v

# Contents

Contents

# List of Tables

# 11

# Dynamics of Diffusion
## Mechanisms, Institutions, and Scale Shift

### Sidney Tarrow

What are the pathways through which a new form of collective action, a new collective action frame, or a new social movement spreads? Do such collective phenomena diffuse autonomously, or in response to the institutional practices to which they are directed? Under what conditions does the horizontal diffusion of contention give way to broader configurations of conflict – what Doug McAdam and this author have called "upward scale shift" (Tarrow and McAdam 2005; Tarrow 2005)? These are the questions I will take up in this chapter.

Research in the past has focused centrally on the "fact" of diffusion (e.g., does an act of contention diffuse or doesn't it?); it has often traced the pathways of diffusion across geographic and social space; and it has tried to show how, and under what circumstances, diffusion produces new organizations and transmits new collective action frames. These are all important contributions to our understanding of contentious politics. But in each respect, existing research leaves lacunae in our understanding of the dynamics of contention:

- First, the "fact" of diffusion can be easily confused with the simultaneous or near-simultaneous emergence of contention in structurally similar situations.
- Second, although diffusion always involves emulation, contention can diffuse across geographic or social space through a combination of mechanisms with different outcomes and valences.
- Third, as Andrews and Biggs show in their contribution to this volume, when preexisting organizational ecology is taken into account, the diffusion of a new form of contention may have no discernable effect on subsequent organizational expansion (Chapter 10).

This chapter will focus on three aspects of the dynamics of diffusion that may help us to unravel these puzzles: the key mechanisms that drive diffusion; its

interaction with institutions and institutional change; and the significance of upward and downward scale shift as part of the diffusion process.

How do we proceed? For reasons of parsimony, this chapter will give less attention to both collective action frames and the spread of new social movements than to the diffusion of new and innovative forms of collective action. I will argue, first, that although analysts have frequently noted the fact of diffusion – and even charted its geographic spread (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Soule and Zylan 1997) – we have little evidence about the concrete mechanisms that drive it. I will identify three main mechanisms of diffusion, which have demonstrably different effects on its reach and outcomes. Second, I will argue that diffusion is seldom self-generating out of the claims and inventions of activists; it results from their interaction with, and often mirrors, the institutions they attack and their practices. Third, I will argue that we need to distinguish between horizontal diffusion and the shift in the scale of contention. Although the former can spread contention broadly across geographic and social divides, it is only the latter that can turn simple incidents into waves of contention, broad social movements, and revolutions.

Here is an example of diffusion that illustrates how mechanisms, institutions, and scale shift came together in a major cycle of contention.

## SOLIDARITY FROM THE LENIN SHIPYARD TO POST-LENINIST STATE

On June 30, 1980, Polish communist authorities announced an increase in meat prices, triggering a vast wave of contention that would ultimately undermine the country's communist system and pave the way for the collapse of the socialist bloc. As Jan Kubik begins the story:

The next day workers in several factories... went on strike. During July the strike wave engulfed several regions. On August 14, 1980, several dozen workers began an occupational strike in the Gdansk Lenin Shipyard. As the strike in the Shipyard grew and the workers from other plants joined in, the authorities agreed to grant wage increases and met some other demands, but only for the Lenin employees. (Kubik 2009: 3072)

There was always a chance that the Gdansk workers would accept the wage increases and go back to work, but under pressure from the base, their representatives ultimately refused, and the strike spread. As Kubik continues:

During the night of August 16 the Inter-factory Strike Committee (MKS) was formed and immediately formulated a list of twenty-one demands, including a demand to create a trade union independent from the Communist Party. By the end of the month over 700 thousand people were on strike in about 700 enterprises in all 49 regions of Poland (ibid.).

The strike soon broadened well beyond the confines of an industrial dispute, as intellectuals and artists, peasants and students, and even state workers lent their support, and Catholic clerics offered certification by the country's deep religious beliefs (Kubik 1994). By September, more than thirty Interfactory

Founding Committees had emerged, forming the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity," with a National Coordinating Committee (KKP) as its governing body. Already the new union had about 3 million members. Of course, an independent trade union and a state socialist regime could not coexist for long. With each move forward by the union, the state intervened with delays, challenges, and occasional repression. As Kubik recalls:

The party-state would provoke a crisis either by dragging its feet when it came to implementing the negotiated decisions or attacking the Union activists (including physical assaults); the Union would respond with strike alerts or strikes. An agreement would ultimately be reached and produce a moment of calm until another provocation would restart the whole cycle (2009: 3074).

Ultimately, on December 13, 1981, martial law was declared, Solidarity's leaders were rounded up, and the regime survived for another eight years. But while the struggle changed its form, it was far from over. As Kubik writes: "A multi-faceted 'underground society' emerged, whose activities ranged from clandestine publishing and private theater performances to spectacular rallies and marches often dispersed by the special riot police units" (ibid.).

Slowly, but with increasing determination, the movement openly reconstituted itself, emerging from clandestinity and forming a National Council in 1987 (ibid.). After a new strike wave in 1988, a series of roundtable discussions was held in January 1989, national elections were held in June, and Solidarity candidates won 161 seats in the Sejm and 99 in the Senate. What had begun as an isolated strike of shipyard workers on the Baltic coast produced the first noncommunist government in a state socialist regime.

This story has been told and retold in many versions[1] but it still holds fascination. Why is this? Apart from its inherent interest to students of world politics, it offers three main lessons for students of diffusion:

• First, Solidarity did not spread through "contagion" – a patternless spread of contention across an entire society resembling the spread of a disease. It diffused through a combination of old and new networks: old ones, such as the KOR (Komitet Obrony Robotników, Workers' Defense Committee), factory councils, and even party cells; and new ones, like the interfactory councils. Not only that, but after the movement was forced underground, Catholic practices were socially appropriated and Catholic social doctrine served as a spiritual glue holding the movement together (Kubik 1994).[2]

• Second, Solidarity did not simply "emerge" as a self-starting social movement. It took its initial form within the logic of industrial relations and shifted to its later forms through a series of interactions with the state and the state's moves. Even the ultimate form of its rise to power – the "round

[1] In addition to Kubik (1994 and 2009), the basic story, with some differences of interpretation, is told by Ash 1983, Bernhard 1993, Laba 1991, and Staniszkis 1984.
[2] I am grateful to Jan Kubik for summarizing these mechanisms of diffusion in private correspondence with the author.

table" format, which ultimately spread to other parts of East-Central Europe – was the result of interaction with a regime which did not want to recognize the legitimacy of the union by sitting across a rectangular table from its representatives.

• Third, although Solidarity spread across Poland through a process of horizontal diffusion, what ultimately explained its success was *upward scale shift* – that is, a transition from lower to higher levels of the political system.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will follow up on these observations by first specifying the varieties of mechanisms of diffusion we can see in the contributions to this book; second, exploring the ways in which new forms of contention emerge from the interaction between institutional actors and new movements; and third, investigating the conditions that shift contention downward and upward in scale, sometimes – but by no means always – producing broader patterns of contention, regime change, and even revolutions.

I begin with the mechanisms of diffusion of collective action.

MECHANISMS OF DIFFUSION: A TILLIAN PERSPECTIVE

In his studies of what has come to be called "the repertoire of contention," the late Charles Tilly wrote that the existing repertoire grows out of three kinds of factors: a population's daily routines and internal organization; the prevailing standards of rights and justice; and the population's accumulated experience with collective action (Tilly 1986: 10). Tilly also emphasized social learning: what people *know* about how to contend in various places and at different periods of history constrains changes in the repertoire and provides the raw materials for innovation. If this is true, then there are both inducements for and constraints on the spread of new forms of contention in both structural conditions and cultural understandings.

In his work on Britain, Tilly showed how both inducements and constraints worked historically, as state building and capitalism triggered the invention of new forms of contention (Tilly 1995a, 2008). As the early modern state consolidated, people resisted its domination with tax revolts, conscription riots, and petitions; as market capitalism took hold, grain seizures, strikes, and turnouts were used to resist its pressures; and as electronic communication partly displaced print and face-to-face contacts, the possibility for rapid spatial diffusion expanded (Tilly 2004).

Take the strike: Its emergence and development were dependent on changes in capitalism. If there had been no capitalists assembling workers in factories and exploiting their labor power, there would have been no strikes. Or consider the demonstration: Had there been no centers of power such as tax collection offices, prefectures, or city halls, demonstrators might have milled around in the streets but would never have developed the orderly progression to places of power. Capitalism and state building were the major macroprocesses triggering the development of the modern repertoire of contention (Tilly 1995a).

But once invented, in response to the broad structural changes Tilly out-lines, new forms of contention did not "sit still." Although some – like the strike – were most at home where there were dense concentrations of workers, others were "modular" – for example, they could be adapted to other venues, different social groups, and diverse configurations of conflict (Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1993a). Even the strike was imitated and modified far beyond its indus-trial origins and outside the structural relations that had produced it. Once its efficacy was demonstrated, it spread from industry to services and from there to educational institutions.

The same was true of other contentious performances. Petitions, which had proven useful when seeking redress from individual state officials, were employed as a political tactic against slavery; turnouts against local capitalists transformed into demonstrations against all manner of antagonists; protesters refusing to leave a particular official's office transmuted into the sit-in. Counter-ing the specificity and locality of the repertoire of contention was its modularity and transferability across space and into different sectors of movement activity. With globalization and internationalization, both the speed and the modularity of diffusion increased.

In his early work, Tilly imputed fundamental changes in the British reper-toire from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, but without specifying the mechanisms of diffusion that brought it about. In his last book, *Contentious Performances* (2008), he summed up these mechanisms as what he called "parliamentarization." He showed how, between the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, British claims-makers shifted their targets to Parlia-ment just as they were discarding the parochial, bifurcated, and particular repertoire of the past.

But the connection Tilly drew between the change in the British repertoire and the rise in Parliament's power was approximate and imputed, rather than specific and demonstrable. Even though diffusion has been a well-recognized part of the study of contentious politics for decades, we still know little about the mechanisms of which it is composed. The idea of patternless "contagion" was long ago dismissed, but much of the research on diffusion (including many of the contributions to this volume) focus more on the *fact* of diffusion than on the mechanisms that drive it. The distinction is important, because of the possibility that similar forms of contention may develop almost simultaneously in different settings either randomly or because actors face similar constraints and inducements.

Think of the wave of protests against International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality that began in the late 1970s and endured through the 1980s (Walton and Seddon 1994). These protests were triggered by near-identical pressures from an external institution, sometimes abetted by, but often opposed by domestic authorities. They *may* have involved mechanisms of diffusion, but in the absence of evidence about *how* protests diffused from one site to another, they were probably similar but independent reactions to the same stimulus.

How does a new form of contention spread, and what lessons does this have for contention in general? We can identify three main pathways of diffusion: relational, nonrelational, and mediated.[3]

- By *relational diffusion* I mean the emulation of new forms of contention on the part of actors with preexisting relationships of trust, intimacy, or regular communication to those who have initiated those forms.
- By *nonrelational diffusion* I mean the emulation of new forms of contention on the part of actors who learn, through impersonal means such as the media, of the actions of those who have initiated those forms.
- By *mediated diffusion* I mean the emulation of new forms of contention on the part of actors with no preexisting ties to those who have initiated those forms through the intervention of third parties who maintain relationships of trust with both initiators and adopters.

The general tendency of students of social movements has been to focus on the first process – relational diffusion – because innovations travel most easily along established lines of interaction.[4] Like the spread of hybrid corn or the adoption of new medical practices, the adoption of new forms of collective action often follows the links of interpersonal interaction among people who know one another or are parts of networks of trust. But in this age of almost instant communication, new forms of protest often spread among people who have never met. And in an age of massive immigration and cheap and easy transportation, information about collective action can also spread through third parties – brokers – who connect people who would otherwise have no contact with one another.

From his study of the spread of the Salafist jihad, Marc Sageman allows us to identify all three main pathways of diffusion: relational, nonrelational, and mediated. According to Sageman, social bonds and personal networks were important in the spread of the Islamist network (Sageman 2004: chapter 5). In his view, not only did Islam and Arabic provide a universal faith and a common language to jihadis, but interpersonal trust, family ties, and common local origins also helped to create "small world networks" among people who identified with one another and were prepared to emulate one another's actions (ibid.: 139). This is what I call *relational diffusion*. It transferred information along established lines of interaction through the attribution of similarity and the networks of trust that it produces (Lee and Strang 2006).

Sageman also observed *nonrelational diffusion* among people who had few or no social ties. By historical accident, the Islamist movement's growth

---

3 These ideas grew out of joint work with Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly (McAdam et al. 2001), and then with McAdam alone (Tarrow and McAdam 2005), and are elaborated in my *New Transnational Activism*, 2005.

4 See the discussions in Jackson et al. 1966; Tarrow 1993; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Pinard 1971; Rogers 1983; Strang and Meyer 1993; and Soule 1997.

coincided with the coming of the Internet, "making possible a new type of relationship between an individual and a virtual community" (Sageman 2004: 160–3). This not only sped the diffusion of the movement but favored its "theorization": a kind of "folk theory" that defines some thing or activity in abstract terms and locates it within a cause–effect or functional scheme (Strang and Meyer 1993). The media, and especially the Internet, encouraged the diffusion of an extremely one-sided reading of Islam, reducing the level of discourse to the lowest common denominator and identifying the suicide bombing as a tool that would bring glory to the martyr and success to the cause (ibid.: 162).

Sageman also observed *mediated diffusion*. In the jihadi networks he studied, he identified a number of movement "nodes" that connected individuals within a geographic cluster and were linked across these clusters by a small number of weak ties (ibid.: 169 ff.). What kept these weak links alive was the mechanisms of brokerage – the connection of two unconnected sites by a third, which works through movement "halfway houses," immigrants, or institutions. Brokers may never participate in contentious politics, but their key position between otherwise unconnected sites can influence the content of the information that is communicated.

Each of these pathways can be observed in the contributions to this volume:

- *Relational diffusion*: In her chapter on the diffusion of the "sexual harassment" frame from the United States to Western Europe, Conny Roggeband pinpoints the role of Dutch feminists who had been living in the United States for several years, who used a *Redbook* survey to highlight sexual harassment in the Netherlands (this volume, Chapter 2). Even in France, seldom willing to follow American examples, feminists of the AVFT (the European Association against Violence Towards Women and Work) were informed by American and French Canadian examples. In Germany, she concludes, "the first awareness programs against sexual harassment in the workplace . . . were inspired not only by U.S. feminism, but also by other European examples." "These European initiatives," she concludes, "were clearly informed by the U.S. example through direct links like international feminist networks, personal contacts and visits" (ibid.).

- *Nonrelational diffusion*: Roggeband also points to the role of the media and available feminist literature in the diffusion of the American approach to sexual harassment in Europe (ibid.). This process was at the heart of the diffusion of the "John Kerry is French" rumor during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign. As Jayson Harsin writes, "the repetition of the rumor bomb by columnists, congressional allies, and pundits and new and old media forms allowed it broad diffusion" (Chapter 9). What was key to the "success" of the "Kerry is French" message was that – although its origin lay in the Bush–Cheney electoral machine – it was diffused by media sources whose interest was less in undercutting Kerry's reputation than in "making news."

- *Mediated diffusion*: Sean Chabot's chapter on the diffusion of the Gandhian repertoire is a good example of mediated diffusion (Chapter 6). Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik's chapter on the diffusion of the "electoral model" of democratic revolutions is another. In the first case, Chabot shows, diffusion worked through the intermediation of American civil rights advocates who traveled to India to meet Gandhi; in the second, the American democracy promotion community, both public and private, played a central role in bringing groups together, transferring campaign and electoral strategies, and providing resources for campaign literature, public opinion surveys, civic groups, and independent media (Chapter 8).

WHY MECHANISMS MATTER

Why is it important to specify these different trajectories of diffusion? Why not simply register the "fact" of diffusion or trace its geographic or social scope? It is important because the outcomes of diffusion vary according to the mechanisms that drive it. For example, in relational diffusion, trust enables communication between originators and adopters and thus the emulation of practices by the originators. But depending on trust also limits the range of diffusion to networks built on personal ties. In such cases, diffusion may be strong but narrow. The history of the limited spread of peasant rebellions illustrates this factor. Only when peasants were somehow "connected" to other peasants did trust networks allow rebellion to be diffused; in highly localized peasant societies in which trust seldom spread beyond a single village or clan, diffusion was limited.

In nonrelational diffusion, "theorization" makes it possible to rapidly transport a message to a new venue. But the need to reduce the message to "folk wisdom" reduces its complexity and can produce a simplistic version of the performances that receivers can interpret as they like, often in sites to which they are ill adapted. The Internet, which has created much excitement about the possibility of online mobilization, can diffuse contention far and wide; but it is possible that Internet-based mobilization may not create the trust networks that are needed for sustained diffusion.

Finally, in mediated diffusion, brokerage by third parties speeds the transfer of information but gives these intermediary actors leverage in reshaping the message. This seems to have been the case for the diffusion of the Gandhian version of nonviolence as it was adopted and adapted to the United States by the civil rights movement. Here, the pervasive institutionalized forms of politics of the United States reshaped the doctrine, giving it a Christian cast. This worked well for churchgoing middle sectors of the black population in the South, but not in the northern ghettoes, where nonviolence gave way to violent riots that alienated many African Americans, as well as the movement's liberal white supporters. Had the Gandhian model of diffusion awaited direct relational diffusion, it would have had to wait a long time; and without its

translation by movement brokers, it might not have been adapted to American conditions.[5]

This takes us to my second argument about the dynamics of diffusion. In our studies of the diffusion of social movements, we have often followed the lead of students of technical innovations. But technical innovation is essentially institution-free. What I mean by this is that the progress of an innovation is largely dependent on its resistance or acceptance by a receiving population (Rogers 1995). To the extent that institutions matter, they either guide the paths of diffusion or provide diffusers with resources – for example, with research grants. The innovation itself is free-floating: Its acceptance or diffusion depends ultimately on the networks through which it travels and on its adaptation to the task it was designed to solve.

## Institutions and Interactive Diffusion

The diffusion of collective action is different: It interacts in complex ways with both political institutions and can bring about institutional change. Consider the influence of American and European institutions on the diffusion of the American frame of sexual harassment from Roggeband's chapter. Whereas American feminists were helped by the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, their European counterparts had no such structuring legislation on which to build. Dutch activists strategically reframed the issue, dropping the American emphasis on "hostile environments," and sought state funding to create a "complaints office," but ultimately, facing limited support at the national level, they cooperated with other feminist groups to place sexual harassment on the agenda of the European Commission. To adapt to European institutions, European feminists adopted a professional scientific language that became the currency in transnational communication between feminists, policy makers, and politicians (Roggeband, Chapter 2; Marks and McAdam 1996).

Institutional encounters often change how movements frame their messages. In their chapter on the creationist–intelligent design controversy in the United States, James Stobaugh and David Snow show how "frames . . . are probably rarely diffused in whole cloth but are more often reconstituted in a fashion in which core ideas or values are laminated with ideas and constraints that are consistent with the temper of the times *and the institutional structures in which the collectivity or movement is embedded* (Chapter 3, this volume, emphasis added). Focusing on the single legal institution of the Supreme Court, Stobaugh and Snow show how, following the setback of the *Epperson v. Arkansas* case, creationists "had to find another means of countering the teaching of evolution" (ibid.; Binder 2002). The result was the amalgam called "creation science," and the argument that it should be taught alongside evolution to allow student

[5] For an extended examination of how such "translation" can work in the case of human rights norms, see Merry 2003.

choice. Not only did the Supreme Court reshape how antievolutionists shaped their message, but different levels of the federal court system also appeared to function as a significant constraint on frame construction and deployment for both sets of contestants. Stobaugh and Snow conclude that "different institutional contexts may impose different sets of constraints on framing processes that in turn affect the character of what is diffused" (Chapter 3, this volume).

So far, institutional effects on diffusion have been portrayed as static: for instance, a given movement adapts to a given institutional context. But institutions are not static; they evolve in a process of interaction with contentious politics. The challenge for diffusion researchers is to try to understand how institutional change and changes in collective action affect one another.

This is not a new idea. More than two decades ago, Doug McAdam showed how the diffusion of the tactics of the civil rights movements interacted iteratively with state responses (McAdam 1983). Each time the movement found itself stymied by state responses, it would innovate in the forms of collective action it employed. State responses were similarly dependent on what the movement did: When repression turned out to fill the jails to overflowing, the police would truck protesters to temporary sites and in some cases adopt the more permissive techniques that later came to be called "protest management" (McCarthy and McPhail 1998).

National traditions of protest condition how a state makes policy to anticipate new contention. Consider the limited U.S. resources that were initially mobilized in both the Afghanistan invasion and the Iraq War. Many critics have noted the relatively small number of troops employed, the use of mercenary forces filling the gaps that would otherwise have had to be filled by conscription, and the low level of sacrifice demanded of the American public. Why did the Bush administration try to fight a war on two fronts with inadequate forces? The reason seems to me to lie in the history of contentious politics triggered by our last major foreign misadventure – in Vietnam – where both mass mobilization at home and troop demoralization in the field combined to shake the foundations of American power. It was fear of a repetition of the recent history of contentious politics at war that led the Bush administration to attempt to fight two wars with inadequate troops and soldiers of fortune.

Interactive diffusion also links non-state institutional and contentious actors. In his chapter, Ronald Herring describes a doubly articulated dialectic: for instance, the ways in which "oppositional politics confronts organized promotion and official sanction" (Chapter 5). Herring develops the concept in the context of the "framing contest" between pro-GMO and anti-GMO forces in the arena of food production over the past decade. "Much of the dialectic," he writes, "is precisely mirrored: The pro-biotech narrative perfectly inverts, for example, the opposition's framing of authoritative knowledge from "GMOs: Unsafe and Untested" to "GMOs: Tested and Safe."

Interactive diffusion also links the moderate and extreme wings of social movements with state strategy in cycles of radicalization and moderation (Tilly and Tarrow 2006; chapter 5). Donatella della Porta and Tarrow traced

the pathways of diffusion in the Italian cycle of protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s through two contradictory yet mutually dependent processes – escalation and institutionalization (della Porta and Tarrow 1986). Combining data on ordinary protest events with data on organized violence, they developed the following explanation.

- *Escalation:* When different movement sectors compete for support, some leaders respond by escalation: the substitution of more extreme goals and more robust tactics for more moderate ones in order to maintain the interest of their supporters and attract new ones.

- At the same time, others respond by *institutionalization:* the substitution of the routines of organized politics for the disorder of life in the streets, buttressed by mass organization and purposive incentives.

- Faced by these competing forms of collective action, states can respond with *facilitation* of those who are willing to work within institutional practices and with *repression* of those who do not. Facilitation produces co-opting of moderates and isolates those whose involvement is most intense into a clandestine world in which their only means of expression is violence.

The result is *polarization:* increasing ideological distance between the wings of a once unified movement sector, divisions between its leaders, and – in some cases – terrorism. Della Porta and Tarrow found that the Italian protest cycle ended in a paroxysm of organized violence but also in the routinization of contention. Escalation and institutionalization – fed by repression – produced a split in what had once been seen as a single movement. But in the meantime the scale of conflict gravitated upward into the political system, culminating in the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, a leading figure in the Christian Democratic party. This takes us to scale shift.

## Scale Shift

Scale shift is a complex process that not only diffuses contention across space or social sectors, but also creates instances for new coordination at a higher or a lower level than its initiation. Scale shift makes a big difference to contention because it leads to new coordination at a different level and thus involves new actors and institutions. Contentious actors often deliberately "venue shop" – often to higher or lower levels of the polity – in order to seek coordination at a level more favorable to them. This was the strategy of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in taking school discrimination to the Supreme Court in the 1950s. It was also the strategy of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which shifted its targets from the national to the state and local levels trying to find a venue in which its message against the evils of alcoholism would be best received (Szymanski 2003).

Scale shift can operate either downward or upward:

- *Downward scale shift* is the coordination of collective action at a more local level than its initiation. A good example is civil rights groups' responding to the Supreme Court's striking down of racial discrimination at the national level by registering African American voters in Mississippi (McAdam 1988).

- In contrast, *upward scale shift* involves coordination of collective action at a higher level (whether regional, national, or even international) than its initiation.

Although downward scale shift can often bury contention in the recesses of individual or group life, upward scale shift is one of the most significant processes in contentious politics. It moves contention beyond its local origins, touches on the interests and values of new actors, involves a shift of venue to sites where contention may be more or less successful, and can threaten other actors or entire regimes.

Figure 11.1 describes two main routes through which upward scale shift can operate: a *direct diffusion* route that passes through individuals and groups whose previous contacts or similarities become the basis of their mobilization; and a *mediated route* through brokers who connect people who would otherwise have no previous contacts. We saw an example of the first route when so many factories adopted the tactic of the Lenin shipyard that Polish authorities were forced to recognize Solidarity's legitimacy. We saw the second route when the parish priests adopted the strikers' cause, if not their tactics, and Catholic Solidarity groups were formed.

Scale shift involves many of the mechanisms familiar from studies of diffusion: *emulation,* as people learn about episodes of contention elsewhere and copy or adapt them; *brokerage,* as movement missionaries or opportunistic political entrepreneurs make connections among groups that would otherwise be isolated from one another; and the *attribution of similarity* among people who did not know one another earlier or may have seen each other as strangers.

An important difference between the two routes is that direct diffusion travels through existing commonalities and networks of trust, whereas mediated diffusion creates new networks and commonalities. At its most successful, upward scale shift creates new identities.

Some episodes of contention never scale upward; that is, they either fail to diffuse widely or their diffusion remains horizontal. Nondiffusion is either the result of the extreme localism or parochialism of a claim or of its demonstrated risks to claims makers. A good example of horizontal diffusion that fails to scale upward would be the "shantytowns" studied by Sarah Soule as part of the divestment movement against apartheid in the 1980s. That innovation first emerged at Columbia University in April 1985 when students blockading Hamilton Hall dragged armchairs and sofas, and eventually tarps and blankets, there from a nearby dormitory. Columbia's constructions of tarps and blankets soon spread to other campuses. At Princeton and Santa Cruz, protesters called
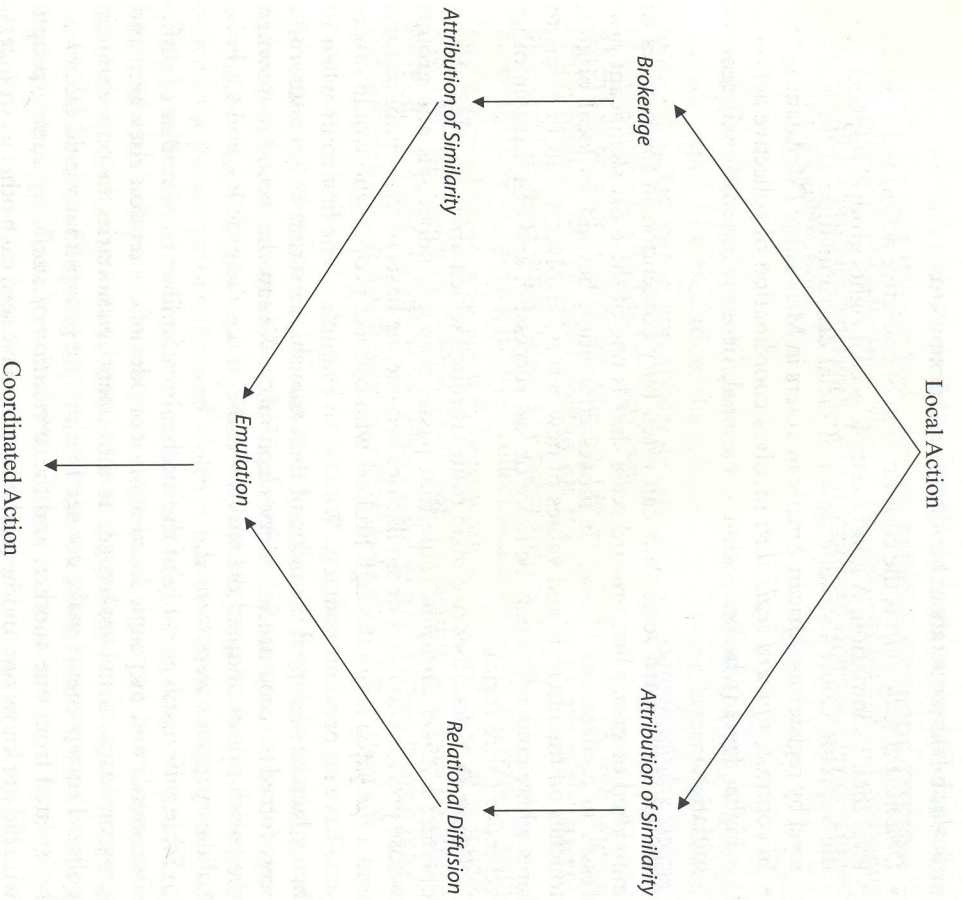
FIGURE 11.1. Scale Shift: Alternative Routes. *Source:* Tarrow and McAdam 2005: 128.

it a "camp-out"; at Harvard a "sleep-in"; whereas other students on other campuses called them "sit-outs." It was only at Cornell, in late spring, that student protesters collected scraps of wood, tar paper, and plastic to construct a shack in front of the university's administration building. That shack, as Soule reports, was the first of what later were called a shantytown, "a performance and a name that eventually spread to similar structures around the country" (Soule 1997, 1999).

Looking back, we can see that the shantytown was no more than a symbol-laden variant of the sit-in, and for that reason, it was inapplicable to other kinds of claims. Its use soon petered out as student protesters attacked other targets with other and more fitting performances. What it certainly did *not* do

was to scale upward to higher levels of American politics; for that to happen, other actors would have had to employ it in public spaces less permissive than college campuses.

An innovation that *did* scale upward came during the early period of the American civil rights movement, when bus boycotts were first used by African Americans in the South. Usually dated from the Montgomery bus boycott in December 1955, the movement actually began two years later when a black minister, Theodore Jemison, organized the same kind of bus boycott in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Tarrow and McAdam 2005: 132). But the Montgomery bus boycott, and the evocative figure of Rosa Parks who initiated it, captured the imagination of black Americans, white liberals, and especially the new television media, which diffused information about it across the country.

The spread of the movement corresponded to a classical process of relational diffusion, with an existing network of black ministers serving as the principal vehicles by which the innovation of the bus boycott spread from Baton Rouge to Montgomery and on to a host of other southern cities, but the campaign also led to the development of new church-based movement organizations throughout the South. "All over the South," writes Pat Watters, "Negroes were forming organizations in imitation of the Montgomery Improvement Association" (1971: 50). It was from this network of local organizations that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed at a meeting held in Atlanta in 1957 (Clayton 1964: 12). The SCLC would remain the principal vehicle of upward scale shift throughout this period.

Many shifts in scale have the effect of institutionalizing contention as they rise into the thicket of national political institutions, with their biases and limitations. Such was the case of the nuclear freeze movement of the early 1980s. That movement began in response to the Reagan administration's plans to send medium-range nuclear missiles to Europe. It depended heavily on relational diffusion among citizens mobilized at the local level. Diffusion occurred most dramatically via the spread of local and state referenda throughout New England and elsewhere (Meyer and Kleidman 1991: 243 ff.), an innovation that would later be revived in the movement against the U.S. Patriot Act following 9/11 (Vasi and Strang 2009).

The organizers of the freeze movement were deliberately aiming at diffusion at the grassroots, avoiding the embrace of existing arms control organizations and symbolically operations far from Washington, D.C., to St. Louis (ibid.: 246). But diffusion was also mediated by existing organizations, such as the test ban and anti-ABM movements, as well as traditional pacifist and peace organizations like Physicians for Social Responsibility, and churches and religious communities. These organizations brought national constituencies and organizing experience to what had been an amateur-led grassroots movement, as David S. Meyer writes. "The nuclear disarmament, civil rights, and antiwar movements of the 1960s," he says, "had established a network of organizations from which the nuclear freeze movement would draw support and also had developed an inventory of tactics" (1990: 149–50). Inevitably, the

movement moved into national politics and as it did, "the movement appeared to moderate its rhetoric and analysis" (Meyer and Kleidman 1991: 249). By 1983, it had become "a vehicle to achieve Congressional action for traditional arms control measures in the face of Reagan administration hostility (ibid.: 233).

CONCLUSIONS

The message of this chapter can be easily summarized. First, I have not argued against the tradition of research on the diffusion of contention. Research in this tradition has usefully focused on the "fact" of diffusion; it has effectively traced the pathways of diffusion across geographic and social space; and it has shown how, and under what circumstances, diffusion produces new organizations and transmits new collective action frames to broader settings. These are all important contributions to our understanding of contentious politics. In each respect, though, existing research leaves open lacunae in our understanding of the dynamics of contention. Instead, this chapter has focused on mechanisms of diffusion, on the interaction between contention and institutions, and on the frequency of diffusion between levels of the political system.

A deliberate effort to identify and trace the mechanisms of diffusion cannot fill all the lacunae in diffusion research, but it can help to produce a clearer outline of the dynamics of contention. Let us first consider the evidence for the "fact" of the near-simultaneous emergence of contention against the so-called Washington consensus on neoliberal policies in Latin America in the last decade. It is true, as Kenneth Roberts writes, that "social resistance has ... punctured the aura of inexorability that surrounded the trends toward economic liberalization and globalization in the waning decades of the twentieth century" (Roberts 2008: 328). That social resistance was driven by powerful international forces, especially by the "policy leverage of international lenders and financial institutions, by the 'authoritative knowledge' of neoclassical economics and its transnational technocratic networks, and resurgent US hegemony in the post-Cold War era" (ibid.).

But was it driven by diffusion? A proliferation of studies on individual protest movements "can easily convey the impression that Latin America is in the midst of a generalized social backlash against market liberalism" (ibid.: 337). But the dramatic differences in the levels of social mobilization and party system institutionalization that Roberts identifies suggest rather that institutional variations and different opportunity structures are more responsible for the differences than country-to-country diffusion. Only a determined effort to trace the mechanisms by which contention arose in each country and of the similarities and differences between them can tell us whether and to what extent diffusion has been operating there.

Institutions and institutional differences frame how claims are produced and disseminated. Many students appear to see framing as a self-generating process of social construction. Although there is warrant for such a view in early

accounts of framing, in Chapter 3 of this volume, Stobaugh and Snow offer a more institutionally-rooted account. It was in response to the Supreme Court's rejection of creationist thinking that the anti-evolution movement in the United States invented the idea of "intelligent design" that could be taught alongside evolution and thus challenge it. Their account demonstrates not only that time affects the framing process, but also that interaction between movements and institutions plays an important role in framing.

Stobaugh and Snow's chapter also illustrates the third argument of this chapter: that scale shift is an important part of the dynamics of contention. In the third section of this chapter, I argued that upward scale shift is an important component of diffusion and differs from horizontal diffusion because it brings new actors and new configurations of conflict into an episode of contention. Stobaugh and Snow go beyond this argument to show how downward scale shift can have similar effects. They show that after their defeat in the Supreme Court in the *Edwards* case, a second prong of the strategy of the anti-evolutionist forces in the United States was to target local and state school boards of education, "pressing them to authorize teaching creation science in the classroom and to get this perspective included alongside evolutionary theory in the textbooks that the school districts purchased."

The success of that strategy is still to be proven and in some cases, local communities have known how to defend themselves from takeovers by local anti-evolution militants. But like the shift of the nuclear freeze movement from grassroots town meetings in New England to the halls of Congress – it did bring an array of new actors and new configurations of conflict into the struggle between evolutionary and anti-evolutionary forces. It also moved the arena of conflict from the lawyerlike discussions before the United States Supreme Court to local communities in which electoral considerations and local networks could play a more important role.

These concluding comments will not end the debate about the diffusion of contentious politics, nor are they intended to do so. We have made good progress in understanding diffusion by tracing where it occurs, which geographic and social divides it crosses, and when and where it produces new movement organizations. I hope to have broadened the debate to include a more deliberate emphasis on the mechanisms of diffusion, on the role of interaction with institutions in diffusion processes, and on how the shift in the scale of contention contributes to changes in the locus of contentious interactions.