

Introduction

The Dimensions of Diffusion

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The concept of *diffusion* is widely used by social scientists to refer to the spread of some innovation through direct or indirect channels across members of a social system (Rogers 1995). Diffusion effects are often recognized, for example, in the spread of new technologies, the adoption of policy reforms (see, e.g., Soule and Zylan 1997; Weyland 2006; Simmons et al. 2006), and changes in political regimes (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005; Brinks and Coppedge 2006). One of the most prominent areas of research on diffusion, however, is in the field of social movements (Strang and Soule 1998; Soule 2004). Observers, participants, and scholars of “contentious politics” have long been intrigued by how social movements (or some element thereof, such as a tactic, frame, symbol, issue, or outcome) spread or diffuse from one site to another. It is commonplace in both media and scholarly accounts of social movements to remark about how some issue or form of protest has spread across a country – or, in some cases, from one country to another.

Indeed, diffusion undoubtedly helps to account for the wavelike character of protest cycles and other types of social mobilization (Tarrow 1998a). Simply put, social movements in one site (or time period) are often inspired or influenced by movements elsewhere. One cannot understand social movements – how they evolve, how they expand, how they engage the political arena – without understanding the dynamics of diffusion. It is little wonder, then, that prior research has explored many different facets of the diffusion process, including the spread of protest repertoires (Soule 1997; Bohstedt and Williams 1988), the construction of overarching issue frames (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Snow and Benford 1992), the role of mass media and other forms of communication in the diffusion process (Singer 1970; Myers 2000; Olesen 2005), and the social networks (Gould 1991) and institutional conditions (Strang and Meyer 1993; Hedström et al. 2000) that foster coordination and collective action.

One of the central insights of this body of research is the multidimensionality of diffusion processes – a multidimensionality that reflects the plethora of actors, networks, and mechanisms involved in the spread of social movements.

This multidimensionality poses a challenge to scholars who study social movements, however, as it complicates the development of a comprehensive framework for the analysis of diffusion effects. Even the most sophisticated research may capture only a narrow slice of more complex realities. The primary purpose of this volume – to our knowledge, the first of its kind to provide a comprehensive overview of diffusion dynamics in social movements – is to promote a more integrated understanding of the diffusion process. Such an understanding must start by “unpacking” the concept of diffusion to identify its core elements and explain how they relate to one another in a larger process of movement transformation. The book is thus designed to pull together different strands of the literature on diffusion into a more coherent theoretical understanding of a dynamic and multidimensional process. It provides an overarching analytical framework to help organize the field and assess existing research, and it presents new research on a number of empirical cases to illuminate the key dimensions outlined in the theoretical framework.

To develop this overarching framework, the contributions start with a straightforward question that too often elicits muddled responses: “What is being diffused?” Protest tactics or collective action “repertoires” often spread from one movement site to another, or sometimes from one social movement to another. But so also do the interpretive frames that actors construct to define the issues, codify problems and solutions, target responsible parties, and mobilize political claims. Protest tactics and interpretive frames interact in complex ways, and they are often adapted or modified by new actors as they diffuse across movements or sites. Indeed, appealing to new constituencies – an integral part of the diffusion process – often requires some reframing of the issues and/or a retooling of the collective action repertoire. Diffusion, then, does not simply mean that tactics or frames are transplanted in whole cloth from one site to another; creative borrowing, adaptation, and political learning are often vital to its success.

Second, our contributors ask, “How does diffusion occur?” This question focuses attention on the mechanisms by which protest repertoires and interpretive frames spread. Diffusion is often a highly social or, as Tarrow (2005) calls it, a “relational” process, whereby repertoires or frames are transmitted through interpersonal contacts, organizational linkages, or associational networks. The study of relational diffusion typically entails tracing the diverse ways in which individuals and groups come into contact with each other and learn, borrow, or adapt the collective action repertoires or frames that have been adopted in one of the sites. Diffusion can also occur in the absence of social contacts, however, as when instantaneous global communications transmit images that elicit demonstration effects among social actors that are otherwise unconnected. Diffusion can also occur through indirect network contacts, such as when two activist groups are not directly connected to each other, but are each connected to a third, mediating, group or actor that brokers the spread of tactics or frames. Arguably, globalization and technological modernization have increased the prevalence and importance of such indirect and nonrelational forms of diffusion, as movements can learn, borrow, and coordinate

across distant sites through the Internet, satellite television, and the rise of transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and activist networks. Consequently, the mechanisms of diffusion are best understood by examining the activist networks, organizational brokers, and communication channels that facilitate the spread of norms, frames, tactics, and images.

Third, our contributors ask, “What is the impact of diffusion?” by exploring its relationship to shifts in the scale of contentious politics (McAdam et al. 2001; Tarrow and McAdam 2005). When a particular type of movement or protest diffuses horizontally from one site to another, it enlarges the scope of contentious politics. When actors at these different sites begin to coordinate with one another, or create new representative or coordinating bodies to articulate their claims in larger political arenas, a “scale shift” has occurred. In the process, a local-level protest or social actor may become linked to contentious struggles being waged at the national or even transnational level. Diffusion, then, is not synonymous with scale shift, but it is often integral to it; by spawning new actors or sites of contention, diffusion creates incentives to build intermediary institutions and “scale up” the level of coordination for waging political struggle. The distinctions between diffusion and scale shift, and the complex linkages between the two processes, are not well understood in the field today, and they cry out for a more systematic delineation.

As the contributions in this volume make clear, diffusion may be driven by identifiable mechanisms, but it is far from being a mechanical process. It is heavily conditioned by political agency, and it almost always involves the interaction between formal and informal institutions. The character and content of diffusion are shaped by the efforts of political actors to proselytize, to engage in dialogue, to borrow and adapt, or to frame and reframe the issues under contention. Some actors are receptive to outside influences, whereas others are more closed or resistant. Diffusion, then, is a creative and strategic process, one that is marked by political learning, adaptation, and innovation; it is not a simple matter of political contagion or imitation.

Consequently, political agency – both individual and collective – will play a central role in the patterns of diffusion analyzed in this volume. Because the role of political agency has been undertheorized and underresearched in previous scholarship, one of our primary goals is to shed new light on the diverse ways in which actors shape the mechanisms of diffusion. The empirical cases in this volume are thus drawn from a variety of national and transnational contexts, and they profile several different types of political actors. These actors vary widely in the material, organizational, and human resources they are able to mobilize, so the mechanisms of diffusion and the prospects for scale shift are inevitably conditioned by resource availability and constraints.

WHAT IS BEING DIFFUSED? THE ALIGNMENT OF REPERTOIRES, FRAMES, AND CONTEXTS

The study of diffusion is often plagued by ambiguity about the nature of the innovation being spread from one site to another. This problem is hardly unique

to the study of diffusion in social movements. In his analysis of policy diffusion, for example, Weyland (2006: 17–18) distinguishes between the spread of specific policy “models” and the more abstract “principles” or guidelines that may be compatible with a range of distinct policy choices. The fact that policy diffusion is often associated with certain types of institutional innovations merely adds to the complexity of identifying what is being diffused. Such complexity is also apparent in the study of social movements, which are inherently multidimensional social phenomena. What does it mean, then, to say that a movement has diffused to another site? Along which dimension(s) should diffusion be tracked? In short, what is being diffused?

The content of diffusion (that is, the innovation that is diffused) can occur along two primary dimensions of social movements: behavioral and ideational. The behavioral dimension involves the diffusion of movement tactics or collective action repertoires. Strikes, riots, protests, sit-ins, boycotts, petition drives, and other forms of contentious action may occur in waves, spreading from their original site of contention to others through a variety of mechanisms that are explored in the next section (Soule 1997; Myers 2000). Tactical diffusion signifies that part of the repertoire employed in one site finds resonance in others, and is deemed to be a legitimate or effective instrument for pressing claims on a given target.

Diffusing innovations, however, can also occur on an ideational plane through the spread of collective action frames that define issues, goals, and targets. As Snow and Benford (1992: 135–136) emphasize, and as a long tradition of scholarship on collective action problems (Olson 1965; Lichbach 1998) and resource mobilization (McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977) demonstrates, social movements do not arise inevitably or even naturally from shared interests or grievances. To mobilize participants, social movements engage in a dynamic and interactive struggle “over the production of ideas and meanings” (Snow and Benford 1992: 136). Such meanings are shaped by structural conditions or positions, but they are not directly determined by them. They are ultimately social productions that construct reality, or at least interpret it, for movement participants, antagonists, and bystanders.

Frames, then, are “interpretive schemata” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137) that give meaning to collective struggles. They determine which claims or grievances are chosen as focal points of contention; how these are interpreted in relationship to specific collective interests, values, or identities; and how they are bundled or separated in the mobilization of different constituencies. Frames help define the objectives of collective action and the political or institutional targets against which specific claims are directed.

As several chapters in this volume demonstrate, framing is an inherently political process that combines the creative construction of social meaning with strategic considerations of political efficacy. Collective action frames are formed and shaped by concrete social struggles, but they are also refined by actors who continually assess how different meanings and tactics will resonate with movement adherents, targeted opponents, and noncommitted observers.

Frames, therefore, are not fixed; they are subject to strategic revision or innovation as conditions change, issues evolve, or new social actors enter a contentious arena. Such innovations may facilitate the diffusion of frames to new actors or sites of contention, and they allow movements to adapt over time in response to changing strategic environments. Adaptation across sites of contention can be seen in Conny Roggeband's chapter on the politicization of sexual harassment, as feminist movements in Europe strategically borrowed and refined collective action frames that originated in the United States to press claims in different national and transnational institutional settings. Likewise, strategic adaptation of frames can take place within a given site over time; as James Stobaugh and David Snow discuss in their chapter, a series of court rulings induced faith-based movements opposed to the teaching of evolution in public schools to shift their focus from a creationist frame to one emphasizing intelligent design.

Such strategic adaptations demonstrate that contentious issues and claims can be framed in different ways, highlighting the centrality of political agency in the spread of social movements. This does not mean that movement activists have free rein to adopt or alter frames to their choosing; collective action frames that are too detached from social realities and prevailing cultural meanings or identities are unlikely to resonate with targeted audiences. Nevertheless, social realities and cultural meanings can be constructed around alternative interpretive schemes, and these have major implications for the ways in which issues and interests are defined, identities are invoked, and claims are made. In Lance Compa's chapter on the U.S. labor movement, for example, workers' struggles that were traditionally conceived in terms of class interests were reinterpreted through a human rights frame that recast the claims around which contention occurred, potentially broadening the scope of their appeal. Similarly, the initial focus of the U.S. civil rights movement on issues of desegregation in the 1950s shifted to a more ambitious and encompassing set of claims around economic justice and democratic citizenship rights, including effective rights to suffrage, during the 1960s. In so doing, elements of the civil rights frame eventually diffused to other aggrieved groups – such as women, Native Americans, immigrant farm workers, and gay and lesbian citizens – that mobilized claims for expanded rights and equal protection under the law.

The political implications of alternative framing strategies are readily apparent in Ronald Herring's chapter on the anti-genetically modified organism (GMO) movement. As Herring demonstrates, the framing of threats and benefits associated with transgenic technologies in pharmaceuticals is quite different from their framing in agriculture, and the framing of the latter in Europe diverges sharply from that in the United States. Indeed, the European threat-based anti-GMO frame diffused through transnational activist networks to developing countries and heavily influenced the construction of an international regulatory regime – one that is routinely skirted by farmers with material stakes in the adoption of new technologies.

Such patterns of diffusion raise important questions about the alignment of actors, tactics, issue frames, and the socioeconomic or political contexts

in which contention occurs. Often diffusion takes place among actors who are located in different sites but share similar structural positions that create a common set of interests, claims, or grievances around which to mobilize. Students subjected to a draft for an unpopular war may conduct protests or sit-ins that spread rapidly from one university campus to another. A successful land invasion by a peasant community or a group of urban squatters may encourage similar groups to attempt the same tactic. Food shortages or price hikes may trigger riots by the urban poor in one city that quickly diffuse to neighboring cities, whereas a labor strike that wrings concessions from business owners or the state for one union may induce other workers to wield the strike weapon as well.

So-called IMF riots in low-income countries during the 1980s provide a clear example of how similar actors, tactics, issue frames, and socioeconomic contexts can be aligned in contentious struggles across multiple sites (Walton and Seddon 1994). These riots were common responses of the urban poor to economic austerity measures imposed by debt-strapped national governments under pressure from foreign creditors and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which often made new lending conditional on the adoption of specific economic adjustment policies. The outbreak of protests in multiple sites around a common set of issues or claims, however, does not suffice to demonstrate that diffusion has occurred, as such protests may be independent responses to structurally similar economic or political grievances. Diffusion requires that movements across these multiple sites be linked together through activist networks, or at least informed and inspired by media-transmitted images or shared cultural understandings of popular struggles in other settings, as discussed later. The chapter by Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik on the diffusion of citizen protests against electoral fraud in postcommunist societies provides a textbook example of how such networks can develop and operate transnationally. In their account, “electoral revolutions” diffused through a range of personal contacts, organizational linkages, and communication strategies that defined a common set of democratic citizenship claims and a collective action repertoire for contesting autocratic political authority in the electoral arena.

Such forms of diffusion rely on an “attribution of similarity” (Tilly and Tarrow 2006: 95), whereby similar groups with closely related claims or grievances adopt a common set of tactics in different locations. Other patterns of diffusion, however, rest on a less thorough alignment of these different dimensions of struggle. As Tarrow (1998a: chapter 3) points out, some tactics are highly portable or “modular” in their application; rather than “belonging” to a specific cause or group, they can be adopted by diverse collective actors mobilizing around quite different types of interests, grievances, or causes. Sean Chabot’s chapter provides a striking example of such modularity – namely, the diffusion of the Gandhian repertoire of nonviolent direct action from India, where it was integral to the nationalist struggle for independence from colonial rule, to the United States, where leaders and participants in the civil rights

movement consciously borrowed tactics from the Gandhian repertoire in their struggle against segregation and disenfranchisement. Similar tactics were thus employed by very different types of actors in pursuit of widely varying claims and grievances.

Even where movement actors, tactics, and issue frames are broadly similar, the contexts of collective action may vary widely. The chapters by Roggeband and Herring, for example, show how similar issue frames operate differently in distinct national or regional settings; hence, feminist mobilization against sexual harassment in Europe is conditioned by national and transnational legal institutions that are different from those in the United States, and the material interests of farmers in low-income countries alter the response on the ground to an anti-GMO frame originating in Europe.

Clearly, tactics vary in their degree of modularity. Workers, students, pensioners, homemakers, and the unemployed may all find cause to protest against government austerity programs, and all are capable of doing so, but only workers can effectively wield the strike weapon. Similarly, collective action frames vary in their degree of specificity or generality – that is, in their ability to incorporate or articulate a range of interests, issue areas, and grievances within a common interpretive scheme. Diffusion is facilitated when “master frames” are developed “to articulate and align a vast array of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and meaningful fashion” (Snow and Benford 1992: 137–138). Democratization, for example, may provide a master frame for diverse struggles over human rights, economic justice, and citizenship claims when regime change is conceived as an overarching precondition for the attainment of more specific goals. Likewise, antiglobalization frames may amplify and connect otherwise separate claims related to environmental protection, workers’ rights, and local or national autonomy. Diffusion, then, is not limited to structurally similar groups articulating the same claims or grievances; the construction of master frames plays an integral role in the magnification and diversification of collective action, transforming particular struggles into more general ones, and facilitating the transition from local to national or even transnational forms of contention.

The recognition that diffusion may involve the spread of both collective action repertoires and interpretative frames begs the question of how it actually occurs. This question directs attention to the causal mechanisms and dynamic properties of diffusion processes, to which we now turn.

HOW DOES DIFFUSION OCCUR? RELATIONAL AND NONRELATIONAL MECHANISMS OF DIFFUSION

After we have identified what is diffusing, the next step is to try to understand the mechanisms that give a diffusion process its dynamic properties. That is, we should ask the question: How has the diffusion occurred? Furthermore, what types of actors, organizations, and institutions set the process of diffusion in motion?

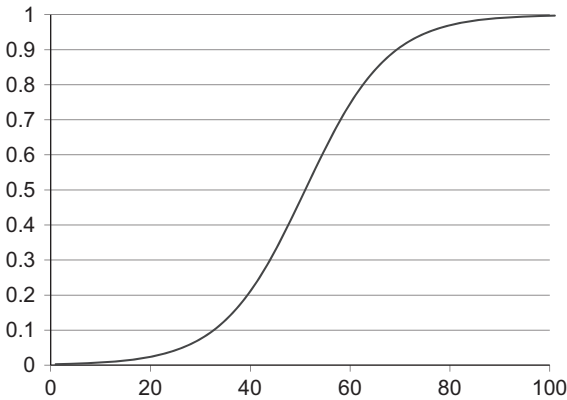


FIGURE 1.1. S-Shaped Curve of Diffusion

Classic diffusion scholarship identifies four kinds of actors that are central to the diffusion process. First, there are *innovators*, who are the adventurous first actors to adopt an innovation. Typically innovators have connections to others outside a given social system; these connections are what allow innovations to be introduced to the social system. Second, there are the *early adopters* who help to legitimate the innovation in the eyes of other actors who have yet to adopt. In the language of *protest cycles* (Tarrow 1998a), innovators and early adopters may be thought of as central to “early riser” movements, which help to set a protest cycle in motion. Third, there are the *later adopters* who come slowly to the process of adoption, but who nonetheless choose to adopt the innovation, often after careful deliberation. And, finally, there are the *nonadopters*, or those who have not yet (and may not ever) adopt the innovation. The actions of these four kinds of actors lead to the classic “S-shaped curve of diffusion,” as depicted in Figure 1.1.

The S-shaped curve depicts the rate of adoption of a given innovation as a function of the number of actors in the population who have adopted the innovation. The figure shows that initially there are no adopters, but after a few innovators begin to use an innovation, adoption catches on as early adopters begin to embrace the innovation. At some point along the curve, the innovation is deemed legitimate, which leads to the steep increase in the number of adoptions. Finally, the rate of adoption slows as the population of nonadopters approaches zero.

This S-shaped curve characterizes diffusion dynamics in many different social and institutional settings, but the mechanisms that account for upward shifts along the curve may vary for different types of diffusion. In other words, the mechanisms that drive the diffusion of social movements are not necessarily the same as those fostering other types of diffusion, such as technological, institutional, or policy innovation. For example, competition is often a driving force behind the diffusion of innovations in technology and organizational

design. Business firms operating in a competitive marketplace, or military institutions locked in a security rivalry, are pressured to adopt technological or organizational innovations that have proven successful elsewhere or provided a competitive advantage for their rivals. In other contexts – for example, the global diffusion of economic liberalism and political democracy in the waning decades of the twentieth century (Simmons et al. 2006; Levitsky and Way 2005) – processes of norm compliance and institutional leverage may play a central role in the spread of innovations. States may embrace internationally sanctioned policy models or institutional forms because of their normative appeal or perceived efficacy, but they may also feel compelled to conform as a condition for gaining access to global financial circuits or membership in international organizations. Diffusion, therefore, may rest in part on the capacity of global power centers to exert leverage for norm compliance on potentially recalcitrant actors.

Such forms of competitive pressure and institutional leverage are less central to diffusion among social movements, which tend to rely more heavily on processes of political learning and what McAdam (1982) called “cognitive liberation.” Learning occurs when actors in different sites find tactics or frames employed elsewhere to be useful tools for articulating their own grievances, mobilizing support, or pressing claims on their targets. As such, it is a highly instrumental process. Although such learning can occur among existing social groups or activist networks, it can also activate new ones, thus expanding the scope of political contention and social mobilization. Indeed, the notion of cognitive liberation suggests that movement diffusion occurs not only through instrumental learning, but also through the construction of new meanings, identities, and issue frames that mobilize new actors by altering their conception of what is politically feasible or desirable. Diffusion, in short, often entails a transformation of political consciousness.

Diffusion conceived as a process of instrumental learning, cognitive liberation, or both is dramatically different from early scholarly treatments of the phenomenon. These treatments were framed by an interest in psychology and micro-level cognitive processes, and they tended to interpret diffusion as a form of contagion between individuals in groups or crowds. Maladaptive and aggressive impulses were to be feared, because they were thought to spread from person to person and drive collective action. Observers of race riots, lynching, Nazism, fascism, McCarthyism, and Stalinism viewed individuals as nonrational and thus susceptible to contagion effects in contexts of failed social integration (Kornhauser 1959).

With the development of the resource mobilization tradition in the 1970s, and its focus on social movement organizations and the rationality of movement actors, it became possible to consider diffusion as something other than a simple process of contagion. Scholars thus began to study diffusion as a function of connections between different organizations and other mechanisms of strategic innovation. We might usefully classify these mechanisms into three very broad categories: *relational*, *nonrelational*, and *mediated mechanisms* of diffusion.

Relational mechanisms include a variety of different direct, interpersonal networks that exist between individuals and organizations. Network ties are a generally efficient channel along which information may flow, as they tend to be based on interpersonal trust. However, because networks tend to be segregated, diffusing items often remain within networks. Thus, whereas networks are an efficient mechanism of diffusion, how far the innovation will travel depends on at least some members' connections beyond a given network.

In some instances, researchers are able to track the presence of ties and communication between people or between organizations, such as in classic network studies. For instance, Singer (1970) interviewed 500 African American men about their sources of information on the Detroit riot of 1967 and found that the chief source of information, according to his informants, was personal communication. The chapter in this volume by Sean Chabot points to precisely this mechanism of diffusion; that is, Chabot discusses the importance of direct, interpersonal communication processes to the diffusion of the Gandhian tactical repertoire.

When scholars are not able to obtain precise data on who spoke to whom (or who is connected to whom directly), it may be possible to infer that direct contact has happened and has facilitated diffusion. For example, some research focuses on the way in which the emergence of transportation and trade routes brought people from disparate locales together (e.g., Rude 1964). The connections forged via these routes were necessary for the dissemination of information of various kinds, including that about politics and social movements. For example, Bohstedt and Williams (1988) show that dense community networks formed through market transactions facilitated the imitation of food riots across communities in Devonshire in the late eighteenth century. Following a similar line of reasoning, Hedström, Sandell, and Stern (2000) find that the diffusion of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (in 1894–1911) followed the travel routes of political agitators at that time.

Another way that direct, interpersonal communication is inferred is via shared organizational memberships. That is, scholars often infer that people are sharing ideas, communicating, and facilitating the diffusion of social movements because they belong to the same movement organizations. Because individuals often have multiple organizational affiliations, they serve as conduits of information across organizational boundaries. This idea is implicit in much of the research on the sit-ins of the 1960s, such as Morris' (1981), which shows that the sit-ins were not spontaneous and uncoordinated activities, but rather preexisting organizational ties facilitated communication necessary for the emergence and development of this protest tactic. Likewise, research on social movements in Latin America suggests that labor union members were important actors in the development of militant grassroots neighborhood organizations in low-income urban communities in Peru (Stokes 1995), whereas Catholic Church activists inspired by liberation theology contributed to the spread of peasant associations in rural El Salvador that eventually provided a social base for insurgent collective action (Wood 2003).

Scholars also infer that interpersonal communication occurs via geographic proximity, adjacency, or both. For example, Petras and Zeitlin (1967) show how the Chilean mining industry spawned high levels of Marxist ideology and activism, which spread to agricultural municipalities via proximity. Likewise, Gould (1991) demonstrates that the district-level insurrection against the impending Versailles army in Paris in 1871 depended on the level of resistance in other districts to which the district was directly linked.

Whether the presence of direct ties is established or inferred, most scholars recognize that direct network ties and relational diffusion are only part of the story. In addition to direct connections among individuals, organizations, or both, indirect ties can also facilitate the diffusion of protest – what we refer to as nonrelational mechanisms. We noted earlier that relational networks of diffusion are efficient, but can be limiting given the tendency for networks to be segregated. Nonrelational mechanisms may be even more efficient, but because individuals are not in direct contact with one another, interpersonal trust and influence do not facilitate the diffusion of an innovation.

One type of indirect tie is the shared cultural understanding of similar activists or organizations in different locales, what we referred to earlier as “attribution of similarity.” Although they are not directly connected, activists who define themselves as similar to other activists may imitate the actions of others. An example of this process is the imitation by activists in Seabrook, New Hampshire in 1976 of a mass demonstration at a nuclear site in Germany in 1974 (McAdam and Rucht 1993). In related work, Soule (1997) shows that innovative student protest tactics diffused among educational institutions that were similar along certain dimensions. The construction of categories of similarity served as indirect channels between colleges and universities in the mid-1980s, leading to the diffusion of the shantytown protest tactic during the student antiapartheid movement.

Part of the story of nonrelational diffusion is that theorization, or “a strategy for making sense of the world” (Strang and Meyer 1993: 493), facilitates the process by which an item diffuses to unconnected actors. Theorization, in many ways, relates to our earlier discussion about framing in that both processes require that a complex set of ideas and policies or tactics are distilled into easily understandable (and modular) units that are more easily imported into a variety of different settings, even if actors are not directly connected. As Strang and Meyer (1993: 490–491) suggest, “linkages may be cultural as well as relational,” and the “cultural understanding that social entities belong to a common social category constructs a tie between them” that facilitates diffusion through a process of “rational mimicking.” Because “cultural linkages generally outstrip direct relations,” Strang and Meyer emphasize the role of theorization in allowing “globally available models” to be “imported into local situations.” As such, they view “culturally legitimated theorists” as “central conduits of diffusion” processes (1993: 492–494, 498).

Clearly, for diffusion to occur in the absence of direct personal or organizational relations, mechanisms must be found to inform actors in different sites

of the tactical repertoires or collective action frames employed elsewhere. The mass media often perform this function, and thus play an important role as indirect channels of diffusion. Noting that the urban riots of the late 1960s appeared to cluster in time, Spilerman (1976) hypothesized that riots diffused throughout urban, black areas, and were facilitated by television coverage of civil rights activism, which helped to create solidarity that went beyond direct ties of community. To Spilerman, then, the media served as an indirect channel of diffusion by creating a cultural linkage among African Americans in different metropolitan areas. Television, he argues, familiarized individuals all over the country with both the details of riots and the reasons that individuals participated in riots. Singer's (1970) aforementioned work on the Detroit riot of 1967 points to the media (as well as interpersonal or direct communication) as a leading source of information on the riot in that city. In more recent treatments, Myers (2000) finds evidence for the claim that riots that received national media attention increased the subsequent national level of riots, whereas smaller riots that received only local media attention increased riot propensities only in the local area. Andrews and Biggs (2006) also point to the importance of the news media to the diffusion of sit-ins in the civil rights movement. In this book, the chapters by Jayson Harsin and by Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport both explore the ways in which technology, and in particular the Internet, is affecting the diffusion of social movements and political tactics in important ways. The Internet can facilitate the sharing of information and interpretive frames, and it can help coordinate protests, petition drives, and other forms of contention among groups that otherwise may have little contact with each other. According to Harsin, it may also spread rumors and images that heavily condition the interpretation of political events.

Finally, brokerage or mediation is a third mechanism of diffusion, which is akin to nonrelational forms of diffusion in that individuals and organizations are not directly connected to one another. However, in mediated diffusion, actors are similarly connected to a third actor, who is able to facilitate the diffusion of information and actions. In such cases, the broker or mediator is an important facilitator of diffusion, yet the diffusion process can be influenced by mediators' preferences, beliefs, and interests. Thus, it is possible to imagine cases in which mediators' self-interests can affect the diffusion of an item to the detriment of the actors who are connected via this broker. In this volume, Bunce and Wolchik imply brokerage when they discuss the role of NGOs in connecting social actors in the various postcommunist regimes that they study. Likewise, NGOs play an important brokerage role in Ronald Herring's account of the diffusion of the anti-GMO movement from Western Europe to developing countries.

The importance of brokerage and mediated forms of diffusion is undoubtedly magnified in an era of globalization, when social struggles in one national setting may influence or coordinate with those in another without establishing direct personal or organizational relations (Tarrow 2005). As Keck and Sikkink (1998) demonstrate, transnational activist networks may form to mediate

otherwise separate national struggles over human rights, women's and indigenous rights, environmental protection, and social and economic justice. Such networks create mediated linkages between local or national organizations, NGOs operating at a transnational level, and parallel groups or solidaristic organizations in other national settings. These transnational networks often mobilize external support for local or national struggles in an attempt to enhance their political leverage when pressing claims on domestic governments. They may also spawn new, transnational institutional forms that are explicitly designed to link and coordinate disparate national actors – a point that is taken up later.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF DIFFUSION?

Finally, the contributors in this volume offer some insight into questions about what impacts the diffusion of social movements have on other social processes. For example, Michael Biggs and Kenneth Andrews ask an important follow-up question about the diffusion of sit-ins associated with the civil rights movement in the 1960s. They ask how the diffusion of sit-ins affected the subsequent growth and founding of civil rights organizations in 334 cities in the southern United States. Diffusion, then, may leave an important imprint on the organizational forms and associational networks of civil society. And as Roggeband and Herring each suggest, diffusion can foster institutional change in the form of new legal and regulatory frameworks to process societal claims and manage contentious issues.

Indeed, diffusion often plays a central role in shifting the scope and scale of contentious politics. It can transform a local protest into a national movement, or a national movement into a transnational one. In so doing, it may foster the development of new and larger organizational forms to articulate and coordinate societal claims, and induce higher-level political institutions to respond to such claims. These dynamics, and the broader patterns of interaction between diffusion and political institutions, are explored in Sidney Tarrow's chapter on the relationship between diffusion and scale shift. Political institutions are generally at the heart of contentious politics; as Tarrow points out, they can focus, channel, and constrain social mobilization, but they are also frequently transformed by such mobilization. Autocratic regimes, for example, that manipulate elections to hold onto power provide a focal point for social mobilization against electoral fraud, sometimes culminating in regime change. At the transnational level, the prominence of institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund in defining the rules and policies for economic integration made them targets of antiglobalization protesters who mobilized around a diverse set of issue claims. Indeed, they provided a stimulus for the counterorganization of new transnational resistance institutions, such as the World Social Forum and its summit meetings of activist groups – an archetypal example of crossborder movement diffusion facilitated by brokerage networks and culminating in the scaling up

of new political institutions (Bandy and Smith 2005). Such forms of transnational organizing may induce institutional or policy change at various points of contention; examples include the World Bank's formal recognition of environmental concerns in its lending policies, the adoption of labor-rights provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement and other international trade accords, and the development of the Cartagena Protocol governing the use of genetically modified seeds in agricultural development.

Although scale shift can engage social actors in larger coordinating bodies that pressure higher-level political institutions for policy change, at times it may generate new institutions that become contenders for political power in their own right. Contemporary Bolivia provides a compelling example. Social actors that articulated a diverse but largely disconnected set of particularistic claims – including peasant and indigenous groups that resisted coca eradication policies, community organizations opposed to the privatization of municipal water services, and labor unions that fought against economic austerity measures – eventually converged in a series of mass protests against the government and its free market policies. The rapid diffusion and coordination of antigovernment protests after 2000 was facilitated by a master frame of nationalist opposition to neoliberal globalization. The protest movement not only forced an elected president to resign, but also spawned a new political party (see Van Cott 2005) that entered the electoral arena and captured the presidency in 2005. The transformation of popular struggles from the Cochabamba “water wars” of 2000 to the capture of national executive office five years later thus entailed both a diffusion of protest repertoires across the social spectrum and a scaling up of organizational forms as social actors entered formal institutional arenas to contest state power.

LAYOUT OF THIS BOOK

The sections of this volume are organized around these three primary questions, with the first section focused on frame adaptation and tactical diffusion, the second on mechanisms of diffusion, and the third on the impacts of diffusion on scale shift and organizational development. The first section includes four chapters that explore how frames adapt and evolve across space and time as movements respond to different contexts and appeal to new audiences. Conny Roggeband analyzes how women's movements in Europe strategically adapted the sexual harassment frames developed by their American counterparts, and Lance Compa examines the labor movement's adoption of a human rights frame to assess workers' right in the United States. Frame adaptation over time in response to changing social, political, and legal contexts is explored in James Stobaugh and David Snow's chapter on the creationist movement from the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925 to the intelligent design case in Dover, Pennsylvania in 2005. Alternative framings of transgenic crops and their implications for the political contestation of scientific knowledge are analyzed in Ronald

Herring's chapter on the anti-GMO movement as it spread from Europe to developing regions.

The second section includes four chapters that analyze different mechanisms of diffusion. Sean Chabot explains how personal contact and intergroup dialogue facilitated the diffusion of the Gandhian repertoire from India to the American civil rights movement. Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport dissect the role of the Internet in the diffusion of protest tactics within "movement societies." Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik analyze how direct contact and movement brokers facilitated the diffusion of electoral revolutions in post-communist Eurasia. Finally, Jayson Harsin examines John Kerry's presidential campaign to understand how political rumors shape public images and "brand" political figures, in the process reframing media coverage of more substantive or policy-related issues.

The third section includes two chapters that explore the relationships among diffusion, scale shift, and organizational change. Michael Biggs and Kenneth Andrews study the organizational effects of student sit-ins during the U.S. civil rights movement, asking whether the diffusion of sit-ins affected the subsequent growth of preexisting organizations and the formation of new ones. Sidney Tarrow concludes with an assessment of scale shift in contentious politics and its relationship to movement diffusion and political institutions. These diverse case studies and analytical approaches shed new light on the different dimensions of diffusion processes and how they interact in the spread of social movements.

