to point toward avenues for further research.

## 2

### A Cognitive-Relational Process

It is not men in general who think, or even isolated individuals who do the thinking, but men in certain groups who have developed a particular style of thought.

Karl Mannheim

Simone, a sixty-five-year-old activist, is committed to defending asylum seekers. Her main task is to visit migrants in state shelters and offer administrative advocacy. For the last fifteen years she has been helping migrants obtain residential permits to remain in Switzerland. Simone is also involved in cultural projects related to migration and was recently involved in the publication of books of drawings by children of asylum seekers. When we met for our last interview, our conversation ended with a cup of tea as Simone offered us the books. Full of tenderness, she said: “Those children carry their sorrows, their joys, but also their dreams with them. They are like any other children.” Simone is also involved in politics. She was never solely satisfied with providing legal counsel and making the national population aware of the harsh conditions asylum seekers face. For her, migration is a political battle.

Like Margot, who is committed to Greenpeace, Simone perceives society and politics through specific mental lenses. She relies on a particular understanding of common good which she perceives in universalist terms and as a matter of rights to which all members of society are entitled. For Simone, to be deprived of rights constitutes a real injustice. And this is how she makes sense of migration issues: “Most of the people who apply for asylum status have suffered in their home country, have risked their lives, and we deny them asylum. It’s insane! . . . Migrants obviously have no rights.” Her universalist understanding of common good is clear in the following declaration: “It’s important that migrants benefit from support and be recognized as human beings. . . . [W]e are all part of the same human community.” Her

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belief in common belonging was also stressed when she gave us the book of children's paintings and said: "Those children are . . . like any other children."

Simone also relies on a specific understanding of politics. She perceives politics as a field of intervention in which civil society actors increase state accountability. For Simone, state actors are mainly responsible for the provision of common good, that is, for the well-being and improvement of people's lives. And she understands civil society actors through specific mental lenses. For her, they are pivotal actors who challenge the state when it fails to ensure common good. This is clearly articulated in her views on migration: "We should fight on a legal basis to defend migrants. What matters most is the political struggle. . . . It's vital that people protest. We must raise awareness and say 'enough!'; migrants can't be treated as lesser humans."

What theoretical explanation is available to make sense of Simone's intentionality? In other terms, how are *mind and action* connected? Borrowing from the epistemologist Bunge (2004) we ask, How does it work? How does an activist's mind orient that person's action? A second theoretical question we address in this chapter relates to why Simone and Margot, mobilized in distinct political struggles in the moral commitment community, share similar views of common good and politics. How is this possible? Shared understandings bring up the question of how the activist's mind is shaped. More specifically, it raises questions about the intimate relation between *mind and interaction*. The synchronized understandings that Simone and Margot share ask us to reflect on the impact of social interaction in the same commitment community. A final question we discuss here pertains to sustained commitment. Simone and Margot's understandings of common good and politics enable them to sustain their commitment. But what process links the activists' minds to their ability to maintain commitment? The human mind sets action, but a non-recursive process is also at work. We should therefore consider the impacts of *action on the mind*. More to the point, we should explain how commitment shapes the activists' minds and enables them to sustain their action.

The aim of this chapter is to further develop the theoretical framework we suggested in Chapter 1. To construct our theoretical explanation we need to present the current research on key concepts: the human mind, social interaction, and sustained commitment. The literature review will also emphasize our contributions to the existing knowledge. We begin by discussing why the mind matters to human activity and action. In a second step, we discuss the close relation between mind and action. In a third step, we scrutinize the

close bonds between mind and social interaction. Finally, we focus on the relation between action and mind, that is to say, the non-recursive tie between the mind and action. We conclude the chapter by examining the cognitive-relational process behind activists' commitment and their sustained participation in collective endeavors.

### The Qualitative Experience of the World

Why is the mind so central to human life? The philosophy of mind is the most important domain in contemporary philosophy. For Searle (2004) the main reason for its centrality is that core philosophical questions are intimately related to the mind. Philosophy of the mind queries the ways in which individuals make sense of reality. Questioning who we are and how we relate to the rest of the world are directly linked to the most prevalent question in Western philosophy: "What does it mean to be human?" (Searle 2004, 7). With those questions at hand, it becomes obvious that mind and meanings are central to human life.

As Searle states, everyone understands that the mind is central to our lives. We understand our close surroundings with our mind, what we live and experience. In other terms, the mind allows us to make sense of reality and of our lived experience. In addition, we act because of our intentions that are first elaborated mentally. Wittgenstein has emphasized that boundaries of meanings and action overlap and the space of individuals' potential action is delineated accordingly, while for Searle: "Not all consciousness is intentional, and not all intentionality is conscious, but there is a very serious and important overlap between consciousness and intentionality" (p. 97). The mind is therefore a central element in human life because it allows individuals to perceive reality and to make sense of it. But it also *sets an individual's intentionality*.

Meaning is also central to the interpretative tradition in sociology. Following neo-Kantian thinkers who see reality as chaotic, Weber developed a conception of human beings as "voracious meaning makers" (Weber 1978). The construction of meaning enables individuals to make sense of a chaotic world as we focus our attention on certain aspects of reality to organize our perceptions. Rational order therefore derives from the subjective perception of certain elements of reality. For Weber, grasping the subject's meanings is central to understanding human action. The Weberian tradition, followed by

Mead, Blumer, Goffman, Berger, and Luckman, among other thinkers of the interpretative turn in sociology, relies on three main heuristic pillars. First, individuals are thinking actors. Second, their interaction with their social environment and fellow humans shapes their subjectivity, and constructs their inter-subjectivity. Third, human action ensues from the inter-subjectivity of actors. Like the philosophers of the mind, interpretative sociologists argue that meanings are central to an individual's life. They enable them to perceive social reality, to make sense of it, and *to act in their social environment*.

The primary question interpretative sociologists ask overlaps with that asked by philosophers of the mind. Questioning who we are as social individuals and how we relate to the social environment, sociologists raise the fundamental question: What does it mean to be a social individual? Sociologists have never fully answered the question. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) have, however, recently offered a compelling response. For them, the existential function of the social world is collaboration in the construction of meaning. But why does this process matter so much?

Fligstein and McAdam recognize that humans face existential fears and uncertainties. The very meaning of life can constitute an existential dread. What happens after death? What is the meaning of my life? Why am I so lonely facing such uncertainties? These existential anxieties are essentially countered by the meanings individuals construct with others, and language acquisition is central in this regard. It offers us three advantages. First, language enables us to communicate with others and to produce collective meanings. Second, it enables us to consider ourselves as the object of our own reflections. This skill is at the basis of a human's ability to empathize with others and to collaborate with fellow beings. Finally, language enables humans to engage in coordinated exchanges with others and to elaborate symbolic activity, especially important when it comes to naming and dealing with existential fears. For Fligstein and McAdam: "The existential function of the social is the meaning worlds we fashion in concert with others that insulate us from the threat of the 'outer perspective' and confirm our own significance" (p. 42). Humans not only act collectively to improve their material conditions, but also construct meanings that enable them to silence their existential fears.<sup>1</sup> The essence of social individuals is thus *to collaborate in meaning making*.

<sup>1</sup> Religions are a good example of this coordinated production of shared meanings as they allow individuals to make sense of their existential fears.

Enriched by these various disciplinary contributions, we understand that individuals are symbol-making creatures and that their relation to reality guides their action in the social world. First, they enable individuals to relate to reality and make sense of their social environment. Second, meanings set an individual's intentionality, for without ideas about reality, action is unlikely to occur. Finally, the construction of meaning is a collaborative effort, whereby individuals make sense of their social environment through communication with others.

*Meanings, intentionality, and social interaction* are the core concepts we discuss in this book to explain how activists commit and sustain their participation. We argue that without specific understandings of their social and political environments, activists would not be able to act and sustain their action. Philosophers of the mind and interpretative sociologists have urged scholars of social movements to reassess the importance of the mind in studies of participation. Moreover, interpretative sociologists have emphasized that individuals do not construct meanings in isolation but through interactions. This means that we should consider the activists' environment, and specifically the conversations that take place in their social sites if we are to understand the specificities of their perceptions about society and politics.

Philosophers question what it means to be a human, while sociologists probe what it means to be a social individual. Our study asks, What does it mean to be an activist? How do activists relate to their social and political environment? How are their qualitative experiences of the world and their interactions with others reflected in their minds? And, finally, what does their perception of their environment owe to their commitment and its sustainment? To answer these questions, we rely on a specific epistemology in which the mind is viewed as central to social action, whereby an individual's subjectivity orients his or her action, and where social interactions enable the elaboration of shared meanings that, in turn, lead individuals into performing joint action. Interpretative sociology therefore guides us on our theoretical path.

### **The Activist's Mind**

How do social movement scholars take the activist's mind into account? The subjective and cultural dimensions of contentious participation have received less attention compared to structural components (Goodwin and Jasper

2004; Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012; Polletta 2004a). However, this objective and structural bias has been recently redressed. Many works have broadened our knowledge on frames and identity and have also yielded insights into the impact of narratives on contentious dynamics (Polletta 2008). We know much more about the cultural and subjective dimensions of contentious commitment than in the past. In the literature on social movements, four concepts—interest, identity, frames, and narratives—help us grasp the activist’s mind, which is defined as the thinking and perceiving “inner box” that sets human intentionality. We now examine these concepts and highlight how they depart from the notion of activists’ understandings we develop in this book.

The concept of *activists’ interest* emerged in the sixties with a new generation of scholars who were largely committed to contentious politics. They contested previous explanations provided by psychologists who construed protest activities as irrational phenomena emerging from “psychic disorders” and personal “breakdowns” (Davies 1962; Hoffer 1951; Le Bon 1895; Smelser 1968; Tarde 1901). This new wave of scholars approached the question of contentious politics armed with a distinct epistemology, heralding rationality and interest as central to their theories (e.g., Fireman and Gamson 1979; Klandermans 1984; Kriesi 1984; McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Snow et al. 1986; Tarrow 1983; Tilly 1978). Contention was accordingly understood as an organized action driven by strategic actors who aim to bring about social change. Collective actors and activists act rationally while interests (not mental disorders) drive their action. The concept of the activist’s interest was popular in the sixties and the ensuing decades. It was indeed seminal when it came to understanding how activists reason.

Epistemologically anchored in individualist theory, the concept of interest entails the satisfaction of self-interest, a significant inner force that motivates people to act. Olson stresses that “rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests” (Olson 1965, 2) and consequently, only individual inducements lead individuals to act in a group-oriented way. Interest is hence featured as the sole motivational factor that explains participation in collective action. The contribution of rational choice theorists cannot be understated, as they argued that collective action is not self-evident. Social problems and injustice are actually more common and persistent in society than collective action is.

Many critics have addressed this figuration of the human mind (e.g., Green and Shapiro 1994; Mansbridge 1990; Monroe 2001; Sen 1990). But it is

beyond our aim to reexamine their criticism here. Rather, we want to underline one major disadvantage: the narrow conception of the activist's mind as it is portrayed in individualist theory. Instrumental motives guide a person in collective action. Yet they fail to exhaust the entirety of individual motives that enable someone to participate in collective endeavors. Human beings rely on a plurality of motivations that cannot be neatly summed up by the stylized individual constructed by individualist theory. Unsurprisingly, the sporadic enquiry of rational choice scholars into the activist's mind lacks depth. Instrumental preferences do not motivate individuals to participate in much collective action (e.g., Knoke 1988; Seyd and Whiteley 1992; Walsh and Warland 1983). This failure has incited scholars to open the Pandora's box of human motives. Along with instrumental motives, solidarity, identity, normative, and many other "soft incentives" help explain individual participation in collective settings (e.g., Chong 1992; P. B. Clark and Wilson 1961; Moe 1980; Opp 1986, 1988).<sup>2</sup> Unquestionably, these models provide a more refined explanation as to what occurs when activists partake in collective endeavors. Despite this, scholars who extend the concept of self-interest remain indebted to a monist conception of human motivations, whereby a person's action is motivated only by the satisfaction of private interests, either instrumental or "soft." Yet, and as underlined above with reference to Fligstein and McAdam (2012), humans not only act to improve their material conditions but also to collaborate in meaning-making with others. Individuals rely on *a plurality of logics of action* that includes but also transcends mere logics of self-interest (Passy 2013; Sorber and Wilson 1998; Terestchenko 2004).<sup>3</sup>

Today, the concept of self-interest features less frequently in the study of social movements. Yet it remains important to expound at least part of the story of participation as the proponents of the individualist theory saw it. In doing so, however, scholars of activists' action should rely on a plural conception of human motivations. The distinction between the individualist concept of interest and that of activists' understandings then appears as twofold. First, the latter does not refer to personal inducements conceived as rational and objective but rather as subjective perceptions of the world.

<sup>2</sup> Opp (1986) elaborated the concept of "soft incentives."

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the drawback of the monist understanding of human motives, individualist scholars face a loss of the predictive strength of their model when the concept of self-interest is stretched: Selective incentives are not selective anymore (e.g., Green and Shapiro 1994; Passy 2013).

Second, individuals cannot be reduced to the sole mental dimension of self-fulfillment. Other mental dimensions are at play.

Scholars have stressed the importance of *identity* on activist commitment, advancing an epistemology often opposed to that proposed by individualist theorists. Identity also constitutes a mental process, whereby it is understood as “an individual cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 285). Those researchers have emphasized that individuals share bonds with others, and that solidarity is a vital force for participation in collective action (e.g., Della Porta 1995; Diani 2011; Fireman and Gamson 1979; Gould 1995; Kriesi 1988; Krinsky 1999; Mansbridge 2001; McAdam 1988; Melucci 1989; Oberschall 1973; Passy 1998a; Polletta 2005; Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson 1980; Tilly 1978, 2005; Whittier 1995). As Fireman and Gamson wrote: “[A] person whose life is intertwined with a group has a big stake in the group’s fate. . . . The person is likely to contribute his or her share even if the impact of that share is not noticeable” (1979, 22). Solidarity is foregrounded in identity and allows an individual to find the motivation for group commitment. Identity therefore operates as an important catalyst that orients individuals toward collective action. This scholarly contribution is key: Commitment, then, is a matter of belonging. In addition, scholarship has underlined that identity is helpful when it comes to explaining how interests emerge, rather than taking them as given, as is the case in individualist theory (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

Identity undoubtedly contributes to explaining why ordinary people engage in collective endeavors. But again, proponents of this view rely on a narrow view of the activist’s mind. Obviously, identification with a group, defined by boundaries between a “we-group” and the “they” of outsiders or opponents, is a catalyzer for commitment. But it is not the only meaning at work. While we draw on the subjective and constructivist dimension of the concept of identity, our notion of activists’ understandings goes beyond the notion of identity. The latter relies on belonging and sentiments of attachment to apprehend what binds people together in a community or a social category. By contrast, the concept of activists’ understandings includes the notion of identity and other activists’ views, and we argue that it is also these that enable them to participate and sustain their commitment.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In addition, broad activists’ understandings about common good and politics generate specific perceptions of belongings, as we will see in the empirical chapters.

The concept of *frames* also relates to mental processes. “Mobilizing people to action always has a subjective component,” according to Noakes and Johnson (2005, 2). And those elements of perception have been conceptualized as a social-psychological process called framing. A frame is an “interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the world ‘out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action” (Snow et al. 1986, 137). Both collective actors and individuals engage in this meaning-making work. While Snow et al. (1986) understood the notion of frame in its collective dimension, Gamson focused on its individual counterpart, which is more directly tied to our interest in the activist’s mind (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Gamson 1992). It is worth discussing what both contributions have to offer and outlining their limits.

For Snow et al., frames are collective, motivational, and strategic.<sup>5</sup> They are collective constructions with which we apprehend reality and which are elaborated by actors through their agency and contention. This suggests that collective action frames are never fixed in time, being the product of a struggle for meaning among actors. Frames also include a motivational component, enabling individuals and collective entities to perform action. Finally, they possess a strategic component as collective action frames seek to draw people into collective endeavors and orient their action. The contribution of framing theory is essential to the study of social movements, as it underscores how fundamental meaning is to collective action.

Nevertheless, the conception of frames used by Snow et al. faces a major shortcoming: The activist’s mind is not accounted for. While they talk about collective action frames, discussion of the activist’s mind is lacking, the exception being the concept of “framing resonance.” Frame resonance describes the degree of receptivity of a collective frame in the public arena and in the aggrieved community that is the beneficiary of the mobilizing effort. It is also through a “frames alignment process” that collective actors recruit new adherents into the aggrieved community (Snow et al. 1986). According to distance (or resonance) of collective frames from potential activists’ worldviews, members are simply bridged to the group, or they should modify, extend,

<sup>5</sup> For a review of the framing process see Benford and Snow 2000; Johnston and Snow 1998; Noakes and Johnston 2005; Oliver and Johnston 2000; Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988, 2000; Snow and Oliver 1995. For specific studies on collective frames and contentious politics, see, e.g., Alimi 2006; Benford 1987, 1997; Benford and Hunt 1992; Coe 2011; Einwohner 2003; Fitzgerald 2009; Marullo, Pagnucco, and Smith 1996; McCammon 2009; McCammon et al. 2007; S. E. Nepstad 2004; Stern 2005.



or, even, transform their meanings to be able to join a collective effort.<sup>6</sup> For Snow et al.—and for most framing theory proponents—collective frames resonate with an individual's understandings. Yet these understandings have never been studied. With framing studies we never know what the activist's understandings might be. The concept of activists' understandings clearly departs from that of collective action frames. First, activists' understandings are located in the participant's head: They are personal perceptions. Second, they are meanings that emerge from personal interactions and not strategic elements elaborated for performing collective action, as the collective frames are.

The conception of action frame developed by Gamson is much closer to our notion of activists' understandings (Gamson 1992, 1995; Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina 1982). Without denying the collective aspect of frames, Gamson focuses on the individual counterpart. He emphasizes the idea that specific cognitions people elaborate mentally motivate their participation in collective endeavors. Three key cognitions are here noteworthy. Activists must first develop a moral indignation, then identify with the people they mobilize for, and finally, construct the acknowledgment that they can redress the social problem through their commitment. For Gamson, injustice, identity, and agency frames are necessary prerequisites for participation in social movements. Without those mental constructions, contentious action is unlikely to occur. Gamson's work constitutes a key contribution to our understanding of the intimate link between the activist's mind and participation in contentious politics. He underscores, as did Klandermans (1997) who followed in his theoretical wake,<sup>7</sup> how activists' cognitions are essential to commitment in contentious politics. Moreover, Gamson (1992) stresses how pivotal social interactions are to the construction of personal frames. Conversation, then, definitely has an impact on people's minds.

However, Gamson falls short on two issues. First, he conceives the activists too narrowly. Participation necessitates that individuals make sense of the aims and means of their commitment, and that they relate to their social and political environments. Those environments are complex and multifaceted, reflected in the activists' minds in the construction of multiple cognitions that allow them to engage in collective endeavors. A much broader cognitive

<sup>6</sup> Snow et al. (1986) define various process of frame alignment: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation.

<sup>7</sup> See also Klandermans (1984, 1989, 1997); Klandermans and Oegema (1987); Oegema and Klandermans (1994); van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013).

baseline is actually at work, one that exceeds the three motivational frames Gamson saw as crucial. The qualitative material collected for this study shows that all activists spontaneously discuss their perceptions of their social and political environment.<sup>8</sup> Stating that injustice, identity, and agency frames are insufficient does not mean that those cognitions do not play a role in orienting action. As we will see in the chapters that draw on empirical material, those frames consistently appeared in activists' accounts and helped to set their intentionality. Hence, we are not opposed to Gamson's analysis, but we stress that it is not sufficient to explain why activists commit.

Yet how are broader understandings fashioned during the commitment process? This question stems from the second limitation we identify in Gamson's analysis: The origin of the three motivational frames is left unquestioned. Raising this issue does not mean that we are not interested in knowing how external factors shape the activist's mind. Rather, we ask how broader meanings enable activists to construct these three specific action frames, among others. As we will show in this chapter, cognitions do not function in isolation but form as clusters in the human mind. Cognitive mechanisms are hence at play, which means that broad cognitions are connected to specific cognitive components. Concretely, understandings about society and politics enable activists to construct specific cognitive components, like perceptions of injustice, identity, and agency, which set intentionality and orient action.

More recently, the concept of *narrative* has been central to studies of contentious action (Fine 2005; Franzosi 1998; Gamson 2005; Groves 2001; Polletta 1998, 2007). "A narrative is an account of a sequence of events in the order in which they occurred to make a point" (Polletta et al. 2011, 111). Only relevant events, or those perceived as such, are included in a narrative, where they constitute a plot. Narratives are therefore chronicles that are invested with moral meaning through use (Polletta 1998, 140). Narratives and the notion of collective frames developed by Snow et al. overlap in many respects. However, they differ in at least three aspects (Polletta 1998). First, a narrative is constituted by a configuration of events over time. Second, the narrative is closely linked to outcome. Finally, as stated previously, frames must resonate with an individual's values or wider culture, which is not necessarily the case of narratives.

<sup>8</sup> This evidence was present in each activist's narrative collected in the first interview, when we let them talk freely without intervening (see our methodology in Chapter 1 and Appendix A.2.)

While the notion of narratives can be useful in understanding the emergence and transformation of contentious politics (see Polletta 2006), it is clearly distinct from our notion of activists' understandings. A narrative is a particular speech act in which the use of events is key. Individual or collective actors tell a story that binds a number of events to an outcome. This speech act is also delivered in a public setting, which can alternatively be the contentious arena, the group, or the public sphere. A narrative, to be sure, is a public performance.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of activists' understandings as we conceive it clearly departs from the notions of interest, collective frames, and narrative. Activists' understandings are subjective meanings rather than objective interests, and personal perceptions rather than collective ones. Our notion of understandings shares much ground with Gamson's concepts of frame, and with the concept of identity. All are subjective constructions elaborated in the person's mind that motivate him or her to act. The main difference stems from the range of meanings: We take a much broader part of the activist's mind into account than Gamson does in the concept of frames and the concept of identity. And we also pay attention to the cognitive mechanisms that tie broad understandings to specific cognitive elements. We therefore develop the notion of individual frames and identity further and our contribution to the social movement literature can be said to be twofold. First, we enlarge the set of meanings used to explain commitment and sustain participation. Second, we highlight the cognitive path that links broader understandings to action.

### Setting Intentionality

As Searle and interpretative sociologists have argued, the mind is central to the puzzle of human action. But how does our mind set our intentionality? Both philosophers of the mind and interpretative sociologists remain rather

<sup>9</sup> The concept of narrative presented here does not overlap with the term "narratives" used in qualitative methodology. Here, the concept of narratives is a public performance whereby individuals tell a story in the public sphere. Narrative in methodology refers to a story provided by an interviewee about events or his or her own life expressed to an interviewer. This narrative couches the speaker's view of what is canonical; it requires the narrator's perspective, as well as a subjective sequential ordering of events (Patterson and Monroe 1998:316). Narrative is actually useful in revealing the speaker's concept of self, and it allows the person to explain and justify why he or she went down a particular road in life (Patterson and Monroe 1998). A person's story is therefore not a public performance as the concept of narrative in sociological theory would have it.

silent on the topic. They admit that a substantial bond exists between mind and action but stop short of investigating what the nature of this bond is. To apprehend the paths that link the mind to action, we turn to cognitive and social psychologists as their empirical investigations provide substantial insight. Two contributions are here noteworthy.

Many social psychologists stress that cognition includes a motivational component that orients human action (e.g., Fiske and Neuberg 1990; Fiske and Taylor 2013; Higgins and Sorrentino 1990; Levine, Resnick, and Higgins 1993).<sup>10</sup> However, they recognize the existence of *domain-specific knowledge* necessary to a person's performance. This is a seminal contribution provided by this field of knowledge: Individuals do not rely on general or universal knowledge, but on a specific knowledge delimited by a field of experience (e.g., Fine 1979; Fine and McDonnell 2007; Fine and Turner 2001; Lawrence A. Hirschfeld and Gelman 2004). Cognitions, in this view, are understood as particular and situated (Levine, Resnick, and Higgins 1993). This insight invites us to specify the cognitive dimensions at work in the performance of activism. As established in Chapter 1, perceptions about the aims and means of activism constitute the domain-specific knowledge required to perform activism. Activists must make sense of the aim of their commitment by elaborating meanings about society and common good in their minds and the means to act so that the social problem that concerns them can be resolved. We accordingly postulate that common good and politics are the necessary cognitions in the performance of activism.

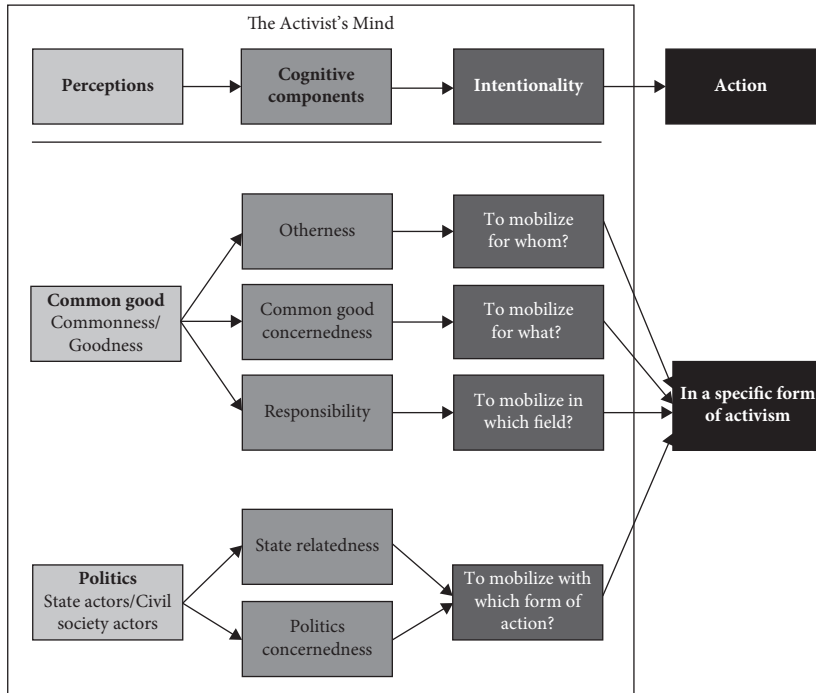
The second key contribution of psychologists is to point out that *cognitive mechanisms* bind specific meanings to individual's intentionality and to action. The work of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) is relevant here, as they showed that broad cognitions are connected to more specific cognitive components, which in turn construct an individual's intentionality and lead to action. A cognitive funnel is hence at work. The strength of this contribution is the emphasis placed on the idea that cognitions are intertwined, tying parts of one's knowledge together. Although the models Ajzen and Fishbein employ

<sup>10</sup> Two distinct types of cognitive processes bridge mind and action together: an unthought process and a deliberative one (e.g., D'Andrade 1995; DiMaggio 1997; Fiske 2010b; Fiske and Taylor 2013; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991). The former is based on automatic cognitions, which are implicit, un verbalized, and rapid. In this case, human action is grounded in routine. While the latter is based on deliberative cognitions, which are explicit, verbalized, and slow. Deliberation occurs when a new problem emerges and attracts the individual's attention, when existing schemas fail to account adequately for a new situation, or when individuals are dissatisfied with the schemas available (DiMaggio 1997). Whether through automatic or deliberative cognitions, the mind motivates individuals to perform action.

are linear—moving from general to specific cognitions—we can also conceive of cognitive linkages in terms of networks. Neuroscientists have revealed that cognitions take the form of clusters in the human mind (e.g., Medaglia, Lynall, and Bassett 2015; Sporns 2014), generating associated networks, or nodes of meanings (Cerulo 2010). Regardless of how we figure cognitive linkages, linear or in constellations, individuals connect different cognitions to construct intentionality, prior to acting.

Highlighting the cognitive paths involved in different forms of activism constitutes one of the major tasks we undertake in this study. We seek to explain *how broad cognitions about common good and politics set an activist's intentionality, and which cognitive mechanisms are involved*. Investigating the cognitive mechanisms is a task that we mainly carry out inductively, as explained in chapters 4 and 5. In the present theoretical section, our aim is merely to gesture toward the cognitive mechanisms that result from our inductive work, sketched out in Figure 2.1. Let us first examine how the perception of common good enables activists to set specific intentionalities.

As discussed in Chapter 1, two specific dimensions enable activists to make sense of common good. Commonness permits us to apprehend how activists comprehend what binds people together and how they perceive society either on a universalist or communitarian basis. By contrast, goodness allows us to scrutinize how activists make sense of the social problem that concerns them. It can be understood according to the care or social justice repertoire. Both dimensions allow activists to fashion three specific cognitive components that figure in the construction of their intentionality. The understanding of commonness enables the construction of a specific relation to *otherness*, which pertains to the way activists conceive relations to others and to human diversity. The way activists perceive commonness allows us to evaluate whether they commit for others or if their commitment is restricted to a group to which they belong. Commonness also constructs a particular *concernedness* about common good. According to their conception, either in universalist or communitarian terms, activists should be able to develop a wide concern or a narrow concern about common goods, restricted to the group they belong to. Finally, the perception of *goodness* allows for the attribution of *responsibility*. The way activists perceive common good—either as a matter of justice or of care—enables them to identify collective actors as accountable for social problems and to decide where political responsibility lies. The attribution of responsibility should, in turn, orient them toward political or social action. Otherness, concernedness, and responsibility are



**Figure 2.1** Cognitive mechanisms that bind activists' perceptions to their action

hence cognitive constructs that set an activist's intentionality and orients his or her action: toward specific social groups, toward certain social issues, and toward the political or social arena. Those cognitive components set activists' intentionality and help us explain *for whom*, *for what*, and *in which field* mobilization occurs.

Understandings of politics also contribute to the construction of cognitive components that orient action. The way activists perceive state and civil society actors enables them develop a particular relation to the state and concernedness regarding political commitment. We call these cognitive components *state relatedness* and *concernedness about politics*. Activists either construct a conflictual or a complementary state relatedness. The former defines a relation to state actors based on such actors' lack of accountability and legitimacy, whereas the latter refers to a view in which state actors are seen as complementary to other actors involved in the production and maintenance of common good. Finally, activists' perception of civil society actors,

which can be grasped as interventional or substituting, allows them to construct ideas about what it means to be a citizen. Activists can be concerned about politics, which implies that they want citizens to remain critical about political processes and active in participatory politics. Or activists can be unconcerned by politics and develop another idea of citizenship accordingly, one based on the care of others and in which participation is restricted to institutional politics. State relatedness and concernedness about politics are cognitive constructs that set an activist's intentionality toward specific forms of activism and help explain *what form of action is chosen*.

Contributions from the field of psychology hence allow us to grasp the relation between the mind and an activist's intentionality. It allows social movement scholars to move beyond the rather elusive bond between mind and action that philosophers of the mind and the interpretative sociologists allude to. But the account advanced by psychologists remains hindered by the lack of attention devoted to the mind's social dimension.

### The Social Mind

Psychologists have too often neglected to consider an individual's mind as *a social mind*. Their approach has remained centered on "a solitary and, for the most part, purely intellectual being" (Levine, Resnick, and Higgins 1993, 586). Most ignore that cognition is a fundamentally social activity, which does not prevent people from thinking, perceiving, feeling, and acting in culture-specific ways (DiMaggio and Markus 2010, 349).<sup>11</sup> A burgeoning field of cultural psychology has emerged over the last decade and provided us with knowledge as to how culture shapes psychological processes (Lehman, Chiu, and Schaller 2004, for a review). Various paradigms have underscored the influence of culture on the human mind, but most studies subscribe to a stylized conception of culture, understood in terms of norms and values.<sup>12</sup> Culture is accordingly frequently conceived of as static, thereby reinforcing stereotypical images (Lehman, Chiu, and Schaller 2004). Finally, these studies are plagued by a lack of attention devoted to the manner in which individuals make use of culture mentally. While variations are observed, explanations are absent as to how the process of importation works. With

<sup>11</sup> For exceptions, see D'Andrade 1995; Fiske and Taylor 2013; Heine 2008; Kitayama and Cohen 2007; Levine, Resnick, and Higgins 1993; Markus and Kitayama 1994; Shweder 1991.

<sup>12</sup> See Alexander et al. (2012) for a critical discussion about culture grasped as norms and values.

few exceptions (Doise and Mugny 1984; Moscovici 1984; Vygotsky 1978), psychologists have left aside just how crucial *conversation is to internalizing cultural practices*, and interactive processes are undermined. Finally, casting social factors aside has led psychologists to forget that people do not rely on personal cognitions to act but on *socially shared meanings*. We can perform joint action thanks to meanings we hold in common,<sup>13</sup> the latter emerging through conversational interaction, as sociologists have stressed.

For sociologists, the mind is above all to be understood as a social optic constrained by the social world. As Zerubavel has claimed: “I experience the world not only personally, through my own senses, but also impersonally, through my mental membership in various social communities” (1997, 7). Sociologists hence conceive our minds as social constructs, and this involves a view of cognition as always particular, contingent upon specific cultural contexts. The mind, perceived as a thinking and perceiving “inner box” is therefore rooted in social processes. But how does the importation of the social occur?

Mead (1934) pioneered the investigation of the socially constructed aspects of one’s mind. For him, the importation of social processes is the outcome of a constant dialogue between two parts of the self: The “Me” and the “I.” The “Me” is the organized set of meanings about others and the social world, whereas the “I” is the response of the individual to the “Me.” For the American sociologist, the emergence of the mind is therefore contingent upon *social interaction*: It is constructed through an ongoing process where language and conversation are key. More recently, Zerubavel (1997) also stressed that the social construction of our minds is achieved through language and during conversations held in the communities we are part of. Such interactions allow us to construct *socially shared meanings*, which can lead us to perform joint action (Collins 2004; Fligstein and McAdam 2012). Without shared meanings, joint action is unlikely to occur.

Drawing on Mead’s work, we argue that activism undeniably relies on shared meanings that enable individuals to perform joint action. Two questions arise at this point. The first is deceptively simply: What are those shared meanings? A large part of our empirical analysis is devoted to the identification of activists’ shared meanings—and their shared understandings of

<sup>13</sup> Few psychologists refer to “shared meanings.” Resnick et al. (1991) and Levine et al. (1993) are among the few cognitivists who raise the issue of inter-subjectivity. They label “shared meanings” as “socially shared cognitions” whereas we refer to “shared meanings” and “socially shared cognitions” interchangeably.



common good and politics in particular. The second question follows from the first: How do activists develop shared meanings mentally? More specifically, how is the convergence of views on common good and politics possible? The task is to explain how social interactions fashion activists' shared understandings that allow them to perform joint action, which will be undertaken in the following section. But we need first to examine how social movement scholars have understood social interaction and its relation to contentious commitment.

Social interaction is a key concept in the literature on social movements. Contentious participation has been apprehended as a relational process (Tilly 2002). Activists are seen as highly interconnected, part of multiple attachments, and engaged in constant fluxes of interactions with their peers (e.g., Della Porta 1988; Diani 2015; Gould 1995; Klandermans 1997; Kriesi 1988; McAdam 1988; Mische 2003; Passy 1998a; Passy and Monsch 2014; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). Social interactions evidently play a crucial role in contentious activism. However, many processes are obscured by the somewhat totalizing notion of a social network. To specify how networks matter and influence contentious processes has become a recurrent concern for social movement scholars, who have worked hard to follow Wellman's (1988) advice to move "from metaphor to substance" (Diani 2003; McAdam 2003; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Passy 2003). The injunction is to understand the influence of networks on contention. This was an essential move toward a more refined comprehension of participation, but one that arguably suffered from structuralist and objectivist biases (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994), leading culture and meanings to be undermined. Seeking to reinscribe the cultural logics of meaning, social movement scholars started a new approach: "From structure to meanings," seeking to apprehend how meanings arise out of structures. In addition to the work of Emirbayer and Goodwin, scholars began to consider networks, not only as structural and instrumental settings but also as cultural ones, which depended on meanings and cognitions (Emirbayer 1997; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Emirbayer and Mische 1998).<sup>14</sup>

White's contribution was pivotal to our understanding of networks in terms of cultural setting. The conception he developed saw networks and

<sup>14</sup> Scholars developed different theoretical approaches to explore the relationship between networks and culture, starting with a relatively poor conception of the link, whereby networks were viewed as mere vehicles of cultural components, and arriving at the development of a richer conception, whereby networks and culture are understood as co-constructs (Mische 2014).

culture as co-constructs. Grounding his work in the interpretative turn of sociology and the theory of language, White argued that networks were “islands of meanings” (White 1992). For him, social networks are permeated by cultural components: discourse, meanings, and stories. Yet these elements also construct the networks. This view postulates that networks are not simply channels that feed an individual’s mind, but rather that they are formed thanks to meanings and narratives constructed through interaction. In this interpretative stance, networks are conceived as “inter-animation of talks and ties” (Mische and White 1998, 696).

White’s conception of networks is heuristically productive for social movement scholars. First, his perspective provides analytical tools that help us understand why activists share common meanings. Through talks and ties, the activist’s mind is enriched with and transformed by meanings derived from the social and political environment. Second, White’s perspective enables social movement scholars to have a better understanding of social networks. They are not merely structural platforms composed of nodes, ties, and some coordinated actions, but envelopes of meanings that shape commitment performances and the minds that carry them out. Finally, White allows us to apprehend the emergence and transformation of networks over time, as they are viewed not merely as the outcome of structural ties but also of stories, meanings, talks, and identities exchanged through ongoing interactions.

White’s conception parallels that of Mead to a certain extent, but also that of Tilly, the latter having made social movement scholars aware of the intrinsic relation between interaction and consciousness, identity, and interests (Tilly 1964, 1978, 2002, 2006).<sup>15</sup> Tilly’s more recent work clearly stressed how ongoing interactions shape the human mind: “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

<sup>15</sup> The work of Thompson (1963) and the more recent studies of Gould (1995) and Walder (2009) reveal similar findings: collective consciousness, identity, and interests emerge not from structural position but from interaction.

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” (Tilly 2001, 39–40).<sup>16</sup>

However, few empirical studies have been conducted to demonstrate the interplay between the activists’ meanings and conversational interactions advocated in White’s compelling theory. Polletta (2006) and Mische (2007) have enquired into the emergence and transformation of contentious performances through this interpretative lens. Polletta showed how narratives, meanings, and identities are constructed through communicational ties, and allow protest to occur, while Mische analyzed how contentious leaders, located at the intersection of multiple networks, are able to organize and transform contention through cross-talks. Likewise, few works have sought to scrutinize how social networks conceived of as “islands of meanings” shape the activist’s mind. Specifying the relational mechanisms behind contentious participation, McAdam and Paulsen (1993) and Passy (1998a, 2001, 2003) have shown that three relational processes help explain participation in contentious politics. One of these is the influence of interactions on the activist’s mind.<sup>17</sup> However, this research, including our own previously, is limited by two elements. First, the studies rely on a narrow view of activists’ minds by examining the influence of talks and ties on a limited set of cognitions (identity for McAdam and Paulsen, and problem and empowerment for Passy). Second, neither work examines the extent to which the activist’s mind reflects the commitment community he or she evolved in.

In the present study, we wish to corroborate White’s theoretical account with a specific focus on individuals’ minds, and expand on McAdam, Paulsen, and Passy’s studies by examining the broader cognitive baseline that enables activists to perform joint action and to sustain it. Indeed, we aim to demonstrate how the “interanimation of talks and ties” nourishes the activist’s mind and allows for the construction of shared meanings, which in turn leads to commitment.

<sup>16</sup> During his long and exciting intellectual life, Tilly got increasingly close to relational sociology and finally adopted a clear *relational perspective* in the 1990s (Collins 2004; Krinsky and Mische 2013; Passy 2009). This relational heuristic is visible throughout his work, be it in his theoretical writings, his studies on contention, social inequalities, state formation, and so forth (Tilly 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2008). Tilly’s readers know that macro-processes fascinated the author of *The Contentious French*. However, Tilly’s later works betray an interest in micro-processes too (Krinsky and Mische 2013).

<sup>17</sup> McAdam and Paulsen talk about a “positive/negative influence attempts” process, while Passy names the same process as a “decision-shaping” one.

## Conversational Interactions

Thanks to the work of interpretative sociologists and social movement scholars, we have stressed how influential social interactions are on the individual's mind. Questions nevertheless persist: How do relational processes shape an individual's mindscape? And how do interactions nourish the cognitive toolkit of people committed in activism?

As emphasized in Chapter 1, people mobilized in activism act collectively, in broader cultural settings we have called a *commitment community*. Therefore, once activists join contentious politics, volunteering, or unionism, they actually integrate a specific social network, laden with cultural components (White 1992). They evolve in social sites that shape their minds. This echoes Mannheim's words quoted in the introduction to this chapter: "It is not men in general who think, or even isolated individuals who do the thinking, but men in certain groups who have developed a particular style of thought." Commitment communities provide activists with particular styles of thought that allow them to construct socially shared meanings, which, in turn, allow them to engage in joint action with members of that community.

But how do communities provide activists with shared meanings? As with any social site, commitment communities are networks where shared meanings, stories, and identities are created and transformed through interactions between members and with outsiders. Commitment communities hence constitute networks in which *cultural scripts* circulate (e.g., Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Polletta 2006), each relying on specific cultural scripts. A community can therefore be said to constitute a cognitive world in its own right. The activists in our study are part of various organizations that belong to three distinct commitment communities: the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers voicing communities, which should specifically shape their shared understandings as to perceptions of common good and politics, and their conception of political citizenship.

When activists integrate a commitment community, they actually practice the cultural scripts available there (Mische 2007). But how are these scripts practiced? Essentially, through communication with peers (Mead 1934). Talking and disputing about issues, strategies, views on politics, or the contention that mobilized them allows activists to interact with their peers using their own cognitive toolkit as well as the cultural scripts that circulate in their community. By the same token, these ongoing conversations also construct, modify, and transform the cultural scripts and, by extension, the

network itself. Constant conversational interactions bear on activists' cognitive toolkits and allow them to *synchronize their understandings* with those of their peers, which leads to the construction of socially shared meanings that enable activists to perform joint action. Synchronization is hence an essential process in action and its sustainment, but it is a process that entails change, whether marginal or substantial. How, then, are worldviews adopted and integrated?

Psychologists and neuroscientists have emphasized the *plasticity of the human mind* (e.g., A. Clark 2007; D'Andrade 1995; Davidson, Jackson, and Kalin 2000; Gardner 2011; Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000; Mercado 2008). Both psychology and neuroscience provide evidence that people acquire new cognitions, and adapt and transform their cognitive toolkits throughout life. This finding overlaps with that of sociologists who underscore learning as a lifelong process (Sigel 1995). By all accounts, we are more open to change than past research on socialization has suggested. Psychologists, neuroscientists, and sociologists have provided abundant empirical evidence that shows how malleable our minds are. They also supply a theoretical grounding that helps us understand how our minds change. Actually, our minds are both stable and adaptive. The stable part relies on automatic cognitions, while the adaptive one operates with deliberative cognitions. Inner deliberation enables individuals to face nascent problems, to respond to new situations and interactions, and to improve upon responses judged to be inadequate. Deliberative cognitions, and mind plasticity more generally, therefore allow us to understand how activists seize opportunities to synchronize their minds. Integrating new social sites, such as commitment communities, they are able to store, modify, and discard cognitions.

Synchronization is nonetheless never fixed in time. Activists experience fluxes of communicational interactions and are therefore involved in a dynamic process that constantly challenges their worldviews, alters some of the meanings they had constructed, and even transforms some of their understandings. In addition, conversations draw on the cultural scripts available, but these scripts also modify and transform in the flux of social interaction. Synchronization is obviously an *ongoing process*.

Nor is synchronization a homogeneous process, which entails that activists within a commitment community "simply look in the same direction." Views can be synchronized, but not homogenized. Multiple scripts and stories circulate, and many shared meanings are practiced simultaneously in a community. Moreover, activists are involved in other social communities

(e.g., family, work, friends, leisure communities,) which shape their minds too. Hence, they must make sense of multiple meanings and organize their cognitive toolkit to suit the conversational interactions that occur in these different social sites. The integration of those multiple, and often conflicting and variegated, cognitions is a creative process, which also leaves room for *human agency*. This creative process is akin to what Levi-Strauss (1966) elegantly called “bricolage.” Given these factors, the homogenization of activists’ worldviews is therefore unlikely.

One could expect that once activists participate in collective endeavors, their views on activism would be synchronized. Yet activists have multiple opportunities for peer interaction but not all interactions lead to synchronization. Simply put, not all conversational interactions shape the activist’s mind. One question then arises: What are the relational mechanisms that enable individuals to develop shared meanings? Our previous research sought to specify why social networks matter to contentious processes (Passy 1998a, 2003; Passy and Monsch 2014), and we here trace the relational mechanisms that enable activists to synchronize their understandings. More concretely, we ask what are the relational mechanisms that allow synchronization to occur. We accordingly identify six distinct mechanisms presented in Figure 2.2 that have the potential to shape the activist’s mind.

*Direct interactions* (face-to-face conversations) obviously allow activists to synchronize their views with those held by their peers. However, most activists are passive members who seldom enter into direct communicational interactions with fellow activists. They nonetheless intermingle with the commitment community indirectly, through *mediated interactions*, the support material the organization produces, such as newspapers and newsletters. At stake is the question of whether mediated communicational interactions are sufficient to convince passive members to synchronize their understandings. Are active participants, who enjoy direct conversation with their peers, the only group able to do so? It is hence necessary to empirically examine whether direct interaction and mediated conversations are relational mechanisms equally apt to shape the activist’s mind, or if only one mechanism is required.

Conversations can of course take place in *formal networks*, within the commitment community. But they also occur in an activist’s *interpersonal network*. As established, passive members do not enjoy direct conversation in the formal networks. However, friends and relatives can be involved in the same commitment networks, or share concerns about the same social and

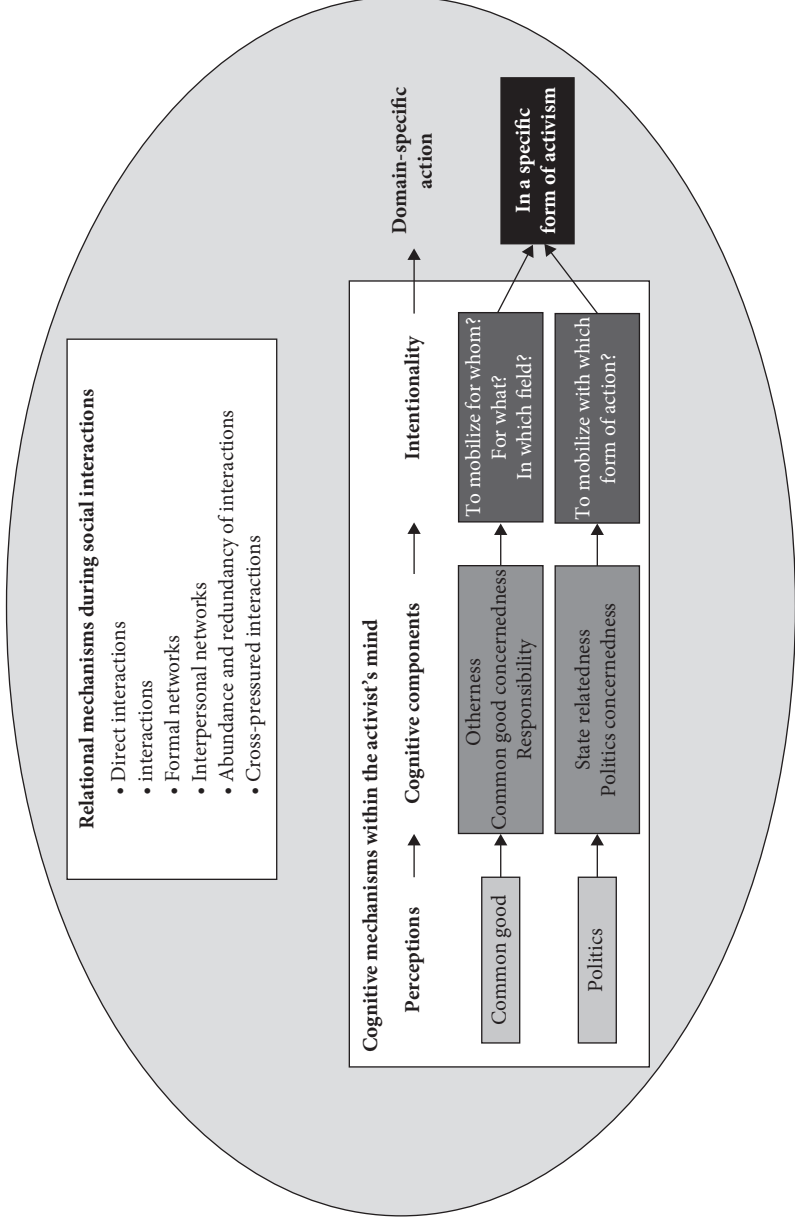


Figure 2.2 Relational mechanisms that shape the activist's mind

political issues. The flux of conversational interaction in this network can mean that passive members synchronize their views with fellow activists. We therefore consider whether conversational interactions activists enjoy within interpersonal networks are sufficient to synchronize their understandings with their active peers. Does this relational mechanism suffice for passive members to construct shared meanings, or is this process confined to direct interaction within the formal network, the commitment community?

Active members and community leaders enjoy dense and multiple interactions, especially as many of them are engaged in several spheres within their community. They usually are members of various groups or action campaigns and often evolve in an interpersonal network composed of friends or relatives involved in the same commitment site. We will question whether a multiplicity of spheres of interaction is essential to the nourishment of an activist's cognitive toolkit. We will also examine whether conversations that take place in only one sphere suffice to synchronize an activist's understandings. How does an *abundance* of interactions determine the development of activists' shared meanings about common good and politics?

Finally, some activists are engaged in several commitment communities and are therefore cross-pressured when it comes to conversations. As stated above, each commitment community relies on specific cultural scripts and socially shared meanings. The question is to what extent *cross-pressured interactions* shape an activist's mind. We empirically investigate whether cross-committed activists have a blended mind as a result of their adherence to multiple commitment communities, or if shared meanings from one commitment community prevail over those of another.

As Figure 2.2 indicates, various relational mechanisms are contrasted to evaluate the impact on the activist's mind. By no means do we want to suggest that those mechanisms exhaust the list of possible interactions that occur within a commitment community. Rather, we advance the notion that they constitute key relational mechanisms behind the shaping of the activist's mind. The empirical enquiry presented in Chapter 6, using both a deductive and inductive approach, will assess the six mechanisms (direct interactions, mediated interactions, interactions in formal networks, interactions in the interpersonal network, abundance of interactions, and cross-pressured interactions) discussed here and probe whether other relational mechanisms are at play.



## Sustaining Commitment

The interplay between the mind and conversational interactions enables action, but it also allows activists to sustain their participation. In this section, we seek to explain how shared meanings relate to the sustainment of commitment. But beforehand, a short detour through the literature on social movements is necessary. As discussed in Chapter 1, we know little about what happens during action as few researchers have questioned how activists maintain commitment. Contention is improbable if participation is not sustained (Tilly 1978, 2008). Several studies have indeed shown that sustaining commitment is a form of behavior more frequent than it is rare (Corrigan-Brown 2012; Passy 1994; 1998b).<sup>18</sup>

The few scholars who have paid attention to the sustainment of participation identify two cardinal factors: social interactions and the activist's mind. Examining how participation is sustained in the Swedish temperance movement, Sandell (1999) found that activists with close friends engaged in the same movement were more likely to uphold commitment over time: Friendship discourages people from leaving their commitment behind. McPherson and his colleagues (1992) revealed similar conclusions. However, they emphasized that the quality and number of ties are factors to be taken into account, an observation with which Corrigan-Brown (2012) concurs. *Strong ties and dense interactions* enable activists to persist in contentious action.<sup>19</sup>

Other scholars have seized on the importance of *cognitions* in sustaining activism. Drury and Reicher (2009), for example, have shown that participation generates a social-psychological transformation. This process necessitates two cognitive mechanisms: identity and empowerment. Participation emboldens one's identity, enabling commitment to a specific cause. It also reinforces one's capacity to oppose dominant groups and authorities. Whittier's study (1995) on radical feminists in the United States underlined the centrality of cognitions (identity in particular) to the sustainment of activism. Klandermans's insightful contribution pointed out that both motivational and relational factors concur to explain persistence in

<sup>18</sup> Sustaining commitment in volunteering action is not that rare a behavior either (see Wilson 2000, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Those results suggest that the organizational setting in which activists evolve increases, or decreases, the possibility of their sustaining participation. Less hierarchical organizational settings lead to higher likelihoods of sustained commitment. According to McPherson et al. and Corrigan-Brown, horizontal organizational settings increase the volume of interactions between activists.

contentious participation. Like scholars who stressed that social ties matter for one to join contentious action, Klandermans (1997) pointed out that individuals must be embedded in social networks, and tied to fellow activists, in order to pursue their contentious activity. Furthermore, he includes motivational factors in his explanation and shows that if activists perceive a higher ratio of benefits to costs they are more likely to maintain their contentious effort. For Klandermans, both cognitive and relational processes contribute to the maintenance of an activist's commitment.

These studies teach us that social interactions and cognitions are crucial to the sustainment of participation. However, despite their pioneering quality, these studies have two shortcomings. First, most of them assess the impact of ties and cognitions separately (e.g., Drury and Reicher 2009; McPherson, Popielarz, and Drobnic 1992; Sandell 1999). They do not link these factors together with the aim of examining sustainment. Second, scholars who investigate the relation between motivations and interactions, as Klandermans does, adopt a "realist view" of networks,<sup>20</sup> which means that they understand networks in their structural and instrumental dimensions. This concerns Klandermans, but it also applies to scholars who argued that ties prevent departure from commitment (McPherson, Popielarz, and Drobnic 1992; Sandell 1999). The interpretative dimension of networks is hence overlooked.

Yet the influence of the interpretative side of social networks is a vital aspect if we are interested in understanding how participation is sustained. Work by Rupp and Taylor (1987) has been cardinal in this respect. They showed that during the McCarthy era, when few opportunities for mobilization were available, the women's rights movement was able to survive thanks to the ties among activists. In addition, the network offered the next generation of feminists a path into the arena of contentious politics. Structural and instrumental dimensions of networks obviously play a part in the sustainment of activism. However, networks, replete with talks and ties, played a crucial role too. Thanks to interpersonal exchanges, activists rehearsed cultural scripts that secured their identities, stories, and meanings despite the repressive atmosphere instigated by McCarthyism. Two more studies can be said to subscribe to this interpretative stance. Whittier's study (1995) of radical feminist networks describes a process that binds talks and ties, thereby enabling shared meanings and identities to be maintained, which,

<sup>20</sup> For a critical assessment of the "realist view" of social networks in sociology, see Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994).

in turn, helped sustain contention, while Corrigan-Brown (2012) explained that networks matter to sustained participation because they embolden an activist's identity in relation to the contentious group. The cultural dimension of social interactions therefore appears to be intrinsic to the sustainment of commitment.

In this book, we seek to underscore how conversational interactions and understandings help activists maintain their commitment. We propose to formalize the process alluded to in work by Rupp and Taylor (1987), Whittier (1992), and Corrigan-Brown (2012). How does the "interanimation of talks and ties" sustain commitment? Although it is a complex relation, the mind and action are intimately tied. We have already discussed the relation between mind and action. This relation echoes the world of William James, often considered the father of psychology: "My thinking is first and last and always for the sake of my doing" ([1890] 1938, 960). The sociologist Monroe expressed a similar view, stating: "Perception effectively delineates and sets the domain of choice options perceived as available to an actor" (1996, 12). Action ensues from thoughts: Our "mental horizon" therefore defines the repertoire of our possible action (Zerubavel 1997). While action is unlikely to occur without prior thought, action shapes the mind too. A *non-recursive process* is hence at work between thinking and acting, configured as an ongoing process.

Performing action *reinforces activists' understandings* about the commitment itself. But how? Activists' perform joint action because they mentally elaborate shared meanings about the aim and means of their commitment, which are reinforced and legitimized once action takes place. As underlined by new developments in the theory of Fishbein and Ajzen, past behavior impacts the beliefs, attitudes, and cognitions that set human intention (Albarracín et al. 2001; Boster et al. 2014).<sup>21</sup> As political scientists, we know that interest in politics favors participation in politics, but the opposite is also true: Participation strengthens political interest. To miss the bidirectional nature of this relation would hence be to misunderstand it entirely.

Individuals can face two distinct situations. First, if action resonates with their meanings, it tends to sharpen their worldviews. This situation is more likely to occur in activism. Because activists develop shared meanings in order to act collectively, their commitment should be aligned with their mindset. Otherwise said, their understandings regarding the aims and

<sup>21</sup> See Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) for a review of their theory.

means of commitment should be legitimized and reinforced through commitment. A *virtuous circle* hence takes place between action and the mind, enabling sustained commitment. By contrast, if the action does not resonate with the understandings activists have constructed, a dissonance between their action and their worldviews leads individuals to modify or transform their views through interactions with their peers, with the aim of attaining a harmony of views, or, if the gap between action and worldviews is too wide, the dissonance culminates in their departure from the community.

### A Cognitive-Relational Process

To conclude this theoretical chapter, let us summarize *the cognitive-relational process*. Throughout the chapter we have highlighted how critical the mind is to the performance of action, and how conversational interactions allow activists to construct socially shared meanings. The mind, interactions, and action are the three cardinal points that guide our understanding of the cognitive-relational process, sketched out in Figure 2.3.

The cognitive-relational process unfolds in four steps. It begins with the activist's participation in an organization or action campaign. Once an activist joins activism, he or she *integrates a commitment community*. There, *conversational interactions* with peers take place and available cultural scripts are practiced. These help *shape the activist's mind*. But specific relational mechanisms are at work in the construction of socially shared meanings. In addition, not all the activist's mental dispositions are affected by those conversations: Only those tied to the domain-specific field of experience of activism are thus shaped, while specific cognitive mechanisms set the activist's intentionality. The interplay between mind and interaction allows an activist to enter a process of *mind synchronization* with peers that enables him or her to elaborate shared meanings and, in turn, perform joint action. A virtuous circle is hence inaugurated, whereby conversations, socially shared cognitions, and joint action allow activists to commit and sustain their commitment.

The cognitive-relational process examined in this book unfolds during action and takes place in a particular location in the continuum of an individual's participation in activism: after joining a collective endeavor, and before leaving it. In both processes (joining and leaving) the activist's mind and social interactions are at work, along with other factors. As shown

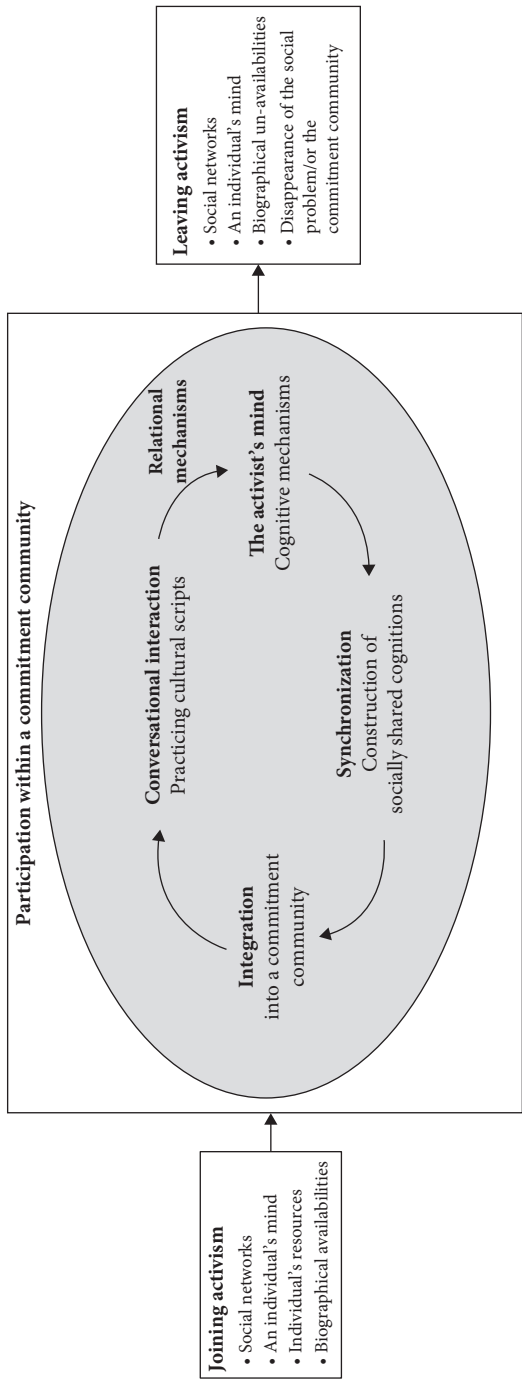


Figure 2.3 The cognitive-relational process in the continuum of participation

in Figure 2.3, the journey into collective action is initiated once a person joins a specific contentious group, volunteering organization, or union. *Social interactions* are key in drawing individuals into activism. Karl Marx ([1852] 1996) already singled out the importance of ties to rebellion.<sup>22</sup> *The individual's mind* is at stake too. The cognitive toolkit allows the person to be concerned about certain social problems, to be aware of certain political conflicts, and to identify with certain groups that gear the individual toward activism.<sup>23</sup> *Individual resources* are also important in the game of commitment. This sociological concept has been identified by social movement scholars through the notion of social networks (and the idea of social capital), as well as through our concept of the individual's mind (values, attitudes, or worldviews as inner resources); also, other resources, like education, are instrumental to joining activism.<sup>24</sup> Finally, *biographical availabilities* constitute an important facilitator in the joining of contentious action (McAdam 1988). Social interactions, the human mind, personal resources, and biographical availabilities are hence the key factors we see as enabling people to join collective endeavors.<sup>25</sup>

If the interplay between mind and interaction is crucial to joining commitment, it is also the force behind the decision to leave it. Once activists no longer enjoy conversations with their peers, the virtuous circle between mind, interaction, and joint action fades away, and a progressive disengagement from the community occurs. Activists can also decide to exit once collective action no longer resonates with their mindset. In both processes the *activist's mind* and interaction with *social networks* remain fundamental. *Biographical availabilities* can also help explain the exit process. If personal constraints change, this inevitably affects the individual's ability to maintain commitment. Finally, the *disappearance of the social problem* (and that of the commitment community), as was the case with the anti-apartheid

<sup>22</sup> Since Marx, scholars have specified three main influences of social interactions: they enable a structural platform to emerge thereby providing an opportunity for mobilization to potential activists (e.g., Blee 2002; Diani 1995; 2015; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Morris 1984); they strategically connect individuals to a commitment community (e.g., Della Porta 1995; Diani 1995, 2015; McAdam 1982; Snow et al. 1986); finally, networks intervene culturally by shaping the activists' minds. Recruiters try to convince potential activists to join the collective effort by erasing, modifying, and transforming some cognitions (Kitts 2000; Krinsky 1999; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Passy 2003; Passy and Giugni 2001; Passy and Monsch 2014; Whittier 1995)

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Jasper 1997; Klandermans 1997; Kriesi 1988; McAdam 1982; Eder 1993; Passy 1998a.

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Klandermans 1997; Kriesi 1993, 1995; McAdam 1988; Morales 2009; Passy 1998a.

<sup>25</sup> The literature on volunteering also highlights such facilitating factors (e.g., Eckstein 2001; Handy and Hustinx 2009; McFarland and Thomas 2006; Musick and Wilson 2007; Schnabel 2003; Snyder and Omoto 1992; Wilson 2000; Wuthnow 1995).

movement once democracy was achieved in South Africa in 1994, inevitably leads to an exit process.

Let us rehearse what we view as our main contributions. Relying on philosophers and sociologists who have explored the centrality of the human mind on individuals' action, we argue here that the activist's mind is a central piece in the puzzle of activist commitment, either in the form of contentious politics, volunteering, or unionism. But what can we say that is new? First, we stress how the mind concretely affects action. Endorsing findings by social psychologists, who argue that cognitions are domain specific, *we identify the main cognitive dimensions involved in activism*. We postulate that understandings of common good and politics enable people to commit in collective endeavors and further concretize the impact of the mind on activism by relying on contributions from psychologists who have proposed that complex bonds exist between the mind and action. This means that broad understandings about common good and politics are not directly linked to activism, but that various cognitive mechanisms bind worldviews to more specific cognitive components that set an activist's intentionality. This ultimately orients his or her action toward a particular form of activism. We therefore aim to identify *the cognitive channels at work during this process*.

Second, drawing on the interpretative tradition in sociology and the idea that human minds are essentially social entities, we argue that conversational interactions shape the activist's mind. Again, we seek to spell out the impact of social interactions and the relational channels at work. Communicational interactions enable *the process of mind synchronization* that allows activists to socially construct shared meanings behind the performance of joint action. Talks and disputes lead activists to fashion understandings of common good and politics, as well as a specific view about democracy. Although mind synchronization occurs in the wake of a relational process, *specific relational mechanisms* allow activists to construct the shared meanings that define their action.

Finally, the interaction between the mind and conversations allows us to highlight *the cognitive-relational process* at work once activists commit. This process enables activists to perform joint action and to maintain commitment. Yet, as stated, this process is not fixed in time but evolves according to the interactions between activists. Change is therefore likely to occur, but not at random. Because conversational interactions occur in commitment communities, changes depend on the stock of knowledge and the cultural scripts available there. Changes are hence path dependent.

Our contribution arises from cross-disciplinary enquiries between psychology and sociology initiated at least two decades ago (e.g., Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004; Cerulo 2002; DiMaggio 1997; DiMaggio and Markus 2010; Massey 2002; Wuthnow 2007; Zerubavel 1997). Di Maggio's pioneering work spelled out a more complex view of culture and a more refined understanding of cognition and thereby enabled the interdisciplinary dialogue (e.g., DiMaggio 1997) we hope to further.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the aim of this book arises from the interface of sociology of culture and cognitive psychology to grasp how cognitions, culture, and action interact.<sup>27</sup> We therefore hope to contribute to what Zerubavel called "a truly comprehensive science of the mind" (Zerubavel 1997, 4; see also Cerulo 2010).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, sociologists understood culture as fragmented and inconsistent in its manifestation and further conceived it as a cognitive resource that could be put to strategic use (e.g., Martin 1992; Sewell 1992; Swidler 1986). On the other hand, psychologists no longer understand cognition as general and universal, but domain specific. In this perspective, cognition becomes richer in content (including culture) than the formal intellectual models that psychologists were preoccupied with (e.g., D'Andrade 1995; Levine, Resnick, and Higgins 1993; Shweder 1990).

<sup>27</sup> In this respect, we use the term "cognitions" from psychology, and "meanings" from interpretative sociology, interchangeably. When we use the term "cognitions" we refer to socially shared meanings as understood in the interpretative sociological tradition. When we refer to "meanings" we do not overlook the cognitive processes that bind cognition to action, as psychologists stress.

<sup>28</sup> Zerubavel (1997) has called the exchanges between psychologists and sociologists "the cognitive sociology," while Cerulo (2010) opts for the "sociology of the mind." Psychologists also call for a better integration of cognitive and sociological accounts in the study the human mind, labeled as the "field of sociocognition" by Levine et al. (Levine, Resnick, and Higgins 1993).



### 3

## Synchronized Minds

We are symbol-making creatures, who spin webs of meaning around ourselves. We proliferate metaphors and language for describing the world; we elaborate theories, hypotheses, and predictions to satisfy our curiosity; and we tell each other story after story.

Jasper (1997, 10)

In the previous chapters, we examined the meanings held by the seventy-year-old Greenpeace activist Margot and the sixty-five-year-old Simone, a defender of migrants' rights. Both perceive common good in universalist terms and as a question of social justice. They also share an understanding of politics in which civil society should intervene to increase state accountability. Is this a coincidence? After all, the causes they are committed to are rather different. Or can this commonality be explained through their careers as activists? Both are part of the same generation and can boast many years of active commitment. At this point, we want to advance an alternative explanation, embedded in Jasper's words: that human beings are symbol-making creatures, who spin community-specific webs of meanings around themselves. The process of integration into a commitment community sees activists interact, practice cultural scripts, and synchronize their minds, allowing community-specific understandings of common good and politics to emerge.

In this chapter, we take a preliminary empirical step that aims to evaluate whether this assumption can be confirmed. Postulating that there is such a thing as a *specific activist mind* requires us to ask four empirical questions, which structure this chapter. First, assuming that activists develop shared cognitions through conversational interaction and the practice of cultural scripts, do activists possess different understandings of common good and politics when compared with the Swiss population more generally? Second, are these shared cognitions community-specific? We answer this question

by comparing the minds of activists of the moral voicing, Christian aid, and radical workers' voicing community. Third, do activists who evolve in the same commitment site, but who are mobilized in different organizations, on different social problems, and with different commitment intensities rely on shared meanings to perform joint action? We address this question by comparing activists from three organizations of the moral voicing community, and by a comparison of active and passive members within the same organization.<sup>1</sup> Fourth, do all activists qualify as strong citizens, concerned by common good and politics? We will assess the types of democratic cultures encountered within these communities.

One may ask *why these questions matter* at all? Well, if activists possess a particular understanding of common good and politics compared to the general population, this could indicate that their minds are shaped by participation and that social interactions and the practice of cultural scripts within activist communities do indeed matter. Additionally, if moral voicing, Christian aid and workers' voicing activists have developed different meanings, it suggests that the transmission of specific worldviews occurs within each commitment community. Such a result reinforces the relevance of our cognitive-relational perspective as it demonstrates that activists

<sup>1</sup> We measured commitment intensity with the following question: "What is currently your commitment within [SAB, GP, STP, Caritas, Unia]? Please check all activities in which you participate." The responses were adapted to the respective organization: SAB activists could tick the following categories: (1) I pay my subscription to the association; (2) I participate in demonstrations / campaigns organized by SAB or a member organization of SAB; (3) I participate in the organization of demonstrations / campaigns organized by SAB or a member organization of SAB; (4) I participate in a working group(s); (5) I participate regularly at general assemblies; (6) I am part of the committee. Greenpeace activists could tick the following categories: (1) I am a (paid-up) member; (2) I participate in campaigns/activities organized by Greenpeace (petitions, demonstrations, online activities, etc.); (3) I participate in the "Youth Sun Project"; (4) I am a volunteer, I participate in a voluntary group(s); (5) I am an activist, I participate in actions (blocking the transportation of nuclear waste, the destruction of genetically modified corn, stop whaling ships, etc.). STP activists could tick the following categories: (1) I am a donor, I support (have supported) STP with one/several donations; (2) I am a member, I regularly support STP; (3) I participate in demonstrations / campaigns organized by STP; (4) I participate in the organization of demonstrations / campaigns organized by STP; (5) I am part of the committee. Caritas volunteers could tick the following categories: (1) I am a sympathizer, I support the association by financial means; (2) I participate in demonstrations / campaigns organized by Caritas; (3) I participate in the organization of demonstrations / campaigns organized by Caritas; (4) I am a volunteer; (5) I am part of the committee or a commission of Caritas Geneva. Unia activists could respond to the following categories: (1) I am a member; (2) I participate in demonstrations / campaigns organized by Unia; (3) I participate in the organization of demonstrations / campaigns organized by Unia; (4) I participate in one or several working group(s). All respondents who checked only (1) (and (2) for STP members) are categorized as passive members. We also recognized SAB as an umbrella organization that accommodates many passive members who are actually active members in their regional organization, and took this into account. We controlled this with an additional question for this group aimed at establishing whether they are members of another organization that defends migrants' rights and whether they are active or passive members in that organization.

possess specific mindsets. But it also suggests that the process underpinning these particular understandings consists of social interactions, which ultimately lead to synchronization within the communities. We discuss the importance of social interactions extensively in Chapter 6.

Before delving into activists' understandings of common good, politics, and political citizenship, a presentation of their social and political profile is necessary. While our main argument is that activists are involved in commitment sites that shape their minds through conversational interactions, we should also acknowledge that these activists evolve in specific social circles. Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that individuals committed to activism come from specific segments of society, which are reflected in their political behavior (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Eder 1993; Kriesi 1988; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The next section of this chapter outlines the sociological and political profile of the activists from the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing communities.

### The Activists

Mobilization for political action follows political and social conflict lines, so-called politicized social cleavages (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Consequently, the workers' voicing community originates from the labor movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when class was an important mobilizing force. In a similar vein, the moral voicing community is the political translation of another social cleavage: the so-called post-industrial cleavage. Appearing in the sixties, it was animated by a concern for social justice, individuals' emancipation, and toward the emergent risk society<sup>2</sup> (Kriesi 1993). Protest actors therefore have a particular political potential and individuals who join in political action have a high probability of belonging to a specific social and political profile. Social and political anchorages are thus important identifiers that delimit the mobilization potential (Klandermans 1997). This concept draws our attention to the fact that not every individual is sensitized to a specific issue and has the same probability to be recruited. Contrary to the moral and the workers' voicing community, the Christian aid community is not reducible to a particular

<sup>2</sup> For Anthony Giddens (1998), a risk society is "a society increasingly preoccupied with the future." Ulrich Beck (1992, 21) defines risk society as "a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself."

political cleavage. Yet, do they still mobilize a particular segment of the population? According to Table 3.1, this is clearly the case. Table 3.1 highlights the social anchorage of activists and of the Swiss population—in particular, social classes, level of education, religious practices, and generational representation within these communities. The most general result we observe is that particular social profiles evolve in these communities. But let us discuss these indicators one after the other.

If we compare activists with the general population, particular sectors of *social classes* are overrepresented in these organizations. For the three organizations of the moral voicing community (Solidarity across Borders, Society for Threatened Peoples, and Greenpeace), previous research has shown that citizens from the new middle class were, and are, the essential carriers of the post-industrial contention (Cotgrove and Duff 1980; Eder 1993; Kriesi 1989; Passy 1998a). Within the new middle class, socio-cultural specialists are particularly dominant, and the empirical evidence confirms this. The new middle class is largely overrepresented within moral voicing activists. By contrast, members of the bourgeoisie and the working class are less frequently mobilized in these political struggles. Individuals from the new middle class, socio-cultural specialists in particular, are most frequently mobilized. For all three moral voicing organizations, we detect a similar social anchorage. The mobilization potential of the Society for Threatened Peoples and Greenpeace is very similar. The social anchorage of Solidarity across Borders activists, by contrast, is somewhat more specific, as they are almost exclusively mobilized within the new middle class. This could be a result of the highly challenging nature of this political conflict, leading to a narrower mobilization potential.

Our results show a comparable distribution for the Christian aid community. The new middle class is overrepresented while the working class is largely underrepresented. What distinguishes Christian aid volunteers from moral voicing activists is that the Christian aid community is composed of more managers and fewer socio-cultural specialists. Further, Caritas is able to recruit slightly more members from the bourgeoisie, especially from self-employed professionals and large employers. Nonetheless, this type of activism mobilizes specific segments of the social world too. Not all classes are similarly represented within the organization as they are within the Swiss society.

Unsurprisingly, working-class activism mobilizes a different class segment from that participating in the other two communities. With regard to the Swiss population, the working class and especially qualified employees

**Table 3.1** The Social Profile of Moral Voicing, Christian Aid and Workers' Voicing Activists

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists	Swiss population
	SAB %	STP %	GP %			
<b>Social class</b>						
<i>Bourgeoisie</i>	6	10	7	12	4	17
<i>Self-employed and large employers</i>	5	6	5	9	1	5
<i>Small business owners</i>	1	4	2	3	3	12
<i>New middle class</i>	93	73	79	73	31	40
<i>Socio-cultural specialists</i>	62	41	37	30	5	13
<i>Technical specialists</i>	5	8	16	7	10	9
<i>Managers</i>	26	24	26	36	16	18
<i>Working class</i>	1	18	15	14	66	44
<i>Qualified employees</i>	1	15	12	13	50	34
<i>Unqualified employees</i>	0	3	3	1	16	10
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	488	309	506	530	666	3849
	<i>n/s</i>	—	<i>n/s</i>	<i>n/s</i>	<i>n/s</i>	—
<i>Commitment intensity (Cramers' V)</i>						
<b>Level of education</b>	1	3	3	3	14	12
<i>Compulsory school</i>	25	21	23	30	62	41
<i>Apprenticeship</i>	8	23	16	18	9	15
<i>College education</i>	66	54	59	50	15	32
<i>University education</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	621	367	585	566	762	4352
	<i>n/s</i>	—	<i>n/s</i>	—,21***	<i>n/s</i>	—
<i>Commitment intensity (Cramers' V)</i>						

<b>Religious services</b>									
Regularly	50	13	10	49	17	20			
Irregularly	25	33	28	26	36	42			
Never	26	54	62	25	47	38			
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			
<i>(n)</i>	408	377	590	586	743	1257			
<i>Commitment intensity (Gamma)</i>	<i>ns</i>	—	-.31***	.23**	.15*	—			
<b>Generations</b>									
Generation Y (1981-1998)	1	38	16	3	7	11			
Generation X (1965-1980)	11	31	35	10	20	31			
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	49	25	38	33	49	33			
WW2 Generation (1922-1945)	39	7	12	55	24	25			
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%			
<i>(n)</i>	611	380	645	589	762	1258			
<i>Commitment intensity (Cramers' V)</i>	<i>ns</i>	—	-.26***	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	—			

Note: SAB = Solidarity across Borders, STP = Society for Threatened Peoples, GP = Greenpeace.

Wright inspired the construction of the social class variable (Wright 1978; see also Oesch 2006). We used the current work position of the activists and his or her partner, their types of job (ISCO-classification), and the pair's level of education to construct the social class indicator. We measured activists' level of education with the following question: "What is the highest education you have achieved? For religious services, we asked respondents: "Except for marriages, funerals and baptisms, how many times do you attend a religious service of your confession?" For the Swiss population, data on social class, level of education, and religious practices come from the Swiss Electoral Studies (2007), and that on generation from the European Values Summary (2008). Cramers' V compared active members with passive ones; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

are overrepresented while the bourgeoisie is largely underrepresented. The middle class is well represented within workers' voicing activists with the exception of socio-cultural specialists. As stipulated before, an important share of Unia activists belongs to the white-collar labor force. Technocrats and managers allow for an important mobilization of the middle class. They come from the craft, construction, or industrial sectors where most of their members work. Nevertheless, workers' rights activism remains a collective action of a particular class. Unia mobilizes a specific segment of the social world and is composed of activists who are not participants in the post-industrial movement or Christian aid volunteerism.

If we compare levels of *education* between commitment communities and the general population, we find that these communities mobilize particular educational levels. Activists in moral voicing communities have benefited from high levels of university education. In fact, more than half have obtained a university degree. Likewise, Christian aid activists mainly recruit highly educated individuals. Half of all activists have completed a university degree, which is substantially more than the general population. However, juxtaposed to the moral voicing community, they gather more activists, especially active members (Cramer's V of  $-.21^{***}$ ),<sup>3</sup> who completed their education with an apprenticeship. Yet, this number is not comparable with the workers' voicing community, as six out of ten Unia activists finished their education with an apprenticeship. Education patterns confirm what we have observed for social classes: Particular segments are mobilized in our commitment communities and these segments vary between commitment communities.

Alongside social class and education, we took *religious anchorage* into account. Switzerland, like most Western societies, is strongly secularized and attendance at religious services is rather exceptional. However, in Switzerland, churches are locations of many mobilizations, notably those related to migration and human rights. Furthermore, given the Catholic background of Caritas, it is interesting to compare the religious anchorage of the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing communities. Generally, we find that none of the commitment communities shows a similar constellation compared to the general population: Concerning religion, they are either exceedingly or hardly observant. The level of religious anchorage is

<sup>3</sup> Cramer's V is a coefficient of statistical association calculating the relation between two variables (similar to Pearson's R or Gamma). Cramer's V is used in tables which have more than  $2 \times 2$  rows and columns.

issue specific and not homogenous within the moral voicing community. While activists from the Society for Threatened Peoples, and active members of Greenpeace especially, show very low levels of participation in religious services (more than half of them never attend any), activists from Solidarity across Borders have a strong religious background. One explanation is that churches play a crucial role in the defense of migrants' rights. Church occupations are even a regular form of action, which means that interactions between church actors and activists take place frequently. Activists from Solidarity across Borders share this characteristic with Christian aid volunteers. Given the Catholic background of Caritas, this does not come as a surprise. Active members of Caritas are even more observant than passive members. In addition to a lower level of education, their religious anchorage is a second characteristic that separates active from passive members within the Christian aid community. Within the workers' rights community, active members are also somewhat more religious than passive members. In the aggregate, however, they do not share the same strong religious background with Christian aid volunteers. Coming perhaps closest to the Swiss population, they are intensely secular, as almost half never attend religious services.

Activist communities have particular social anchorages in terms of social class, education, and religion. In addition, specific *generations* are overrepresented as demonstrated by a closer look at the distribution of age groups. We split age into four generations. The youngest (born between 1981 and 1998) represent Generation Y, followed by Generation X (1965–1980). A third category (1946–1964) is the Baby Boomers generation, and the last (1922–1945) is the WW2 (World War II) Generation. Within the moral voicing community, we observe that specific generations are more or less dominant in different organizations. The majority of activists from Solidarity across Borders belong to older generations compared to activists from the Society for Threatened Peoples and Greenpeace. In relation to the general population, the two oldest generations, Baby Boomers and WW2 Generation, are overrepresented in the defense of migrants' rights, while younger generations dominate in the other two groups. The generational distribution of Greenpeace activists is perhaps closest to the general population, as the typical Greenpeace activist, the active members in particular, belongs to a younger generation than the defender of migrants' rights. Activists from the Society for Threatened Peoples are overrepresented in the youngest generation too. This result is somewhat puzzling as all three political conflicts belong to the post-industrial movement, which was launched by Baby



Boomers in the late sixties and throughout the seventies. An explanation of this result is that the defense of collective minorities' rights and environmental protection was adopted and transformed by younger generations, contributing to the persistence of these issues. By contrast, the challenging nature of the migrants' rights conflict may explain why an older generation dominates this political issue. In fact, organizations that defend the rights of minorities or that protect the environment may manage the mobilization of younger generations better, due to the less challenging character of both political struggles. Perhaps commitment to a challenging issue requires some activist experience and a denser network to resist the harshness of the political climate, as is the case for the defense of migrants' rights.

Compared to moral voicing activists, Christian aid volunteerism seems age defined, as more than half of the activists were born before 1945.<sup>4</sup> This result can be explained by the secularization of the population, making it difficult for a religious organization to sustain a large membership base by attracting younger volunteers. Finally, workers' rights activists are overrepresented in the Baby Boomers generation. However, the explanation has less to do with generation than with professional life. As additional analyses have shown, unionists typically start their commitment career quite late and tend to put an end to their participation shortly after retirement. Only activists between the ages of thirty-six and sixty-five are overrepresented in relation to the general population, and this suggests that Unia is constantly challenged by rather a high membership turnover (Oesch 2012). To summarize, the social anchorage of the moral voicing, the Christian aid, and the workers' voicing community is hence distinct from the broader Swiss population. Moreover, the mobilization potential varies between different forms of activism as the comparison between communities has shown.

The particular social anchorage of these activists translates into a specific *political profile*. In Table 3.2, we observe a particular political anchorage in terms of party support with regard to the Swiss population for the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing communities. As expected, all forms of activism clearly sympathize more with leftist parties than with the larger Swiss population. This result confirms what we stated in the first chapter. We are faced with particular communities, not only when they are compared with the Swiss population but also regarding the spectrum of

<sup>4</sup> This result also justifies our selection of interview cases on the basis of age (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1).

Table 3.2 The Political Profile of Moral Voicing, Christian Aid and Workers' Voicing Activists

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists	Swiss population
	SAB %	STP %	GP %	Caritas %	Unia %	%
<b>Political positioning</b>						
Radical Left	7	5	3	3	15	1
Left	84	70	81	50	57	34
Right	9	22	12	45	19	39
Radical Right	0	2	4	2	9	26
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Commitment intensity (Cramers' V)</i>	359	257	463	402	439	1713
	.15*	—	.16*	ns	.22***	—
<b>Political discussion</b>						
A lot	40	32	29	29	25	19
Somewhat	33	24	26	21	23	18
A little	16	23	23	23	21	23
No discussion	11	21	22	27	32	41
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<i>Commitment intensity (Gamma)</i>	610	381	632	553	713	1224
	ns	—	.21**	ns	.23**	—

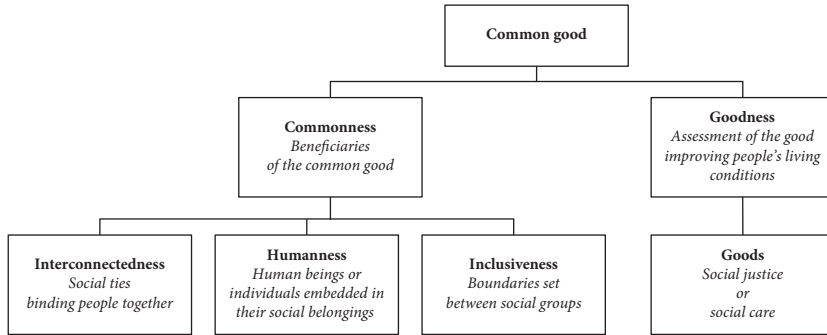
Note: SAB = Solidarity across Borders, STP = Society for Threatened Peoples, GP = Greenpeace.

For political position, we asked the following question: "Are you a member of a political party? If yes which one? If no, which is the political party you feel closest to?" The comparison with the Swiss population is made on the basis of respondents who declared a partisan identification, representing only 35% of the respondents (Swiss Electoral Studies 2007). We included the following parties within the four categories: Radical Left (Swiss Labor Party), Left (Social Democratic Party, Green Party), Right (Liberals, Christian Democratic People's Party, Conservative Democratic Party, Green Liberal Party, Christian Social Party, Liberal Party of Switzerland, Federal Democratic Union, Evangelical People's Party), Radical Right (Swiss People's Party, Ticino League, Swiss Democrats). We measured political discussions with the following question: "If you think about your life with your parents when you were fourteen, how often did you discuss politics with them?" Data for the Swiss population stems from the European Values Survey (2008). Cramers' V compared active members with passive ones; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

social movements, third sector organizations, and unions. Moral voicing activism is definitely a political struggle of left-wing oriented individuals. At least three out of four activists sympathize with left-wing parties. We just have seen that Christian aid activists have a rather similar social profile to that of moral voicing activists, but this is not confirmed when it comes to political profiles. Actually, activists from Caritas are evenly split between left- and right-wing orientation (the Christian Democratic Party in particular). Together with observations made regarding their sociological profile, where we pointed to the overrepresentation of managers within the new middle class and a comparatively higher share of lower educational levels, we begin to observe particularities between the moral voicing and the Christian aid community. Workers' voicing activists share their political anchorage with moral voicing activists to a large extent. However, they display somewhat more radical political orientations than other commitment communities, as active members especially sympathize with the radical left, notably with the Swiss Labor Party.

The second dimension for an activist's political profile that we explore is the level of *political discussions* held with their parents when the activists were teenagers. It shows that activists of all communities benefited from a rather important political socialization when compared to the general population. In fact, more than two thirds of all activists frequently discussed politics with their parents. Yet the level of political socialization during youth varies between activists' communities. Moral voicing activists, and defenders of migrants' rights in particular, enjoyed more political discussions as teenagers than did Christian aid volunteers and workers' rights activists. In addition, active members also tended to have more political discussions with their parents than did passive members. This is what we find for Greenpeace and Unia activists. By contrast, a highly challenging political conflict, like the defense of migrants' rights, requires fairly high political socialization for all members involved. Finally, as a third sector organization without political claims, active and passive members of Caritas also share similar levels of political socialization.

With this brief overview, we have seen that our activists have a specific social and political anchorage with regard to the general population. Moreover, different commitment communities do not share the same mobilization potential. We saw that in the moral voicing and Christian aid communities, the social classes and educational levels that are mobilized are different from those the the workers' rights community. Religion and generational



**Figure 3.1** The (sub-)dimensions that help explain activists’ perception of common good

differences also lead to a distinction between commitment communities, as well as within the moral voicing community. Regarding their political profile, we knew that we would face a largely left-wing oriented population. However, Christian aid activists clearly depart from moral voicing and workers’ voicing activists. *Activists mobilized in these communities have particular profiles.* But do they also possess a specific mind?

### Specific Minds?

We first compare the mental world of activists with that of the general population. Do activists possess an understanding of common good and politics that is different from that of the Swiss population? Answering this question is crucial as such a finding would provide a first indication of the relevance of our cognitive-relational approach.

We begin our inquiry with the *activist’s relation to common good*. Figure 3.1 reminds us of the operationalization elaborated in the first chapter. We divide common good into two dimensions: Commonness and goodness. Their perception of commonness, which relates to who activists perceive as beneficiaries of the common good, is further distinguished into three categories: Interconnectedness, to assess the perception of the social ties binding people together, humanness, to evaluate whether others are seized as human beings or as individuals embedded in social belongings and inclusiveness, to establish whether boundaries are set between social groups. The perception of goodness explains how goods that objectively improve

people's living conditions are assessed, and we distinguish them between evaluations in terms of social justice or in terms of the perception of social care. Unfortunately, all dimensions of an activists' relation to common good cannot be discussed because we lack indicators, especially to assess the dimensions of humanness and goodness, but we will return to this dimension through activists' narratives in the next chapter. Throughout Tables 3.3 to 3.5, we discuss differences between the three commitment communities and the general population. To compare the percentage points of the various indicators, we use  $\chi^2$ -values to assess the significance of differences between the two.

Table 3.3 shows that some activists have a specific relation to common good while others do not. In fact, moral voicing and Christian aid activists have more interconnected and inclusive understandings of society, while workers' voicing activists score close to the general population. We will explain possible implications of this result at the end of this section, but for now, we begin by taking a closer look at the specific indicators. Two of them assess whether individuals perceive social ties binding people together. We have labeled this dimension *interconnectedness*. The first indicator examines the level of trust these individuals have for people they do not know, including neighbors and people they meet for the first time, and it offers a valuable proxy, as trust is required in the perception of social ties. More than half of all moral voicing activists and three quarters of SAB activists trust unknown others, while two thirds of all Christian aid activists are open minded. By contrast, less than half of the general population does not trust neighbors and people met for the first time (see  $\chi^2$  in Table 3.3). Workers' rights activists score poorly, as little more than a third deem unknown others trustworthy. The second indicator mainly aims to evaluate the importance of helping disadvantaged people in Switzerland. The reasoning behind this indicator is the following: If one perceives society as interconnected, one should consider helping others as important. In general, helping others in Switzerland is fairly central for activists as well as for the general population. Nonetheless, SAB activists and Caritas volunteers consider it significantly more important to provide help to less advantaged people, thus indicating that moral voicing and Christian aid activists clearly depart from the general population, as they perceive more social interconnectedness. By opposition, workers' voicing activists perceive social bonds the same way the general population does.

The second dimension of commonness, *inclusiveness*, measures whether society is perceived in universalist or communitarian terms. The three

**Table 3.3** Activists' Perception of Commonness Compared to the Swiss Population

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists	Swiss population
	SAB %	STP %	GP %			
<b>INTERCONNECTEDNESS</b>						
Trust of unknown others	74	58	55	64	37	45
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	541 124.5***	345 17.8***	569 15.4***	504 47.7***	681 -13.5***	1214 —
Helping others in Switzerland	77	61	59	71	60	56
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	620 81.8***	379 ns	633 ns	577 40.0***	731 4.0*	1'069 —
<b>INCLUSIVENESS</b>						
Social trust in culturally distant others	96	85	82	92	65	68
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	522 162.5***	319 37.9***	513 33.5***	522 117.7***	622 ns	1'161 —
Helping others outside Switzerland	74	67	57	61	44	44
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	616 145.1***	379 58.6***	627 29.0***	572 43.8***	710 ns	1'067 —

Continued

Table 3.3 Continued

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists	Swiss population
	SAB %	STP %	GP %			
<b>Boundaries . . .</b>						
With marginal groups Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	64 5.6*	52 37.6***	63 8.0**	70 ns	64 5.6*	69 -
With cultural minorities Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ ) (n)	6 178.8*** 608	12 69.1*** 381	17 60.4*** 638	20 36.3*** 573	34 ns 757	34 — 1'245

Note: SAB = Solidarity across Borders, STP = Society for Threatened Peoples, 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." Those who trust people of another religion and nationality were merged in the category "culturally 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 Switzerland, in the world]?" On a seven-point scale, only people who found this very important (six or seven) were included (International Social Survey Programme 2004). Boundaries, finally, represent an index of people who are socially and 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?" For marginal groups, we included alcoholics, drug addicts, emotionally unstable people, people with a criminal record, and people who suffer from AIDS. For cultural minorities, we included Muslims, Jews, Sinti people, and migrants (European Values Study 2008).  $\chi^2$  compared activists with the Swiss population; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

indicators listed in the bottom half of Table 3.3 present similar results as those found for interconnectedness. The indicators of social trust in culturally distant others, the importance of helping others on a global level, and the importance of boundaries all aim to measure how inclusive a society is imagined to be. First, moral voicing and Christian aid activists put more social trust in people from other religions or nationalities than do the general population and workers' rights activists. Second, while helping others in Switzerland hardly separated activists from the general population, helping others on a global level introduces a substantial cleavage. The same partition appears between moral voicing and Christian aid activists compared with workers' rights activists and the general population. The third indicator, boundaries, obeys to this scission as well. However, the story here is somewhat more complicated and necessitates a brief digression.

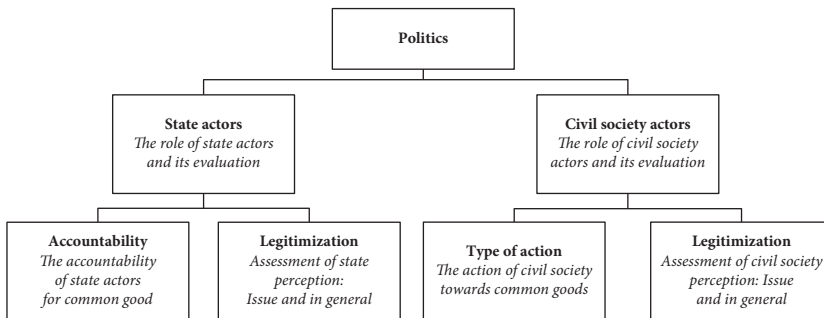
We wanted to know whether activists erect boundaries around cultural minorities and marginal groups. Again, we expected moral voicing and Christian aid activists to be more inclusive than the general population and unionists, which is what we found. However, this applies only to cultural minorities and not for marginal groups. Marginal groups include alcoholics, drug addicts, emotionally unstable people, people with criminal records, and people who suffer from AIDS. This indicator shows that, like the general population, activists marginalize certain social groups. More than half of all activists reject marginal groups and only minimal differences are detectable between the general population and all activists ( $\chi^2$  not or only marginally significant in Table 3.3). In fact, marginal groups belong to the most excluded groups. They are scorned and dehumanized, belonging to the most excluded social groups because they are perceived as responsible for their situation (D'Houtaud 1995) and provoke a fear of contagion (Jodelet 1991). Consequently, they are associated with negative emotions, such as disgust and contempt (Fiske 2010a; Harris and Fiske 2006). Whenever we speak about commitment communities who have an inclusive or universalist understanding of society, we should remember that this does not necessarily pertain to all social groups living within a society.

After this brief detour, we return to our general argument and face a very different picture for cultural minorities including Muslims, Jews, Sinti people, and migrants. Given that a third of the Swiss population and workers' rights activists exclude cultural minorities, moral voicing and Christian aid activists are definitely more inclusive regarding cultural minorities.



To summarize, we provided evidence indicating that moral voicing and Christian aid activists possess a universalist understanding of society consisting of social ties that bind people together. This is less the case for workers’ rights activists who have views similar to those of the general population. These five indicators revealed a rather systematic pattern separating moral voicing and Christian aid activists from the general population and workers’ rights activists. Moral voicing and Christian aid activists have a broader, more encompassing understanding of society than that found in the national context, as we described in the first chapter, while the general population and workers’ rights activists correspond more to this communitarian understanding of society.

We now turn our attention to activists’ relation to politics. As summarized in Figure 3.2, this understanding is also divided into two dimensions: the perception of state actors and the perception of civil society actors. The perception of state actors pertains to two questions: What is the role of state actors? How are they evaluated? The role of state actors is evaluated with the notion of accountability for common good, which assesses whether individuals perceive state actors to be responsible, while the second question examines legitimization, that is, the trust in state actors and the range of this trust. Likewise, an activist’s perception of civil society actors is divided into two dimensions: the role of civil society actors and an assessment of this role. Consequently, we distinguish between the perception of the type of action of civil society actors which may be perceived either as politically interventionist and thus challenging state actors, or as necessary substitutes to state actors. Finally, we assess whether civil society actors are legitimized and



**Figure 3.2** The (sub-)dimensions that help explain activists’ perception of politics

whether legitimization of civil society actors is generalized across different types of actors.

Do we find a similar pattern for *activists' relation to politics* as we did for their relation to common good? Yes and no. Yes: Again some commitment communities have specific understandings of politics, while others do not diverge from the views of the general population. And no: Because this time moral and workers' voicing activists depart from the views of the general population and Christian aid activists. Moral voicing activists therefore depart on both dimensions, while Christian aid and workers' rights activists differ from the general population on one dimension. This general conclusion sounds pretty straightforward. However, as the following reveals, we need to approach the two dimensions with different logics in order to understand the findings. The first dimension, the *relation to state actors*, uses an indicator for the level of trust in national executive and legislative authorities. Logically, an individual who trusts political institutions is supposed to legitimize them. As we noted in the first chapter, contentious activists are supposed to delegitimize state actors and accordingly, we expect lower levels of trust among activists compared to the general population. Simultaneously, we stated that Swiss citizens tend to trust and legitimize the political system and its actors. In fact, we encounter this pattern in the first part of Table 3.4. Activists of the moral and workers' voicing community generally have lower levels of trust in the Federal Council as well as in the Federal Parliament. These activists delegitimize federal authorities significantly more than the general population does. By contrast, Christian aid activists tend to legitimize political authorities and seem to trust political authorities more than the general population does. The first reaction to this result was that these numbers were at odds with the fact that Caritas volunteers support deprived people and therefore deliver a common good supposed to be the responsibility of state actors. Could it be that Christian aid volunteers disagree with this interpretation? Have they constructed another perception of state actors? One possible reason could be that Christian aid activism is heavily supported by the state, contributing to a more sympathetic perception of federal authorities. However, these remain speculations for now. For the moment, we simply observe that moral voicing and workers' voicing activists apparently delegitimize national political authorities more than do Christian aid activists and the general population.

Regarding the *relation to civil society actors*, we show numbers for the level of trust in unions, environmental associations, and humanitarian

Table 3.4 Activists' Perception of Politics Compared to the Swiss Population

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists		Workers' voicing activists		Swiss population	
	SAB %	STP %	GP %	Caritas %	Unia %				
<b>STATE ACTORS</b>									
Trust in political authorities Federal Council	44	58	52	72	51			69	
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	(n) 609 111.5***	361 17.1***	606 58.2***	541 ns	705 65.2***			1'200 —	
Federal Parliament	39	54	45	68	46			57	
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	(n) 602 53.6***	357 ns	595 22.9***	525 —16.0***	684 24.0***			1'180 —	
<b>CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS</b>									
Trust in civil society actors Unions	78	66	61	58	91			43	
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	(n) 561 185.5***	342 53.2***	582 50.1***	500 28.4***	726 427.0***			1'149 —	
Environmental actors	93	88	95	76	60			69	
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	(n) 599 130.3***	373 49.9***	622 159.3**	523 8.5***	669 —15.4***			1'208 —	
Humanitarian actors	96	91	86	93	66			70	
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	(n) 608 163.6***	365 67.9***	606 57.2***	567 117.7**	668 ns			1'228 —	

Note: To evaluate trust in political authorities, we asked the following question: "How much confidence do you have in [the Federal Council/the Federal Parliament]?" Individuals who have little or no confidence are shown in the Table (World Values Survey 2007). The same question was used for trust in civil society actors. This time however, respondents with a great deal or quite a lot confidence are represented in the Table (World Values Survey 2007).  $\chi^2$  compared activists with the Swiss population; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

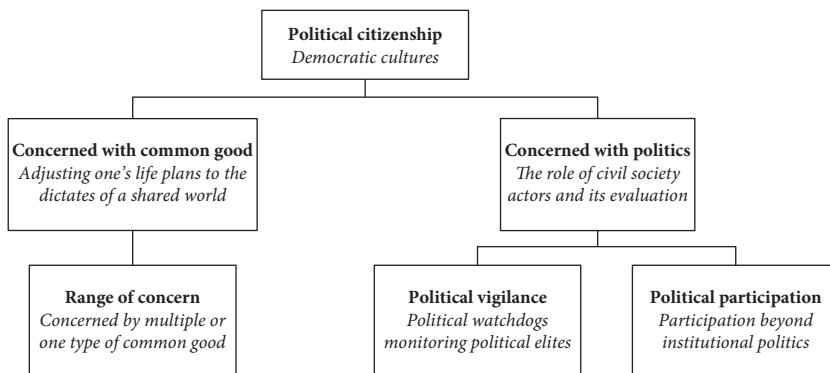
associations. Like the indicator of the delegitimization of state actors, trust in civil society actors is supposed to provide a reason to legitimize collective actors. As the literature suggests, activists generally legitimize civil society actors and do so more than the general population. In Table 3.4, we observe that moral voicing activists strongly legitimize all three types of civil society actors. While the general population also has high levels of trust in environmental and humanitarian actors, they fall behind moral voicing activists significantly (see  $\chi^2$  in Table 3.4). Furthermore, the general population does not seem to appreciate unions highly, contributing to an increase in difference between the population and the moral voicing community. We observe a similar pattern for Christian aid activists, who also tend to legitimize civil society actors more than the general population do. However, the Christian aid community clearly favors humanitarian actors over the two other types. The differentiation between types of civil society actors increases for workers' rights activists, who clearly trust unions the most.

As was the case for activists' relation to common good, we also find support for a specific mind for the second dimension: activists' relation to politics. For the relation to state actors, we saw that moral and workers' voicing activists tend to distrust state actors, while Christian aid activists and the general population do not. The general population, as well as the Christian aid activists, hence falls under the trustworthy relation with state actors described in the first chapter. By contrast, and as a result of their social interactions within their respective communities, activists from the moral and workers' voicing communities delegitimize state actors. For their understanding of civil society actors, the three commitment communities have higher levels of trust than the general population. However, these results arouse suspicions that Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists in particular, tend to cherry pick between the different types of civil society actors.

After an initial consideration of activists' relation to common good and politics, we now turn to *activists' understandings of political citizenship*. Figure 3.3 sums up the two dimensions to grasp activists' perception of political citizenship: to be concerned by common good and by politics. First, we examine the range of their concern for common good. In order to do so, we use a set of indicators pertaining to the three types of common good the three communities are committed to: emancipation of migrants, environmental protection, and the redistribution of wealth. Do the three commitment communities depart from the general population? According to Table 3.5, the answer is yes.

The Swiss population is supportive of the emancipation of migrants and the redistribution of wealth, but not for paying taxes for environmental protection. These common goods therefore concern an important part of the general population. The range of their concern, however, cannot be compared to that of activists in the moral voicing community, who have developed a much broader range of concern than the general population. Christian aid activists depart from the Swiss population too, though to a lesser extent. In contrast, workers' rights activists only surpass the general population in their concern for wealth redistribution. As for the concern for common good, moral voicing and Christian aid activists clearly depart from the general population, while workers' rights activists do not. Hence, not all activists are concerned by a broad range of common goods.

The second dimension of political citizenship relies on whether activists are *concerned by politics*. As shown in Figure 3.3, we differentiate between political vigilance, that is, the importance of being a political watchdog monitoring political elite and participating beyond institutional politics. The bottom half of Table 3.5 represents the evaluation of activists' perception of political vigilance and participation compared to the general population. Individuals were asked how important it is for a citizen to keep an eye on the government, to always vote, and to be active in social and political associations. The result is a clear one. All three indicators suggest that activists are significantly more concerned by politics than the general population. There is a higher probability that activists are "watchdogs" and active citizens corresponding to the criteria of strong citizens. The next section, and Chapter 5



**Figure 3.3** The (sub-)dimensions that help explain activists' perception of political citizenship

Table 3.5 Activists' Perception of Citizenship Compared to the Swiss Population

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists	Swiss population
	SAB %	STP %	GP %			
<b>CONCERNED ABOUT COMMON GOOD</b>						
Migration						
Emancipation of migrants	94	84	84	80	63	56
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	605 273.1***	356 95.1***	606 143.2***	498 90.4***	661 10.2**	1'243 —
<b>Environmental issue</b>						
Pay more taxes to protect the environment	48	34	43	21	19	11
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	623 304.6***	373 103.1***	628 241.9***	541 29.5***	96 4.6*	1'219 —
<b>Redistribution of wealth</b>						
Income equality	97	93	91	84	90	67
<i>Comparison with the Swiss population (<math>\chi^2</math>)</i>	622 214.9***	365 100.7***	626 133.0***	542 59.4***	705 118.0***	1'241 —

Continued

Table 3.5 Continued

	Moral voicing activists		Christian aid activists		Workers' voicing activists		Swiss population	
	SAB %	STP %	GP %	Caritas %	Unia %			
<b>CONCERNED WITH POLITICS</b>								
Political vigilance								
Keep an eye on government	64	43	47	60	55	37		
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	618	380	625	577	732	1'063		
	112.6***	3.8*	14.0***	75.4***	55.3***	—		
<b>Participation</b>								
Always vote	87	70	76	84	78	57		
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	628	380	634	578	740	1'065		
	155.8***	20.1***	62.5***	117.0***	81.5***	—		
<b>Active in associations</b>								
	58	32	28	35	39	22		
Comparison with the Swiss population ( $\chi^2$ )	615	370	620	542	704	1'059		
	216.5***	14.9***	6.4*	30.1***	58.4***	—		

Note: To assess activists' concern with the common good, we measured three different kinds of common good: migration, environmental protection, and wealth redistribution. For the migration issue, we computed a migrants' emancipation index with two interval scales measuring the degree of acceptance toward migrants' emancipation. The first asked whether "immigrants take jobs away from natives in a country or not." The second asked whether "a country's cultural life is undermined by immigrants or not" (European Values Study 2008). For the environmental issue, we asked respondents if they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental pollution." The numbers of individuals who strongly agree or disagree are represented in the table (World Values Survey 2007). For the wealth redistribution issue, individuals had to position themselves on a 10-point scale to show agreement with the statement "Income should be made more equal or if we need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort." The percentage points in the table represent individuals who scored between 1 and 3 and therefore represent high agreement on income equality (World Values Survey 2007). For their concern with politics, we used three indicators. We asked respondents on a 7-point scale "How important is it for a good citizen to [keep watch on government/to always vote/to be active in social and political associations]?" Only people who found this very important (scoring 6 or 7) were included (International Social Survey Programme 2004).  $\chi^2$  compared activists with the Swiss population; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

especially, will discuss these preliminary observations in detail. For now, we can satisfyingly establish that activists are more concerned by politics than the general population is.

On the basis of the indicators presented here, *activists' minds* are specific in these commitment communities. Moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing differ substantially from the general population. They have specific minds with regard to their relation to common good, politics, and political citizenship. However, the numbers we came across also pointed to considerable variations among commitment communities. What does this imply? Did we get inconsistent results that shed doubts on the specificity of an activist's mind? We do not think so. Altogether, we obtained systematic evidence with several indicators that showed that moral voicing activists depart from the general population on both dimensions, while the Christian aid community does so only in relation to common good and the workers' rights community only in relation to politics. Two explanations are available: first, that there are no, or very few, social interactions within a specific community on particular cognitive dimensions and hence, that there is no immediate synchronization as a result of participation. According to our results, this would imply that within the workers' rights community there are very few conversations and cultural scripts available on the topic of common good. Similarly, this would imply that the Christian aid community exchanges little socially shared cognition about politics and state actors in particular.

The second explanation is that the numbers in these quantitative indicators do not reveal the whole content of an activist's relation to common good and politics. While we have presented seventeen indicators in this section, we could not cover all dimensions developed in the first chapter. For the relation to common good, we held no indicators for the dimension of humanness and for the dimension of goodness. For the relation to politics, we have no information on responsibility for common good and on the role of civil society actors. One reason for the absence of these dimensions is that we simply have no comparative indicators. Another more substantial reason is that these dimensions emerged inductively through the analysis of the interview data. While we return to these issues in the rest of this book, the next section is dedicated to an in-depth analysis of variations within and between commitment communities.





<b>Self-extension scale</b>	Self-extension	30	59	63	52	16	-79.9***	-144.3***	ns	-58.5***	ns	16.2***	114.0***	216.7***	336.5***	215.1***		
	Self-extension / Boundaries	49	32	28	35	35												
Boundaries / Self-extension	Boundaries	18	8	8	12	32	ns	-144.3***	ns	-58.5***	ns	16.2***	114.0***	216.7***	336.5***	215.1***		
	Boundaries	3	2	1	1	18												
	(n)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%												
		594	339	615	497	497												
<b>Identification</b>	The same world	50	52	—	40	—	ns	—	—	15.6***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
	The same world, even if different	48	45	—	56	—												
We are very different people		2	3	—	5	—												
	(n)	100%	100%	—	100%	—												
		662	365	—	563	—												

Note: The items *social trust*, *helping others*, and *cognitive boundaries* are described in the notes of Table 2. 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 frontiers. Self-extension items were the following: (1) "We live on the same planet, it is normal to act for others" (SAB, Greenpeace, STP, Caritas, Unia), (2) "I want everyone, migrants and non-migrants to have the same rights" (SAB, STP), "I want to protect the planet, its environment and its biodiversity" (Greenpeace), "I want to fight for equality of opportunity of all human beings" (Unia), "I want all mankind to be able to live an appropriate/worthy life" (Caritas). Boundary items were the following: (1) "I defend migrants because I (or my family) was a migrant" (SAB), "I, my next of kin, and my family are directly touched by [environmental problems/problems at the workplace]" (Greenpeace, Unia), "I defend [minorities/people in need] because I (or my family) [have a minority background/have been in a precarious situation]" (STP, Caritas), (2) "I want to improve [the social justice of the environmental quality of] the society in which I live, i.e. Switzerland" (SAB, Greenpeace, Unia, Caritas), "Offering better rights/conditions for minorities in Switzerland allows us to live in harmony and peace" (STP). For identification with the group activists are committed for, we asked the following question: "You are committed to [migrants/autonomous people/deprived people]. To what extent do you identify with the people for whom you mobilize?"  $\chi^2$  compared commitment communities between each other; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

### Variations in Commitment Communities

An activist's relation to common good and politics is specific when compared to the general population. This result is a first indication that an *activist's mind is influenced by social interactions within commitment communities*. This section will develop this argument in light of three supplementary tests: a comparison within a given community, between communities, and within organizations. Our first task consists in evaluating whether activists of SAB, STP, and Greenpeace share a similar understanding of common good and politics. We expect this to be the case because all belong to the same commitment community and should therefore exchange and practice similar cultural scripts. We therefore consider activists who defend different types of common good and are confronted with various degrees of political challenge. As mentioned in Chapter 1, defenders of migrants' rights are engaged in a challenging political issue, while STP and Greenpeace activists are committed to mainstream causes. Later, we compare activists across commitment communities. Do activists from different communities possess the same understanding of common good and politics? Or do the opinions of Christian aid volunteers and workers' rights activists differ from those of the moral voicing community? And if so, how do they differ? Finally, we will assess variations within each organization, with the aim of evaluating whether an activist's commitment intensity is related to the meanings constructed. According to our theory, active and passive members should not differ because they are exposed to the same cultural scripts. However, they vary in terms of the frequency of interactions and the way these occur. Thus, passive members are less exposed to cultural scripts within their respective community and have fewer, if any, direct face-to-face interactions. Tables 3.6 to 3.10 help us answer these questions. These tables are organized with a similar logic as the ones of the previous section. We start by showing percentage points for each indicator. After the bold vertical line we use  $\chi^2$ -values to compare commitment communities. We first compare the three organizations of the moral voicing community, then we compare moral voicers with the Christian aid community as well with the workers' voicing community, and finally, we compare the Christian aid volunteers with unionists.

In the previous section, we saw that moral voicing and Christian aid activists possess a specific *relation to common good* when compared to the whole population. By contrast, views of workers' rights activists do not depart from those of the Swiss population. This finding indicates that the

understanding of common good varies among communities, as Table 3.6 summarizes. How do they perceive commonness; and do they perceive differently who are the beneficiaries of the common goods? To answer this question, we return to activists' perception of *interconnectedness* between society members. Three main results arise from the analysis of this dimension. First, little variation occurs within the moral voicing community. People committed to defending the rights of migrants, minority groups and environmental activists trust others and are highly concerned by helping disadvantaged people (see percentage points in the upper half of Table 3.6). They perceive society as composed of ties binding people together. We also note that activists who defend migrants' rights have a somewhat more interconnected perception of society. A substantially higher part of these activists trust unknown others and stresses the importance to help others in Switzerland. Second, similar shares of Christian aid activists perceive ties binding people together in society. Their view parallels that of moral voicing activists. Finally, compared to both moral voicing and Christian aid activists, people committed to workers voicing perceive social interconnectedness differently. While they are numerically close when it comes to the importance of helping others in Switzerland, this equivalence remains exceptional. They have far less trust in unknown others and other indicators of the perception of commonness set the workers' rights community apart from the moral voicing and the Christian aid community, as we shall soon see.

The investigation of the second dimension of commonness, *inclusiveness*, recounts a similar story. The moral voicing community generally shares a universalist understanding of society. If we compare the different communities, Christian aid activists, like the moral voicing community, also have an inclusive perception, contrary to the workers' voicing community. The three indicators we used in the previous section—social trust in culturally distant others, helping others in the world, and boundaries with cultural minorities—all support this conclusion (Table 3.6). Here, we focus on two additional indicators: a self-extension scale and identification with the population mobilized for.<sup>5</sup> These two indicators further validate our measurements of the concept of inclusiveness, because the self-extension scale examines inclusiveness as a motivation of an activist's commitment, while the identification measure tells us whether activists perceive themselves as part of

<sup>5</sup> The self-extension scale is inspired from Inglehart's indicators on values of post-materialism (Inglehart 1977).

the groups they are committed to. While these two indicators do not deviate from the general analysis, they give us some additional in-depth insights that could not have been obtained solely from comparative indicators.

The results from the self-extension scale are quite straightforward: Four out of five moral voicing and Christian aid activists have a fairly high extension of themselves.<sup>6</sup> They possess a rather inclusive view of society, setting no or few boundaries between themselves and others. If we compare these numbers with those of the workers' rights community, another picture emerges. Half of the workers' rights activists define boundaries and view these as meaningful motivations for their commitment. The second indicator asks activists whether they identify with the group they mobilize for (SAB, STP and Caritas).<sup>7</sup> Although both moral voicing and Christian aid participants include the people they are committed to, differences in perception are present. While the moral voicing community perceives the people they mobilize for as part of the same humanity, more than half of Christian aid volunteers establish differences between themselves and the beneficiaries of their actions. This suggests that both communities have a universal understanding of society, but that some differences exist between the moral voicing and the Christian aid community. We will further examine these differences with our qualitative material in the next chapter.

To summarize, we have seen that activists of different organizations within the moral voicing community have synchronized their cultural scripts regarding their relation to common good. There are no significant variations between activists who defend migrants' rights, participants engaged in providing autochthonous people with rights, and activists committed to environmental protection. In addition, the moral voicing communities share this inclusive view of society, setting no—or few—boundaries between people inhabiting society with the Christian aid community and conceive society in universalist terms. Yet, the indicator of identification raised doubts regarding the perception of commonness between the two communities. By

<sup>6</sup> Activists from Solidarity across Borders (SAB) have a less extensive self compared to activists from STP and Greenpeace. This variation is explainable thanks to an item that measures boundaries between social groups or individuals for SAB activists: "I want above all to improve the society in which I live (Switzerland)." Qualitative interviews provide insights when it comes to understanding the position of some pro-migrants activists on this item. Many interviewees declared that they feel ashamed to live in a country that violates migrants' rights as Switzerland does and want to bring about social change in Switzerland because the situation is humanly unacceptable.

<sup>7</sup> We asked this question only of activists who defend the rights of social groups they are not part of. This is the case for activists of Solidarity across Borders, the Society for Threatened Peoples, and Caritas—but not for Greenpeace and Unia.

contrast, we saw that workers' voicing activists systematically possess a different conception of inclusiveness, as all indicators show they have a rather exclusionary view of society. Thus, on both dimensions of commonness—interconnectedness and inclusiveness—unionists' views systematically depart from those of other activists. They are far less aware of the ties binding people together in society and tend to raise cognitive barriers between themselves and their fellow citizens. Unionists therefore seem to have developed a communitarian understanding of commonness. These findings underscore that activists' relation to common good uncontestedly varies among the different activists. But is this the case for the relation to politics as well?

We know from the previous section that the moral and workers' voicing communities have lower levels of trust in political authorities than is found in the Christian aid community and the general population. We also know that all three activist communities have more confidence in civil society actors. Activists therefore have a specific relation to politics. But what can we say about variations within and between communities? Do activists understand the actors involved in the political space differently? To assess activists' *relation to state actors*, we examine not only the level of trust they place in different state actors but also whether they think state actors are willing to improve the production and maintenance of the common good they are committed to (political willingness). Three main results are provided by this analysis in Table 3.7. First, moral voicing activists undoubtedly delegitimize political authorities and have developed a broad range of delegitimization. They neither believe in the political willingness of national and international authorities, nor do they trust political institutions. Again, we encounter a common understanding among members of the moral voicing community. However, moral voicing activists consciously delegitimize political authorities and are aware of the plurality of state actors. The perception of the political willingness of international institutions, the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund in this case, demonstrates this clearly. More than two thirds of SAB and STP activists believe in the political willingness of international institutions to support the political issues they are committed to. By contrast, Greenpeace activists delegitimize international authorities and this makes sense, as these authorities are important targets in ecological protest. Except for this difference, the moral voicing community adopts a common critical stance toward state actors.

The second key finding is that the Christian aid community legitimizes state actors. Caritas is not a protest organization, challenging political



<b>Trust in political authorities</b>	31	46	41	63	39	-24.0***	-12.6***	ns	-118.9***	-23.9***	-57.1***	-10.2**	5.1**	ns	68.5***
	(n)	612	368	613	551	710									
<b>International authorities</b>	37	37	25	36	25	ns	21.1***	16.0***	ns	ns	-30.8***	19.8***	14.7***	ns	14.6***
	(n)	596	366	604	527	685									

Note: For political willingness of authorities, we asked the following question: "In the following list, you find political authorities, associations, and citizen groups who tend (or should tend) [to defend migrants' rights/to protect the rights of political minorities/to protect the environment/to help deprived people/to protect workers' rights]. Please state to which degree these authorities, associations, and citizens groups have the willingness to improve [the rights of migrants/minorities' rights/environmental protection/the situation of deprived people/workers' rights]?" We account for distrust in political authorities in Table 3.4.  $\chi^2$  compared commitment communities between each other; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.



authorities, and this is clearly reflected in their perception of state actors. The only exception to this pattern is their perception of the European Union, which is the only one of the four political institutions they delegitimize. Third, workers' voicing activists have a similar delegitimizing perception of state actors as that of moral voicing participants.<sup>8</sup> Unia activists not only oppose national authorities but also face a very weak international labor organization and a liberal European Union that passes legislation to shrink welfare states and the protection of workers.

Activists have also developed a relation to *civil society actors* (Table 3.8). As with the perception of state actors, we must differentiate between how activists conceive of their role and the range of legitimization they develop with regard to different types of civil society actors. For the role of civil society actors, we differentiate between an interventionist stance toward state actors and a substituting role aimed at minimizing state intervention. Unfortunately, we do not have a measure to evaluate this issue by quantitative means for the moral voicing community. However, these activists are by nature heavily involved in political struggles and therefore, we can expect them to have developed an understanding of civil society actors that underlines political intervention. Indeed, this is what we will encounter in the analysis of activist narratives in Chapter 5. For workers' rights activists, this question becomes more challenging as one major mobilization strategy in the recruitment of new members is to offer them individual benefits such as legal protection, advanced education, or unemployment insurance. Consequently, we asked unionists whether these individual benefits take priority over the collective struggle to defend workers' rights and salaries in order to find out which role dominates within this community. The result is clear: Four out of five activists prefer contentious action. The picture is rather different for Christian aid activists. When we asked them to qualify Caritas as an organization, they had to choose two of the seven different qualifiers provided and only 2 percent qualified Caritas as a political organization.<sup>9</sup> While these indicators do not allow us to offer a definite answer of whether activists perceive the role of a civil society organization as contentious or substitutive, they suggest substantial variations concerning the role of civil society actors between communities.

<sup>8</sup> We have to interpret the numbers for political willingness with some distance as only a very small number of workers' rights activists had the opportunity to respond to that question.

<sup>9</sup> Activists could choose from the following qualifiers: social aid, Catholic, political, regional, or cantonal, professional, and voluntary organization. Political organization is included in the category "other" in Table 3.8.

**Table 3.8** Activists' Relation to Civil Society Actors

	Moral voicing activists		Christian aid activists		Workers' voicing activists	Within moral voicing community	Between communities					
	SAB	STP	GP	GP			Moral voicing vs Christian aid (CA)	Moral voicing vs Workers' voicing (WV)	CA vs WV			
	SAB	STP	GP	GP	Unia	SAB vs STP	SAB vs GP	SAB vs STP	SAB vs Unia	STP vs Unia	GP vs Unia	Caritas vs Unia
	%	%	%	%	%	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2$
<b>ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS</b>												
Importance of collective rights	—	—	—	—	84	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
					756							
(n)												
Caritas can be qualified as a...												
Social aid organization	—	—	—	86	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Catholic organization	—	—	—	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Volunteer organization	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(n)				717								

Continued

Table 3.8 Continued

	Moral voicing activists		Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists	Within moral voicing community		Between communities					
	SAB	STP			GP	SAB vs STP	STP vs GP	Moral voicing vs Christian aid (CA)	Moral voicing vs Workers' voicing (WV)	CA vs WV		
<b>LEGITIMIZATION</b>												
<b>Pol. willingness of civil society actors</b>												
	100	98	99	97	4.9*	ns	ns	ns	7.3**	ns	ns	ns
(n)	659	376	664	99								
<b>Trust in civil society actors</b>												
<b>Unions</b>	78	66	61	91	17.0***	38.6***	ns	ns	-41.3***	-103.6***	-163.8***	-187.7***
(n)	561	342	582	726								
<b>Environmental actors</b>	93	88	95	60	8.5**	ns	-17.6***	86.4***	186.6***	85.9***	220.1***	33.5***
(n)	599	373	622	669								
<b>Humanitarian actors</b>	96	91	86	66	9.1**	35.6***	5.6*	-14.7***	180.5***	80.2***	69.8***	132.5***
(n)	608	365	606	668								

Note: Importance of collective rights gives the percentage of activists who favor the struggle for collective rights over individual performances. We used the following question: "Unia is committed on a political level to defend the rights and interests of workers. In addition, they also offer individual performances for their members. If you have to choose between the two priorities which one would be more important to you?" Respondents were asked about the most important characteristics attributed to their organization. The wording of the question was: "Several characteristics may qualify Caritas. For you, personally, what is Caritas? Please choose a main and a second characteristic for Caritas." For political willingness of civil society actors, we used the same question as for political willingness in authorities shown in Table 3.4. Trust in civil society actors is shown in Table 3.4.  $\chi^2$  compared commitment communities between each other; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

To assess the range of legitimization, we rely on the same indicators as for the evaluation of state actors, that is, political willingness of and trust in civil society actors. A significant narrative is expressed in the numbers of Table 3.8. To begin with, all activists strongly legitimize the type of civil society actor they are mobilized for. As expected, they do not doubt that the community where they invest time and money is willing to improve and defend the given common good. But this, of course, tells us nothing about the range of legitimization. Within the moral voicing community, we encounter a broad range of legitimization. Although they trust unions less than humanitarian and ecological actors, more than 60 percent of the moral voicing community trust organizations that defend workers' rights. By contrast, the Christian aid community legitimizes unions less. They have a narrower range despite trusting environmental and humanitarian actors quite highly. Finally, workers' voicing activists have the narrowest range of legitimization. While they strongly legitimize unions, they trust the other two types of civil society actors much less.

The pattern regarding the relation to politics is hence similar to that for the relation to common good. We encountered a homogeneous moral voicing community and came across variations as soon as they were compared to the Christian aid and the workers' voicing community. While workers' voicing and moral voicing activists perceive state actors similarly, they do not do so in terms of the range of legitimization of civil society actors. Further, while Christian aid volunteers were on par with the moral voicing community regarding their relation to common good, they understand politics differently. For them, state actors are legitimized. Engaged in the third sector, they do not challenge political elites but rather tend to perceive their own efforts as substitutive with regard to state actors. For their relation to common good as well as their relation to politics, we can therefore affirm that the three different communities produce three different minds.

What about the understanding of political citizenship? Are they *concerned by common good and politics*? To evaluate the range of concern by common good, we use the same indicators as for the comparison with the general population. Do moral voicing and Christian aid activists still share a common view on that dimension as they did for commonness? And does the workers' voicing community depart from them? Are only the former two communities strong citizens in terms of their range of concern about common good? Table 3.9 helps us answer these questions. People committed to moral voicing have an extensive concern for common good. In fact, they worry about



<b>CONCERNED BY POLITICS</b>	64	43	47	60	55	42.5***	38.6***	ns	ns	-25.5***	-20.6***	11.4**	-14.5***	-9.7**	ns	
	(n)	618	380	625	577	732										
<b>Political vigilance</b>	87	70	76	84	78	39.4***	21.9***	-4.3*	ns	-23.9***	-10.2**	17.5***	-7.5**	ns	7.0**	
Keep an eye on government	(n)	628	380	634	578	740										
<b>Participation</b>	58	32	28	35	39	60.5***	114.7***	ns	60.4***	ns	-7.2**	46.5***	-4.8*	-19.0***	ns	
Always vote	(n)	615	370	620	542	704										
Active in associations																

Note: We described these items in Table 3.5.  $\chi^2$  compared commitment communities between each other; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

all the social issues examined here: migration, environmental protection, and wealth redistribution. The Christian aid community comes close to this and their volunteers can also be described as having a broad concern for common good. However, while they are heavily concerned by migrants' emancipation and wealth redistribution in society, they show less concern about environmental protection when paying more taxes for it is involved. Nevertheless, this is a larger range of concern for common good than encountered with the workers' rights community, whose activists are mainly concerned by the defense of their rights and demonstrate less interest for other common goods.

The second dimension of an activist's understanding of political citizenship relates to the *concern for politics*. Three main findings are presented in the bottom half of Table 3.9. First, moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists seem to be concerned by politics in a similar fashion. Compared to the dimensions analyzed so far, the three communities do not vary systematically on political vigilance and participation. Second, only about half of the activists estimate that monitoring of governmental action is important. Third, various types of political participation are valued differently. In fact, voting is an obvious baseline of political participation and as such, 70 percent and more of all activists state that it is crucial to vote when the opportunity is presented. Notably, taking an active part in political and social associations is deemed less important. What do these findings mean for the assessment of activists' concern for politics? The indicators show that all activists think voting is fundamental, that vigilance is necessary, and that active commitment is less important. With regard to the second dimension of strong citizenship, activists therefore score rather poorly.

But does this suggest that activists are not *strong citizens*? The different scores provided by the indicators demonstrate the multi-dimensionality of the concepts of political vigilance and participation. Some forms of political vigilance and participation are important, others less so. What does political vigilance and participation effectively mean for moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists? And are all communities concerned by politics in a similar way? We allow these questions to be left unanswered for the moment. The narratives studied in Chapter 5 will enable us to return to them.

Two additional issues must be raised before we conclude this chapter. First, we need to address the slightly higher scores observed for the defenders of migrants' rights and on the other hand, an evaluation of the differences between active and passive members is necessary. In the first chapter, we

presented defenders of migrants' rights as engaged in a highly *challenging political struggle*. Our findings demonstrate that SAB activists have a similar perception of common good and politics as the other types of moral voicing activists. However, they score higher on almost all indicators than STP and Greenpeace activists. Their relation to common good reveals that SAB activists adopt a more universalist understanding of society. As for their relation to politics, SAB activists are less trustful of national state actors and tend to present a broader range of legitimization of civil society actors. Finally, migrants' rights defenders are more concerned about common good and politics than are STP and Greenpeace activists, indicating that their understanding of political citizenship is different. Hence, it appears that the understanding of common good, politics, and citizenship tends to be more radically synchronized for activists who take part in challenging political struggles.

The second point we must address are the differences in the *intensity of commitment*. Table 3.10 sums up the variation between active and passive members for all the indicators used in this chapter. Overall, active and passive members do not systematically depart from each other. Activists from any one organization possess synchronized minds, sharing a similar understanding of common good and politics. However, two exceptions prevail. First, active and passive members in all organizations differ on the importance of being active in political and social associations. This is not surprising because the phrasing of the question implies an active contribution, which is something that passive members, by definition, do not engage in. Second, we came across much disparity between active and passive members within the workers' voicing community. Actually, active members of Unia depart significantly from passive members on the majority of indicators presented. Why is this the case? Our argument is that the minds of these active members are blended because, in addition to their active participation in workers' rights activism, they are significantly more engaged in moral voicing communities than are passive members (Cramer's  $V: .20^{***}$ ). They therefore face cross-pressured interactions that result in an understanding of common good and politics that reflects the different communities they are involved in. Of course, the next question is why certain cross-commitments produce understandings synchronized with one contentious community and result in a blended mind for others? We cover this paradoxical issue in Chapter 6.



**Table 3.10** Commitment Intensity and Common Good, Politics and Citizenship Perception

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists
	SAB <i>Cramer's V</i>	STP <i>Cramer's V</i>	GP <i>Cramer's V</i>		
<b>COMMON GOOD PERCEPTION</b>					
Trust in unknown others	ns	—	ns	ns	ns
Helping others in Switzerland	ns	—	ns	ns	.11**
Social trust in culturally distant others	ns	—	ns	ns	.09*
Helping others on a global level	ns	—	ns	ns	.17***
Boundaries . . .					
With marginal groups	ns	—	ns	ns	.10*
With cultural minorities	ns	—	ns	ns	.16***
Self-extension scale	ns	—	ns	ns	ns
Identification	ns	—	—	-.19***	—
<b>PERCEPTION OF POLITICS</b>					
Trust in political authorities					
Federal authorities	.14**	—	.10*	-.19**	ns
International authorities	.14**	—	ns	ns	ns
Political willingness of state actors					
Federal authorities	ns	—	.17**	ns	.34***
Cantonal authorities	ns	—	ns	ns	ns
European Union	ns	—	ns	ns	ns
International institutions	.17**	—	ns	-.18**	ns

Trust in civil society actors							
Unions	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	.11*	.11*
Environmental actors	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	.11**	.11**
Humanitarian actors	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	.10*	.10*
Political willingness of civil society actors	ns	—	-.10*	ns	ns		ns
<b>PERCEPTION OF CITIZENSHIP</b>							
Migration	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	.15***	.15***
Environmental issue	ns	—	.19***	ns	ns	ns	ns
Redistribution of wealth	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Political vigilance	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	.15***	.15***
Always vote	ns	—	ns	ns	ns	.18***	.18***
Active in associations	.19***	—	.20***	.13**	.13**	.37***	.37***

Note: Cramers' V compared active members with passive ones; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.

### Different Communities, Specific Minds

We began this chapter by demonstrating that activists have a particular social and political anchorage. Evidence for the moral voicing community confirmed what was known from the literature, but we also showed that Christian aid volunteers and workers' voicing activists possess specific potential for mobilization. Moral voicing activists come predominantly from the new middle class, are highly educated, and clearly lean toward the left. The profile of Christian aid community activists is not too dissimilar. However, this community experiences difficulties in mobilizing younger generations, recruiting instead from a broader political spectrum. Unionists, by contrast, come mostly from working-class backgrounds, are on average somewhat less educated, and are slightly more to the radical left.

We then focused on the main aim of this chapter: the claim that activists have specific minds. The *moral voicing community* departs from the general population regarding their perception of common good and politics. This is the case for defenders of SAB, STP, and Greenpeace activists, who share a similar mind. They have constructed a universalist understanding of commonness, which postulates that the benefit of common goods must not be restricted to particular groups. In addition, they are distrustful of state actors and do not believe in the state's political willingness to improve and deliver the common good they are committed to. State actors are subsequently delegitimized, while civil society actors are broadly legitimized. Finally, they qualify as strong citizens, concerned as they are about both common good and politics.

Activists in the *Christian aid community* possess specific minds too. They share perceptions of common good with that of the moral voicing community and accordingly depart from the views of the general population. They also hold a universalist perception of society. However, they differ from the moral voicing community in their relation to politics, as they legitimize state actors (similar to the beliefs of the general population), are trustful of institutions, and believe that state actors are willing to improve the situation of the needy. Drawing a conclusion regarding the second dimension of their perception of politics is somewhat more difficult: What understanding of civil society actors do they have? They certainly legitimize civil society actors in their field, but they remain skeptical of the performance of other types of civil society actors, as their low level of trust in unions indicates. When it comes to their understanding of citizenship, they seem concerned by common good, but not by politics.

We are presented with a specific mind with the *workers' rights community*, in relation to the general population and the two other communities. Unlike the Christian aid community, unionists depart from the general population on the perception of politics, but not on their relation to common good. They perceive society in a communitarian fashion, as the general population does. They have rather low levels of social trust and tend to erect boundaries. Yet they depart from the general population and come close to the position adopted by the moral voicing community in their relation to politics, delegitimizing state actors, and legitimizing unions. They nonetheless legitimize civil society actors far less than other types of activists, displaying a narrow range of legitimization for these actors. Finally, they have a perception of citizenship unlike that held by the moral voicing or Christian aid communities: while they are concerned by politics, common good is not an object of interest for them.

Activists hold a specific understanding of common good and politics when compared to the general population. And we found shared cognitions within the moral voicing community and within each organization. By contrast, the comparison between the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing communities revealed significant variations. While particular social and political backgrounds may help explain this pattern, the argument we developed in the previous chapter relies on another claim: the centrality of the interactions that take place within these commitment communities. Community-specific understandings of common good and politics and variations in terms of political citizenship are consequences of the process of integration into a particular commitment community. Conversational interactions, the sharing of cultural scripts, and discussions within a community lead to socially shared cognitions, to the transformation of cultural scripts, and to the synchronization of activists' minds. Our quantitative data pointed to this direction, highlighting that activist communities rely on specific understandings of common good and politics when compared with the general population. And all three communities constructed specific understandings of the two dimensions.

But how does the community integration process enable activists to sustain their participation? What are the cognitive mechanisms (Chapter 4 and 5) and relational elements (Chapter 6) at stake in the sustainment of participation? Why do networks matter more than social anchorage? And how do activists transform perceptions of common good and politics into intentionality? The following chapters build on these findings through a detailed and systematic analysis of activists' narratives.

## 4

# Common Good and Intentionality

It belongs to us to care for each other.

Toni Morrison

What do we know so far of the relation to common good and politics constructed in activists' minds? Chapter 3 provided two main findings on their mindsets. We have established that activists possess a specific mindset. And their perception of common good and politics through specific lenses means that they depart from views held by the general population. The second major result shows that activists' minds are of a diverse lot: moral voicing, unionists, and Christian aid activists do not share the same perception of common good and politics. In other terms, *a plurality of activist minds exists*. These findings provide preliminary clues toward our assumption that activists' minds resonate with the commitment sites in which they evolve and interact. The influence of commitment sites on the activists' mental world will be the subject of our enquiry in Chapter 6.

What is unclear at this point is whether activists' understandings of common good and politics set their intentionality. In Chapter 2, we saw that the human mind is a key element for action in that it sets an individual's intentionality. Human action is unlikely to occur without mental constructions. Throughout the previous chapters we have argued that cognitions allow activists to commit and sustain their participation. It is now time to demonstrate *how meanings set activists' intentions*. At stake here is the identification of the cognitive mechanisms that configure an activist's intentionality. We will see that an activist's understanding of common good and politics enables the mental construction of specific cognitive components, which in turn orient action toward a specific group of people (1), on specific issues (2), in a particular action field (3), and with specific action forms (4). The identification of the cognitive path from broad perceptions of common good and politics to intentionality constitutes the central aim of the present and

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following chapters. We hence seek to show how broader meanings configure intentionality and guide action.

The second aim of chapters 4 and 5 is to develop a view of activists' conception of *political citizenship*. We will examine the types of democratic cultures activists construct in their minds and accordingly ask whether these cultures allow the activists to be qualified as strong citizens. As seen in Chapter 1, a strong citizen in democratic theory—most notably Barber (1984)—is a person committed to the widespread defense of common good. The strong citizen is also one who is concerned with politics, acting as a watchdog citizen when required and actively taking part in the political sphere. An in-depth analysis of activists' understanding of common good and politics enables us to learn whether activists are concerned with the common good and politics. It allows us to determine whether all types of activists are preoccupied with the common good and politics or only some of them are. Based on the data presented in Chapter 3, we know that not all activists are concerned with the common good and, to a certain extent, by politics. A fine-grained analysis yields more information and allows us to understand whether unionists, moral voicing, and Christian aid activists fulfill the criteria that would qualify them as strong citizens.

An in-depth analysis of activists' understandings is necessary to meet both our aims: to identify the cognitive links that bind meaning and intentionality, and to determine the conception of political citizenship that activists hold. We therefore need to delve into activists' minds and examine their understanding of common good and politics in all its complexity. The quantitative data used in Chapter 3 prove insufficient for a refined analysis of activists' understandings. While statistics provide insights into individuals' perceptions, they are inadequate to reveal the complexity of the human mind, an entity composed of multiple cognitive links. To grasp these intricate cognitive links, we must rely on the narratives provided by activists themselves. Opting for an inductive analysis is the only way we can isolate the specific orientations behind their actions. Indeed, induction shows how broader meanings configure activists' intentionality and guide their action, so we use induction to analyze the qualitative material gathered.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the whole body of interviews (forty narratives) was analyzed. A first step involved a cursory analysis, after which we selected *twenty-four interviewees* with whom to conduct the systematic and in-depth analysis presented here and in the following chapter. Reducing the number of cases was necessary if we were to provide a rigorous and complex analysis

of the activists' understandings of common good and politics. We made the reductions on the basis of redundancy criteria identified during the initial cursory analysis. We excluded activists from the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) to begin with, as their views on common good and politics substantially overlap with migrants' rights activists (SAB). We then excluded two of the eight interviews per organization (one active and one passive member). The fine-grained analysis of the activist narratives was therefore effectively carried out for twenty-four interviewees. We are confident of our case selection because we discarded only the interviewees whose views showed redundancy with those of retained interviewees.<sup>1</sup>

As analyzing narrative data is always challenging (Kohler Riessman 1993; McCracken 1988; Wolcott 1990), we must clarify our procedure. To bring the reader into the activists' inner world, we applied a strict 'one plus three' formula: We illustrated activists' understandings by taking the story of one activist from the six narratives systematically analyzed. We then broadened our example of the activist's relation to common good and politics by using excerpts from three of the five remaining retained interviewees. We hence selected four interviewees among the six systematically analyzed per organization: The main case was supported by excerpts from three activists. And we applied the same logic to present the cognitive mechanisms binding understandings to activists' intentionality. Again, we used the central case to illustrate the cognitive path and excerpts from three other activists to support our interpretation. Whereas the main case was used throughout the presentation of the cognitive dimensions, we changed interviewees for the three illustrative excerpts. We therefore adopted a systematic approach toward all twenty-four cases, equally represented throughout chapters 4 and 5, as shown in Table A.3 in the appendix, A.5.

This chapter focuses on how activists perceive common good. As discussed in Chapter 1, we distinguish two main dimensions in our empirical examination of understandings of common good: commonness and goodness. *Commonness* refers to the idea that the whole community must share a given good. Three sub-dimensions are necessary to delineate this dimension: activists' perception of social *interconnectedness*; activists' views about *humanness*, which can be apprehended universally or through particular

<sup>1</sup> See the section "Studying the Activist's Mind" in Chapter 1 for detailed information about the selection of interviewees and the methodology behind the analysis of the narratives (see also the Appendix A.4, Table A.2 on the matter).

socio-cultural belongings; and *inclusiveness*, whether activists perceive society as a world that is without distinctions or whether society is understood according to social and cultural differences. These sub-dimensions indicate whether activists understand society in a universalist or communitarian manner. Perceptions of commonness hence establish whether activists rely on an inclusive or exclusive understanding of the beneficiaries of common good. The second dimension, *goodness*, homes in on activists' perceptions of goods that objectively improve people's living conditions. And these goods can be understood in terms of social justice or social care. This dimension allows us to consider whether activists perceive common good with a care or a social justice orientation. Perceptions of goodness enable us to determine whether activists wish to improve the welfare of individuals or seek to broaden people's rights.

We begin our analysis of understandings of common good with Adriana, a member of Solidarity across Borders (SAB), and first closely examine her perception of common good to apprehend the cognitive path between her broad understanding of common good and her intentionality. Regarding commonness, then, how does she make sense of the ties that bind members of society together (interconnectedness)? How does she perceive individuals inhabiting society (humanness)? And does she erect boundaries between individuals (inclusiveness)? We then continue our study by scrutinizing her understanding of goodness: Does she see common good in terms of justice or care? This will be followed by a consideration of how other SAB activists understand those dimensions, the aim being to determine what kind of understanding of common good they have and if they share a similar view of common good with other activists. In a second step, we consider how this broad understanding of common good sets pro-migrant activists' intentionality and orients their action specifically. We will ultimately be in a position to know what conception of political citizenship pro-migrant activists hold, allowing us to evaluate whether they belong to the category of strong citizens. The same method will then be replicated for activists of Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia.

### **Activists for the Rights of Migrants**

Adriana is a sixty-year-old woman and a native of Ticino, the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. Her personal route to activism began in the



1970s when she moved to Geneva to study sociology. Throughout her life, she has been engaged in different contentious activities, mainly linked to the post-industrial movement: in peace, women, human rights, and solidarity concerns. Adriana also made brief incursions into Christian aid voluntarism to help poor people. However, she quit soon after because the faith-driven discourse did not suit her. In the Christian aid circle, poverty is not conceived as an injustice to be fought on political grounds. Compared to her other commitments, Adriana's advocacy for the rights of migrants is a fairly recent one. A decade ago, distressed by massive deportation of illegal migrants, she joined a local group called *In five years, we take roots*<sup>2</sup> and became a member of SAB a few years later. Adriana has therefore had a long journey in activism and has been engaged in a number of social problems. Despite this, her understanding of common good largely overlaps with that of the other migrant's rights activists interviewed.

First, Adriana perceives a strong sense of *interconnectedness* among members of society and makes sense of the society she inhabits with others through social ties. For her, society is made primarily of social links between people, essential to living together. For no reason should those ties be destroyed. As she says: "The world, the society, is above all made of relations between humans. All human constructions, art or buildings, can be destroyed. But this is of no importance because we can rebuild them. However, if we break relations between people we can't rebuild them. If we start to say: 'You're Muslim so you have the right to do this; you, you're Catholic, you have the right to do this and not that,' and so forth, this breaks bonds between human beings. For instance, if we start to break the ties developed between the Swiss population and the Tibetans settled here, we can't reconstruct them."<sup>3</sup>

Adriana also relies on an *inclusive sense of society*. She establishes no cognitive distinctions between people or between groups of citizens. To understand her inclusive perception of society, it is useful to examine how she makes sense of the individuals living in society: "A human being is something marvelous, and the world is above all made of human beings. I like people, I believe in people and this is why I don't believe in God anymore [laugh]."

<sup>2</sup> *En cinq ans on prend racine.*

<sup>3</sup> We collected oral communications from activists, and these are difficult to replicate in a book, which is a written communication. To make these oral statements readable, we rewrote them. "Rewriting" means that we used the activist's own words, expressions, and images, and we deleted repetitions, added phrase connections when they were missing, and changed grammatical errors. At all times we stayed faithful to the activists' purposes expressed in the oral format.

I believe in human beings because they have extraordinary abilities. I'm always interested in seeing what people do, how they think or see the world, and this could be my neighbor, who is Swiss like me, or the people coming from Sri Lanka. What I want to say is that people are not very different from one country to another: We are all human beings." Humans hold a central place in Adriana's cognitive world and what she intends by "human being" is actually a "universal human": "I learned something fundamental from my commitment to Amnesty International: to bring support to people and to defend their rights independently of the person who is in front of me. There are people who I can't stand. For instance, I defended people who approved of the Bosnian Genocide and were convinced that it was for the best! I also defended men who were violent with their wives and sought to justify their recourse to violence. In those cases, even if I'm profoundly shocked by what they did or thought, I do my best to defend them because they are human beings. No matter who the person is, all humans have fundamental rights, and that idea is central to my activism."

But how does Adriana universalize human beings? It is actually through *an essentialist understanding of humans*. Indeed, it is through the intimate characteristics of the individual, that person's essence, that Adriana makes sense of human beings: "I fundamentally believe that human beings are all the same. I also notice this with the asylum seekers we defend. When we face core problems or suffering, we are all the same. When a mother comes with her baby, she has the same feelings that I experience with my children. What do people want? What do migrants want? They want to live peacefully and, if possible, with loving people around them. They wish to enjoy life, to have happy moments, and to have a job. I often quote an African proverb: Life is about 'carrying water and carrying wood.' Human beings want only this: To live peacefully. You know I don't idealize people from abroad. I know a lot of migrants and I know that there is exactly the same proportion of good and bad people [in all societies]. In this respect, we are fundamentally all the same: We are human beings with our dark and light sides."

Finally, Adriana does not erect boundaries between people inhabiting society. When she speaks of the Swiss melting pot, we see just how extensive her vision of society is: "Switzerland is now so mixed. It's such a great richness to have people coming from abroad, bringing other values to mix with our own. What a wealth! Why should we refuse them? We can keep on rejecting them, but Switzerland would not be the country it once was. Are we to stop, close our eyes, and repeating: 'We are in Switzerland, we are the

Swiss people.' I always say that if in the sixties Switzerland had closed the doors to Italians and Spaniards we would still be in the Alps eating fondue (laugh). You know, we are in the same world; that's for sure. They are boundaries, but those boundaries are constructed. People create barriers out of fear of difference: I regret that a lot." Adriana sees the ties binding people together, relies on a universalist conception of human being, and perceives that we all live in the same world, without establishing boundaries between groups of people. She clearly relies on a *universalist understanding of commonness*.

But how does she perceive *goodness*? How does Adriana perceive the good (migrants' rights) that mobilizes her? The defense of migrants is understood with *the repertoire of social injustice*. Adriana is aware that the violation of migrants' rights impacts their welfare as most migrants live in poor conditions. However, she sees her commitment in terms of rights provision and social justice: "Migration is a history of blatant injustices. We actually create victims. Rich countries create victims in poor countries, and once people migrate to those rich countries, we shut the door on them! It's a fundamental right to settle where one wants. This is not only my own view; it's actually stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But this right is far from respected. If I go to Africa, I can settle down where I want without any trouble. In contrast, migrants who are coming to Switzerland can't settle here; we reject and deport them. You know, there are terrible migration stories. I can give you one example among many others: Two years ago the Swiss authorities deported a Beninese father who was separated from his wife and two kids still here, in Switzerland. For two years, we have been trying to get them a family residence permit. They fulfill all the criteria in Article 14 to receive the necessary permit. They have been settled in Switzerland for more than five years, are economically independent, and the kids attend public school, etc. For the third time in a row, we received a negative response from the federal authorities. The wife and kids will therefore soon be deported. It's a dramatically unjust situation." Clearly, the good mobilizes Adriana is perceived as a social justice problem.

Other SAB activists interviewed lead a different life from Adriana's. They belong to other generations and have other professions, family settings, and life experiences. Despite these variances among individuals, we were struck by the overlaps in their understanding of common good with that of Adriana. First, all share a common view of society. *Interconnectedness* between people could be thought of in terms of interdependence between people, social

trust, or ties binding people together. Yet all are highly aware of the ties that bind people together:

We are interrelated, that's for sure. For me, it is impossible to remain indifferent to poverty, injustice, or to people whose rights are violated. It's unthinkable to act as if others don't exist. (Simone).

I'm living in this world, I'm thus connected to the world. We're living in society and for me this means that we necessarily depend on others. Society is fundamental; we can't live without it. We really are social animals. (Colette)

For me, to live means to improve things, to contribute to society. It means to be open toward others and to be committed to them. I'm living in society and I am tied to others. For me, it's crucial to do things for others, but also with them. What one does alone is of no interest. (Lisa)

Activists committed to the rights of migrants share an extensive understanding of society, where no boundaries between people are established. Their *universalist perception of society* is ultimately tied to a view of the individual, understood first and foremost as a human being. As we saw with Adriana, it is through an essentialist understanding of the human being—with similar desires, suffering, and sources of happiness—that the human is constructed, and engages with others:

We are all humans. I'm a historian, and as a historian I find that all major human problems are essentially the same. For me, differences and racism is rooted in a hatred of others: To not accept others as human beings like oneself. (Wilhelm)

Take the example of the new juridical status put into effect by the authorities: The NEMs (Non-entrées en matière).<sup>4</sup> With this status, non-humans are created. They are already not citizens; but now, they are not treated as human beings anymore. This is just unacceptable! Those people who are coming in this country, they are just humans like me. But we don't consider them to be human beings. This makes me crazy! I grew up with the idea that all humans have the same value and the same rights. (Lisa)

<sup>4</sup> NEM is a French abbreviation for "Non-entrée en matière" and refers to individuals whose asylum application has been dismissed.

We are all the same! What we look for in life it's to find a place that suits us: to get a job, have a family and friends. It's certainly trivial to say this, but I think it's what drives most people, whether they are migrants or not. Prejudice toward migrants conveys falsities. When you hear: "Asylum seekers are lazy, they would not work," that is simply not true. They want to work because they want to live. I can fully identify with all the people coming to Switzerland, because in their situation, I would do the same thing. Human beings are fundamentally the same. (Yan)

It becomes clear that activists for migrant's rights do not erect boundaries between people and understand individuals as part of the larger human community:

I'm against discourses of cultural difference. Nowadays, this is a prevalent public discourse but I think such ideas are completely wrong. For me, it's just the opposite. I'm always amazed to see what we have in common. We share so much despite coming from different countries, evolving in different cultures, and speaking different languages. It's the reason why I don't support identity-based discourse based on claims that we are all culturally different. Those groups scare me and constitute a real threat for society. By advocating diversity, they contribute to creating social fault lines. (Simone)

We are all part of the same species. If all humanity does well, the little human that I am does well too. We should never forget that we all belong to mankind; we are part of this humanity, and nothing else. (Colette)

When I was working in Java as a theologian, I gave regular conferences. I knew that people listening to me came from different faiths —Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians—and adhered to various political ideologies—Marxism, nationalism, and so forth. Those conferences led to real exchanges. I always saw my job as fostering dialogue between people, occasions where you can be influenced by others, and even be converted to another religion. I never saw boundaries between religions. It's the reason I have been committed to inter-religion dialogues my whole life. There are no frontiers between humans, or between confessions. (Wilhelm)

Taking the *goodness* dimension of common good into account, we see that the contentious issue that mobilizes activists is perceived in terms of *social*

*justice.* Of course, they are well aware that the problems migrants face are not only a question of rights. They know that migrants in Switzerland, as in many countries, belong to the poorest social groups in society. But for them, the migrants' plight is above all an issue of social justice:

The way we welcome asylum seekers is intolerable. We pretend to provide them with accommodation, but that's a joke! They are put in civil protection shelters under the surveillance of security guards. It's like being in jail. Many asylum seekers come from countries at war and have experienced dramatic situations, such as violence, imprisonment, and other violations of human rights. What do we do when they arrive in Switzerland? We lock them up in overpopulated shelters with guards to keep them in. Welcoming migrants is a façade. Reality is cruel and highly unfair for those people. A few years ago, when I was working as a nurse in an asylum seekers shelter, I met a young woman who suffered from cancer. The state only supported emergency care, and of course she had no private health insurance. At the hospital, she was told: "You can't afford surgery, you don't have a residence permit and no insurance, we can't do the surgery." It clearly meant, you can keep your "tumor." Can you imagine that? This is the way we treat asylum seekers in this country. (Yan)

When I see asylum seekers or NEMs (Non-entrées en matière) being deported, I'm disgusted. These are the people that society wants to reject and erase. What is unbelievable is that these people evolve in spaces of non-rights. In addition, we turn them into scapegoats. As individuals, they have no future: no job, no home, no food, nothing. In a democracy, we can't accept it when people are excluded and rejected in such a manner. (Simone)

Settlement right should be granted to any human being. I can settle where I want, easily receive a Visa for traveling, 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 and theirs, it's clear that there is an obscene injustice. They are denied basic rights. (Lisa)

What emerges from our systematic analysis of the accounts provided by activists for migrants' rights is first that they perceive people as interconnected

and interdependent. Second, their understanding of the society they inhabit with others is highly inclusive. Indeed, they do not believe in cognitive boundaries between people, even for individuals coming from diverse cultures, different regions of the world, or different social groups. Their conception of individuals as universal humans is uncontestedly the most important cognition that configures their extensive-self. Third, they perceive the common good they mobilize for in terms of rights and rights violation. SAB activists consider common good as “justice for all.” The social problem for which they are mobilized is apprehended in terms of “social justice” and for “all” by relying on an all-inclusive category, to paraphrase Douglass (1980). All members of society should benefit from those goods that objectively improve people’s lives. Pro-migrant activists rely on what we have termed a *universal social justice* understanding of common good.

### “Social Justice for All” and Intentionality

Defenders of migrants’ rights perceive common good with a specific lens. But how does this perception set their intentionality? How does their understanding of common good as a “social justice for all” allow them to elaborate cognitive components that orient their action? What are the cognitive mechanisms or the cognitive linkages that bind their perception of common good to their intentionality? As we will see, the specific understanding of common good developed by pro-migrant activists enables them to construct three cognitive components—otherness, concernedness, and responsibility—directing their action in distinct ways: toward others, for a global change in society, and in the political sphere.

First, a universalist perception of society, allows them to construct a specific relation to *otherness*. Their inclusive view of society is unrestricted and favors a specific cognitive construction toward others. This construction relies on two cognitive pillars: first, a centrality of the human being in their mental world, and second, an identification with the people for whom they mobilize as human beings. This cognitive construction sets their intentionality, and enables them *to mobilize for others*, beyond their own personal socio-cultural belongings. Let us highlighted this cognitive path with Adriana. The centrality of human the being is self-evident in her discourse: “I like people, I believe in people. . . . I am deeply tied with and interested in human beings.” Her identification with migrants as humans is

evident too, as she said above: “When a mother comes with her baby, she has the same feelings that I’m experiencing with my children. When there is a drama, we all have the same sadness.” It is through the human essence that identification with migrants occurs and is extended to other people in need. It is notable that the activists who also have migrant pasts, such as Colette and Simone, identify with migrants as human beings and not as former migrants (see Simone’s quote *infra*). The centrality of the notion of the human and identification with migrants accordingly constitute two pillars that enable Adriana to develop a specific relation to otherness. They enable her to mobilize for others, for people who do not belong to her social and cultural groups: “Whatever my commitments are, they originate from my understanding of the human being. When human beings suffer from injustice, I am committed to improving their lives. I must act.” The other pro-migrant activists interviewed follow a similar cognitive path that set their intentionality:

Of course the human being is central for me. We do not live alone in society, we are among other human beings. . . . It’s unthinkable to act as if others do not exist. . . . You know, at the beginning of my commitment, I was affected by what migrants underwent as a people in exile. Being a migrant myself, I was sensitive to what migration is. But my situation was different from theirs. I migrated from France willingly. Although I suffered from exile, I can’t identify directly with their sufferings, with what they have gone through. Most of them experienced war and violence; they have had to abandon their children in their home country and live under a constant fear of deportation, etc. I have never experienced such hardships. I identify with them as a fellow human being would. . . . We must commit to dissent. We must defend others in need, those who are made into scapegoats as migrants are. It’s important that migrants benefit from support and be recognized as human beings. That is why I’m committed to defending and supporting migrants. (Simone)

For me, the individual is very important. As a nurse, I find it’s important to be committed to the patient, to listen to them, to engage in a real relationship. When dealing with a patient, I face another human being, and that’s what matters for me. . . . We’re all the same, we’re just looking for a place that suits us. . . . Migrants want to live. I can fully identify with these people who come into Switzerland. In their situation, I would do the same



thing. . . . Well . . . the financial support I provide for various organizations and my volunteer work as a therapist for prisoners are tied to the fact that we have humans who need support right in front of us. Our struggle should be for them. (Yan)

As I told you, I grew up with the idea that all humans have the same value and the same rights. This is fundamental for me. What matters to me is the human. It's really central for me. For instance, when I'm traveling, what I like above all is to meet people. Frankly, when I travel, I'm really not fascinated by sceneries, as beautiful they may be, but by the people, the people I meet. . . . You asked me before how I see the migrants that I'm fighting for. It's quite simple: I identify with migrants as humans; they are humans like me. That's it. . . . And you know what I'm doing, I mean my commitment to migrants, as well as my new professional commitment to peacekeeping, are above all commitments to others. To be open toward others beyond the family circle is what drives my political commitments. (Lisa)

The universalist conception of society enables pro-migrant activists to construct a second cognitive component: *concernedness*. This perception of society leads to a concern for various common goods, and not only for the good for which activists are currently mobilized, such as the defense of migrants' rights. This cognitive component enables them to commit, or to desire to commit, to the resolution of various social problems. A specific construction of concernedness sets their intentionality, orienting their action toward various social issues and toward changing society as whole. Concernedness enables activists to *mobilize for a widespread change in society*. Adriana's account well illustrates this cognitive path: "When I see situations of injustice, I feel concerned. I think that I should resist those inequalities; I can't accept them. I could be committed to a many number of things, but of course I can't be involved in each and every fight. Nowadays, the struggle I've committed myself to is that of the human beings in my vicinity: migrants. You know fighting for a better world is what vitalizes me. I'm committed to attempting to construct a different society, a fairer and more human one."

I've been involved in many issues throughout my life: for human rights, pacifism, ecology, women rights, against apartheid in South Africa, and helping the poor. Today, I'm a very old man, and my commitment consists essentially in providing financial support to various organizations.

I'm concerned by human problems and injustice. It's the hope to live in a better world with more justice that has always driven me and my commitments. (Wilhelm)

For me, justice and equal opportunities are central. Every time I see injustices and inequalities I feel concerned. It's what motivates me to commit myself to various struggles such as gender equality, workers' rights, migrants' rights, and basic infrastructure for people living in developing countries. The spirit is always the same: to fight against injustice. . . . To counter injustice and selfishness with humanity is essential, that's why I have devoted my energy to helping others. (Colette)

When I see injustice, I always feel concerned and I want to act. The only problem is that I'm not really an activist. I mean I'm not a person who could actively commit to a cause. I always feel torn between the necessity to act against injustice and the feeling of not really being an activist. I solve this conundrum by supporting organizations involved in struggles against injustice financially. I support many associations [laugh]. My financial commitment to all these organizations, all of these causes, is driven by the desire to improve our society, to make it better, and less unfair. (Yan)

Finally, a particular perception of goodness enables the activists to construct a last cognitive component that we identify as *responsibility*. Perceiving the good for which they mobilize as a struggle against an injustice enables them to attribute responsibility to collective actors and to frame the social problem in terms of a political struggle. Pro-migrant activists do not perceive migrants as responsible for their situation or fate. They are viewed as victims of state legislation. State actors are considered accountable for the violation of migrants' rights. This cognitive component sets the intentionality of defenders of migrants' rights, leading them *to mobilize in the political field*. Adriana's account provides evidence of the cognitive linkages between social injustice, the attribution of responsibility, and the necessity for political commitment: "Migration is a history of blatant injustices. We actually create victims. Rich countries create victims in poor countries, and once people migrate to those rich countries, we shut the door on them!" For Adriana, fighting for migrants' rights is a political conflict, and this perception orients her action toward the political sphere: "In the asylum and migration domain, it's clear that we must challenge the government if we are to change

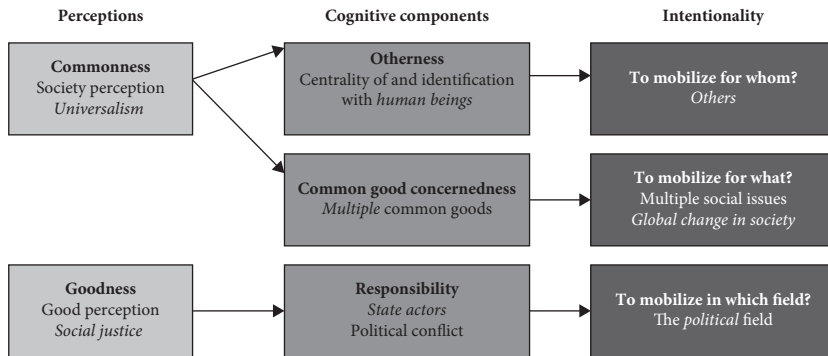
things. Without political struggles these rights would remain violated, that's for sure." Other pro-migrants express a similar cognitive path that sets their intentionality.

Migrants are victims of state violence. They have to wait for five years before receiving a response from the authorities. It's an unbearable psychological pressure. The state keeps them on a leash. . . . There are also problems with the civil servants working in the field of asylum seekers. Most of them follow restrictive practices, even though they have a considerable margin in which to interpret the law. In addition, I know that many of them do not read the migrants' personal records. They simply skim through them. Without lawyers defending their case, most of the asylum seekers would have no chance to stay. I'm committed to asylum seekers' defense by providing legal counsel and by defending cases before the administration and courts, but I'm also engaged politically. Migration laws will keep on being strengthened without political struggles to oppose such measures. (Lisa)

It's intolerable the way we welcome asylum seekers. . . . It's like being in jail. If people knew what was really going on, how we treat migrants and asylum seekers, they would all protest. Government practices toward migrants are unjust and inhuman. It is our duty to denounce them. Of course, we have to fight on the political terrain if change is to happen! (Yan)

The laws are so rigid. Arbitrariness is also a major issue. When you think that most of the people applying for asylum have suffered in their home country, they have risked their lives, and we don't give them asylum. It's twisted! When you know that, you just rebel. Recently, I defended an Iranian woman; she was economically independent, spoke French, and was perfectly integrated, meeting the government's requirements to receive a resident permit. Yet she never received the right to settle in Switzerland. We must fight legally to defend migrants' situation, but the most important thing is to be involved in political struggles if we are to improve the rights of migrants. (Simone)

Defenders of migrants' rights perceive common good with a specific lens. As Figure 4.1 summarizes, this specific understanding enables them to



**Figure 4.1** From the perception of common good of the pro-migrant activists to their intentionality of action

construct a specific relation to otherness, to develop concern toward a large set of common goods, and finally to elaborate meanings toward responsibility when migrants are conceived as victims of state practices. These specific cognitive components set their intentionality, facilitating and orienting their action. First, their specific relation to otherness allows them to mobilize for others. Second, their concernedness enables them to commit to social change. They are inclined to engage in multiple social struggles in order to improve society as a whole. Finally, attribution of responsibilities to collective actors, and here to state actors in particular, orients their action toward the political sphere.

Regarding pro-migrant activists, a last dimension remains to be examined. *Are migrants' defenders concerned by common good?* Or does the range of their concerns about common good go beyond this specific problem? As we saw above, migrants' rights activists are concerned with broad social issues and are not exclusively committed to one social problem. They are concerned by various social problems that are cognitively structured around the idea of improving community life in general. As Wilhelm stated: "It's the hope to live in a more just world that drives me." Adriana, Colette, Lisa, Simone, and Yan express similar views that demonstrate that they are cognitively committed to improving society and to broaden access to the common good. In this regard, following the definition of strong citizenship under the first pillar, they can be considered *strong citizens*; they are concerned by the common good, and their commitment seeks to improve our life in common.

### Common Views on Common Good?

People committed to Greenpeace are involved in political struggles for environmental matters. Their contentious battle is therefore not analogous with that of migrants' right activists. Nonetheless, as shown in Chapter 1, they share a similar contentious milieu as both groups take part in the post-industrial movement. But do Greenpeace participants share a view of common good with that elaborated by defenders of migrants' rights? Or, do they perceive common good from a different perspective? Again, we enter the green activists' mental world through an activist's account.

Nathan is a thirty-year-old man. He was born in Bourgogne and lived there until his mid-twenties. After studying information technology, he found a job in Switzerland and moved to Geneva where he now lives. Nathan was not always aware of environmental issues. He discovered ecological activism when he was in Finland completing his studies. Four years ago, when he settled in Switzerland, a good friend took him to a Greenpeace meeting, and since then, he has been committed to the organization. Before joining environmental contention, Nathan was occasionally involved in student protests in France. He protested against state reforms that hindered access to higher education. Nowadays, alongside his participation in Greenpeace, Nathan is committed to making relations between developed and developing nations fairer, and he seeks to provide poor people with support. More recently, he was fired from the international company he worked for and subsequently joined the workers' syndicate Unia.

Let us first investigate how Nathan perceives the society he inhabits with others. Like the pro-migrant activists, Nathan perceives *interconnectedness* between members of society. In his mind, we are all interdependent. This perception requires that solidarity be displayed and social trust be developed. Interdependence, social trust, and solidarity are the cognitive resources that, in Nathan's view, bind social members together. As he says: "For me trusting others is crucial. If you don't trust others, you become an individualist worrying 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. This is true on an ecological scale too: Pollution in one country impacts the environment in other countries, and advances in protecting the environment in one country benefit all of us."

As Nathan's last idea stresses, he does not establish boundaries between people. His *understanding of society is inclusive*, and it parallels the view

shared by the migrants' right activists. As with the pro-migrant activists, Nathan perceives individuals in society as belonging to a universal humanity. When he talks about members of society, he always refers to humans, unmoored from social or cultural belongings: "We should connect humans and nature together. If we don't bind humans to nature, we will face tremendous problems. This much is obvious. 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." Nathan's thoughts concerning the human are slightly less developed than those formulated by migrants' rights activists. Despite this, he has a universalist understanding of society, setting no boundaries between people who make up society. As he declares: "Recently, I went on *Médecins du Monde's* website and I found what they do to be highly interesting because they provide medical assistance for people both in Switzerland and abroad. They are committed nationally and internationally. As I see it, we should act against poverty here, in Switzerland, but also everywhere in the world. To return to your question, 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."

Does Nathan's perception of *goodness* overlap with that constructed by the defenders of migrants' rights? The common good to which Nathan is committed is perceived both in terms of care and social injustice. For Nathan, extensive predation on natural resources, massive pollution, and energy problems directly impact human survival and care. As Nathan stated: "If nature doesn't exist anymore, human beings cannot survive." Environmental problems are therefore seen in terms of human care. However, the connection to social justice is not far away. For Nathan, environmental problems are linked to issues of social justice: "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. The devices are full of toxic substances and people are ill equipped to recycle those products. It's unbearable; we send tons of electronic equipment to landfills in developing countries where people can't afford computers! We are not all equal in terms of environmental destruction and it's the same with global warming. Developing countries are much more affected by global warming than first world countries. Switzerland will have

enough money to cope with floods or hurricanes, but this is not the case for Bangladesh and many other poor countries. There, most of the people live in slums and will suffer directly from the effects of climate change.”

Nathan sees environmental problems in terms of both care and social injustice. Indeed, the question of social justice goes beyond the challenge of human survival due to environmental destruction. For Nathan, the impact of global warming is not equally distributed, and this unevenness constitutes a major injustice. Further, subsequent generations will suffer from the environmental destruction we are engendering. Again, he thinks of this idea first and foremost in terms of injustice and unequal treatment between generations. In this respect, Nathan conceives of common good similarly to the way pro-migrant activists do, as a universal social justice.

The other Greenpeace activists interviewed share Nathan’s understanding of common good to a large extent. First, they perceive *interconnectedness* between people in all societies. Like Nathan, they feel that bonds between people should be displayed, in terms of interdependence among people, social trust, or solidarity. With some individual idiosyncrasies, green activists perceive interconnectedness between people in a similar fashion:

Society exists thanks to social ties and humans relations. Without such ties, societies can develop but are imbalanced. Since childhood, and throughout our adult lives, what matters are the ties which bind us to others. Each of us exists, as a person, because of those ties; we are just a fraction of a whole. Several years ago, I realized that I exist in relationship to a larger whole. To live, I need to belong to that whole: to construct with others, and to solve problems with others. (Margot)

We can’t live by ourselves. As long as things go well you could live by yourself. But when things don’t, you realize that you need others. When you’re open to others, you realize that everything becomes easier. I think that the more we share, the more our relationships tend toward equality. (Evelyne)

It might be nice to think we can manage everything by ourselves, achieve that sort of total autonomy from others. But I don’t believe that’s possible anymore. Before, we were able to be independent from others, we were hunters and gatherers. Nowadays, we are all specialized in one domain. There are people who produce our food, others the water we consume, the electricity we need, etc. We can’t expect a train driver to build his own

house, to grow his food, to create his clothing. In our modern society, we are all interdependent. (Pierrette)

Greenpeace activists are aware they dwell in society with others and therefore share a universalist understanding of society. However, they depart from pro-migrant activists on one point. Indeed, many Greenpeace activists perceive humans through a negative lens by underlining humanity's darker aspects: ecological destruction and the endangerment of human survival as well as a generalized sense of irresponsibility and carelessness. Nevertheless, the generic umbrella of life remains intact:

I feel really close to animals. If I had to choose between saving an animal or a human, I might just save the animal. Of course, animals live under the law of the strongest and eat their fellows when necessary. However, if they kill it's always for a good reason: either to eat, or to save their babies. They don't display unwarranted violence as is the case with humans. I think that humans are fundamentally stupid creatures—you, all others, and me. We are unable to live with nature. All we do is take from nature incessantly, be it minerals, wood, oil, or water. We think that we own the planet. Humans are crazy! (Pierrette)

We are all human beings. We should all benefit from the same rights, be treated with respect, and act freely. Certainly differences exist: We don't all share the same faiths, cultures, or ethnicities. However, while our worldviews are slightly different, we are above all human beings. (Evelyne)

If I'm driving and I see a cat run over, I think: "Oh the poor cat, it's so sad, it's too bad." If I see a child hit by a car, I will scream, I will be shocked. This child is a human like me. I profoundly think that we human beings are much more important than animals. Of course, we should respect animals and treat them kindly. However, humans are much more important. (Maria)

With this understanding of individuals as human beings, green activists do not establish cognitive boundaries between people, or groups of people in society. They make use of a *universalist repertoire* to understand society. Yet again, their perception overlaps with that of pro-migrant activists. For green activists, we all belong to the same world:



Racism is a real problem, but it is a misconception. Between white and black people, there are no differences. Black people are not less smart than us; they are not less hard workers than us. There is no difference. It's just a matter of skin color; it's nothing more than that. Black, white, or yellow, it makes no difference. In any case, I have no nationalist fiber: I could be Cambodian, American, or from another nationality. I don't care about that. I find it totally foolish to draw boundaries between each other. (Pierrette)

I have experienced situations of exclusion, above all with my husband. Sometimes, in restaurants, people seated next to us say: "Look at those Jewish faces." Several times, I've seen people stare at him. People don't see my husband as an individual like others, an individual belonging to a larger set of people. They perceive him as a Jew. This is difficult and of course unbearable. I share this experience to claim that we should work for a more open world: A world without social, faith-based, or cultural distinctions. This is an imperative for me. (Margot)

I like diversity. That's why I have friends from abroad, people who are open to others. I think that someone who has remained in a small village for their whole life is much less open to others than people who have traveled and lived in other countries. I think the more you exchange with others, the more you open yourself to difference. It's what I learned when I lived in Ghana. When you live abroad you realize that we are not so different from each other. (Maria)

Greenpeace activists also share the same perception of common good as migrant rights' activists, as *social injustice* is part of their cognitive world too. As observed with Nathan, when it comes to environmental problems, this common good is apprehended both in terms of care and injustice. Pollution, excessive consumption, the exhaustion of natural resources, and global warming worry these activists because of the impact on human living conditions. Environment protection is hence considered in terms of social care. However, social justice remains a key factor. Concerns about a legacy for subsequent generations are notably expressed by all Greenpeace activists interviewed. Environmental destruction threatens the livelihood of those who will come after us, and this constitutes a major injustice for all Greenpeace activists interviewed:

We inherited the earth, a place full of life. We use portions of those elements, and we destroy others. But the earth is a common good and we are undermining the legacy we received. With all species that have already disappeared, those that are disappearing, and those that will disappear in a near future: This legacy is now under threat. This is worrisome because we are all responsible for this legacy, and we should be aware of that. If it appears absolutely normal to destroy this legacy, we are far away from the idea of co-responsibility shared with future generations. This behavior is wrong and, above all, unfair toward future generations. (Margot)

We must stop polluting and think of new modes of consumption. We must put a stop to advertisement urging us to consume ever more. This maddens me because we don't have the resources to consume in those quantities. It's the same with electricity; we waste too much energy in useless lighting. So many shops and buildings are illuminated at night when they need not be. Consumerism is an aberration! We won't leave much for the next generations and that is deplorable. (Pierrette)

I learned a lot about nature thanks to my mother. We were always in nature, walking either in forests or in countryside. She transmitted a love of the earth to me. But I wasn't aware of environmental problems from the onset. For example, I started recycling only much later in life. Now, I'm very aware of those problems. I can't stand throwing a can or a battery in the trash and I don't throw away things that I can reuse or transform. We must stop wasting because the earth is so polluted. . . . We should put an end to all of this. How will future generations inhabit such an earth? (Maria)

The narratives provided by Greenpeace activists reveal that their understanding of common good is in line with that of defenders of migrants' rights. First, they perceive interconnectedness between individuals. Second, their understanding of the society they inhabit with others is inclusive, with no cognitive boundaries between people. Like defenders of migrants' rights, Greenpeace activists perceive individuals as universal human beings, and by this they define themselves as extensive. Third, green activists grasp the good for which they mobilize with the repertoire of both care and social justice. However, the social justice repertoire matters more than care. As we will see in the following section, they perceive other common goods exclusively through a social justice lens. Social justice is a structural perspective

when it comes to understanding common good. Like the migrants' rights defenders, green activists conceive common good in terms of "justice for all." Again, they rely on a *universal social justice* understanding of common good. While they are involved in contentious battles pertaining to specific political issues, migrant defenders and green activists share common views on common good.

While all Greenpeace activists interviewed share a similar concern for common good, Yves, one of the green activists interviewed, differs from the cohort. First, he does not rely on a universalist understanding of common good but rather perceives individuals as formed by social and cultural belongings, and he defines boundaries between groups of people inhabiting society. In his mind, society is highly segmented, and we live in specific social groups. Second, Yves does not apprehend common good with the social justice repertoire. His cognitive world departs from the one elaborated by other Greenpeace activists interviewed. Yves's relational setting provides clues toward perceiving why this particular activist relies on a distinct understanding of common good. We return to this issue in Chapter 6.

### **Green Activists' Intentionality**

Green activists perceive common good in a similar way as defenders of migrants' rights. Does their understanding of common good enable them to elaborate cognitive components that overlap with those of migrant activists? If so, do those cognitive components orient Greenpeace participants toward types of action similar to those of pro-migrant activists? In other terms, do the cognitive mechanisms binding their perception of common good to their intentionality parallel those of SAB activists? By analyzing the content of the three cognitive components—otherness, concernedness, and responsibility—and examining for whom, for what, and in which field Greenpeace activists orient their action, we will be able to answer those questions.

To begin with, like pro-migrant activists, their inclusive view of society favors a specific cognitive construction toward others. This construction relies on two cognitive pillars: a centrality of the human being in their mental world and a concern for the universality of environmental issues. Mobilizing on environmental issues, ecological activists do not speak about the ways in which they identify with the humans they mobilize for as the pro-migrant

activists do. Despite this, they problematize the universality of the issue they are mobilized for. Both cognitive pillars set their intentionality, and enable them *to mobilize for others*.

Actually, ecological activism might be motivated by two distinct concerns: by activists' self-protection (or protection of their relatives) and the preservation of the environment surrounding them, or by a more universalist preoccupation that transcends self-preservation and goes beyond one's "backyard." Greenpeace activists belong to the latter category of green activism. In our long conversations, none of them hinted at the idea that their commitment replies to a concern about their own lives. Indeed, community as a whole and the lives of others drive their commitment. Moreover, ecological problems in their immediate surroundings do not matter as they are mostly burdened with universalist environmental issues. "Not in my backyard" (NIMBY) is not a meaning present in their minds.

The centrality of the human being in their mindset and a universalist dimension of environmental issues are two cognitive sets orienting their mobilization toward others, as Nathan's accounts well illustrated. "As I already told you, I'm concerned about human beings. And my anxiety about environmental issues is related to others. You know, even if I live to be one hundred years old, I wouldn't suffer from the consequences of our destruction of the planet. I will not be personally affected by this destruction, but the next generation will. We must think about future generations, and it's for their well-being that I am committed. Similarly, global issues are of huge concern to me: protecting endangered species, combating the use of nuclear energy, reversing global warming, among others. We should always bear in mind that environmental issues have an impact on us all. We are not equal regarding those problems, and people living in poor countries are much more exposed to the effects of ecological destruction, and we should mobilize our energies for them too." The cognitive path—from the centrality of the human in the cognitive map presented by Greenpeace activists and their concern with universal issues pertaining to their willingness to act on behalf of others—appears in each of the Greenpeace activist's narratives:

A long time ago, I realized that I exist in something global and that I'm just a small cog in something bigger, so, I exist through others. To meet the other, to communicate with the other, to listen to the other, and to be committed to the other, matters to me. . . . You know, environmental issues have an impact on us all, here and elsewhere. We must act locally but also

globally. Global issues are important, and I also commit to these kinds of issues. (Margot)

Human beings are important to me: We must protect them and act for them. With environmental issues, I am not mobilized for myself but for all of us. We must leave a sustainable planet for everyone. We all have a responsibility in protecting the environment. All of us should do something, like improving the protection of forests here and in other places in the world, saving polar bears, putting a halt to the fishing of endangered species, etc. A commitment to the environment is a commitment to humanity, because without nature our species won't survive. My commitment to Greenpeace resonates with what I believe in: a global commitment for all. (Maria)

Of course the human being matters for me. As I told you, we should all be concerned by others and be committed to improving others' lives. . . . With the environment, I'm concerned by an issue which affects all of us. For instance, overfishing, nuclear energy, ocean pollution due to oil platforms worries me. We must protect our planet. I support Greenpeace because the organization acts on global issues for all: Others and me. (Evelyne)

The universalist understanding of society also favors a specific construction of *concernedness* for the Greenpeace activists. As we found for defenders of migrants' rights, multiple common good issues concern them. Their views on common good are not restricted to environmental problems. As with the pro-migrant activists, these cognitive components allow Greenpeace activists to commit, or desire to commit, to solving *various social problems*. Their extensive concern with the common good enables them to mobilize for various social causes encapsulated in the wish to bring global social change in society. Nathan's narrative provides evidence regarding the cognitive linkage. "I feel concerned by many social causes. I'm committed for more equity between rich and poor countries; I would like to provide support for poor people; and I joined Unia after my company fired me. The company made huge profits but fired us to outsource the production to countries where wages are much lower. As I told you, we should be concerned by local and global problems. Most of them are interrelated: It's the case for issues of labor, North-South relations, the environment, etc. We need to fight for a sustainable world and a fairer society." The following excerpts by Margot, Evelyne, and Maria provide further evidence of this cognitive path, from

an inclusive understanding of commonness, a concernedness for multiple public issues, to the development of an intentionality that urges Greenpeace activists to mobilize for various social problems with the wish to bring about an overall change in society.

Many injustices preoccupy me. For years, I have been involved in the defense of migrants who do not have legal status to be here and I could commit to many other causes. I'm committed to making a better world. My mom transmitted this concern to me: to be engaged against injustices regardless of where or what they are. (Evelyne)

For me it's obvious that we must fight against injustice and for anyone. We can't live in a society excluding people and treating some of them so unfairly. Many social issues concern me and I'm committed to addressing them. All my life, I was engaged in professional organizations, trade unions, as well as on matters of migration. Since I retired, I'm no longer in those associations, but I remain concerned by those issues. Today, I'm involved in guardianships: I defend and mentor individuals who face life difficulties. As long as I have the strength, I will remain committed. For me, there's always this idea to try to improve our society; to make it better and fairer. (Margot)

When I see injustice, I want to do something to amend it. When I see migrants deported, I'm revolted and want to act. When I see poverty, here or in developing countries, I want to do something about it. I want to fight against those injustices. I don't always do it: I don't have enough money to support all these organizations, nor do I have time to commit. You know, I always want to change this society, to make it better [laugh]. (Maria)

The understanding of goodness that green activists develop enables them to construct a final cognitive component: *responsibility*. Like defenders of migrants' rights, green activists perceive the good they mobilize for in terms of social justice, which allows them to attribute responsibility to collective actors. Although they consider individuals as accountable for the planet's destruction due to consumerism, two collective actors are perceived as important players in this destruction: economic and political actors. Attributing responsibilities to both actors allows them to view environmental problems as a political conflict, which in turn favors *a mobilization in the political field*. Nathan's narrative illustrates these cognitive connections: "Multinational

corporations are responsible for environmental degradation and predation of resources. They must change their behavior and assume responsibility. For example, food companies using GMO<sup>5</sup> have a huge responsibility toward the environment. It's the same with companies producing nuclear energy. These are real problems. Well, in that case, political authorities are also accountable. The authorities ultimately agree or not to power plants, and actually they favor building more of them. Government always posits the environment in opposition to the economy, and the economy wins. The other problem with political authorities is their short-term view on such matters. Look at how they handled the economic crisis: They provided huge amounts of money to rescue banks, but no money is to be found when it comes to halting global warming. We should continuously pressure governments to do something for the environment." A similar thought process appears in accounts by Margot, Pierrette, and Evelyne:

Large companies are accountable and should assume responsibility, and so are supermarkets that sell products with GMO, or chemical industries in Basel or in Bhopal. Of course, they should be held accountable, but so should political authorities. Look at Bhopal; the Indian government is responsible for the decontamination of this industrial site but has done nothing. With political authorities it's always difficult because they have conflicting interests. They are bound to the economy and profit. So they are not very active in environmental protection. It's the reason why we must act: We must contest their policies, and put them under pressure in order to make them act. Otherwise, they will never take action. (Margot)

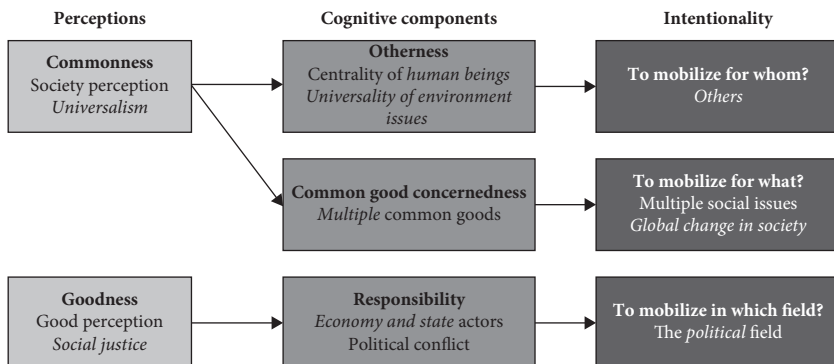
Capitalism is a real problem. It encourages us to consume unnecessarily. Businesses and large companies are fueled by that logic: unending consumption. They are based on growth logics and must be held accountable for spoliation of resources and creating pollution. But the state is also accountable: It's not committed enough to environmental protection. The state is driven by capitalist logics. Consider oil companies; governments support these polluting companies and let them destroy our environment. If companies and state interests overlap, political authorities are not really engaged in protecting the environment. This responsibility is therefore

<sup>5</sup> Genetically modified organisms.

bestowed upon us. As citizens and activists, we must put pressure on the state and industries. (Pierrette)

Industries and the economic world are accountable for the destruction of the environment, but so are political authorities. State authorities start to do something, but they are very slow and have to do much more. We should commit on the political level to making them act! (Evelyne)

Greenpeace activists' understanding of common good in universalist terms and with the social justice repertoire enables them to construct three cognitive components: *otherness*, *concernedness*, and *responsibility*. As shown in Figure 4.2, those cognitive components orient their action toward others, lead them to be involved in multiple social issues aiming to improve the society as a whole, and encourage them to mobilize in the political field. As for migrants' defenders, these three cognitive components set their intentionality. In the opening of this discussion on how understandings set green activists' intentionality, we wondered whether the cognitive mechanisms binding perceptions of common good to intentionality matched those of pro-migrant activists. The answer is clearly yes. The cognitive mechanisms are the same and enable Greenpeace activists to orient their action in a direction similar to that adopted by defenders of migrants' rights. Like the latter group, green activists' specific understanding of common good sets a distinct intentionality: It allows them to mobilize for others, on multiple issues, and in the political realm.



**Figure 4.2** From the perception of common good of the Greenpeace activists to their intentionality of action



Finally, like pro-migrant activists, members of Greenpeace demonstrate a concern for various social problems. Indeed, as underlined above, their concerns are not strictly restricted to environmental problems. All Greenpeace activists interviewed share views similar to the one expressed by Evelyne: “I could commit to many other causes.” They have an extensive concern about the common good. Like the pro-migrant activists, then, Greenpeace activists can be considered *strong citizens* under the criteria of the first pillar of strong citizenship: Their action is dedicated to improving our common good.

### **Christian Aid Volunteers and Common Good**

A distinctive inner world unfolds once we consider activists committed in Christian aid organizations, as their relation to common good does not overlap with that of moral voicing activists. Caritas volunteers have a rather distinct understanding of common good. Let us look at what views emerge from their narratives by considering Mathieu’s account first. Mathieu retired from his architect position a decade ago. While he was at the head of a fairly large company, Mathieu managed to be socially and politically active in his community. He even reduced his involvement with the architecture office and worked a part-time position to set aside enough time for his commitments. From the time he was a child and up to his twenties, Mathieu participated in a scouting movement. A few years later, he joined the Geneva division of Emmaus, an organization that provides help to the homeless. After he had spent a short period in this volunteering association, a close friend brought Mathieu to Caritas. He was, and still is, deeply involved in the organization. Along with his volunteering work, Mathieu also took part in the Christian Democratic Party, and for thirty years served as a member of the Geneva parliament. Both party politics and volunteering were hence important aspects of his life. Mathieu left the Christian Democrat Party a decade ago but remains active in Caritas, even if his commitment is not as strong as it was in the past. Mathieu has been committed to his community throughout his life. But what perception of community does he have? And more generally, what is his understanding of common good?

For Mathieu, *interconnectedness* between people is self-evident. Individuals are bound together and depend on one another, and each individual needs the help of his or her fellow citizens. Social links and solidarity with others are the main prisms through which he perceives interconnectedness. As he

declares: “We live in a society; we belong to a society. In our life, we can have kids, a wife, brothers and sisters, but there are all the others too. Each time we have the opportunity to develop social ties among people, we must do it. Once we develop ties between people—for instance, between misfits and people who are better off—it’s always positive. Community life is extremely important because it brings people together.”

Mathieu also relies on a *universalist understanding of commonness*. Yet his understanding of commonness is less extensive than that of the moral voicing activists. Actually, Mathieu has an *ambivalent perception* of individuals in society. His Christian background provides him with substantial cognitive resources to view individuals as universal human beings. As he explains: “I was born and raised in a Christian family: My parents were always concerned by respect for others. In my view, religion means the other above all. I see fellow humans in front of me: This person is like me, with their flaws and qualities. I’m convinced that every person has marvelous abilities which simply need to be discovered and developed.” However, his self-extension is less generous than that of moral voicing activists. Contrary to moral voicing activists who include others in their own world, Mathieu perceives others, and particularly the people he mobilizes for, as distinct from him, and he never seeks to absorb others into his own world. Throughout his account, Mathieu speaks of the poor in pejorative terms: They are “lost,” “misfits,” or “broken.” Cognitive boundaries are set between his self and the “misfits”: “In Caritas, once we say ‘others,’ it actually means people who are lost and battered by life. These are the misfits who need help. You know that Emmaus companions started like this. Abbé Pierre met a misfit man in the street, a guy who was totally lost and nobody was interested in, and told him: ‘Come with me, I need you.’<sup>6</sup> Recently, I have been helping an architect who is completely lost. I spend time with him and I listen to him. I try to do my best to help him, but this guy is a complete misfit.”

Throughout Mathieu’s narrative, this ambivalence—between a universal human and a categorized individual—is present. This ambivalence leads him to construct a *less inclusive understanding of society*. He does not think that “we all belong to the same world,” as moral voicing activists do. His understanding of society is less extensive, as he emphasizes: “Rather than saying we’re in the same world, I would say that we are in the same region.”

<sup>6</sup> Abbé Pierre was a French Catholic priest. In 1949, he founded the Emmaus organization. Nowadays, the organization is represented in many countries. The French priest was highly popular in France and in many French-speaking countries.

Mathieu's conception of society is rather that of a community, the one in which he lives. However, this understanding of community is viewed in universalist terms. He does not erect boundaries within the community, and his community is conceived as rather extensive, including Swiss and French people: "Community holds a central place in my life. All my commitments relate to this core idea: I live in a community; I should therefore be committed to it. I have always been, and still am, highly involved in the community. For me, community means the Geneva region including the French region around Geneva. People from Geneva and the surrounding French region live in the same community. We shouldn't distinguish them, and we must solve community problems together."

Does Mathieu's perception and assessment of *goodness* match that of moral voicing activists? The answer is clearly no. Mathieu's actions for poor people are exclusively framed with the *social care* repertoire in mind. The common good for which he is committed relates to a care problem and he never raises the question of social justice. Mathieu never states that poverty is an injustice, nor does he question the social causes that lead to poverty and social inequality. The common good for which he mobilizes is essentially viewed as caring for underprivileged people: "My commitment to Emmaus was above linked to Abbé Pierre. He opened a shelter in Geneva for homeless people, and I joined him. He provided support for people who were freezing to death in Paris, and was committed to providing them with housing, clothing, and food. His action was appealing to me. Helping people in distress has always motivated me. And it's exactly what we are doing in Caritas. We help people bruised by life."

Mathieu's specific understanding of common good is one shared by other Caritas volunteers. All are aware of the social ties that bind people together and apprehend *interconnectedness* mainly through the lens of interdependence between individuals, which calls for solidarity with others:

We live in an increasingly individualist society where people are isolated from each other and worry essentially about themselves, their jobs or their own families. They don't help others anymore. That's so sad because they forget that we need others to live and that to live in society means living with others. (Edwige)

We are bound to others and we must show our solidarity to them. In my family, we've always helped others. My father helped sick people going to

Lourdes and my grandmother was always giving to people around her. I remember, during the war, she helped French people living across the border. At night, over barbed wire, she gave them eggs and milk from our farm. We weren't rich, but each time we could help others we did it. It was a way of living. And nowadays, I continue doing the same thing [laugh]. (Christine)

It's important to care about common good, on issues such as education, access to water, among many other things. We should protect those goods but also pay attention to their distribution, so that we all can profit from them. Today, caring and sharing common good is not done properly; it's not satisfying. Then again, maybe, it never was. . . . I believe that citizens should be aware that common good is more important than their own personal welfare. You know, living in society means helping one another. (Emmanuelle)

Like Mathieu, they rely on an *ambivalent understanding of commonness*. Their Christian background offers them well-defined cognitive resources to view society in universalist terms, and this enables them to perceive individuals as universal humans. But their accounts also reveal that their perception of society is based on a categorized individual, conceived of along national, religious, racial, or class divides. Caritas activists perceive individuals in their social and cultural specificities. Their universalist understanding of community thus functions in tandem with a categorical understanding of individuals. This sort of categorical thinking was absent in accounts provided by moral voicing activists. The ambivalent understanding of humans—sometimes as generic, and sometimes in their categorical specificities—shows that Christian aid volunteers have a much less extensive-self than moral voicing activists. On a continuum of universalist thinking, moral voicing activists form one extremity, relying on an unbridled universalist view of society, while Christian aid volunteers are situated on the other extreme, with a less inclusive understanding of society.

I've been immersed in Christian values. Respecting others, caring and helping them are part of my values. We all know that some people face tremendous difficulties and need help to overcome hardship. We should do something to help them with their plight. And Caritas does a great job by supporting human beings who need help. . . . Speaking of hardship, I don't put everyone in the same bag: There are different categories of poor people. Drug addicts destroy themselves and are difficult to handle as they often

have mental problems. It's what I call human misery. They shouldn't be compared to working-poor people, whom we must help. You know, there are good and bad poor people. When you look at the history of poverty in Europe, it has always been like this: There has always been a distinction between categories of poor people. And I see the need to maintain distinctions. (Emmanuelle)

For me, Catholicism is a religion defined by charity, driven by the idea of loving and helping others. To be a Christian is to be kind to others, to be concerned for others, to help others. It's why it shocks me that some people show disdain for poor people. It's shocking because they are human beings, and should be respected accordingly. That said, I enjoy working in the Caritas shop. We meet people from all over the world; we have people from all ethnicities. In that respect, it's an interesting job, but sometimes not an easy one. Some people under stress are not always that polite. Then we explain that we are volunteers, and that calms them down. You know, foreigners are always impressed when they know that we are working for free. Then, you have people who always seek to haggle. Usually they are Arab. Bargaining is part of their culture, but they are nice people. You also have Muslims who disdain us because we're women. (Christine)

I was raised in a very religious environment. My mother has always been a generous person who sought to help others. Having been raised in such a context, to share with other and to help them comes normally to me. I find the scale of social discrepancies tragic: Some people waste large quantities of food, while others, millions of human beings, go to sleep without having eaten. . . . Also, you have various types of poor people. You have the working-poor people and people who have lost their jobs, and, on the other side, individuals who never have, and will never have, enough money to live because they are unable to manage money when they have it. Those people waste. They buy lots of foods and let it rot in the fridge. And, of course, at the end of the month, they come to Caritas for food. There are huge differences between rich and poor people. Rich people never waste. They know how to manage and save their resources. People from the bourgeoisie have been educated to become what they are. They were sent to private schools for strict education. And thanks to that, they're now part of the elite. By contrast, workers' children are too pampered. (Edwige)

The above excerpts clearly emphasize the ambivalence of Caritas activists and the extent to which their accounts are strewn with social and cultural divides that serve to categorize individuals. Sometimes people in need are perceived as universal humans, while at other times they are categorized along racial, religious, national, or class divides. Christian aid activists hence rely on a peculiar universalist understanding of commonness, tinted by categorical conceptions. This ambivalent perception affects their view of society, which is *less inclusive* than that of moral voicing activists. Moral voicing activists claim that “we live in the same humanity,” while Christian aid volunteers could be grouped under Mathieu’s view when he claimed that “we live in the same region.” Actually, Caritas volunteers depend on a strong sense of the community shared with others. This understanding matches the one that emerged from Mathieu’s narrative, where a local community extended over the Swiss city of Geneva to include French surroundings. Despite the pride expressed regarding their local community, Caritas activists perceive it in universalist terms without setting boundaries between people inhabiting that particular community:

I think Switzerland welcomes too many foreigners; the earth’s entire population comes to our country. We can’t keep the borders open anymore. We need to curb this openness. We wouldn’t be able to accommodate all of them. It’s the same with cross-border commuters. In the past, it was our friends from Savoy. Nowadays, the whole of the North of France settles in the region for jobs in Geneva, and we don’t have jobs for all those people. Speaking of Savoy, you know I like Savoyards. They are like us, we come from the same world. (Christine).

I think that the “melting pot” is a difficult idea. It’s difficult for cultures to co-exist. We were idealist to think that everyone coming in Switzerland could easily integrate. It was fine with Italians, Spaniards, and Portuguese because they wanted the same things that we do. But with people from the Middle East, Africa, or the Balkans it’s difficult. We don’t have the same values and understandings. They couldn’t integrate our community. (Emmanuelle)

One day, a French lady said to me: “What a shame to be Swiss! All these horrors you committed during WW2.’ It was the first time that I heard such a terrible thing about Switzerland. I started to be uncomfortable with

my national identity. Then, I told her that Switzerland is a small country and we couldn't accommodate all the refugees. I remember this period well. It was hard to find food or primary goods. But I'm a patriot. I'm Swiss, and primarily from Geneva. Today, people say that they are citizens of the world, but that doesn't mean much. You always belong to a piece of land, to a region. (Edwige)

Christian aid activists rely on a sort of universalist understanding of society that overlaps somewhat with that of moral voicing activists, while relying on a less extensive view of society. By contrast, they depart from moral voicing activists in their understanding of *goodness*. They see the good they are mobilized for not in terms of social justice, but solely through the *social care repertoire*. In their minds, they are committed to caring for a population whose well-being is not provided for. Their actions aim to offer this population material support so they can have a better daily life. Poverty is not considered in terms of a denial of rights, and Christian aid activists do not enter the social justice terrain but perceive their actions as caring for under-privileged people:

There are people facing great difficulties. We should care for them; we must improve their daily lives. My mom always said: "There are poor people living close to us, they need care." I followed the same path. (Edwige)

We need to provide care and assistance for others: older people, people with AIDS, people deprived of basic means, among many other groups. (Christine)

Caritas volunteers do not change the world, that's for sure. But they try to make the daily life of people better. They care for people with difficult lives. I think this is important. They are not only caring for disadvantaged people but also for people with chronic illnesses, people at the end of their life, youth in difficulty, etc. That work is essential. (Emmanuelle)

The understanding Caritas activists have of the common good only partly overlaps with that of moral voicing activists. Although their self-extension is less ample than the perception of moral voicing activists, they nevertheless rely on a somewhat universalist conception of common good. First, they see people as interconnected. Second, they do not set boundaries

between people or groups of people inhabiting their region. While they have an ambivalent understanding of individuals, defined in either universalist or categorical terms, they rely on an inclusive view of the people who should benefit from a common good that is contingent upon the region they inhabit. If their understanding is less extensive than pro-migrant and Greenpeace activists, they nevertheless perceive the beneficiaries of common good in universalist terms. By contrast, Christian aid and moral voicing activists do not perceive the goods with the same lens. Caritas volunteers grasp the problem they mobilize for in terms of care. Caring is at the core of their cognitive world, while social injustice is central for moral voicing activists. Christian aid activists rely thus on a specific understanding of common good that differs from that of moral voicing activists, as Christian aid activists conceive common good not as “social justice for all” but as “social care for all.” Their actions are therefore predicated on a *universal social care* understanding of common good.

The Caritas activists interviewed share a similar assessment of common good, with the exception of Elisabeth and Jérémie. Their divergent views are easily explained, however. Alongside their commitment to Caritas, both take part in moral voicing activities. For the last forty years, Elisabeth has been committed to defending migrants’ rights, while Jérémie has worked toward the establishment of fairer relations between developed and developing countries. Their cross-commitment shapes their view on the common good, as their understanding is a blend of perceptions conveyed by both the moral voicing and the Christian aid communities. As Elisabeth’s account reveals, common good is perceived with the repertoire of care, in addition to that of social justice.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, their understanding of common good is more extensive than that of the Christian aid activists interviewed. We return to the issue of a blended mind as well as the impact of cross-commitment, in Chapter 6.

Caritas is committed to improving people’s daily lives. We provide care to people who need it because they face life difficulties. One of my jobs is to organize the distribution of clothing for people in need. I have met so many waves of refugees over time: WW2 refugees; refugees from Communist countries; from South American dictatorships; from Zaire; from the

<sup>7</sup> Due to space constraints, we offer excerpts only from Elisabeth’s account. Similar views were expressed by Jérémie.



Balkans; and today, new wars bring new refugees our way. We should help and care for them. It's a necessity because they have nothing. But we should also fight against injustice and inequality. You know, the gap between the rich and the poor people should be reduced; but it expands daily. We must struggle for a fairer distribution of wealth and resources. You know, each time I see injustices, I should commit, I should get involved in struggles against them. I'm approaching the age of eighty-five, I can't commit anymore, but I remain revolted by blatant forms of injustice. (Elisabeth)

We must be open to others regardless of who they are. We are, above all, human beings and we share the same humanity. My involvement in Caritas and my commitment to migrants' rights are commitments to struggle against poverty, inequality, and racism. A person could be black, yellow, red, or anything else; it doesn't matter. We should give up prejudices: "I don't like black because they are black; I don't like white people because they are white." It's so absurd! Having said that, I also have a deep sense of belonging to my community. I belong to a country, which has qualities and faults. I have much criticism to formulate toward Switzerland; nevertheless, I belong to this country. To be from Geneva, from this region, means something to me. (Elisabeth)

### **“Social Care for All” and Intentionality**

As we have seen, the understanding of common good enables defenders of migrants' rights and Greenpeace activists to develop specific cognitive linkages with otherness, concernedness, and responsibility that orients their action in a specific way. But what are the cognitive mechanisms binding Christian aid activists' perception of common good to their intentionality?

First, their somewhat universalist understanding of commonness allows them to construct a specific relation to *otherness*. This construction relies on a main cognitive pillar: the centrality of “human” in their mental world. As was the case with the moral voicing activists, human beings hold a significant place in the mind of Caritas volunteers. However, contrary to pro-migrant activists who identify with migrants, Caritas activists do not identify with disadvantaged people. Human beings are important to them, but the people they mobilize for are not included in their own world. Their

ambivalence about individuals and their less extensive-self can serve to explain the differences between both types of activists. Caritas volunteers do not identify with the people they provide support for; however, the centrality of human beings in their mindset supplies them with the cognitive resources allowing them to construct a relation to otherness that enables them *to mobilize for others*. This cognitive construction sets their intentionality; it enables them to commit to others, beyond their own socio-cultural belongings. Mathieu's words aptly illustrate this cognitive path: "Others interest me, they are important to me. We must be attentive to others, listen to them, and help by taking some of their suffering away. I follow Abbé Pierre's ideal in that regard: 'If someone is lost or in great suffering, you should take their pain on your shoulders and try to solve it.' But you know, the deep Caritas milieu, the people they help, all the things they do for misfit people, I'm very far from that milieu and those people. I can't say that I'm close to those misfits: We don't have the same life. But it's important to commit to their well-being. For me it's obvious that we must be engaged in our community to help others, to support people in distress, and I have been committed to that idea my whole life." The other Caritas volunteers rely on similar cognitive links:

All the people I work with at Caritas are interested in others. Human beings matter to us. As I told you, for me to be a Christian is to be kind to others, but also to be concerned about others and to help others. And honestly, I have to say that I enjoy volunteering: I meet a lot of people through the Caritas shop. They are so different from me: We have black women dressed with wonderful boubous who come to buy at the shop and a lot of foreigners come as well. These days, I work with a young lady who is facing major difficulties, and who is a little bit lost. I like talking with her and try my best to give her advice, to help her in her disorganized life. (Christine)

Others are important and we must take care of them. We know that some people face dramatic situations, live with difficulties, and really need help. We know it, so, we must help them and that's what I'm doing. As I told you, we all belong to the human race. However, identifying with the marginal and the misfits is a difficult task. Many of the people helped by Caritas are addicted to drugs. They ruin themselves because only drugs get them up in the morning. To be honest, it's impossible to identify with such people. (Emmanuelle)

It's normal to help and rescue one's neighbor; I was raised with values where others were important. For me, it's obvious to share and to provide others with help. For instance, we should support poor people, although most of them don't know how to manage money. Often, they waste their money; they don't know how to save their money. Poor people are often irresponsible. (Edwige)

Like the moral voicing activists, Christian aid volunteers' understanding of society enables them to set a second cognitive component that orients their action. *Concernedness* for multiple common goods—not only the one they mobilize for—is a result of their universalist perception of commonness. This broader scope permits them to commit to various social problems. Concernedness sets Christian aid activists' intentionality and orients their action toward various issues, enabling them *to mobilize for multiple issues* aiming to improve people's social welfare. Mathieu clearly displays such a cognitive linkage: "Improving the lives of people has always motivated me. I feel concerned about various social issues: poverty, families facing difficulties, children dropping out of school, the well-being of elders, etc. I have always been drawn to others. My commitments have always resonated with this attraction, whether in scouting, or Caritas, Emmaus, or the Christian Democrat Party. My commitment to the party and my position as a city councilor were above all social commitments with the aim of improving the lives of others." Fellow Caritas activists display the same cognitive path, as the accounts of Christine, Emmanuelle, and Edwige exemplify:

I feel concerned by people who suffer. Poor people, families in trouble, teenagers in social breakdown, sick people, people at the end of their lives, all of them are a concern to me. In my opinion, we must be concerned about others and try to help them. That's why I support Caritas, Emmaus, Aid to Mountain People, Terre des Hommes, and Children of the World. (Emmanuelle)

There is so much misery in the world that we can't simply remain blind to it. We must act for people whose lives are extremely difficult. Caritas fulfills this aim for me: helping others, and trying to make lives better, here and elsewhere. Perhaps you know that Caritas is present all over the world; this is an essential aspect of the organization. (Christine)

Oh, you know, I worry about various social problems: poverty, children's education, the care of elders, environmental issues, especially as they generate poverty. Take the example of Kenya. They grow beans and export them, so they don't farm for their own nation but to feed the Europeans and Americans. Foreign companies bought their lands and make huge profit with bean exportation. Now, Kenyans don't have enough land to grow their own food supply. I'm close to the Liberals, which is the party of bankers, but I can't accept this! It's this concern about people's lives which is behind my commitments: to Caritas, the Red Cross, Emmaus, Aid to Mountain People, and other organizations. (Edwige)

Finally, their specific perception of goodness leads them to construct a final cognitive component: *responsibility*. As underscored above, Caritas activists conceptualize the good they mobilize for in terms of social care. This perception does not facilitate the social attribution of responsibility to the poverty problem. Contrary to moral voicing activists, Caritas volunteers do not perceive the people they mobilize for as victims of state policies or of our economic system. Actually, for Christian aid activists, poor people are responsible for their own fate: Lack of luck or the inability to manage their lives is viewed as the main factor for people in poverty. With this perception in mind, Christian aid activists cannot identify political or economic issues as underlying the problem of poverty. The way they construct responsibility favors a *mobilization in the social field* with the aim of providing help to the needy but not to make claims in the political sphere to solve social problems. Mathieu's narrative offers an illustration of this cognitive mechanism: "There are people hurt by life and misfits. Some of them are responsible for what happens to them, others are not. As I told you, I'm helping an architect who is a total misfit, a poor guy. I try giving him a hand, to the best of my abilities. But he got himself in trouble. It's sad but he got himself into this situation. Nevertheless, we must commit to helping these people. It's our duty to show solidarity with people in distress and our task to help them." Individual responsibility is also present in the mind of the other Caritas volunteers. No collective actors are blamed and, in their view, citizens and society are accountable for providing support to people in need; making claims in the political arena is not an option.

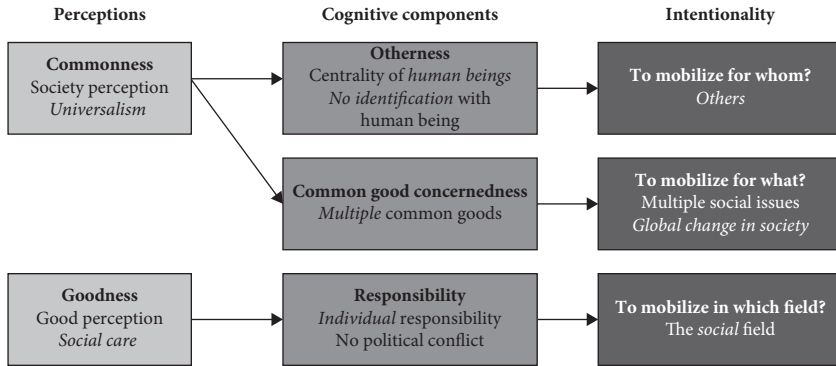
People are often responsible for their own difficulties. Let me give you an example: Last month, a mother living on social aid received money

in her bank account. She went to the bank and withdrew all the cash. Unfortunately, when she got out of the bank, her bag was stolen. When you have so little money to live on, you must mind it. You can go withdraw everything from your bank account. It's senseless! Lots of people get themselves into such difficult situations. But we should help them; we should do something for them. It's not the state's responsibility to provide this type of help, the state has enough to do. (Edwige)

Among disadvantaged people you have unlucky people, like those who lose their jobs. But you also find people who are responsible for the situation they are in. I recognize that I may sound harsh, but it's reality. Drug addicts are accountable for their own situation. They systematically destroy themselves. But society must support these people. It's our responsibility to help them. It's not the task of the state to help those people. (Emmanuelle)

In Switzerland, on the whole, we live well, but there are still people who live in poverty. Everything is so expensive. Debt is a real problem: People have credit cards and spend too much. Young people live beyond their means. They work hard, are always under stress, and all that just so they can live beyond their means. It's sad. Moral misery is also a big issue: Many people are depressed and lonely, and children abandon their elderly parents, because they live in small apartments and can't accommodate their parents. It's terrible, but it's like that. As I told you, we must provide assistance to these people; they need it. (Christine)

A specific understanding of common good allows Christian aid activists to construct a distinct relation to otherness, to elaborate a form of concernedness toward a large set of common goods, and to construct responsibility when poor people are seen as responsible for their fate, and these cognitive components set their intentionality. These cognitive paths are summarized in Figure 4.3. First, their conception of otherness enables them to act for others. Second, concernedness with many common goods favors a commitment to various social issues, and not only by providing support to the poor. Their commitment on multiple issues is encapsulated in their wish to improve people's social welfare. Finally, responsibility is constructed through individual responsibility and does not orient Christian aid activists toward the political arena. People are responsible for their situation, and it is the citizens' responsibility to help distressed people with their



**Figure 4.3** From the perception of common good of the Caritas volunteers to their intentionality of action

plight. The specific understanding of common good put forth by Christian aid volunteers defines their intentionality, allowing them to mobilize for others, on global issues and in the social field. While their intentionality overlaps that of moral voicing activists—because their action is oriented toward others and on multiple issues—it stems from an interest for action in the social and not in the political field, contrary to the political dynamics that drive moral voicing activists.

Finally, moral voicing and Christian aid activists share a broad concern on common good. As their accounts underscore, multiple social causes concern them. The social welfare of different groups (poor, sick, old, young people, etc.) who live in Switzerland, and elsewhere, constitute key issues in their eyes. Christian aid volunteers are not cognitively engaged in bringing social change in society, unlike moral voicing activists, but seek to strengthen social welfare in society, and for all types of people. They are committed to enlarging access to common good. In that respect, like moral voicing activists, Christian aid activists are *strong citizens*, at least as defined by the first pillar of strong citizenship. Their multiple actions are dedicated to improving our common good, and not a specific collective good.

## Unionists and Common Good

With workers' rights activists, we encounter another understanding of common good, which overlaps with neither that of moral voicing activists

nor with that of Christian aid volunteers. Joao's account will help us make sense of what the unionists' conception of common good might look like. Joao is a fifty-year-old man, strongly committed to union activism since he emigrated from Portugal to Switzerland, seventeen years ago. He grew up in Portugal where he experienced dictatorship and civil revolution. According to Joao, the Carnation Revolution was a defining life experience. It sensitized him to politics and brought him into contact with communist youth and the ideals that animated them. Joao has a long protest career driven by a single issue. Although he financially supports a few post-industrial organizations—environmental, human rights, and north/south solidarity—such matters are peripheral when compared to his commitment to unionism. As typical with union activists, he started his activist career after he encountered problems in his workplace. His company outsourced production to countries with cheaper wages and fired most of the employees. This initial battle in the workplace was the beginning of his long road into unionism.

Joao perceives *interconnectedness*, the ties binding people together in society, mainly in terms of solidarity between society members. In his mind, individuals should provide each other with mutual protection and support. However, Joao thinks of solidarity mainly in terms of mutual aid between workers or among people who are less advantaged in society. His sense of solidarity is therefore restricted to a specific group of people: "We are in a world where we are forced to live together. But my assessment is that everyone defends his own interest. We live in a society where only money and profit matter, and this will never change! In such a capital-driven society, I don't see how we can bring about effective change. We should all live with the same basic conditions, but reality is very different. We should show solidarity with people who are less advantaged. Solidarity is an important aspect for living in society, but unfortunately, there is little of it among people. For example, at the workplace we try to explain that the more unionized we are, the stronger we become when we need to defend our rights. But, you know, many people are afraid and will never be able to stand with others. It's a pity, but that is the way it is."

Joao clearly frames interconnection in terms of solidarity. However, this perception does not include a universalist understanding of society, as society is grasped through the lens of social difference and division among people. Joao relies on a *communitarian view of society*. He does not perceive individuals as universal humans but as part of social categories. The major dividing line which structures his mind is the distinction between workers

and employers. This fundamental social rift is constituted by the split between blue and white collars, which can be due to political, economic, or cultural factors. Joao declares: "If we had a different government, one that represented the workers better, and if workers became aware that it's necessary to vote with that aim, things could be changed. Individual interests guide politics. Look at the federal councilors and parliament members; they are all board members of private companies. Obviously, they are not the ones who will be defending workers' rights! They back up those who pay them and they advance their own interests. In general, I don't think that the Swiss government is very socially oriented [laugh]. Of course, Switzerland is a rich country, a capitalist country, and I find that the state favors employers' interests far too much. The state makes laws and rules for the country but not in the interest of all, certainly not in the interest of workers."

The division between employers and workers constitutes the basic prism through which Joao views his social environment. He repeatedly explains how fractured society is: between company owners and workers, within the workers group, and between people of different nationalities. Joao's view is not a universalist one as, according to him, we do not live in a shared humanity but in a *segmented world*: "We are all different: We are in different industrial sectors, the working conditions are different, wages are different; everything is different. Basically, we are all workers who seek better working conditions, but differences exist. They structure relations between employers and employees, and among employees too. But there are also differences between nations: There are rich and poor ones, powerful and powerless states. Then, you have differences of race and religion. The world is full of distinctions."

With unionists, a *social justice repertoire* is at the basis of perceptions of common good. The good Joao mobilizes for is, above all, set in terms of injustice and rights. Of course, Joao is well aware that struggles for workers' rights improve their situation. His activism seeks to secure the workplace against practices of mass firing, to increase salaries, or to improve general working conditions. But in Joao's mind, these goods are above all framed in terms of social justice. As he says: "When Americans buy companies, they fire people and then outsource work to countries with cheaper wages in order to increase profits. This is the main mechanism of economic globalization where the stock exchange and shareholders rule. Capitalism fosters injustice because profit is made at the expense of workers' rights and welfare. As workers, we always face pressure from employers. They repeat that "we must remain



competitive,” “in Switzerland, salaries are too high,” and threaten us with outsourcing saying that “the company could outsource labor to China or the Czech Republic.” Yet outsourcing is not the only problem we face. For example, temporary labor is a major issue. Companies hire more and more on a temporary basis. Of course, we need those people during production peaks, but employers keep them on for years without converting their contracts into permanent ones. It’s much easier for them to have temporary workers: They can fire them at any point! Companies take too much advantage of temporary workers. They don’t respect their rights.”

Like the other workers’ voicing activists interviewed, Joao’s activism depends on a different understanding of common good, which matches neither that of moral voicing activists nor that of Christian aid volunteers, as the perception of commonness is much less developed than for other activist groups. For unionists, ties binding people together are rather tenuous. They are perceived in terms that are restricted to people in their immediate group. Most unionists act in solidarity with their neighbors, relatives, or co-workers, but that solidarity is confined to those circles. In Chapter 3, the quantitative findings underscored that *interconnectedness* ranks fairly low in the minds of workers’ voicing activists. The qualitative data consolidate this evidence. Unionists’ perception of social links among society members is restricted to people in their close surroundings. In addition, solidarity is often perceived as reciprocal:

I grew up with the idea that solidarity is important. We must rely on each other. To show solidarity with relatives was important, but it also extended outside the family circle. When I lived in Argentina, solidarity among neighbors was essential. For instance, my mother got a phone and we received phone calls for the neighbors. The neighbor across the street had a car and we could rely on him to share it in the case of an emergency. These experiences clearly shaped the way I see the world. We should show solidarity with people, especially those in our proximity. (Eva)

My family, and my mother in particular, were always helping people around us. We should all show solidarity with others. Yes, I’m really in favor of exchanging with others, helping others. I like the idea of mutual help; it’s a good system for living together.” (Sarah)

We depend on others. If you do nothing for society, if you remain in a cocoon, or you stay outside of society, it doesn’t work. We should show

solidarity with others. If you want to have a better life, you can't stay in a cocoon. You have to meet people and build relationships, because the more relationships you have, the easier your life becomes. We all need such a supportive network. (Tiago)

As Joao's account highlights, unionists rely on a *categorical conception of human beings*. It is through their social, cultural, or economic belongings that individuals are classified. For them, individuals are either workers or bosses. This is the primary dividing line between social groups and leads to further social divisions: among workers, categorized in types, and among people from other cultures. Racial, religious, or national categorizations are structural too:

A bank boss is paid a fortune every month while plumbers or builders earn at least four times less. These are the guys who build the boss's house, who put a roof on his head. Workers fight every day for a salary of shit, and, if one day they face a shit in their life, their entire world collapses because they own nothing. Facing them, you have bosses who make a fortune. I know them well because I often work in their houses by the Geneva Lake, with swimming pools, tennis courts, dozens of bedrooms, gyms, and home cinemas; it's unbelievable! There are too many differences between employers and workers. Well, there is this difference, but many others as well. I'm not a racist, but when I see Gypsy people hanging around on the street, pfff. The state supports them and helps them, using our pensions to support people who don't work. It's the same with asylum seekers. They hang around with their Nikes and iPhones. Those people don't work, but receive money from the state, from us, the workers. We pay for people who do nothing! (André)

The working world is totally divided, between employers and employees, but also among employees. I see three different groups of employees: leaders, workers, and temporary workers. Their role, salaries, problems, and their place within the company are very distinct. There are differences due to nationality too. In the construction sector where I work, you have many nationalities: Yugoslavs, Turks, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, etc. And I see right away who is an Italian, a Spaniard, or a Portuguese. Italians, as they were the first to come in Switzerland, they always believe that they are the best workers. I'm always involved in disputes with them. With ex-Yugoslavs,

it's also difficult. It doesn't go well with them because they don't like to work. We, Portuguese, are well known to be hard workers. So, with Yugoslavs, it isn't easy. (Tiago)

In Switzerland, there is no state control on collective agreements between bosses and workers. Workers always control the implementation of agreements, and when it's not done properly they make a request to the boss. In my company, I'm the one responsible for the enforcement of collective agreements. This means that I've to challenge my boss when necessary; . . . however, as the boss has the power to fire employees, you can guess how fraught the issue is. I can provide another example: If we salesmen take home a free fabric sample, we can be fired on the spot. Even though the cloth has no market value, the act is considered by company owners to be theft, and we can be dismissed in less than five minutes! (Eva)

By categorizing individuals in their specific social rank, either by class or nation, worker activists clearly see society as segmented into many different groups. This results in an *understanding of commonness as communitarian*. Actually, their communitarian view reflects the main dividing line they perceive in society: between company owners and the working class. Their identification clearly resides with the latter group. But this identification should not obscure the fact that their communitarian view of society is also assembled on cultural differences:

Society is totally fractured. The economic crisis we are in clearly demonstrates this. It's not a crisis for everyone. In Europe, the number of Ferraris sold has never been this high. So what happens? A small proportion of people earn huge amounts of money despite the crisis. Many of those people play the stock market. Actually, they play with people's lives. If they lose, their firms close. But they don't care. On the other side, you have masses of employees who earn less and less. I fear that the working class is sinking and joining the margins of society: those who have nothing. More and more employees can't survive on their salaries. So yes, our society is divided. And as I told you, I have a strong class-consciousness. I belong to one side of the social barrier, and I'm well aware of that. (Nuno)

In society, there are lots of differences, above all between bosses and workers. You know, the owner of my company flies in a helicopter to take

his Sunday breakfast in Monte Carlo, while I'm saving each last centime living in a tiny apartment. I take my Sunday breakfast at the popular baths of Geneva [laugh]. Actually, I feel comfortable there because you meet all types of people and class distinctions disappear. It's rare to find such a location; usually class distinctions are blatantly obvious. (Eva)

Cultures always clashed, and they will always clash. It's like the story of the Tower of Babel. They spoke different languages and were unable to understand each other. One asked for a hammer, the other gave him a saw. It didn't work. Finally, they stopped building the tower. This is an example of cultural differences. It makes living together difficult. You know, I understand when authorities exclude migrants. I understand it perfectly well. They should limit the number of people coming into the country. (Tiago)

While unionists and moral voicing activists do not see commonness through the same cognitive lens, they share a common understanding of *goodness*, as they make sense of the common good for which they mobilize in terms of *social justice*:

People working in the construction sector are highly disadvantaged, compared to people, like me, who work in the tertiary sector. Builders face harsh working conditions. They work outside, exposed to varying weather conditions. It's a very difficult job, and they earn next to nothing. If Unia could obtain retirement at the age of sixty for these workers, it would be a real achievement. They can't work beyond that age. For me, it's above all a question of justice. I want people to be treated fairly, to earn a salary proportionate to their work and in suitable working conditions. This is not the case for builders, and it's a crude injustice. (Sarah)

Injustices have always been there. Today, billions are made thanks to the outsourcing of production and the dismissal of employees. With computer technology, company owners see their benefits on their screen without understanding that behind numbers there are people who work hard to feed their families. Employees are fired with a mere computer click. Capitalism is the real problem. It turns the rich into the richest, and the poor into the poorest. Marx was right: Capitalism always goes in the same direction. And now with neo-liberalism, it's even worse. The system is much more

aggressive leading to massive increases in injustice and vulnerability in the name of profit maximization. (Nuno)

The salary inequality is unacceptable. Company bosses fuck workers over. A worker toils for twelve hours a day and gets 3,000 Swiss Francs per month. A company owner works three hours a day but earns 12,000 each month. Is this fair? As a worker, I'm at the bottom of the scale. Everyone who works should receive a fair wage. It's a matter of justice. (André)

With workers' voicing activists, we face a different understanding of common good. Their views depart from the perceptions displayed by moral voicing and Christian aid activists. Unionists rely on a *communitarian social care* understanding of common good. First, their perception of social ties is rather thin and mainly thought of in terms of solidarity with people in their immediate surroundings. Second, they understand the society they inhabit with others as fragmented, the major dividing line being that between workers and employers, and identification occurs with the working component of the social division. Unionists belong to a specific group: the workers, the people who are less advantaged in society. Finally, they perceive the good for which they mobilize with the social justice repertoire, with rights and rights violation lying at the basis of their discourse. Workers' voicing activists rely on a specific understanding of common good: For them it is "social justice for a specific group." As the next section will demonstrate, unionists are concerned not so much by common good as by a collective good for a specific social group.

### **“Social Justice for a Specific Group” and Unionists’ Intentionality**

How does the understanding of common good of unionists set their intentionality? As we have done previously, we now examine the content of the three cognitive components—otherness, concernedness, and responsibility—in order to show how those cognitive components orient action toward a specific group, on a single issue, and in the political field.

As was the case with pro-migrant, Greenpeace, and Caritas activists, the understanding of commonness shapes the relation toward *otherness*. Yet unlike the other activist groups, for the unionists the human being is not a

core concept. They favor a communitarian understanding of commonness which is grounded in a specific group defined by strong identification with its members: the workers. This limited relation to otherness orients unionists' actions mainly toward the group they identify with and *to mobilizing for their group* primarily. Joao's account aptly illustrates the way this cognitive linkage materializes: "The working world is vital to me, and I identify with this world, and with the people who are part of it. I was always conscious of being a worker, and this consciousness was present before I joined Unia. But of course, belonging to a union strengthened my class consciousness. As I told you, many differences exist in the labor world: Employees face different work conditions, salaries are different; everything is different. But we are all workers, and in my view, I mobilize to get better conditions for all workers, regardless of their professional sector. I'm primarily committed to improving our rights, because if we do nothing, our working conditions are not going to improve by magic." The other Unionists display a similar cognitive path:

I'm a real unionist, a real worker. Many workers are afraid to commit. Many colleagues told me not to commit, not to challenge our boss, but I did it despite their warnings. I joined Unia when I was fired for the first time, but my commitment stretches beyond my personal history: I want to improve work conditions for all of us, for all workers. (Eva)

Workers matter to me, and I have a fairly strong class consciousness. Society is divided and I am aware of where I am located in the class spectrum. I belong to a class that must speak up for its rights, and I am committed to doing so because we are the only ones who are going to defend our interests. Do you think that the boss wakes up in the middle of the night and says to his wife: "Honey, I've decided to increase the salaries of my employees"? [laugh] (Nuno)

We must respect workers, who get up early in the morning to go to work. And I belong to that world. I'm dedicated to defending our rights, the rights of those who work and get up early. (André)

Unionists' communitarian perception of common good allows them to construct a second cognitive component: *concernedness*. Contrary to activists relying on a universalist understanding of commonness, workers' voicing activists define their struggle through a limited range of concerns. They are

mainly preoccupied with goods pertaining to their own group. Their limited concernedness does not enable them to improve society as a whole, to engage in various social issues. Rather, it orients their action toward a narrow set of issues and *to mobilizing essentially on workers' problems*. Joao makes this clear: "I feel concerned by workers' rights, and I am mainly committed to improving our rights and work conditions. Of course, the protection of the environment is important. Greenpeace's work is exemplary in this regard, but the most important thing for me is to fight for better working conditions." The other Unia activists display a similar thought process. Indeed, at no point do unionists emphasize that other common goods matter for them:

I'm a communist and for me improving the working-class situation comes first. Working conditions concern me, and I am committed to improving our rights with the aim of bettering our situation. Unia is how I contribute to the enhancement of this particular class situation. (Nuno)

There are huge gaps between company owners and workers. One major difference is, of course, in the wages. We must fight against such unacceptable inequalities and demand respect, we, the people who get up early to feed our families. This is the only struggle that I am mobilized for. (André)

Injustices at the professional level are unbearable. To defend our rights, our work conditions, our salaries is central to me and I am committed to that objective: the defense of our rights! I've always been a union member, and this is my sole political commitment. (Sarah)

Finally, unionists' perception of goodness enables them to construct the last cognitive component: *responsibility*. As previously underlined, unionists perceive common good with the social justice repertoire. With this perception in mind, they are able to identify economic actors and political authorities as accountable for workers' conditions. For unionists, a political conflict places economy actors and state members against workers. This cognitive component leads them to orient their action *in the political field*. Joao's statement exposes the dynamics of this struggle: "I don't think that capitalism makes anything easy. This economic system is designed to make employers want more. It's a vicious circle: Companies always seek to make more profit than the year before, at the expense of workers. They have the power to decide, to outsource, to dismiss, to put pressure on workers, and workers can do nothing.

And the state isn't on the workers' side either. As I told you before, the state doesn't do much for workers. It makes laws and rules for the country, but not with the interest of workers in mind. We must commit politically; that's where things happen. If we want to advance our cause, we must act politically." The accounts of Eva, Tiago, and André provide other evidence on this path:

Employers don't stick to their commitments. In the department store where I worked, they wanted to open on Sundays. It was decided that employees working on Sunday would receive double payment for that day, but that agreement wasn't upheld. I went to the press to denounce this problem, and I was fired on the spot. But you know it's not better with the state. It takes a very short amount of time to talk about labor laws in Switzerland: They simply don't exist! Switzerland doesn't even comply with the international labor laws. Political authorities don't support us. Nowadays, laws become increasingly restrictive: The retirement age is extended; unemployment acts are revised. This is totally senseless: They make unemployment laws more restrictive even though the unemployment rate is only at 7 percent, and 93 percent of the population is working. This is unbearable! So yes, we must fight politically to change that; we have no other choice. (Eva)

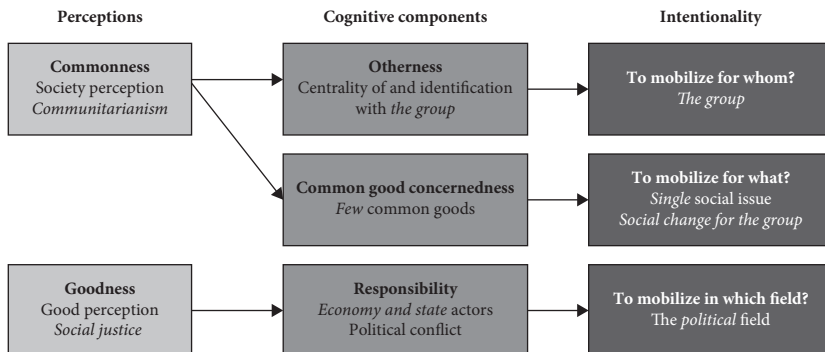
Employers have too much power. One day, I needed to take my daughter to the doctor, but my boss threatened to fire me. No law protects us when we need to take relatives to the doctor during work hours. The law depends on the boss's will. In the construction sector, a law states that in case of bad weather, workers must stop working; I can assure you that in my company we never stopped working. In Switzerland, workers aren't really protected. The state is on the boss's side. You can work in a company for five years and one day the boss can tell you: "I do not need you; you're fired." So if we want to defend ourselves, we must engage politically, at least to enforce laws that exist and aren't implemented. (Tiago)

Employers of large companies fuck workers over. We are workers and they don't hesitate to tell us that we are replaceable. If you're not satisfied, the door is wide open. They do what they want and the government says nothing; it just shuts its trap. Few laws protect us, and the government does nothing to improve our working conditions. So we are left with no choice; we must fight; we must organize ourselves politically; we must commit to trade unions and improve our situation. (André)



Unionists' view of the common good enables them to develop a particular relation to otherness, concernedness, and responsibility. Those cognitive components set their intentionality in specific ways. As summarized in Figure 4.4, first, their relation to otherness is indebted to workers, who hold a central place in their minds and with whom they identify. This identification favors a mobilization essentially oriented toward the workers as the sole social group. Second, their limited concern with the common good orients their action mainly toward the problems workers face. Although some unionists are committed to other social issues (like Joao, who supports actions by Greenpeace), those issues are peripheral when compared to workers' problems. Third, conceiving common good in terms of justice enables them to identify collective actors as accountable for the poor conditions workers labor in. Economic and political actors are identified as the main actors responsible for the unjust treatment workers experience. The attribution of responsibility and the identification of political conflict orient their action toward the political field. The specific understanding of common good adopted by unionists defines a specific intentionality: It allows them to mobilize for a specific group, on a single issue, and in the political field. In this respect, the intentionality of unionists overlaps with neither that of moral voicing activists nor with that of Caritas volunteers.

Finally, unionists have a limited range of concern toward the common good. As their accounts show, they are mainly concerned with social problems that workers face. They are not committed to improving and enlarging the common good, but are engaged in strengthening a specific collective good:



**Figure 4.4** From the perception of common good of the unionists to their intentionality of action

that of workers’ rights and conditions. The Aristotelian definition of common good does not apply here, as unionists are committed to a specific category of people, not to all citizens. In that respect, unionists *cannot be qualified as strong citizens*.

### Common Good and Diverse Intentionalities

We dealt with three core questions in this chapter. First, we asked *what understandings of common good activists construct?* In-depth analysis revealed that activists committed to moral voicing, Christian aid, and unions rely on different understandings of common good. The statistical findings, discussed in Chapter 3, had already highlighted variations regarding activists’ perception of common good. The analysis of activists’ narratives deepens this finding: Activists clearly do not comprehend common good in the same way. As summarized in Figure 4.5, neither commonness nor goodness is envisioned in the same way by all groups.

Moral voicing activists rely on a humanist understanding of common good based on social justice. They are conscious of the ties that bind people together, and they perceive society with an inclusive lens: They see themselves as inhabiting a common world with others. Ultimately, moral voicing activists understand common good in terms of *universal social justice*. Both pro-migrant activists and Greenpeace activists share this understanding.

		Commonness	
		Perception of the beneficiaries of common good	
		Universalism	Communitarianism
Goodness	Justice	<b>Universal social justice</b> Moral voicing activists	<b>Communitarian social justice</b> Workers’ voicing activists
	Care	<b>Universal social care</b> Christian aid activists	<b>Communitarian social care</b> –

**Figure 4.5** The different understandings of common good of the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers’ voicing activists

However, Christian aid volunteers hold a different perception of common good, preferring a humanist understanding based on social care. Like moral voicing activists, they understand social ties through a universalist lens, albeit with a somewhat less extensive conception than that of moral voicing activists. Nonetheless, Christian aid activists envision common good through the care, and not in terms of justice, as moral voicing activists do. Christian aid volunteers perceive common good in terms of *universal social care*. Unionists offer yet another understanding of common good: Their perception of the ties that bind people together is much more restricted, confined mainly to solidarity with proximate others. Furthermore, they view society as segmented, leading to a view of society that is communitarian. Finally, they perceive common good in terms of social justice. Unionists have a very narrow view of common good, perceived in terms of a *communitarian social justice*, a social benefit for a specific group. They therefore differ from moral voicing activists and Christian aid volunteers on this point.

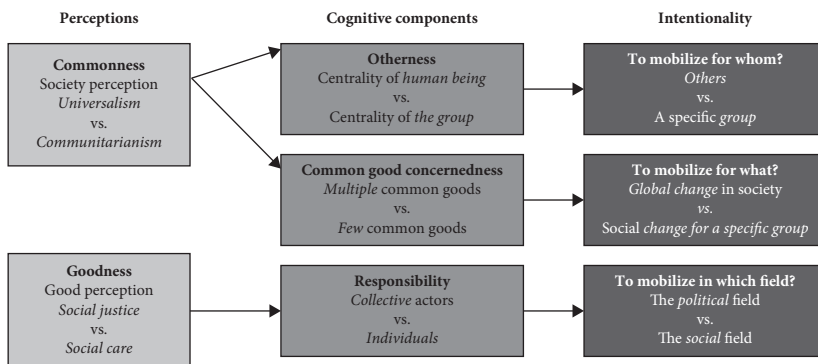
We hence face three distinct views of common good. These findings support our postulate: that activists' minds reflect the commitment site they evolve in. Participation in specific social sites shapes minds and leads to various perceptions of common good. Activists interact in different commitment sites and, unsurprisingly, their understandings of common good differ. The social mechanisms that allow for activists' perceptions to be synchronized will form the basis of Chapter 6.

The second question addressed in this chapter enquired into the way perceptions of common good orient action. We were not simply interested in asserting that understandings of common good and politics direct activists' intentionality. Rather, we sought to understand what *type of intentionality these understandings determine*. We aimed to trace cognitive processes, highlighting cognitive mechanisms at work as they bind activists' understandings of common good to their intentions. The inductive analysis of activists' narratives highlighted three distinct cognitive mechanisms. First, activists' perception of society enables them to construct a concept of otherness that orients their action toward specific social groups. Second, their perception of society also allows activists to elaborate a specific cognitive component—concernedness—which allows them to act on specific issues. Finally, the last cognitive mechanism—responsibility—binds activists' perception of the good for which they are mobilized to a specific field of action. The cognitive mechanisms at play are similar for all types of activists. However, because common good is perceived through different lenses, the

construction of the three cognitive components—otherness, concernedness, and responsibility—leads to different meanings and different orientations of their action. Intention to act can then be said to vary according to the way activists perceive commonness and goodness. Figure 4.6 highlights the cognitive mechanisms at work.

The first aspect, underlined in Figure 4.6, was how activists perceive society, in either universalist or communitarian terms, thereby enabling them to build a specific relation to *otherness* which, in turn, leads them *to mobilize for all others or for a specific social group*. Moral voicing and Christian aid activists rely on a universalist understanding of society and construct a specific relation to otherness in which human beings are central. This leads them to mobilize for others regardless of social and cultural groups. A different cognitive path appears in the case of unionists. Their communitarian understanding of society is pitted on the predominance of a specific social group: workers. And this particular relation to otherness favors a mobilization focused on advancing workers' rights and interests.

Second, perceptions of society enable activists to construct another cognitive component: *concernedness* for common good. Activists are concerned by either various common goods or by a limited range of them. Their specific relation to concernedness provides them with cognitive resources *to mobilize for various social issues*, driven by the desire to change society, or to focus their *mobilization on a single issue*, with the aim of promoting the well-being of a specific social group. As with the construction of otherness, moral voicing and Christian aid participants share similar cognitive paths.



**Figure 4.6** The summary of the cognitive mechanisms that bind the activists' perception of common good to their intentionality

Their universalist understanding of society provides them with cognitive resources that facilitate a concern for various common goods. This broad concern favors a mobilization for, or a desire to commit to, multiple social issues. Improving society as a whole is what matters most to them. Unionists take a different cognitive path. Their communitarian conception of society leads to a limited concern about common good. Outsourcing production, unemployment, precarious work contracts, or the problems caused by our capital-driven society, are issues essentially articulated in relation to workers. This specific construction of concernedness therefore favors a form of mobilization dependent on a single issue: the defense of workers' rights.

Finally, we wanted to outline the way activists perceive common good, as either a care problem or a question of social justice, and the way this factor leads them to construct a specific relation to *responsibility*. Their understanding of common good allows them to identify the collective actors accountable for promoting and strengthening common good, and the specific perception of common good that ensues permits them to evaluate whether the promotion of common good entails political conflict. The way responsibility of common good is viewed orients their action in either *the political field* or *the social sphere*. In that regard, moral voicing activists and unionists share a similar understanding of common good defined by a comparable intentionality: social justice. With this construction in mind, they clearly identify collective actors as accountable for the promotion or denial of common good, a realization that defines their mobilization in the political field. Political conflicts are there to be fought, urging them to enter the political arena with the defense and promotion of common good in mind. Christian aid activists pursue a different cognitive path. For them, common good is a matter of social care. This means that they do not identify or hold collective actors accountable for common good, as individuation is central to them. This specific relation to responsibility requires a mobilization in the social field, whereby their actions are oriented toward supporting and helping people whose well-being is at stake.

Philosophers of the mind, interpretative sociologists, and cognitive psychologists have alerted us to the fact that the qualitative experience of the world nourishes a person's mind and sets his or her intentionality. There is no action without meaning. We have seen that the manner in which activists adopt specific meanings sets their intentionalities, leading them in turn to commit to specific collective endeavors. We have also seen that cognitions

set activists' intentionalities, orienting action toward distinct collective struggles, and maintaining it.

The last question addressed in this chapter was related to activists' concern for common good. Is it a concern for them, and if so, to what extent? Are they strong citizens as defined by the first pillar of strong citizenship (Barber 1984)? Aristotle's influential definition was that common good was an objective good that improved people's lives and that benefited all members of society. Regarding the first dimension—objective goods improving people's lives—moral voicing, Christian aid, and unionists are all committed to defending or securing objective goods, regardless of the fact that some of these are considered in terms of social justice or of social care. Migrants' rights, environmental protection, the well-being of the poor, or workers' rights are goods that objectively seek to ameliorate an individual's life.

Variations appear when the second dimension—goods that benefit all members of society—is taken into account. Activists who rely on a universalist perception of society, as the moral voicing and Christian aid activists do, are acutely aware of who the beneficiaries of common good are. Their understanding is in line with Aristotle's definition of common good, whereby all social members benefit from a good. As we saw throughout the chapter, their specific understanding of commonness enables them to act for others, beyond their own groups of belonging, and for various problems pertaining to common good. Moral voicing and Christian aid activists seek to improve society as a whole, whether by providing social justice or welfare. They are concerned by a large range of common goods and are committed, or have the desire to commit, to resolving various social problems. By contrast, activists like unionists, who rely on a communitarian perception of society, restrict the beneficiaries of common good to a specific group of people. Further, as we saw from the qualitative data, their understanding of commonness leads them to act for a specific group and with localized action. Other common good is not of concern.

Are they all strong citizens? The answer is a clear no if we stick with Aristotle's definition of common good. Moral voicing and Christian aid activists are dedicated to *common good*, while unionists act in favor of a *collective good*. To paraphrase Barber (1984), moral voicing and Christian activists are citizens "who are made capable of common purpose" (p. 117) and who are committed to enlarging shared public goods (p. 132). They are dedicated to improving common good in Aristotelian terms. This does not mean that

the action of unionists is of no value or that their commitment is not socially relevant, merely that their action is limited to the social group of workers. Moral voicing and Christian activists can easily lay claim to Toni Morrison's thought at the head of this chapter: "It belongs to us to care for each other." The distinction between moral voicing and Christian activists and unionists essentially pivots around the range of concern on common good. Do they therefore seek to implement a strong democracy as Barber conceived of it? If we take the first dimension of his definition of a strong democracy—a citizen who "adjusts his own life plans to the dictates of a shared world" (Barber 1984, 224)—the answer is yet again no.

We want to return to the theory developed in Chapter 2 to conclude. There, we saw that the notions of identity and the frames developed by Gamson are comparable to our concept of activists' understandings. However, as stated earlier, scholars working with Gamson's conception face two major shortcomings: Their view of the activist's mind is too narrow, and they fail to discuss how identity and frames are developed in an activist's mind. To state the question simply, where does the impulse to act come from? First, we have seen in this chapter that identity and the three cognitive dimensions put forth by Gamson are inadequate to encompass the cognitive dimensions that activists deploy. Undoubtedly, identity, injustice, and agency constitute motivational factors behind activists' desire to commit, and to sustain their commitment. For example, we saw that the injustice frame is present especially in the narratives of moral voicing activists and unionists. In this respect, it constitutes an important motivational factor, allowing them to act. Similarly, as we will see in Chapter 5, identity and agency are also present in activists' minds, setting activists' intentionality. However, several other cognitive dimensions are involved. Activists' perception of the ties that bind people together, of human beings, of society as a universalist or communitarian space, and social problems viewed either as care or justice problems are all cognitive elements that enable action. This set of cognitions, linked to understandings of common good, defines the activists' motivation to act: identity and Gamson's frames are largely exceeded.

Second, we saw that motivational cognitions are fashioned into complex cognitive paths to orient action. These motivational components are formed by broad understandings of common good held by activists and are derived from specific relations to common good. In other terms, the impulse to act comes from a broader cognitive baseline that was largely ignored by Gamson and scholars who came after him.

Finally, we also showed that similar social problems are perceived differently and lead to mobilization in different forms of collective action. Some activists are committed to similar issues: Participants in SAB and Caritas support migrants. For SAB activists, helping migrants constitutes the main focus of their activist commitment, while for the Caritas volunteers, supporting the poor is key. Yet migrants, and asylum seekers and immigrants without legal status in particular, form part of the poorest population group in Swiss society. SAB and Caritas activists are hence mobilized for the same people and social problem. Despite this, the way they relate to common good enables them to perceive the migration and the social problem it creates differently. Similarly, Unia and Caritas activists are also mobilized on comparable issues, but again these are perceived differently. For unionists, fighting for better working conditions remains at the heart of their activist commitment. They provide support for workers who face difficulties, like employees who have been fired, the unemployed, and the working poor, while Caritas volunteers are committed to helping the poor. There is therefore substantial overlap when it comes to the target groups. Nonetheless, diverse perceptions abound. The specific understandings of common good held by Unia and Caritas activists enable them to construct cognitive components that construct the social problem differently, orienting their commitment in distinct fields of action and in a distinct manner.

These findings reveal two theoretical issues. First, they show that a similar social issue can be perceived with totally distinct mental lenses. This is far from being a revolutionary claim. Since Weber and the development of the interpretative sociology, we know that social facts are socially constructed. And the same goes for activism. Second, and this is perhaps more of a novelty, the way activists perceive a social problem leads them to different forms of collective action. The innovation stems less from the idea that distinct meanings lead to distinct action, but the demonstration that distinct views favor distinct action. By subjecting to scrutiny the cognitive path from broad activists' understandings to intentionality, and then action, we observed that the SAB activists' perception of migration problems in terms of justice drives them to perform joint action in the political field, whereas the same problem construed as a question of care favors activism in the social field for the Caritas volunteers. Similarly, seeing workers' issues with the injustice repertoire pushes unionists to act politically, while apprehending the same issues with the care repertoire leads members of



Caritas to provide direct services in the social field. It remains for us to show how activists committed in the same organization, and in the same commitment community, are able to develop shared meanings about the aim and means of action. This will be done in Chapter 6. Beforehand, we must turn to activists' understanding of politics, and underscore how this dimension sets their intentionality.

## 5

# Politics and Intentionality

We are not simply to bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Moral voicing activists, Christian aid volunteers, and workers' voicing activists possess various understandings of common good, but they also perceive politics differently, as shown in Chapter 3. But how do they really *perceive politics*? How do these perceptions set their intentionalities? Are they concerned with politics, and consequently, are they strong citizens in terms of their relation to politics? When it comes to their understanding of politics, the core questions dealt with in Chapter 4 return. The relation to politics is the second crucial dimension to underline when we depart from the idea that meaning is important for setting an activist's intentionality. We argued that the notion of identity and Gamson's action frames are insufficient cognitive conditions when it comes to understanding how activists sustain contention. A specific understanding of common good is insufficient, too. In this chapter, we show how activists understand politics and how these understandings enable them to construct specific cognitive components, which in turn set their intentionality toward specific forms of collective action. By understanding activists' relation to politics, we seek to apprehend the cognitive mechanisms that orient them toward specific forms of action.

An in-depth analysis of the activist's mind allows us to understand why activists committed in different communities make use of specific *forms of collective action*. For example, activists in Greenpeace and Solidarity across Borders are committed to different issues: environmental protection and the defense of migrants' rights, respectively. However, they defend these different causes with the same form of action: contentious politics. Despite the range of issues for which they mobilize, activists perceive politics in a similar way, and this common understanding of politics directs them toward protest

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action. By contrast, Unia and Caritas activists are partly engaged for the same groups but employ different forms of action. As stated in Chapter 4, workers who have been fired or people belonging to the working poor constitute a large portion of Caritas's target population. This population overlaps with the one defended by Unia. While similar groups focus the attention of these activists, the forms of action used by each group vary: contentious and institutional politics on one side, volunteering on the other. Different perceptions of politics are at stake and these specific understandings of state and civil society actors orient activists toward either a political or a civic commitment. The cognitive mechanisms that link the understanding of politics to action orientation will be our focus here.

As presented in Chapter 1, we define politics as the regulation of conflicts of interest between different actors. Therefore, an activist's relation to politics is the cognitive link an individual constructs with the actors who manage political interests and ongoing conflicts within a given political field. Perceptions of two particular types of actors are at stake here: the activists' relation to state actors and their understanding of civil society actors. In a democracy, *state actors* are the most powerful actors within a given political space. Therefore, the perception of the role of state actors and its evaluation is crucial. Different perceptions of the role of state actors are conceivable: On one hand, activists could acknowledge that state actors are accountable for common good as they desire state actors who take responsibility for the production and maintenance of common good. If state actors do not fulfill this task, activists' assessment of the state actors' role will be negative and result in their delegitimization. On the other hand, activists may perceive state actors as not, or less, accountable for common good: In this view, state actors' intervention has to be contained (i.e., reduced) and activists can delegitimize state actors when they intervene too much. Moreover, activists perceive the state as a heterogeneous actor. Consequently, the range of delegitimization can vary. State actors can either be (de-)legitimized solely regarding the issue that activists advocate, or state action can be (de-)legitimized more generally.

*Civil society actors* promote, defend, and strengthen common good also. They pursue these actions with the aim of bringing about social change, by helping people in need or by stepping in and substituting their actions for state intervention. Because of these collective efforts, committed activists should legitimize civil society actors. However, the role of civil society actors can be understood in different ways. Civil society can be understood as either actors who intervene politically for state accountability or who

substitute for state intervention in order to contain—or limit—state actors' accountability. In addition, the range of the legitimization of civil society may vary. In line with activists' concern for common good, this legitimization can be focused on a specific issue or more broadly encompass multiple common goods. As with their understanding of state actors, we will therefore assess whether the legitimization of civil society actors is focused on the issue activists are mobilized for, or whether activists have developed a generalized form of legitimization.

Three questions guide this chapter. How do moral voicing activists, Christian aid volunteers, and unionists perceive state and civil society actors? Do these understandings enable activists to construct cognitive components that orient them toward different forms of collection action? Are all activists strong citizens as described by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the epigraph to this chapter?<sup>1</sup> A thorough look at activists' understanding of politics will provide answers to these questions. In what follows, we proceed with the “one plus three” formula adopted in the previous chapter: We present the understanding of politics that activists construct through the account of one activist for each community. But we choose other cases to illustrate cognitive mechanisms in this chapter. This change in narratives does not occur because the narratives suit our argument better but because our objective is to underline perceptual similarities between individuals despite different biographical backgrounds. In a later step, we offer more evidence regarding activists' relation to politics by selecting excerpts from three out of the five remaining people per organization. We do so to build robust evidence for the comparison of activists within and across communities. Further in the chapter, we show the cognitive mechanisms that bind understandings of politics to action orientation. Finally, we offer an overall assessment of the information put forth in Chapter 4 and this chapter.

### **Defenders of Migrants' Rights**

Lisa is a thirty-two-year-old mother of two. In her free time, Lisa defends asylum seekers, advocating fairer migration and asylum policies. Lisa began her activist career when she was a university student, as she was involved

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran theologian and member of the German resistance against National Socialism.

in protests against increases in tuition fees. At the time, she was also committed to the squatters' scene<sup>2</sup> where she came to understand political activism as a vital dimension of democratic societies. Two friends from these movements convinced her to join the pro-migrant activist community and Solidarity across Borders (SAB) in particular. Lisa has fought to improve the rights of migrants for the last eight years, revolted by the absence of equality between migrants and people in privileged situations such as herself. Whereas she can travel and settle down almost anywhere, migrants who arrive in Europe cannot. Although her personal background frames her understanding of politics, her perceptions of state and civil society actors are nevertheless close to the perceptions of other defenders of migrants' rights whom we interviewed.

For Lisa, *state actors* are accountable for common good. Regarding issues of migration, this means that they must care about migrants, because responsibility for migration on the national level is a fact the state must deal with. While the state does intervene, Lisa criticizes the way state actors handle migration: "State action is repressive and not welcoming to migrants as it should be. It's a difficult task but they are in charge of these people, and should therefore welcome migrants without creating xenophobia. It's of no help to stigmatize them, to cut budgets, to place them under social care, and to create an artificial juridical status such as the NEMs.<sup>3</sup> With such measures, state actors create non-humans: Migrants are neither citizens, nor human beings."

In Lisa's view, state action is everything it should not be: repressive, hypocritical, and inhuman. If Lisa attributes the accountability of dealing with migration to state actors, she also acknowledges that this is a difficult task. Lisa proceeds by delegitimizing state actors: "Migrants are victims of state violence. They have to wait for five years before they receive a response from the authorities. It's an unbearable psychological pressure. The state keeps them on a leash. Will they get the right to stay or will they have to go back to their home country? They are left in uncertainty and therefore can't start a new life somewhere under such psychological violence. We don't have the right to treat human beings like this. We have to ask ourselves: How would we handle living for five years without knowing anything, without working, without the right to leave, without the right to stay, in a state of suspension. State actors

<sup>2</sup> Squatting is the act of occupying an abandoned or unoccupied building. In Switzerland, these sites usually host cultural events like concerts, theatres, or bars where people can meet and interact.

<sup>3</sup> NEM is the French abbreviation for "Non-entrée en matière" and refers to individuals whose asylum application has been denied.

do not even recognize psychological illnesses migrants may suffer from. This is just a silent violence that is directly at odds with Swiss humanitarian tradition.” Lisa’s negative evaluation of the way the state recognizes its responsibility toward the migrant population has three parts: inhuman treatment, excessively long procedures, and a forceful application of existing legislation. “The laws we voted for were already a disaster, but there is always a margin of interpretation and application. In Switzerland, we apply them in the harshest possible way.” Lisa thus criticizes the state actors’ accountability regarding migration.

Despite this, she recognizes the plurality of state actors and does not generalize her negative view of the state. She possesses a complex understanding of the state actors involved and is able to distinguish them: “The migration office is the biggest problem. I know a person who works there and I’m really shocked by some of the stories she relates. It is truly a state institution in its worst possible form.” The migration office is the main actor Lisa criticizes when it comes to the state actors who deal with migrants’ rights. Conversely, Lisa legitimizes other state actors based on their management of matters that result in the common good: “Some other governmental domains are better. For example, environmental protection is rather effective, because the issue was a popular one and politicians won votes by adopting ecological arguments. The interests of the civil society and of politicians are aligned and it becomes possible to advance a whole legal system for the better.” While she is not always happy with the state and democracy in Switzerland, there is no generalized delegitimization of the state. She understands the state as what it is: a multifaceted but central actor that is accountable for the common good and the people living within its territory: “I have a rather ambiguous perception of the state. I think the state has a tremendously important role to play and I’m a proponent of a strong state because the state’s purpose is to take responsibility for its citizens. However, I disagree with the laws the state dictates to me.”

In order to push state actors to account for migration, *civil society actors* have to intervene politically: “I see it as a kind of lobby. If there is no pressure on politicians or at least groups on which politicians can rely, there is no progress. Concerning migration, I have the impression that state actors are going in the wrong direction, but it would certainly be worse without us. The defense of migrants’ rights is a necessary act, that much is clear.” Civil society actors play a crucial role for politics and they influence the decision-making process by pressuring politicians.

In contrast to state actors, differentiated by Lisa in terms of multiple existing actors, civil society actors are generally legitimized: “To me, civil society actors are the basis of democratic societies. A state cut off from the demands of its population isn’t a democracy anymore. I don’t really believe in political representation. I know how politics works: Getting elected is the main aim, while dealing with the real questions citizens are confronted with is down the list. While there are some politicians who maintain a strong relation with what happens on a social level, they remain a minority and they generally belong to the left or to the greens. So it’s extremely important that people organize themselves to make their claims heard.” The democracy in which Lisa wants to live is clearly a participative one and elective representation is not enough. Civil society actors emerge as the necessary force required to pressure state actors in every domain.

Lisa’s robust critique regarding the accountability of state actors on the issue of migration and her legitimization of civil society actors with regard to political intervention adequately represent how defenders of migrants’ rights perceive these two key actors. The perception would have in no way differed whether we began our description of activists’ understanding of politics with Adriana, Simone, Yan, Wilhelm, or Colette.

First, all underline the accountability of *state actors* in relation to migration and harshly criticize the current status quo. As we saw with Lisa, procedures are drawn out, and legislation is harsh and interpreted in a restrictive manner:

For migrants, a system with many trying procedures awaits. Laws are harsh and unrealistic. It’s an abstraction; state actors think they can control everything. They think they can simply keep the good people in and eliminate the bad ones. It’s incredible to see how we head toward more restrictive and coercive directions. There has to be a procedure, of course. But to think we can control everything is absolutely insane and has terrible consequences. Several migrants are in situations without any rights, they are just thrown into the wild, and it’s frightening. (Simone)

I have seen catastrophic situations in the medical facility where I worked. People, who have been here for fifteen years, suddenly they lose their right to work: Such actions are simply meant to drive migrants crazy. In addition, they have to renew their visas every three months. They are forced to live in a dreadful state of insecurity. I also know people in such situations who

suffer from psychological or somatic pathologies, individuals on dialysis or people with cancer, and we leave them in these precarious conditions for fifteen years! (Yan)

Switzerland is highly restrictive when it comes to migration. Sometimes the government sends fathers back to their country and destroys families! The law is always interpreted in the severest way in order to expel a maximum number of people. Between doors left completely open and doors completely shut, there is a gray arena in which the law can be interpreted. (Colette)

This negative critique is not generalized to all state actors or political institutions. Once again, the understanding of the other SAB activists overlaps importantly with Lisa's perception: All draw a differentiated picture of the state, which matches its complexity:

We are a democracy; not everything is bad. We have the freedom to vote. If somebody wants to vote, nobody will prevent them from doing so. I benefited from the social security system a lot; it allowed me to undertake an apprenticeship. Without all these social laws, it would not have been possible for me to obtain the things I have, and I'm really grateful for that. (Colette)

I love reflecting on our political system here in Switzerland. If one compares it to the French one, for example, I think that it takes much longer to change or enforce something in Switzerland, and here we have many opportunities to participate: The people's opinion matters. (Yan)

A semi-direct democracy like the Swiss political system is very demanding for citizens. Yet, because of this, we have many opportunities to express our views. Even if citizens are not specialists in all fields, I think it's really important that they can voice their opinion. This is a crucial advantage compared to a representative democracy like France. (Simone)

In these accounts, Swiss democracy is evaluated positively when compared with other countries. A semi-direct democratic system, however, also has drawbacks. Procedures generally take longer, and the system, as a whole, requires participation from a lot of its citizens. A way to cope with this



demanding system is through *civil society actors*, especially protest actors, who intervene in politics, advocating change in the field of migration:

We have always recognized that by joining forces and by defending a claim we can achieve our goals successfully. For example, for the cause of the “523,” we managed to ensure that the large majority of the migrants could stay in this country.<sup>4</sup> Two or three of them did not get the official right to stay, but even they have remained nonetheless [laughs]. All other refugees got permission to stay and this was not thanks to any political party. We had to pressure political parties vigorously before they actually got involved. In my opinion, the traditional left lacks courage; they do nothing for migrants’ rights. They just oppose everything that the political right puts forward. Why don’t they initiate motions or question other political parties in the national parliament as the right does? Why don’t they suggest something like the regularization of people who have been here for five years? This would advance some issues, or start a discussion at the very least. But they do not put these demands forth and that’s why we have to push them to act. (Adriana)

I think it’s vital that people protest. We have to raise awareness and to say stop; migrants can’t be treated like that. That’s the task of protest action groups like the one I’m involved in. It’s a necessity; it’s our task to bear witness and to ring alarm bells. This can be carried out through various forms of action, other than protest action. For example, a primary school class recently visited the place where we receive migrants because one of the schoolgirls was in a terrible situation and the teacher wanted to understand her condition better. Sometimes, simple actions can change minds. But that does not replace direct action. It’s crucial to have all forms of protesting, sensitizing, and helping organizations. (Simone)

In the asylum and migration domain, it’s insufficient to elaborate reflections and herald humanist values. Those values won’t be implemented anyway. We need act as counterpoints to the power in place, to achieve some sort of a balance. That’s why protest action is vital. We need to influence politicians because, in the end, they make the decisions. (Yan)

<sup>4</sup> “523” is the name of a political campaign derived from the number of asylum seekers political authorities wanted to expel. Among other events, this campaign included occupying a church where we hid denied asylum seekers. It proved to be a very successful campaign as activists managed to get a right to stay for almost all of the 523 asylum seekers.

Civil society actors need to push state actors, and this type of intervention for migrants' rights is generalized to other causes. Civil society actors are important in every political field. Adriana, for example, tells us that her group matters because it pushes political parties that lack courage, while Simone claims that "all forms of protesting" are necessary. Political interventions of such groups constitute essential countervailing powers for social change and bring new issues into the political arena:

We have to show up, and demonstrate relentlessly. The powerful actors—politicians, financiers, and economic actors—are very present. Civil society also has to get a move on! This is the only way to bring change about. I don't believe that the G20 will change the world. There must be tough demonstrations, like street demonstrations; I think it's crucial. (Adriana)

Protest is perhaps just a drop of water in the sea, but after all, the sea is made of drops of water. I think civil society actors are important in every domain. They initiate the first step and focus attention on a problem. (Colette)

I know that Switzerland can't accept everybody. But I'm shocked by the fact that everyone knows that many people work without a work permit, because we need those workers. It's important to denounce such matters and build on past struggles. There were women who went on strike against their husbands, workers who striked. Struggles like those are important no matter what the issue is. (Wilhelm)

Defenders of migrants' rights share a clear conception of politics. State actors are accountable for the common good and for migration in particular. Regarding migration, all activists have developed a negative evaluation of state action and delegitimize the state when it comes to the issue they are committed to. Activists advocating for migrants are able to differentiate between the various state actors and consequently do not proceed to delegitimize them generally. They all also underline the critical need for civil society actors to intervene politically. They legitimize the actions of these actors for migration and for other political issues as well, resulting in a generalized legitimization of civil society actors who intervene in politics. Taken together, they perceive of politics as a field of *intervention for accountability*.

### Intentionality and “Intervention for Accountability”

Defenders of migrants’ rights perceive politics in a specific way. We will now show how such perceptions enable them to develop cognitive components and set their intentionality to act. Does their understanding of state and civil society actors help us see why they favor a particular form of action over another? What are the cognitive mechanisms, and the cognitive linkages, through which their perception of politics is connected to their intentionality? In this section, we illustrate how the perception of politics enables pro-migrant activists to develop two cognitive components—*state relatedness* and *political concernedness*—that orient them toward a specific form of action: *contentious politics*.

On the one hand, state actors are perceived as accountable for promoting the common good, and it is this their administering of this accountability that is delegitimized. This leads to the development of a first cognitive component: a *conflictual state relatedness*. The procedure of state actors in carrying out their accountability is criticized, thereby leading activists to develop a conflictual relation with these actors who do not fulfill their role. Lisa expresses this cognitive component explicitly: “It’s the responsibility of the state to care for migrants but it doesn’t fulfill its mission. We have to push the state to fulfill its responsibility. But this does not mean that the state has to cease to exist.” This conflictual relation with state actors is deeply rooted as she speaks often and explicitly about injustices that migrants face: “We need to counter injustices committed by the state. Migrants leave their home for a reason; they always suffer a primary form of violence before arriving in Switzerland. Following that, violations accumulate once they are here. We have to fight against such injustice and challenge state actors when necessary!” All other activists have also developed a conflictual relation to state actors:

We need to act against the government, not collaborate with them. Especially, but not only, in the asylum domain, we have to confront the government and challenge existing laws. (Adriana)

Some laws will change but we need to protest for that to happen. (Wilhelm)

Movements can influence political decisions of the federal state, or work against cantonal implementations of these decisions. We have to challenge

state actors on every level because the final outcome can be very different from the decision made in parliament. (Yan)

On the other hand, the perception of civil society actors leads activists to think about their role as citizens: Should we be *concerned with politics*? Should we be vigilant and participate in protest action in order to enable civil society actors to intervene politically? Lisa affirms: "First, I think that as citizens we should be concerned by the people in our surroundings, by the place we live in and then ask questions such as, Why are my neighbors sent back to their home country? Then, we should react against unjust decisions. We should gather and voice our opinion on important matters. A citizen should have an active role in protest organizations." Like other SAB activists, Lisa has clearly developed a political concernedness as a consequence of her perception of civil society actors:

I believe that citizens can change many things. I believe that we can change things in our surroundings, in our neighborhoods or in our schools. Politics isn't something we do and then forget. We need to live politics because it determines our living conditions. We should not accept anything; we can take part in political decision making, and it's our civic duty to do so. If we delegate this task to others, we can't be surprised when they take decisions we do not support. (Adriana)

We need to be actively engaged in political struggles. That might be for justice or against an enemy. We don't know what our actions will yield and we need to remain vigilant. (Wilhelm)

Voting, for people who represent our ideas is important, of course. So first, you need to vote to be a citizen. But associational life exists beyond that. I think it's important that there are societies, people who do gymnastics or neighbors who organize parties once or twice a year. To value collective action is a civic attitude. Likewise, you also have to demonstrate, to strike and defend your ideas when needed. (Colette)

Their understanding of both state and civil society actors enables these activists to construct a conflictual state relatedness and a strong concern for politics. These cognitive components orient them toward a specific *form of action*. Lisa clearly expresses her action orientation in her account: "We have

to push the state to do something. The Socialists do not push enough. I'm more to the left than the Socialists are." All activists agree that pressure must be placed on state actors through protest action:

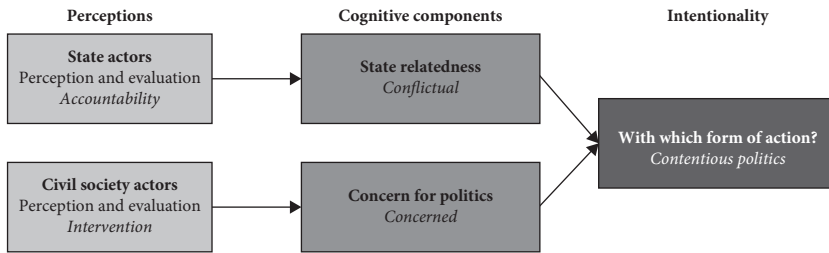
I think it's important for citizens to be committed politically. They have to vote, to carry petitions through, to intervene and to react. We need to resist some political ideas and suggest other ones in their place. In our democracies, it's vital to resist. I don't believe in political parties; I don't have a membership card and I vote less and less for the Socialists. (Simone)

I hate it when we don't react against injustice. Alone, I couldn't do anything but that's not the case. We just have to stand together and try to change these things, because, by creating a countervailing power, we can actually change things. Nowadays, it's more difficult but this does not mean we should give up. The Socialists don't act. They don't seem interested in issues of migration and, frankly, I don't know what exactly they are concerned with. Because of such a lack of action, I stay clear of political parties. (Adriana)

To support protest action through financial contributions is useful because organizations need money to exist. They have to send letters, print bulletins, and pay people to do these things. If we don't support activists financially, they can't do all things they want to. I enable them to do what they want. The Socialist Party, however, irritates me. I held a membership card, but I did not renew it. They are like the French Socialists; they just oppose everything the right-wing parties do, without proposing alternatives. (Colette)

They are clearly oriented toward contentious politics over other forms of action and are especially reluctant when it comes to participation in political parties. As charted in Figure 5.1, their perception of politics as a field where political intervention by civil society actors is required in order to increase the state actors' actions in ensuring the common good lies at the heart of the cognitive mechanism that orients their action. Activists construct a conflictual state relatedness and are concerned about politics. These cognitive components enable them to privilege a particular form of action: *contentious politics*.

A question arises: Are defenders of migrants' rights *strong citizens* in terms of their concern for politics? We saw that everyone shares Lisa's ideas on what constitutes a political citizen: To be informed, to be vigilant, and especially



**Figure 5.1** From the perception of politics of the pro-migrant activists to their intentionality of action

to participate in protest action when necessary. SAB activists are concerned with politics and therefore can be considered strong citizens not only regarding the common good, but also under the second pillar that defines strong citizenship: concern for politics.

### Green Activists' Perception of Politics

As the quantitative data in Chapter 3 indicated, Greenpeace activists also belong to the moral voicing community. In the previous chapter, they displayed a similar perception of common good, but do these similarities also apply to their perception of politics? Do green contenders perceive state and civil society actors in a similar fashion, although they are committed to a less challenging issue?

To introduce Green activists' perception of politics, we return to Margot, the seventy-year-old we met in the first chapter. She was a social worker and later became a teacher at a university for applied sciences. Margot has been active her whole life and her commitments can be summarized in four parts: the radical left, unions and professional organizations, the solidarity movement, and finally, environmental protection. She was also an active member of the Green political party. However, today, she is merely a party sympathizer, as she can no longer bear the endless meetings and the compromises her party concedes. For around two decades, Margot has been a highly active member in Greenpeace and this has gradually become her main commitment. She translates educational material from German to French and delivers lectures in schools to sensitize pupils on environmental protection. She also participates in various forms of contentious action such as street demonstrations and other modes of direct action.

As we saw in Chapter 3, for green contenders, *state actors* are accountable for environmental protection. Margot relates: “Once finance intervenes in environmental politics, action comes to a halt. We will see if during the Copenhagen Summit they take measures to slow down climate change.<sup>5</sup> They will make promises. But decisions need to be taken and measures implemented. We will be in even greater difficulties if the issue stagnates.” For Margot, state actors should clearly take care of the common good. Unfortunately, they do not do enough: “I entertain a difficult relationship with state actors. They have many conflicting interests and they are very profit oriented. They decide something but then the implementation is superficial.” As was the case with the defenders of migrants’ rights, Margot clearly attributes accountability for environmental protection to state actors, and delegitimizes them for their lack of responsible action.

However, like the defenders of migrants’ rights, Margot does not extend this negative assessment to all state actors. For her, the state is an important heterogeneous entity and state actors have a crucial duty in ensuring the common good: “Politics is everywhere. By politics, I mean those who decide what laws we vote on, which credits are allocated and to which domain. Will the money be spent for the army or in another department—environmental protection, perhaps?”

Margot shares her perception of state actors with pro-migrant activists as well as her perception of *civil society actors*, seen as influential to political decision making. “We demonstrated last Saturday. We had a two-hour long authorization to walk along the main road and go to the supermarket where we could talk with people, and tried to win them over to our cause. After that, we went to a company and protested against their production of genetically modified seeds. We had big banners and also distributed small pieces of bread. It was a huge success. The people listened to us and they learned about this business in their neighborhood.” For Margot, protest action leads to sensitization, but it also enables people to voice concerns and pressure state and economic actors. While she shares a similar understanding of politics to that of defenders of migrants’ rights, we sense that, as a Greenpeace activist, she occupies another position. Margot is engaged in a less challenging political issue and consequently is in a better place to reach out and sensitize people: “In my view, Greenpeace does vital work. They inform people and

<sup>5</sup> The interviews took place just before the Copenhagen Summit (UN Climate Change Conference) in December 2009.

allow them to form an opinion on ecological matters. For example, whenever I go to a school to deliver an informative lecture, I also take the opportunity to exchange with the students. I always try to start a debate and I try to explain what we do at Greenpeace, and why we do it.”

For Margot, civil society actors are generally legitimized because they are the actors who intervene in politics within a participatory democracy: “I think civil society actors are an absolute necessity if one thinks about the political decision-making process. Think about how ordinary people form an opinion on important issues like nuclear energy, electricity, and others. Civil society actors have a crucial role in influencing opinions. They make the population aware of existing problems and their actions receive media coverage. Everybody needs to be aware of environmental issues, but also with regard to other social problems. I think this is where civil society actors come in.” To sensitize and inform the population appears necessary alongside opposition to state action, and this double form of commitment is relevant for environmental protection as well as the protection of other types of common good. For Margot, civil society “is a world carrying ideas. These actors are very important to me.”

Margot’s account resonates with the understanding of the political sphere put forth by pro-migrant activists. State actors are accountable for common good and criticized when they are reluctant to promote environmental protection. Moreover, civil society actors play a crucial role in the protection of the environment as well as on other social problems. These actors are generally legitimized because they intervene in politics by sensitizing the population and by pushing state actors to solve existing problems. The sensitization aspect did not appear in the narratives provided by defenders of migrants’ rights. The explanation of this difference probably lies in the less challenging and long-lasting nature of environmental struggles, where it has become easier to gain the population’s support. Despite their focus on different types of common good, defenders of migrants’ rights and green contenders share the same views on politics. They perceive politics as a field where civil society actors need to intervene to push state actors to act responsibly, as the other green contenders make clear:

As I told you, political authorities are responsible and must be held accountable. It’s the authorities who ultimately say “yes or no” to power plants and are in favor of building new plants. The government always opposes the environment and favors the economy, and the latter often wins. The other



problem with political authorities is the short-term views they adopt. Look what they did with the economic crisis. They gave huge amounts of money to rescue banks. Amounts like those were never allocated to stopping global warming. State money is used to support the economy above all. (Nathan)

State actors are responsible for the environmental problems we now face. They could do so much but choose not to. For example, they could suppress all the electronic advertising or forbid unnecessary store lighting. They could invest more money in bicycle paths and public transport instead of highways. (Pierrette)

The state must do more. I have the impression that people living in cities pollute much more than people who live in rural areas, and this is no doubt due to the treatment of waste. People in villages are more sensitive toward the environment. In cities, I feel that people are far less aware of these things. Look at waste separation for example. On the one hand, you could have a neighbor who separates waste really well and another who mixes it all up. This is ridiculous and there should be a control mechanism—for example, the use of a card through which one gets taxed according to the amount of garbage put into the garbage truck. State actors should really look into the waste system of cities. (Maria)

State actors evidently need to do more in terms of environmental protection but are also accountable for the protection and promotion of the common good generally. Whenever they do not fulfill this role, green contenders delegitimize state actors.

The state could build more accommodations for homeless people. We have the means to do it but we use this money to renovate our train station. This angers me. I wanted to tell the government that their intention to renovate the train station was ridiculous. It made me sad and I was ready to take part in a demonstration. (Maria)

As the privatization of public services increases, the state takes less and less care of our problems. While schools remain more or less public, hospitals turn into private clinics. The health system and health insurance are all privatized. I completely disagree with privatization. Some domains, like health, water, and electricity, must remain public and accessible to all, not profit oriented. (Nathan)

The state can be an opponent, but it can also be an ally. Migrants' rights are a good example of this dynamic. To give a concrete example: The state is against the idea of collective regularization. In this regard, the state constitutes an opponent. However, the state can also be an ally: When we want to regularize the situation of some migrants, we can go to a public official and explain a person's specific situation. In one case, we told them a man had been a seasonal worker for fifteen years and asked if they could find a way to give this person a resident permit. We really need to make state actors our allies because they have the power to change things. (Evelyne)

Greenpeace activists also view the operational dimensions of political institutions positively. As such, the existing direct democratic institutions are perceived as opportunities for action, and the Swiss democracy is considered to be a valid system. State actors are not generally delegitimized. For Greenpeace activists, state actors do a bad job regarding environmental protection. However, state actors are crucial when it comes to the common good in general, and this responsibility is assumed to a certain degree. Green contenders and pro-migrant activists share a critical but heterogeneous understanding of state actors.

They also have a common view of civil society actors:

Civil society actors are indispensable. For example, ecological associations use the right of recourse from time to time, and are often successful with this kind of action. These actors are fundamental in positing a counter-vailing power with regard to all the other economic and nuclear lobbies. We need to have associations that think about ecological problems. (Nathan)

Civil society actors are really important. Greenpeace is useful because everybody sees their posters and these sometimes make people reflect on these issues. For this reason, I think Greenpeace and their actions are efficient in sensitizing the population. (Pierrette)

Ecological associations are an important lobby. At least that's what they say in their bulletins. But I don't know if they just want to make a good impression on readers so that the sympathizers continue to pay [laughs]. That said, I do have the impression that they are efficient lobbyists. They get real results and inform the population. For example, if Greenpeace had not pursued these big French ships and circulated the information about their nuclear tests, we would know nothing about the whole affair. We would be in

the dark about the community that faces a destroyed sea and can no longer rely on healthy fish. All that just so more nuclear tests could be carried out. (Evelyne)

Civil society actors are indispensable for political intervention. By contrast to migrants' rights activists, however, Greenpeace activists are conscious that the population is sensitive to environmental problems and therefore can be addressed with ease. This is not the case for challenging issues like the defense of migrants' rights. Despite this difference, the role of civil society actors is the same: They must guarantee the accountability of state actors for the common good—in their case, on the issue of environmental protection.

What is true for civil society actors in the environmental domain also applies to other types of civil society actors, who are crucial actors in democratic decision making, because they bring a plurality of opinions into the political arena. Civil society actors are thus generally legitimized:

In a very general way, protest organizations are fundamental political actors. These organizations launch initiatives and nourish public debate. They are actors who address social and political issues either through initiatives, through referenda, or through action campaigns and are important because they display a multitude of existing opinions. (Evelyne)

Protest groups are important because they allow people to show that they are unhappy. Without them, everybody would stay at home instead of speaking up. And this is important for any cause, be it combating homophobia or, racism, etc. (Pierrette)

Civil society plays an important part in the political game. They pressure the state and voice problems. If state actors don't do their job, protest organizations intervene. To me, civil society, which comprises organizations helping refugees, development aid, etc., play a vital part in the improvement of our society. (Nathan)

Green contenders share a common understanding of politics, which is the same as that of defenders of migrant' rights. State actors are accountable for the common good, for environmental matters in particular, but also for other forms of common good. When state actors do not fulfill this role, they are delegitimized. State actors do not go far enough because they are caught in a

conflict of interests between ecological and economic lobbies. Unfortunately, the impact of economic lobbies on the final decision often prevails. Like their pro-migrant counterparts, green activists also have a nuanced and complex perception of the state. Thus, state actors not only constrain environmental protection but also provide activists with the opportunity to influence politics. Finally, moral voicing activists have a common understanding of civil society actors. They are of the utmost importance because they bring new ideas to the political debate and are able to influence decision making. Consequently, green contenders also perceive politics as a field of *intervention for accountability*.

All but one of the green contenders shared this perception of politics. As was the case in Chapter 4, Yves proves to be an exception. On the one hand, he legitimizes state actors: “You can’t expect that the government will invest billions for renewable energy, that’s just not possible. State actors already do a lot.” On the other hand, he is quite reluctant when it comes to the legitimization of civil society actors. “We need radicals in order to change things. But do they really change something? I have the impression that they tilt at windmills; we are all sheep who like following the government.” In a nutshell, Yves does not fit the understanding of other Greenpeace activists’ interviewed. Why is it that Yves’s conception of the common good as well as his understanding of politics is different from that of other green contenders? We will address this issue in Chapter 6.

### **Green Activists’ Perception of Politics and Intentionality**

Do we find the same cognitive mechanisms connecting perceptions of politics to action orientation as we did for defenders of migrants’ rights? In other words, does the understanding of state and civil society actors by green contenders help us to see why they favor contentious politics over other forms of action?

Their perception of state actors as accountable for the promotion of common good enables them to construct a specific cognitive component. In line with pro-migrant activists, they have a *conflictual relation with state actors* who do not take care of a given common good. Margot’s account exemplifies the importance of this struggle: “We are a cog in the decision-making process. For example, regarding political decisions on nuclear energy, electricity, or other means of energy, I think we are absolutely necessary.” The

other Greenpeace activists interviewed also underline the conflictual nature of their relation to state actors:

Obviously, politicians have to respect a certain legal framework. However, they can also develop it further and it's often our role as activists to push politicians in that direction, to hand them the right arguments. It's our role to suggest developments in legal frameworks. (Evelyne)

Greenpeace is really efficient when it comes to raising media and political awareness on a specific issue. Unfortunately, it takes so much time between the denunciation of a problem and the reaction of the government or the companies. (Nathan)

Ecologists will try to put pressure and to focus attention. Everybody should protest, not only organizations. You might say that if the state would take care of things, there would be no need for these organizations, but I prefer to think that organizations must always have an eye on the state. (Pierrette)

Green contenders have also developed a strong *concern for politics*, which sits alongside their conflictual state relatedness. This means that their perception of civil society actors enables them to construct the cognitive component that citizens should be politicized and act accordingly. In a similar fashion to migrants' rights defenders, they value vigilance and participation in contentious politics with the aim of influencing the democratic decision-making process. Margot explains this view as follows: "To be a citizen means to exist through what one can do: to exchange, to communicate and to use one's ability to transform social situations. A society cannot develop without exchanges. I understand myself as a fraction of a whole. People have to be an active element in a society and one becomes active by communicating and transforming the elements of his or her society." The other Greenpeace activists are also concerned about politics:

It's important to participate: Given that we are in a democracy, it's important to vote and to be active in protest organizations. If we don't do so, we no longer live in a democracy. (Pierrette)

We are interested in environmental problems, we get the newspaper and we read the information. We all use environmental friendly bulbs and we all

have some solar panels on our balcony. We all do some small gestures, we have a very small car or we buy only organically grown food. After a while, however, you realize you should do more, at which point you become an activist. You take part in demonstrations and you show that you disagree. We need to do more than just small gestures. (Nathan)

It's through discussions that you become vigilant. Discussions are held whenever you participate. So, you have to be active in your community, to be present in order to improve things. (Evelyne)

It becomes clear that green contenders have the same perception of politics as the other activist groups studied. With a conflictual state relatedness and concern for politics, they are clearly *oriented toward contentious politics* and less toward other types of action, such as participation in political parties. Margot relates: "I'm also a member of the Green Party, but that membership is more like a memory than anything else. Political parties are institutions that erase personalities and drain commitment away. I'm a member and I pay my fees, but I want to commit to an organization that allows me to rebel, where people are committed to real change." Other Greenpeace activists stress their intentionality in a similar fashion and developed cognitive components similar to those of the defenders of migrants' rights.

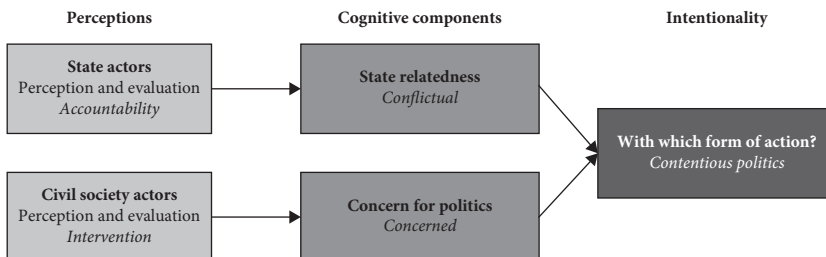
There is no political party with which I agree a hundred percent. They have to compromise all the time. I prefer committing to an association I totally agree with. We have to pressure the whole political class to become more environmentally friendly and this is best done through protest action. That is why I'm at Greenpeace. Look at the visual forms of action we use: You see activists obstructing trains carrying nuclear waste, and using banners to denounce certain issues, or blocking factory ships used for whaling; that's the type of action which led me to take part in protest action. (Nathan)

I admire the way Greenpeace alerts people. Their actions require a small number of people but usually receive tremendous media coverage. You see four of them climbing up the side of a cooling tower to affix a big banner with the help of a helicopter. These are the forms of action that effectively lead to social change. There is a reason I take part in these organizations. I want them to have the means to do the work, and I support them

financially. In contrast, the Socialist Party is not really aware which political strategy they want to adopt. They have to be active in every sector which makes it difficult to formulate clear in-depth strategies. (Evelyne)

I really take my commitment to heart. We face serious planetary problems. I know I won't change the world, but I can try to contribute to its progressive transformation. Greenpeace is recognized internationally and are excellent at getting their messages across. The more we are at Greenpeace, the more we can do to attract media attention. I'm ready to climb up a tree of the Amazon rainforest to stop people from cutting it. Or I imagine chaining myself to a Panda to protect it. The Greens, by contrast, are a party who defend the environment because it's fashionable. More often than not, they shoot themselves in the foot with all the political compromises they have to agree on. (Pierrette)

As illustrated in Figure 5.2, green contenders have developed the same cognitive mechanisms as the defenders of migrants' rights, setting their intentionality in a particular way. This action orientation is constructed through a specific cognitive mechanism: a belief that state actors are accountable for the common good, but that they neglect this task. In addition, an important role is attributed to civil society actors. They are legitimized because they intervene to influence state decisions. This understanding enables green contenders to construct two cognitive components: a conflictual state relatedness and a strong concern for politics. The combination of such a conflictual relation with a politically active conception of citizenship orients them toward *contentious politics* and highlights why participation in other forms, such as political parties, is not an option.



**Figure 5.2** From the perception of politics of the Greenpeace activists to their intentionality of action

The analysis of the narratives of Green contenders has shown that they are concerned with politics. They stress the need to be informed, to be vigilant, and to resort to action when necessary. They are politicized citizens, and it is their perception of civil society actors that consolidates that politicization. Thus, different types of moral voicing activists, whether engaged in challenging issues or in mainstream protest, are *strong citizens*, concerned not merely with the common good, but also with politics.

### Christian Aid Volunteers and Politics

We now inquire into a different understanding of politics with Caritas activists, as the quantitative analysis in Chapter 3 has shown. With Christine, a longtime activist, we engage with the way volunteers perceive politics.

Christine is a seventy-three-year-old woman and has been committed to Caritas for twenty-three years. She became a volunteer after her children left home and she decided she needed something to do in her free time. During much of her life, Christine was a housewife and took care of her four children. Before getting married and becoming a mother, Christine worked as a clothes saleswoman. She loved this job as it gave her the opportunity to attend fashion shows. Her experience in selling clothing items also partly explains why she decided to become a volunteer at Caritas, as she manages one of the clothing boutiques the organization operates to raise funds. By contrast, Christine was never an activist for moral voicing, or unions. How does Christine, who has a long history of volunteer work, perceive political authorities and civil society organizations? How does her perception of politics differ from that of moral voicing activists? And do these perceptions also contribute to orienting her action?

Christine favors *state actors' containment*. For her, they are clearly less accountable for common good than was the belief among moral voicing activists. She believes that state actors intervene too much and are too generous, making their intervention inefficient: "The state should force unemployed people to take jobs. Instead of pushing them toward work, the state pampers them. I know it's difficult for most people to be unemployed, but there are many who enjoy it. I don't think it's normal to stay unemployed for a very long time, and abuse of state welfare remains unchecked." Christine belief about state actors' accountability for unemployed people is also true for her regarding migrants, the second major group Caritas handles: "Caritas



needs to help them because it's not only the state's task to care about migrants, it's the duty of Caritas and like-minded organizations." As we saw in Chapter 4, the Christian aid community does not see the matter of migrants' rights as an injustice, and Christine's understanding of the appropriate roles for state actors supplements this explanation. For Christine, state actors are not accountable for marginal groups like migrants or unemployed people, and state intervention can be contained by substitution of help from other actors. Between an accountable and a containing state, Christine clearly tends toward the latter. While this does not mean that state actors are not at all accountable, they are clearly less accountable than in the eyes of moral voicing activists.

Despite her belief that state actors are too helpful in terms of unemployment and migration, Christine nevertheless offers a generally positive evaluation of state actors. She continues: "Personally, I think the Swiss state performs its duties well. They try to handle things as competently as possible as it's impossible to satisfy everyone. All in all, I think the state does a really good job." Christine generally legitimizes state actors and does not hold them accountable for the common good. Individuals are responsible for themselves.

Christine mentions unemployment and migration as matters where state actors should be discharged from most responsibility. But who has the capacity to substitute for state actors? According to Christine, *civil society actors* should substitute for state actors on such issues, thereby leading to the containment of state actors: "Caritas has become a very professional organization. When I started, there was the director, the person who took care of the volunteers, and two secretaries. It was really small. But today, we have many offices, and lots of people work for the organization, which is great!" She continues: "The organization has become vital in cities, where poverty is a real issue." For Christine, Caritas fulfills a crucial social requirement by providing help to people. By contrast with moral voicing activists, civil society actors do not have an intervening function in the democratic process but are indispensable in order to contain state intervention. Although moral voicing and Caritas activists legitimize civil society actors on the issues they are committed to, they go about the process differently.

Another difference between moral voicing activists and Christine is that she does not generalize her legitimization of civil society actors. There are other types of organizations, which do not substitute for the state and are therefore not necessary. She is especially critical of protest organizations: "These

associations behave like sects. I think of ecological associations in particular. They get on our nerves with this climate change affair. Remember last winter? We never had such a long one.” Christine does not extend her legitimization of civil society actors to include protest organizations.

With Christine, we deal with a new representation of politics: State actors care too much and their intervention should be minimized or substituted by civil society actors like Caritas. She believes that state actors are, by far, less accountable for common good than they are in the understanding of moral voicing activists, who criticized state action claiming that the state does not care enough about social problems. Further, her understanding of the role of civil society actors is also opposed to that expressed by moral voicing activists: Civil society actors do not need to push for more state accountability but to reduce it. Christine perceives politics as a field of *substitution for containment*. The view of Christian aid volunteers resonates with the cognitive landscape Christine displays:

I’m a member of a political party which believes that the state should not do what the private sector can handle. Of course, the state must also handle issues. For example, elderly people, those who don’t want to die. We can all turn ninety nowadays, and the state should take care of aged persons. But we have to remain selective and not assign responsibilities to the state when unnecessary. (Edwige)

As you know, I’m a member of the Christian Democratic Party. What fundamentally differentiates us from the Socialists is that we don’t solve problems by asking the state to handle them. This has always bothered me. I have always based myself on the principle of subsidiarity. As long as the private sector can solve a problem, there is no reason that the state should take care of it. As long as a municipality can solve a problem, there is no reason that the canton needs to take care of it. And as long as the canton can solve a problem, there is no reason for the federal state to take care of it. (Mathieu)

If you look at the amounts spent on social action and social insurance, you get the impression that resources exist. They give the money but then it’s difficult to judge how these resources are used. Not so long ago, I saw a report about the financial situation of regional unemployment offices: They get a lot of money, but don’t seem very efficient. In addition, you hear

from unemployed people that these offices simply apply schemes instead of responding to personal situations. So you never know if a policy is well implemented. (Emmanuelle)

For these volunteers, state actors are less accountable for common good and they emphasize the importance of containing the state wherever possible. This is not only true for the issue these volunteers are committed to, but they also legitimize state actors' containment in general and in turn criticize state actors' involvement:

You can't imagine the money we lose when the state intervenes. I don't consider all of them to be thieves but you have to think about all these officials we have to pay. (Edwige)

Our society has become too critical. The consequence of this is that we have become static. My city is a case in point. Everybody wants more housing to be constructed but popular opposition then blocks most housing projects! It seems to have become fashionable to systematically oppose the state. Citizens don't trust the state anymore. We elect people but we don't trust them. All these obstructions leave me speechless. Let's be honest, it's raining initiatives and referendums, especially during electoral periods. I think this is a sign of a very interesting political crisis. With our democratic system, we can hinder the process when we want to. (Emmanuelle)

It's due to subsidiarity that we live in such a wonderful country. Because we have a strong civil society and economic sector we don't need to rely too much on the state. I'm always a little bit critical when the state actors want to take care of something. It's never easy if you have to rely on the state. If the state intervenes, you can be sure that it will cost a fortune and then you're not even sure if it will improve matters in the end. (Mathieu)

These volunteers believe that not only should state intervention be reduced, but they also criticize the participative political institutions that, in their view, slow down and even prevent political solutions. By contrast with moral voicing activists, they therefore favor a representative idea of democracy, not a participative one. Citizens should elect politicians and let them do their job. Similarly, *civil society actors* are not political but social actors. As we saw with

Christine, civil society actors are presented as professional and efficient, justifying a reduction of state accountability:

Caritas clearly states that all the money donated goes directly to the poor. Well, I'm aware that Caritas is an organization and the director and the social assistants receive wages. But I think the money for this is taken from somewhere else. Anyway, donation money is given to help poor families and children who don't have the means to go on holidays. (Edwige)

I think it's an organization that works well. As always, if you support an organization, you want it to be as efficient as possible. That's why I will continue to support Caritas. They are present everywhere. I know what they do. They publish a bulletin and it is important because it informs me on what goes on and what they do. (Emmanuelle)

Caritas has a very important role. When I think about all the volunteers and the work they do, this is incredibly important. As I'm not a socialist [laughs], I think that the private sector has a role to play. The state can't do everything. I am certain of this. (Mathieu)

Caritas, unlike the state, needs no intermediaries. Instead, the money goes directly to the people in need. As with the moral voicing activists, civil society actors are thus viewed in contrast to state actors. However, the content of this dissimilarity is completely different, as civil society actors are efficient and able to substitute for state intervention. It is interesting to note how recurrent this perception of efficiency is, as the interviewees are convinced of Caritas's professionalism, omnipresence, and experience in the domain. This positive evaluation of civil society actors is, however, not a general one. As was the case for Christine, volunteers at Caritas are rather dismissive of other forms of collective action, especially protest organizations. Civil society actors are thus legitimized as long as they tend to substitute for the state. However, protest organizations are perceived critically:

Those who say we need to protest are often doctrinaires. These people think that it's only the state which can do a good job. But I know that this is by no means true. That's why I'm not too taken with protest organizations. I'm more for substitution. (Mathieu)

All the people from the left think that the state is everything. That's dangerous. The Socialists and all the people on the left, those who go out in the street, they have no idea about the state's finances, and therefore, don't care about expenses. (Edwige)

I remember when I was at college, it was just after 1968 and we had to draft the regulations ourselves. There was this participative process. I didn't have the patience to work in a group like this. It was impossible. I was impatient and wanted to move forward. If you work in a group you can't move forward. I think it's for this reason that I don't have a mind for protest action. (Emmanuelle)

The understanding of politics these volunteers have developed is different from that of moral voicing activists. For Christian aid volunteers, state actors are less accountable for common good. They prefer containment of state actors, with an emphasis on economic liberty and the minimization of state intervention. Consequently, state actors are generally legitimized. Furthermore, civil society actors fulfill a different, yet crucial, social role: They act as substitutes for the state. In addition, protest actors and other left-wing oriented groups are delegitimized. While moral voicing activists understand politics as a field of intervention for accountability, Christian aid activists perceive politics as a *substitution for containment*—a replacement of the state by the private sector in matters that should not be the state's responsibility.

However, Elisabeth and Jérémie do not subscribe to this pattern. As we demonstrated in the previous chapter, their understanding of common good and politics is due to their long-term commitment to moral voicing communities. For half of their lives, Elisabeth and Jérémie have been advocates for the defense of migrants' rights and development groups, respectively, and these cross-commitments result in an understanding of politics shaped by social interactions in both communities. As a short excursion into Jérémie's mind shows, their understanding of politics sways between contention and substitution.<sup>6</sup> Such instances of blended minds, and the effects of cross-commitment in activists' understanding, will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

<sup>6</sup> We provide only excerpts from Jérémie's account. Similar views are expressed in Elisabeth's narrative.

The state is accountable for many things and they do a lot, as with the medical sector. People who are treated at home, for example. But there will be an increase in this demand with the rise of the population's age. Will the state be able to handle this increase in demand? I don't know. But we will certainly need civil society actors, such as Caritas, to help them. (Jérémie)

Caritas also has a political mission. Whenever they talk about refugees, for example, they have to challenge the state. It's true that most of the volunteers are not politically committed. However, as an organization, they have to formulate political expectations and these are often challenging voices. One cannot separate the social from the political. (Jérémie)

### **“Substitution for State Containment” and Intentionality**

Moral voicing activists perceive state and civil society actors in a specific way enabling the construction of two particular cognitive components: a conflictual state relatedness and a strong concern for politics. Taken together, these cognitive components orient their action toward contentious politics. By contrast, Caritas activists perceive politics differently. How does their perception of politics set their intentionality?

Christian aid activists construct the same cognitive components but with a different content: For them, *state actors have to be complemented* and there is no conflict at stake. As we saw in Chapter 4, for Caritas volunteers the problem of poverty is a care problem and it is the duty of civil society to take care of it. State actors should not intervene in such instances. For Christine, civil society actors should not be political because they are complementary to state actors: “State actors and Caritas work hand in hand. Caritas takes care of children in difficulty but they do so in conjunction with the state. Therefore, Caritas can't be political. It has to be an apolitical association. They take care of youth in difficulty, among many other issues where the state and Caritas work complementarily. I think this is absolutely normal and a very good thing. In addition, Caritas is also subsidized by the state, so can't become a political organization.” Christine, as well as the other volunteers who were interviewed, relate to state actors in a similar way:

Look at all the volunteers working for Caritas and everything they accomplish! If the state had to do all that, it would cost a fortune. Even then, I'm not sure if the state would do it any better. Again, if a private organization can do the work efficiently and in a professional way, why should we assign these tasks to the state? It makes no sense at all. There are certainly domains where the state is better suited to solve a problem, but I'm convinced that there are many others where the private sector can handle things. So, it's obvious that the two of them are really complementary. (Mathieu)

I think it's really a pairing. Private charity has always existed and, historically, dominated social care. State charity came much later. (Emmanuelle)

We should prevent state intervention wherever we can. Caritas does an excellent job and they are more efficient than state actors. (Edwige)

By contrast with moral voicing activists, volunteers at Caritas are *not concerned with politics*. However, this does not mean that they are not interested in politics. For Christine, voting is important: "I always vote. We have the right to do so we must use it." Volunteers do not stress the need for political vigilance and participatory politics and are therefore not concerned by politics as we define it. For them, politicians should be elected and allowed to do their job without citizens incessantly intervening.

The most important thing is to pay taxes and vote. A colleague of mine never votes. I told her that there are people who are tortured and murdered because they fight for the right to vote. She said I was right, but I don't know if she has voted since (laughs). In my view, the right to vote is a privilege and in Switzerland the people are really consulted about everything. (Edwige)

A citizen has to elect his government and try to trust its representatives. You can be vigilant of course but this does not mean that everybody should think that we are the government. Citizens should be aware that the common good comes first and personal well-being second. It's clear that we have to control what the government does, they shouldn't try to trick us. But to continuously claim that the state is wrong and to protest against everything is to be a hypocrite. (Emmanuelle)

I always hear people complain and do nothing to change what bothers them. This affects me. There are so many people saying we have to do this or that. I always ask them, what do you do to change things? Obviously, nothing. I'm always motivated if there is a problem. What can I do about it? How can I do my share to solve the problem? This is the way I approach an issue, and the result of this is that I'm committed a little bit everywhere. It doesn't get more complicated than that. (Mathieu)

Christian aid volunteers are not concerned with politics the way moral voicing activists are. While the latter stress political vigilance and participatory politics, Caritas activists emphasize the importance of caring for others and believe a citizen's participation in politics should be limited to voting. Although Mathieu's ideas seem to go further than other volunteers, he does not share the views of the moral voicing activists on political commitment. His perception of politics and the cognitive linkages allow him to act. However, that action is not a contentious one, but volunteering. Voting, paying taxes, and caring about others are the main tasks for Caritas volunteers. With these narratives, we aimed to show that Christine, Edwige, Emmanuelle, and Mathieu are not concerned with politics. They do not value political vigilance, nor are they ready to join contentious action. Instead, they underline the importance of participation in institutional politics and the need to trust existing political institutions.

Christian aid volunteers have another perception of politics and have accordingly developed different cognitive components. Alongside a non-conflictual and complementary relation to state actors and being unconcerned with politics, they have developed the mental components that *orient their action toward volunteering*. In fact, the very meaning of commitment changes through this cognitive mechanism as Christine explains: "We know we work to help others. We know that the money we earn in our shop is given to the poor. We are a charitable organization. We give our time for these people and for the cause. That's what we love doing and we love the people who come in need of help." For all Christian aid activists, volunteering means doing good by spending time or money. Their commitment allows them to share, to help others, to make something out of their privileged situation and to satisfy their desire to participate in volunteer action:

For a while, I supported the Bern Declaration, because I think it's important to work toward a sustainable environment. But I left the movement because



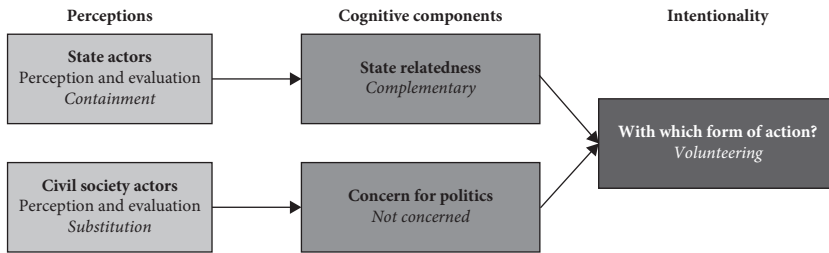
they were too politicized. My commitment to Caritas is important. I do it as a Christian. I think we have to share. Caritas matters to me because some people are really in need. Whenever I receive the bulletin and look through the cases described I want to help them. (Edwige)

I like my commitment because it allows me to satisfy my social intentions. My commitment allows me to help people in need. (Mathieu)

I think it's important to realize that if one is in a privileged situation he or she should not forget others in less enviable positions. There is civic engagement that leads one to support organizations like Caritas and another form of engagement which leads to politics. These are two different things. (Emmanuelle)

In addition, an action orientation toward volunteering does not foreclose political commitment. As we have seen, voting is crucial for Christian aid activists. Some of them are also involved in political parties. Mathieu, for example, was involved in a party for a long time: "For more than twenty years, I was committed to the Christian Democratic Party. First, I was elected to the municipal council and then I went on to the cantonal parliament. I really liked this form of commitment because many things were going on in the construction sector where I am professionally involved and those issues resonated with my stance on social matters." Edwige, too, is a member of a political party: "The Liberal Party suits my ideas: They advocate for self-responsibility. One has to care about oneself and not just count on the state's help. I became committed to politics at an early age. Being a woman, this wasn't obvious. You know, I voted for the first time in 1960!" To be oriented toward volunteering does not necessarily mean there is no political commitment, but it is present and is located in established political parties, not in protest organizations.

As Figure 5.3 illustrates, the perception of politics shared by Christian aid volunteers results in a specific intention to engage and support collective action: volunteering or "civic engagement" as Emmanuelle labels it. For them, volunteering means to give time to help and share with others. In order to construct this action orientation, their perception of politics is important. In their view, state actors are less accountable for the common good than was the case for moral voicing activists. Accordingly, state intervention should be contained, or limited. By contrast with state actors, civil society actors—at



**Figure 5.3** From the perception of politics of the Caritas volunteers to their intentionality of action

least in the volunteering sector—are efficient and able to substitute for or at least complement state actors. Their perception of state actors leads them to construct two cognitive components: a complementary state relatedness and a lack of concern for politics. Regarding the former, the work of state actors has to be complemented and substituted for wherever possible, while the latter means that politicians should be elected and left to do their job. These are citizens who want to be represented rather than participate in the decision-making process. If participation in politics occurs, as with Edwige or Mathieu, it is through political parties. Finally, such an understanding of politics orients them toward a specific form of action, which in this case is volunteering.

Are Christian aid volunteers *strong citizens* like moral voicing activists? The answer is clearly no. While Chapter 4 revealed that they are strong citizens in terms of their concern for the common good, they would not be considered strong citizens under the criteria of the second pillar, being neither vigilant nor ready to take part in participatory politics. For them, the duty of a citizen is to take care of others and to participate in institutional politics.

### Unionists and Politics

We now turn to still another form of collective action: unionism. The action repertoire of unionists is particular because they use a blend of institutional and contentious politics. Do these activists consequently develop a different kind of perception of politics? Nuno's account will help us make sense of their understanding of politics.

Nuno is a sixty-year-old man. He grew up in Portugal and moved to Switzerland at the age of thirty. When he was young, he started working as a locksmith and later became a welder in a refinery. At that time, he did not care about politics. However, after his military service, things changed. He was deployed to Timor where he began to criticize colonization and realized that Portugal was actually a dictatorship at the time. The Carnation Revolution was on the verge of beginning when he returned from his military service. He became an active member of the Communist Party and a union sympathizer. This was forty years ago. When he moved to Switzerland, he maintained his union commitment. For over thirty years now, Nuno has been an active member of Unia, takes part in many demonstrations, and is a member of several committees within Unia's federal structure.

Regarding *state actors*, Nuno clearly perceives a discrepancy between what state actors should do for workers and what they currently do. "In my opinion, the Swiss state does not exist for workers. I really don't understand this federal system and the lack of power and accountability of the government. The Federal Council is not really concerned with workers' rights." For Nuno, state actors lack accountability for common good when it comes to workers' rights. "There is no culture of a labor secretary, as in other countries. In Switzerland, the commerce secretary is linked to the state secretary for economic affairs (SECO), who is in charge of workers' rights. An indirect system links the labor force to the state, and that is a handicap, because there is no reliable interlocutor with a clear labor agenda. I'm very skeptical about the Swiss government when it comes to workers' rights. They ignore our claims and do not care about our salaries." Nuno clearly delegitimizes state actors regarding the issue he is committed to.

When Nuno speaks of state actors in general, however, his perception is more positive. As was the case with the other activists, he is able to differentiate the various state actors, as with the example of cantonal commission for the integration of foreigners: "It's a cantonal commission. Around the table, there are good and bad people. There is the committee for foreigners, politicians, the church, and other people. Sometimes, I disagree with what happens in this commission, but I want to underline our canton's awareness of the issue. They were the first canton to establish such a commission for the integration of foreigners. It was innovative. Sometimes, it's difficult to integrate foreigners, so they established this commission to help people who just arrived. For example, you come from Portugal and you present yourself at the municipality. Thanks to the commission, you will get a brochure with

the essential information in Portuguese. That's the way we approach here the problem of cohabitation with other communities." While state actors do not care enough about workers' rights and protection, they do care about other common goods, and Nuno is satisfied with the existing political system. Nuno does not generally delegitimize state actors: "Switzerland is the only country in the world where there is this specific form of direct democracy. Just count the amount of ballots cast in a year. In other countries, you have to wait for years to be able to vote or to express your opinion on a referendum." Like moral voicing activists, Nuno delegitimizes state actors when they lack accountability.

Though institutions of direct democracy are good, they are not sufficient when it comes to the protection of workers' rights. *Civil society actors*, and especially unions, play a key role: "The unions are crucial because they set the agenda. Without them, governmental decisions would just be arbitrary. The union continues to fight. Like the Communist Party, they still have the same energy and the same conviction as before. As long as there is class injustice, a strong Communist Party is necessary. The union is important too because if a person has a problem, there is always a good lawyer who tells him or her what to do. This is crucial." For workers' voicing activists, unions have *to intervene politically* by participating in and influencing political decision making: "Despite the difficulties and the weaknesses of the union, it's thanks to them that people have a civil code, and right to take at least three weeks of holidays, or work a maximum of forty-five hours per week. This is the strength of the union; they fight hard against existing injustices and for our rights." For Nuno, Unia is the most significant actor for the protection of workers' rights and has secured many victories.

The perception of civil society actors Nuno displays matches that of moral voicing activists with two exceptions. The first is the level of generalization. Indeed, Nuno generalizes far less: "I was engaged in Portuguese associations, in the Portuguese centers, and in the parents' commission for the Portuguese school. These were all associations that sought to improve the integration of the Portuguese community. I wanted to organize the Portuguese community in a more coherent manner so we could advance better claims. We are entirely Portuguese; we want to have a consulate here and we want to have a Portuguese cinema for children. And we are successful sometimes. For example, we obtained Portuguese language courses." While Nuno's account shows some form of generalization, it also illustrates how this generalization is linked to his communitarian perception, a topic developed in

Chapter 4. In fact, his generalizations pertain exclusively to the groups he belongs to: workers and the Portuguese community. The second difference with moral voicing activists is that Nuno perceives a strong link of the union to the Socialist Party: “Unia is somewhat under the umbrella of the Socialist Party. There’s also the president of the union of the Swiss unions who is a delegate at the national parliament. Some directors of Unia are delegates at the parliament for the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party really supports us, they are generally a strong ally of the workers’ movement.” In fact, the Socialist Party and the union are complementary and Unia represents the activist wing of the party. Thus, Nuno’s perception of politics is specific when compared to Caritas volunteers but very similar to that of moral voicing activists. He sees politics as a field where *civil society actors must intervene to increase state actors’ accountability*.

The perception of state actors by other workers’ voicing activists resonates with Nuno’s view. They criticize *state actors* for failing to protect workers’ rights and subsequently see unions as the crucial civil society actor able to struggle for social justice for workers. State decisions are seen as heavily influenced by economic interests, which are, of course, detrimental to workers’ rights:

I want to have another government, one that actually represents workers. For now, personal interests are being defended, and these interests are those of the capitalists. We all know that every federal councilor as well as members of parliament is a board member of big corporations. So obviously, they won’t be defending workers, but the interests of those who pay them. (Joao)

Politicians have no guts. They don’t want to review the labor law although it’s virtually inexistent. For example, the collective labor agreement has to be controlled by somebody. But nobody does it! We, the workers, need to defend our workplace. But I have to do what the boss tells me and if I denounce my miserable working conditions I will be dismissed, because there is no protection for workers. That is the reality of Swiss politics! (Eva)

As I told you, employers fuck workers over. A worker slaves for twelve hours a day and gets 3,000 Swiss Francs at the end of the month. The owner of a company works for three hours a day but earns 12,000 per month. It’s totally unfair. As a worker, I’m at the bottom of the social ladder. (André)

For these activists, Switzerland is a capitalist country with non-existent labor laws, and outrageous injustices exist between workers and employers who are indebted to the state for the lack of laws and regulations that would protect employees. This critical stance on state actors concerning workers' rights is in sharp contrast with the general perception of state actors. State actors' accountability is generally not delegitimized. State actors do care about common good except the protection of workers' rights. In addition, residents of Switzerland live in a political system that allows them to take part in political decision making. Unionists are hence also able to differentiate their critique of state actors with regard to different state institutions in the same way that moral voicing activists do. Contrary to Christian aid volunteers, however, they have a perception of the state as being accountable for the common good.

State actors generally do a good job and have constructed excellent infrastructures. The streets are always in a good shape. School is free: You don't pay for books, for example. You go to the lake and everything is clean. Life in Switzerland is good and the medical system and health insurance are excellent. If my daughter has to go to the doctor, I only need to pay a tenth of the bill. If an emergency operation is required, you just have to wait a month. You pay a lot but you are well treated. There's a good quality of life. (Tiago)

Switzerland is a very well structured country. State actors organize everything properly; it's fantastic. There are also things to change, of course, but there is no perfect country or society. We are certainly not in a bad place in Switzerland. (Joao)

Just compare the Swiss context with the French one. They have way more strikes. Why? That's because here, we can express our opinion. If we want to work forty, forty-two, or thirty-six hours, we will ask for it. We are able to say what we like and what we don't like. We can pay our taxes as we want. The French don't have these possibilities. In terms of democracy, we are a very good country. That's also true for the common good. If you need hospitalization you are treated even though you don't have health insurance. (Sarah)

In order to improve the situation with regard to workers' rights, unions have to intervene in politics. They are a cog in the democratic machine and allow the population to be sensitized to problems workers are confronted with and

to influence political decision making. As far as unions are concerned, *civil society actors* are crucial for the functioning of democracy. Unlike Christian aid volunteers, they see their role as a clearly political one, as was the case for moral voicing activists.

Contention is always of value because it raises awareness. Imagine a perfect world where everybody contributes their part; we would achieve beautiful things. But we aren't in a perfect world and therefore protest is necessary in order to change the world into a better place for workers." (Sarah)

I think that protest is really important. Unions are a crucial link in the political machine in Switzerland. We are able to influence political decisions. In general, union members are left-oriented people and that's why it's also important that they inform the population in order to sensitize them on issues related to workers' rights. (Joao)

There is no other place for the defense of workers' rights than the union. I remember a demonstration that half of the population was against and the other half approved of. But last Thursday, we demonstrated again from the train station to the old town and we supported those who were striking. It was a two- or three-kilometer-long march and we saw only one person who was against the strike. All the others congratulated us, told us to continue, and took pictures. It was really gratifying. Within a year, a tremendous change has occurred both on the level of public awareness and for the working conditions of those on strike. (Eva)

However, this strong legitimization of civil society actors pertains mostly to unions and the groups they belong to. Unionists have therefore a narrower range of legitimization than moral voicing activists. In addition, unionists have developed a strong link between the role of Unia and the Socialist Party where Unia is the activist wing of the party. Both actors are complementary: Institutional as well as contentious forms of action are important in influencing political decision making.

There is certainly a link between the Socialist Party and Unia. If you want to change a law, you have to be linked to a political party. I think they protect Unia and especially active members. You know, they are trying to draft

legislation that protects the active members of Unia, and members of the Socialist Party will try to enforce this law. (Tiago)

I'm currently closer to the Socialist Party. I realized that the Christian Democratic Party and the Greens are too far to the right for me. However, I also sympathize with other left-wing parties. If I had to choose a party, I would choose an established party, probably the Socialist Party. (Eva)

The Socialist Party is a strong ally of the unions and this link is very important in influencing state actors. (Sarah)

### **“Intervention for More Workers’ Protection” and Intentionality**

Workers’ voicing activists share their perception of politics with moral voicing activists to a large extent. The most striking difference, however, is that their perception is more focused on workers’ protection and the groups they belong to. In addition, political parties, and the Socialist Party in particular, play a crucial and supportive role in the unionists’ political struggle. How does this kind of perception orient their action? And more specifically, toward what form of action are they oriented? Does their perception of politics allow us to understand the cognitive mechanism that orients them toward contentious action and toward workers’ rights activism in particular?

The perception of politics is not the only element of overlap, as unionists also have cognitive components in common with moral voicing activists. They have a *conflictual state relatedness* regarding state actors who do not take care of the particular common good the unionists are concerned with, that is, workers’ rights. In Nuno’s words: “The union opposes the government. Without the unions, the government would just not care about workers. Employers’ associations were obviously important interlocutors during strikes on construction sites. The government was reluctant and intervened in the process only later, and when they did, they sided with the employers. In the end, it was the strength of the workers’ strike that allowed us to succeed.” The other workers’ rights activists developed the same challenging state relatedness:



Of course, the unions have an impact on the political elite. The political elite is constrained to accept the unions. Unions are a thorn in the flesh for the political elite because they force them to represent the people. (André)

There's no written law about flextime. We have to enforce a law to register flextime. If we don't, all what matters is the goodwill of the employer. The union has to do something. If you have a boss without any goodwill like the one I had before, workers will be treated like animals. That's why we need laws. It's not easy trying to enter a factory when the boss says you can't. I participated in a demonstration where we wanted to protest on a construction site and it didn't go smoothly. (Tiago)

I'm ready to go as far as possible. I told this to the union. I'm desperate to win the struggles I'm involved in. I want companies to recognize their behavior and: change. My wildest idea is to have the labor law revised. We should protest for that. (Eva)

Workers' voicing activists have hence constructed a conflictual state relatedness. In addition, they have a *concern for politics*. As civil society actors need to intervene politically, the unionists as citizens should be politically vigilant and participate in protest politics to protect workers' rights. Again, this is similar to views expressed by moral voicing activists. Why, then, do workers' voicing activists opt for unionism instead of contentious politics more generally? The answer to this question is linked to their communitarian and issue-specific perception of society discussed in Chapter 4 and influencing their perception of politics. Nuno's opinion is exemplary: "To be vigilant and critical is a civic obligation for every worker. They must forge an opinion. I always said to my people that they have to go to elections. Even if I don't like anybody, I cast a blank vote. Voting is a civic obligation; it's an exercise of our right. And it's the same with being critical toward the government. If the government does a good job, all right, but if they do a bad job, you need to criticize and go into the streets to protect workers' rights!" The other unionists do not differ from Nuno's line of argument:

Citizens need to participate in political parties and in workers' organizations: It's not enough to vote. Of course, you must vote, but in order to know

how to vote one has to be somewhat interested. You can get the information through the radio, the TV, the Internet or the newspaper. But if you participate actively in a party or organization, you understand the stakes much more. (Joao)

Voting for the left is good, but it's insufficient. Paying your annual subscription to the union is good, but it's insufficient. Being a good, accountable, and conscientious worker is good, but it's insufficient. Being a good Catholic, going every Sunday to Mass, praying for the well-being of the world is good, but it's insufficient. I became aware that I needed to do more; it's insufficient to stay at home and watch the news. If you don't commit yourself actively, it's insufficient. (Eva)

Everyone should do what he or she can do. You have to participate in society. You have to work. A person who is unemployed gets excluded from the society and should be reintegrated as quickly as possible. It's important to take part in some kind of organization. We need to stay alert and actively defend our rights. (Tiago)

With a challenging state relatedness and a concern for politics, workers' voicing activists have developed the mental predisposition that allows them to be *oriented toward contentious action*. However, as their perception of politics is almost exclusively concerned with workers' protection, their intentionality is set toward unionism. Nuno relates: "I will always remain activist. I think this is very important. With the union I can contribute to my social ideal." Unionists are thus oriented toward contentious action in order to protect workers' rights and sometimes specifically their own rights.

If you do nothing, you let the things go. Things do not take care of themselves. If everyone participates, we can improve many things and that's really important for the workers of this country, even primordial I would say. One should not only participate if one has a problem. Demonstrating is an everyday engagement. (Joao)

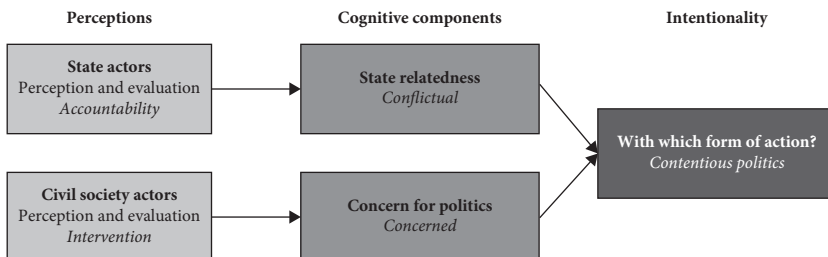
The words I use mean something to me. We are "comrades in arms" and I'm engaged in a "social struggle." Before, I could never imagine getting

involved in struggles. Today, however, I know that I will not let employers abuse me. (Eva)

The union means two things to me: On the one hand, it provides legal protection and there are opportunities for education so I have advantages as a member of the union. On the other, it's a collective fight to improve certain things. (Tiago)

As illustrated in Figure 5.4, unionists are oriented toward contentious action in a similar way as moral voicing activists are, and this action orientation is the result of a specific cognitive mechanism. In their view, state actors are accountable for the protection of workers' rights. Accordingly, they criticize state actors who do not embrace this task and who support the financial interests of employers' associations. Therefore, civil society actors, especially unions, have to intervene politically in order to advance workers' rights. Without them, workers would stand alone against powerful and abusive employers. As a consequence of their perception of politics, unionists have developed a conflictual relation with state actors and are concerned with politics. They do not comply with a state that ignores workers, and they feel it is their civic duty to be vigilant and participative in order to make the intervention of civil society actors possible. These two cognitive components, as well as their strong identification with their social group, orient them toward a specific form of contentious action with the aim of defending their community.

Even though unionists do not display a broad political vigilance on many issues and are not oriented toward each type of contentious action, they clearly constitute *strong citizens* when it comes to their concern for the political dimension, insofar as rights of workers are concerned.



**Figure 5.4** From the perception of politics of the unionists to their intentionality of action

## Different Perceptions, Different Intentionalities

This chapter has provided answers to two crucial questions regarding activists' understanding of politics. First, it showed *what activists mean by politics* and thereby enhanced the results provided in Chapter 3. We emphasize that activists committed in the same community share similar understandings of politics and that cognitive variations between activists committed in distinct communities exist. Second, it unveiled *cognitive mechanisms for action orientation*—in particular, the ways in which specific perceptions of politics enable activists to elaborate cognitive components that direct their intentionality. Figure 5.5 summarizes the understanding of politics of the activists' communities and shows that they do not understand state or civil society actors in a similar fashion.

Moral voicing activists perceive politics as a field of *intervention for accountability*. They want state actors to be accountable for common good and civil society actors to intervene in politics where this is not the case. For the issue they are committed to, moral voicing activists delegitimize state actors because they do not fulfill their role. This, however, does not lead to a general delegitimization of the state. By contrast, they are well aware that the state is a heterogeneous entity comprised of a complex set of actors with different interests and roles. Civil society actors are generally legitimized. They sensitize the population about existing injustices and push the state to intervene for change in every political field. Civil society actors are a vital link in

		State actors Perception and evaluation	
		Accountability	Containment
Civil society actors Perception and evaluation	Intervention	<b>Intervention for accountability</b> Moral voicing activists & Workers' voicing activists	<b>Intervention for containment</b> –
	Substitution	<b>Substitution for accountability</b> –	<b>Substitution for containment</b> Christian aid activists

**Figure 5.5** The different understandings of politics of the moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists

political decision making and are therefore essential in ideals of participative democracy.

Workers' rights activists perceive politics in a similar way. What differentiates them from moral voicing activists is the narrowness of their perception as well as their strong link to the Socialist Party. Affected by their communitarian perception of society, unionists' perception of politics concentrates on workers' rights and the cultural groups they belong to. In addition, they have constructed a strong link to the Socialist Party. Institutional politics plays an important role for unionist negotiations, and the Socialist Party is perceived as an indispensable ally. Nevertheless, state actors are accountable for protecting and strengthening workers' rights, and unions are meant to politically *intervene for accountability*.

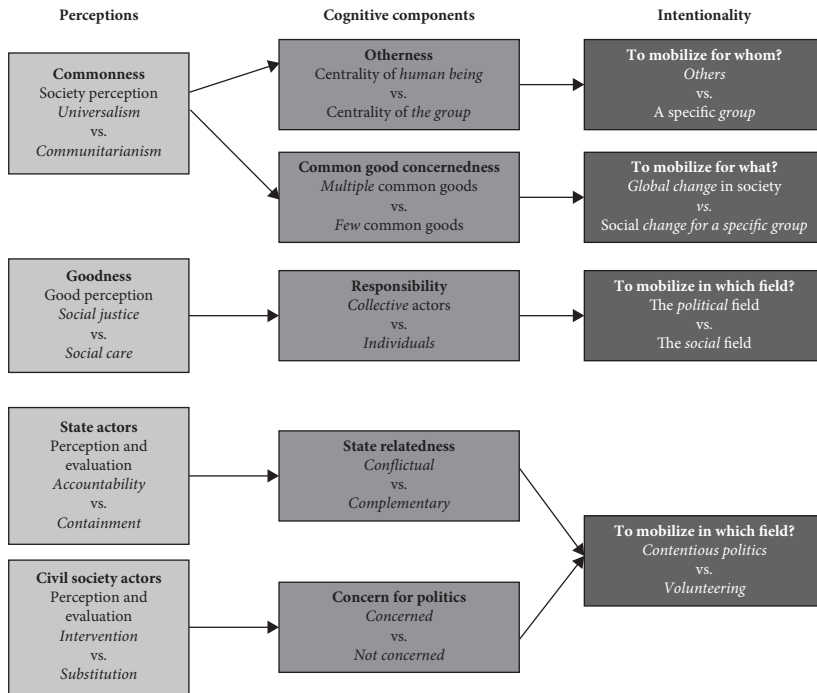
Christian aid volunteers elaborate a different interpretation of politics. They want to shrink state actors' responsibility for the common good by replacing them with civil society actors. While such a perception enables them to criticize state actors in domains where they intervene too much, they are proud of the effectiveness of the Swiss state and proceed to legitimize state actors in general. Nonetheless, civil society actors remain relevant, insofar as they reduce state intervention. Indeed, they have to take care of crucial social needs and problems in various social domains. In addition, this legitimization of civil society actors is not extended to protest organizations. In fact, Christian aid volunteers draw a clear line between social and political collective action. In their view, civil society actors, like Caritas, are there to manage social collective action, while political collective action should remain the task of political parties and officials. We have termed this understanding of politics a *substitution for containment*.

The second crucial question dealt with in this chapter was *how activists' understandings of politics orient them toward specific forms of action*. How do understandings produce cognitive components linking perception to intentionality? We differentiated between two cognitive mechanisms. The first tied understandings of state actors to action orientation. In fact, activists perceive the role of state actors in particular terms and evaluate them according to these standards. These understandings, accountability for moral voicing and union activists and containment for Christian aid activists, allowed them to establish a specific *state relatedness*: Those who criticized state actors for their lack of accountability for common good developed a conflictual relation to the state while those who legitimize state containment desire to complement state actors.

The second cognitive mechanism that results from their understanding of civil society actors is the way activists define their role as citizens in the political framework and influences whether they have a *concern for politics*. As we have shown, moral voicing activists and unionists believe they should intervene in politics, resulting in a strong concern for politics. In their narratives, they stress that individuals should be politically vigilant and active in participatory politics. Christian aid volunteers, however, want civil society actors to substitute for state actors and consequently, are not concerned with politics according to our definition. They operate on a representative idea of politics where political activity is restricted to traditional political participation. This evaluation is by no means negative on our behalf. Christian aid volunteers are interested in politics and participate in elections. Some are also members of a political party. Politics thus matters to them, but the way they perceive it differs completely from the perception of moral voicing activists and unionists.

Understandings of politics are central for all three types of activists to understand why they are oriented toward specific forms of action. Those who combine a conflictual relation to state actors with a participative ideal of citizenship seek to challenge state actors and are accordingly oriented toward contentious politics. This applies to moral voicing activists and unionists. Following our interpretation, it is the communitarian perception of society that ties unionists to defend only their own group rights. Christian aid volunteers have a complementary relation to state actors and are not concerned with politics. Therefore, they want to substitute their own services for state actors' responsibilities in the services area, which orients them toward volunteerism.

As summarized in Figure 5.6, chapters 4 and 5 argued that to understand activists' action orientation, we need to look at *broad cognitions as they delineate specific cognitive paths that set their intentionality*. While there are similar cognitive mechanisms linking perception of common good and politics to intentionality, the variation in the way activists perceive these two broad dimensions results in different intentionalities. Figure 5.6 displays why moral voicing activists, Christian aid volunteers, and unionists are oriented toward specific groups (for whom), for a specific issue (for what), within a given field (in which field), and for a particular form of action. These are the cognitive processes that allow activists to sustain their commitment. It summarizes three main claims of this book: first, which types of understandings are important; second, which types of cognitive links are constructed; and third, how this inner world sets an activist's intentionality.



**Figure 5.6** Summary of the cognitive mechanisms that bind the activists' perception of common good and politics to their intentionality

Activists' understanding of common good is a crucial element of their mental world. Their perception of society allows them to make two cognitive linkages: It configures how they perceive other groups within their society (otherness) and accordingly, whom they should mobilize for. It also influences their level of concern for the common good and thereby directs their intention on the object of mobilization. Next, their perception of goodness enables them to attribute responsibility, which provides them with the intention related to the field they should mobilize in. Finally, their perception of politics helps them develop different meanings for the two cognitive components—state relatedness (or relation to the state) and concern for politics—which in turn orients them toward specific forms of action.

More generally chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that *Gamson's action frames* are insufficient when it comes to understanding how an individual can be oriented toward collective action and how these commitments are sustained. This does not mean, of course, that these three dimensions are not important.

Injustice, identity, and agency frames appeared consistently in accounts and, therefore, certainly play an important role in understanding how individuals decide on their intentions. In Chapter 4, we saw that social problems are framed either as injustices or as care problems. Gamson was therefore correct in highlighting that for contentious politics, issues are constructed in terms of injustice. Moral voicing activists, as well as unionists, perceive social problems as injustices. However, narratives by Christian aid volunteers demonstrate that injustice is not the only way to frame a social problem. Instead, a social care frame can also constitute a mobilizing factor.

Further, activists' understandings of politics analyzed in this chapter clearly reveal the presence of agency and identity frames for all activists. Agency frames exist in activists' narratives, through the development of a sense of individual efficacy. All believe that their contribution is of some value, either by supporting collective action financially (passive members), or through their own active contribution (active members). In other words, they all have developed an understanding of the importance of their contribution toward social change or their offer to help and support people in need. This is most visible in their concern for politics, when activists stress the importance of participating in either volunteer or contentious action. However, this feeling of individual efficiency is mediated through a collective sense of empowerment: Numbers count. It is only through their respective groups that they believe individuals can change the world. Collective and individual efficiency are hence important in understanding how activists sustain commitments and how their intentionality is set. Yet, this is only a part of the cognitive mechanism guiding their understanding of politics toward specific forms of collective action.

The same is true for their identity frame. Returning to the narratives presented in this chapter enabled us to see how activists differentiated between their social group and others. They frequently mentioned how they identify with the group or the community they mobilize for and delimitation occurred naturally. For moral voicing activists and unionists, state actors constitute the opposition. The state is also a significant other for Christian aid volunteers. However, the way in which state actors are perceived differs. Activists' identity frames are thus made up through their understandings of common good and politics. These perceptions define personal identities and delimit boundaries between social actors. Injustice, agency, and identity frames are thus crucial cognitive dimensions for understanding activists' action orientation and how commitment is sustained. However, activists'



minds are cognitively more complex than social movement scholars have acknowledged so far. Primarily, we saw how *their understandings of common good and politics*, together with their complex cognitive linkages to specific mental components, *orients their action toward specific collective endeavors*.

The findings of chapters 4 and 5 have two additional implications. First, they demonstrate the variation of activists' understandings empirically. We can therefore establish that a *plurality of activists' mindsets* exists across different activist communities. We also showed that shared understandings exist within the moral voicing community as well as between active and passive members involved in the same commitment site. Theoretically, this implies that ongoing interactions in these communities lead to the development of shared understandings, which then enables activists to perform collective action. We return to this theoretical implication in Chapter 6.

Further, our findings concerning the level of concern for common good and politics also has implications for political citizenship. As we see in Figure 5.7, *not all activists are cognitively strong citizens*. In fact, different types of activists have various ideas of their role as citizens. It therefore appears that every community constructs different democratic cultures, disseminates these ideas through their actions in society, and contributes in a specific way to the democratic life in a country. To borrow the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Not all activists "drive a spoke into the wheel" in order to keep society rolling, some also keep "bandaging the wound of victims." Different understandings lead to different action orientations.

Moral voicing activists are concerned by both common good and politics. They are strong citizens in cognitive terms and are therefore placed in the

		Perception of Politics	
		Concerned	Not Concerned
Perception of Common Good	Concerned	<b>Strong citizens</b> Moral voicing activists	<b>Social citizens</b> Christian aid activists
	Not Concerned	<b>Resistant citizens</b> Workers' voicing activists	<b>Weak citizens</b> -

**Figure 5.7** Are all activists strong citizens?

upper left square in Figure 5.7. Christian aid volunteers are, as we label them, social citizens. They have a concern for common good but not for politics, which prevents them from engaging in contentious action as moral voicing activists or unionists do. While unionists are concerned with politics, they are not concerned with common good. They are resistant citizens, driven by their intention to protect their own group rights. Finally, in the lower right corner, we find what we would call weak citizens. For individuals without a concern for either common good or politics it will be difficult to participate in collective action: either volunteering or protest action. This last category is not a result of our empirical analysis but a conclusion we draw on the basis of the analysis of activists' narratives studied here. If weak citizens really exist, the intentions they develop would require further research.

Chapters 4 and 5 provided us with a lot of answers but, as is always the case, they opened other questions. Why does an activist's mind differ from one commitment site to another? How do we explain these variations? And what about individuals engaged in multiple communities? How do cross-pressured interactions in plural communities impact activists' understanding of common good and politics? All these questions direct us toward a relational explanation. We therefore turn to the meaning of social networks in Chapter 6.

## 6

# Networks as “Islands of Meanings”

Transactions, interactions, social ties, and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life.

Charles Tilly

The activist’s mind is nourished by specific worldviews. It departs from the mindset of the wider population, as we saw in Chapter 3. It also appears as distinct from one commitment site to another. As underlined in chapters 4 and 5, moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers’ voicing activists do not perceive common good and politics through the same lens. Activists’ cognitive maps are dissimilar. This is the central finding derived from previous analyses. The second finding is that activists who evolve in the same commitment site rely on a synchronized cognitive map. Their understandings of common good and politics overlap. However, the views they share do not mean that their cognitive maps are homogenous; they are simply synchronized. Individuals mobilized in the same commitment community do not form a homogenous group; idiosyncrasies exist. As the previous accounts have shown, activists often express themselves with different words to emphasize their relation to common good and politics. Individuals, whether they are activists or not, are engaged in multiple interactions and in different life spheres. These webs of interactions shape their minds and make an individual a complex person with a multifaceted mindset. Therefore, we did not find homogeneity, but rather activists who are “looking in the same direction.”

The aim of this chapter is to explain these findings. Why do activists’ minds differ from one commitment site to another? And why is an activist’s mind synchronized with the minds of people in the same commitment community? In other terms, how could we explain variations between communities and synchronization within the same commitment site? In this chapter, we move from a primary description highlighting activists’ understandings of common good and politics to the explanation of why such worldviews are

present in their minds. To borrow from Bunge (2004), we move from “how it is” to “how does it work” as we now look for explanatory mechanisms.

In Chapter 2, we saw with Searle (2004) that the qualitative experience of the world feeds human minds and sets human intentionality. However, Searle remains silent as to what mechanisms allow for the translation of qualitative experience into human minds. We know from psychologists and sociologists that we experience the world through our interactions with others. For psychologists, child development is possible due to the child’s interactions with his or her close surroundings. As Trevarthen (1979) shows, in the very first moments of a baby’s life, interactions with parents instantly shape the child’s mind and ensure his or her first intersubjective experiences. Sociologists who have emphasized the central role of interactions on the mind-shaping process have also underlined this view (e.g., Blumer 1969; Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1967; Mead 1934; Schutz 1932). Both psychologists and sociologists agree that we experience the world through our interactions. “Transactions, interactions, social ties, and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life,” as Tilly (2004) reminds us. Throughout his work, Tilly clearly states that “if social construction occurs, it happens socially, not in the isolated recess of individual minds” (Tilly 2005, 59–60). Individuals experience fluxes of interaction with others and these interactions allow them to define who they are, to adjust the boundaries they occupy, to modify understandings by selecting and transforming available scripts, and to invent new forms of being, feeling, seeing, and acting (Tilly 2004, 2005). Hence, our explanation of the differences between activists’ minds from one commitment site to another, and why minds are synchronized for participants in the same commitment community must be understood in terms of *relationality*. Communicational interactions shape, and reshape, an activist’s mind. Those interactions take place within each commitment context and feed the activist’s cognitive toolkit with specific cultural and cognitive elements. Networks can be viewed as “islands of meanings,” as White (1992) reminds us, and those islands of meanings are different from one commitment site to another. But how do interactions actually shape an activist’s mind?

Activists committed in moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers’ voicing evolve in different commitment communities. In fact, they evolve in a specific cognitive world as stories, narratives, identities, and worldviews circulate in each community. Communities therefore rely on distinguishable cultural practices, and these constitute meaningful universes in which activists evolve and interact. Participants interact within a social site laden

with specific cultural scripts and progressively adopt them through practice leading to a synchronization of their views with those of fellow activists. However, synchronization is a dynamic and negotiated process mobilizing the actor's agency. First, it is a dynamic process whereby multiple and often contradictory scripts circulate within a commitment community. Moreover, scripts transform over time through interactions and external events. Consequently, individuals need to make sense for themselves of multiple and transforming meanings, and their agency is at stake. Second, individuals do not practice cultural scripts in only one social site but evolve in multiple social sites laden with cultural scripts. As discussed in previous work, activists evolve in various life spheres (e.g., family, work, friends, leisure, politics), and conversational interactions that take place in each of these life spheres enrich their personal toolkit with specific meanings (Passy 1998a; Passy and Giugni 2000). Therefore, they are exposed to diverse and contradictory meanings. They must negotiate these meanings to construct their own. This process relies on creativity. The consequence of this dynamic and negotiated process is that the synchronization of the activists' cognitive map can be neither homogenous nor stable over time.

In Chapter 2, we noted that social movement scholars attempt to specify what networks really mean and how they matter in social processes, following Wellman's advice to move "from metaphor to substance" (Diani and McAdam 2003). Two heuristic moves were undertaken: a move from "networks to relational mechanisms," and a move from "structure to meanings." In previous work, we have endorsed those heuristic concerns in the study of individual participation in contentious politics (Passy 1998a, 2001, 2003). First, we sought to disentangle the relational mechanisms at work in an activist's participation process. As social movement scholars, we know that social networks matter, but the question is how do they matter? Second, we examined not only the structural and instrumental impact of networks but also their constructivist effects in shaping the activists' meanings, the effect of networks as "islands of meanings."

The empirical findings from our study of activists committed in the Bern Declaration and WWF demonstrated that before deciding to take part in contentious activities, they experience three distinct social mechanisms (Passy 1998a, 2001, 2003). First, a *socialization mechanism* is at work. Once individuals evolve in networks close to a specific political issue, they enter communicational interactions that allow them to redefine their worldviews. More precisely, those interactions build and strengthen an individual's

identity, and create and solidify the person’s consciousness regarding a given political issue. Conversational interactions hence create or reinforce initial dispositions to participate by developing and reinforcing specific meanings. This is the first constructivist mechanism. Second, networks influence an individual’s decision to become a participant in contentious activities by giving someone who is sensitive to a political issue a concrete opportunity to participate. This *mediating and structural mechanism* ensures that potential activists can convert their initial dispositions toward participation in action.<sup>1</sup> Finally, networks intervene at the very end of the decision process by a *decision-shaping mechanism*. Before activists actualize their potential for participating in a specific contention, they make a series of decisions. They assess various parameters pertaining to the protest itself (e.g., the risks involved, the chances of success, the likelihood of government reform in the absence of protest), and their willingness to take action (e.g., the utility of their involvement in bringing about social change, assessment of their biographical availabilities<sup>2</sup>). Contrary to what rational choice theorists think, individuals do not make isolated and autonomous decisions. Conversational interactions taking place in an individual’s formal and informal networks affect the assessment of their preferences, which, *in fine*, enable the individual to act. This last relational mechanism, which enables potential activists to convert their readiness to take action into effective participation, is also a constructivist mechanism that stresses how networks form “islands of meanings.”

Three mechanisms are singled out amid this work: Socialization, mediating, and decision-shaping mechanisms. Among those three relational mechanisms that impact contentious participation and the intensity of activists’ commitment, two are of a constructivist nature: socialization, and decision-shaping mechanisms. This means that an “inter-animation of talk and ties” is at work (Mische and White 1998, 696), shaping minds accordingly. Conversational interactions occur in the process of joining contention, and these happen *before* a person participates in a protest organization. In this book, the activists studied are already committed and are in the process of *sustaining* their participation. We will examine how communicational interactions enable them to sustain their commitment through synchronization of meanings. Of course, this process is not the only one allowing them to

<sup>1</sup> Activism is a “non-volitional action” (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Without an opportunity to act, the initial dispositions of an individual remain latent or unrealized.

<sup>2</sup> For the concept of biographical availability, see McAdam (1988) and Beyerlein and Bergstrand (2013).

sustain their commitment; we will discuss others in our final chapter. But the synchronization of minds is obviously an important element where networks as “islands of meanings” play a decisive role. But how do these networks come to matter? Through which relational mechanisms do networks nourish an activist’s mind?

In this chapter, we seek to *trace the relational mechanisms at stake* that enable the synchronization of activists’ understandings. Without a synchronization of views on the social and political environment, joint action is improbable. Relational processes shape individuals’ minds to perform actions and to maintain their commitment. However, many relational mechanisms can potentially shape the activist’s mind as he or she has multiple opportunities for conversational interactions in the commitment community. Our purpose is not simply to emphasize that communicational interactions shape the activist’s cognitive map but rather to highlight which relational mechanisms actually feed their minds. Do some communicational interactions impact the activist’s mind more than others? Three specific mechanisms pertaining to three distinct relational situations in which activists evolve will structure our analysis.

First, most activists are passive members who interact with fellow activists only indirectly, mainly through the discursive mediums of the organization (newspapers or newsletters). Regarding these activists, we ask whether mediated communicational interactions are sufficient in the synchronization of understandings, or if they are not. Do *mediated or direct* (face-to-face) relations play a similar role in shaping the activist’s mind? Second, many active members engage in multiple communicational interactions within their commitment community. Some of them are members of various groups and have an interpersonal network tied to this community, while others interact only in one communicational sphere: the organization they were interviewed for. We examine whether a multiplicity of spheres of interaction is essential to nourish an activist’s cognitive map, or if exchanges that take place in one sphere are sufficient to synchronize an activist’s understandings. In other terms, we investigate whether *redundancy and abundance of interactions* are essential in shaping an activist’s mind, or if they are not. Finally, several activists are cross-committed in several commitment sites and therefore enjoy cross-pressure interactions. We explore the impact of such interaction on the activist’s mind. Specifically, we want to explain why cross-commitment produces synchronized understandings with one commitment community in certain situations, and constructs a blended mind that reflects the different

communities in which activists are committed in other instances. We therefore inquire into why *cross-pressure interactions* impact differently activists’ understandings of common good and politics, and highlight what relational mechanism is at work in the process.

The study of relational mechanisms is what concerns us here. The survey data will enable us to examine the importance and range of activists’ embeddedness in formal and interpersonal networks which ensure potential communicational interactions in a given commitment community. By contrast, qualitative data will show us the relational mechanisms that shape an activist’s cognitive map and allow us to disentangle processes and mechanisms at work. In this chapter, we rely mainly *on cases*—the activists interviewed—to emphasize the relational mechanisms. Here, the rationale is not statistical (how many activists are in such type of relational configurations) but rather to emphasize the social mechanisms at work, and qualitative data are suitable for this end. The cases we make use of to trace relational mechanisms are those of activists committed in Solidarity across Borders (SAB), Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia whose narratives were previously analyzed in chapters 4 and 5.<sup>3</sup>

### **Embeddedness and Conversational Interactions**

Many relational paths can shape an activist’s mind. Within a commitment community, participants enjoy various opportunities to engage in communicational interactions. They can also evolve in interpersonal networks tied to their commitment community: Friends, relatives, or acquaintances offer further conversational interaction opportunities. Many relational mechanisms can potentially enable activists to synchronize their understandings of common good and politics. We must first examine the magnitude of opportunities for communicational interaction activists enjoy. In other terms, we need to understand their relational reality in order to map their conversational opportunities. Second, we must investigate whether activists are really engaged in communicational interactions. Criticism against studies on social networks has pointed out that embeddedness in networks does not mean that activists necessarily engage in communicational interactions. Indeed, most of the research on social networks, including our own work (Passy

<sup>3</sup> Our body of cases is hence composed of twenty-four activists.



2001, 2003; Passy and Monsch 2014), assumes that participants who take part in social networks are engaged in concrete interactions. But are they really in communicational interactions? Do they discuss, exchange ideas, and practice cultural scripts available in their commitment sites? Before examining the relational mechanisms that can shape an activist's mind, let us first examine the activist's relational reality and then assess whether they are engaged in real conversations.

### Relational Reality

Beyond their participation in Solidarity across Borders (SAB), Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia, we would like to know whether activists benefit from *other relational spheres* that can shape their minds within their respective commitment community. To identify activists' relational reality, we use the survey data that guarantees statistical representativeness.

First, let us consider embeddedness in *formal networks*. The matter here is to know whether activists enjoy potential conversational interactions in organizational networks. Along with their commitment in SAB, STP, Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia, do activists participate in other organizations of their respective commitment community? As shown in Table 6.1, the answer to this question is clearly yes: Commitment in formal networks is fairly important and many participants have a plural commitment within the same community. One out of two moral voicing activists participates in other organizations linked to post-industrial contention. Around 40 percent of unionists are committed in other workers' voicing groups, and a third of Christian aid participants are involved in other volunteering associations. Hence, between 30 to 60 percent of the activists are engaged in multiple formal spheres where they have communicational interactions with other activists. We also show that SAB and Unia active members benefit from a wider embeddedness in formal networks than do passive activists. By contrast, for Greenpeace activists and Caritas volunteers, the passive members are the ones who are slightly more embedded in formal networks in their respective commitment community. Differences between active and passive members aside, the statistics show that a large proportion of moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists experience other opportunities to engage in communicational interactions within their commitment site.

**Table 6.1** Current Embeddedness in Formal and Interpersonal Networks of Moral Voicing, Christian Aid, and Workers' Voicing Activists

Embedded in	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists
	SAB	STP	GP	Caritas	Unia
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Formal networks</b>					
Member of another organization of their respective commitment community	61	59	48	29	43
(n)	878	434	736	717	827
Commitment intensity (Phi)	.13**	—	-.14***	-.13**	.24***
<b>Interpersonal network</b>					
No ties	1	10	3	5	3
Weak ties partly or highly sensitized	2	1	1	4	18
Strong ties partly or highly sensitized	97	88	96	91	80
(n)	100%	99%	100%	100%	101%
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	649	375	659	568	717
	ns	—	ns	ns	ns
<b>Formal and informal networks</b>					
No networks	1	5	2	6	3
Only formal networks	1	6	2	1	2
Only interpersonal networks	21	31	47	60	51
Formal and informal networks	78	58	50	33	44
(n)	101%	100%	101%	100%	100%
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	651	379	663	579	735
	ns	—	-.16**	-.14*	.24***

Note: SAB= Solidarity across Borders, STP= Society for Threatened Peoples, GP= Greenpeace.

We measured activists' embeddedness in formal networks with the following questions: "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; poverty; workers' rights]?" For each type of network (close friends; acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers; and relatives) we asked how sensitive people were to the social problem using a five points ordinary scale. Cramer's V compared active members with passive ones; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

While embeddedness in formal networks is important for a large number of activists, opportunities for conversational interactions about social problems occur in their *interpersonal networks* also. As shown in Table 6.1, only 1 to 10 percent of activists do not have ties among their friends, acquaintances, and family members that can bind them to their commitment site. In other words, about 90 percent of the activists committed to moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing declare that their interpersonal network is either sensitized to the social problems their respective commitment community addresses or are committed to this community as well. This finding reveals that almost all activists have an interpersonal environment where they can discuss the issues of their commitment community. Moreover, as Table 6.1 emphasizes, liked-minded people constitute *strong ties*, being either close friends or family members. In their private sphere, activists therefore have relations with whom they can discuss strategies, issues, and views. Those exchanges are genuine and probably frequent, as they take place with close friends or relatives. Another important finding that emerges from the statistics is that passive members benefit from a similar relational context. Despite never engaging in an active process of commitment, their interpersonal network is, like that of active members, full of people close to their commitment community. Hence, passive members benefit from large opportunities to have conversational interactions.

Moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists benefit from numerous opportunities to engage in communicational interactions in their respective commitment site, either in formal or interpersonal networks. Actually, the number of opportunities for communicational interactions is impressive. As highlighted at the bottom of Table 6.1, between 1 and 6 percent of activists have no other spheres of interaction than the organization they were interviewed for. This percentage is perhaps slightly overestimated;<sup>4</sup> however, these findings are not exceptional. We found similar results in previous studies (Passy 1998b, 2001, 2003). Other scholars have obtained results that point in the same direction, specifically for forms of activism that are formalized and as well established as the ones studied here (see Diani 2011 for an overview on the topic studies). Moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers'

<sup>4</sup> The overestimation is due to the interpersonal network indicators which do not distinguish between individuals who are sensitized to the aims of the commitment community and individuals who are actually committed to this community.

voicing activists are largely embedded in networks close to their commitment site. But do they really exchange ideas and opinions with their fellow activists, friends, and relatives?

### Real Interaction?

*Active members* who organize public campaigns and rallies are part of the committee or working groups and are committed to various activities of their organization; obviously they interact within the organization. They enjoy an ongoing communicational process with peers based on the exchange of ideas and the elaboration of collective action frames. These ongoing conversations in their respective organization shape their cognitive maps. By practicing the scripts available, their minds are nourished by new cognitive elements. As we see in Table 6.2, all active members interviewed enjoy frequent face-to-face interactions with other active members of SAB, Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia, respectively. In their narratives, all emphasized how important those conversations are. Christine, who is actively committed in Caritas, clearly underlines those influences on her mind: “You know at first I just wanted to get involved as a volunteer. My children left home and I wanted to invest my time in a cause. When I joined Caritas, I didn’t really think why I would commit to helping people in need. Once I was committed, I started to read Caritas’s reports and the newspaper, but I was also in contact with other volunteers. I was first active in the group responsible for the distribution of clothing, then I joined the Caritas committee. Thanks to those contacts and exchanges, I realized what my commitment means. Helping others—people in distress—became central.” Lisa, a pro-migrant volunteer, also became aware of many issues pertaining to migrants’ rights through conversations with her fellow activists: “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: We exchange a lot. 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.”

Within their respective organizations, active members benefit from many opportunities to engage in communicational interactions: committees, think

**Table 6.2** Current Communicational Interactions of Active and Passive Members in Their Respective Commitment Communities

Activists	Committed to	Communicational interactions		
		In their respective organization	In their interpersonal network	
			Friends	Relatives
<b>Active members</b>				
<i>Adriana</i>	SAB	X	X	X
<i>Lisa</i>	SAB	X	X	X
<i>Simone</i>	SAB	X	X	X
<i>Nathan</i>	Greenpeace	X	X	—
<i>Pierrette</i>	Greenpeace	X	X	—
<i>Margot</i>	Greenpeace	X	X	X
<i>Joao</i>	Unia	X	X	—
<i>Nuno</i>	Unia	X	X	—
<i>Eva</i>	Unia	X	—	—
<i>Tiago</i>	Unia	X	—	—
<i>Mathieu</i>	Caritas	X	X	X
<i>Elisabeth</i>	Caritas	X	X	X
<i>Christine</i>	Caritas	X	—	—
<b>Passive members</b>				
<i>Colette</i>	SAB	x	X	X
<i>Wilhelm</i>	SAB	x	X	X
<i>Yan</i>	SAB	x	X	X
<i>Evelyne</i>	Greenpeace	x	X	—
<i>Maria</i>	Greenpeace	x	X	X
<i>Yves</i>	Greenpeace	x	—	—
<i>André</i>	Unia	x	X	X
<i>Sarah</i>	Unia	x	X	—
<i>Edwige</i>	Caritas	x	X	X
<i>Emmanuelle</i>	Caritas	x	X	—
<i>Jérémie</i>	Caritas	x	X	X

Note: SAB= Solidarity across Borders.

“X” (bold capital letter) highlights *direct communicational interactions* (or face-to-face interactions), and “x” (lowercase letter) *mediated communicational interactions* (via the organization newspapers/newsletters).

tanks, training groups, working groups, and so forth. Margot, a Greenpeace activist, explains how this communicational dynamic works: “In Greenpeace, we discuss things a lot and we educate ourselves too. A few years ago, I visited a nuclear power plant with one of our members, Juan, who is a physicist. We were a bunch of people from Greenpeace who wanted to know more about nuclear plants and talk with the people working in them. After that, we met with Juan regularly: We exchanged on environmental matters, among other issues. I learn a lot from him, but also from exchanges I have with the professional staff. We always have long and deep exchanges within the small group of activists in charge of ‘direct actions.’”<sup>5</sup> To become part of these groups, we first follow an extensive training. Then, we prepare for each action with two or three prior meetings. The day before a direct action, we spend the evening and the night together to mentally prepare ourselves to committing illegal, and sometimes risky, actions. We always have a debrief after the action. Finally, being in charge of environmental education at schools, I am also part of a working group where we often exchange. We discuss ways in which to present social problems to pupils, to inform them about our action, about who we are, etc. So, obviously we exchange a lot among activists [laugh].”

Exchanges with peers also reinforce, or reorganize, existing cognitive components. We find many evidences of this, as Nuno, an active member of Unia, stated: “Once you’re involved, obviously you have a lot of exchanges: I know a lot of unionists in Unia, but in other unions too. We constantly talk with each other. Those people are very important to me because I learn a lot by discussing issues with them. It’s also through such exchanges that my working-class consciousness is strengthened. I have always been aware of belonging to the working class, even before joining Unia. However, this consciousness developed and deepened thanks to my union friends and to our exchanges.”

For active members, communications within their organization constitute an important sphere of interaction. As shown in Table 6.2, all active members interviewed are involved in such discursive exchanges. This table also demonstrates that most active members are also engaged in face-to-face interactions in their interpersonal network, either with friends or relatives. Conversations about issues, strategies, commitment, understanding, and the perception of others related to their commitment community occur in this

<sup>5</sup> “Direct actions” are disruptive and illegal actions, as climbing on nuclear plants buildings, blocking trains carrying nuclear waste, clambering out of oil platforms, etc.

network too. For many active members, a participant met they meet during joint action often becomes a close friend, and discussions about issues that relate to their activism occur outside sites of formal activism. Nuno told us how important unionists are in his life. During the interview, he said: “Many of them are close friends: They mean a lot for me. And, of course, when we meet we talk about Unia, Unionism, politics, and many other related issues. I enjoy those exchanges!” Simone, a pro-migrant activist, describes a similar situation: “You know, I made real friends in this group. Now, those people are part of my closest friends, and my husband knows my fellow activists very well. We meet frequently and of course, we talk about many things but also about our commitment [laugh].” Mathieu, a member of Caritas, tells a similar story: “I’ve a very diverse network of friends, but you know, my closest friends are those I have made through Caritas. Those are old friends, and we share a lot together. We talk about everything: Our commitment in Caritas, social issues, but also about our lives. When I am facing a problem in my life or need advice, I call them straightaway.”

The interpersonal network of active participants is replete with friends who are committed in the same commitment site, but with relatives too. Mathieu also explains that “I met my second wife in Caritas, and share everything with her. It’s fabulous! We have the same values and share a strong commitment in Caritas. Of course, sometimes we disagree on issues and, because both of us have strong personalities, we may yell at each other [laugh]. But basically we see the world in the same way. Her respect for others never fails to fascinate me. I really admire her. I can debate for hours on end with her.” Simone shares a similar account: “My husband understands my commitment to migrants’ rights. He was committed to refugees and human rights and together we also opposed nuclear energy. Those issues are part of our life, and we have had many discussions about migration, social justice, ecology, etc. My brother-in-law is highly active too: He was a key figure in human rights in Geneva for many years. I still debate a lot with my husband and brother-in-law, and also love to talk with my son. He is a marine biologist, and in a couple of days, will embark on a ship belonging to several ecologist associations to investigate plankton levels in oceans. I love talking about environmental protection and global warming with him, asking him how we could redress these problems. Our family dinners are exciting events!”

Active members engage in communicational interactions with their commitment community, both within the organization for which they commit and also often within their interpersonal network. But what about *passive*

*members* who do not benefit from direct interactions within the organization for which they mobilize? As indicated with the survey data, most of them are sensitized and evolve in an interpersonal network or, are often engaged in their commitment community. But do they really interact with those friends and relatives on issues pertaining to their commitment? In Table 6.2, we see that the passive members interviewed often have direct communicational interactions in their private sphere, with friends and for some with family members. They exchange ideas and practice cultural scripts available in their respective 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. Another couple of friends, Manon and Fernando, help people in developing countries, and for several years now, have been committed to improving children’s education in Colombia. We all share the same ideals. They are really good friends, and we debate about politics and our commitments on a regular basis. Oh, but not all my friends are sensitive to these issues [laugh]! However, social justice is a concern to some of them, and a few are politically committed. My son worked at the International Red Cross to protect refugees. Each time he returned from his missions, we talked about his experiences and his frustration, because of the thousands of refugees he saw, but whom he could do little for in the end. Nowadays, Tristan does not work for the Red Cross anymore, but those issues still concern him, and I know that he supports some organizations. Tristan was always sensitive to my commitment; maybe I influenced him—who knows [laugh].”

Those face-to-face interactions are not specific to moral voicing activists. Indeed, workers’ voicing activists are also engaged in conversational interactions in their interpersonal networks. When they have friends or relatives who are sensitive or committed in the commitment site, they discuss their own commitments with them. For example, André tells us: “I met my wife at my workplace. She was unionized before I was. She played an important role in bringing me closer to the union. My father played an important role too. He was never an active member in unions but regularly followed meetings at his workplace. When he came back home, he always spoke about the meetings and



discussions. He always told me that if we aren't aware of our rights, employers would take advantage of our ignorance. I started to be interested in those issues and my father incited me to join Unia. Today, I still talk a lot with my father, my wife, and some unionized co-workers. We question our work situations, company outsourcing, and work agreements in our branch."

Passive members interact within their interpersonal network in Caritas too. Emmanuelle has friends who are passive and active members in Christian aid associations. She discusses their commitment and the situation of poor people they are committed to: "Sometimes, we think about the Caritas newspaper, or some articles we have read in it." For about a year, she has given a helping hand to friends who run a market and sell products to provide money to a small Christian aid group: "It's fun. I go there once a month. We have a nice time together. We discuss our lives, our families, grandchildren, but also our commitment. I like those moments." Many other accounts show that passive members are engaged in conversational interaction within their interpersonal networks.

As we see in Table 6.2, when passive members have friends who are sensitive to the social issues related to their commitment site, real exchange occurs. At this point, a new question arises: Given the face-to-face interactions in their interpersonal network, why do passive members remain passive? Three elements can help explain their low level of commitment. First, they may have no biographical availability to engage actively in a commitment community. However, statistical findings raise some doubts about this hypothesis.<sup>6</sup> Second, as we have underscored in previous work (Passy 1998a, 1998b, 2003), once an activist recruits members, the latter tend to join into activities with a high intensity of commitment. In a similar vein, once an active member recruits them, members commit with intensity. Here again, our statistics show that passive members of moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists are offered fewer opportunities to commit through such ties (Passy and Monsch 2014). Finally, in our previous work, we also found that perceived personal efficacy to bring about social change (the feeling that commitment successfully translates into social change) increases an activist's level of commitment. The analysis of survey data also shows that passive members are less confident than active members when it comes to

<sup>6</sup> Three indicators weaken the argument of biographical availability. First, only in Greenpeace do active members have fewer children at home than passive members (Pearson's  $r = -.24^{***}$ ). Second, only for Caritas do we find that fewer active members are employed than passive members ( $-.17^{**}$ ). Third, only in Greenpeace are there fewer unmarried active members than passive members ( $-.25^{***}$ ). Active and passive members in the other organizations do not differ significantly for these indicators.

social change. Like active members, they trust the organization they mobilized for to bring such social changes about (see Chapter 3), but they are less confident that their personal commitment will contribute toward change. These three factors help us make sense of why passive members, who evolve in dense conversational interactions, remain passive activists.

A huge proportion of activists, active as well as passive members, are embedded in social networks, and specifically interpersonal ones (around 90 percent of them). This level of embeddedness in networks allows them to practice the scripts available in their commitment community and this could enable a synchronization of their views on common good and politics. Furthermore, active members enjoy various opportunities to engage in communicational interactions within their respective commitment communities through formal and interpersonal networks. Finally, we saw that activists are concretely engaged in conversational interactions. They discuss, debate, and exchange with their fellow activists either in the organization for which they mobilize or within their interpersonal networks, or both. Many relational paths can therefore shape and synchronize their minds. We must now investigate the relational mechanisms that actually enable this synchronization.

### Mediated Interactions

A relational path that bears the potential to shape the activist's mind involves mediated interactions. Such interactions do not engage activists in direct, or face-to-face, communication, but are indirect, such as the newspapers and newsletters published by the organization. The organization's written production conveys meanings, stories, and collective worldviews that can play an important role in shaping the activist's mind. But does such material lead to synchronized views with other activists? *Passive members* are the participants generally involved with mediated interactions. As they simply support the commitment effort through money donation, they do not engage in direct interactions with active members of the organization (as shown above in Table 6.2). However, as previously discussed, passive members have an interpersonal network of friends and relatives who are sensitized or committed (see Table 6.1 and Table 6.2). The question is now whether mediated communicational interactions are able to shape the activist's mind, or if only direct interactions that take place in their interpersonal network are able to

synchronize their views with the views of other activists on common good and politics.

To address this issue, we must first examine whether activists read the discursive outcomes produced by the organization they mobilize for. Through this material (newspapers, pamphlets, or newsletters), passive members are engaged in mediated interactions with their respective commitment communities, indirectly practicing cultural scripts that circulate within it. Statistics shown in Table 6.3 reveal that almost all passive members interact with their community through the written material.<sup>7</sup> About 80 percent of them regularly read the material produced by the organization they support. Like active members, passive supporters read the material of their respective organizations.<sup>8</sup> Narrative analysis reveals similar findings. Passive members are therefore in contact with the stories, narratives, and worldviews of the organization they supply financial support for and indirectly practice the cultural scripts made available in their commitment site. But do those mediated interactions shape their minds? As a large proportion of passive members have discussions within their interpersonal network about issues important to them (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2), the role of mediated interactions in shaping activists' cognitive maps remains open. The relational mechanisms shaping minds should be untangled: Are they mediated interactions or direct interactions in their interpersonal networks? To sort out which relational mechanism is at work, we rely on our cases.

As shown in Table 6.4, all passive members interviewed engage in both mediated and direct interactions in their respective communities, except in one instance: Yves. This Greenpeace supporter has no tie with his contentious community, other than the ecological organization. He does not support other moral voicing groups, and has no friend, acquaintance, or relative

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have comparative indicators. At the end of our survey, we provided a free space where each organization could ask questions useful for their mobilizing work. All of them used this space to assess the consumption of their discursive material. However, questions were formulated differently among organizations. SAB and Caritas asked their members whether they *receive* their newspaper without asking if they read it. Greenpeace and Unia asked their members whether they *read* their newspaper, webpage, and newsletter. Finally, STP asked their activists whether they *receive and read* their information sources (newspaper, webpage, and newsletter). By comparing receiving and reading practices among activists, and specifically with the help of STP statistics, we are assured that our distinct indicators are still valid for all activists compared in this analysis. First, as shown in Table 6.3, the percentage of STP activists receiving the discursive production is similar to the percentage we found for SAB and Caritas (more than 80 percent). Second, the percentage of reading practices is highly similar for activists committed in STP, Greenpeace, and Unia. We deduce from those results that SAB and Caritas participants should have reading practices fairly similar to those of the other activists studied in this research.

<sup>8</sup> Cramers' V are statistically insignificant.

**Table 6.3** Percentages of *Passive Members* Who Receive and Read Discursive Information (Newspapers or Newsletters) Published by the Organization for Which They Are Mobilized

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers' voicing activists
	SAB %	STP %	GP %	Caritas %	Unia %
Reception of newspapers	83	79	—	89	—
Reading of newspapers	—	79	82	—	87
(n)	299	385	487	247	427
Commitment intensity (Cramer's V)	ns	—	ns	.14**	.22***

Note: SAB= Solidarity across Borders, STP= Society for Threatened Peoples, GP= Greenpeace.

The question for SAB activists was the following: “SAB produces an electronic newsletter and a trimestral bulletin. Do you receive it?” The percentage represents the number of individuals who receive at least one form of information.

For STP members, three sets of questions were asked: (1) “STP publishes the journal “Voice” twice a year. Do you receive it? Do you read it?” (2) “Do you know the STP webpage? Do you read it?” (3) “Do you know about the STP newsletter? Do you read it?” The first percentage represents the number of individuals who receive at least one source of information, and the second one the number of people who regularly (or very regularly) read at least one source of information.

For Greenpeace activists, we relied on the following question: “Greenpeace uses several sources to inform its members. Please indicate for each source (journal, webpage, newsletter) if you use it very regularly, rather regularly, rarely or never to be informed on environmental issues.” The percentage represents the number of individuals who use at least one information source regularly or very regularly to be informed on environmental issues. The same question and indicator was used for Greenpeace and UNIA activists.

Finally, for Caritas volunteers, the question was: “Caritas publishes the journal Caritas. Do you receive it?” Cramer's V compared active members with passive ones; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

who participates in moral voicing activities. Yves is isolated from this commitment community. He has communicational interaction with the moral voicing community only indirectly, through the Greenpeace written material. We know that Yves frequently reads the organization's newspaper and that this reading enlarges his knowledge about environmental issues: “I joined Greenpeace because I was worried about the destruction of my natural surroundings, specifically the forest where I grew up. I was also concerned by the extinction of species, but not that much. Before I started reading the Greenpeace newspaper, I wasn't aware about nuclear waste,

renewable energy, or about over-fishing and its consequences. I learn many things reading the newspaper.”

Mediated interaction enables him to enlarge his knowledge about environmental issues, but does it allow him to synchronize his understandings of common good and politics with his commitment? The answer is no. As we underlined in chapters 4 and 5, Yves neither relies on a universal social justice understanding of common good nor perceives politics as a field of intervention to increase state actors’ accountability, as is the case for other moral voicing activists. He has no shared understandings with the moral voicing community, nor do his views on both dimensions overlap with other Greenpeace activists and moral voicing activists (Table 6.4). Maria and Evelyne, who are passive members in Greenpeace, and Colette, Wilhelm, and Yan who are financially committed to defending migrants’ rights all rely on shared understandings of common good and politics. While their views are synchronized with the views of the moral voicing community for which they mobilize, Yves’s is not.

As we see in Table 6.4, besides mediated interaction with their commitment community, passive members committed in moral voicing activities all enjoy direct communicational interaction within their interpersonal networks. Further, all of them have synchronized views of common good and politics. Similarly, all passive members committed to Christian aid (Edwige and Emmanuelle) and workers’ voicing activism (André and Sarah) enjoy direct interactions in their personal networks and rely on understandings of common good and politics that are synchronized with those of members of their respective commitment communities (Table 6.4).<sup>9</sup> Passive members debate about issues pertaining to their commitment site with friends or relatives, and they participate in communicational interactions that enable them to practice the scripts available within their respective communities. Those interactions allow for a progressive synchronization of their views with those of activists in their respective commitment milieus. By contrast, Yves, who never engages in direct interactions with his peers, does not have opportunities to practice the scripts available in his commitment community effectively.

The power of mediated interactions in shaping the activist’s mind is hence limited. As we saw with Yves, the influence of organizational material is

<sup>9</sup> Apart from Jérémie, a cross-committed activist. His understandings of common good and politics reflect both of the commitment sites for which he mobilizes. We discuss his case in the last section of this chapter.

**Table 6.4** Passive Members' Current Communicational Interactions in Their Commitment Community

Activists	Committed to	Understanding of common good and politics	Communicational interactions				Summary Number of face-to-face interactions
			In their respective organization	In other organizations of their respective community	In their interpersonal network		
<i>Yves</i>	Greenpeace	<i>None</i>	x	—	—	0	
<i>Maria</i>	Greenpeace	Moral voicing	x	—	X	1	
<i>André</i>	Unia	Workers' voicing	x	—	X	1	
<i>Sarah</i>	Unia	Workers' voicing	x	—	X	1	
<i>Edwige</i>	Caritas	Christian aid	x	—	X	1	
<i>Emmanuelle</i>	Caritas	Christian aid	x	x	X	1	
<i>Colette</i>	SAB	Moral voicing	x	x	X	1	
<i>Wilhelm</i>	SAB	Moral voicing	x	x	X	1	
<i>Yan</i>	SAB	Moral voicing	x	x	X	1	
<i>Evelyne</i>	Greenpeace	Moral voicing	x	X	X	2	
<i>Jérémie</i>	Caritas	<i>Blended</i>	x	X	X	2	

*Note:* SAB= Solidarity across Borders, STP= Society for Threatened Peoples.

“X” (bold capital letter) highlights *direct communicational interactions* (or face-to-face interactions), and “x” (lowercase letter) *mediated communicational interactions* (via the organization newspapers/newsletters).

circumscribed to the dissemination of knowledge on contentious issues but is insufficient to create similar understandings among members of a given commitment community. By contrast, direct communicational interactions in interpersonal networks are able to synchronize activists' understanding. All passive members who have such communicational interactions have views that are very similar to those of members of their respective commitment communities. Our finding on the weak power of mediated interactions relies on only one case: that of Yves. However, this finding agrees with results found in public opinion studies, which show the weakness of mediated information on affecting an individual's opinion (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995). Studies actually highlight the importance of interpersonal networks in the integration of opinions mediated by newspapers, radio, or television. Interpersonal networks are increasingly important when they are presenting thoughts, information, or worldviews that are different from an individual's opinion (Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004). Direct communication with peers in an interpersonal network is thus necessary if an individual is to process, accept, and integrate opinions or cognitive elements.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. First, *mediated interactions are insufficient* to change an activist's mind. This relational mechanism is unable to synchronize activists' understandings and does not allow a sufficient amount of practice of cultural scripts available in the organization. This is true even for a long-term commitment. Yves has been engaged in mediated communicational interaction for seven years, yet his cognitive map 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. Hence, we can claim that direct interaction in informal networks is the key relational mechanism that shapes the minds of passive members.

### Multiple Spheres of Interactions

Contrary to passive supporters, who engage in direct interactions only through their interpersonal network, *active members* are engaged in direct interactions in multiple networks. As discussed above and shown in Table

6.1, several active members enjoy discursive interactions, respectively, in SAB, Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia, but they also are engaged in other organizations of their respective commitment community. In addition, many of them take part in conversations in their interpersonal networks. They are therefore engaged in multiple spheres where conversational interactions take place.

Adriana's narrative illustrates this dynamic aptly. As we see in Table 6.5, she discusses issues with her fellow activists committed in SAB, but also with activists participating in “In five years, we take roots,” a local group defending migrants' rights in which Adriana is also an active member, and in Amnesty International, to which she is actively committed. Besides the conversations she has in those formal networks, she also discusses her commitments in her interpersonal network: with her friends, husband, and daughter. Like Lisa, Joao, and Nuno she practices the scripts available in her commitment community in three different spheres, and certainly more regularly than active members who have communicational interactions in a single sphere. For example, Eva practices the scripts available in the workers' voicing community only when she meets her fellow activists in Unia. She is not committed to other unionist organizations and her interpersonal network is not composed of friends or relatives who are sensitive to unionists' issues or committed to the workers' voicing community. As summarized in Table 6.5 (last column), Eva, like Tiago and Christine, enjoys conversational interactions in only one network.

Adriana and Eva clearly experience different relational configurations. Adriana has multiple opportunities to practice the scripts of importance to her commitment community, while Eva faces limited conversational opportunities within her commitment site. The issue is to know whether communicational interactions in a single sphere are sufficient to synchronize understandings or if multiple spheres of interaction are necessary to feed the activist's mind. In other terms, *is redundancy and abundance* of interactions decisive in synchronizing an active member's understandings? Again, we rely on case studies to sort out which relational mechanism is at work and will compare activists who evolve in distinct relational configurations.

We have three active members who are engaged in conversational interactions in a single network in our qualitative interview data. Eva, Tiago, and Christine practice scripts available in their respective organization (Unia and Caritas, respectively). They do not participate in other workers' voicing or Christian aid groups, and they have no friends or relatives tied to their commitment community. Do their understandings of common good and



**Table 6.5** *Active Members' Current Communicational Interactions in Their Commitment Communities.*

Activists	Committed to	Understanding of common good and politics	Communicational interactions				Summary Number of face-to-face interactions
			In their respective organization	In other organizations of their respective community	In their interpersonal network		
<i>Eva</i>	Unia	Workers' voicing	X	—	—	1	
<i>Tiago</i>	Unia	Workers' voicing	X	—	—	1	
<i>Christine</i>	Caritas	Christian aid	X	—	—	1	
<i>Simone</i>	SAB	Moral voicing	X	—	X	2	
<i>Nathan</i>	Greenpeace	Moral voicing	X	—	X	2	
<i>Pierrette</i>	Greenpeace	Moral voicing	X	—	X	2	
<i>Margot</i>	Greenpeace	Moral voicing	X	—	X	2	
<i>Mathieu</i>	Caritas	Christian aid	X	—	X	2	
<i>Elisabeth</i>	Caritas	<i>Blended</i>	X	—	X	2	
<i>Adriana</i>	SAB	Moral voicing	X	X	X	3	
<i>Lisa</i>	SAB	Moral voicing	X	X	X	3	
<i>Joao</i>	Unia	Workers' voicing	X	X	X	3	
<i>Nuno</i>	Unia	Workers' voicing	X	X	X	3	

*Note:* "X" (bold capital letter) highlights *direct communicational interactions* (face-to-face interactions), and "x" (lowercase letter) *mediated communicational interactions* (via the organization newspapers/newsletters).

politics reflect the views of their respective commitment communities? And do they share similar understandings with active members who enjoy communicational interactions in various spheres?

As shown in Table 6.5, the answer to both questions is yes. First, their views are synchronized with those of members in their respective commitment sites. Second, their ideas do not depart from those of active members who enjoy multiple spheres of communicational interactions. Like other unionists, Eva and Tiago rely on a communitarian understanding of common good based on social justice, and they see politics as a field of intervention to increase state actors' accountability for workers' rights. Both share these understandings with Joao and Nuno, who practice workers' voicing scripts in multiple spheres: in Unia, in other formal networks, and in their interpersonal networks. Although their opportunities to practice the workers' voicing scripts are very distinct, Eva's, Tiago's, Joao's, and Nuno's understandings of common good and politics are nonetheless synchronized. We find similar results with Christine, who shares a Christian aid understanding of common good and politics with other Caritas volunteers. Second, her views match those of active members who enjoy multiple spheres of communicational interactions. For example, Mathieu, who practices the Christian aid scripts in Caritas and in his interpersonal network, relies on similar understandings of common good and politics as Christine.<sup>10</sup>

This first comparison suggests that practicing cultural scripts in a single sphere is sufficient to synchronize activists' understandings. A second comparison also shows that a redundancy and abundance of interactions do not affect activists' minds. We see that activists' understandings of common good and politics are all synchronized with those of their respective commitment communities when we compare active members who have two types of communicational interactions with activists who multiply their communicational interactions—in the organization they mobilize for, in other formal networks, and in their interpersonal network. As shown in Table 6.5, Simone, Nathan, Pierrette, and Margot exchange views on moral voicing issues with both their fellow activists committed in SAB or in Greenpeace, and within their interpersonal networks. They enjoy direct communicational interactions in both spheres. Those active members all rely on moral voicing

<sup>10</sup> We cannot compare Christine with Elisabeth, another Caritas active member (see Table 6.5). Elisabeth is a cross-committed activist, active in both Christian aid and moral voicing activism. Elisabeth's cognitive map reflects this dual commitment, as she demonstrates a blended understanding of common good and politics.

understandings of common good and politics. Interestingly, their views overlap those of Adriana and Lisa. Yet both women are involved in communicational interactions in three distinct networks. Hence, a multiplicity of spheres of conversational interactions does not lead to a different synchronization of activists' understandings.

These cases comparisons stress that a single sphere of communicational interactions where activists could enjoy direct exchanges is sufficient to synchronize active members' views with those of their commitment community. Redundancy and abundance of interactions are not necessary. The case comparisons actually underline the importance of direct communicational interactions within the organization in which participants actively commit. Those interactions are frequent, intense, and, as stressed in the first section of this chapter, highly meaningful. Enjoying additional discussion and exchange in other networks does not alter the views acquired in one single sphere. Communicational interactions in the organization to which active members commit are particularly relevant in nourishing the participant's mind, and synchronizing their views with those of their commitment community. As for passive members, direct interactions are necessary to feed their minds. However, *one single relational path is sufficient* to shape an activist's mind.

### **Cross-Pressured Interactions**

Activists have various opportunities for conversational interaction in their own commitment community but also in other commitment sites. Many activists are engaged in multiple sites of protest, and cross-commitment is a reality for about a third of the participants studied here. Table 6.6 shows that between 20 percent and 33 percent of moral voicing activists are also engaged in Christian aid volunteering. They are also committed in workers' voicing activism, even if the percentage is slightly less important than their commitment to the Christian aid community (between 10 to 24 percent). Many Caritas volunteers are also cross-committed: 42 percent of them participate in moral voicing contention, and a few of them participate in union activities (9 percent). Cross-commitment is also present in unionism as 34 percent of unionists also take part in moral voicing activities, and 17 percent support Christian aid activism. Activists can also be committed in numerous commitment sites. As reported in Table 6.6, between 25 and 45 percent of

**Table 6.6** Current Cross-Commitment of Moral Voicing, Christian Aid, and Workers’ Voicing Activists

	Moral voicing activists			Christian aid activists	Workers’ voicing activists
	SAB	STP	GP	Caritas	Unia
Another Commitment to	%	%	%	%	%
Moral voicing community	—	—	—	42	34
<i>Commitment intensity (Pearson’s r)</i>				<i>ns</i>	<i>.20***</i>
Workers’ voicing community	24	15	10	9	—
<i>Commitment intensity (Pearson’s r)</i>	<i>ns</i>	—	<i>ns</i>	<i>-.10*</i>	
Christian aid community	33	27	20	—	17
<i>Commitment intensity (Pearson’s r)</i>	<i>.09*</i>	—	<i>-.10**</i>		<i>.12**</i>
<i>n</i>	878	434	736	717	827
In two communities	45	36	25	43	38
<i>Commitment intensity (Pearson’s r)</i>	<i>.09*</i>	—	<i>-.12**</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>.21***</i>
In three communities	12	6	4	8	13
<i>Commitment intensity (Pearson’s r)</i>	<i>.07*</i>	—	<i>ns</i>	<i>-.09*</i>	<i>.10**</i>
<i>n</i>	878	434	736	717	827

Note: SAB= Solidarity across Borders, STP= Society for Threatened Peoples, GP= Greenpeace.

We measured the activists’ commitment to various organizations with the following questions: “Here is a list of associations/groups. Could you tell us if, today, you are committed in these associations?” We computed percentage points for activists belonging to one other commitment site, to one of two commitment sites (e.g., Christian aid or workers’ voicing for the moral voicing community) and to both commitment sites (e.g., Moral voicing and workers’ voicing for the Christian aid community).

Pearson’s r compared active members with passive ones; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

activists are engaged in at least one other commitment site and between 4 and 13 percent participate in all three commitment communities: moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers’ voicing.

For these cross-committed activists, many relational paths concur as they evolve in cross-pressured interactions. They enter conversational

interaction in their various commitment communities. So, the questions are twofold. First, how do they make sense of their cross-pressured interactions? The issue is to understand whether cognitive maps are synchronized over various activism sites. Second, if their minds are affected by cross-commitment, *how* are they affected? More precisely, what are the relational mechanisms at play in shaping a cross-committed an activist's cognitive map? In our qualitative data, we distinguish three distinct types of cross-commitment. First, we have activists who participate in both moral voicing and Christian aid commitment. And we know that activists committed in those communities do not share the same view of politics (see Chapter 5). Second, we have participants who are currently engaged in moral voicing and workers' voicing communities. Here again, the activists involved in those communities rely on distinct understandings, notably on the issue of common good (see Chapter 4). Finally, in the data we have one activist who is committed in three communities: the moral voicing, Christian Aid, and workers' voicing commitment sites, and in those communities the understandings of both common good and politics diverge. By scrutinizing those cases and their narratives, we aim to understand what actually happens in activists' minds.

The first finding relates to the differential impact of cross-commitment on activists' minds. Out of the ten cross-committed activists included in our qualitative data, we observe two different outcomes on the activists' cognitive map: a mind synchronized with a single commitment site, and a blended mind fed by cognitive elements provided by various commitment communities. For several cross-committed participants, understandings of common good and politics are synchronized with only one commitment site and their cognitive map does not include cognitive elements from other activist milieus in which they are mobilized. However, in the case of other cross-committed activists, the different commitment sites in which they participate are mirrored in their cognitive map. Cross-pressure interactions therefore impact an activist's mind in different ways. Our explanation is a relational one: The *density of an activist's conversational interactions* is the relational mechanism that explains such variation. The frequency and coherence of communicational interactions clarify why several cross-committed activists have a cognitive map synchronized with a single commitment community, while for others this map is synchronized with various communities. Let us examine this relational mechanism empirically.

### Dense Conversations in a Single Commitment Community

As shown in Table 6.7, several cross-committed activists have a cognitive map that is synchronized with a single commitment community. Despite the fact that cross-commitment varies (some activists participate in moral and workers' voicing groups, others in moral voicing and Christian aid commitment sites), all activists have a mind synchronized with a single commitment site. Relational paths also vary: Several participants enjoy direct communicational interactions in both formal and interpersonal networks, others engage in direct exchange only in their interpersonal network, some benefit from direct exchanges in one commitment site, and others engage in conversations in various commitment sites. Despite variations in the types of cross-commitment and in the relational context, all cross-committed activists have one thing in common: *Their minds are synchronized with those of members in a single commitment site.* Another aspect in common is that they enjoy dense conversational interaction in one commitment site.

Joao and Nuno are both unionists who support moral voicing contention. Furthermore, Nuno participates in Christian aid groups. Although they are cross-committed activists, their cognitive map does not reflect this cross-commitment. As shown in Table 6.7, their understandings of common good and politics are those of the workers' voicing community. Their views are synchronized with this commitment milieu, and not with activists in the moral voicing or Christian aid sites. By examining their relational configuration, we note that the density of their communicational interactions is highly dissimilar from one commitment site to another. Joao and Nuno exclusively enjoy conversational interactions in the workers' voicing community. As Unia active members, both have various and meaningful interactions with their fellow unionists. Besides Unia, both are actively engaged in other unionist organizations, where they practice scripts available in the workers' voicing community. Finally, their interpersonal network is full of unionized friends with whom they discuss issues pertaining to unionism. In these three spheres, Joao and Nuno engage in direct conversational interactions enabling them to practice the workers' voicing scripts. Joao states this clearly: “I regularly met with unionists in Unia, but also in other groups. It's always the same people you meet and talk with. We share similar views; we have the same feelings about working issues, and have created bonds over time. Some

**Table 6.7** Current Communicational Interactions of Cross-Committed Activists

Activists	Cross-commitment in	Understanding of common good and politics	Communicational interactions									
			In moral voicing community		In Christian aid community		In workers' voicing community		Summary			
			FN	IN	FN	IN	FN	IN	MV	CA	WV	
<i>Joao</i>	Moral voicing/workers' voicing	Workers' voicing	x					XX	X	0	—	3
<i>Nuno</i>	Moral voicing/Christian aid/workers' voicing	Workers' voicing	x		x			XX	X	0	0	3
<i>Margot</i>	Moral voicing/workers' voicing	Moral voicing	X	X				x		2	—	0
<i>Evelyne</i>	Moral voicing/workers' voicing	Moral voicing	X	X				x		2	—	0
<i>Yan</i>	Moral voicing/workers' voicing	Moral voicing	x	X				x		1	—	0
<i>Colette</i>	Moral voicing/Christian aid	Moral voicing	x	X				x		1	0	—
<i>Maria</i>	Moral voicing/Christian aid	Moral voicing	x	X				x		1	—	0
<i>Nathan</i>	Moral voicing/workers' voicing	Moral voicing	X	X				x	X	2	1	0
<i>Elisabeth</i>	Moral voicing/Christian aid	<i>Blended</i>	X	X				X	X	2	2	—
<i>J�er�mie</i>	Moral voicing/Christian aid	<i>Blended</i>	X	X				X	X	2	2	—

*Note:* "X" (bold capital letter) highlights *direct communicational interactions* (or face-to-face interactions), and "x" (lowercase letter) *mediated communicational interactions* (via the organization newspapers/newspapers). Double "X" means that activists engage in direct interactions in their respective organization and in other organizations of their commitment community. Key to acronyms: FN, formal network (interactions in the community); IN, interpersonal network (interactions with friends or relatives); MV, moral voicing community; CA, Christian aid community; WV, workers' voicing community.

of them have become friends and we often meet outside unions.” Both Joao and Nuno evolve in dense and meaningful conversational interactions in the workers’ voicing milieu. By contrast, in the moral voicing and Christian aid communities, they do not engage in such conversational interactions, as the summary columns of Table 6.7 indicate. Joao and Nuno support these collective endeavors financially, and therefore enjoy mediated interactions with those commitment sites, but they never engage in direct interactions in the moral voicing and Christian aid commitment sites. They mainly interact with the workers’ voicing community, with whom they enjoy direct and dense conversational interactions, allowing their cognitive maps to be synchronized with the views held in this commitment community.

We face a similar situation with Margot and Evelyne. Both participate in moral and workers’ voicing communities, yet their minds reflect a single commitment site. Like Joao and Nuno, they engage in dense conversational interactions in only one contentious community (Table 6.7). Margot and Evelyne are active members in moral voicing groups: Margot in Greenpeace, and Evelyne in a local organization defending migrants’ rights. In their respective groups, both enjoy intense discursive interactions with peers. Moreover, Margot and Evelyne enjoy dense conversations in their interpersonal network. Several friends and their partners are also committed to moral voicing contention that leads to further discussion. By contrast, Margot and Evelyne currently have no direct communicational interactions with the workers’ voicing community.<sup>11</sup> They support unions by paying membership fees. While both express the importance of unions in society and are concerned by work relations, they nonetheless never engage in direct exchanges with this commitment milieu. As passive members they experience mediated interactions by reading newspapers prepared by the unions, but they do not have direct interactions. Moreover, their interpersonal network is not made up principally of friends or relatives who are committed in the workers’ voicing site. Here again, with unbalanced interactions in both contentious sites, Margot and Evelyne are synchronized with a single contentious site: the moral voicing community. Their minds do not present a blend of cognitive elements derived from the workers’ voicing community.

<sup>11</sup> When she was working, Margot was an active member of the workers’ voicing community, therefore benefiting from direct interaction with peers. After leaving her job twenty years ago, Margot has not entered in direct interactions with this contentious group.



Contrarily to Joao, Nuno, Margot, and Evelyne, who are actively committed in one contentious site, Yan, Colette, and Maria are exclusively passive members. They support various causes but never engage in activities. While their relational configuration differs from that of Joao, Nuno, Margot, and Evelyne, they nonetheless share a synchronization of their understandings of common good and politics with a single commitment community. In Table 6.7, we see that they enjoy dissimilar interactions in their respective commitment sites. Yan, Colette, and Maria are passively committed to various moral voicing actions. Alongside this commitment, Yan is a member of a union, while Colette and Maria provide financial support to Christian aid groups. As passive members, they benefit from mediated interactions through discursive material with all the communities they are committed to. However, in the moral voicing community, in addition to mediated interactions they also interact directly, in their interpersonal networks, with friends or relatives who are sensitive to moral voicing issues or engaged in this commitment milieu. Above, we saw how dense the communicational interactions of Colette are with her friends and her son. Similar interactions occur in Yan's and Maria's interpersonal network. For example, Yan relates: "I like to talk about those issues with my wife. Emma works with migrants. At her workplace, she meets many activists who come to discuss the juridical situation of the asylum seekers. They talk about the migrants' personal situations, but also more generally about migration. And then we often discuss those issues at home. She is really upset about what she sees at her workplace and because of the ways Switzerland treats asylum seekers. I also discuss those issues with my brother: He supports an organization that advocates migrants' rights. However, it's with my mom that I talk the most. She was involved in providing Eastern European children with help her whole life and is politically dedicated to the development of fairer relations between countries in the global North and South." Yan, Colette, and Maria benefit from mediated interactions in the moral voicing community, but those interactions are doubled by direct exchanges taking place in their interpersonal network. By contrast, they do not benefit from such conversational interactions in their other commitment sites. Yan has no friends or relatives committed in unions, and Colette and Maria do not enjoy direct exchange on Christian aid issues in their private sphere (Table 6.7). Their communicational interactions are denser in the moral voicing community than in the other commitment sites in which they are engaged. The minds of these cross-committed activists are synchronized with the

commitment community where most of their interaction occurs: the moral voicing community.

Nathan provides a final interesting case of activists who participate in various commitment communities, yet have a mind synchronized with a single commitment site. Activists in the previous cases discussed are cross-committed, but not cross-pressured. Their conversational interactions occur in a single commitment site. By contrast, Nathan has direct interactions in both commitment communities in which he participates. Nathan is therefore clearly cross-pressured by both the moral and workers' voicing communities. But here again, the density of his direct interactions in a dominant commitment community is a key explanatory mechanism: His mind is synchronized only with the moral voicing community. Nathan is actively committed in Greenpeace and, like any active member, has abundant communicational interactions inside this organization. In addition, Nathan is involved in dense exchanges in his interpersonal network with Lou, a close friend, with whom he incessantly discusses social and environmental problems. He told us that Lou plays a crucial role in making him aware of many environmental issues. Besides his commitment to Greenpeace, he has recently joined Unia after being dismissed by his company. As a passive member, Nathan does not enjoy direct exchange with other unionists but engages in direct interactions with the workers' voicing milieu thanks to his interpersonal network, as his parents are active in unionist struggles in France. After he was fired, they advised him to join a union. They used to talk a lot about unionist issues, but since Nathan settled in Switzerland those interactions are much less frequent than they used to be. Although Nathan enjoys conversational interactions in both commitment communities, the intensity of those exchanges is nevertheless distinct. While he has frequent and dense conversational interactions with the moral voicing community through Greenpeace's active members and his friend Lou, his direct interactions with the workers' voicing community exist, though they occur sporadically.

### Dense Conversations in Various Commitment Communities

With Elisabeth and Jérémie, we face a different situation. They are also cross-committed activists, but their cross-commitment is mirrored in their cognitive map. As shown in chapters 4 and 5, their understandings of common good and politics are imbued with cognitive elements that reflect both

commitment sites they are committed to. They possess *blended minds*. Again, their relational configuration offers an explanation. Elisabeth and Jérémie enjoy direct interactions in the commitment sites they are engaged in (Table 6.7). Their communicational interactions in both sites are balanced, contrary to what we found for the other cross-committed activists interviewed.

For more than forty years, Elisabeth and Jérémie have been involved in Christian aid volunteering, as both were active members in Caritas. Elisabeth is still actively involved in this organization, while Jérémie left it about ten years ago. However, Jérémie remains committed to the Christian aid community by supporting people in the last stage of their lives. In addition to these commitments, Elisabeth and Jérémie actively participate in moral voicing contentions: Elisabeth in the defense of migrants' rights, and Jérémie to ensure fairer relations between developed and developing countries. Both have lifelong engagements in both commitment sites. Nowadays, Elisabeth and Jérémie are over eighty years old, and both are less actively committed in the Christian aid milieu than in the past. Recently, they both quit their moral voicing commitment. Nevertheless, they remain close to this activist milieu and continue to support their respective organizations financially. Elisabeth and Jérémie have a similar career in commitment. Their communicational interactions are also alike, and their cognitive maps are blended regarding common good and politics. To avoid redundancy, we have chosen to present Elisabeth's narrative.

In Caritas, Elisabeth has discussions and debates with her peers. She is active in the team organizing the clothing shop and in the committee. She enjoys dense conversational interactions with other volunteers in both spaces: "I like to converse with members of the professional staff, but also with unpaid volunteers. I have always learned a lot from them: how to face poverty, to manage people in great distress." With years of commitment in Caritas, her interpersonal network is composed of friends who were committed, and still are, to Caritas or other Christian aid organizations. In the Christian aid milieu, Elisabeth still benefits from dense communicational interactions, both in Caritas and in her interpersonal network (Table 6.7). For years, she practiced the scripts available in this commitment site, and still practices them today. Those direct and dense interactions shape her understandings on common good and politics.

Elisabeth was also highly active in the moral voicing community, above all in groups that defend migrants' rights. She relates: "Nowadays, I don't have the same strength as before. In the past, I went to Caritas on a daily

basis, and was also involved in the network defending migrants' rights. I took part in all the street demonstrations too: for asylum rights, against torture, against war, etc. Now, I have to give up these escapades. I can't follow street demonstrations anymore. . . . [A]fter half-an-hour, I'm exhausted [laugh].” But, until recently, she was actively committed in the defense of migrants' rights. And like each active member, she enjoyed dense exchanges with her fellow activists (Table 6.7). Elisabeth's interpersonal network was tied to this commitment site throughout her life (Table 6.7): “I have a very close friend who was a lifelong activist: fighting against torture and for human rights. We had very many meaningful exchanges; about migrants, refugees, human rights, social justice, and other issues. But we used to talk a lot about our religious faith too. We share the same view: For us, faith should bring love, humanity, and justice. My husband was a very important person too. An upright and honest man who was committed to justice his whole life. He was a true humanist. He was editor of a leftist Catholic newspaper, and I was always the first to read his articles before they went to print. He knew that we had the same political sensitivity and that I could offer valuable comments. During our lives, we were committed together. And we did risky things, like providing clandestine shelter to migrants. When someone's life was at stake, when there was a question of justice that enters into play, we committed. For us, protecting those people was a humanitarian and a political question: We had to counter the injustice. And, inevitably, we participated in many demonstrations [laugh]. Our friends belonged to those networks too, not all of them, but the majority. We chose to have these friends with whom we could share and debate.” Today, Elisabeth's discursive interactions are less abundant than they were in the past, due to the loss of her friends and her husband, and because of her reduced mobility. However she continues to exchange with friends at home.

Like Jérémie, Elisabeth benefits from *balanced interactions* in the Christian aid community and in the moral voicing contentious site. Both have conversational interactions through the activist milieu of their formal and interpersonal networks (Table 6.7). Elisabeth and Jérémie therefore benefit from dense interactions in both commitment sites and this is mirrored in their minds. They share an extensive view of society with other Christian aid volunteers. However, this view is closer to moral voicing activists as it is more extensive than what we found for Christian aid activists. Like them, Elisabeth and Jérémie perceive social problems in terms of rights and justice, not through the repertoire of care. Although caring for people is important for

them, both believe that social problems are above all a question of injustice and the violation of rights. Their view on politics is blended too. They think that the state cannot be engaged in all social problems and that delegation to civil society actors is necessary. However, they claim that actively working for justice is also essential, as they apprehend most of the social problems as injustices against which people should rebel. Contrary to Christian aid activists, and in line with moral voicing activists, Elisabeth and Jérémie are inclined to voice their indignation by entering the political sphere to address social injustice. Their minds are composed of cognitive elements from both commitment sites for which they have been committed as they have practiced, and still practice, scripts available in both Christian aid and moral voicing milieus.

### Relational Minds

We have seen that activists are highly embedded in relational settings. However, they are not just embedded in social networks but also interact with fellow activists. Activists therefore have various relational opportunities to practice the scripts available in their commitment community. Yet not all relational opportunities allow them to synchronize their minds, or are useful for sharing understandings on common good and politics with their respective commitment communities. Some relational mechanisms are more inclined to shape activists' minds than others. Let us summarize those mechanisms.

First, we saw that mediated conversational interactions are insufficient when it comes to the synchronization of an activist's understandings. Those indirect interactions can enlarge knowledge about the issues for which activists commit at best, but they do not allow shared understandings, which are essential to for a person to take part in action, to be developed. Activists actually need to practice the cultural scripts available in their commitment community, and face-to-face conversational exchanges are therefore necessary. *Direct communicational interactions are the key process* in shaping the activist's mind. This result is particularly relevant regarding passive participants who have no direct exchange with activists involved in the organization(s) they financially support. It is through direct conversational interactions with friends and relatives that they effectively practice the scripts

circulating in their commitment milieu. For these activists, conversations within their *interpersonal network are essential in the synchronization process*.

Direct conversations in interpersonal networks are important, not only theoretically—by highlighting a specific relational mechanism impacting passive members' mind—but also pragmatically. In Western democracies, passive members constitute the largest bastion of activists, and also of unionists and volunteers. In the West, societies are, as Meyer and Tarrow (1998) stress, "movement societies," but this social movement society relies mainly on passive members. Our finding shows that mediated interactions are insufficient to synchronize views with a commitment community for the largest bastion of activists. To be an activist and to sustain commitment, communicational interactions in private networks are required. Findings from our quantitative data, like results from other research (e.g., Diani 1995; Della Porta 1995; Klandermans 1997; McAdam 1988; Passy 1998a; Snow et al. 1986), show that passive members are embedded in interpersonal networks where friends and relatives are in agreement with their issues, or committed to contention. It means that activism goes well beyond formal adherence to a specific organization: It is anchored in a much vaster social context.

Second, our results emphasize that redundancy and abundance of direct interactions are not needed to shape an activist's mind. Direct interactions are essential in feeding an activist's mind; however interactions that take place in *a single sphere are sufficient* to synchronize the activist's views. We saw that passive members only enjoy conversations in their interpersonal networks, yet their understandings of common good and politics are synchronized. Similarly, active members who engage in communicational interactions with their peers only in the organization they are actively committed to display synchronized minds. The multiplicity of relational paths is thus not essential. A single relational path is sufficient but should be made of direct communicational interactions. This means that direct exchanges in interpersonal networks are crucial for passive members, while conversations in the organization to which they are committed are vital for active members. Direct conversational interactions are a necessary condition to practice scripts available in commitment communities and to synchronize activists' understandings. The fact that communicational interactions in a single sphere are sufficient makes commitment slightly more accessible to people. At the very least, it does not add other relational constraints to one's becoming an activist and sustaining participation.

Finally, we saw that cross-commitment impacts an activist's mind in different ways. The *density of direct interactions* is the relational mechanism at work, which explains why cross-committed activists can have minds synchronized with the beliefs of one single commitment community, or blended minds reflecting the multiple commitment communities in which they are engaged. While about a third of moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists are cross-committed, not all of them actually evolve in a cross-pressured environment. Cross-committed activists, engaged in direct conversational interactions in only one commitment site, have understandings synchronized with this community. Those activists are cross-committed, but not cross-pressured, and their cognitive maps synchronize with the commitment community where they enjoy direct and dense interactions, not with the other sites where they engage only in mediated interactions. Other cross-committed activists, who face unbalanced direct interactions in the various commitment communities they are involved in, synchronize their understandings with the community with whom they have denser direct interactions. Here again, those participants are cross-committed but not cross-pressured. Finally, other cross-committed participants are effectively cross-pressured. They benefit from balanced interactions in the various commitment sites and engage in direct conversational interactions in all sites of their commitment. This pattern of communicational interactions enriches their cognitive map with cognitive elements of all these commitment sites. Consequently, their minds reflect each of these communities. Their minds are of a blended sort.

The activists' minds reflect their commitment community or communities to a large extent. As we know from sociologists, an individual's mind is a social mind. It reflects the social environment in which individuals evolve. The activist's mind is a social mind too and the activist's understandings of common good and politics reflect those that circulate in the commitment community he or she is mobilized for. The synchronization of his or her views with those of fellow activists enables the person to join action and to sustain participation in commitment activities. However, the social process that explains the synchronization of minds is a relational one. Social networks constitute real "islands of meanings" enabling individuals to be activists. An activist's mind is undeniably a social mind, but it is a relational one above all.

# 7

## Culture in Mind

We're actually a part of reality, and if we don't realize that we are totally irresponsible. We are a productive reality. We are the reality, but that part of reality means that we need to produce another reality.

Ai Weiwei

We are part of reality, we are a productive reality, and we need to produce another reality once the one we live in is no longer satisfying. Ai Weiwei's words are those of an artist who knows that art is a major lever for producing and transforming reality. As an activist, Weiwei also understands that political commitment is another important means for modifying reality. If one considers Ai Weiwei's works, one rapidly becomes aware of how traditional Chinese culture imbues them and enables him—with many other cultural resources he has in mind—to attempt to alter current reality. As individuals, we perceive the world through the lens of our own minds, and our inner worlds are nourished by specific cognitions that orient the way we are able to act in reality and to try to bring about another reality. Yet as Swidler (2001) shows, our cognitive toolkit is culturally configured. Culture is constitutive of interests and identities, but it also circulates through networks in which we evolve (Polletta 2008). Scripts laden with cognitions and stories define these networks, and practicing those scripts is a crucial process in which culture feeds our cognitive toolkit.

As we have shown throughout this book, activists perceive the world through specific lenses. Their mindset is nourished with cultural resources that orient their action and enable them to act and sustain their action. This last chapter aims to gather the main findings of our study. Beside attempting to explore the minds of activists involved in moral voicing, Christian aid, and voluntarism, the book was motivated by a theoretical agenda: We aimed to underscore the dynamics between the mind and social interactions that contribute to setting an activist's intentionality and orienting his or her action

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in a specific manner. This theoretical perspective enabled us to develop a cognitive-relational framework that explains activists' participation in specific collective endeavors, and their ability to sustain their commitment. This conclusive chapter returns to this theoretical agenda and discusses its implications for the study of social movements. Finally, we envision avenues of future research.

### Meaningful Conversations and Mindful Interactions

Participation (and sustained participation), the mind, conversations, and a resulting cognitive-relational model are the four cornerstones of this book. These in turn structure the following summary of our major results. In this study, we focus on *sustained participation*, and this emphasis allowed us to underscore two elements: First, collective action scholars should scrutinize the whole continuum of participation, and move beyond an analytical effort exclusively aimed at understanding the initial impulse to engage in collective endeavors. Participation involves much more than the decision to join a collective movement. Maintaining and disengagement processes are also important for understanding civil commitment. Our understanding of this social phenomenon is expanded not only by providing substantial knowledge on the continuum of participation as a whole but also by enlarging our theoretical understanding of citizen commitment, and this constitutes our second point. What we see is that the ways in which activists sustain their commitment rely on a cognitive-relational process. But this process, taking place through the mind and meaningful conversations, is also at work, as stated in Chapter 2, in the other steps of the participation continuum, namely, the person's initial engagement and decision to disengage. Hence, the cognitive-relational process this book highlights encompasses the acts of joining and of exiting (Passy 1998a, 2001, 2003, 2005; Passy and Giugni 2001). The mind and conversational interactions are at stake in all the key stages of an activist's participation. The interpretative facet of social networks therefore plays a crucial role through the continuum of participation. We return to this issue in a following section of this chapter.

One question drives our study: How do activists participate and sustain their collective effort? To answer this question, we turn to the other three pillars of this book: the mind, conversations, and the cognitive-relational model. First, throughout the study, we accumulated evidence supporting

the argument that a process of mind synchronization is an important element in sustained participation. Second, conversation is the mechanism that serves to explain why and how this synchronization occurs, ultimately sustaining participation. Third, we developed the links between the mind and conversations into a cognitive-relational model for sustained participation, which is our main theoretical contribution. Over the following pages, we briefly return to these three arguments and synthesize our main results.

Individuals are symbol-making creatures who spin webs of meaning. We are constantly trying to make sense of the world out there, and some of us commit in collective efforts because what we believe is challenged. These meanings are at work once we commit to contentious politics, volunteering action, or unionism. To prove that activists rely on a *process of mind synchronization* in their commitment, we first examined how their meanings depart from those held by the general population. Comparing the statistical data concerning activists' understandings of common good and politics with that of the population, we found that an activist's views of common good and politics do not overlap with those of the whole population. Moral voicing activists depart on both dimensions, Christian aid volunteers possess only a particular understanding of common good, and unionists differ from the general population only for their perception of politics. Activists with a particular view of common good perceive society in a more interconnected and inclusive way and are concerned by a broader range of common goods than the general population. A specific perception of politics is characterized by less trust in state actors; skepticism regarding state actors' willingness to improve and deliver the common good activists are committed to; a broad legitimization of civil society actors; and finally, a conception of the citizen as a vigilant and politically active being. These findings constituted the first element that allows us to stress that cognitions are integral to commitment in collective endeavors: Activists possess a specific mind.

With the support of statistics and narratives, we then showed that activists not only rely on distinct views about common good and politics when compared with the whole population, but that these views vary among different groups of activists. Activists who evolve in different commitment communities possess their own understandings of politics and common good. There is no unique model for an activist's mind, but a plurality of minds. Our findings show that *moral voicing activists* understand common good in terms of universal social justice. For them, access to common goods is a question of social justice and rights that should benefit all members of society. They

also see politics through specific cognitive lenses, viewing it in terms of intervention to increase state actors' accountability. The state is perceived as the main actor responsible for the development and implementation of common good. When social problems arise, civil society actors (perceived as a major political force in society) must challenge the state if social issues are to be solved.

*Christian aid volunteers* rely on distinct meanings about common good and politics. Common good is perceived in terms of universal social care. It should benefit all members of society, as was the case for moral voicing activists. However, common good is essentially conceived in terms of care with the aim of improving an individual's well-being. Their view of politics also departs from that of moral voicing activists. Civil society, not state actors, is perceived as accountable for the provision of care. For Christian aid activists, politics therefore appears as a substitution for the state in providing this care.

*Unionists* rely on another understanding of common good and politics, which does not overlap with that of Christian aid volunteers and only partly with that of moral voicing activists. Common good is framed in terms of communitarian social justice. For workers' voicing activists, common good is a matter of rights and justice, but for specific social groups. They perceive a specific collective good rather than a common good. Their conception of politics is also specific. Indeed, like moral voicing participants, they view politics through the lens of contention: The state is perceived as the primary actor accountable for the protection and implementation of common good and it must be the first challenged when social problems arise. Politics thus emerges as a field of intervention to increase state actors' accountability. However, contrary to moral voicing activists, contention is uniquely focused on workers' social problems. And accordingly, unionists do not legitimize all social actors to push contention forward: Only unions are considered as trustworthy actors capable of strengthening workers' collective good. Activists who evolve in distinct commitment communities hence rely on different cultural resources to understand common good and politics. While their minds overlap on some aspects, activists of different commitment communities do not share the same understandings of common good and politics.

Although activists' minds differ from those of the population and even from different commitment communities, statistics and narratives revealed a third issue that underlines the importance of the mind for sustained

participation. Indeed, activists engaged in the same commitment community share similar cognitions when it comes to common good and politics: Their minds are highly synchronized. This argument is based on two findings: First, understandings of activists committed in the moral voicing community, but mobilized in distinct organizations and for distinct social causes, apprehend common good and politics with the same cognitive lenses. Despite being mobilized for particular social problems (defense of migrants, autochthonous peoples' rights, and environmental protection) and although they act on confrontational or consensual political issues, moral voicing activists rely on socially shared cognitions toward common good and politics. Regardless of the social problems they choose to address and of the degree of social conflict surrounding the issue, evolving in the same commitment community provides activists with similar cultural resources for framing an understanding of common good and politics. Second, we examined whether activists engaged in the same organization, but with distinct levels of commitment, rely on shared views of common good and politics. And we found no substantial variation in the way active and passive members apprehend common good and politics.

Activists possess a specific mind, which differs from that of the whole population. They rely on different cultural resources when they evolve in distinct commitment communities; and participants involved in the same commitment community share similar understandings. What do these findings mean? First, they prove the assumption that activists rely on specific cognitions to act. They require socially shared cognitions to perform and sustain joint action. Second, the findings underscore that individuals engaged in a specific commitment community synchronize their minds. Evolving in a community and practicing the cultural scripts circulating in these social sites shape their mind and synchronize their views, and this, in turn, enables them to perform joint action.

Showing that activists rely on specific meanings is only one part of the story of underscoring the role of the mind and its synchronization with others in the process of participation and sustained commitment. The second part relies on how those broad understandings of common good and politics set *activists' intentionality*. Based on a systematic analysis of activists' narratives, we showed that four cognitive paths bind activists' understandings of common good and politics. As shown in Figure 7.1, one cognitive path links activists' understandings of common good to their perception of otherness, which in turn orients their action toward certain social groups. A second

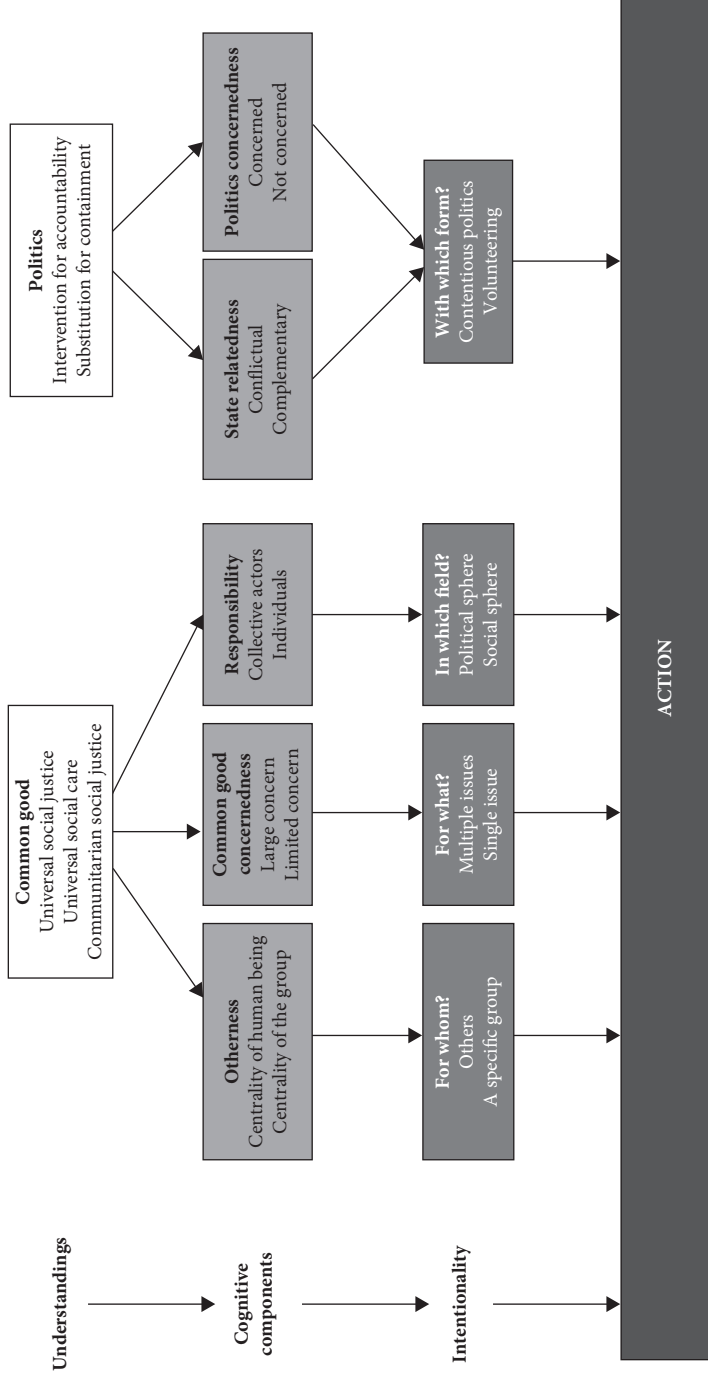


Figure 7.1 From understandings to intentionalities: A summary of the cognitive paths

cognitive path bridges the activists' view and concern for common good that allows them to commit to a specific social issue over another. A third path connects activists' perception of common good with their cognitive construction of responsibility that orients their action either politically or socially. Finally, the last cognitive path binds activists' understandings of politics to their state relatedness and concern for politics; both orient activists toward specific forms of action. We found the same four cognitive paths in the narratives of moral voicing, Christian aid, and workers' voicing activists. Yet, as the understandings of common good and politics differ from one commitment community to another, intentionality is inevitably plural.

The universalist understanding of common good advocated by *moral voicing activists* enables them to build the cognitive component pertaining to otherness. Accordingly, human beings hold a central place and are understood beyond their social anchorage. Moral voicing activists act for others regardless of social difference. Second, their perception of common good allows them to construct a broad concern for common good. This cognitive component orients their action toward multiple social issues with the aim of bringing about a global change in society. Third, grasping common good as a matter of social justice provides moral voicing activists with the cognitive component whereby collective actors are perceived as responsible for the violation of rights, as this is identified as a political conflict. This attribution of responsibility orients their action toward the political sphere. Finally, because state actors are criticized for their lack of accountability, activists develop a conflictual relation toward them. In addition, it is the role of civil society actors to intervene in politics and therefore, citizens must be politically active and vigilant. An orientation toward contentious politics arises as a result of these two factors.

The perception of common good and politics sets distinct intentionalities for *Christian aid volunteers*. Like moral voicing activists, a universalist understanding of common good allows Christian aid activists to construct a relation to otherness in which human beings are central. This eventually sets their intentionality toward acting on behalf of others. In addition, this universalist frame allows Christian aid activists to build a cognitive component with a broad concern toward common good that orients their action on multiple social issues with the aim of bringing about a global change in society. Additionally, Christian aid volunteers perceive common good as a matter of social care, which leads to a specific construction of responsibility. Unlike moral voicing activists, they do not identify collective actors as accountable

for the promotion or deterioration of common good. This explains why they do not view matters in terms of political conflicts. Indeed, individuals are responsible for their fate and problems. This specific construction of responsibility orients Christian aid activists toward the social sphere rather than the political one. In addition, they perceive politics as a process in which civil society actors substitute state actors' accountability, develop a complementary relation to state actors, and herald an understanding of citizens as socially active beings. This cognitive path orients their action toward volunteerism.

The *workers' voicing activists* possess yet another intentionality. Their communitarian understanding of common good provides them with the cultural resources necessary to construct a specific relation to otherness. Workers are the particular group they identify with. This narrower relation to otherness orients their action toward the defense of employees' rights. Their communitarian understanding of common good also leads to a limited concern for social issues, as they are primarily motivated by the collective good of workers. This cognitive component gears a unionist's action toward the defense of his or her own collective good. Unlike Christian aid volunteers, but similarly to moral voicing activists, unionists see common good as a matter of social justice. This understanding requires the attribution of responsibility to the collective actors accountable for the violation of workers' rights, viewed as a public political conflict. Accordingly, this cognitive component ultimately orients unionists' action toward the political sphere. Finally, like moral voicing activists, unionists perceive state actors as accountable for common good. This perception constructs a conflictual relation to the state requiring citizens to be politically vigilant and active, ultimately orienting them toward contentious action.

A major finding of our study lies in the idea that activists possess a specific mind, which sets a particular intentionality and guides their action toward specific forms of commitment. As summarized in Figure 7.1, cognitive linkages—from broad meanings to more specific cognitive components that set intentionality—enable activists to perform joint actions and allow them to maintain this commitment over time. A first set of answers to our core question—why activists participate and sustain commitment in collective endeavors—hence relates to their minds and their synchronization with the other participants of their commitment community.

However, we had yet to explain why and how mind synchronization takes places. This is where *conversations*, the third pillar in our study, comes into play. As Tilly argued, mental constructions such as understandings, cognitive

components, and intentionalities do not happen “in the isolated recess of individual minds” (Tilly 2005, 59–60). Ties and ongoing conversations are the central breeding grounds of mind construction. As shown in Chapter 6, activists are not merely embedded in social networks but interact with fellow activists. Through communicational interactions, they practice the cultural scripts available in their commitment communities enabling them to construct socially shared cognitions fashioned in concert with others. In this respect, Yves was a counterfactual example in our study. This Greenpeace participant does not enjoy conversational interactions with fellow activists and consequently relies on understandings of common good and politics that do not overlap with those of moral voicing activists. Conversational interactions are hence essential to synchronizing views among participants.

Yet this synchronization process takes shape through specific *relational mechanisms*. Not all conversational opportunities allow activists to construct socially shared cognitions. We saw that *direct communicational interactions* are the key process by which an activist’s mind is shaped. Practicing cultural scripts implies face-to-face exchanges with fellow activists. Mediated interactions, such as those Yves experiences, are largely insufficient to construct socially shared cognitions. How, then, do passive members synchronize their understandings and sustain their commitment? Our findings show that conversational interactions that occur in the activists’ interpersonal network (friends or family members closely tied to or engaged in the same commitment community) are essential for passive members who seldom enjoy face-to-face interactions with fellow activists. Direct interaction in their interpersonal sphere is the channel that allows them to construct shared meanings.

Additionally, the *density of direct interactions* is a key relational mechanism for cross-committed activists. Activists committed in numerous commitment communities benefit from dense face-to-face interactions in each commitment site, and are enriched by cognitive elements of each community. Their understandings are thus blended. In contrast, cross-committed activists engaged in direct conversational interactions in only one commitment site, or who face unbalanced direct interactions in the various commitment communities, synchronize their understandings with the community they have the densest direct interactions with. Direct conversations with fellow activists, face-to-face communicational interactions in interpersonal networks, and the density of direct interactions for cross-committed activists are the main relational mechanisms by which the activists’ minds are synchronized.



Conversations and the mind are therefore intimately linked: A *cognitive-relational process* is at work and this is the fourth pillar of our study. Once activists integrate a commitment community they enter into a process of conversational interactions: Through talks and disputes they practice the cultural scripts available in this community that enable them to develop socially shared meanings allowing them to perform joint action. This cognitive-relational process is something of a virtuous circle that reinforces and maintains commitment through socially shared cognitions and communicational interactions.

The mind, conversations, and the resulting cognitive-relational process are essential pillars of sustained commitment. These findings are important in themselves but they also have implications for the study of social movements, and beyond the field. In the following sections, we emphasize four major implications: the necessity to bring the mind back in the study of social movements; to rely on an integrated perspective of social networks by taking their structural, instrumental, and interpretative sides into account; to further the integration of culture in our theoretical framework; and to acknowledge the importance of collective action in shaping democratic cultures.

### **Bringing the Mind Back In**

An activist's mind is involved in participating and sustaining commitment. This urges scholars to return to the mind in social movement studies and to grasp its implications thoroughly. Our findings underscore that the activist's mind is actually much more complex than suggested by previous studies on activism. Neither the three core cognitions highlighted by Gamson (1992) nor the concept of identity and that of self-interest developed by rational choice theorists take the complexity of activists' minds into account when attempting to explain an individual's commitment.

Our findings stress that the injustice, identity, and agency frames developed by Gamson are not sufficient cognitive conditions to explain commitment, either in contentious politics or in other forms of activism. Activists rely on a broader cognitive baseline to commit and to sustain participation: Perceptions of common good and politics are actually central, for two main reasons. First, activists who commit to enforce common good with specific means of action need to construct mental understandings of both dimensions to be able to act

and sustain their action. Common good and politics relate to the very aim and means of activism. Without meanings around both pillars of activism, action is unlikely to occur. Indeed, the activists studied here have all elaborated understandings about common good and politics, albeit with distinct factures. Second, broad understandings regarding common good and politics enable activists to develop specific cognitive elements that set their intentionality. Cognitions about otherness, responsibility, concern, and state relatedness result from participants' understandings of these two pillars of activism, and those mental constructs set their intention to act specifically. Such nodes of meanings are bound up together and orient the activists' action. Gamson's three core cognitions do not exhaust the cognitive resources necessary for commitment and sustainment.

Nor does identity deplete the complex ways in which the human mind works. Rather, identity is a major cognitive force for mobilizing and sustaining commitment in collective endeavors (e.g., Della Porta 1995; Diani 2011; Fireman and Gamson 1979; Gould 1995; Krinsky 1999; Mansbridge 2001; McAdam 1988; Melucci 1989; Passy 1998a; Polletta 2005; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980; Whittier 1995). But identity is composed of shared meanings, stories, and boundaries (Tilly 2005). Shared understandings, like those about common good and politics, relation to otherness, responsibility, concern, and state relatedness are meanings that concretely constitute a common identity. A plurality of meanings and cognitions are present behind the concept of identity. Socially shared meanings set identity by enabling activists to build inter-recognition among each other and delimit their group identity. Our study invites scholars to grasp meanings in their plurality—to substantialize what identities are—rather than remaining with a vague category that deprives the mind of its complexity.

Self-interest too does not cover the mental resources necessary to perform action. A person's interests certainly enter into play. However, as our study shows, intentionality is not only driven by self-fulfillment, and this is as true for activists who mobilize on behalf of others as it is for participants who defend their own group's interests, like unionists do. As many scholars have demonstrated, motivational monism fares poorly in explaining people's action (e.g., Batson 2011; Frey and Meier 2004; Monroe 2003; Ostrom 2000). Monism fails to grasp the complexity of the human mind and the various motivational springs that allow an individual to act. In line with other scholars (e.g., Sen 1990; Sorber and Wilson 1998; Passy 2013), we claim that a plurality of logics sets a person's intentionality.

The second insight of our work relates to the necessity *to return to the mind* in the study of contentious politics, and more generally of activism. Throughout the book we have shown that the activist's mindscape is crucial. It enables activists to make sense of their commitment, orients their action, and contributes to maintaining their participation. Alongside new-institutionalist scholars, we can argue that scrutinizing the subjective and individual levels is essential if we want to understand social process. But let us first settle our argument with Hechter (2000), who claims,

I have always taken the sociologist's principal task to be that of explaining variations in collective action, institutions, and formal organizations, among other social outcomes. [For example,] I seek to learn why revolutions occur in some places and times rather than others. . . . This is quite a different task from the explanation of cognition, perception, personality, and other-individual-level outcomes. At first glance, explaining social outcomes would appear a straightforward mandate, but any such impression is misleading. Ultimately, social outcomes result from individuals' relations with one another and with aspects of their environment. . . . Getting a better grip on . . . internal states would be an important contribution, but this information alone will not enable us to account for social outcomes. (pp. 697–98)

As sociologists, we should primarily devote our attention to explaining macro-sociological phenomena, such as revolutions and protests. To do so, Hechter claims that we must carefully analyze the micro-sociological level and pay attention to an individual's cognitions and perceptions. As social scientists we cannot neglect the investigation of people's subjectivities as well as how individuals make sense of others and their environment. Individuals and their minds are therefore a crucial nexus in social science. However, highlighting the importance of people's inner world is insufficient. And of course, this never was our claim. Yet, bringing the mind back helps explain key social phenomena (e.g., Blumer 1969; Berger and Luckmann 1967; Bourdieu 1977; Cicourel 1974; Collins 2004; Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1967). But why—and how—do individuals and their inner states engage in social processes?

Individuals do not rely on a personal mind but on a social mind that reflects the social sites they evolve in. Their social mind is developed through the practice of cultural scripts available in sites they are embedded in. Our study

clearly shows this process to be at work: By practicing the cultural scripts circulating in their respective commitment community, the activists' cognitive toolkit is nourished by those cultural elements. Similarly, practicing cultural scripts through conversations inevitably constructs and transforms socially shared cognitions that circulate in a community. In turn, it constructs the social network itself (White 1992). Conversations therefore lead to a constant *to-and-fro process* between an activist's mind and the social networks.

In this study, we focused essentially on the activist's mind, not on how it engages in the construction of the social network itself. However, this mutual construction between the individual's mind and social networks is actually what underlines our entire study and explanatory proposal. Cognitions at the micro-sociological level definitely participate in the construction of commitment communities, which contribute to contentious processes and outcomes, as Hechter stresses when he writes of revolution. Without this to-and-fro process between the activist's mind and commitment communities, and the bonds formed through conversational interactions, contention is unlikely to occur. While this process is not restricted to the micro-level, it is, however, intimately linked with individuals' minds.

New-institutionalist scholars underscore a similar process. For them, cognitions are central in explaining how people act, but above all how institutions are formed (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). As Zucker argues (1983, 25) "institutionalization is fundamentally a cognitive process." Whereas structuralists focused on social institutions and their impact on the level of the individual, new-institutionalists reverse the causality by claiming that cognitions build social institutions. Actually, new-institutionalists argue that cognitions and interactions enable patterns of action, which in turn define institutional settings.<sup>1</sup> This insight constitutes a major contribution to *the micro-foundation of social process*. The macro side of social process must, of course, not be ruled out, but as DiMaggio and Powell emphasize: "Any macrosociology rests on a microsociology" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991, 16).

<sup>1</sup> Resting upon psychological findings, new-institutionalists admit that the cognitive dimension of action is much more important previously thought, and action results most of the time from (automatic) cognitions that settle routines. Taken-for-granted cognitions (i.e., cultural scripts) are the matter from which institutions are made. Cognition is the underbelly of institutionalization; however, new-institutionalists drew on the work of interactionists to establish the links between cognition and institution stability. "Ritual games" (Goffman 1967) and "interaction ritual chains" (Collins 1988), operating at the level of practical consciousness, are essential to understanding institutionalization. Ritual interactions, which mobilize both cognitions and interactions, allow individuals to perform encounters in institutional settings. Stability hence emerges from the patterning of these interactions.

We cannot avoid scrutinizing cognitions and meanings at the micro-level if we wish to grasp social phenomena.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to the mind is hence essential in explaining the social process, whatever this might be. If we want to grasp contentious processes, as well as those pertaining to other forms of activism, we cannot set the individual aside. Nor can we silence the importance of cognition and the minds of individuals.

### Toward an Integrated Perspective of Social Networks

To explain commitment and sustained participation, we rely on an *interpretative conception of social networks*. Networks are not only structures, or an association of actors that are strategically linked together to influence other actors such as the state or economic actors. They are networks of meanings too. Networks are imbued with cultural components, like stories and shared cognitions, and they are constructed by those cultural components. Networks are “islands of meanings”: “An inter-animation of talks and ties” (Mische and White 1998; White 1992).

Relying on the interpretative side of social networks has allowed us to explain why, and how, ordinary people participate and sustain their action in collective endeavors. Other factors contribute to the sustainment of commitment in contentious politics and in other forms of activism.<sup>3</sup> As with any social process, various factors and dynamics enter into play to explain how commitment is sustained. Among those factors, the interplay between minds and conversations is crucial. We showed that activists could perform joint action with peers by relying on shared cognitions concerning common good and politics and that those shared meanings are formed and transformed through conversations activists enjoy in their respective commitment communities, and in their network of friends and relatives. If we do not conceive of

<sup>2</sup> Whereas the first developments in the new-intuitionist theory fall short of explaining changes, further work has shown that practicing cultural scripts provides less regularities than previously thought (e.g., Clemens and Cook 1999; Friedland and Alford 1991; Polletta 1998; Swidler 2001). This does not distract from the core contribution of new-institutionalists: Social phenomena rest upon micro-sociology.

<sup>3</sup> From the demand side, biographical availabilities matter. Once activists have less time at their disposal due to professional, domestic, or other constraints, they are more likely to leave their commitment aside. From the supply side, persistence in the social problem and in the mobilizing structures (e.g., organizations, networks) is key to sustaining commitment. When the social problem disappears, disengagement obviously follows.

networks as enclaves of meanings, as social scholars we cannot figure out why and how people come to be committed and maintain their collective effort.

Even so, we must remember that networks are institutional settings and are also driven by strategic action. Networks form and transform through talks and ties; that is to say that meanings and communicational interactions constitute social networks. But networks are also structural realities imbued with instrumental actions. We call for *an integrated relational perspective* that rests upon the structural, instrumental, and interpretative dimensions of social networks. Networks are ties that enable institutionalization of social structure; they are collections of interests that allow for instrumental action to be performed, and they constitute an enclave of meanings that enables the mutual construction of cultural scripts and, ultimately, the network itself. These three aspects cannot be separated when we talk about social networks.

Let us take two examples to illustrate how the interpretative, structural, and instrumental dimensions are amalgamated and shape the social process. The first example pertains to the whole *continuum of individual participation*. In this study, we focused on the interpretative facet of the social network and showed how it contributes to *sustaining mobilization* in contentious politics, volunteering, and unionism. But the structural and instrumental dimensions of the network are relevant too. Activists evolve in social networks that have a material and organizational reality. Those organizations and communities interact, challenge, and build alliances with collective actors who evolve in the public sphere. These structural realities are constructed through activists' ties and conversations, but these occur in institutional settings nonetheless. Those actors are also affected by instrumental action. They act strategically with their allies, opponents, the media, and the public. They also use instrumental action to engage with their members with the purpose of stabilizing their commitment and bridging passive members. This is carried out through newspapers, leaflets, and electronic newsletters. All three facets of networks—the interpretative, structural, and instrumental—serve to sustain an activist's participation in collective action.

These dimensions also intervene in the process of *joining collective action*. Here again, when activists join a commitment community, they join a structural and organizational reality. Instrumental strategies are also necessary to recruit new members in order to enlarge a movement's base. Finally, a cognitive-relational process also occurs at this stage. Before activists actualize their potential for participation in a specific collective endeavor, they undertake a decision-making process by assessing several parameters

pertaining to the commitment itself, like the chances of the collective action succeeding, the risk undertaken, the utility of their involvement in bringing about social change, or their personal availabilities. However, talks and ties are part of the decision-making process. As we underscored in previous studies (Passy 1998a, 2001, 2003), conversational interactions that take place with recruiters and within interpersonal networks markedly affect the potential of a person's joining commitment. Those social interactions help activists construct meanings that enable them to engage in contention (see also Kitts 2000; McAdam and Paulsen 1993).

Finally, all three dimensions of the social network intervene in the exit process too. When the structural setting declines or is consumed by internal conflicts, activists tend to leave the organization. Similarly, when the organization uses loose strategies to maintain their passive and active members, the latter are more likely to leave. However, as we underlined in previous work, a cognitive-conversational process is at work too (Passy 1998a, 2005; Passy and Giugni 2000). When activists' conversational interactions decrease within their commitment community and in their interpersonal networks, they progressively distance themselves from their commitment. We specifically want to underscore that when activists enjoy less intense conversations in their networks, and when their life spheres (e.g., work, family) do not overlap anymore with the object of their contention, the sense of their commitment slowly vanishes and leads to demobilization.

*Alliance building* is another example that illustrates how the interpretative, structural, and instrumental facets are contingent upon one another. Whereas in his previous work, Diani stressed the importance of the structural and instrumental facets of social networks, in *Cement of Civil Society* he clearly integrates the interpretative dimension of social networks to encourage alliance building among civil society actors (Diani 2015). Diani connects the three dimensions of networks by relying on two key analytical dimensions: resource allocation (which is the whole set of procedures through which decisions are taken regarding the use of organizational resources) and processes by which boundaries are defined. While the first dimension rests upon structural and instrumental understandings of networks, the second enables Diani to bring the interpretative facet of networks into his theoretical development. Relying on boundary works that emphasize that boundaries are composed of identities, meanings, and stories (Lamont 1993; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Tilly 2005), he considers how ideational elements help build coalitions among civil society organizations. Alongside structure

and strategy, Diani acknowledges the crucial role of culture in the process of alliance building. As he underlines: “Culture shapes how traits and relations combine in specific settings” (p. 195). Diani hence shows how modes of coordination occur and transform in Bristol and Glasgow. Structure, strategy, and culture are intimately tied together and aptly intervene in the process of alliance building.

An individual’s participation and the alliances collective actors build are two straightforward examples that show that *an integrated relational perspective* which rests upon the structural, instrumental, and interpretative dimensions of social networks is essential to explaining social processes that rely on networks. To move toward an integrated relational perspective is what we advocate. For many decades, scholars relied on a structural or instrumental understanding of social networks. In the mid-nineties, the cultural turn in sociology led meaning-making to be considered as a powerful dimension of social life (Alexander, Jacobs, and Smith 2012), and this turn highly contributed to thinking about networks in a distinct manner. It allowed scholars to grasp the interpretative dimension of social interactions, and with his seminal work, White (1992) was a key author in conceiving of networks as meaningful realities. Since then, the three dimensions of networks have been studied separately, and in a somewhat competitive manner. Actually, all three help us understand what networks really are: institutional settings imbued with strategies, which form and transform through talks and ties. This integrated perspective on social networks not only impact how we think and grasp networks in the social movement studies or in the research domain of activism, but also beyond these fields.

### **Integrating Culture in Social Movements Studies**

Meanings hold a central place in this study. Following Jasper, we see “culture as meanings that are shared by individuals, along with the words, artworks, rituals, and other things perceived as embodying those meanings” (2014, 24). We consider that culture is not an objective reality that occurs outside of people’s heads; it is inside individuals even if meanings are shaped and triggered by interactions with the outside (Cerulo 2002; DiMaggio and Markus 2010; Swidler 1986). Our findings and the cognitive-relational model we develop have implications for how we apprehend culture as a social process in the study of social movements.



For decades, social movement scholars treated culture as an “analytical noise” (Polletta 2004a, 162). Culture was a residual category at first, but when it was taken into consideration, it was conceived as an objective structure impacting contentious processes from the outside by shaping individual and collective behaviors (Goodwin and Jasper 2004). This conception was intimately tied to the Parsonian functionalism of culture (Alexander, Jacobs, and Smith 2012; Alexander and Smith 2010) and was unsuitable for explaining the complex dynamics of culture. Many social movement scholars try to challenge this conception and argue that culture is not a free-floating and independent process (Polletta 2004a, 2008). Culture is actually constitutive of interests and sets the terms of strategic action.

To turn culture “from outside in” constituted a major challenge for social movements scholars (Polletta 2004a),<sup>4</sup> and we review some of these challenges now: First, scholars had to acknowledge that collective actors are strategic and self-interested actors and had to forego dualities such as objectivity and subjectivity, or interest and identity. Second, scholars had to distance themselves from Geertzian or Parsonian understandings of culture, where culture is viewed as a constraining component of social life, leaving no room for actors’ freedom and undermining actors’ strategic use of culture. Finally, scholars had to show the substantial role of culture in social processes and highlight how social processes are empirically imbued with culture.

Those challenges have been met by several scholars who bring considerable insights to refine our understanding of contentious dynamics (Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett 2002; Polletta 2008). Unsurprisingly, a major avenue of thought emerged alongside the new institutionalist theory. Culture configures the institutional rules of the game and institutional schemes. These then shape how institutions operate and are reproduced through actors’ routines. Drawing on this theoretical account, scholars show how culture operates in contentious politics: designing organizational patterns (e.g., Clemens 1997; Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Reger 2002); channeling activists’ claim-making (e.g., Barker and Lavalette 2002; Koopmans et al. 2005); altering institutional reproduction (e.g., Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Sewell 1992); transforming cultural schemes (e.g., Naples 2002; M. Young 2007); or even generating new institutional practices and schemas (Davis 2005).

<sup>4</sup> It is also the main theoretical challenge in the current sociology of culture (e.g., Mohr and White 2008; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Swidler 1986, 2001).

A second key path arose from Swidler's work, which showed that culture has to be conceived as a strategy (Swidler 1986, 2001). Individual and collective actors strategically use culture to perform action that necessarily requires some degree of agency. Opting for this heuristic path, social movement scholars underscore that collective actors address certain political demands rather than others (Whittier 2001), constructed in the course of protest specific claims by mobilizing specific cultural elements (Polletta 2006). They also indicate that cultural expressions enter into an activist's own tactical calculation (Groves 2001). They show that activists use culture practically and creatively. Those studies, drawing either on new institutionalism or Swidler accounts, emphasize the substantial role of culture in contentious politics but stress that culture is part of contentious dynamics.

As insightful these studies can be, they nevertheless tend *to overlook people's minds*. Polletta rightly argues that culture is not only in people's heads (Polletta 2004b). The above-mentioned studies aptly point out that culture is part of strategizing, organizing, institutionalizing, and interacting with other players. Yet those studies focus mainly on the interplay between the meso- and the macro-sociological level. Most of them omit the activist's mind. Yet, as we have underscored, individuals' cognitive toolkit is an important piece to explain contentious processes. Those cultural resources participate in the contentious game: They set people's intentionality and orient their action; they enable people, through talks and ties, to practice cultural scripts available in their social community; they modify and generate new cultural scripts; and finally, they allow the institutionalization of the social network in which activists are committed.

Activists' cognitive toolkit plays an important role in explaining contentious processes, and it cannot be cropped out from the understanding of contentious dynamics and other social processes as well. This implies that social movement scholars should aim to better integrate culture into their theoretical frameworks, specifically by binding the macro- and meso-sociological levels with that of the individuals. As we have shown here, and as new institutionalists highlight, individuals' cognitive toolkit is an important piece to explain social processes. As social movement scholars and as sociologists, we cannot set aside the individual's cultural resources available in his or her cognitive toolkit. However, cultural processes occurring at the individual level are intimately bound to institutions. As stressed above, talk and ties shape activists' minds but also form and transform networks (commitment communities). Individuals are not independent of their social sites;

both levels work together. In addition, we know with new institutionalist accounts that we cannot grasp social phenomena without taking into account meanings at the individual level. Macro-sociological explanation rests upon a micro-sociology where cognitions are central. New institutionalist scholars provide substantial forays into features of the micro-foundation of the social process. Social movement scholars should ground contentious processes more in micro-dynamics and should integrate the micro-foundations of social processes in their theoretical and empirical accounts.

Grasping culture from inside results in better theories of mobilization, as Polletta (2008) rightly pointed out. But meaning—that is culture—is also in people’s minds, enabling and constraining action, creating and modifying cultural scripts, and crafting and transforming institutions. Our future task is to incorporate culture in social movement studies by taking into account cultural dynamics occurring at the level of individuals, which are bound to the macro- and meso-sociological levels.

### Democracies in Mind

One illustration of how culture can be incorporated into social movement studies was our query concerning *activists’ ideals of citizenship*. We employed the term citizenship not to describe rules for nationality acquisition (Koopmans et al. 2005; Marshall 1950) but to show how an individual conceives his or her role as a citizen within a democratic regime (Dalton 2008; Schudson 1998). Close to our results, scholars who have looked at understandings of citizenship have found that multiple forms of citizenship exist within a country. Dalton (2008), for example, differentiates between a “duty-based” and an “engaged” conception of citizenship. The former emphasizes voting and social order and the latter active participation in voluntary groups and solidarity. In a similar vein, Mouffe (1992, 4) distinguishes between a liberal citizen who is a bearer of rights and a radical democratic citizen as “somebody who acts as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking.” Although these analytical categories come close to the democratic cultures found in the commitment communities studied here, our work shows that democratic cultures are more diverse than these two-dimensional schemes would have us believe.

As we have shown, not all activists are strong citizens. Different democratic cultures (and certainly undemocratic ones too) are imagined and lived

in our societies and thereby enter the public sphere through collective action. Certainly, a vague and generic democratic culture exists on the national level and shapes a general idea of citizenship. As shown in Chapter 1, direct democratic institutions invite citizens in Switzerland to discuss and participate in politics at least four times a year. However, the analysis of activists' perceptions of citizenship enabled us to temper an overly structuralistic notion of culture. There is not one homogeneous but multiple democratic cultures lived and experienced concurrently in different commitment communities. Individuals practice different cultural scripts because they are inscribed in particular sites. Thereby, *cultures shape minds and minds simultaneously shape cultures*.

In this study, we wanted to know whether all activists are strong citizens and, following our theoretical argument, whether they contribute to a realization of a strong democracy as described by Benjamin Barber (1984). We found different conceptions of citizenship across the three commitment communities: *Activists have particular democratic cultures in mind* and consequently, different types of democratic regimes are promulgated through the actions of these communities. Moral voicing activists are strong citizens, they are concerned by a broad range of common goods and stress the importance of being politically vigilant and active in participatory politics. We found another understanding of citizenship within the Christian aid community, which we labeled as social citizens. While these members are also concerned by a broad range of common good, they associate political activity primarily with voting and are skeptical of contentious politics. Finally, the third conception of citizenship is that of workers' rights activists, who stress the importance of political vigilance and protest activity, but they restrict this idea to the defense of their own group. Accordingly, we labeled them as resistant citizens concerned by politics but not by common good.

In addition to showing that different democratic cultures exist within these communities, the investigation of activists' understandings of citizenship is also important because these *cultures contribute to (de-)democratization processes*. Meaningful interactions within commitment communities contribute to the construction and transformation of collective frames—for instance ideals of citizenship—which in turn effects collective action. Collective action, then, is an animating element of democracies. While “popular struggle affects whether and how democratization comes to pass” (Tilly 2007, xi), other forms of collective action effect (de-)democratization as well. The civil ideals of the three communities under scrutiny here clearly favor

a specific democratic regime. However, it is perfectly imaginable that other communities, not studied here, produce the reverse effect and contribute to de-democratization.

We were inspired by Barber (1984), who argued that strong citizens are required for a realization of a strong democracy; other proponents of a participatory theory of democracy support this thesis as well (Macpherson 1977; Pateman 1970). In a similar vein, proponents of other types of democratic regimes argue that political participation is only required to elect decision makers. In this view, political apathy is required for the stability of a democratic regime because the majority of the population holds anti-democratic values (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Dahl 1956; Sartori 1962). Other commentators have shown that understandings of citizenship have a systematic effect on political activities (Bengtsson and Christensen 2014) and that robust democracies require politically tolerant citizens, who have incorporated a civic culture and interpersonal trust and who participate in politics (Almond and Verba 1963; Sullivan and Transue 1999). We are not in a position to directly assess the link between the form and intensity of political participation and the stability of a democratic regime. Yet we observe that different ideas of citizenship, disseminated by different commitment communities, exist within one democratic regime.

In other words, our study has shown that understandings of citizenship are one outcome of the practice of meaningful interactions, the practice and transformation of cultural scripts, and sustained participation. Cognitive and relational processes are thus crucial to understanding the relationship between associations and democracies because different associations produce different democratic cultures. The comparison of three commitment communities demonstrates that we are confronted with as many ideas of how a “good citizen” (Schudson 1998) should act. Consequently, *particular and radically different democratic cultures are disseminated within a country*. In that sense, strong citizens tend to incorporate a strong or participatory (Macpherson 1977; Pateman 1970) democratic culture with an emphasis on conflict and inclusion; social citizens prefer a representative one (Dahl 1956; Sartori 1962; Schumpeter 1942) with citizens electing elites who do politics for them; and citizens with a communitarian democratic culture (Etzioni 1993) tend toward contentious participation. Thus, the analysis of activists’ understanding of citizenship enables us to show how commitment communities contribute to ongoing processes of (de-)democratization (Tilly

2007) by creating spaces where (un-)democratic cultures are constantly constructed and modified.

### Further Research

We have sought to provide four key contributions in this book. First, we bring the mind back in the study of social movements. Contrary to the narrow view of the activist's mind scholars have focused on, we opted for a broader conception of the mind, which we view as a key player in the game of activism. Indeed, it enables individuals to act and to perform joint action thanks to shared meanings fashioned in concert with others. A second contribution is linked to our conceptualization of social networks, apprehended in light of White's notion of "islands of meanings." We underscore that the interpretative side of networks (along with its structural and strategic counterparts) has a forceful impact on the action activists carry out. Networks are imbued with cultural components that shape the activist's mind. Through talks and ties, activists practice the cultural scripts available in their commitment community, with consequences for their thoughts and ultimately their actions. Communicational interactions are therefore also crucial to activism as they have an obvious bearing on commitment and the sustainment of participation. Seeing networks in their cultural dimension enables us to bring culture back into our heuristic model, forming our third contribution to the literature. We show that culture enters the activist's mind through conversational interactions with his or her peers, thereby having a direct effect on the commitment process and the sustainment of participation. Culture does not exist outside social processes, as several social movements scholars have claimed (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Koopmans et al. 2005; Mische 2007; Polletta 2004b); however, noting this does not suggest that culture is not part of people's minds. Quite the contrary: We saw that culture enters people's heads and clearly shapes commitment processes. Finally, the last contribution of our study is to stress that various conceptions of democratic cultures exist in activists' minds. Activists possess a specific democratic culture depending on the commitment communities they evolve in. They accordingly develop distinct ideals of political citizenship. And through the performance of collective action, these conceptions are disseminated through society.

Further research is of course necessary to deepen our contributions. More work is needed to enlarge our knowledge of the human mind, of meaningful social networks, of the importance of culture in contentious dynamics, and of the various conceptions of democratic culture people construct. However, bringing a broad notion of mind back to the study of social movements was the central aspect of our research study. We therefore wish to conclude by proposing avenues for future research centered on this element, particularly when it comes to the investigation of activists' cognitions.

We relied on a static research design in this study. This meant we investigated activists in action and collected data at one point in time. This design was appropriate to the examination of how activists' minds are synchronized and helped highlight the impact of meaningful interactions. To further our knowledge, we should now adopt longitudinal research designs. Social scientists know that learning is a lifelong process: People develop understandings and practices that they modify throughout their lives. We are more prone to change than previous research on socialization has suggested (Sigel 1995), which reflects the idea of a plasticity of the human mind, now confirmed by various disciplines, the neurosciences most notably. To study these cognitive changes, scholars must opt for longitudinal research designs that take change and time into consideration.

Longitudinal studies would allow scholars to develop four key issues. A before/after research design makes it possible to know whether *an individual's mind is modified, or transformed, once he or she joins a collective endeavor*. Does the mind change once individuals engage in a commitment community (and to what extent)? Does change necessarily happen after commitment, suggesting that cognitive resources were hence essential to enrollment? And do new members already possess minds largely synchronized with the community they join? Answering this question matters. As underlined in Chapter 1, we are still confronted with ambiguous findings on the topic. Most scholars stress that cognitions are key to joining activism: People with a potential for political participation, defined by their values and social anchorages, are far more prone to joining specific contentious sites than others without this potential for mobilization. Scholars who hold this view argue that the mind conditions human behavior. Most rely on a static conception of the mind, whereby values are conceived as core beliefs that are unlikely to be altered over the course of a person's life. Munson's work (2009) revealed distinctly different findings. Indeed, he showed that before joining pro-life contention, some activists were already well synchronized

with the movement's views, while others were not. Some of the activists he studied were ambivalent on abortion and pro-choice positions. Once they joined pro-life groups, they underwent a socializing process that led them to align their views, or even to convert their pro-choice understandings into pro-life ones. Synchronization hence occurred progressively with fellow activists. Munson shows how malleable and susceptible to change the mind is. And his work is close to recent studies on the socialization process mentioned above. Munson also stressed that various patterns of mental change took place once activists joined a commitment community: Some changed their minds; other did not.

Our study has also highlighted various patterns of mental change. Even though we cannot validate those findings—they require retrospective data and therefore lead to problems of causality—we saw that some activists changed their understandings of common good and politics slightly, while others radically altered their views. Adriana, Lisa, Yan, Mathieu, and André are good examples of minor changes, or no changes whatsoever. Before joining the moral voicing, Christian aid, or workers' voicing community, they evolved in interpersonal networks either sensitized to the issues or including relations already committed to these causes. Conversations in their interpersonal network had provided them with specific understandings of common good and politics, so that joining activism did not drastically alter their cultural toolkit. By contrast, for activists like Eva or Christine, views about common good and politics underwent substantial change. Like many unionists, Eva joined the workers' voicing community after she experienced problems in the workplace. Before she came to Unia, her interpersonal network was not particularly attuned to unions. According to Eva, her entrance into the unionist community significantly shaped her views about politics and common good. Christine benefited from a similar mental change, having joined Caritas with no prior experience in activism and with an interpersonal network only weakly tied to the Christian aid community. During our long conversation with Christine, she emphasized how her views on common good and politics were shaped by her repeated conversations with other Caritas volunteers.

Relying on a longitudinal research design would also enable scholars to underscore whether certain *necessary cognitions* are required for a person to join activism in specific commitment communities. Gamson stated that injustice, agency, and identity frames are necessary cognitive components for a person to take part in contentious politics (Fireman and Gamson 1979;



Gamson 1992). But he leaves many questions unanswered. Are those frames necessary for all individuals to join contentious activities? Does variation exist among individuals who join protest groups? Are broader cognitions, like those highlighted in this study, required to joining activism too? Must activists construct certain synchronized views pertaining to the aim and means of the commitment community, or are those views developed only once participation has begun? The question of indispensable cognitions remains an open one in the research on social movements.

Longitudinal research designs are also relevant for examining what occurs during commitment and for understanding *whether the activist's mind changes once the person is committed*, and to what extent. We could then examine the time span needed for synchronization to occur. Take Pierrette, for example. She joined Greenpeace and therefore the moral voicing community a mere three months before we interviewed her: In her case, synchronization occurred rapidly. However, we can readily imagine that not all synchronizations follow this pattern. The question remains tightly linked to the matter of agency, creating two interrelated questions. First, how do activists make sense of the cultural scripts that circulate in their commitment site? More precisely, how do they merge those scripts with their personal cognitive resources? Second, how do they transform the cultural scripts available in their community through conversation with peers? These theoretical questions can only be answered with longitudinal data.

Finally, a before/after research design is required to encompass the question of *mental resistance*. Mental resistance occurs when activists join a commitment community but do not experience mind synchronization. They reject the cognitive elements that conflict with their own cultural toolkits. Two distinct examples surfaced in our study. The first relates to activists who join a commitment community but do not sustain their commitment. Adriana is a case in point. She was already a moral voicing contender when she joined the Christian aid community and had been involved for more than a year in an association that sought to stamp out chronic poverty. However, she gave up this commitment although she remains convinced that supporting the poor is necessary. Adriana dissolved her commitment because her views did not mesh with the cultural scripts that circulated in the community. Adriana perceives poverty as a fundamental injustice, whereas the Christian aid community holds fast to the idea that poverty is a matter of personal failure. Her views on the nature of common good were hence quite different from those promulgated by the community. The same holds for her relation to politics. For Adriana, commitment involves political resistance, whereas Christian

aid volunteers view commitment as a substitute for state action. Edwige's case is similar. She was committed to Caritas and was involved in the moral voicing community for less than a year. As she relates: "They were too politicized for me; everything was a political fight, that's ridiculous. Then, everything was an injustice! They really exaggerated. . . . It was too much for me, so I left." The lack of fit between their own cognitive world and that of their community did not allow synchronization to occur: They rejected the incorporation of cognitive elements that failed to resonate with their cultural toolkit.

The second situation of mental resistance pertains to activists who participate in a commitment community but sustain their participation without sharing common understandings with their peers. Yves's case—as a Greenpeace activist engaged for fifteen years—is relevant here. While we can explain why he is not synchronized with his commitment site, the reason behind his sustained commitment remains elusive. Yves maintains his commitment despite lacking socially shared meanings. The most probable hypothesis relates to the nature of his commitment. In Switzerland, environmental contention is highly consensual: Both public opinion and state actors are inclined to develop public policies to curtail environmental damage (see Chapter 2). Activists who mobilize on consensual issues, like Yves, can engage in activism without developing socially shared cognitions with their commitment community. Both cases call for more work on mental resistance and invite us to consider how mental synchronization relates to levels of political challenge. For example, among pro-migrant activists interviewed—and migrants' rights is a highly confrontational political issue in Switzerland—all were synchronized with their fellow activists and their commitment community. The cognitions behind these varied configurations require further study.

Investigating what mental changes occur following commitment can enhance our understanding as to the biographical impact of activism and help us comprehend socialization processes (Passy and Monsch 2018). How and to what extent does joining a commitment community socialize individuals? The question is key to understanding the contentious process: How does protest alter people's mindsets and ultimately their behavior? Little has been said on the topic and what we have is beset by problems of causality, due to the lack of a longitudinal research design (Giugni 20014, 2013; McAdam 1999). A before/after research design would avoid issues of causality and provide robust findings. Further study of mental changes would also highlight how activists use their own agency to synchronize their minds and transform the cultural scripts circulating within their commitment communities,

thereby providing insights into socialization processes during action (Passy and Monsch 2018). Light would then be shed on the manner in which individuals make use of what Levi-Strauss called “bricolage”: how individuals manage their cognitive resources—those acquired from practicing cultural scripts from social sites they recently joined and their previous stock of knowledge—to perform action.

A second avenue of further research would be to attain a better understanding of the human mind. Scholars should face the complexity of the human mind with the aim of providing more accurate understandings of the mental processes that affect action. Work has shown that cognitions and emotions are intimately intertwined (e.g., Barrett, Dunbar, and Lycett 2002; Kahneman 2011; Nussbaum 2001). Yet too often cognitions and emotions are analyzed separately in the study of social movements. Several researchers have shown that emotions play a significant role in contentious dynamics (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Jasper 1998, for a review see 2011). However, we know of this interplay more from a theoretical than an empirical angle. Jasper stressed that emotions shape ideas, construct identities, elaborate cognitions, and motivate and promote action (Jasper 1997, 2014). Other scholars emphasized that emotions amplify and accelerate individual processes (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). We have here seen that cognitions are emotionally laden and probably help set activists’ intentionalities. However, studies so far only intimate what requires empirical spelling out. We therefore enjoin social movement scholars to analyze how emotions relate to action in more detail, and thinking and feeling processes should be incorporated into the study of social movements with more attentiveness. Interdisciplinary exchanges between studies on cognition and emotion will certainly improve our understanding of contentious processes.

We began this book with the ambitious aim of transcending the narrow view of activists’ minds that recurs in social movement studies. But the qualitative experience of the world, as Searle (2004) stated, is only one piece in the puzzle of commitment and sustained participation. Conversations are another important component. We underscored the interplay between the mind and conversations so as to examine how activists make sense of one reality and are able to produce another one through commitment. We hope this inquiry will continue and lead to a broadened interest in the relevance of the mind in the study of social movements.

## APPENDIX

### A.1 Organizational Characteristics

Table A.1 provides additional information on organizations whose members are part of the study (see also Chapter 1, Section “Comparing Commitment Communities”). Most of the information is drawn from their respective websites. As such, it complements the information given in the section titled “Comparing Commitment Communities,” in Chapter 1. For the number of members and the annual income, we refer to the year 2009, when our research began.

### A.2 Interview Guideline

The guideline served as a preparation for each interview. As described in the methodological part of Chapter 1—“Studying Activists’ Minds”—the interviews, especially the first part, were open conversations and did not impose questions or suggest answers. The guideline was thus mostly useful in assessing the first interview in order to prepare the second one, that is, to elaborate on life periods and understandings barely touched on during the first interview.

#### I. Guideline for the First Interview

##### Introduction

1. Presentation of the interview
  - 1.1. To understand interviewee’s commitment and especially his or her commitment for others
2. Procedure of the interview (in two parts)
  - 2.1. First interview: to understand interviewee and his or her life history better
  - 2.2. Second interview: to discuss topics that emerged during the first interview
3. Regarding the interview itself
  - 3.1. Open discussion: Interviewer says, “You can tell me whatever you want and whatever you think is important when it comes to your commitment and experiences”
  - 3.2. Interview is strictly anonymous
  - 3.3. Interview is recorded to facilitate the analysis
    - 3.3.1. Asking permission to record the interview
  - 3.4. Thank the participant for collaboration

**Table A.1** Main Features of Organizations

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<b>Solidarity across Borders (SAB)</b>	
Foundation	SAB is a national organization founded in 2000 after the merger of two organizations committed to the defense of migrants' rights: BODS (Movement for an open, democratic and solidary Switzerland) and AKS (Asylum Coordination Switzerland).
Organization units	One unit in Bern, Switzerland. SAB is considered an umbrella org. of the national movement for the defense of migrants' rights. Many, often small and mostly urban, networks have tight links with this organization.
Action domains	Asylum; Sans-Papiers (undocumented migrants); Schengen-Europe; Migration
Annual income	180,000 Swiss Francs (2009: 189,000, 2016: 179,000)
Membership	3,193 members (82% passive members; 18% active members)
Website	sosf.ch
<b>Greenpeace (GP)</b>	
Foundation	GP is an international organization. In 1971, a small team of activists set sail from Vancouver, Canada, to bear witness to US nuclear testing at Amchitka, a tiny island off the Western coast of Alaska. A Swiss Greenpeace branch has existed since 1984. The branch's first spectacular action took place in 1986 when a group of activists chained themselves to trees in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, to protest a plan to cut down a huge swath of trees for a World Cup ski event.
Organization units	The national main office is located in Zurich; 12 regional groups are situated in the other urban regions.
Action domains	Nuclear energy; chemical contamination; gene technology; climate; biodiversity
Annual income	25,000,000 CHF (2009: 23,200,000, 2016: 24,900,000 CHF)
Membership	166,927 members (99.7% passive members; 0.3% active members)
Website	greenpeace.ch
<b>Society for Threatened Peoples (STP)</b>	
Foundation	STP is an international organization, established in 1970, emerging from the "Action Help to Biafra" which began in Hamburg, Germany. The movement denounced the genocide in Biafra during the summer of 1968. Since 1989, a branch of the STP has existed in Switzerland. The first actions of STP Switzerland concerned the peoples of Tibet, the Penan in Malaysia, the Yanomami in Brazil, the Papua in Indonesia, and the Yenish in Switzerland.

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Table A.1 Continued

Organization units	One unit in Bern, Switzerland.
Action domains	Human rights; collective rights for minorities; self-determination for indigenous people
Annual income	2,000,000 CHF (2009: 1,800,000 CHF, 2016: 2,080,000 CHF)
Membership	11,868 members (99.9% passive members; 0.1% active members)
Website	gfbv.ch
<b>Caritas Geneva</b>	
Foundation	Caritas is an international organization, founded in 1897 in Cologne, Germany, by the theologian Lorenz Werthmann. The purpose was to avoid the fragmentation of Catholic social assistance efforts. Caritas Switzerland was founded four years later. Caritas Geneva has existed since 1942 with the aim of helping victims of war and of those who have suffered a violation of their human rights.
Organization units	6 sub-units in Geneva, 16 regional Caritas units in Switzerland.
Action domains	Help the poor and the elderly on a local level, providing social and legal support, emergency relief, or youth integration, and assisting in the integration of migrants.
Annual income	1,500,000 CHF (2009: na, 2016: 1,500,000 CHF)
Membership	8,461 members (91% passive members; 9% active members)
Website	caritasge.ch
<b>Unia</b>	
Foundation	Unia is a national organization founded in 2004 as a result of the merger between the union of engineers and watchmakers (SMUV), the union of construction and industrial workers (GBI), and the union of transport and foodstuff workers (VHTL).
Organization units	14 regional units and about 110 sub-units in Switzerland.
Action domains	Negotiation of collective labor agreements; rights of employees; social security; provision of individual help; training and guidance for members
Annual income	142,000,000 (2009: na, 2016: 141,800,000 CHF)
Membership	193,406 members
Website	unia.ch

## Life history

1. Parents and early childhood
  - 1.1. Social context, origin, and composition of family
    - 1.1.1. Country of origin
    - 1.1.2. Profession of parents
    - 1.1.3. Material and socio-economic conditions
    - 1.1.4. Type of family: large, compound, single parent, etc.
  - 1.2. Ideological, religious, and identity context of the family
    - 1.2.1. Religion
    - 1.2.2. Politics
    - 1.2.3. Important values of the family
    - 1.2.4. Dominant identity
    - 1.2.5. Understanding of humanity
    - 1.2.6. Associative commitment
  - 1.3. Ambiance in the family
    - 1.3.1. Type of family: liberal, authoritarian
    - 1.3.2. Openness to others (closeness of the nuclear family)
    - 1.3.3. Conflicts: values, lifestyles, political or other commitments
  - 1.4. Influence: Commitment
    - 1.4.1. Family context plays a role in person's commitment choices?
2. Youth
  - 2.1. Social and relational context
    - 2.1.1. School/university: success, failure
    - 2.1.2. Type of activities: music, sport, travels
    - 2.1.3. Networks: church, sports, etc.
    - 2.1.4. Friends
  - 2.2. Important events
    - 2.2.1. Individuals who were particularly important for interviewee in this period (family or other)
    - 2.2.2. Events that were particularly important in this period (individual or historic event)
  - 2.3. Subjective world
    - 2.3.1. Understanding of the world/society: injustices, revolts, etc.
    - 2.3.2. Political, religious, social beliefs
    - 2.3.3. Dominant identity
    - 2.3.4. Understanding of humanity
    - 2.3.5. Idealized individuals
    - 2.3.6. Lectures
    - 2.3.7. Perception of the future
    - 2.3.8. Memory of this period of person's life: easy, hard
  - 2.4. Influence: commitment
    - 2.4.1. Youth and its role in defining commitment choices
3. Adult life
  - 3.1. Social context
    - 3.1.1. Profession (changes, employment course)
    - 3.1.2. Material and socio-economic conditions
    - 3.1.3. Travels, living abroad

- 3.2. Relation and affective context
  - 3.2.1. Friends (type, milieu, commitment)
  - 3.2.2. Partner (type, milieu, commitment)
  - 3.2.3. Children
  - 3.2.4. Networks: church, sports, etc.
- 3.3. Ideological, religious, and identity context
  - 3.3.1. Understanding of the world: changes and intensification
  - 3.3.2. Important values, beliefs
  - 3.3.3. Religion (commitment, practices, beliefs)
  - 3.3.4. Politics (political orientation, political and social sensitiveness)
  - 3.3.5. Dominant identities: Interviewer asks, What defines you today? (evolution and intensification, new and abandoned identities)
  - 3.3.6. Vision and understanding of humanity/society
  - 3.3.7. Development of an interest for political/civic commitment
- 4. Political and civic commitment
  - 4.1. First political and civic commitment
    - 4.1.1. At what moment (age, life period)
    - 4.1.2. Political issues
    - 4.1.3. Which organization/network (type)
    - 4.1.4. Person's activity within this organization/network (intensity)
    - 4.1.5. Motivation for this commitment (Why this one?)
    - 4.1.6. Meaning of this commitment (What does it represent in your life?)
    - 4.1.7. Incentives (opportunities, networks, friends, media, etc.)
    - 4.1.8. Influence of networks/friends on person's motivations
    - 4.1.9. Evident commitment, natural (link with your life, beliefs, interests, or coincidence)
  - 4.2. Course of interviewee's political and civic commitments
    - 4.2.1. Other commitments
    - 4.2.2. Issues
    - 4.2.3. Organization/networks
    - 4.2.4. New center of interests/preoccupations (changing political beliefs/political events)
    - 4.2.5. Motivation for this commitment (Why this one?)
    - 4.2.6. Meaning of this commitment (What does it represent?)
    - 4.2.7. Incentives (opportunities, networks, friends, media, etc.)
    - 4.2.8. Influence of networks/friends on person's motivations
    - 4.2.9. Evident commitment, natural (link with person's life, beliefs, interests or coincidence)
    - 4.2.10. Panorama of interviewee's commitments (motivations, incentives, links between commitments)
  - 4.3. Motivation for political commitment
    - 4.3.1. Motivation that brought him or her to commit (political life in general)
    - 4.3.2. What pushes you to act (beliefs, necessity to act for a better society, etc.)
    - 4.3.3. Let others commit (commitment is costly)
  - 4.4. Politics, civil society, and the role of citizens
    - 4.4.1. Perception of political authorities (state, government, democracy /(de) legitimization)
    - 4.4.2. Perception of civil society ((de)legitimization, necessity, collective action)



- 4.4.3. Perception of a citizen's role (active, vigilant or passive, only voting, social responsibility)
- 4.4.4. Construction of these perceptions (friends, networks, events, family)
- 4.4.5. Common good (defend, promote, protect, etc.)
- 4.4.6. Motivation to maintain commitment (beliefs, friends, networks, events)
- 4.4.7. Efficacy of this commitment for social change (collective and individual efficacy)
- 5. Commitment to organization X (SAB; STP; GP; Caritas, Unia)
  - 5.1. Action
    - 5.1.1. Since when
    - 5.1.2. Choice of this organization/group: issues, action repertoire, identity, members, coincidence, friends, etc.)
    - 5.1.3. What they have done: intensity
  - 5.2. Meaning of this action/commitment
    - 5.2.1. Importance of this commitment: central to the person's life?
    - 5.2.2. What does it represent to you? Are you attached to it?
    - 5.2.3. If important: Why is it an injustice? Why is responsibility important? How do you identify? etc.
    - 5.2.4. If important: How did you become a member?
    - 5.2.5. Definition of commitment
  - 5.3. Motivations and cognitions: Why?
    - 5.3.1. Motivations that have brought person to this commitment
    - 5.3.2. Evident or natural commitment
  - 5.4. Relation to others
    - 5.4.1. Identification with the group for which interviewee is committed
    - 5.4.2. Identification process (family, events, networks, friends, etc.)
    - 5.4.3. Conception of humanity (common faith, shared humanity?)
    - 5.4.4. Interdependence between individuals
    - 5.4.5. Identification with other people in difficult situations
  - 5.5. Relational context
    - 5.5.1. Incentives for commitment: opportunities, networks, friends, media, etc.
    - 5.5.2. Commitment process: How did you start? Networks, trust, etc.
    - 5.5.3. Influence of networks/friends on person's motivations
    - 5.5.4. Motivation to maintain the commitment (beliefs, friends/networks, events)
  - 5.6. Efficacy
    - 5.6.1. Collective efficacy: Did something change due to political action?
    - 5.6.2. Individual efficacy: Did something change due to person's personal actions?
    - 5.6.3. Is efficacy important for commitment?
    - 5.6.4. Individual benefits of commitment
      - 5.6.4.1. If yes: before or after commitment started?
- 6. End of the first interview
  - 6.1. Points to add
  - 6.2. Comments on the interview
  - 6.3. Other stuff
  - 6.4. Thank you
  - 6.5. Schedule second interview

## II. Guideline for the second interview

### In-depth interview

1. Organizational context
  - 1.1. Choice and perceptions of organization X
    - 1.1.1. Why this organization? Issues, action repertoire, identities, members, friends, etc.—networks
    - 1.1.2. Most important issues/themes for you, why?
    - 1.1.3. Ideological and political orientation of the organization
    - 1.1.4. Action repertoire
    - 1.1.5. Importance of commitment (in your life: central, peripheral)
  - 1.2. Members of the organization
    - 1.2.1. Knowledge of members
    - 1.2.2. Identification with them (to feel close; aspects of identification)
    - 1.2.3. Frequency of interaction with members
    - 1.2.4. Important people (and why are they important?)
    - 1.2.5. Importance of these people for your life: central, peripheral
  - 1.3. Multi-commitment for the issue
    - 1.3.1. One or plural commitments for this issue
    - 1.3.2. Coherence between commitments
  - 1.4. Collective efficacy
    - 1.4.1. Changes accomplished: Which one, the most important, meaning applied to these changes?
    - 1.4.2. Role of this organization for the issue
    - 1.4.3. Role of all organizations committed on this issue for general cause
    - 1.4.4. If not efficient: Why maintain commitment?
2. Social and interpersonal networks
  - 2.1. Social networks, multi-commitment (political and civic)
    - 2.1.1. Types of commitment (order of importance: centrality, identity)
    - 2.1.2. Links between these commitments (coherence or coincidence)
    - 2.1.3. Links of these commitments with the commitment to SAB, STP, GP, Caritas or Unia
    - 2.1.4. Intensity of commitment (very or superficially committed)
    - 2.1.5. Motivation/meaning of these commitments
  - 2.2. Informal networks
    - 2.2.1. Friends: close to the cause defended by SAB, STP, GP, Caritas or Unia
    - 2.2.2. Family (origin): close to the cause defended by SAB, STP, GP, Caritas or Unia
    - 2.2.3. Partner/children: close to the cause defended by SAB, STP, GP, Caritas or Unia
    - 2.2.4. Influence of friends/family for their commitment to SAB, STP, GP, Caritas or Unia
  - 2.3. Influential encounters
    - 2.3.1. Influential encounters in person's life: commitment, issue
    - 2.3.2. Who is this influential person (friend, trust, etc.), what does he/she represent?
    - 2.3.3. Meaning of this influence in interviewee's view

3. Cognitions—Relation to others
  - 3.1. Identification with the group helped/defense of their rights
    - 3.1.1. Perception of the group
    - 3.1.2. Identification with the group: commonalities, belonging to the same world
    - 3.1.3. What differentiates them from the interviewee: belonging to different worlds
    - 3.1.4. Identification with other people in difficult situations (who, why, similarities, differences)
  - 3.2. Process and influences
    - 3.2.1. How did you develop this identification? (construction, always existed)
    - 3.2.2. Influence of family/children (individuals, values)
    - 3.2.3. Influenced of friends (individuals, values)
    - 3.2.4. Influenced of lived experiences
  - 3.3. Dilemma to commit without identification
    - 3.3.1. Difficult to commit without identification?
    - 3.3.2. How to overcome these difficulties?
4. Self-extension
  - 4.1. Interviewee's relation to others, to differences: different vs. shared world, shared humanity, shared faith or not?)
  - 4.2. Feeling of belonging to the world or to groups (frontiers, which ones?)
  - 4.3. Perception of the human being (humanism, empathy)
  - 4.4. Identities, self-definition, and order of identities
  - 4.5. Process and influences
    - 4.5.1. How did you develop this perception (construction, always existed)?
    - 4.5.2. Influence of the family/children (individuals, values)
    - 4.5.3. Influence of your friends (individuals, values)
    - 4.5.4. Influence of lived experiences
5. Common good
  - 5.1. Existence and importance of common good, i.e., goods we all share, for example: education, health care, food
  - 5.2. Examples of the interviewee and order of these
  - 5.3. Interdependence between citizens/individuals
  - 5.4. Interviewee's interdependence with others
  - 5.5. Process and influences
    - 5.5.1. How did you develop this perception (construction, always existed)?
    - 5.5.2. Influence of the family/children (individuals, values)
    - 5.5.3. Influence of friends (individuals, values)
    - 5.5.4. Influence of lived experiences
6. Relation to the issue: injustice frame
  - 6.1. Importance of the issue in your life (central, peripheral)
  - 6.2. Meaning of this commitment to the cause (meaning in your life, what does it represent?)
  - 6.3. Identification with the issue (what concerns you?)
  - 6.4. Process and influences
    - 6.4.1. How did you develop this perception (construction, always existed)?
    - 6.4.2. Influence of the family/children (individuals, values)
    - 6.4.3. Influence of friends (individuals, values)
    - 6.4.4. Influence of lived experiences

7. Relation to the politics
  - 7.1. Delegitimization of state actors (cause)
    - 7.1.1. Evaluation of state actors concerning the cause
    - 7.1.2. State considered as a political enemy (we/them)
    - 7.1.3. Other actors considered as enemies (we/them)
    - 7.1.4. Perspectives (future)
  - 7.2. Legitimization of civil society actors (issue)
    - 7.2.1. Evaluation of the action of the organizations concerning the issue
    - 7.2.2. Organizations considered as political allies
    - 7.2.3. Other organizations/actors considered as political enemies
    - 7.2.4. Perspectives (future)
    - 7.2.5. Feeling of being a minority
  - 7.3. Process and influences
    - 7.3.1. How did you develop this perception (construction, always existed)?
    - 7.3.2. Influence of family/children (individuals, values)
    - 7.3.3. Influence of friends (individuals, values)
    - 7.3.4. Influence of lived experiences
  - 7.4. Delegitimization in general
    - 7.4.1. Other issues where state actors are enemies
    - 7.4.2. Performances/evaluation of Swiss democracy
    - 7.4.3. Action by organizations/civil society necessary for democracy
    - 7.4.4. Examples in Switzerland and abroad
  - 7.5. Efficacy of commitment
    - 7.5.1. Contribution of organization to bring about changes: in general and for the cause
    - 7.5.2. Your contribution to bring about changes: in general and for the cause
  - 7.6. The role of citizens
    - 7.6.1. Definition (active, vigilant, critical, etc. . . .)
    - 7.6.2. Importance of this role (as described by the interviewee)
    - 7.6.3. Identification/attachment to the role
    - 7.6.4. Identification with other citizens (belonging to the same community)
8. Ideological, religious, and identitarian contexts
  - 8.1. Open question: What are the values that you would like to transmit to your children (order of importance)?
  - 8.2. Individual values: "life guide"
    - 8.2.1. Values that guide you in your life
    - 8.2.2. Individual responsibility of your acts
    - 8.2.3. Responsibility for others
    - 8.2.4. Confidence in others/other individuals
    - 8.2.5. Solidarity between individuals
    - 8.2.6. Individualism
    - 8.2.7. Religion
  - 8.3. Social values: "collective life guide"
    - 8.3.1. Values that guide your collective life
    - 8.3.2. Respect of cultural diversity
    - 8.3.3. Equality
    - 8.3.4. Liberty of others (emancipation)
    - 8.3.5. Trust in other groups (to which you do not belong)

- 8.3.6. Differences in income
- 8.3.7. Religion
- 8.3.8. Individualism
- 8.3.9. Environment
- 8.3.10. Political tolerance: anarchism, extreme right, etc.
- 9. End of conversation
  - 9.1. Points to add
  - 9.2. Comments on the interview
  - 9.3. Other stuff
  - 9.4. Thank you
  - 9.5. To get the recording of the interview or the transcript

### A.3 Codebook

The following codebook is connected to the interview guideline (Appendix A.2). Once the interviews were transcribed, we used it to code the interviews as described in the section “Studying Activists’ Minds” in Chapter 1.

1. About the social movement organization (SMO) (SAB, STP, GP, Caritas, Unia)
  - 1.1. Choice: Why this organization?
  - 1.2. Actions: What did they do?/Since when?/Variation since the start of the commitment
  - 1.3. Importance/meaning of this action
  - 1.4. Reason for commitment/support
  - 1.5. Interactions with members/important individuals
  - 1.9. Other matters related to the SMO
2. Meanings: Relation to others
  - 2.1. Self-extension/shared humanity/identification with others
  - 2.2. Identification with the helped group (migrants, poor people, minorities, etc.)
  - 2.3. Interest in/discovery of the other: holidays, going abroad, curiosity, exchange with others
  - 2.9. Other stuff related to the relation to others
3. Meanings: relation to politics
  - 3.1. How does interviewee perceive political authorities regarding the cause?
  - 3.2. How does interviewee perceive political authorities in general?
  - 3.3. How does interviewee perceive civil society actors regarding the cause/collective efficacy?
  - 3.4. How does interviewee perceive civil society actors in general/collective efficacy?
  - 3.5. Individual efficacy
  - 3.9. Other matters related to the relation to politics
4. Meanings: relation to society
  - 4.1. Interconnectedness/links between members of a society
  - 4.2. Importance of common good
  - 4.3. Role of the citizen
  - 4.9. Other matters concerning the relation to society

5. Meanings: Relation to cause
  - 5.1. Injustice frame
  - 5.2. Identification with the issue
  - 5.9. Other matters concerning the relation to issue
6. Parents and early childhood
  - 6.1. Social origin father/mother
  - 6.2. Siblings (sister/brother)
  - 6.3. Ideological context, identities, norms, political vision, comprehension
  - 6.4. Civic, political, and religious commitment of father/mother
  - 6.5. Importance of the family for interviewee's commitment
  - 6.6. Role model: father, mother, other member of the family, others
  - 6.7. Other matters related to parents and early childhood
7. Youth
  - 7.1. Education/army
  - 7.2. Formal networks (civic, political, and religious commitment)
    - 7.2.1. Civic, political, and religious commitment
    - 7.2.2. Coherence between commitments, links; meaning of these commitments
    - 7.2.3. Why?/motivations
    - 7.2.4. Reasons behind commitment
    - 7.2.5. Other formal networks (leisure, culture, etc.)
    - 7.2.6. Other matters related to formal networks
  - 7.3. Informal networks
    - 7.3.1. Friends/acquaintances close to the issue of commitment/commitment in general
    - 7.3.2. Family (sisters/brothers)
    - 7.3.3. Influential encounters
  - 7.4. Important events
    - 7.4.1. Sociopolitical, historical, etc.
    - 7.4.2. Lived experience
  - 7.5. Subjective world/meanings
    - 7.5.1. Beliefs, values, identities, norms, lectures
    - 7.5.2. Aspirations, wishes, desires, what interviewee wants to become in the future
    - 7.5.3. Interest for commitment
  - 7.6. Other matters related to youth
8. Adult life /current life
  - 8.1. Profession/education
  - 8.2. Social and material conditions
  - 8.3. Formal networks (civic, political, and religious commitment)
    - 8.3.1. Civic, political, and religious commitment
    - 8.3.2. Coherence between commitments, links; meaning of these commitments
    - 8.3.3. Why?/motivations
    - 8.3.4. Reasons behind commitment
    - 8.3.5. Other formal networks (leisure, culture, etc.)
    - 8.3.6. Other matters related to formal networks

- 8.4. Informal networks
  - 8.4.1. Friends/acquaintances close to the issue of commitment/commitment in general
  - 8.4.2. Family (sisters/brothers)
  - 8.4.3. interviewee's nuclear family: partners, children
  - 8.4.4. Influential encounters
- 8.5. Important events
  - 8.5.1. Sociopolitical, historical, etc.
  - 8.5.2. Lived experience
- 8.6. Subjective world/meanings
  - 8.6.1. Beliefs, values, identities, norms, lectures
  - 8.6.2. Aspirations, wishes, desires, what interviewee wants to become in the future
  - 8.6.3. Interest in commitment
- 8.7. Other matters related to adult/current life
- 9. New elements/dimensions

#### A.4 Interviewees

The following table complements Table 1.1 in Chapter 1. It provides an overview of all the interviews conducted in this research. In bold are the cases included as empirical evidence. However, all the cases contributed to the assessment of our arguments.

**Table A.2** List of All Interviewees and Their Characteristics

Name	Gender	Age	Profession	Commitment intensity
<b>Solidarity across Borders</b>				
<b>Adriana</b>	<b>Woman</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>Housewife</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Simone</b>	<b>Woman</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>Housewife</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Lisa</b>	<b>Woman</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Political work for a peace NGO</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Colette</b>	<b>Woman</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Retired laboratory assistant</b>	<b>Passive</b>
<b>Wilhelm</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>Retired theologian</b>	<b>Passive</b>
<b>Yan</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Nurse</b>	<b>Passive</b>
<b>Paul</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>Journalist</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Richard</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Doctoral student in film studies</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Pasqualine</b>	<b>Woman</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Daycare for young women</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Bernard</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>High school teacher</b>	<b>Passive</b>

Name	Gender	Age	Profession	Commitment intensity
<b>Greenpeace</b>				
Margot	Woman	72	Professor of social assistance	Active
Nathan	Man	27	Computer scientist	Active
Pierrette	Woman	18	Apprentice in a jeweler's store	Active
Evelyne	Woman	41	University teacher	Passive
Maria	Woman	22	Telephone saleswoman	Passive
Yves	Man	38	Unemployed	Passive
Derick	Man	45	Banker	Active
François	Man	69	Retired co-director of a multinational	Passive
<b>Society for Threatened Peoples</b>				
Catherine	Woman	69	Social scientist, politician	Active
Bianca	Woman	31	Geologist	Active
Walter	Man	65	Head of project development cooperation	Active
René	Man	54	Head of project Zoo	Active
Barbara	Woman	70	Retired arts and crafts college teacher	Passive
Laura	Woman	33	Graduate in international relations	Passive
Cyril	Man	17	High school student	Passive
Lukas	Man	27	BA student in film studies	Passive
<b>Caritas</b>				
Christine	Woman	73	Retired tailor	Active
Elisabeth	Woman	80	Retired secretary	Active
Mathieu	Man	75	Retired engineer	Active
Jérémie	Man	88	Retired engineer	Passive
Edwige	Woman	82	Retired librarian	Passive
Emmanuelle	Woman	58	Librarian	Passive
Jacques	Man	38	Computer scientist	Active
Jean-Paul	Man	51	Financial analyst	Passive
<b>Unia</b>				
Eva	Woman	44	Clothes-saleswoman	Active
Joao	Man	50	Balm manufacturer	Active
Nuno	Man	60	Mason, taxi driver	Active
Tiago	Man	33	Foreman	Passive
André	Man	31	Mechanic	Passive
Sarah	Woman	53	Secretary	Passive

Note: Age of interviewees during interview, i.e., 2009 and 2010. Analyzed interviews in bold.



### A.5 Quotes in the Empirical Chapters

This table demonstrates that we used activists' excerpts in a balanced way throughout chapters 4 and 5 in order to support our arguments with empirical evidence. Each column represents the number of quotes we used per case in each chapter. For example, Simone (SAB) is cited five times in Chapter 4 and four times in Chapter 5, resulting in a total of nine quotes in both chapters. The label "main case" refers to the case we selected to introduce a particular cognitive dimension. There are two cases for each organization: one for participants' understanding of common good (Chapter 4) and another for their understanding of politics (Chapter 5). "Special case" refers to activists who have another perception of one or both dimensions studied here. We highlight them in each chapter.

Table A.3 Number of Quotes per Case in Chapters 4 and 5

Activists	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Total
<b>Solidarity across Borders</b>			
Adriana	Main case	5	Main case + 5
Simone	5	4	9
Lisa	5	Main case	Main case + 5
Colette	3	5	8
Wilhelm	3	3	6
Yan	5	4	9
	(21)	(21)	(42)
<b>Greenpeace</b>			
Margot	6	Main case	Main case + 6
Nathan	Main case	7	Main case + 7
Pierrette	5	6	11
Evelyne	5	6	11
Maria	5	2	7
Yves	Special case	Special case	—
	(21)	(21)	(42)
<b>Caritas</b>			
Christine	7	Main case	Main case + 7
Elisabeth	Special case	Special case	—
Mathieu	Main case	7	Main case + 7
Jérémie	Special case	Special case	—
Edwige	7	7	14
Emmanuelle	7	7	14
	(21)	(21)	(42)

Activists	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Total
<b>Unia</b>			
Eva	5	6	11
Joao	<b>Main case</b>	5	Main case +5
Nuno	4	<b>Main case</b>	Main case +4
Tiago	4	5	9
André	5	2	7
Sarah	3	3	6
	(21)	(21)	(42)

### A.6 Representativeness of Survey Data

Table A.6 shows the data we used to judge the representativeness of the survey data. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in the section “Studying Activists’ Minds,” we are restricted to four (three for SAB and Caritas, two for Unia) indicators. For each organization, we mention the distribution within the population (pop.), the distribution in our sample (sample) as well the difference between the two. Based on gender and age, we have representative samples for SAB, Greenpeace, Caritas, and Unia. However, within the sample of STP, young activists (between eighteen and twenty-four years old) are underrepresented. Stratifications in our sample led to large differences for commitment intensity and language. We explain how we handled this in the above-mentioned section of Chapter 1.

**Table A.4** Representativeness of Samples

	Moral voicing activists						Christian aid activists			Workers' voicing activists					
	Pop. %	Sample %	Diff %	STP Pop. %	Sample %	Diff %	GP Pop. %	Sample %	Diff %	Pop. %	Sample %	Diff %	Unia Pop. %	Sample %	Diff %
<b>GENDER</b>															
Women	43	36	-7	52	52	0	46	44	-2	51	56	5	21	28	7
Men	38	34	-4	46	36	-10	48	43	-5	34	26	-8	79	64	-15
Unknown	19	30	11	2	12	10	6	13	7	15	18	3	0	8	8
<b>AGE</b>															
18-24	—			40	21	-19	10	7	-3	—			—		
25-34	—			32	25	-7	20	17	-3	—			—		
35-44	—			11	13	2	20	19	-1	—			—		
45-54	—			7	16	9	19	22	3	—			—		
55-64	—			3	7	4	11	13	2	—			—		
65+	—			2	6	4	11	10	-1	—			—		
Unknown	—			5	12	7	10	13	3	—			—		
<b>COMMITMENT INTENSITY</b>															
Active members	18	43	25	0.1	1.0	0.9	0.3	20	19.7	9	45	36	—	42	—
Passive members	82	57	-25	99.9	99.0	-0.9	99.7	80	-19.7	91	55	-36	—	58	—





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