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Life-Spheres, Networks, and Sustained Participation in Social Movements: A Phenomenological Approach to Political Commitment¹

Florence Passy^{2,4} and Marco Giugni³

This article proposes an account of individual participation in social movements that combines structural and cultural factors. It aims to explain why certain activists continue to be involved in social movements while others withdraw. When activists remain embedded in social networks relevant for the protest issues and, above all, when they keep a symbolic linkage between their activism and their personal life-spheres, sustained participation is likely to occur. When these two factors become progressively separated from each other and the process of self-interaction by activists loses its strength, disengagement can be expected. The argument is illustrated with life-history interviews of activists who have kept their strong commitment to a major organization of the Swiss solidarity movement, and others that, in contrast, have abandoned their involvement. The findings support the argument that the interplay of the structural positions of actors and the symbolic meanings of mobilization has a strong impact on commitment to social movements and hence on sustained participation or disengagement. In particular, the interviews show the importance of a sense of coherence and of a holistic view of one's personal life for keeping commitment over time. This calls for a view of individual participation in social movements that draws from social phenomenology and symbolic interactionism in order to shed light on the symbolic (subjective) dimensions of participation,

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yet without neglecting the crucial role played by structural (objective) factors.

KEY WORDS: commitment; sustained participation; disengagement; social networks; life-spheres.

INTRODUCTION

Much work on social movements has inquired after the determinants of individual participation in movement activities (Barkan *et al.*, 1995; Klandermans, 1997; Klandermans and Oegema, 1987; Marwell and Oliver, 1993; McAdam and Paulsen, 1993). However, little attention has been paid to the postrecruitment period. We lack both theory and empirical research on what happens to individual members once they have been brought to engage in collective action. We surely have a number of studies about the biographical consequences of activism (Fendrich, 1977, 1993; McAdam, 1986, 1988a; Sherkat and Blocker, 1997). But these studies are mostly concerned with the individual trajectories *after* activists have abandoned their involvement in social movements and look mainly at the impact of activism on their personal life. What still needs to be done is both theoretical and empirical work on the personal trajectories of activists *before* they exit. This is the question of keeping committed over time, which leads to sustained participation, or conversely, disengagement. In this paper we focus precisely on why some activists continue to be involved while others drop out, rather than on who is more likely to get involved in movement activities in the first place.

This question is important both for social movement organizations (SMOs) and for students of social movements. On the one hand, one of the main goals of SMOs is to mobilize and sustain a basis of support for their activities. This can be done by recruiting new members or by consolidating the existing support basis. Hence, to understand the factors that lead to sustained participation or disengagement is a crucial task for SMOs, especially for those relying on the work and energy of voluntary members. On the other hand, to ascertain the conditions of commitment of participants is equally important for analysts of social movements, not only because this is a understudied topic, but also because it will provide new insights on the individual variations of political participation, thus avoiding abstract generalizations.

While it seems quite obvious that highly committed participants remain involved for a longer time and that, on the contrary, those who did not invest much are more likely to withdraw when conditions for mobilization

become less favorable, what is more puzzling is that even equally highly committed activists do not follow the same trajectory. Some of them remain deeply involved despite ebbs and flows in the mobilization around the political cause they support, while others decrease or abandon their involvement at some point. Why is it so? Why do some activists maintain their commitment over time while others diminish their involvement and eventually abandon their involvement in a social movement? Apart from notable exceptions, mostly to be found in the literature on volunteering (Cress *et al.*, 1997; McPherson, 1981, 1983; McPherson and Rotolo, 1996; McPherson *et al.*, 1992; Popielarz and McPherson, 1995), most studies assume that the dynamics that account for recruitment resemble those that account for persistence in participation (Cress *et al.*, 1997). In the social movement literature, they usually follow the resource mobilization approach and stress the role of micromobilization contexts, mobilizing structures, and above all social networks (Gould, 1995; Fernandez and McAdam, 1989; Kriesi, 1993; McAdam, 1986, 1988a, 1988b; McAdam and Paulsen, 1993; McAdam *et al.*, 1988; McCarthy, 1996; Rosenthal *et al.*, 1985; Snow *et al.*, 1980). Work in the rational choice perspective focuses more explicitly on individual-level variables that affect the decision to participate, such as perceived effectiveness (Macy, 1991; Marwell and Oliver, 1993; Opp, 1989). Similarly, work in the social-psychological tradition stresses the role of individual perceptions and expectations for participation in movement activities (Piven and Cloward, 1977; Klandermans, 1997).

In spite of their differences, the main goal of all these studies is to explain who gets involved in social movements and why. Yet, we think that engagement produces new dynamics that need to be investigated. As Klandermans (1997:8) has remarked, “[s]ustained participation raises a set of questions different than those related to the conversion of sympathizers into participants.” Thus, in order to understand sustained participation in social movements (or, conversely, disengagement), here we want to pay attention to the specific dynamics that take place during the period in which activists are engaged. We argue that a critical factor in these dynamics is the way participants perceive their position as activists and relate that to their own personal life, both concretely and symbolically. Thus, while we do take into account the role of social networks as a factor of sustained participation, in this paper we focus on the symbolic dimensions of activism. We want to put forward a phenomenological perspective that looks at the constant work of definition and redefinition of the social world by participants in social movements and at their self-positioning within this world. More precisely, our explanation stresses the joint impact of the actors’ structural location and their individual life histories on political commitment. We argue that sustained participation, which is a direct result

of the stabilization of commitment, depends on the interplay of objective (factual) and subjective (perceived) elements of the social world. More specifically, movement activists are more likely to remain deeply involved when their embeddedness in social networks and their perception of such embeddedness in relation to their life-spheres are coherently and consistently interconnected.

The empirical illustration of our argument rests on qualitative data on members of a SMO of the Swiss solidarity movement. More precisely, we make use of life-history interviews with a small sample of activists. They have been gathered as part of a broader study on micromobilization processes (Passy, 1998) and focus on the cultural aspects of engagement. It is our hope that the empirical evidence thus presented will allow us to show the connections between the various components of an individual's life and how a lack of such linkages leads activists to diminish or abandon their involvement in social movements. Before we proceed, it is important to note that we only deal with the case of activists who have kept their involvement stable over time, or on the contrary, who have demobilized, thus excluding from our analysis the case of increased intensity of participation. Furthermore, we only deal with participation at high levels of intensity, or to use a fortunate expression, with *lifetimes of commitment* (Andrews, 1991). What we are proposing is a way to account for the lack of such lifetimes of commitment.

THEORY: LIFE-SPHERES AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Social network accounts offer important insights into an explanation of individual participation in social movements. However, we think that a structural perspective has some weaknesses and that, in order to explain sustained participation, it has to be supplemented by the cultural and symbolic dimensions of commitment. In particular, the social networks perspective has three major weaknesses that have to do with the origins of embeddedness in social networks, the objective vs. subjective aspect of mobilization, and the problem of agency. First, this view leaves the question open of why and how do actors remain in or abandon networks. How can we explain a change in the structure of social interactions of movement participants and activists? We think a more satisfying answer to the central question we are addressing here requires us to look at the causes of given configurations of structural locations in order to account for changes in the embeddedness of movement participants in social networks. Second, network analysts endow an objective view of reality at the expense of subjective perceptions, which are after all what affects behavior. As Emir-

bayer and Goodwin (1994) have pointed out, network analysis overlooks cultural factors to the benefit of structural ones. By neglecting the social construction of meanings, they miss a crucial side of action. In our view, networks are not only important because they provide individuals with an environment that facilitates recruitment to social movements, but also because they create a structure of meanings about their commitment that helps them to remain committed over time. We argue that this structure of meanings stems not only from the participants' interactions with other social actors within formal and informal networks, but also from their interactions with themselves, or self-interaction (Blumer, 1969). Third, by neglecting culture, meanings, and subjectivity in social action, network analysis carries an unsatisfactory conception of human agency. Far from merely reacting to interpersonal links and connections, individuals interpret them and try to make sense of their interactions with others. They incorporate concrete interactions into their self and adapt the social knowledge they acquire from prior interactions with new information drawn from recent ones, thereby unleashing their own creativity. The way they formalize structures of meaning depends on this creative process of social learning, which takes place during moments of freedom (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994). Of course, the social and cultural environment largely shapes such moments of freedom. Yet, human agency is not totally determined by the context. Taking into account the actors' feelings and perceptions regarding their interactions with others is a way to reinstate agency in the study of collective action.

Thus, as with any other kind of activity, political participation takes on a specific meaning in the activists' life. Such meaning is structured around what we propose to call *life-spheres*. The life of each of us is composed of life-spheres, which can be defined as distinct though interrelated "regions" in the life of an individual, each one with its own borders, logic, and dynamic. A life-sphere has both an objective and a subjective side. Its objective side is represented by the individual's belonging to a group and the social relations arising from such belonging. The concept of social networks, as it has been used in the social movement literature, captures much of this aspect of life-spheres. However, the heuristic importance of the concept of life-spheres lies in their subjective side, which reflects the perception social actors have of their embeddedness in groups or networks. In this paper we focus on this aspect.

The concept of life-spheres entails two crucial elements. The first is that it reflects the individuals' perception of reality, in particular of social reality. By pointing to perceptions, it unfolds the meaning that objects and actions have for individuals. For, as social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz (1967:230) pointed out, "it is the meaning of our experiences and not the

ontological structure of the objects which constitutes reality.” Needless to say, the idea of reality as a social construct and the centrality of meaning construction are deeply anchored in various sociological traditions, both in the social movement literature (e.g., Gamson, 1992; Gamson *et al.*, 1982; Johnston and Klandermans, 1995; Snow and Bendford, 1992; Snow *et al.*, 1986) and in social theory (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Habermas, 1984; Schutz, 1934, 1967). The concept of life-spheres has also a long-standing tradition in philosophical and sociological thought. For example, Edmund Husserl’s notion of *Lebenswelt* constitutes the phenomenological ground of our argument about the role of life-spheres in social movements. Yet, Habermas’ (1984) elaboration of the Husserlian concept of lifeworld with regard to social relations better grasps the idea we want to convey of a space whose boundaries and possibilities for action are marked by subjectivity, meanings, perceptions, and emotions, as opposed to the external imperatives coming from the “objective” system. Also, our concept of life-spheres is close to Schutz’s idea of the world of daily life, insofar as it stresses the intersubjectivity at work in the order of reality.

The second element entailed by the concept of life-spheres is even more important for our present purpose. That is the idea that life-spheres are interconnected. In other words, although they have well-defined borders and specific codes, life-spheres are constantly interacting. It is precisely this interaction that shapes the actors’ structure of meanings. The subjective world of actors is formed by all the life-spheres and by their mutual interactions. Schutz (1967), again, speaks of multiple realities in order to underscore the existence of various provinces of meaning in the social world. Similarly, though in a different perspective, Berger *et al.* (1974) mention the plurality of life-worlds as being one of the peculiarities of modern society.

Political action is a specific life-sphere, along with other ones anchored in the principal axes of an individual’s life. For empirical purposes, we can pragmatically define a number of relevant spheres. At least in the contemporary western societies, the spheres pertaining to the family, the studies, the work, the friends, and the leisure, which are arguably the central loci of the personal life, are common to most people. In addition, for some, one should consider the sphere of religious participation as well and, for others, the sphere of political engagement. Of course, not all life-spheres are equally important in people’s life. Their position in the hierarchy of values depends, among other things, on the frequency of activation. In a sense, life-spheres are the symbolic side of actual practices. The more frequently a life-sphere is activated, the more likely it is to become important in people’s life. Moreover, the hierarchy of spheres will change according to the moment in the life cycle. In general, however, we can arguably maintain that family, study, and work are the principal spheres in the

western societies today, for they have been “constructed” during the socialization process, which is crucial for the formation of the personality and value system of individuals. These spheres have a direct impact on the activists’ structure of meanings, thus leading them to reassess in a positive or negative way their political activism, which is also one of their life-spheres, indeed an important one for strongly committed activists. More formally, we hypothesize that the more connected the central life-spheres of an activist to her/his sphere of political engagement, the more stable her/his commitment. Conversely, an isolated political sphere is likely to lead to diminished activism or withdrawal. This hypothesis needs to be spelled out a little more. In order to do so, we can draw some parallels between our argument and early developments in sociological theories.

Symbolic interactionism can help us to further clarify our argument. According to this theoretical perspective, social actors interact through meanings, thus establishing a cognitive frame of reality that is constantly redefined and transformed as a result of chains of interaction (Blumer, 1969). Meanings channel social interactions that, in turn, transform the structure of meanings. However, interactions are not only located on the collective level, but also on the individual level. That is to say, actors also interact and communicate with themselves. Blumer (1969) named this process *self-interaction*. A large part of human behavior is shaped by a process of interpretation based both on social interaction and self-interaction. In Blumer’s view, actors refer back to themselves in order to find meaning in a given situation. According to symbolic interactionism, what characterizes the human being as “social” is also that it is “an organism that engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such indications (Blumer, 1969:14). Thus, self-interaction is a communicative process that helps individuals to give social reality a meaning and to act accordingly. In the case of participants in social movements, the meaning they draw from situations—including their location in social networks—stems from the cognitive and affective connections they make between those situations and their personal life, that is, from their life-spheres.

The perspective we propose is akin to Swidler’s (1986) idea of culture in action and to the relational and comprehensive view of culture recently put forward by Emirbayer and Goodwin (1996). Following this line of reasoning, we see a mutual relationship between social practices and representations, between action and culture. The theoretical roots of the symbolic components of this perspective rest on the phenomenological tradition of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and of social theorists such as Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, while social phenomenologist Alfred Schutz has perhaps established a *trait d’union* between these two schools of

thought. This line of reasoning has further been followed by the constructivist perspective in sociology (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Berger *et al.*, 1974; Blumer, 1969). In a broader sense, the argument we are proposing is also close to Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) concept of *habitus* and his insight that culture is a socially organized practice, that culture arises from action which in turn produces cultural formations. In some way, our notion of life-spheres is aimed at capturing the same idea of culture as firmly grounded in practices and, vice versa, practices as being affected by culture. Participants in social movements are in constant interaction with both other participants and themselves. This interaction is at the same time factual and symbolic. It is factual insofar as activists take part in social relations with other groups and individuals, and this influences their commitment, at least to some extent. It is symbolic to the extent that activists engage in social relations with a sense of the meaning those relations have in their life. In the final analysis, their decision to continue to participate or to withdraw depends on these two types of interaction and their mutual relation.

On a more microsociological level, our argument parallels certain early developments in cognitive psychology and theories of group dynamics. Field theory, for example, put forward the idea that the field of social forces in which a group is located determines its behavior. According to Lewin (1936, 1951), groups are embedded in a social space that comprises the group itself and its environment. Most important, much like symbolic interactionists, he saw the perceived environment as crucial for the members of a social group. Our argument has also some commonalities with balance theory (Heider, 1946), and in particular his stress upon the congruence (or, conversely, the lack of congruence) among attitudes to other people. Furthermore, much like Lewin, Heider underscored the perception of the external world by individuals. Finally, our perspective is akin to certain applications of graph theory to group behavior (Cartwright and Harary, 1956; Cartwright and Zender, 1953; Harary and Norman, 1953). Both approaches maintain that attitudes and behavior depend from the configuration of interpersonal relationships within a given group. Quite interestingly, these early developments in social psychology have formed one of the main lines from which social network analysis has developed (Scott, 1991). Graph theory, in particular, was an important step toward network analysis. Yet, contemporary applications of the latter in the fields of social movements have often forgotten the cognitive and symbolic aspects put forward by those early developments. In contrast, we would like to bring these aspects back into the analysis. As a consequence, our approach rests on qualitative evidence such as in-depth interviews or life histories rather than on quantitative and mathematical models like some of the theories we have just reviewed.

To return to our focus on social movements, once activists have estab-

lished a connection between their life-spheres—in particular, the three principal ones (family, studies, and work)—and their political engagement, they are in constant interaction with the protest issues for which they mobilize. In a way, they are “locked-in” (Keohane and Nye, 1989) through the linkages they establish in everyday life between their life-spheres and their commitment. The more the life-spheres are interlocked, or better yet, intertwined with a given political issue and the stronger this connection, the higher the chances that such an issue will become a crucial element in the construction of the self, and as a result, the higher the chances that their political commitment will stabilize, leading to sustained participation. For, when the other life-spheres are related to the political sphere and to the protest issues, activists are more likely to be symbolically in contact with their personal commitment through the process of self-interaction and to internalize it than activists whose commitment bears no relation to their central life-spheres. In the former situation, symbolic interaction with the protest issues are more frequent, thus strengthening the centrality of commitment within the structure of meanings. In other words, self-interaction with respect to a given protest issue solidifies the meaning of commitment, and as a consequence, sustained participation in social movements.

The solidification of meanings and practices of political commitment, in turn, strengthens the activists’ embeddedness in social networks. By symbolically strengthening the place of commitment within the individual structure of meanings, activists reaffirm their loyalty to the networks in which they are embedded. In fact, as our discussion should have made clear, we maintain that networks and life-spheres are closely linked to each other. Embeddedness in social networks largely shapes the orientation of life-spheres. Everyday-life social interactions help activists to build their self. In turn, life-spheres define and redefine networks through the process of self-interaction. Thus, both social networks and life-spheres contribute to the definition of the individuals’ structure of meanings during the course of their life, though in distinct ways: networks through social interaction, life-spheres through self-interaction. Our argument, then, takes into account both factors by stating that when activists are deeply embedded in social networks that are strongly related to a given movement or protest issue (for example, to be married with another activist, or in the case of the solidarity movement in particular, to be embedded in a religious milieu) and when they have symbolically linked their life-spheres to the movement or the protest issue, they are more likely to keep commitment over time and, hence, to show sustained participation. In contrast, activists who change the orientation of their life-spheres—that is, activists who begin to symbolically disconnect their spheres from the movement or the protest issue—will gradually modify their embeddedness in social networks. As a consequence,

they will reassess their preferences in a way that will estrange them from political commitment, a process eventually resulting in disengagement.

ILLUSTRATION: SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION VS. DISENGAGEMENT

Data and Methods

Next we illustrate our argument on the basis of empirical material on individual participation in social movements. In order to do so, we present a set of life-history interviews conducted within a larger study of micromobilization processes in the Swiss solidarity movement. Two main reasons led us to adopt this method.⁵ First, life histories are better suited than quantitative approaches to unveil structures of meaning. As they talk about themselves, actors express the meaning of their practices and convey the subjective interpretation of their acts. Second, life histories touch upon different aspects of a personal life. Thus they reveal the whole life system of individuals. Third, life histories allow us not only to look at the individual life space, but also to take into account seriously the notion of time, for they introduce a dynamic perspective in the analysis. They capture past experiences, present feelings, and future hopes and projects of the interviewees. This allows us to examine the interplay of social networks, life-spheres, and political commitment. On the other hand, this method is not without weaknesses. The major one is perhaps its inadequacy to generalize the findings because of the limited number of interviews. Qualitative methods are well suited for theory building, as opposed to theory testing. Therefore, what follows should be intended as an illustration of our general argument and a proposal for future research rather than an empirical test of hypotheses.

We conducted twelve interviews, both with activists who are or have been strongly committed and with participants who simply contribute or have contributed financially to the Bern Declaration (BD), a major SMO of the Swiss solidarity movement. For our present purpose, we selected two groups of participants: those who have kept a high level of commitment and those who have withdrawn. Thus, our analysis is based on five accounts by activists or former activists: two cases of sustained participation (Yves and Josette) and three cases of disengagement (François, Maria Luisa, and Véronique).⁶ This choice further reduced the number of cases. However, it has often been remarked that for this type of interview a small number

⁵For a discussion of this method, see Bertaux (1981), Denzin (1989), and Ferrarotti (1990).

⁶With regard to social movement research, see della Porta (1992).

⁶Fictitious names.

is appropriate. In addition, our theory-building rather than theory-testing approach encouraged us to stick with our limited number of interviews.⁷

Sustained Participation

Yves' personal trajectory has been marked by Third World political issues since his childhood. Raised in a Catholic family, he was soon integrated into religious networks that introduced him to the values of solidarity with people living in developing countries. Being sensitive to international inequalities and injustices, especially with regard to the situation of the Third World, he began to connect these kinds of issues to his central life-spheres. The sphere of studies, or educational sphere, was the first to be connected. To study to become a teacher was for him a means to change the world by helping the socialization of pupils toward social problems. It was also an opportunity to concretize his religious commitment in the future by working in a Third World country:

I had an interest in other countries, foreign countries, cooperation . . . [. . .] I studied to become a primary-school teacher. Three years of studies. At that time I was interested in going to Africa to work. [Q.: Is that why you chose to become a teacher?] It's possible . . . yes, I guess it was also for that reason.

Here we can see that, in addition to the educational sphere, the religious sphere participated in the interplay of different life-spheres. Following the same logic, the sphere of work, or professional sphere, also began to be related to Third World issues, either directly or indirectly. After he finished his studies, he taught for two years in Senegal. The linkage between the professional and the political spheres was straightforward. Upon his return to Switzerland, he moved to a public school located in Geneva. Although in this case the link is less obvious than in Africa, he connected the two life-spheres by grounding his teaching activities on Third World issues. First of all, he decided to embark in new studies to become a high school teacher because, in his view, it would have been easier for him to combine his professional and political interests. As a geography teacher, he was able to sensitize his pupils to an issue that was so important to him. The link between his profession and his political commitment was strengthening day after day. On the one hand, the political issue became increasingly incorporated into his teaching activities. On the other hand, he poured his teaching experience into the BD, which, in addition to lobbying the institutions, aims at sensitizing the public opinion and particularly children. In the process, Yves became an important leader

⁷All interviews have been conducted in French. The excerpts reported here have been adapted to the present purpose.

of the group within the SMO that was in charge of creating new pedagogic tools to educate children to Third World issues:

Concerning the games, with regard to the young, the point was above all to let them understand certain mechanisms of the life in the Third World—of exploitation or, on the contrary, of resistance—certain places for social transformations. [. . .] I had pretty much tested the games in my classes. . . .

The professional sphere has long been closely related to Yves' political commitment: one nourished the other. Such relation allowed him to integrate life choices concerning Third World issues, which he has been cultivating since his childhood, into his professional life. His activities within the movement, in turn, gave his work a new meaning:

It's a way to integrate into my life choices that I made with regard to the Third World. [. . .] Well, there is a stimulating aspect in all this. Hadn't I done that, my job would have been more annoying, and more sleepy.

In addition to the educational and professional spheres, the family sphere became connected to his activism in favor of Third World populations, as his wife, too, was strongly committed to the movement:

When I finished with my studies, I got involved with someone who was in the field of education. By the way, we got married later on. We had already been teaching during several years. She was also interested in possibly leaving for Africa, [to go] in the Third World with me. So we left for two years. [. . .] And then, yes, we were directing this school. We both had a class.

When they went back to Switzerland, she got involved in the BD.

Yves' family sphere got linked to the Third World issue even more intimately through the adoption of a child. He and his wife decided to adopt a child from that part of the world. As he admits, the adoption was closely related to their political commitment:

It's a solidary way to help people, when you see the number of children who die in the Third World. In Bogota, people were saying that every day 100 children were dying, 30 of natural death and 70 because nobody was taking care of them. Knowing that, we couldn't do nothing. It was really coherent. It's important to be coherent in life.

Here we see a first important element of the symbolic interconnection that is made between life-spheres: *coherence*. The feeling to be coherent in what one thinks and does is a crucial aspect of the cognitive process through which one makes sense of a whole variety of activities. This is in line with several theories in cognitive and social psychology, not only the aforementioned balance theory (Heider, 1946), but also Festinger's (1962) theory of cognitive dissonance. The adoption of a Third World child was, in the eyes of Yves and his wife, an act of coherence with respect to their deep involvement in political activities aimed at helping to redress North/South unbalances.

To summarize, Yves' three main life-spheres are intimately tied to his political activism concerning Third World issues. This connection leads him to interact frequently with the protest issue (self-interaction) and helps him to constantly reassert the meaning of his commitment. All aspects of his personal life bring him back to his political activism, thus consolidating the meaning of his action. This process has two important consequences. First, it strengthens his integration into formal and informal networks, as he is still deeply embedded in his previous formal networks and a large part of his informal networks are still related to Third World issues. Second, it consolidates his structure of meanings and his strong commitment, as he is locked in his activism, which he has few reasons to abandon. The outcome of this process is sustained participation.

Josette, our second example of sustained participation, is in a similar situation. She has long been deeply involved in Third World political organizations. As a result of her prior embeddedness in religious networks, at the age of 20 she became very active in progressive Catholic organizations that deal with Third World issues. Similar to the previous example, the religious sphere is part of Josette's political trajectory. This is hardly surprising because religion is an important dimension of the solidarity movement to which the BD belongs. At least for this movement, one could argue that people who have strong religious values tend to be more attached to their participation than people who lack such values. However, at the age of 30, Josette and some of her friends cofounded a lay organization, a move that corresponds to the progressive loss of religious roots and the growing importance of a leftist orientation within the BD. At the same time, she became one of the leaders of the solidarity movement in Geneva and tried to set up a network of Third World SMOs there. She was involved in various SMOs, including the BD. She was also active in several unions. Both types of political commitment were based on the same rationale: to fight social injustices, both here and in the Third World.

Nevertheless, the educational sphere was not connected to her political activism. Having been raised in a poor Catholic family from the Swiss Alps, she had to find a job as soon as possible. In contrast, a link was made with the professional sphere. To work as a bookseller offered her an open window to the world and an opportunity to reach a better understanding of the causes of social injustices. Symbolically and intellectually, she was brought to link her professional sphere and her political activism:

Through the book, things are conveyed, you convey ideas . . . [. . .] So let's say that this helped me very much. [. . .] Thanks to the bookstore, you get formed, you get a self-instructed formation. So it's for this reason that it is a whole, the BD in this regard is really a whole.

In addition, to be a bookseller gave her the possibility both to have a better

formation and to take advantage of these skills in the SMOs in which she was involved:

Working at the university bookstore, I got to know a fair number of people [. . .] who helped me in bunches of debates, of conferences we organized. . . . We could ask people to come give us a complement of information in their sector. So it's for that reason that I say it was a whole. . . . I think every thing has an influence, without us to really see the borders; I think there was no separation. . . .

The connection between professional sphere and commitment is straightforward: she tries to subjectively direct this life-sphere, which at first sight bears no relationship with Third World issues whatsoever, toward her political engagement. During the interview, she kept saying that her work and her activism follow the same logic, that they are not separate things. Here we can see a second important element of the symbolic interplay among life-spheres, in addition to coherence: a *holistic view* of one's personal life. The various aspects of everyday life and activities are seen as parts of a whole, with no clear-cut separations between them. This helps one give meaning to what he/she does, and hence to his/her political activism. Again, this is a familiar process in the literature on cognitive and social psychology.

The family sphere, too, became subjectively connected to Third World issues. Her partner comes from a Third World country. This meant an affective tie to the issues she was politically involved for as well as a feeling that her personal commitment and family life were parts of a whole, symbolically and concretely:

But all this led me to [make] choices: the birth of my daughter—the father of my daughter is not Swiss, he comes from another country—; this led to all kinds of things [. . .] because the father of my daughter, being from another country, has lived other realities [. . .] He comes from Haiti; so he has very strong engagements with regard to his country. Well, it was something impressive, concretely, and all this meant many things. So, you see, I've been linked intimately, personally, collectively; it was a whole, there has been no breach.

This excerpt shows quite clearly the role played by Josette's family sphere, which is also linked to her activism through her daughter, who is sensitive to the political issue for which her mother mobilizes. She is less involved than her mother, but she participated in various groups and visited several development projects when she traveled in Third World countries. The fact that the birth of her daughter led her to experience a deeper sense of commitment is quite interesting, for it is counterintuitive and goes against much of the existing literature on participation in social movements, which suggests that motherhood conflicts with the demands of activism. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the previous example, though it was a case of adoption. In our view, it is precisely the symbolic value given to the event of having a child that makes it an incentive rather an obstacle

to political activism. If this event is symbolically related to other life-spheres, as in the cases of Yves and Josette, it is likely to strengthen commitment rather than to weaken it.

To summarize, two central life-spheres are tied to Josette's strong commitment to Third World issues. This tight connection resulted in a stabilization of her embeddedness in social networks, as she is still embedded in the same formal networks and her network of friends is mainly formed by Third World activists. Although her life trajectory is different than Yves', both have in common the fact that their political life-spheres largely overlay with other spheres that compose their lifeworld, to use Habermas' (1984) concept. This overlap puts them in constant interaction with political issues—in this case Third World issues—and shows the extent to which they have directed their structure of meanings toward those issues. Such constant self-interaction allows them to define their political interests, political identity, individual preferences, and embeddedness in social networks as parts of a whole. This process of symbolic definition, in turn, strengthens their commitment and makes it more difficult for them to diminish or abandon their involvement in the solidarity movement. Sustained participation is a likely outcome of this process.

Disengagement

Let us now turn to the other side of the coin and look at the impact of life-spheres on disengagement. The trajectories of François, Maria Luisa, and Véronique provide us with several insights about how the disconnection of the central life-spheres from the sphere of political activism negatively affects one's commitment.

Francois has been very active in the solidarity movement over almost ten years. Coming from an Italian Catholic family, he was soon embedded in religious networks, particularly in holiday camps for children organized by his neighborhood's parish. This introduced him to Third World issues and pushed him to join the BD. From adolescence to the age of 30, his central life-spheres were related to his political idealism and activism. But at some point, they began to separate from commitment, and in due process, he gradually outdistanced from his activities in favor of Third World countries. Incidentally, this suggests that sharing religious values might be important for recruitment to social movements, but is not sufficient to prevent from disengagement. If the other life-spheres get disconnected, also the religious sphere loses its importance as a catalyst of commitment. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the other two cases of disengagement discussed below.

At first, the educational sphere was intimately linked to Third World issues. Like Yves, François considered the prospect to become a teacher as a way to “transform the world.” He thought a teacher is in a favorable position to influence students, and in doing so, to contribute to change an unjust world by sensitizing them to those issues:

Well, I guess grossly in my head I always had . . . —okay, I mean it’s completely utopian—we needed to transform the world. So well, it was like that and for me to work as a teacher is what crosses the entire society. Grossly, as there is a problem we say it’s up to the school to solve it. Grossly, I was like that, [that was] my stuff. If you want to change the world, you need to engage politically. Then, if you want to change it even more steadily, you need to work with the young. [. . .] Hence, it was also a form of coherence *vis-à-vis* all those problems.

He saw his choice of studies as an appropriate means to integrate his political interests into his future professional life by linking his teaching activity to Third World issues. Thus, his choice was consciously made according to his political interests. Self-interaction regarding these two life-spheres tended to strengthen his structure of meanings toward political activities. In addition, we see once again how a sense of coherence is crucial to make sense of a variety of activities that could as well be viewed as separate from each other.

After he finished his studies, his professional sphere became connected to Third World issues. As in the case of Yves, a double linkage was made. First, as he had hoped, he could incorporate his political activism into his work by sensitizing students to Third World issues and showing them the causes of the unfavorable situation of those countries:

We also carried actions in the school, I personally fought in my school. [. . .] I’ve pretty much worked in my school so that people would become a little bit conscious. We carried, for instance, the action “rice bowl,” which took place in the schools. [. . .] It was working very well. We were doing the school party and a part of the proceeds was for the project. . . .

Secondly, he put his teaching skills at the disposal of the BD in order to build pedagogical materials:

We have worked a lot on the pedagogical means. Due to the fact that we were a fair number of teachers in the group, we naturally swam in there during a fair amount of time: the pedagogical files, the books, the Third-Worldopoly,⁸ etc.

Thus, political activism has been in constant interaction with the professional sphere during his first years as a teacher, mutually strengthening. As he reiterates, “there was a strong coherence.” The connections between life-spheres consolidated his embeddedness in formal and informal networks, as most of his friends were also activists in the solidarity movement. Indeed,

⁸A game similar to the well-known Monopoly, but aimed at sensitizing and educating people on Third World issues.

he is still very integrated into the holiday camps carried out by the church (in the meantime, he became one of the leaders of these activities). Most importantly, these connections have consolidated his structure of meanings and, for some time, his strong commitment.

The situation changed dramatically as the family sphere developed in the absence of relation to political activism. Around the age of 30, François left the BD. To explain his disengagement, he stresses three points:

On the one hand, there were the summer camps; there I took the presidency of the association. Hence, there I was asked to invest more than before. On the other hand, [. . .] in effect the local group was running worse than before. Hence, it was less evident to know what we were doing there. Well, thirdly, in effect I met my wife at that time . . . [. . .] She's not at all in this kind of things, she's favorable, she finds this nice but . . . it's not her who pushes me by saying: 'Don't forget to be an activist' [smile]. I would rather have needed to negotiate. So, progressively I made choices.

However, the more he talks about his disengagement, the clearer it becomes that the main cause for that was the lack of connection between the family sphere and activism. During the interview, he kept referring to the separation of these two life-spheres:

[. . .] It's also by chance, but the fact that my wife is not at all in these things and . . . At first, for example, I surely told myself that I would have worked there; then this doesn't happen like that, in any case not in our place! [. . .] There are choices. I'm not in an activist family environment. I mean I'm not in the same situation, for example, as Charles, whose wife is an activist too. We can't be activists in [our] family like Charles and Sabine used to do, or Pierre and Jacqueline . . . So it has progressively gotten undone.

The new direction taken by the family sphere introduced a breach in his self-interaction regarding the political issues to which he was committed. The lack of self-interaction eroded the symbolic and emotional space that had been constantly bringing him back to his political action. In other words, the family sphere did not allow him to subjectively strengthen the structure of meanings related to his activism. From this moment onward, the other life-spheres—in particular, the professional sphere—got gradually disconnected from Third World issues. After a while, he gave up his teaching position to join the local ministry of education and work on a reform of the primary school. Although he considered this change in his professional life as another form of political action aimed at bringing justice to the world, the direct link with Third World issues disappeared. His work was no longer connected to these issues. On the one hand, he lost his students, with whom he had been exchanging on Third World issues and on whom he had been testing the pedagogical materials elaborated within the BD. On the other hand, in the absence of contacts with the students, he was unable to inform his activities in the SMO with his experience as a teacher.

Having gradually loosened his self-interaction regarding his activism

in favor of Third World countries, his social embeddedness transformed: the networks to which he belonged became progressively disconnected from his activism. Furthermore, even in those cases in which he remained in previous networks, he did not establish a connection between, for example, religious holiday camps and Third World issues. Thus, he got involved in new formal networks related to pedagogical issues. His embeddedness in informal networks changed as well, as he gradually abandoned his Third World activist friends; they were replaced by his wife's friends, who had, however, no interest in those issues.

In addition to changes regarding his social networks, his individual preferences modified as well. Prior to the disconnection of the family sphere from the political sphere, he perceived his involvement as very effective in fighting social injustices in the Third World. Now his feeling about the effectiveness of political action became totally different:

Right now I'm not transforming the world. I'm doing nothing for. But at the same time, it's what I was saying before: I could kill myself doing this . . . the world wouldn't be better for that matter. . . .

In contrast, he considered his pedagogical work as much more useful. While he felt that he was unable to change things with regard to the situation of the Third World, in his view he was having an impact on the social world.

To summarize, we observe a gradual disconnection among François' life-spheres, a process that modified three crucial factors related to his political activism: the structure of meanings, the embeddedness in social networks, and the individual preferences. All these three dimensions influenced each other, resulting in a gradual disengagement due to a weakening of commitment to the BD. In other words, François lost a substantial and symbolic interactive structure that could bring him back to his involvement. His central life-spheres lost the tie to Third World issues and his social networks were cut off from his activism. This both objective and subjective lack of interaction dramatically transformed his structure of meanings, resulting in disengagement.

The process of disengagement by Maria Luisa follows a similar trajectory. She has been strongly involved in the solidarity movement, as well as in several organizations of the extreme left, for more than 20 years. Having been socialized in religious networks, she first joined the Catholic youth movement. Then, once at the university, she got involved in radical organizations fighting imperialism. At the end of the 1970s, when the leftist movement demobilized, she participated in the solidarity movement and joined the BD as well as an SMO that promotes movies from Third World countries. She has been politically active until recently.

Since the early phases of her political involvement, two important life-spheres were closely tied to her activism. The first connection was with the

educational sphere. She studied sociology at the university. This choice was related to her activism:

. . . the AJEC [. . .] was the first involvement. Following which there were the sequels of 68 in Geneva, which would have come a little bit later. And then, when I entered the university in 1970, it was the big moment of all leftist movements. [. . .] . . . we need to change the world, we are there for that. And then, an ambiance that was there as well . . . I mean they were very lively times, when you speak a lot. [. . .] suddenly a world was opening like that; it was a somewhat blessed period. Sociology was getting along, at that time.

While the choice of sociology responded to her political interests, her studies, in turn, nourished her activism intellectually and solidified her embeddedness in formal, and above all, informal networks related to extreme left groups.

Later on, the professional sphere became intimately linked to her activism. Once she had finished her studies, she worked for two years in Senegal. This experience put her in close interaction with her activism in favor of Third World countries. When she went back home, her political convictions had strengthened. Her work solidified her structure of meanings regarding Third World issues. The professional sphere, too, became connected to her activism. She was an adjunct teacher of sociology at the university. This choice of work was in line with her studies in this field. From her point of view, to work as a sociologist carried a specific meaning and strengthened her political involvement through such meaning.

The connection of these two life-spheres to the political sphere put her in constant interaction with the latter. This process contributed to consolidating her structure of meanings, and as a result, her embeddedness in social networks and her activism. In other words, her activism became increasingly meaningful. However, after a long period of involvement in the BD, she began to disengage. To explain her disengagement, she said she was tired of her activism and no longer had time to be active. However, if we go beyond this *post hoc* rationalization and look instead at her life history, we observe that something had changed in her personal life. Starting from the beginning of the 1990s, she began to redirect the professional sphere by creating her own institute of social research. Unlike her previous activity, the creation of this institute was not linked to her political involvement. Sociology lost its significance as a means to change the world and became only a way to gain her life. Thus the subjective connection between this life-sphere and her political commitment disappeared.

Starting from this moment, her self-interaction with respect to Third World issues began to erode and the meaning of her activism changed in due process. She progressively disengaged, first from the BD, and a few years later, from the Third World film festival. In addition, her network structure underwent a deep transformation. She abandoned her formal

networks: the church because she no longer felt like a Christian, and the extreme left because this network practically dissolved toward the end of the 1970s. She also abandoned her informal networks: “My old activist friends became [. . .] quiet bourgeois.”

Thus, subjectively and objectively, she gradually lost contact with the movement. This led her to revise her preferences—for example, she became less and less convinced of the effectiveness of her action in the movement—and provoked a loss of identification with the political issues that once were at the center of her life:

. . . because I can't identify with [or] push myself for a cause. I feel a very strong sense of ineffectiveness. When I look retrospectively at how we got excited and all what we have obtained; it's a little bit derisory after all. And I think the fatigue settles. [. . .] I don't feel effective being at the BD today. [. . .] Above all, this looks derisory to me as compared to the problems we need to solve.

In the end, she abandoned her long-lasting political activism.

Finally, the process of disengagement by Véronique can also be explained with the detachment of her central life-spheres from her political involvement. Like Maria Luisa, Véronique was deeply involved in the Catholic youth movement. Political activism dominated her youth. Not surprisingly, she chose her studies according to that. Similar to Yves and François, she perceived the choice of becoming a teacher as a way to sensitize her students to Third World issues.

Literature: French and German; because I wanted to become a teacher [. . .] There were some professors whom I admired very much. . . . More or less one each year at high-school; I was lucky, I found that fantastic. The geography class, which has impressed me very much the third year of high-school and was a North/South course as well [. . .] . . . this professor was very good. I don't know . . . I found it was interesting to have contacts with the young and to form them.

At first, the educational sphere was intimately tied to Third World issues. Nevertheless, following the ideology of the religious student movement, which maintains that people have to be active in their own environment, Véronique shifted to university issues—always with the aim of bringing more justice and democracy to the world—and began to be active in critical groups within the university. Her social networks modified accordingly as she lost contact with the Third World. The latter were placed at the periphery of her life-spheres and soon lost much of their meaning as they were replaced by university issues such as the democratization of studies and of school institutions. Thus, Véronique entered a new dynamic in which university policies and local politics were the central issues. Her political interests, her activism, and her embeddedness in social networks all transformed themselves as she quit the religious organization and lost contact with her old activist friends. Neither self-interaction nor social

interactions would bring her back to Third World political issues. Both substantially and symbolically, she became disconnected from those issues.

Once she had redirected the educational sphere, she no longer wanted to be a teacher. So she decided to become a journalist, for she had friends in this professions as well as an experience in local politics. A professional sphere unconnected to her previous political involvement took over. The breach between her central life-spheres and her activism in favor of Third World countries was strengthened by the family sphere, which bore no relationship to politics. Speaking of her boyfriend, she stressed ironically his lack of interest in political activities, in addition to his position of outsider with respect to Third World issues:

On the level of ideas? Yes, yes, on the level of ideas. But he lives in a rather different milieu. He's a lawyer. [Q.: Does he have a past as an activist?] He also has a past as an activist [laughs]! Activist at the university. . . .

Once she entered the university, she no longer had interactions with Third World issues. Thus, her structure of meanings and her preferences—in particular, the perception of her effectiveness—changed, leading to disengagement.

Summary

The five life histories illustrate how meanings intervene in the individual participation in social movements, a factor that has often been neglected in previous research. The phenomenological approach followed here allows us to take into account the entire life system of activists by means of life history interviews and to underline the role of life-spheres for sustained participation, or conversely, disengagement. The accounts by Yves and Josette show that when the central life-spheres are connected to political activism, thanks to a constant work of social interaction and self-interaction, this contributes to the stabilization of strong commitment, which is particularly costly, and hence sustained participation to social movements is more likely to occur. Both Yves and Josette have been socialized to Third World political issues through their embeddedness in formal networks that have raised their interest in these issues and helped them to relate their central life-spheres to their activism. Once the spheres have been linked to their political involvement, an interactive field took shape that resulted in sustained participation. Such an interactive field operates both at the individual and the collective level. On the one hand, Yves and Josette got caught in a constant self-interaction that kept them in contact with Third World issues. As the excerpts from the interviews show quite clearly, this work of self-interaction provides activists with a sense of coherence of what they

are doing as well as with the feeling that the various activities they are involved in are parts of a whole. In other words, it creates a meaningful continuum between their activism and the other spheres of their personal life. On the other hand, the consolidation of the structure of meanings led them to keep their embeddedness in social networks, which in turn strengthened the meaning given to activism. Here, structure and meaning establish an indissoluble relationship; objectively and subjectively, activists become locked in their engagement. As a result, both Yves and Josette's identification with Third World issues has strengthened and their commitment to such issues has become stable over time, leading to sustained participation.

In contrast, François, Maria Luisa, and Véronique all ended up abandoning their involvement in the BD. The evidence provided by their life histories shows that this, at least in part, has to do with a gradual separation of their political activism from their central life-spheres. They all disengaged when one of the spheres became alienated from their activism. The diminished self-interaction about Third World issues robbed these issues from their meaning, drawing them away from the center of their lives. As a result, François, Maria Luisa, and Véronique began to modify their relational structure in a way that undermined their connections with networks related to Third World issues. In the end, their embeddedness in social networks bore no similarity with the one that had characterized the period of activism. Due to the diminished self-interaction and to the exit from existing networks, these three former activists lost their identification with the issues, as Maria Luisa's account shows very well, and changed their preferences in a way to move off from political activism. Specifically, they came to perceive their commitment as more costly and their action as less effective. All this resulted in disengagement.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Individual participation in social movements resembles volunteering in several respects (Knoke and Wood, 1981; Pearce, 1993; Smith, 1994, 1997; Smith *et al.*, 1995; Verba *et al.*, 1995; Wilson and Musick, 1997; Wuthnow, 1991, 1995). Both types of activity imply that individuals invest time and energy in a given cause. Paid staff of SMOs are of course an exception, insofar as they are being paid for their work. However, most movement participants are volunteers. Political activism is thus one form of volunteering, and these two research fields share many issues and problems that can be addressed with the same analytical tools. For example, attachment to both activities can be seen as being determined by the level of resources

people bring to them, the rewards derived from them, and the context in which the activity is carried out (Wilson and Musick, 1999). Such an approach draws a parallel between voluntary work and paid work, based on the fact that they are both productive activities and assuming that the dynamics governing the former resemble those found in the latter. Yet, this assumption seems little warranted in the light of existing studies on volunteering and social movements. On the one hand, it has been remarked that voluntary work differs from paid work to the extent that the former consists of a generalized exchange—that is, the giving of a service to others without expecting exclusive and immediate benefits (Janoski and Wilson, 1995). On the other hand, participation in social movements is often driven by moral reasons, emotional and affective motivations, and solidarity feelings that are seldom present in productive work (Eder, 1993; Goodwin, 1997; Jasper, 1998; Lahusen, 1996; Melucci, 1996). In this paper we have elaborated on the latter aspect in the typical case of volunteered activity in social movements, an aspect that has received little attention in previous work.

Our findings suggests several implications for future theory and research on social movements. First, contrary to the bulk of the literature on micromobilization, which endorses a structural view of the role of social networks for individual participation (Fernandez and McAdam, 1989; Kriesi, 1993; McAdam, 1986, 1988a; McCarthy, 1996; Rosenthal *et al.*, 1985; Snow *et al.*, 1980), our approach has followed McAdam and Paulsen's (1993) suggestion that networks have multiple roles. Here we have highlighted the cultural role of networks, that is to say, their contribution to the production of meanings. Existing theories that stress the role of social networks in bringing people into collective action do provide some clues for an explanation of sustained participation or disengagement. Yet, these theories understate the role of meanings and the actors' perception of structural locations. As our findings suggest, this aspect is crucial to an understanding of why and how people keep their commitment over time. Thus, future research should acknowledge the varying roles and functions of networks, and in particular, pay more attention to the mechanisms through which they can shape and bring about cultural meanings for collective action. We have some promising contributions going in this direction (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994, 1996; Gould, 1995), but a lot more work is needed, especially with regard to sustained participation and disengagement.

Second, recent work on social movements has stressed the role of cultural meanings and in particular of shared identities (Andrews, 1991; Gamson, 1992; Johnston and Klandermans, 1995; Melucci, 1996; Pizzorno, 1978). We have focused on the production of meanings and identities through social relations. Drawing from Alfred Schutz's social phenomenol-

ogy and from the sociological tradition of symbolic interactionism, specifically from the work of Herbert Blumer, we wanted to suggest that cultural meanings for collective action are not only produced through social interactions, but also from the interaction individuals have with themselves. Our concept of life-spheres aims to convey this idea in a way that can be applied to the study of social movements. Our research shows that self-interaction is critical to the micromobilization process insofar as it helps activists to keep their commitment to a political cause and to an SMO or a movement that mobilizes for that cause.

Third, as the excerpts of the interviews with members of the BD illustrate, the keeping of commitment over time is strongly related to the perception of the effectiveness of one's involvement. This is in line with a great many previous studies, most of which follow a rationalist perspective (Chong, 1991; Oberschall, 1993; Opp, 1989), but which also stem from other theoretical traditions (Klandermans, 1997; Piven and Cloward, 1977). However, the rationalist view focuses on individual preferences and beliefs that lead to engagement, including the perception of the effectiveness of the action, but ignores the impact of the actors' social environment on the definition of those preferences and beliefs. Furthermore, those who have theorized about linkages between social networks and individual preferences (Macy, 1991; Marwell and Oliver, 1993) often assume that the latter are predetermined, thus avoiding the question of where individual preferences comes from. This leaves no room for a possible impact of the embeddedness of actors in social networks on their priorities regarding the involvement in collective action and in particular of its perceived effectiveness. This is particularly problematic when one looks at already engaged actors. In contrast, we have tried to show that the preferences and perceptions of individuals who are involved in collective action are shaped by their social relations and by their self-interaction. Briefly put, networks and life-spheres combine to give action its meaning, to shape the personal judgments over the action, and to set the individual preferences toward the action and its possibilities.

To conclude, the principal aim of this paper was to put forward a theoretical framework for the explanation of sustained participation in, or conversely, disengagement from social movements which underscores the personal life-spheres of movement participants and their relations with the embeddedness in social networks. Following the recent cultural turn in the study of social movements (e.g., Gamson, 1992; Gamson *et al.*, 1982; Johnston and Klandermans, 1995; Snow and Bendford, 1992; Snow *et al.*, 1986), the line of reasoning we have proposed attempts to "bring culture and meanings back" into social movement research, yet without neglecting structural factors that have yielded powerful explanations in previous work.

While our argument certainly needs to be elaborated and improved, it shows that structural and cultural factors interact to explain individual behavior within social movements. As a suggestion for further research, we will conclude by acknowledging that the perspective offered here needs not only to be supplemented with more data, but also to be applied to different movements and political contexts. Only thus will we be able to determine whether the concept of life-spheres can be added to that, so far much more widespread in current theory and research, of social networks to reach a better understanding of participation in social movements. Once we will have ascertained that, we will have a more solid ground for a phenomenology of political commitment.

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