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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN: EXPLAINING CROSSNATIONAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS*

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This exploratory essay provides a general framework for the study of crossnational similarities among social movements by looking at three broad social processes: globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion. Each of these concepts is at the core of three apparently rival explanations of movement similarities. The globalization model explains similarities among social movements as a product of similar movement reactions to transnational political opportunities; the structural affinity model states that similar national political opportunity structures account for similarities among social movements across countries; and the diffusion model argues that the adoption of information from abroad causes similarities among social movements in different countries. This essay integrates three concepts in a general model of crossnational similarities among social movements. The model is illustrated with data on new social movements in four West European countries.

Recent work on social movements and political protest stresses *differences* among single movements or movement families across countries (e.g., Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995; Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly 1975). Although accounting for crossnational variations is crucial in understanding how political structures affect social movements, researchers tend to overlook the striking *similarities* displayed by movements across countries. This is to some extent a matter of perception, as similarities are the reverse side of differences, and the accent can be put on either one aspect or the other. Explanations of variations so far have been the main focus of social movement research. This article focuses on the other side of the coin and seeks to stimulate inquiry into the sources of similarity and resemblance within the social movement sector.

How can we account for similarities among social movements? To do so we must proceed in four steps: (1) identify similarities across nation-states, (2) look for possible explanatory factors, (3) formulate clear and testable hypotheses to explain the similarities, and (4) test the hypotheses on different movements and in different circumstances. My discussion will focus on the first and second steps and develop the third only in part. Instead of the fourth step, testing hypotheses, I will limit myself to illustrating the main arguments. Regarding possible explanations, I look at three sets of factors: (1) long-term, global, macro

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structural changes, (2) similar configurations on the state level, and (3) short-term exchanges among nation-states.

Given the breadth and relative novelty of the subject matter, my goal is to explore possible relationships and suggest some useful concepts for analyzing crossnational similarities. My aim is to advance our thinking and research in two related domains. On the one hand, I hope to show that, although variation-finding comparisons are crucial to our understanding of social movements, explaining similarities deserves careful attention too. On the other hand, the concepts I propose to account for similarities should sensitize us to the increasing importance of international and transnational dynamics among social movements. To accomplish these two tasks, I will first identify those aspects of movements which tend to be shared. Second, I will propose three models that can explain movement similarities, based on three broad concepts: globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion. Third, I shall attempt to combine the three models by proposing a general model which acknowledges interactions among these concepts. Fourth, I will try to specify some mechanisms through which structure translates into action. Finally, I will illustrate the argument with the example of new social movements (NSMs) in Western Europe.

WHAT IS TO BE EXPLAINED?

To explain crossnational similarities we must first identify those aspects of movements that frequently resemble each other. For this purpose, it is useful to separate the long-term structural similarities from short-term conjunctural ones. Action repertoires are an example of the former. As Tilly (1986, 1995) has repeatedly shown, the repertoires of contention available to challengers for claim-making have changed little during the last two centuries, after a major shift around the mid-nineteenth century. On the other hand, the almost simultaneous rise of peace movements in many western countries in the early 1980s, principally targeting the nuclear arms race, was a more temporary contingent phenomenon. A further distinction can be made between general and particular similarity. The former concerns a movement or movement family as a whole, and refers to the rise of mobilization. The latter situation concerns a particular movement feature, such as a tactic or slogan. Social movement similarities range across a structural-to-conjunctural axis and across a general-to-particular axis.

A better way to identify crossnational similarities of social movements is to single out concrete items that lend themselves to empirical observation and verification. Here I distinguish among six movement characteristics.

First, social movements may address similar *issues, themes, and goals*. Different countries may see the rise of the same movements, such as peace, women's, and ecology movements. Also, the demands, ideology, and strategies of a particular movement in one country may reflect that of its counterparts in other countries. New social movements (NSMs) in Western Europe illustrate how movement themes and issues can resemble each other across countries. NSMs such as the women's, student, peace, ecology, and antinuclear movements all emerged at about the same time, approximately in the sixties, and grew to become the main extrainstitutional forces in the western world.¹ Furthermore, the goals of these movements are similar, although their size and influence may vary widely. Also, the targets of protest actions often coincide: nuclear power plants, air and water pollution, the army, nuclear weapons, abortion rights are only some examples.

¹ Some movements, most notably, the women's, peace, and ecology movements, were already present at the end of the nineteenth century. However, their basic characteristics and degree of politicization are largely a product of the protest wave of the sixties.

Second, movements may display similar *levels of mobilization*, that is, carry out similar numbers of protest actions and/or involve similar numbers of participants in those actions. For example, Kriesi et al. (1995) have shown that NSMs have mobilized to a roughly similar extent in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland from 1975 to 1989, while in France their level of mobilization was much lower. However, this difference is less pronounced among the four countries' whole social movement sectors, as "old" movements were stronger in France than in the three other countries.

Third, the *strategies, tactics, and forms of action* may converge. Research on this crucial dimension has mostly focused on crossnational variations of action repertoires. The adoption of the sit-in as a specific tactic is an example. More generally, though NSMs are usually more radical in certain countries (for example, France) than in others, street demonstrations prevail everywhere.

Fourth, we may observe similar *organizational structures*, which refer to the level of resources and other organizational features (centralized/decentralized, formal/ informal, integrated/isolated, and so forth). For example, at the time of their emergence, the NSMs brought to the fore non-hierarchical, participatory forms of organization, which Gerlach and Hine (1970) have called "segmented, polycentric, informal networks." Later, formalized and professional organizations emerged almost everywhere among NSMs.

Fifth, movement *cultural frames, ideas, and discourses* may show similar patterns (McAdam and Rucht 1993). Here we refer to the ideological and symbolic contents of mobilization. The use of similar slogans is perhaps most typical. There are numerous examples: the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist slogans of the sixties European student movements, the small-is-beautiful slogan of the early ecology movement, the stress on sustainable development of the present-day global environmental movement, the nuclear-free-zone concept used by movements, and so forth.

Sixth, and perhaps most interesting, we may observe parallels in the *timing of protest*. This aspect is shared across countries both in the short- and long-term. Similar timing of protest is illustrated by the rise of protest among student movements in the late 1960s, mobilization against the deployment of NATO missiles in the early 1980s, and the strong opposition to communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the same decade. Protest against nuclear power plants, which peaked in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States between 1975 and 1977, is another parallel in mobilization timing.

THREE MODELS OF CROSSNATIONAL SIMILARITIES

Once we have identified movement similarities, we need to look for possible explanations. I argue in this section that those general factors used to understand differences—most notably, political opportunities—can also be used to account for resemblances. I focus on three sets of factors, summarized by the concepts of globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion. Also, I suggest that similarities among social movements across countries can be accounted for by means of three models that when employed to explain differences are usually portrayed as rivals. The first, the *globalization model*, points to how the increasing interconnectedness of the world stimulates transnational structures and processes which might simultaneously affect movements in different countries. The second, the *structural affinity model*, stresses the existence of similar structures in different countries that may lead to convergent patterns in movement activity. The third, the *diffusion model*, explains similarities among movements through direct (networks) or indirect (mass media) crossnational flows of information that might diffuse protest from one country to the other. Next I discuss each of these three models in more detail.

The Globalization Model

In recent years, the idea of an international system of nation-states has been challenged by the idea of a global system transcending them. The nation-state, once the uncontested leading actor on the world stage, has been challenged by processes of *globalization* that are independent of states and, therefore, must be studied in terms that do not refer to nations. According to Robertson (1992: 8), "globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole." Similarly, other authors define globalization as political processes broadening in scope and deepening in intensity (McGrew and Lewis 1992). Globalization is distinct from the mere increase in international linkages. International relations only implies relations among sovereign nation-states, whereas transnational relations—upon which the historical process of globalization is based—describes "those networks, associations or interactions which cut across national societies, creating linkages among individuals, groups, organizations and communities within different nation-states" (Modelski 1972). Globalization thus refers to the multiplicity of linkages that transcend nation-states and the increasing density of such linkages.

This process affects levels of society differently. The best known aspect refers to the creation of a global economic system under market capitalism (Wallerstein 1974, 1983) and to the rise of a distinct capitalist global society through the transnational organization of production and exchange (Sklair 1991). The late twentieth century has seen the accelerated transformation of national capitalism to transnational capitalism and the creation of an integrated global economy built on multinational corporations. But cultural globalization also occurs through a homogenized world culture which has replaced or supplemented national or local cultures (Robertson 1992). Global cultural interdependence is mainly due to advances in telecommunications (Rosenau 1980, 1989, 1990). Finally, the world is not only globalizing through the development of markets and technology, but also via political forces. Thus, from a neorealist perspective in the study of international relations, Gilpin (1981, 1987) maintains that globalization is a historically contingent process that relies upon the hegemonic states in the international system. In his view, global interdependence increases as a function of a stable world order guaranteed by the power of a hegemonic liberal state.

As a result of globalization, events in one part of the world can affect individuals and communities in far distant parts. Moreover, one event can affect simultaneously many distant individuals and communities. For these reasons, globalization has significant effects on collective action. Unlike in the past, contemporary social movements may use several leverage points. In premodern societies, local protest was the only way to bring grievances to authorities. With the expansion of the national state in the modern era—most notably during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—national politics gave rise to the national social movement (Tilly 1984). In a similar fashion, the growing role of transnational and global structures characterizes postmodern societies.

Thus, globalization brings about a "transnational society," a "multicentric world" of transnational organizations, problems, events, communities, and structures (Rosenau 1990). This translates into two distinct, though interrelated, implications. First, as Giddens (1990: 21) has pointed out, globalization is characterized by the disembedding of social relations, that is by the "'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space." As a result, contingent events that take place far away impinge on local social movements in different countries. Second,

globalization processes produce transnational or supranational structures which take on increasing salience for social movements. This may bring about *transnational opportunities* for mobilization. The creation of centers of power in the European Union is a good example. Similar transnational opportunities structures should cause convergence in the emergence and behaviors of different national movements that take advantage of such opportunities.

In brief, the globalization model assumes that, in an increasingly globalizing world, national factors lose much of their explanatory power and, conversely, social movements in different contexts react to transnational opportunities in a similar fashion. The globalization model explains similarities among social movements as a product of similar movement reactions to changes occurring on the global level.

The Structural Affinity Model

While globalization is defined as the growing interdependence of the modern world, its homogenizing effects should be somewhat qualified. To begin with, similar global processes do not necessarily lead to similar movements. For example, as Walton and Seddon (1994) have shown, reactions to economic liberalization and structural adjustment programs vary across countries according to pre-existing mobilizing structures. More generally, different reactions due to varying political opportunity structures may produce divergent movement trajectories even amidst strong globalizing forces (Kriesi et al. 1995). In addition, globalization might spur reactions opposite to homogenization. For example, the process of Europeanization has spurred countervailing forces at the regional level in many European countries (Marks and McAdam 1996).

We could say, following Rosenau (1990), that there are two global societies rather than one today: a multi-centric society made of transnational links, and a state-centric society whereby the nation-state is still the dominant actor. In this essay I stress the former, that is, transnational links that have homogenized societies and, as a result, the social movements that develop within them. In addition, I focus on movements in the western world and for the moment place aside the impact of global market capitalism on third-world and newly industrializing countries.

Globalization has another important consequence: it contributes to the formation of what I propose to call *structural affinity*; that is, the presence of similar structures among different nations. Structural affinity can also emerge as a product of independent national developments, but globalization strongly facilitates its emergence. For instance, in a globalizing world, concepts such as democracy and capitalism tend to be shared in many national contexts, to varying degrees. Shared definitions of appropriate political and economic behaviors facilitate the emergence of movements have comparable structures and display similar characteristics. Thus, while the globalization model refers to structural or contingent events on the transnational level, the structural affinity model focuses upon structural similarities on the national level.

Among the structural features of the political system that might affect social movements, I will look at those summarized in the concept of political opportunity structure (POS). The various aspects of POS do not only characterize crossnational differences, but also structural affinity in different countries, and such affinity may account for similarities among social movements in those countries. If we follow the conceptualization of POS proposed by Kriesi et al. (1995), we can highlight four aspects that can lead to crossnational similarities.

First, country-specific structure of political cleavages largely determines the mobilization capacity of social movements. These cleavages in turn are rooted in the social

and cultural dividing lines of a given society. Similar cleavage or conflict structures would explain why movements with similar grievances emerge in different places and why such movements display similar levels of mobilization. In particular, as Bartolini and Mair (1990) have pointed out in relation to electoral competition, the mobilization potential of a political cleavage depends on two factors: (1) degree of closure of the social relationships it gives rise to—that is, whether one group is internally integrated and clearly segmented from others; and (2) salience in the political arena. Thus, similarly closed and salient cleavages should lead to parallels in movement emergence and mobilization.

Second, social movements are strongly constrained by the formal structure of the political system. Such structures include the state's degree of territorial centralization, the functional concentration or separation of state power, the degree of coherence of the public administration, and the presence or absence of direct democratic procedures. All these aspects characterize a state as more or less weak or strong and offer greater or fewer opportunities to challengers for access. This, in turn has an impact on the mobilization of social movements, in particular on their strategies and tactics. Thus, similar institutional arrangements should have analogous consequences on social movements in different countries, leading to parallels in mobilization, strategies, and organization.

Third, the informal prevailing strategies political authorities use with challengers influence social movements. Such strategies can be inclusive (i.e., tolerant and facilitating) or exclusive (i.e., rigid and repressive), and coupled with the institutional structures, strongly constrain social movement mobilization and forms of action. Thus, similar prevailing strategies—that is, similar reactions of political authorities to movement actions—would strongly influence the action forms social movements adopt, which would thus tend to resemble each other across countries.

Fourth, Tarrow (1994) points out that volatile aspects of political context can influence mobilization. Kriesi et al. (1995) have summarized these aspects under the term *alliance structures*. This variable refers to short-term changes in political opportunities that may spur or discourage protest. These include increased access to participation, shifts in ruling alignments, availability of powerful allies, and conflicts within and among elites. Thus, resemblance among social movements would stem from similar alliance structures in different countries. In particular, a similar configuration of power and similar behaviors by both the alliance coalition and opponents should have analogous consequences on social movements across countries.

In brief, the specific version of the structural affinity model put forth here generalizes the POS argument by stating that similar political opportunities account for similarities among social movements across countries. Of course, more general structural affinities, such as shared social organization or culture are also relevant. In general, the fact that NSMs act within democratic societies with shared democratic values may bring them closer across countries. Here, however, I focus specifically on political-institutional affinities.

The Diffusion Model

Surely, *diffusion* is a well studied phenomenon in social science. Yet, in the field of collective action, though scholars have often acknowledged that diffusion among social movements in different countries might occur, attempts at explanation are still quite rare.²

² For exceptions, see Giugni (1995), McAdam and Rucht (1993), and Pitcher, Hamblin, and Miller (1978).

Diffusion is usually viewed as a residual factor that accounts for unexplained variation in different contexts. As McAdam and Rucht (1993: 58) have remarked, however, "the real challenge is not so much in demonstrating the mere fact of diffusion . . . but to investigate systematically the conditions under which diffusion is likely to occur and the means by which it does." Of course, a diffusion model of protest can be applied within countries, but here I only deal with crossnational diffusion of protest.

Diffusion theorists have produced considerable research to explain the diffusion of information and opinions (e.g., Berelson et al. 1954; Fisher 1978; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Lazarsfeld et al. 1944) or the spread of innovations and techniques (e.g., Coleman, Katz, and Menzel 1966; Hagerstrand 1967; Mahajan and Peterson 1985; Rogers 1983). These studies, in general, follow a simple and straightforward definition of diffusion. Katz (1968), for instance, sees diffusion "as the acceptance of some specific item, over time, by adopting units—individuals, groups, communities—that are linked both to external channels of communication and to each other by means of both a structure of social relations and a system of values, or culture." Similarly, Rogers (1983: 14) states that there is diffusion when "an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system". More recently, Michaelson (1993: 217) has defined diffusion as "the process by which an innovation (any new idea, activity or technology) spreads through the population."

Pitcher, Hamblin, and Miller (1978) have suggested that the concept has to be modified when applied to collective action. In particular, they maintain that existing models of cultural diffusion (Dodd 1953, 1955; Griliches 1957; Coleman et al. 1966) need to take into account indirect channels of diffusion such as news media. Some authors have argued that for violent protest the probable mechanism is not direct, face-to-face communication typical of earlier diffusion studies, but rather indirect learning based on the mass media (Archer and Gartner 1976; Spilerman 1976; Pitcher et al. 1978). While it is widely recognized that mass media are crucial channels of diffusion for social movements, this could obscure the role of interpersonal networks as a source of direct diffusion. Traditional diffusion theorists were more interested in modeling the rate of diffusion of some idea, technique, or innovation than in determining the social conditions under which diffusion occurs. In my view, the latter is precisely what we need in order to explain crossnational diffusion among social movements.

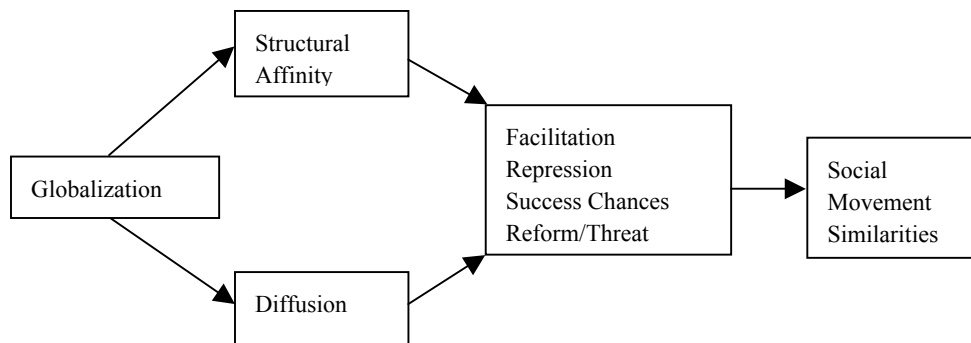
More recently, Tarrow (1989, 1994) has stressed the role of diffusion processes for the spread of protest waves. In his view, protest cycles are periods of generalized disorder spurred by shifts in POS in the first place, but then develop through the diffusion of tactical innovations to other themes, groups, and locations. Competition among social movement organizations and tactical innovation shape such diffusion, which originates protest cycles. Tarrow's theory suggests that, in addition to the six foci of movement similarity mentioned earlier, two other aspects can be identified: a model of action, and the likely effects of action. On the one hand, one movement's mobilization may provide an example for other actors, groups, or movements. On the other hand, successful actions are more likely to be borrowed by movements abroad, for they increase the participants' motivations to engage in collective action.

In brief, the diffusion model maintains that similarities among social movements in different countries derive from the adoption of protest or certain protest features, from abroad. Of course, preconditions for adoption are a communication channel and a flow of information between transmitters and adopters. The channels of communication can be either direct, indirect, or both.

THREE IN ONE: A GENERAL MODEL

In order to achieve a better understanding of crossnational movement similarities, I argue for the integration of all three concepts into a general model. The conceptual paths of the general model are presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. A General Model of Crossnational Social Movement Similarities



Globalization intensifies transnational linkages, with two relevant consequences for social movements. First, transnational structures such as the United Nations and the European Community form a common framework for movement activities in different countries. Although these structures are less frequent targets for social movements than nation- states, they play determining roles in such issues as the environment and international security, and are thus targeted by social movements with increasing frequency. Common international opportunities therefore open up give rise to common social movement strategies. This implies common constraints for movements in different countries and, other things being equal, common reactions by movements to such constraints. Second, contingent events such as civil war, an accident at a nuclear plant, or a decision by a foreign government take on increasing local relevance. Events on the international, transnational, or supranational level are broadcast worldwide and, most importantly, people feel concerned about such events.

Globalization, conceived of as a large-scale process transforming society in the long run, has a third crucial consequence for social movements, this time an indirect one: a restructuring of the political conditions for protest. In other words, among the consequences of globalization is the creation of structural affinities in different countries. In particular, similar (though not identical) conflict structures, which correspond to existing social and cultural cleavages, are more likely to emerge in a globalizing world. As a consequence, popular protest should tend to address similar issues. For instance, labor movements have emerged in practically every contemporary western society. Capitalist industrial relations created parallel left-right cleavages on which labor movements were based. More recently, peace, ecology, and related grievances gave rise to peace, ecology, and other new social movements in many western countries.

Globalization also creates institutional structural affinities. Institutional resolutions of specific problems tend to resemble each other because the latter are increasingly global in

scope. This produces what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call institutional isomorphism. Similarly, institutional reactions to social movement mobilization (including the mix of repression and facilitation by political authorities) should tend to resemble each other across countries and movements adapt to their institutional environment in similar ways.

Structural affinity is a less abstract concept than globalization. Concrete aspects such as those listed under the notion of POS are more easily grasped. Furthermore, structural affinity is more subject to change, especially in the short run, than globalization. As a consequence, structural affinity has a more direct impact on social movements. However, as I will argue below, the translation of structural aspects of the political environment into concrete action becomes intelligible only if we resort to intervening microsociological factors. The same holds true for diffusion. The spread of certain protest features from one country or group of activists to the other may translate directly into resemblance among movements. Yet, the spread of information depends on a series of cultural, social, and political conditions.

Diffusion may, in turn, facilitate the creation of structural affinities. In particular, institutional parallels may result from the spread of certain practices from one country to another. For instance, a given country may adopt policing strategies by imitating those of other countries, especially if the strategies proved successful. However, the focus here is not upon the diffusion of properties which create structural affinities, but rather upon the role of the latter on the likelihood of the former to generate social movement similarities.

Finally, there is the relationship between globalization and diffusion. In order to keep the model as simple as possible, I suggest viewing globalization as a macrostructural frame which creates the conditions for diffusion to take place, or at least for the intensification of diffusion processes (in addition to helping produce structural affinities). Nevertheless, globalization and diffusion should be considered as mutually related for at least two reasons. To begin with, globalization, defined as the increasing and deepening of transnational linkages, clearly sets the conditions for diffusion to occur and to intensify. At the same time, diffusion is a major factor in globalization. According to McGrew and Lewis (1992), for instance, technological innovation and its diffusion is one of four processes of globalization, the other three being great power competition, the internationalization of production and exchange, and modernization. In any event, it is difficult to disentangle these two concepts from one another, as they are part of the same process of increasing interconnectedness in the contemporary world. Nevertheless, an important link between globalization and diffusion is the role of transnational networks and diffusion in producing crossnational similarities among social movements. Certain movements, such as peace and ecology movements, have established transnational organizations and coalitions with branches in several countries which can act as channels for the spread of similar goals, tactics, and ideas. For example, organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, and Greenpeace, as well as the coalition European Nuclear Disarmament, which opposed the stationing of nuclear missiles in the early 1980s, have probably helped render peace and ecology movements more similar across countries.

To summarize, globalization is responsible for the resemblance of social movements across countries because it has helped to (1) create transnational opportunities, (2) form structural affinities in different countries, and (3) facilitate the diffusion processes. Thus, according to this model, globalization has an indirect impact on crossnational social movement similarities. Yet, while its effect on movements is mediated by structural affinity and diffusion, these are also abstract concepts which translate into action only insofar as they affect movement participants' motivations to act. Therefore, if we are to understand the processes through which globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion affect social

movements, we need to turn to the microsociological mechanisms that link these three abstract concepts and movement action, thus leading to social movement similarities across countries. With no claim to be exhaustive, I will point out some of these mechanisms.

MICROMECHANISMS OF DIFFUSION

Globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion have an impact on social movements to the extent that they affect the perceptions and behavior of movement participants. Hence, we have to specify the mechanisms through which they can lead to movement similarities across countries. In other words, we need to look at the micromechanisms which translate macro-structures into social movement action. A way to do so is to introduce intermediate variables between the political *structure* and movement *action* that reflect the perception of external conditions by movement participants. In order to show how structural changes affect behavior, one should be able to build a motivational theory that specifies the links among variables in the model presented above. Here I will give only some indications for each of the three main paths in the model.

The motivational theory proposed by Koopmans (1995), drawing from Tilly (1978), identifies four mechanisms by which globalization leads to movement similarities through structural similarities. Kriesi et al. (1995) have applied the theory to NSMs in several West European countries. Koopmans identifies four concrete opportunities—motivational derivatives of POS—that interact with people's sentiments and emotions to shape movement mobilization: (1) *facilitation* refers to those actions by political authorities which lower the costs of collective action; (2) *repression* implies exactly the opposite; (3) the pair *reform/threat* refers to external responses to movement goals without any action by the movement—reform if a change is favorable for the movement, threat if it is unfavorable; and (4) *success chances* refers to the likelihood that collective action will have positive results for the movement.

These four motivational factors mediate the link between structural affinity and movement similarities. While different countries in a globalizing world are more likely to present homologous structures, the impact of such structures on movement participants and activists is filtered through their perceptions and feelings. Existing POS—the political-institutional variant of structural affinity I focus upon here—affects social movements by offering them a specific set of concrete opportunities, that is, facilitation, repression, success chances, and reform/threat. Thus, one can explain variations in the levels of mobilization and the action repertoires: open systems generally provide opportunities for moderate action, while closed systems are more conducive to disruptive protest. Generalizing this argument, social movements faced with similar political opportunities will tend to have similar protest repertoires.

Microsociological dynamics can also help explain how globalization leads to social movement similarities through diffusion, the second path in our general model. If globalization makes crossnational diffusion easier to occur, it certainly helps explain why movements in different countries resemble each other. However, diffusion is not an automatic process. On the contrary, it occurs to the extent that movement participants establish links with their counterparts in other countries that allow them to borrow and imitate elements of protest.

I suggested earlier that organizational, political, and cultural contexts serve as intervening variables affecting the crossnational flow of information about protest events. More specifically, McAdam and Rucht (1993) focus on the cultural conditions that facilitate the spread of movement ideas. Inspired by Strang and Meyer (1993), they argue that

transmitters and adopters must attribute some degree of similarity among themselves and/or their situations for diffusion to take place. This attribution of similarity creates cultural linkages among social movement participants in different countries and allows protest repertoires to spread even in the absence of direct relational ties. The attribution of similarity is made possible, or at least facilitated, by the cognitive process of "theorization." Strang and Meyer (1993) identify this as "the self-conscious development and specification of abstract categories and the formulation of patterned relationships such as chains of cause of effect." It facilitates diffusion by enabling potential adopters to define themselves as similar to transmitters, even without any direct contact.

Besides cultural conditions, however, political conditions help explain how globalization produces social movement similarities through diffusion. This brings us to the third path in our general model, the one from globalization to structural affinity and then to diffusion, ending in movement similarities. The presence of structural affinities may facilitate diffusion processes. A similar argument has been advanced by Strang and Meyer (1993) in their discussion of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concept of institutional isomorphism in relation to diffusion and, specifically, to culturally defined categories.

Political opportunities and their motivational derivatives can thus be seen as crucial conditions for diffusion. More generally, certain structural affinities may facilitate the diffusion of protest or of protest features, hence mediating the relationship between diffusion and social movement similarities. Even though potential adopters have established strong feelings of identity with transmitters—another kind of attribution of similarity—protest or protest elements may not spread to another country because of lack of political opportunities. For example, the adoption of civil disobedience is unlikely in a context where political authorities strongly repress illegal actions. Similarly, the use of the referendum by social movements is unlikely in countries where noninstitutional actors present important hurdles to its adoption.

In addition to favorable political opportunities in the adopters' environment, some aspects of POS in the transmitters' context may also affect diffusion. Most important is an action or strategy's effectiveness. For example, the use of violence by social movements is more likely if it has been successful in another country. Similarly, a given movement slogan spreads to the extent that it has helped the movement to reach its goals. In both cases, political opportunities are a major factor in successful action by transmitters. Thus, diffusion also depends on opportunities in the transmitters' country or location. Of course, successful action is partially a matter of subjective appraisal, but judgement is usually made on objective criteria.

AN ILLUSTRATION: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE

In this section I will illustrate the general model with a few examples drawn from NSMs in four West European countries: France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. Given the exploratory character of this paper, the goal is to show how the three factors described above—globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion—operated in these cases.

The first thing that catches our eye is the presence of several similar movements in all these countries. Women's, student, peace, ecology, and antinuclear movements, to mention only a few, are found throughout the western world. However, levels of mobilization differ significantly in these countries. The figures for NSM mobilization in *unconventional actions* (demonstrations, protest marches, etc.) between 1975 and 1989 in four West European countries are as follows: 43,000 per million inhabitants in France, 168,000 in Germany, 143,000 in the Netherlands, and 101,000 in Switzerland (Kriesi et al.

1995). Such variation is related to the country-specific set of political opportunities faced by the movements. An obvious corollary is that movements confronted with similar sets of opportunities display comparable levels of mobilization. In our example, France clearly stands out from the others in that traditional cleavage structures predominate over new cleavages on which NSMs are based. The strong opposition between socialist and communist parties left less space for NSM emergence.

The mobilization levels of French NSMs also stand if we consider all forms of collective action (meeting attendance, letter writing, pasting posters, etc). Drawing again from the study of Kriesi et al. (1995), NSMs have mobilized—all action forms considered—much less in France than in the other three countries: 405,000 per million inhabitants in Switzerland, 504,000 in the Netherlands, 351,000 in Germany, and only 96,000 in France.³ Again, POS can be used to explain both variation (as the authors have done) and resemblance (as I do here). The combination of institutional structures (very closed in France and extremely open in Switzerland in the parliamentary, administrative, and electoral arenas) and prevailing strategies (exclusive in France and inclusive in Switzerland) presents two opposing sets of opportunities to movements and leads to different levels of mobilization. Conversely, similar structural settings for political mobilization in the Netherlands and Germany—that is, the presence of structural affinities—result in analogous opportunities and, consequently, less pronounced differences among social movements.

We also observe similarities in action repertoires. The action repertoires of NSMs strongly resemble each other across the four countries studied by Kriesi et al. (1995). In each country, demonstrative actions (street demonstrations, rallies, protest marches, sit-ins, and the like) are the forms of action NSMs (and movements *tout court*) most often adopt to address their demands to political authorities. For example, the authors found that of the total number of protest actions in Switzerland 58.3% were demonstrative actions, with 52.1% in the Netherlands, 61.8% in Germany, and 55.1% in France. These similarities can be attributed to structural affinity in a broader sense. In these societies, NSMs are similarly positioned in the power structure and have more or less the same degree of legitimacy. As a result, their action repertoires are similar and offer a limited range of actions to adopt.

Similarities in mobilization levels and in action repertoires are produced by structural affinities that are partly provoked by globalization processes. However, as I pointed out in the previous section, motivational factors intervene between structural affinity and social movement action. Drawing once again from the data assembled by Kriesi et al. (1995), we can see how movements that differ in focus and strategy behave in similar ways. The authors distinguish among instrumental, countercultural, and subcultural movements according to two criteria: the movement's general orientation (internal or external) and its logic of action (instrumental or identity-based). Their data show that instrumental movements display similarly high levels of mobilization, while countercultural movements mobilize much less, and subcultural movements even less. In addition, countercultural movements make wider use of confrontational actions than instrumental and, especially, subcultural movements. Thus, characteristics internal to the movements filter the impact of structural affinity on the resemblance among them.

³ If we include official figures (in addition to newspaper data, from which these figures are drawn), the number of people mobilized in Switzerland rises to 872,000. All the figures reported here are the sum of the number of participants in all actions held by the movements under study. As many people have participated in more than one action, there is no correspondence between the number of people mobilized and the total population in the country. Thus, the fact that NSMs in Switzerland mobilized 872,000 people during the period under study does not mean that nearly nine of every ten Swiss engaged in contentious politics.

The authors also show that parallels exist among movements that concern similar policy domains, although results here are somewhat less clear-cut. High-profile domains, such as national defense or energy, lead to lower levels of mobilization and more disruptive action repertoires than low-profile policy domains. This is because the former include more salient issues for political authorities—that is, issues concerning the core interests of the state. Movements addressing these issues threaten authorities. This makes authorities less receptive to movement demands and may even increase the likelihood of repression. In contrast, movements addressing low-profile policy domains are more likely to be accepted as legitimate and less likely to be repressed. In short, globalization contributes to structural affinity, thus leading to crossnational similarities among social movements in general. However, similar reactions of analogous movements to their environment and similar opportunities for analogous movements of a given policy domain can also account for significant parallels.

All these examples of social movement similarities refer to long-run characteristics. Nevertheless, short-run features of protest are perhaps more interesting to examine and to some extent easier to explain. Leaving aside simultaneous changes in POS as part of structural affinity, diffusion seems to play a central role in short-run similarities. For example, the use of sit-ins by various NSMs can be attributed to their spread in the U.S. from the civil rights movement to the student movement, then from the latter to its European counterpart, and finally from the European student movement to the NSMs. The fact that this tactic has often proven successful (at least in the eyes of movement participants, which is what counts in this respect) has certainly helped its diffusion across movements as well as across countries. Structural affinity (specifically, POS) is probably less constraining in this case, for specific protest forms or slogans adapt more easily to different contexts. In other words, they are modular (Tarrow 1994). On the other hand, certain forms of action, such as the referendum, are not always exportable because they are simply unavailable in certain countries.

Peace movement mobilization illustrates the connections of globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion to the timing of protest. Peace movements strongly mobilized in several European countries and in the United States at the beginning of the 1980s. While in the U.S. mobilization focused upon the nuclear weapons freeze proposal, which tried to force the U.S. government to adopt a disarmament resolution, European peace movements protested NATO's double-track decision to deploy middle-range missiles in European countries. Peace movement mobilization arose almost simultaneously in different Western European countries. Major demonstrations took place, for example, during the weekend of November 10-11, 1981 in Germany, on November 21 in the Netherlands, during the weekend of November 24-25 in Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Italy, and on December 30 in Switzerland. An even bigger international wave of peace movement protest occurred between September and December 1983, while protest in the United States peaked in December 1982 with a huge demonstration in New York. In Western Europe, NATO's decision to deploy the missiles sparked an international protest wave. In this case, the almost simultaneous mobilization of peace movements in various countries could be attributed to globalization. However, movement reactions were conditioned by national political opportunities, insofar as mobilization was particularly strong in those countries where NSMs found favorable opportunities to mobilize, such as Germany and the Netherlands. Protest arose even in Switzerland, although NATO did not concern it. In contrast, France (also not a full member of NATO) displayed lower levels of mobilization relative to its population. The French peace movement mobilized significantly only at the end of 1983, when disappointment in the Socialist government became stronger

and NSMs reacted, though weakly, to government unresponsiveness. However, because of the time lag, it is very likely that, in addition to globalization, diffusion influenced the mobilization of the French movement.

Concerning the protest timing, political opportunities mediate the impact of diffusion on collective action. Far from provoking mobilization independently, I argue that diffusion takes place only where favorable political opportunities exist. To put it another way, where opportunities are unfavorable, diffusion has only a weak impact on mobilization. This perspective is, in my view, more appropriate than one that conceives of diffusion as almost automatically provoking or reinforcing mobilization. How can we otherwise explain why protest spreads rapidly to certain countries and not to other ones? Take the example of antinuclear movements in Western Europe. Antinuclear protest erupted in the first half of the 1970s when a nuclear plant in southern Germany was occupied. The German example was soon followed by Swiss antinuclear activists and a site occupation took place close to the German border. Besides site occupations, the movement displayed impressive levels of mobilization, giving rise to a wave of antinuclear protest in the border area of France, Germany, and Switzerland. What is interesting, though, is that protest did not spread as much to France, because political opportunities for antinuclear opposition there were limited by the French government's strong commitment to nuclear energy. A similar process can be observed in the wave of squatter protests during the early 1980s. Protest started in Amsterdam and soon spread to Zurich and Berlin. However, given the unfavorable political opportunities for this type of protest in France after the Socialist party seized power, mobilization remained very low there.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I reflected on the striking similarities that social movements often display across countries and suggested a general framework to deal with this issue. Without a sound theoretical framework, we can hardly explain why movements in different countries often resemble each other. The general model presented here is a tentative and preliminary contribution to our task of explaining similarity and resemblance in addition to difference and variation.

I have suggested that a model for the explanation of crossnational social movement similarities should take into account three basic concepts: (1) the globalization of modern societies and its consequences for collective action, (2) the presence of structural affinities in different countries, which are in part a result of globalization, and (3) diffusion processes which may provoke the spread of the protest or some of its features from one country to the other. Instead of viewing such factors as rival explanations, I have suggested that we view them as interacting factors within a general model. Furthermore, I have proposed that, in order to avoid meaningless generalizations, we distinguish among different characteristics of social movements. Here I have identified six aspects of social movements that might be similar across countries: (1) issues, themes, and goals; (2) levels of mobilization; (3) strategies, tactics, and forms of action; (4) organizational structures; (5) cultural frames, ideas, and discourses; and (6) the timing of protest.

Globalization has only an indirect impact on movement characteristics, for it forms a general structural and cultural frame with little direct relation to social movement action. Globalization, nevertheless, has two important consequences relevant to social movements: it helps produce structural affinities in different countries and it makes diffusion of movement repertoires and strategies easier. It is via these two consequences, which impinge more directly on movement participants, that globalization influences social movements. A

more direct effect of globalization is transnational structures of power that may lead social movements in different countries to act in parallel ways, that is, to use similar strategies to seize the opportunities provided by these power structures. Whether it originates in globalization, diffusion, or independent country-specific developments, POS, as a specific kind of structural affinity, is crucial to understand not only variations in social movements across countries, but also similarities.

In order to explain why and how social movements resemble each other across countries, we need to specify the mechanisms through which abstract concepts such as globalization, structural affinity, and diffusion influence movement participants. In other words, certain motivational factors link structural changes and people's actions. Among such factors, I have argued, those linked to political opportunities promise to shed light on this phenomenon. Thus, generalizing the POS argument, I have proposed political opportunities and their motivational derivatives as a major explanation of certain similarities in different countries, since they allow for or impede protest due to either globalization or diffusion. Unfortunately, I was at best able to illustrate my argument with the example of NSMs in four West European countries, but not to operationalize the hypotheses I advanced on the basis of the proposed general model, let alone to test them systematically. These are two directions for future research.

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