

9 Identification

Naming the injustice

If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention.¹

For grievances to emerge, an injustice needs to be identified in the first place. In essence, what is or is not unjust is an inherently subjective definition, and there are endless debates as to the meaning of justice or injustice, respectively. There may be some universal consensus that certain forms of behaviour, situations or events constitute injustices (both individual and collective), such as the oppression of a people by a dictator, a physical assault on a child or an older person or the incarceration of an innocent person. However, depending on the context, the parties involved and the information at hand, a situation, event or behaviour may be considered as an injustice by some and not by others. In what follows, it is the *perception* of an injustice that is at the core of the discussion. I will make sure to provide as many details as possible regarding the actual event or situation that tends to be portrayed as an injustice, but readers should recall that, ultimately, injustice is treated here as an inherently (co-)constructed, subjective and evolving object. Nevertheless, it is this object and the meaning attributed to it by interviewees that is of central importance for the narratives and trajectories under study.

There are various factors that play a role when it comes to the identification of the injustice. Factors that play a role in the identification of the injustice include moral shocks that are directly or vicariously experienced and collective memories of pain that are remembered as part of a collective identity formation process. Certain actors may play a role in provoking moral shocks or recalling collective memories of pain in order to achieve a certain strategic goal. They can be considered as *grievance entrepreneurs* who engage in various forms of *emotional weaponisation*. Moreover, this section also discusses the formation of enemy images which are closely tied to the identification of an injustice. Finally, the section presents findings on why these interviewees choose to care about the various causes they are engaged in as well as on the emotions tied to the identification of injustices.

‘Boiling blood’: The lasting impacts of moral shocks

Moral shocks can be defined as a ‘vertiginous feeling that results when an event or information shows that the world is not what one had expected, which can sometimes lead to articulation or rethinking of moral principles’ (Jasper, 2011, p.289). The concept is useful for an understanding of how macro-level grievances come to affect individuals at the micro-level as Jasper himself had suggested when writing that ‘an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action’ (2008, p.106). Moral shocks are also linked to what has been called moral panic, as suggested in Martin’s (2015) analysis of the Australian public’s reaction to asylum seekers in the age of the War on Terror. Stanley Cohen (1972) proposed the concept of *moral panic*, which denotes the active promotion or even the manufacturing of information that is emotionally unsettling for the public, and serves to define a condition, episode, person or group of persons as a threat to society. Moral panic can thus be read as the result of manufacturing moral shocks (Martin, 2015).

Moral shocks (and the inherent analysis of injustice) elicit what Jasper (2011) calls *moral emotions*, such as moral indignation and outrage. They can lead to political action as a form of redress and they have helped recruit people to various causes ranging from animal rights to antiracist movements (Jasper, 2011). Using imagery and speech, they may also further entrench the commitment of existing members. On the other hand, moral shocks may have the opposite effect and drive people away from the cause, something Jasper (2011) calls the ‘Janus Dilemma’ (p.292). In the Northern Ireland context, Ferguson et al. (2008) found something that resonates with moral shocks, and which they refer to as ‘critical incidents’ (p.133), to be a central moment in individuals’ adoption of violent tactics or joining of paramilitary groups.

Moral shocks may function as triggers of a so-called *cognitive opening*, i.e., the point at which an individual comes to care about a certain cause (Hafez & Mullins, 2015; Ratelle & Souleimanov, 2017). Moral shocks are also frequently referred to by both non-violent activists and violent militants as an important driver of their commitment to the cause. In the French context, for instance, Crettiez and Anine (2017) found that young men incarcerated for terrorism-related offences refer to moral shocks as being at the origin of their indignation about certain socio-political issues and their growing interest in groups such as AQ and IS, and Lafaye (2017) found ample evidence pointing towards the importance of moral shocks in the process towards left-wing PIV.

Although moral shocks were part of the interview grid, there were no specific prompts at the beginning of the interview as to what moral shocks may have played a role in the interviewees’ trajectories. Rather, moral shocks came up organically and turned out to form an integral building block of narratives about politico-ideological mobilisation. Moral shocks were relevant for all interviewees. Prompted to talk about the beginnings of their engagement, individuals systematically point to an event or a situation that shook them profoundly and that led them to ask questions and seek answers. Interviewees seem to make sense of their

engagement by referring to moral shocks without my really intentionally pushing them for it. Moral shocks seem to function as a narrative element that lends logical coherence to a trajectory of engagement.

The relationship between grievances and moral shocks revealed itself to be more complicated than initially expected. In fact, moral shocks, while integral parts of the narratives of engagement, are confined to a narrower timeframe than grievances. Grievances are recurring and represent prolonged feelings and thoughts about a particular form of injustice, usually built, as demonstrated earlier, on fundamental political disequilibria and prolonged or recurring situations and incidents of neglect and abuse. Moral shocks, on the other hand, concern one specific event or situation that is witnessed or learned of. They spark engagement and go on to be an essential part of individuals' narrative, but they do not constitute the main pillar that grievances rest upon. Moral shocks in that sense can be thought of as episodic and anecdotal evidence that the dysfunctionality or the injustice that grievances are concerned with have significant validity. Grievances and moral shocks also differ in terms of the emotions they elicit: While grievances are often narrated in a much more detached and rationalised manner, descriptions of moral shocks are closely accompanied by vivid expressions of moral outrage.

Across the narratives, moral shocks tend to refer to events and situations of extreme violence and brutality. Most of them refer to events that do not affect the interviewee directly. They can be considered as moral shocks by vicarious victimisation. The suffering that results from this violence is immense in terms of human casualties and fatalities. Moral shocks refer to situations that are usually highly mediated and reach audiences all over the world. Interviewees learn about them through images and video material, on TV – before the spread of access to the internet – and more recently through social media. Given the importance of visual material for moral shocks, the present section will include pictures of the events that interviewees refer to. Usually, these are the very same images that produced the moral shocks. The use of these powerful and often disturbing images is also intended to facilitate readers' engagement with the impact of visual violence on interviewees.

Given the focus of the study on the Arab World and the consequential choice of interviewees and forms of engagement, moral shocks frequently relate to the Palestinian context. One of these examples is the picture of Faris Odeh throwing a stone at an Israeli tank during the second intifada. The picture is mentioned by interviewees in all three countries. It symbolises the Palestinian civilians' struggle against the Israeli army by capturing the power disbalance in a 'David vs. Goliath' fashion.

Souhail recalls watching the news of the first Palestinian Intifada, and being confronted with this image in his early adolescence

What really left a mark on me was this shocking image...while watching the news with my parents...this image of total inequality between that young boy holding a stone, facing that Israeli tank. I think that strong image is what deeply troubled me and shook me in my young spirit.

(Souhail, Switzerland)

Aziz similarly recalls seeing that picture and the symbolism behind it

I think...that maybe most people have this picture in mind. The picture of the kid who is carrying a stone. In my mind, this is the most impactful picture in political terms. A small kid facing a tank with a stone. Developed technology against what people who have barely anything and who have to fight with stones. If you want to oppose a big power, everyone will be your enemy.

(Aziz, Lebanon)²

In February 2020, another video started circulating around the world, capturing once again the brutality and inhumanity of violence in this conflict. It was reposted by several of my interviewees in Canada and Lebanon. On 23 February 2020, 27-year-old Muhammad Al Na'im was killed by the Israeli army on the border of the Gaza Strip. The IDF claimed that Al Na'im was suspected of planting an improvised explosive device. The video that was released on social media and garnered worldwide attention shows a group of Palestinian boys running towards the bulldozer, guarded by an Israeli tank, to retrieve the body, but are shot in their legs and run away. The bulldozer then starts lifting up Na'im's body and carrying it away (Gross, 2020). The drawing by Palestinian activist Ghassan Atawneh accompanied the image of the bulldozer carrying the corpse.

Another image and video that remained strongly ingrained in the collective memory related to the Palestinian conflict is the killing of Muhammad Al-Durrah by the Israeli military. The scene was filmed by a *France 2* Cameraman and images of Muhammad and his father trying to shield him from the bullets travelled around the world (BBC, 2000). Ziad, e.g., refers to the Al-Durrah image when he speaks about his first instances of engagement for the Palestinian cause (see Chapter 7).

Another example of a moral shock does not relate immediately to the Palestinian conflict, but also involves the IDF. A small village in Southern Lebanon, *Kfar Qana*, was haunted in both 1996 and 2006 by large-scale killings of civilians by IDF artillery. In 1996, the IDF shelled a UN compound, which led to the killing of over 100 civilians. One of the most shocking images shows a soldier carrying a killed infant with Fijian UNIFIL soldiers watching in the background.

During the war between Hezbollah and the IDF in July 2006, a building in Qana was shelled again, this time killing more than 60 civilians, more than half of them children. In this case, the image of a man carrying a child out of the rubble sent shockwaves through the world.

The massacres of Qana are strongly ingrained in the collective memory of Hezbollah sympathisers, and Southern Lebanese in general. Nidhal recalls growing up learning about the massacre of Qana, and connects it with attacks against Palestinians in Gaza and the West bank

One of the turning points that I grew up to...it was the massacre of Qana 1996. And the Israeli hypocrisy that came with it. You know this story that they are friendly...that they don't want war... and Hezbollah are the enemies

and they want war etc. that's something that really makes me angry. And what happens in Gaza and the West bank. The shellings and stuff. It's something that infuriates me.

(Nidhal, Lebanon)

Hezbollah sympathisers were also impacted by the images emerging from the Syrian civil war. Samir's quote illustrates this well. Of particular interest is his observation that images of extreme violence were still easily accessible and uncensored at the beginning of the war

I mean the media, in 2013 the official media wasn't working anymore it was mostly Facebook, social media ... The pictures were clear. Back then, Facebook would not blur the pictures and warn you and stuff, no...it was accessible to anyone. Videos, you could see them. The Free Syrian Army, in Daraa, a guy he pulled out a heart and ate it, and then they threw it away, these are things you don't forget of course ... These massacres, until now they are in my mind [...] the massacre that affected me most was the massacre of Hatla³. At the beginning. It was a Shia town. An older man, they killed his wife and his children in front of him. And his son, they killed him in front of him and then they killed him. This massacre, I can't forget it until now. I remember back then, I wrote something it came from the depth of my heart. I was crying whenever I thought about these pictures. The people that get massacred. Children, women.

(Samir, Lebanon)

For individuals who joined the Syrian conflict to fight against Bashar Al-Assad, pictures and videos of civilian killings and torture at the hands of the Syrian military, and of chemical attacks against children were central to their growing grievances and their feeling that they had to intervene to defend the innocent in this conflict. Max, for instance, recounted that in the period leading to his departure for Syria to join IS, he was watching a lot of videos emphasising the massacres committed by the Syrian regime on the Syrian population, although it becomes clear in the quote that he is struggling to transport himself back into the mindset of the time

Actually, the injustice I was perceiving was clearly mistaken, but in my head at the time, it was an injustice that I couldn't bear. [...] I was telling myself, regarding all that was happening, when I see people that get totally...of course it was totally biased, because those were propaganda videos and not the reality, but I was influenced by that so when I saw that the people were being massacred and all these atrocious things...But then, how could you know who started it?

(Max, Switzerland)

For the Islamists from Tripoli, moral shocks were mostly experienced by watching TV or videos on social media. They concern mainly the Syrian context, but

occasional references are also made to Palestine, Iraq, Yemen and Myanmar (formerly Burma). These moral shocks were mainly evoked in relation to engagement in foreign fighting, i.e., in the Syrian civil war. The narration of these moral shocks is frequently also action-oriented, for it is followed by the expression of a willingness or need to go defend the people who are suffering. This, of course, is primarily relevant for moral shocks that relate to situations and events in the present and not in the past. Here is an extract from the interview conducted with Mansour from Tripoli

AA: How did you hear about those things?

Mansour: I remember videos, and extracts, Sunni people, being killed, burned, and I saw a video of a woman who was killed and raped. That's where the hatred started.

AA: What are the emotions when you watch a video like this?

Mansour: I wanted to go there to get out what was in my heart, I was like a monster that wanted to eat people, I didn't necessarily want to blow myself up, I wanted a rifle and grenades and fight these people there who were killing women and children.

Bader, towards the end of the interview, in a rather sudden fashion and without being specifically prompted, recalls seeing scenes of attacks on Rohingya in Myanmar. He is visibly upset, because he recently watched a video on social media

For example, the people in Burma...When you see that, doesn't it burn your heart, doesn't it make your blood boil? How can you stay cold? They are butchering them, burning them alive! I am ready to go now, I swear I would go now, for this...to defend the Muslims there...I would go now. Syria and Iraq, no, but Burma, I would go now! I was watching something on Facebook, I wanted to break my phone, I was so upset!

(Bader, Lebanon)

Similarly, Nassim recalls images and videos when asked what affects him most about the Syrian conflict:

What upsets me most is when I see them kill people ... when they torture them and tell them to say that their God is Bashar, when they kill kids, rape women ... you know ... many channels would show these things.

(Nassim, Lebanon)

It also becomes clear throughout the narratives of this specific group that these are mainly examples of Sunni Muslims suffering, in line with observations made above on the idea of *Madhloumiya* of Sunni Muslims being oppressed and in need of solidarity and defence.

For this type of moral shocks – vicarious and globally oriented – the role that social media plays is crucial. Through images, people can be transported into

a conflict zone, on an emotional level. As Meriem (Canada) suggests cogently, social media has led to a ‘globalisation of suffering’. In fact, they are the main sources of information through which these individuals have learned about political events and injustices, whether they are related to domestic or global situations. Similarly to collective memory, the pertinence of moral shocks produced by information received through media or social media lies not in its truthful representation of world events, but in their lasting emotional impact, which comes to the fore through the narrated expressions of grievances. These images can be very unsettling, especially when one is told bits and pieces about the background story to them. They capture enormous human suffering, especially of non-combatant civilians such as the old, women and children, in tragically powerful ways. They spark moral outrage and indignation and tend to remain lastingly engrained in the viewers’ memory.

Besides globally oriented moral shocks referring to situations and events that do not impact them personally in objective terms, interviewees also evoke moments of moral shocks that refer to their immediate environment. These are instances of extreme violence against them directly, their friends or family members or where they themselves are witnessing situations of extreme violence and human suffering. In this respect, there is a clear experiential difference between interviewees who are living in impoverished zones where conflict occurs repeatedly and interviewees from a safer background. Even the interviewees who grew up under difficult circumstances in the Swiss or Canadian context, do not mention situations of extreme violence such as the ones narrated by interviewees from Tripoli.

The narratives of the young men from Tripoli all include moral shocks, of which most refer to attacks against families and friends. Compared to stories of past suffering or suffering occurring elsewhere, interviewees ascribe particularly important effects to the witnessing of the suffering with their own eyes

When I was young already, I heard the stories of the massacres of the Syrian regime, but what affected me more was seeing, with my own eyes, someone being hurt in front of me who is innocent... That’s what would drive me crazy. I couldn’t leave these people. Even if I die, I will stay here. Even if I die. It’s a red line.

(Walid, Lebanon)

Similar to moral shocks resulting from vicarious suffering, but to a much greater extent, these locally oriented moral shocks directly affecting the interviewees involve a strong impetus for action. The narratives usually mention moral shocks to explain not only engagement for a cause on a more intellectual level, but, in this context of ongoing conflict, physical engagement in the fighting that was taking place. At least in part, these narratives have certainly evolved over time to function as a storytelling tool about why somebody would engage in fighting, especially since that participation is strongly criminalised. Halim describes how

an injury suffered by his mother was the moment he decided to participate in the fighting

In 2010, my mother was shot. I didn't care about the sniper; I ran towards her and we managed to get her to the hospital. From that day on, I started participating in the fighting. Before that, I was participating, but mostly helping people getting food, securing passages. But when that happened, I started fighting. The sniper could have killed her. Before that, I had some ideas about the Jabal, but at that moment I had huge hatred against them.

(Halim, Lebanon)

Similarly, Naseem, from Jabal Mohsen, recalls that the day his father lost his eyesight after being hit by a bullet coming from Bab-el-Tabbaneh, he decided to pick up a weapon and fight

AA: What exactly led to your engagement?

Naseem: My father. When I saw how his eye apple fell out of his head, I was so shocked and angry, I took a weapon and started fighting.

Sometimes, these attacks on friends and families happened in the course of the army's involvement in the fighting, which feeds into the grudge the residents of BT hold against the security forces

My cousin was killed – because a rocket killed him on the balcony, he died immediately. That was the army! Because they thought we were all terrorists! The army killed so many people who had nothing to do with it.

(Zakaria, Lebanon)

An event that literally shook the entire neighbourhood of Bab-el-Tabbaneh was the bombing of two mosques, Al-Taqwa and Al-Salam, on 23 August 2013. Two minutes after the first car bomb went off in front of the Al-Taqwa Mosque, a second car bomb exploded next to the Al-Salam mosque in the port area, outside the area of fighting between BT and JM. The death toll rose to almost 50, while hundreds of citizens were injured. Two individuals from Jabal Mohsen were brought to justice and sentenced to life, but there is a widespread belief in Bab-el-Tabbaneh says that the Syrian regime and their proxies in Lebanon were behind the attack, especially since it involved some sophisticated logistical preparation.

This tragedy is recalled by many interviewees from BT as the point when they became ready to kill and sacrifice their lives. The interviews conducted in Tripoli with people from different backgrounds provide evidence that after the bombing, many young men from the neighbourhood reportedly went to the sheikhs who were recruiting fighters and told them they wanted to go fight in Syria. Among them were several interviewees. Some of them were minors at the time and therefore prevented from participating. Nassim describes his experience of the bombings as follows

We got to the mosque, it was blown up, there were corpses everywhere... When I saw that, I almost lost consciousness...I was standing there, crying, but my blood was boiling. And while we were standing there, the second explosion happened. We heard it and the ground shook. [...] At this point, it was completely anarchy. [...] I was walking through the streets and when I saw the army, I would shoot at them. I am surprised how I am still alive today. [...] I didn't care about anything. I wanted to die.

(Nassim, Lebanon)

It should be noted that many young people went to the mosque to help and were therefore inevitably faced with the direct manifestations of the two explosions. Experiencing such horror first-hand causes enormous individual and collective trauma. The way the explosion is commemorated today will certainly ensure that it becomes part of the collective memory of suffering that will be passed on to future generations.

Also, although such extreme violence is not common in the Swiss and Canadian context, the findings and quotes presented earlier illustrate that to many interviewees, direct moral shocks refer to encounters with state violence, such as Richard's arrest and detention because of his participation in a demonstration, Daniel's arbitrary arrest while sitting with a group of friends outside, or Kevin's encounters with police violence (see Chapter 7). These events lead to a sort of awakening that includes a sense of betrayal, especially if they happen for the first time. These emotions will be explored more extensively below.

In sum, a number of observations can be made regarding moral shocks. As the findings of this study demonstrate, moral shocks can relate to both vicarious and direct victimisation. When it comes to vicarious victimisation, especially events that happened in the past, the role of images is central. Images provoke strong emotions and lead to moral outrage and indignation about the injustice committed. When it comes to direct victimisation, including harm suffered by friends and family, or within one's neighbourhood, the emotions involved are, unsurprisingly, much stronger and of a more acute nature. In this sample, interviewees who experienced moral shocks described them as the moment they had to engage in fighting. In fact, immediate moral shocks are more frequently associated with involvement in PIV, whereas individuals engaged in PIM and primarily non-violent tactics, rarely experience situations of extreme physical violence.

Although there are significant differences between grievances and moral shocks, as discussed earlier, the events and situations that are the object of moral shocks display similarities to the objects of grievances discussed earlier. Moral shocks also refer to situations that, in a sense, lack complexity; situations, where the perpetrators and the victims can be clearly identified. Again, the victims are usually defenceless, non-combatants, elderly, women and children, and they suffer unjustified and enormous harm, usually at the hands of a much more powerful entity.

Apart from violent emotional reactions, including moral outrage and indignation, moral shocks are accompanied by what can be described as an impetus to act.

This may simply be part of human nature and an ordinary sense of justice, where the witnessing of great injustice usually incites men and women to either prevent further suffering or bring perpetrators to justice, or even seek revenge. Hence, moral shocks seem to have a significant power to *mobilise* for action.

Wounds that never heal: Collective memories of pain

Daphi and Zamponi (2019) claim that ‘collective memory has become a fundamental tool in advancing our understanding of social movements’ (p.400). In his analysis of engagement in ethnic conflict, Rydgren (2007) highlights the importance of ‘collective memory’, which Paez and Liu (2011, p.105) define as ‘widely shared knowledge of past social events that may not have been personally experienced but are collectively constructed through communicative social functions’. In other words, memory is not simply individual but co-constructed through social processes and interactions, particularly through a fragmentary narrativisation of the past. It has therefore also been referred to as *shared* or *social* memory (Candau, 2017). Collective memory is, at best, an assemblage of individual memories. More often, however, it is merely a social representation expressed through metaphors such as national, familial, common or cultural memory without much concern for its empirical foundations. It can therefore be instrumentalised for various political purposes, including creating rifts between groups with competing collective memories, when the question becomes about who suffered in the past at the hands of whom (Candau, 2017). In the process of social construction that is inherent to the formation of collective memory, certain episodes from the past have a more prominent place in the collective memory, a fact reminiscent of Kahneman et al.’s (1982) theory of *availability heuristic*: Significant events are remembered more easily and more widely than insignificant events. Unsurprisingly, then, the suffering inflicted on a community, people or nation is likely to be part of the collective memory. Genocides, massacres, assassinations, slavery, systematic oppression, segregation and exclusion are often prolonged experiences of widespread and brutal violence that are stored in collective memories and continue to nurture feelings of injustice, victimisation as well as a desire for restoration, revenge and justice.

When it comes to mobilisations related to the Arab World, it has been argued that the collective memory of European colonialism and imperialism is particularly vivid, especially since conflicts in that region persist and involvement by some of the original colonising powers remains contentious (Abi-Hashem, 2004; Mohamedou, 2018; Burgat, 2016; Falk, 2017). William Polk reaches even further back, into the *deep past*, and points to the experience of the Christian crusades as still being engrained in the collective memory of the Muslim World

Collectively, these and other events constitute a holocaust as formative to Muslim action as the German holocaust has been to Jewish action [...] Even if we, as northerners, choose to ignore this story, the victims’ descendants will not. Muslims, like Jews, increasingly probe into and publicize their

holocaust. The ‘deep past’ already played a significant role in the growth of Muslim sentiment toward the Christian north. It will play an important role in international affairs far into the future. Memory of it accounts at least in part for the growth of Muslim hostility today in such movements as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban, al-Qaida, various movements of Salafiyah and more recently the Islamic State.

(Polk, 2018, pp.64–65)

In another context, Paez et al. (2008), surveying students from 22 nations, found collective remembering of WWII to be positively correlated with a willingness to fight for one’s country. Collective memories may also contain interpretations of historical events that provide ‘a specific repertoire of possible action’ (Ruggiero 2005, p.11), including violent or non-violent resistance and political emancipation. These may influence individuals in what they perceive as noble, justifiable and necessary action repertoires for their own struggles in the present.

Collective memory can operate as a continual re-activator of grievances across generations (Marsella, 2004), which may explain why younger generations sometimes hold grievances related to the suffering of previous generations within the collective that they identify with (Pollak, 1993). Thus, though individuals may not suffer any direct victimization, they can feel *vicariously victimised* by witnessing or learning about the suffering of others (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020). Through collective memory, then, grievances are kept up over long periods of time, when the initial suffering has long disappeared from the individual memories of the majority (Jasper, 2011; Marsella, 2004; Ruggiero, 2009). It is important to note that the pertinence of collective memory lies not in the memories’ historic veracity, but in their potential to significantly influence future generations in their emotions, attitudes and their *Weltanschauung*. The practice of remembering and reactivating past suffering recalls the concept of *chosen trauma*. Turkish–American Psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan coined the term *chosen trauma* to describe the process of intentionally evoking a painful memory of collective suffering and placing it in the present to ascribe historic significance to it. Volkan argues that this process may work in a *reparative* way in order to strengthen the group’s unity and solidarity, or in a *destructive* way which focuses on vilifying a real or imagined enemy and focusing on revenge for past wrongdoings (Volkan, 2001).

Since collective memory is the result of a collective reconstruction and recounting of history, it may be subject to the influences of *memory entrepreneurs* (Pollak, 1993) who, analogously to moral entrepreneurs (Becker, 1963), ‘create shared references and monitor respect for them’ (Pollak, 1993, p.30). Because memory needs *social appropriation* in the present to gain relevance at the personal level for what is happening in the present, various actors can engage in *memory work*, that is, a conscious and strategic construction and reconstruction of history into a cohesive memory that has relevance for the present (Daphi & Zamponi, 2019). Memory entrepreneurs may be elites, social movement leaders and charismatic individuals who use narratives and stories to ‘connect a group’s collective past to

their present situation' (Della Porta, 2008, pp.226–227), sometimes to mobilise people emotionally and behaviourally. Polletta and Jasper (2001) argue that collective memories are the 'cultural building blocks' (p.299) of *collective identities*.

In the context of Algeria, Zeraouia (2020) demonstrates how political elites have been using the memories of the *Black Decade* of the 1990s, in combination with the Syrian civil war, to dissuade the people from challenging established powers. In relation to the South African transition process, Hemson (2012) suggests that memories of violence can be 'transmuted into a conviction for nonviolence' (p.27). In the context of the Crimean Tatar National Movement, Uehling (2004) explains that the *power of memory* could only be grasped if one realises that the collective memory consists of *memories of power* and resistance: 'Based on their narratives [...], the Tatars framed a very specific ideological terrain, from which to resist' (p.135). She also described how the act of 'remembering the movement endorsed became a form of collective action' (p.135) in and of itself.

Within the field of terrorism and radicalisation research, the past is frequently brought into discussion via the idea of a *Golden Age*, i.e., a period in the past during which the group of reference supposedly enjoyed economic and political glory. Various ideological orientations draw on the idea of a *Golden Age* and stress the importance of re-establishing the prosperity of the group (Abi-Hashem, 2004; McCauley, 2018; Jackson, 2019). In the case of Salafi-jihadism, the idea of a *Golden Age* of medieval Islam is strongly present, although this form of nostalgia is also widespread across the Arab-Muslim World and therefore part of the repertoire of a variety of Islamic political movements (Abu Rumman, 2014; Shayegan, 2014).

From moral shocks to collective memories

Across the three contexts, collective memories were found to be highly relevant for mobilisation processes. They are also closely connected to moral shocks. Through the images and stories commemorating a large-scale event of collective victimisation, moral shocks become part of collective memory. This is the case, for instance, regarding the massacres of Qana, the Palestinian struggles, or, though more recent, the twin bombings in Tripoli. By being integrated into collective memory, the moral shocks are perennialised and can be continuously reactivated and create a sense of continuity between present and past suffering. Hence, collective memories frequently refer to tragic events that affected a particular group, usually one the individual feels affiliated to. Importantly, the overarching collective memory that is attributed to an abstract, seemingly cohesive global community, is often complemented by many more individualised collective memories, e.g., stories of suffering that are specific to one's family, although they can be put in relation to a more general suffering occurring at the same time. These multifold collective memories that are more defined and more individualised serve as evidence that the larger collective memory has validity.

Justin, for instance, refers to the killings of his family members during the civil war, to talk about the general targeting of Christian communities in Lebanon

My mother is from Baalbek...her father, my grandfather was with the Kata'ib in Hermel Baalbek...and in 1978, the Syrians came and took 26 men from the village Al-Qaa'. They tortured and killed them and threw them into the valley. Among them my father. My mother was 16 years old...that's something that remains really strongly ingrained in my mother's memory. And you see it until now, in her behaviour. She is very scared...when you go anywhere, to a place where there are a lot of Muslims...[...] But you know, it's a general fear, that's our main cause here in Lebanon, the one we are fighting for...because since the 6th century, we have been persecuted by the Byzantine emperor and we fled into the Lebanese mountains and have defended ourselves ever since...And we let the Arabs enter, because we needed them to defend us against the Byzantians, but then they turned out to be worse.

(Justin, Lebanon)

The collective memory includes, again, instances of enormous suffering that serve to maintain the image of an enemy who poses an existential threat. There is a clear narrative and intellectual continuity between the suffering of Christians throughout history, and the current need to arm and be ready to defend the Christian Maronite community in Lebanon.

The young men from Tripoli also learn about the massacres committed by the Syrian regime, this time in Bab-el-Tabbaneh during the 1980s. Most of them did not witness them themselves, although practically all of them remember the presence of the Syrian Army in their neighbourhood. These stories, which all of them are confronted with, contain acts of immense brutality, great pain and enormous suffering. They create a grudge and hatred against the Syrian regime and, *in extenso*, anyone that seems to be supportive of it, in particular the people of JM, who are generally sympathetic to the Syrian regime.

Walid and Zakaria, for instance, refer to the massacres

They wanted to take the gold of a woman so they cut her hand. Or they would go in and throw someone from the balcony from the third floor. Do you see what I mean? All these stories, we grew up hearing them.

(Walid, Lebanon)

In 6 hours, there were 300 dead, that's what they told us about the massacres! These memories are still here and present. And we remember that when they came, we used to hide [...] they committed massacres out of hatred.

(Zakaria, Lebanon)

Sometimes, positive memories are enmeshed with negative ones. However, any reference to the time of their parents will point to the massacres and to the enormous suffering. Nassim explains the feelings associated with hearing those stories

I was sitting with the elders of the neighbourhood, and they would tell us their stories, they were nice stories. It was nice, but at the same time, there is a lot

of pain in these memories. People who killed each other. Women who were raped in front of their husbands, their brothers. There are women who are still alive who were raped. How could I love them [the people of JM]? Imagine it's your mother? If not your mother, then the mother of your friend, or else? Here in BT, we all know each other. Many have suffered. Others committed suicide after they were raped. Others got crazy; others died. These are painful stories. These are deep wounds that are hard to heal.

(Nassim, Lebanon)

It is important to note that there is frequent reference to the suffering of women, especially to acts of rape. In a context where the honour of the woman is given particular importance and on which the honour of the entire family is often believed to depend, the greatest moral humiliation is to sexually abuse and rape a woman. This aspect will be further discussed in the context of combat masculinity.

Another crucial aspect of collective memories is that they become entangled with collective identity. They become essential building blocks of a collective identity. Unsurprisingly, some members who care strongly about that collective identity may feel compelled to police the way history is taught. The narratives reveal very strong reactions to what is perceived as historical revisionism. Justin's quote is a good case in point

There are phases where I can discuss things. And on other occasions, I don't feel like discussing. I have a hard time understanding. I hate Bashar Al Assad. Somebody said something, like I had to understand things...be open-minded etc. I completely lost it. But look, I have two red lines: The existence of Christians in Lebanon. And the history... if somebody comes and wants to distort my history, anyone, as saying that they are the victims and you are the one who wronged them. Then, I don't have any understanding. Because there is history, there are facts. There is no yes or no. In relation to this, I am a little bit extreme.

(Justin, Lebanon)

This feeling that historical revisionism needs to be fought is a crucial aspect of an individual's engagement with a cause that is relevant to their collective identity. The collective memory of suffering and victimhood is elevated to a sacrosanct level, because the martyrs died for that cause, often unjustly. It, therefore, has to be defended against outsiders. The narrative of past victimhood needs to be maintained to justify today's engagement. This is also in particular the case for the Palestinian cause. Many interviewees worry that the Palestinian Nakba will one day be forgotten, e.g., Aziz

It's not far-fetched to say that my children will forget one day that there is anything called Palestine. And that is very scary to me.

(Aziz, Lebanon)

Finally, collective memories evoked by interviewees also contain elements that refer to political struggles, their failures and the pains connected with that. Collective memories can thereby shape the worldviews of individuals even generations later, through the stories that continue to be told. Daniel sums this up as follows

I am a son of political exiles. I have grown up in stories of political struggle, militancy, seeking refuge, frustrations over failed projects and destroyed dreams. This idea of fragility has been passed on to me very strongly.

(Daniel, Switzerland)

Grievance entrepreneurs and emotional weaponisation

As mentioned, *memory entrepreneurs* may actively shape collective memories, by highlighting certain episodes and proposing or imposing a certain view and understanding of the past. In that process, they are engaging in something that has been referred to as *framing*. Ideological constructs, typically, contain *frames* and prisms through which memories and events are interpreted and the world is explained and understood. As Goffman (1974) argues, frames provide us with ‘schemata of interpretation [to] locate, perceive, identify, and label’ events (p.21). Any information we are confronted with is framed in a particular manner, which we might often be oblivious to. Thus, collective memory as well as information and imagery that have the potential to provoke moral shocks are often framed, wittingly or unwittingly by the narrator or presenter, in a way that makes injustices salient (Crettez, 2011).

The narratives collected for this book also reveal that collective memories are the products of social construction. Many of the memory narrators have themselves personally experienced what they are talking about. In fact, family members, people with a certain authority, or even simply elders in the neighbourhood can be considered as *memory entrepreneurs*, for they manage memories, pass on what they believe should be remembered and perhaps neglect some other aspects that were less salient to their eyes or personal experience. The process of remembering also contributes to simplifying and clarifying past episodes, which is important for the memories to be received and passed on. The stories that family members (and other people with a certain degree of authority and experience) share with the interviewees from an early age on, including the way they frame them, contribute to shaping their worldview and designating enemies and perpetrators even in the present.

To the interviewees, the fact that the generation before them was involved in fighting and had experienced the suffering at the hands of the Syrian regime provides the impression of continuity. There is a narrative that says that the fighting from back then was only slumbering and is now flaring up again. Those who are fighting today are therefore not only retaliating against a perceived or actual attack; they are also able to take revenge for what happened yesterday. Mansour and Zakaria make this point very clear

But...you know, in the 80s, our parents would tell us...that they came down to destroy mosques, commit all these massacres, humiliate us, rape our women...and now...the same thing...exactly the same thing is happening now!!

(Mansour, Lebanon)

I heard the stories of massacres. So, I hated them, because their blood is blue, because they are kuffar. I had many friends at JM, but in 2008, the fighting started, I knew that between us there was only killing. They had to die. This guy is here to kill us, to destroy the Sunna, the Muslims.

(Zakaria, Lebanon)

An important figure in the recruitment of people for fighting in Syria has been the religious cleric, the sheikh. There were a few in Tripoli who were well-known to be affiliated with JAN and IS from 2007 on. They were preaching in different mosques and rallying people around them and sending them to Syria. The sheikhs fulfilled both the role of *memory* and *moral entrepreneurs*. They would engage what some of my interviewees have called *emotional weaponisation* by recalling the painful memories of the Syrian massacres, but also by telling stories about the suffering of the Syrian people at the hands of Bashar Al-Assad, thereby creating *moral shocks* and granting religious legitimacy to the act of fighting in defence of suffering Muslims

Even our Sheikhs they started saying go fight in Syria. But they tell you to go fight there, and that its sharia etc. in the end, they tell you you're an unbeliever. [...] You go to the sheikh, and he makes you cry. 'They raped our women, now they are raping our children, etc.' of course, you will want to go fight jihad for them. I started hating anything associated with the Alawite sect. They make you hate everything. They manipulate you emotionally.

(Amir, Lebanon)

When sheikhs use such grievances to motivate people to join their cause and respective groups, this is often very uncontroversial in the beginning. Anyone is allowed to suffer for other people. Sometimes they would also use political stances that are in themselves legitimate, such as dislike of Hezbollah, to present uncontroversial entry points for people to join their sermons:

The sheikh came and started talking to me, and at first, he was mostly talking against Hezbollah, saying that the Shia are kuffar, which I agreed with especially after what happened on 7 May 2008, so I thought we were fighting against Hezbollah, but then he got affiliated to AQ and IS.

(Abdelaziz, Lebanon)

A similar form of emotional weaponising was operated by Ahmed Al-Aseer who was rallying people from Saida around the Syrian cause and the fight against

Bashar Al-Assad. Rashid, who was recruited by Al-Aseer, recalls the way the Sheikh stirred upset among his followers

After 2011, when the Syrian conflict broke out...he started talking more and more about the pains of the Sunni people. To me, that's where the mistakes started already. He started talking about our brothers in the religion, that they had to be protected in Syria...The thing is, there was no talk of Palestine or Burma before...why now Syria? He said that as Lebanese we had a special responsibility, because we were just next door and this conflict would affect us anyway...So there was this emotional weaponisation, but in the beginning, there was no effective call to arms. But to me, that was already problematic. Because people get very emotional, very upset, and they want to do something about these pains. But he kept telling them to be patient. So, he fuelled the emotions, but did not act upon them. Obviously, people would get upset and things would derail at some point.

(Rashid, Lebanon)

It follows that emotional weaponising can be understood as a social process where actors with a certain authority and legitimacy expose individuals to moral shocks and to painful collective memories. Thereby, they are creating the grudge and the frustration that build up in individuals, especially young men, who naturally feel that they need to act upon the injustice that is presented to them.

Across the narratives, there are many figures that can be qualified as *grievance entrepreneurs*, beyond merely being memory or moral entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs are family members, relatives, friends and people with charisma, legitimacy and a certain authority, including religious clerics. The example of the sheikhs' role in 'weaponising' youths emotionally is indicative, for instance, of the fact they mobilise collective memory alongside moral shocks relating to domestic and global instances of injustice and suffering. In addition to that, grievance entrepreneurs can provide a certain intellectual frame to understand the suffering, provide analysis of a particular situation, designate enemies and propose ways to act. They can also, importantly, either through their very existence or through their values and attitudes, shape the sense of collective identity of a young man, by reminding him of his cultural or religious heritage or suggesting that he is part of a particular collective. Given their somewhat transversal role – across memory and identity formation and the framing of moral shocks – we could envisage the role of such key figures as *grievance entrepreneurs*. Sheikh Ajouz, living in Switzerland and of Lebanese origin, describes this process as follows

What these people do is that they exploit situations of injustice that exist in the world. There are many of them! For example, the Palestinian cause, the Iraq invasion, especially since Iraq didn't have anything to do with 9/11...But it was clear, that they wanted to destroy the culture of Iraq. And if you want to destroy your enemy, you destroy their culture. The most dangerous thing for your enemy is when you are educated...And see, these things, if you

talk about them, any young man will feel strongly about it...how can these Americans come and destroy our land and leave with impunity? And the same thing with Palestine, itself is an axis of injustice, I mean just now, a disabled young man, you go and shoot him⁴. What, seriously, you were thinking he had a gun?? What is this? So, these things, anyone will be moved by them. I for example, since I was a kid, I was always considered as a support for the weak. I would also want to defend them. And there are many young men who are like me. Now, when there is no education, aha, that is the problem! They can be deluded into thinking that they can be the fighters for injustice, you give them weapons, one or two Ayat, Hadith, and Jihad. And then...he will enter a group that has nothing to do with religion.

(Sheikh Ajouz, Switzerland)

The influence of grievance entrepreneurs is greater when individuals consider them uncritically as infallible figures of authority who hold the real truth. Rashid considers this as the ‘easy way out’

To me...there is one form of unreal extremism...which is simply what people label those who are very pious, who have long beards and gowns and whose wives are completely covered...the real extremism in my view is those who don't accept any kind of criticism of their ideas. They would not accept that Aseer [Ahmed Al-Aseer] was wrong in anything for example. It was almost some form of sacralizing his person...which is wrong...even when it comes to the prophet, this is something you should not do. It's a cognitive rigidity which switches off the mind...which is something wrong. There is always an enemy...you're maintaining that image of the enemy. But I repeat that extremism is not restricted to any religion. The people I know who are still extremist in their thinking are those who are not well-educated and who have little knowledge of religion...what they do is...they cede their responsibility to understand religion to a person who seems more knowledgeable. It's the easy way out.

(Rashid, Lebanon)

It is worth noting that social media may have played an important role in giving increased exposure to figures that can be considered as grievance entrepreneurs. Video material can circulate faster and more widely than ever before, allowing for grievance entrepreneurs to reach audiences worldwide.

‘They gave up their humanity’: Defining and dehumanising the enemy

Definitions of injustices seem to naturally include definitions of enemies. The narratives illustrate that wherever an injustice is described with expressions of moral outrage and indignation, a perpetrator of the injustice is defined as well. Enemies tend to be entities that are powerful economically or militarily

speaking, or influential in political terms. Given the context of the inquiry, Israel, more specifically the Israeli military, frequently occupies the position of the powerful and evil Other in the narratives collected here. It is not surprising that this enemy also tends to be dehumanised. The following longer excerpt of the interview with Aziz is worth quoting in full, because it illustrates well how Israel is constructed as the enemy and dehumanised because of their military actions in Palestine

If you want to liberate Palestine, you will hurt Israel, and Israel is also human beings. And you shouldn't hurt human beings. But the difference is the story of the injustice. A human being loses his humanity when he does injustice to someone else, when he lets someone else lose his humanity. When Israel entered Palestine, they took away the Palestinian's most basic rights. The greatest injustice ever committed is the Palestinian occupation. It's worse than all the things that happened in Russia, Hitler, Mussolini, etc. the biggest tyrants...they are not even a percentage of what Israel did. You are killing people, innocent people who are in this country. I told you, I always consider situations from a personalized point of view – I try to imagine 'what if this happened to me?'...if Lebanon was taken away from me? If an oppressor came to my country? If I was a young kid, when all these things happened. How many young boys had to leave because of the oppression, and they remember their friends from school? ...How much does this make you hate Israel? Not the Jews – Judaism is one of the heavenly religions, we acknowledge them. Islam is one of them. But the Zionist, he is a human who gave up his humanity and lost the slightest bit of human feelings he might have had.

(Aziz, Lebanon)

Salim makes a similar explanation regarding the Israeli enemy, explaining which actors may be deserving of violence

I am very strongly against violence that targets civilians...but you have to define civilians first. To me, a woman...although she is a woman...when she wears a miniskirt and carries an AK-47 on her back...she is not a civilian anymore. As soon as she is armed, she can be attacked.

(Salim, Canada)

Fahad demonstrates a similar understanding of who may be a legitimate target of violence. Interestingly, he also engages with the label of terrorism, demanding that nuances be maintained when designating someone as a terrorist

Be careful, not all terrorism is terrorism, not all which they call terrorism. For example, someone fighting US soldiers in Iraq is not a terrorist, someone using explosives against the army is not a terrorist. A terrorist is someone who starts fighting against innocent civilians. That's injustice.

(Fahad, Lebanon)

Other groups of humans that are constructed as enemies throughout the narratives are Shia Muslims and Alawites which are associated with the Shia sect by the Salafi-jihadist interviewees; Daesh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, of course, which have become, in the eyes of most interviewees, incarnations of evil and brutality; Islam and Muslims in general, in the eyes of right-wing Christian Maronite activists; or Western powers such as the United States or France. Regardless of racial or religious traits, representatives of the state that engage in abuse and violence are also portrayed as enemies. Anti-police activists consider police officers as dehumanised the moment they put on their uniforms. Kevin's statement in this respect is illustrative of this

I am profoundly anti-authoritarian...I hate police officers who allow themselves to beat up the poor...even when you try to humanise them, it is still the same to me...We often joke that police officers would probably not pass the Turing test, which tests whether you are a person or a computer. To me, the police officers follow orders, don't think and are therefore not human.

(Kevin, Canada)

Defining an enemy provides a target for the grudge and the frustration felt by interviewees who identify with a cause and suffering. Because most situations in the world are extremely complex and hard to be broken down in black-and-white fashion, the designation of enemies always operates as a simplification of reality. Enemies are, also to justify violence against them, often dehumanised and portrayed as purely evil. It is important to note, however, that constructing a collective as an enemy as such is always tied, narratively, intellectually and emotionally to great acts of violence and injustice committed by members of the collective. Hence, although the designation is simplistic, it is not arbitrary in the sense that enemies are solely constructed based on their affiliation. There is always a justification for the hatred directed towards them by evoking their responsibility and complicity in causing great and unjustified human suffering.

'Why should I care?': Resisting against apathy

As human beings in an era of high-speed connectivity and social media, we are likely to be confronted to a plethora of causes and situations of suffering and injustice every day. But what makes some individuals connect with certain causes more than with others? Why, in fact, do individuals care about causes that do not concern them, at least physically, in the first place? Where do individuals choose to *look* and why?

In their biographical study of different cases of political violence, McCauley and Moskalenko (2011), concluded that 'what moved [them], while others who shared their convictions did nothing, seems to have been an unusual capacity to care⁵ about others' (p.76). Cohen (2016) in his study of politico-religious self-sacrifice, found that perpetrators of suicide attacks displayed 'heightened awareness and sensitivity to social and/or political grievance' (p.751) and tend to be

characterised by an ‘over-identification with the collective’ (p.751). Accusations of *hyper-* or *over-sensitivity* are also frequently directed at those engaged in militancy, e.g., for feminist or anti-racist causes, especially when they correspond to the group that is perceived as being disadvantaged (West, 2019).

When it comes to PIM and PIV, ‘collective problems become personal problems’, as Lee (2019) argues, ‘and for this reason, no study of violence is complete without the study of society and societal dynamics’ (p.85). Whether through vicarious victimisation (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020), the ‘psychology of attribution’ (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011, p.19), the transformation of one’s social identity (Rydgren, 2007), or the ‘enlargement of personal identity’ (Benford & Snow, 2000, p.632): Individuals who invest themselves emotionally, intellectually and physically for a certain cause feel that they are part of a collective. They connect to their suffering, and they feel responsible to defend the imaginary collective and act on its behalf.

Being confronted by moral shocks and collective memories of suffering, either via social media, through friends and families or within the social environment that one grows up with, are the main drivers of identifying injustices. These are the first stages of the emergence of grievances for individuals who go on to engage in PIM and PIV. As mentioned, identifying injustices can be supported by so-called *memory* or *grievance entrepreneurs* who present individuals with moral shocks and collective memories of pain to influence them, garner them for a cause, or simply for their personal political interest. The findings also demonstrate that moral shocks and collective memories of suffering are closely intertwined with designations and constructions of enemies, who are dehumanised and against whom retaliatory or vengeful violent action is justified or even necessary to do justice.

However, since it can be reasonably claimed that everyone has at some point in their lives been confronted with situations of injustice, even collective injustice, abuse, and neglect, whether personally, through witnessing them, or by learning about them via stories and images, one has to ask why these individuals come or choose to *care* while many others don’t or don’t feel as compelled to do something about it. What do their narratives tell us about *why* they care about something so much, and why they come to sacrifice their lives for a certain cause?

One finding is that individuals come to care about social and political issues through their socialisation. In a sense, sensitivity, is then, learned. Souhail and Richard were both influenced by their parents in this regard

My father was a social worker in the French banlieues, working with the generation of immigrants. Today, he helps out refugees. My mother works in education and a lot with disadvantaged children. Social issues have always been something that mattered to them.

(Souhail, Switzerland)

Politics, I have bathed in it since I was a kid. My father was very politically engaged. [...] Politics has always been of great importance at home. I was interested in what was happening in the world.

(Richard, Switzerland)

Jaafar makes an interesting connection between the context one grows up in, the general sense of security and one's propensity to get involved in politics. His view is representative of Lebanese interviewees' views on politicisation and its inevitability in the Lebanese context

In my family, we have political figures. So, you get affected, obviously. For example, my father...when he met friends, it was mostly about politics. The family plays a huge role. But the university also played a huge role...See, there is something you need to know. That Lebanon's life is always about politics. It is always hot and loaded. Any Lebanese citizen, whether he wants it or not, politics is imposed on him. Wherever you go, you will see that everyone talks about...at least once per day...about politics, or 70% of them. At least! Because Lebanon is a generator of political crises. And the whole region of course is hot. There is Israel, there is petrol. It is always a place for conflict...so, you are not in a country that is completely secure. There are always crises. There is no real stability...For example, imagine...had I grown up in Canada. Why should I care about politics? There is everything provided in terms of security. Even if you are a student, you get an income, in Sweden for example. You live in peace and you can enjoy your life. In general, the atmosphere is not politically charged constantly [...] here, because every conflict has a direct impact on the citizen. You have to participate.

(Jaafar, Lebanon)

Several individuals point to their childhood or adolescence as the period when they realised that they felt strongly about injustice and inequality and tried to do something about it. Souhail, for instance, recalls this as follows

I've always been very sensitive to injustice. When I was 4 or 5 years old and we went on vacation, I cried when I saw the boys of my age working on the street, while I was there on vacation. I think that certainly played a role. The fact of always having seen this inequality. It definitely influenced me.

(Souhail, Switzerland)

Richard similarly recalls what his parents told him about his character when he was a young boy

My parents always told me that as a boy, I strongly disliked injustice. At school, I spoke up against teachers when I thought something was wrong. I was kind of a troublemaker as a kid. When I saw something that seemed unjust, I was not afraid of pointing it out. That's what my parents have always told me.

(Richard, Switzerland)

Sabri also remembers that he has always resisted injustice, even at smaller scales

I think that I have always had a hard time accepting injustice around me. You know at school, there is a lot of violence in our school system in Syria...and I never thought this was right. When most of my schoolmates were laughing when the teacher made fun of a student, I never laughed. I refused to. I thought this was disgusting.

(Sabri, Canada)

Salman also points out that it is simply in his nature to react strongly when he sees someone who is oppressed

I fought to defend the weak and the oppressed, not for the politicians, like many others did. There were a lot of wrongs being committed, a lot of exploitation in this civil war. Many of us were tricked into joining. But to me, it is simply...that I can't see someone suffer and not want to help that person.

(Salman, Lebanon)

There are various indications that these interviewees do indeed themselves feel that they have a particularly heightened sensitivity which distinguishes them from others. As a methodological comment, I shall add that this question (*Do you feel like you are particularly sensitive to injustice?*) was often asked quite directly, towards the end of the interview, when a certain connection with interviewees had been established and they had talked abundantly about their engagement and commitment. The question was always well received and well understood, because these interviewees were very aware that they *did* distinguish themselves from the common man or woman through their engagement, commitment and radicality. At the same time, one should keep in mind that these individuals want to be committed politically and see strong feelings about injustice as a virtue, which certainly influences the way they present themselves.

While individuals may have a personal predisposition to being particularly sensitive to injustices, they also believe that this should be the general attitude of a normal human being, to care about human suffering. This is also supported by frequent references to the fact that the causes they are engaged in are *human* causes. Across the narratives, interviewees from very different orientations stress the fact that they are engaged for *humanity* and not for a particular collective.

Also, the narratives clearly point to the fact that there is a sort of moral obligation to *care* and that the right choice is the choice to care. There is a sort of resistance against what is perceived as *carelessness* or even as *apathy* on the part of those who remain idle in the face of injustice

When it came to political causes, I could be very violent, verbally. When I saw injustice and I couldn't understand how people could *not* react [emphasis added]. In those cases, I really felt great anger.

(Souhail, Switzerland)

In the Swiss context, there are indications that values of caring are defined against a vague idea of *Swissness*. Swiss interviews express frustrations with perceived Swiss *apoliticality* – ‘People pretend to be apolitical and objective. [...] To me, it always seemed more like they didn’t want to get involved and change things’ (Daniel, Switzerland) – and calmness or even nonchalance: ‘I think we were trying to distance ourselves from the "calm Swiss", to define ourselves against that’ (Souhail, Switzerland).

Kevin’s description of his sensitivity reveals his struggle to do anything else but care, it’s a sort of compulsive empathy, with a clear undertone that one *has to care* if things are going that badly in this world

AA: How do you see your future?

My future...I can’t see my future, I can’t conceive it, because THE future is bad. The question about my personal future becomes superfluous. I cannot be happy if the world is doing so bad...this capitalism is eating us up. I can’t be in a relationship with anyone, I can’t pretend to be satisfied when others are suffering, when in the country next to mine, children are dying in concentration camps... [...] This affects me a lot. Even when I cannot understand something, I try to do my best and to get involved. I can’t take those people who want to remain in their comfort zone, I simply can’t.

(Kevin, Canada)

Overall, the sensitivity to injustices is something that is inherently human. An ordinary human being wants to prevent or remedy the unjustified suffering of others. However, depending on one’s context and environment, one may be rarely directly confronted to injustice and suffering, therefore not inevitably *seeing* violence and suffering. In an era of mass media, social media, instant information flows and hypoconnectivity across the globe, living in society includes being at least exposed to some extent to information about suffering and violence elsewhere, without, however, necessarily needing to. People living in safe environments can choose to look the other way, or they can choose to look and choose to care. Individuals who engage in causes and conflicts around the world make a conscious decision to care, and to care again and again. They see their caring not as exceptional in terms of human character traits – regarding that, they generally acknowledge that human beings do normally care about suffering – but they do see themselves as exceptional in terms of their *act of caring*. Given that most people will not engage politically as much as they do, they know that their engagement is to a certain extent radical. And an essential part of their radicality is the *act of caring* itself, which is a defiance of the dominant tendency towards *apathy*; radically caring translates into a moral indignation about carelessness, about people’s unwillingness to leave their comfort zone and look at the ugly side of the world. It is a strikingly consistent theme throughout the narratives: Radicality is, to a large part, a visceral reaction to the apathy of this world.

Feeling the injustice: Betrayal and a complicated relationship with emotions

Politico-ideological engagement, mobilisation and violence include, as has been discussed so far, intensive moral and emotional engagement with the things that happen in the world. Grievances themselves translate, in fact, into an emotional state, a prolonged one that is embedded in a narrative of analytical rationality. Emotions are therefore inherent to the study of grievances, sometimes to such an extent that it may be tempting to overlook them. Trajectories of radicality are also trajectories of dealing with and handling often overwhelming and unsettling emotional states, such as resentment, rage, anger, numbness, helplessness, sadness and despair.

For a long time, emotions were relegated outside the realm of academic inquiry in the social sciences because of their association with a sort of irrational passion. Human beings were considered as ‘patients’ and not ‘agents’ of their emotions (Kaufmann & Quéré, 2020, p.9). Scholarship has since evolved significantly to allow for a comprehensive engagement with emotions as an essential aspect of social interactions, conceding also their malleable and co-constructed nature. As Kaufmann and Quéré (2020) argue, emotions are of the ‘interactive kind’ rather than the ‘indifferent kind’ (Hacking, 1999, p.104) – they are not indifferent to discursive performances and social construction (Jasper, 2011). Hence, while there are psychological and physiological processes that are somewhat universal to emotional reactions, emotions must be understood as socially constructed, according to the specificities of the time and the cultural context in which they take place (Hacking, 1999).

It follows that emotions are inherently tied to cognition. As Jasper (2012) puts it: ‘Humans are driven by both passion and purpose’ (p.38). Similarly, Ortony et al. (1990) suggest that conceptualising ‘a situation in a certain kind of way’ (p.2) can create the potential for a particular kind of emotion, and Petersen (2002) argues that cognition tends to precede emotion in ethnic conflicts. While it is beyond the scope of this book to thoroughly discuss cognition and emotion in relation to PIM and PIV, we shall recall that there tends to be a constant interplay between thinking and feeling, particularly when it comes to grievances.

Emotions are crucial to understanding how individuals move their self-perception from the *micro*- to the *macro*-level (Scheff, 1994). For engagement in PIM and PIV, both individual and collective emotions are at play. However, the ontological difficulty of grasping emotions is exacerbated when moving from the individual to the collective level: How can emotions, which are, by essence, occurring at the individual level, be felt at the level of the collective? Does the notion of ‘collective emotions’ refer to the fact that a collective experiences emotions or the fact that these emotions are actually of a different nature? In other words, does the term ‘collective’ function as a ‘subject’ or as an ‘attribute’ of emotions? (Kaufmann & Quéré, 2020, p.14). These questions are not easily resolved, but they point to the complexity of theoretically and empirically engaging with emotions.

Emotions must also be analysed in terms of their temporality. Experiencing moral shocks, learning about injustices framed in a particular way and relating to a suffering collective both in the present and the past, are likely to elicit strong *moral emotions*, i.e., feelings of approval or disapproval based on moral intuitions and principles (e.g., pride, shame, guilt, indignation, outrage, compassion) (Jasper, 2011, p.287). These emotions are different from so-called *reflex emotions* such as anger, in that they tend to build up and persist over a longer period of time, in the face of injustice, but also impunity⁶. Petersen (2002) suggests three types of emotions that he found to be dominant in ethnic conflict, namely *fear* (prepares the individual to act for safety), *hatred* (resulting from historic grievance) and *resentment* (prepares individuals to address status/self-esteem discrepancies). While fear and resentment operate in a more restricted timeframe, hatred can be associated with antipathies and hostile attitudes that persist over a longer period of time. In relation to PIM and PIV associated with causes and conflicts in the Arab World, these may include Anti-Americanism (Marsella, 2004; Türkmen, 2010), Anti-Westernism, Anti-Imperialism and Anti-Colonialism (Burgat, 2016; Mohamedou, 2018).

Politico-ideological mobilisation and acts of politico-ideological violence are hardly ever spontaneous, but the result of a process of reflection that can take years to lead to actual engagement. Sometimes, however, grievances may not be clearly articulated to the individuals engaging in PIV themselves. They may not relate to immediate or direct suffering. It may therefore even be difficult for individuals engaged to clearly state the goals and objectives of their engagement (Hamm, 2012). In order to understand how individuals react in the *present* to grievances that may have built up over many years, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* provides some insights. Bourdieu suggested *habitus* as the physical embodiment of cultural capital, habits, feelings and skills that are accumulated over a lifetime (Bourdieu, 1977). In her compelling analysis of the 2011 British riots, Akram (2014) suggests that grievances produced through memories and experiences collected over a life course are in some way stored in the *habitus* and may be at play in violent action. In the context of the Black Power movements in the United States, Morris (2019) similarly writes that 'grievances are not static. Sometimes they lie meek and dormant like raisins in the sun. At other times, they fester, exploding into organised, creative, collective action' (p.133). The goal of social science research is, then, to 'examine grievances, articulate the sources of their passivity, and understand the transformation process through which they become the fuel for overturning the old regime' (p.133). This accumulation of grievances and feelings over time is tellingly captured by an account of what Missak Manouchian, a French resistance fighter during the WWII, is reported to have said

There is no cause or feeling that is born suddenly. It is always the result of a more or less long history. The first image that came to my mind when I engaged in action was that of my father, who died during WWI, and that of my mother, who died from hunger shortly after that. I really got the impression

that they were coming out of their tombs, telling me that I had to act: ‘You’re not doing anything bad; you are simply killing killers’.

(Malayalam, 2019)

Finally, emotions can provide an impetus towards action, including towards PIV (Ducol, 2013; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011). Since emotions are, as discussed, socially constructed, the way certain issues or events are framed may have an impact on the emotional response that is provoked. Certain *frames* can channel feelings of *just rage* about injustices (Crettiez, 2016; Della Porta, 2008; Gamson, 1992; McCauley, 2017). The energy produced by emotions has been termed ‘emotional energy’, i.e., a ‘mood of excitement and enthusiasm, generated in interaction rituals and successful strategic engagement, that encourages further action’ (Jasper, 2011, p.287). While that energy may pull an individual into different directions – towards or away from action – ‘emotional liberation’ (Flam, 2005) signifies the replacement of ‘action-blocking’ emotions with ‘action-enabling’ emotions: E.g., anger replacing fear, hope replacing despair and indignation replacing shame. In a slightly different context, Liebling and Williams (2018) identify *political charge* (i.e., anger and alienation over unjust treatment) as creating an environment conducive to the formation of resistance identities, which can lead to the outbreak of prison riots. Cowlshaw (2004) notes that ‘a particular kind of agency derives from injury’ (p.60). The act of remembering and acknowledging the suffering of injustice, instead of denying it, can in itself be understood as an expression of unwillingness to accept the injustice and thereby as a first step towards opposing it, ‘answering back’ (Cowlshaw, 2004, p.68).

The emotions that accompany the descriptions of moral shocks and of painful collective memories are of great intensity. The narratives are riddled with facial and tonal expressions alternating between genuine disillusionment and utter indignation. A major observation that is that at the beginning of a process of engagement, a feeling of betrayal is identified by the interviewees, usually in relation to a moral shock. The feeling of betrayal is central to a trajectory of radicalisation away from the mainstream towards the margins. Radicality starts with a first dissociation from what can be considered, in Gramscian terms, as hegemonic knowledge (Gramsci, 1971). Moral shocks induce a sense of betrayal, because the hegemonic knowledge one has grown to believe and which is considered as so normal, natural and corresponding to not only *a* truth, but *the* truth, turns out to be complicit in injustice and suffering. The structure of hegemonic knowledge, maintained by a dominant narrative in a given society, a given context, at a particular moment in time, crumbles in the eyes of these individuals, leaving them strongly alienated. Not only does the betrayal lead to grudge and frustration with hegemonic knowledge, it also opens up possibilities for new and alternative worldviews to be adopted. Moral shocks lead to a loss of trust in the state and the justice system, in the international community and international institutions, Western countries which are thought of as beacons of democracy and freedoms, as well as neighbours, members of the same imagined community, or human beings more generally. Moral shocks, whether direct or vicarious, reveal not only the fallibility of

these actors that are granted axiomatic legitimacy; they also reveal their ability to inflict great human suffering, whether maliciously or neglectfully, thereby questioning their moral authority. This moment of realisation, this *epiphany*, is accompanied by moral indignation not only about the inflicted suffering and the injustice itself, but about the *hypocrisy* of these actors, namely the fact that they benefit from a hegemonic narrative that presents them as legitimate, right, and good.

As a general observation on emotions, the study reveals that interviewees have a somewhat ambiguous relationship with emotions. On the one hand, moral indignation about injustices is expressed and presented as a very natural and logical human reaction. On the other hand, interviewees also make sure that their engagement is not seen as only an emotional subjective reaction: They make visible efforts to replace their individual emotions regarding a particular injustice with a larger analysis of injustice that is based on rational arguments and where emotions are downplayed. Frequently and somewhat ironically, interviewees claim that they are *not emotional people*, that they are not guided by emotions but by a rational analysis of injustice and dysfunctionality. In a way similar to the role of religion, the role of emotions is downplayed. This repeated narrative emphasis is testimony to the fact that these individuals are forced to justify their engagement throughout their lives. They have grown used to explaining what they are engaged for, why, and why they sacrifice so much. By embedding their engagement in a rational and logical narrative, they are shielding themselves from accusations of subjectivity, emotionality, partisanship and irrationality. Following are a few examples to illustrate this

I am not a very emotional person; I get to my position through reading and through arguments. For example, I decided to read Amin Rubenstein's book about Zionism to understand what kind of dehumanising and racist ideology this is.

(Nooreddine, Switzerland)

I think a lot before I get involved emotionally. I try to rationalise and understand before I get too involved.

(Sobhi, Lebanon)

I am very open-minded about most things, but some things I simply can't discuss them. For example, normalisation with Israel. It's not that I am very angry or anything, but I would first need to pull you out of your deep hole to be able to discuss with you...So I always try to be rational about things...My father is very similar. He always tells us stories about the things that happened during the civil war, but he does not get involved emotionally...he just states the things as they were.

(Nidhal, Lebanon)

The findings also reveal that there are strategies that interviewees resort to in order to deal with strong emotions such as indignation, rage and despair. Some of these strategies overlap with the way interviewees narrate and rationalise

their engagement. The narrative about their engagement, collected at a specific moment in time, is of course a product of an iterative process between reflecting about their engagement, being engaged and talking about their engagement. This process is likely to contribute to an evolving posture over time, to which a snapshot obtained through an interview, can hardly do justice. However, if one looks at Battoul's way to engage with her anger, this gives us some indication as to what led others to arrive at a narrative that is largely emotionally detached

AA: How do you handle the destructive impacts of anger and rage, of these strong emotions that come with indignation? How do you transform them into something more constructive?

Battoul: [Smiles and thinks for a few seconds] it's very hard, really. What really helps me is trying to find resources, political analyses, things, writings that put words on what I am feeling. They provide logical answers and a vocabulary...and I need those to be able to have evidence for my arguments...to justify why I am feeling so upset about something.

(Battoul, Canada)

This observation is crucial: Analysis, solid arguments, evidence and compelling writings provide a basis on which the feverishness of indignation can settle and cool down. Analysis provides distance, emotions can become secondary because the injustice is there, factually and objectively, for everyone to see. When individuals operate that rupture from hegemonic knowledge, they enter a phase of *constant struggle against that hegemonic knowledge*, against a crushing dominant narrative that delegitimises, pathologises and criminalises radicality. In that struggle, analysis and rational arguments become a precious currency that provides relief to individuals who are engaged.

Another strategy consists of adopting what Trotskyists call the *long view of history*, as Khaled explains compellingly

I think for me...I think my political training...this is gonna sound like 1970s Trotskyist something you know it's going to be bad...but like I think for me like the way I was politically trained...sort of like that long view of history... you know you can live in periods where nothing happens for a very long time and many things happen very quickly and the world changes [...] ...there are moments yeah it's extremely emotional you know I think especially like I've had moments there where when I've been in Palestine ...you know the level of emotion is really frustrating...and I could imagine what it would be like to actually have to total reality forever...signs of arrogance and powerlessness that like...that just...all of a sudden you would be trying to feed some chickens and then...Israeli out of nowhere come and shut down your well...you know the fact that you watch people's whole lives be governed by a series of 18 year old kids with high powered weaponry to maintain all of their privileges nothing else...it's angering...you can't. [...] because it can be so illogical...it's like...despite everything...all of these things continue,

right?...like water flowing downhill...you know like it just doesn't stop [...] despite everything that we've witnessed you think at some point...it would just become a normal place...but it doesn't...and our people can have like the same dreams and aspirations and hopes...or begin to develop a search of trajectory...but it just like it continuously is blocked again and again [...] I think it makes it so critical to change those powers of production right...and like having some sense out the long run that you're like going to be doing this for a very long time...and...Moral anger and moral indignation is just that it's normal...but is it yeah it's normal... but it's not going to change anything too...that like you know if you walk up and down the street and just yell at the end of the day it's not going to... well it's not going to change anything it's not going to win people over...who you want to be involved to change something to fight those grievances.

(Khaled, Canada)

Though clearly understanding the emotions involved in engagement, Khaled also relegates moral emotions and *ad-hoc* instantaneous emotional mobilisation to a secondary position, over which proper analysis and building the structures that can actually change power dynamics in the long run should take precedence. The long view of history, embedded in analysis and continuous work though without the expectation of immediate gratification, can calm the spirits and give hope. Ziad who also subscribes to the long view of history and emphasises rational arguments for engagement, in a way similar to Khaled acknowledges the importance of rage, but cautions against letting rage take over

I've always been motivated by rage I know like people say that it's not healthy but for me it's like if you don't feel that rage yeah you can't really...can't really fight effectively for what you're fighting for...but obviously you can't let it take over you have to be able to think things through and build.

(Ziad, Canada)

Finally, regarding the emotionality of the narratives, another observation is worth mentioning. In fact, it appears that the more one moves away from conflict-ridden contexts, the more the narratives seem to sound rational and explain engagement as a result of political reasoning. The narratives are less endowed with honest expressions of rage and anger about violence and suffering, in the case of interviewees in Switzerland and Canada or even many in Beirut. The important distinguishing factor seems to be the privilege: the less someone is directly impacted by violence and conflict, the more distance the narratives also create between the narrator and the cause, in terms of emotions. Another factor that distinguishes most of my interviewees in Switzerland, Canada or Beirut from those in Tripoli, e.g., is their political maturity and education. Education and intellect seem to be playing a role in dealing with emotions in a different way, or at least presenting oneself as cultivating a more 'rational' relationship with emotions.

Notes

- 1 Tweet by Heather Heyer, a legal assistant from Virginia, about the events in Charlottesville in August 2017, shortly before she lost her life in the protests, when a vehicle drove into a crowd of protesters (Independent, 2017).
- 2 Beyond the imagery, an aspect that none of the interviewees refers to, but which may have contributed to its worldwide spread, is the fact that Faris Odeh was killed by the Israeli army ten days after this picture was taken. I was personally not aware of it until I conducted some research into this image, and I felt that this additional information gave the image greater weight and importance.
- 3 The Hatla massacre was the killing of 30 to 60 Shia villagers by Syrian opposition fighters and members of Jabhat Al-Nusra on 11 June 2013 (van Tets, 2013).
- 4 He is referring to an incident of a young disabled man being shot in Jerusalem by Israeli forces on 30 May 2020, which sparked outrage across the Arab World (<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/mentally-disabled-palestinian-shot-dead-in-jerusalem/1858804>).
- 5 The notion of care has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Scholars like Gilligan (1977) have suggested a departure from traditional male-dominated universalist understandings of the notion of 'ethics' towards an *ethics of care*, which lays the foundations for *care politics* as a guide for social organisation. Exploring this debate is beyond the scope of this book, but the understanding of *care* that is maintained throughout the following pages is closely associated with a political conviction regarding an obligation to care. See Gilligan, C. (1977). In a different voice: Women's conceptions of self and of morality. *Harvard educational review*, 47(4), 481–517.
- 6 As Beanfield suggests, referring to the 1919 Chicago riots: 'Here the rioters are moved by indignation at what they regard rightly or wrongly as injustice or violation of mores that is likely to go unpunished. Their indignation is partly at the wrongfulness of the act and partly at the wrongfulness of its going unpunished' (Beanfield, 1970, p.190).

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