Domains of Diffusion: How Culture and Institutions Travel around the World and with What Consequences[1]

Andreas Wimmer
Columbia University

How do cultural and organizational templates, such as the ideal of gender equality or neoliberal policies, spread around the globe, and what are the cumulative consequences of such processes? This article offers a multilevel theory of diffusion and local incorporation that overcomes some of the conceptual problems of existing answers to this question including those provided by world polity theory, global field theory, policy diffusion scholarship, and research on cultural globalization. The theory conceives the world as polycentric, divided into multiple, overlapping domains of bounded connectivity within which diffusion unfolds. These domains differ in their basic characteristics, such as their degrees of institutionalization, which determine which mechanisms of diffusion (such as coercion or imitation) will be at work and how widely and quickly templates will be initially adopted within them. Depending on the intrinsic properties of templates as well as the local configuration of power, a template may further spread among a population and eventually be incorporated into local cultural and organizational fabrics. Charting new territory of theoretical inquiry and future empirical exploration, the article highlights three cumulative and long-term consequences of diffusion: layered cultural and institutional complexity at the local level, polythetic areas of cultural and institutional similarity at the regional level, and a multichanneled network of diffusion at the global level.

For the past three decades, social scientists have paid increasing attention to how ideas, cultural objects, and organizational templates travel around the

[1] I wish to thank Helmut Anheier, Chris Bail, Nitsan Chorev, Matthias König, Gisèle Sapiro, Prerna Singh, Fabio Wasserfallen, as well as three *AJS* reviewers for their comments

0002-9602/2021/12606-0003$10.00

world—from the ideal of women's rights (Levitt and Merry 2009) or the viral video "Gangnam Style" (Yoon and Schattle 2017) all the way to neoliberal recipes for governing the economy (Simmons and Elkins 2004) or democratic forms of governance (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). Leaving aside individual-level research on peer influence or the adoption of innovations, four distinct research traditions seek to understand diffusion processes at the macrolevel.[2] Each offers valuable insights into how to understand the mechanisms and consequences of the global circulation of ideas and institutions: world society theory, global field theory, various approaches to cultural globalization, and research on policy diffusion.

This article integrates these four research strands into a unifying theoretical framework that promises to overcome some of their limitations in terms of empirical scope, theoretical precision, and analytical depth. It thus attempts to heed Katz's "call for volunteers to stand on the shoulders of Gabriel Tarde and Pitirim Sorokin, who dared to theorize the process of diffusion over a wide variety of disciplines" (1999, p. 144). It integrates and connects a series of hypotheses, some of them new and some of them already formulated with regard to different, more microlevels of analysis.

The point of departure is the work of 19th-century French sociologist Gabriel Tarde, a recently rediscovered pioneer of diffusion studies. He saw the world as a unified, single sphere within which ideas, institutions, and practices could potentially spread, leading to a uniform human civilization. He noted the obvious: such an all-encompassing, global field of connectivity has not materialized so far, but he took it as a useful baseline scenario against which to assess contemporary reality. Luhmann (1984, pp. 65, 631, 644) echoed Tarde's contrafactual image of total global integration by highlighting how *Interdependenzunterbrechungen* ("the interruption of [theoretically possible] interdependencies") divided global society into separate spheres of connectivities.

I will call these spheres domains: more or less bounded parts of the global social space within which connections are dense and actors are often aware of each other, while across their boundaries connections are sparser and

and suggestions on earlier drafts, as well as the audiences of the department of sociology of Yale, the European University Institute, and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, as well as a plenary session of the annual meeting of the German Sociological Association (DGS) in Göttingen. Many of the arguments were originally developed when I was directing Princeton's Fung Global Fellows Program, which during that year was dedicated to the study of global diffusion. I thank the fellows for many inspiring conversations and months of companionship: Seva Gunitsky, Alexandra Kowalski, Deepak Malghan, Lorena Poblete, Aashish Velkar, and Fabio Wasserfallen. Direct correspondence to Andreas Wimmer, Columbia University, Department of Sociology, 607 Knox Hall, New York, New York 10027. E-mail: andreas.wimmer@columbia.edu

[2] Key works in that tradition are Fowler and Christakis (2011) as well as Centola (2018); for an overview of the social network diffusion literature, see Everton and Pfaff (2021).

actors don't know about or perceive each other as less relevant. The theory assumes that the world is characterized by multiple, overlapping domains generated by a variety of economic, political, and social forces, from the empires of the past to contemporary online networks. The theory thus describes the world as necessarily polycentric and assumes a long-term perspective, going beyond the postwar era of globalization on which most research on transnational diffusion has focused.

Also in contrast to most existing approaches, the theory emphasizes the structural features of these domains—the degrees to which they are institutionalized, hierarchical, and bounded. These characteristics, I will argue, shape the diffusion processes unfolding within them. They determine through which precise mechanism—identified by previous research in organizational sociology and comparative political science—and with what speed and reach diffusion unfolds.

Diffusion is also influenced by local factors, however, which are crucial for understanding in how far diffusing templates are further adopted, reinterpreted, and perhaps incorporated into existing cultural and organizational ecologies. Since these local factors vary independently from domain characteristics, the theory has a multilevel character (without, n.b., incorporating an individual level). Building on existing research in the historical institutionalist tradition, I will argue that the local configuration of power and already established cultural and organizational models determine whether a new template appears attractive and plausible enough from many different points of view, facilitating local incorporation.

Three aggregate and long-term consequences are discussed, none of which have been systematically considered by existing research. First, because domains overlap and because local power configurations vary within them, each local society represents a unique assemblage of templates adopted during previous waves of diffusion, with each wave path-dependently shaping the possibility of future waves—generating what I will call layered local complexity. Second, because domains overlap only partially and because local adoption varies within domains, areas of cultural and institutional similarity assume the form of fuzzy sets in which no single characteristic defines membership unequivocally. Cultural areas therefore do not represent clearly bounded and mutually exclusive civilizational blocks, as assumed by recent research in sociology and political science. Third, since the world as a whole is characterized by multiple, overlapping domains, the global network of diffusion—constituted by dyads of inspiration and imitation—displays a polycentric structure with a diverse set of channels that proliferate like the roots of mushrooms, rather than a more monopolistic, starlike structure connecting a single center to its peripheries.

The proposed framework combines a macroscopic view on diffusion and its consequences with a mesolevel analysis of the dynamics of local adoption

and adaptation. It assumes a long-term historical perspective, trying to understand global and regional entanglements over generations and the complex ecology of cultural and institutional features it generates. It is rigorously comparative across types of domains and types of diffusing objects, thus following up on Strang and Soule's call to go beyond the standard "single-population, single-practice research designs" and to see diffusion through "a larger comparative lens" (1998, p. 285). Only a few elements of this theory have already been tested empirically, especially at the macrolevel. It thus represents an architectural plan of hypotheses, rather than an edifice built on well-established empirical foundations. The discussion starts with a review of the literature.

FOUR CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO DIFFUSION

World Society

Perhaps the most prominent and well-developed research program in sociology is based on the world society theory introduced by John Meyer and further elaborated by his many students (for an overview, see Krücken and Drori 2009). According to this macro-phenomenological approach, cultural and organizational principles that originated in the European Enlightenment—rationalism, universalism, democracy, gender equality, human rights, developmentalism, and so forth—have imposed themselves on governments and citizens around the world. As a consequence, constitutions, laws, public policies, or school curricula increasingly resemble one another.

There is only one world cultural pattern—even if it appears in different versions—and it spreads precisely because it is the only normative game in the global town: local governments and populations emulate these ideas and institutions because they have acquired universal legitimacy. World cultural laws and principles have not always worked themselves into the organizational routines of every bureaucracy around the world, however—leading to more or less "decoupling" between declared principles and the everyday workings of governments depending on their capacity to implement policies (Cole 2015). A second source of variation is that some societies have been exposed to world society templates more intensively or for longer periods of time than others due to higher levels of "structural embeddedness," as measured, for example, by the presence of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). Finally, multiple versions of world cultural models have emerged, for example, various ideas of how to protect the environment (Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000), some of which have been adopted here and others there.

As proponents of world society theory have acknowledged (Pope and Meyer 2016, 292; Suarez and Bromley 2016), the original version tended

to underestimate the importance of local cultural and political dynamics, such as established cultural traditions that may conflict with world cultural ideals or the political interests of powerful local elites, who may lose out if the new policies were to be implemented (Djelic 1998; Guillén 2001; Bockman and Eyal 2002; Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002).[3] These dynamics may very well lead to the rejection of global models (Guillén 1994) and in most cases to their transformation, adaptation, and creative reinterpretation to such a degree that national differences reemerge in new form, rather than erode (Westney 1987; Djelic 1998).

In more recent elaborations, extensions, and modifications of world society theory, the role of local processes—beyond varying institutional capacities and thus levels of "decoupling"—has been given more attention. In an authoritative review, Pope and Meyer (2016, pp. 294–95) list cultural compatibility as well as local power inequalities as important factors to understanding how far and exactly how world society models are locally adopted. While this makes sense empirically, it is not clear whether and how these additions fit into the theoretical framework. World society theory rests on the basis of a phenomenological ontology, projected onto the global level. According to this ontology, there is nothing "outside" of the *Lebenswelt* of world culture that could be more or less compatible with it. If one abandons this crucial assumption and allows for multiple cultures with different levels of compatibility, the basic structure of world society theory would have to be rethought in order to explain why, over the 19th and 20th centuries, Western cultural patterns were more often copied than non-Western ones.

Similarly and relatedly, a macro-phenomenological theory has no place for the concept of power (except if explicitly juxtaposed to the culture of the *Lebenswelt*, as in Habermas [1989]). To pay attention to local power structures therefore does not fit well into the general theoretical architecture. Realizing that such structures do matter empirically is a first step, which should be followed by incorporating these lower-level structures into the theoretical edifice. This is why domain theory has a multilevel architecture, trading parsimony for increased empirical accuracy.

The lack of attention to political power is problematic at the global level as well; however, since there is no world state and global society is therefore lacking, in the eyes of John Meyer and his students, an "organized hierarchy of power and interests" (Meyer et al. 1997, p. 145), the only conceivable mechanism of diffusion is normative emulation—the voluntary adoption of a template because of its superior legitimacy. However, there is plenty of evidence that coercion also plays an important role in the worldwide diffusion of policies. For example, institutions such as the International

[3] For a sophisticated recent analysis, written from an international relations perspective, of how world-level processes interact with domestic ones, see Chaudoin, Milner, and Pang (2015).

Monetary Fund have been retooled, under the pressure of the U.S. government (Kentikelenis and Babb 2019), to serve the agenda of neoliberalism, forcing market reforms on many countries in the Global South against their will and at substantial social costs (Downey et al. 2020).[4] A more complete theory of global diffusion therefore has to take a whole variety of possible mechanisms into account, building on the insights gained by the policy diffusion school to be discussed shortly.

Finally, the lack of attention to conflict, competition, and power makes it difficult to understand how opposition to world cultural models could possibly emerge. To reach for a dramatic example, over the past decades jihadist discourses and practices diffused widely in the Middle East and beyond. On the extreme end of the specter, these practices include blowing up world heritage sites or decapitating infidels in front of running cameras precisely to show how much jihadists despise world cultural norms. Other, more mainstream trends also deviate from world cultural orthodoxy—such as the decisively authoritarian, collectivist interpretation of the modern canon that China offers a global audience, with increasing success. In other words, world society theory has difficulty grasping the fact that different policy prescriptions, normative ideals, and discourses of legitimation are simultaneously circulating in different networks of diffusion and that the world is increasingly fragmented into such subglobal networks of alliances and mutual orientation (as demonstrated by Alderson and Beckfield [2004]).

These points of critique should in no way diminish the merits of world society theory, not the least of which is to have kept alive, in a discipline that struggles to swim free from its tradition of Western provincialism, a sustained research program focused on the world as a whole. And despite its limitations, world society theory has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of global diffusion processes by identifying and documenting important, recurring, and pervasive patterns of normative emulation in the postwar West. Instead of theorizing this as the general condition of modernity tout court, however, we need to identify the scope conditions under which we expect normative diffusion processes to operate. This is what the theory of domains seeks to accomplish.

Global Fields

A second, more recent tradition of sociological analysis is to take Bourdieu's theory of fields to the global level. While Bourdieu was often criticized for

[4] To be sure, recent work in the world society tradition has looked at the microdynamics of how power relations within international institutions influence which policies they adopt (Kentikelenis and Seabrooke 2017; similarly, Botzem and Quack 2005; Solli, Demediuk, and Sims 2005).

conceiving of society as a bounded container shielded from international influence, his followers have recently shown that this is not a necessary feature of the theory. It can be adapted to suit a more transnational perspective—following the leads that Bourdieu (2002) himself left in some hitherto underappreciated writing. For Bourdieusians, whether a globally integrated field has emerged is a matter of empirical investigation, rather than theoretical principle, as it is for proponents of world society theory. Also in contrast to world society theory, global fields are specific to a particular sphere of global society, such visual arts, law, or politics.[5]

Following Buchholz (2016), we can speak of a global field if specific institutions operate on a planetary scale, if they have become sufficiently independent from national institutions, and if they use their own system of evaluation, producing a specific "global capital" in Bourdieusian language. Under these empirical circumstances, some basic principles of field analysis can be deployed: the meaning of a cultural object is derived from the position that its producer occupies in the global field vis-à-vis other actors; the shared evaluative canon is the object of intense global struggles to define its precise meaning; and, importantly for the topic at hand, cultural borrowing (leading to diffusion) and distancing are important parts of the strategic repertoires of actors who struggle over global capital.

The main limitation of this approach is that it is hard to understand processes of global diffusion that are not institutionally structured and thus occur outside of a global field. An example is contemporary "hipster" culture and fashion, as manifested in the appreciation for vintage clothes, artisanal beers, and trimmed beards, which can now be spotted in any major city around the world (see, e.g., Browning 2014). To understand these kinds of processes, some Bourdieusians have recently introduced the concept of a "weak field" with much less institutional autonomy and coherence than the original notion of a field implied. European Union law and policy making have been the prime example of such a weak field (Vauchez 2008). However, this risks overstretching the terminology by introducing the idea of a field without clearly defined rules, which makes it difficult to apply the theoretical tools of field theory.[6]

The empirical scope of the theory is therefore limited to institutionally structured cultural circulations—quite in line with the more focused intentions of most of its proponents. For those empirically interested in any kind of cultural diffusion, including those occurring outside of institutionally

[5] Major studies of global fields refer to the visual arts (Buchholz 2016), international law (Dezaley and Garth 1996), literature (Casanova 2004; Sapiro, Leperlier, and Brahimi 2018), colonial states (Go 2008; Steinmetz 2008), humanitarian NGOs (Krause 2014), and television production (Kuipers 2011).

[6] On the centrality of rules for the definition of fields, see Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 97), among many others.

coherent fields, global field theory therefore offers an important but partial account. Furthermore and from a more abstract point of view, the concept of a global field offers an important complement to studies of policy diffusion (to be discussed below), by focusing on the character of the social space within which patterns diffuse, rather than on the process alone. This is an important theoretical move, as it allows developing a structural account of how these macrosocial spaces vary across the world and over time and how this variation influences the diffusion processes that unfold within them. Domain theory tries to step up to this challenge by offering a more systematic account of how macrosocial spaces vary in their properties, including but not limited to their degrees of institutionalization.

Cultural Globalization

Anthropologists and practitioners of cultural studies have discussed cultural globalization since the early nineties. The focus is again on global processes, as in world society theory, but with more emphasis on cultural practices, rather than organizational models. In contrast to both world society and global field theory, the global structures within which diffusion occurs received far less attention than the local, everyday reinterpretation of globalizing cultural practices.

Initially, most scholars argued against early sociological accounts of how consumption styles across the globe increasingly resembled one another, a dynamic captured in such terms as "McDonaldization" (Ritzer 1993), "Coca-Colonization" (Howes 1996), and the like. Writing against such homogenization narratives, anthropologists highlighted how local populations creatively reinterpret globalizing cultural ideas and practices, leading to "creolization" (Hannerz 1987), "hybridity" and "mélange" (Pieterse 2015), or "glocalization" (a term coined by sociologist Roland Robertson [1992]).[7] Similarily, cultural studies scholars have underlined that local populations interpret cultural products that spread around the world, such as the TV series *Dallas*, in very different ways (Notoji 2000; Kraidy 2006; Morley 2006; Sturken and Cartwright 2009).

A useful corrective to accounts of globalization as homogenization, these approaches do not offer much analysis of which local and global elements are mixed and what the underlying social dynamics could look like. In the tradition of anthropological ethnographies, these questions are left to the specificity of each context (Appadurai 1996, p. 47), and we therefore wonder how we could explain variation across such contexts. For example, why is hip-hop picked up in some places (e.g., Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2009) but not in others?

[7] For an overview of the cultural globalization debate, see Hopper (2007).

In search for an answer, we can turn to sociologists working in the historical institutionalist tradition. They have emphasized the configurations of power (Bourdieu 2002; Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002; Illouz and John 2003; Kaufman and Patterson 2005; Halliday and Carruthers 2007; Wimmer and Feinstein 2010; Sun 2017) or institutional traditions (Dobbin 1994; Sutton 2000; Savelsberg and King 2005; Savelsberg 2011) that profoundly shape which actors promote which globalizing idea or institution in the local context and whether they are successful in spreading it into a local society. This emphasis on the role of power configurations in local adoption processes will be carried forward into the multilevel theory of domains developed below.

Policy Diffusion

A fourth and extraordinarily well-advanced tradition is rooted in political science and organizational sociology.[8] As with world society, the focus is on institutions and organizational models, but researchers are now mostly interested in the process of diffusion itself rather than its possible global consequences. They stand on the shoulders of a well-established and methodologically sophisticated body of scholarship that dates back to the rural sociology of the 1930s. It sought to understand how innovations (most famously hybrid corn) or information (e.g., about a new drug) spread among a specific population, such as farmers or doctors in the American Midwest.

Contemporary scholarship adopted the sender-receiver metaphor from this classical body of work to study how institutions (such as central bank independence or the divisional organization of companies) and public policies (such gender mainstreaming) travel across polities or companies. A great deal has been learned about the role of network ties along which policies tend to diffuse (in political science it is often operationalized as a matrix of bilateral relations; Simmons and Elkins 2004), about the different mechanisms of diffusion, and about the different temporal patterns of adoption that they produce (such as rapid cascades; see Watts 1999*b*).

A first limitation of this research program is that it does not pay much attention to how institutions change during the process of diffusion. The nature of a policy may be markedly different when it "arrives" at the end of a diffusion chain compared to where it started (resulting in "reactive diffusion," in the words of Chorev [2012]; see also Czarniawska and Sevon 1996; Wasserfallen 2018). Simply noting whether adoption has occurred is therefore underestimating the degree of institutional heterogeneity produced by the process. In extreme cases, the policy or cultural practice might

[8] For overviews, see Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett (2006), Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett (2007), and Gilardi (2012).

be so markedly different from its origins that the image of "diffusion"—which assumes the continuity of a traveling object—no longer makes much sense. Has the pajama (from Hindustani *pāy-jāma*) Westerners have worn at night since the Victorian era really "diffused" from northern Indian drawstring trousers or merely been inspired by it?

A second problem, pointed out by historical sociologists (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002), students of literature (Griswold 1987, p. 1110), and others (Wejnert 2002, pp. 299–302), is that some ideas, policies, or consumption practices might be more prone to adoption than others. Such variation in the intrinsic "diffusibility" is obscured by the exclusive attention on things that did diffuse, a characteristic of almost all diffusion research (as already noted by Strang and Soule [1998], p. 285). For example, not a single country adopted the French Minitel infrastructure, a videotext online service connected through telephone lines that the French government tried to promote. Instead, the world opted for the internet. A proper theory of diffusion therefore has to pay attention to the intrinsic characteristic of cultural and institutional templates, which make them more or less attractive or easy to adopt—an argument to be integrated into the theoretical framework developed in this article.

A third limitation of the policy diffusion program is that it usually focuses on a single policy or idea (as also noted by Strang and Soule [1998, p. 285]; for a recent study of two simultaneously diffusing policies, see Genovese, Kern, and Martin [2017]). This tends to draw attention away from the complex ecology of cultural and institutional patterns that emerge from simultaneous or subsequent waves of diffusion. Diffusion, in other words, changes the context for further diffusion a way similar to how the beaver changes the course of the river in which it lives. Reaching for such a more encompassing ecological perspective, as I attempt to do further below, obviously complements, rather than supplants, the more precise analysis of specific diffusion processes.

A fourth point of critique is that policy diffusion research undertheorizes the nature of the connections along which diffusion occurs. In the ontology of policy diffusion scholars, the process unfolds within a matrix of dyads, and diffusion is thought to be more likely, the stronger the connection between two actors, organizations, or countries. However, the overall network of connections is patterned in a certain way that cannot be reduced to tie strength alone: it displays certain structural characteristics such as the degree of institutionalization highlighted by Bourdieusians. These features of the overall network might very well influence the process of diffusion itself, a point long emphasized by the more microoriented network studies of contagion processes (e.g., Pellis et al. 2015). More specifically, the characteristics of domains may determine which mechanism of diffusion operates within them—an important aspect of domain theory introduced further below.

Despite these limitations, the literature on policy diffusion offers many insights that need to be carried forward. Most importantly, it has identified and amply documented four mechanisms through which diffusion occurs: coercion, competition, learning, and emulation. This typology will be incorporated into domain theory by specifying which domain characteristics encourage which of these mechanisms to operate. From classical diffusion research, I will also adopt a two-stage model according to which early adoption is analytically distinguished from the further spread of a new template through a population.

DOMAINS: DEFINITION, ORIGINS, AND CHARACTERISTICS

Building on these various approaches, all the while seeking to overcome some of their limitations, I propose a theory of multiple domains within which global, regional, and local processes of diffusion unfold.[9] I start with the domain concept and how it differs from the core ideas around which the four existing approaches are built.

Defining and Observing Domains

In line with Gabriel de Tarde, domain theory sees diffusion as a basic process that shapes cultural and institutional developments around the world and throughout history (the first axiom, or A1). This contrasts with the Durkheimian traditions in sociology, in which diffusion appears as an aberration from the stable equilibrium of bounded societies, messed up only recently by the postwar wave of "globalization" on which diffusion research has traditionally focused. Second, domain theory sees the world as a polycentric conglomerate of multiple, partly overlapping domains (axiom 2, or A2), rather than a single, unified sphere as in world society theory. A third assumption concerns the nested, multilevel nature of the social world. More precisely, I assume that each domain comprises multiple local societies, characterized by their own political and cultural dynamics. Local configurations of power and culture therefore vary within domains (axiom 3, or A3), with important consequences for the process of diffusion.

But before we explore these, a definition of domains is in order. They represent a segment of the global social space that emerges when boundaries interrupt theoretically possible connections between actors. Two basic types of connectivities are considered here: relations and imaginations. Social relationships between geographically distinct actors are established through trade, migration, political alliances, transborder organizations, personal ties, and so forth. In

[9] This literature review is certainly not exhaustive. For example, it excludes the world systems perspective adopted by Hannerz (1987), Heilbron (1999), and Moretti (2000).

the tradition of exchange theory (Blau 1986), this involves giving and taking information, recognition, or economic goods. Connections may also assume the form of mutual awareness and observation between actors that do not maintain a social relation but perceive each other as socially relevant (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Strang and Meyer 1993; see also the "foci" in the network literature following Feld [1981]). In other words, domains might assume the form of an arena, often established by the media including today, of course, the internet and the social media.[10] A more traditional example is the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 1991), a space of mutual observation generated during the 18th and 19th centuries by the print media.

In domains that represent pure arenas, few of its members have a personal, unmediated connection with any other member, making arenas potentially vast. During the last world cup soccer finals, for example, approximately 3.5 billion individuals tuned into one or the other of the games and became aware of their shared and simultaneous focus on a leather ball. Pure arenas are often delimited by social categories ("soccer fans," "Europeans," "feminists") that channel individual attention toward relevant peers and away from social others that are considered irrelevant or incomprehensible. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we find domains without any arena characteristics at all, such as patron-client relationships that link a large number of individuals together. There is no awareness of their connections beyond the individual pair of a patron and a client, and there is no shared social category describing all members of the network. Pure arenas and pure tie-based domains represent extreme and rare cases, however.

The vast majority of domains are situated somewhere in the middle and comprise both social ties and shared membership in social categories. Within domains, the effort needed to establish a new tie is lower because actors are already aware of each other's presence, have learned to interpret each other's actions, and can build on or copy existing connections. Domains are thus constituted by boundaries across which it is more costly to communicate and that interrupt, à la Luhmann, the theoretically unrestricted exchange of information, ideas, and goods around the world.

How could we empirically identify a domain and its boundaries? As defined above, domains are composed of connections (both actual ties and ties of mutual observation) between geographically distinct actors and defined by the lack of connections across their boundaries. Seen from a bird's-eye view, one can pin down domains by charting all social and observational connections in the world—let us say all social ties maintained between individuals on Facebook, or all political relations of authority and alliance

[10] On media-mediated diffusion, see the literature in Strang and Soule (1998), p. 271; on diffusion within arenas constituted by shared social categories, see pp. 275–76.

within and between states, or all connections of mutual observations within socially relevant categories. We can then use a community detection algorithm to identify the boundaries that crisscross the global social sphere and establish clusters of individuals, organizations, or places that are more tightly connected either through ties or mutual observation or both, a perspective that parallels Castell's (1996) notion of the network society (see also Osterhammel and Peterson 2005, pp. 21–27). Note that some of these clusters will have geographically identifiable boundaries (say between groups of states), while others will be deterritorialized, such as a large online community whose members are drawn from various locales without, however, comprising all inhabitants of those locales.[11]

The concept of multiple domains seeks to overcome some of the problems associated with the theoretical traditions discussed above. First, and in contrast to world society theory, it foresees various centers of diffusion of possibly divergent content, most of which is modern but certainly not all derived from Western, rational, and universalist principles—as illustrated by the recent spread of jihadist ideologies and practices referenced above or, to give another example, by the diffusion of antigay legislation in sub-Saharan Africa and the former Soviet Union (Ferguson 2020). While world society theory hard wires the idea of a single, global sphere of exchange into its theoretical apparatus, the domain concept leaves the size and structure of spheres of connectivity open. It can thus conceive of a whole range of variation from big to small and from unipolar to multipolar domains, as discussed further below.

Second, and in contrast to global field theory, the domain concept also does not hard wire the degree of institutionalization into its definitions. It can therefore grasp variation along this dimension as well and explore its consequences. As noted above with reference to the hipster example, many diffusion processes cut across institutionalized fields and thus unfold in an institutionally heterogeneous domain (Tarrow and McAdam 2005; Halliday and Carruthers 2007; Dezaley and Nay 2015).[12]

Third, and in contrast to the scholarship on policy diffusion, the domain concept goes beyond a dyadic understanding of network structures and allows describing a variety of aggregate structural characteristics that influence how diffusion will unfold. On this conceptual basis, I will identify social worlds within which diffusion will be more likely and specify the macroproperties that encourage a particular mechanism of diffusion to operate rather than another.

[11] This has been theorized by Albrow (1997) as the distinction between socioscape (all domains that are represented in a specific locale) and sociosphere (a nonterritorial domain).

[12] See also in the field of comparative literature Even-Zohar (1978).

Three Domain-Generating Mechanisms

How do domains emerge? The first axiomatic assumption encourages us to extend the empirical horizon beyond the postwar era of globalization, in contrast to most contemporary theories of diffusion, and to bring our attention to a wide variety of mechanisms that have generated domains in the past and in different parts of the world, including outside the Western dominated sphere. I distinguish between three groups of mechanisms.

First and most importantly, the political integration of diverse locales into a single polity creates dense and multiple connectivities within their boundaries and disconnections across them. Historical empires represented vast domains within which organizational relationships were confined, such as the hierarchical ties of imperial bureaucracies that stretched from the metropolis all the way to the hinterlands (for the Ottoman empire, see Barkey 2008), as well as the personal ties established between dominated populations and missionaries or imperial administrators.

Empires thus certainly constituted an organizationally structured, vertically autonomous field in the Bourdieusian sense (Steinmetz 2008). They established both social ties as well as a communicative arena of mutual observation held together by a shared (elite) language and orientation toward a metropole. A large literature has shown the long-lasting legacies of empire. Much of this legacy works through the collective mentalities and behavioral patterns that diffused during the period of imperial rule (Becker et al. 2016) or through the institutional traditions empires have left (Acemoglu et al. 2011).

Nation-states are even more effective in bundling social ties within their boundaries and limiting imagined communities to their horizon—they represent formidable systems of social closure, in the words of Brubaker (1992) and Wimmer (1996). In the field of cultural production and the circulation of ideas, for example, some authoritarian states exercise a powerful influence over which books are translated into the national language and thus become accessible to the general readership (Sapiro 2016).[13] The theory proposed here is therefore not exclusively concerned with transnational diffusion, as is much of the research in political science and macrosociology, but with "domestic" processes as well. These are usually addressed in entirely different terms and in different corners of the scholarly universe, such as by students of nation building (see Weber 1979; Wimmer 2018).

Economic domains emerge from commodity chains or trade (Smith and White 1992; Zhou, Wu, and Xu 2016). They can be more or less formalized, while political domains are by definition institutionally structured. Globally operating companies such as Walmart or Volkswagen employ millions of

[13] Other politically constructed domains are tribal confederacies (such as the Mongols), traditional states such as Ethiopia before the revolution, or supranational institutions such as the contemporary European Union.

individuals who are connected through hierarchical organizational networks and a shared identity. On the less formal end, networks of Islamic banks, charitable funds, civil society organizations, and businesses form a more loosely structured domain of connectivities and an arena of mutual observation. Again, many economic domains promote diffusion processes that shape cultural, institutional, and behavioral templates in durable ways, as the legacies of the slave trade in West Africa show (Nunn 2008).

Social and religious ties also generate domains. Transnational migrant communities and diasporas can maintain connections between their members through the shared attention to one another, as mediated, for example, through diaspora newspapers or TV stations or frequent travel (Appadurai 1996, chap. 3; Levitt and Schiller 2006; Cohen 2008). Such communities can again support themselves through organizations (such as hometown organizations) or be of a more informal nature. Some diaspora communities have survived for centuries or millennia (the *casus classicus* being the Jews), while others have succumbed to the pressures of assimilation within a generation or two (Patterson 1975). Within diasporic domains, ideas, cultural practices, or institutions travel from countries of origin to the place of settlement. From there, newly acquired, perhaps creolized ideas, practices, and institutions also travel back to the origins, a phenomenon that has been termed "social remittances" (Levitt 1998).

Global social movements (della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Cohen and Rai 2006) and activist networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998) represent another prominently researched social domain within which ideological templates and movement repertoires spread (McAdam and Rucht 1993; Soule 1997; Chabot and Duyvendak 2002; della Porta and Tarrow 2005). Important examples come to mind, such as the conglomerate of contemporary jihadist and Islamist movements or the Free Masons who had developed branches in many Western countries from the 18th century onward and played an important role in the American, Belgian, and Polish independence movements, among others. Recent research shows how cultural templates (or "frames") and organizational strategies can not only diffuse between social movements but spread into the wider population and become part of everyday forms of interpreting reality. An example is the widespread adoption of the term "male chauvinist" originally coined by the feminist movement (Mansbridge and Flaster 2007) or more recently the spread of the idea of "systemic racism" into American society at large.[14]

Historically perhaps even more consequential and durable, religious organizations have established well-defined and vast domains. Some are highly hierarchical and centralized, such as the Catholic Church or the Mourid brotherhood of Senegal and Gambia, while others are only weakly institutionalized

[14] See more generally Polletta and Amenta (2019).

(as was shamanism) or fragmented between different centers (as are Buddhism and Evangelical Christianity). Again, important legacy effects have been noted. For example, democratization is more likely in the Global South if a country was evangelized by Protestant missionaries during the colonial period—a consequence of the high levels of literacy and the dense networks of voluntary associations they helped create (Woodberry 2012).

Four Domain Characteristics

These political, economic, and social mechanisms generate domains of different shapes, which can be described along four dimensions. These characteristics will shape, enable, and constrain diffusion processes, as discussed below. The first dimension is the configuration of power. We find more or less steep *power hierarchies* within domains, giving rise to more or less pronounced center-periphery structures. Most polities have capital cities where the center of power is located. Some commodity chain networks display stark hierarchies of power (Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon 2005). Some social movement networks are dominated by the most well-funded or prestigious organization (Diani 2003) or a sponsoring state (such was the case with the Communist International dominated by the Soviet Union; McDermott and Agnew 1996). Relatedly, domains may be organized around one or several power centers and their respective dependencies, thus displaying a more *polycentric or monocentric structure*. An example for an increasingly polycentric domain is the global city network, as evidenced in the locations of headquarters and branches of major service firms (Liu, Derudder, and Taylor 2014). The Catholic world, an obvious contrast, is highly centralized.

Second, domains distinguish themselves in how they relate to one another. Three aspects need to be discussed here. Some domains are *nested* within other, larger domains. In Europe, strongly structured national domains persist along with the higher-level domain of the European Union, creating what is known as a structure of "multi-level governance" (Hooghe and Marks 2001).[15] Relatedly, domains are more or less *overlapping*. They are rarely mutually exclusive, and the overlap is often considerable, as illustrated by the various economic, social, and political domains that are coextensive with or nested within Western Europe.

Both nestedness and overlap are related to how bounded domains are, that is, the degree to which their boundaries interrupt interdependencies, to come back to Luhmann's formulation. Modern states are more clearly bounded, given the principle of exclusive legal and political sovereignty, compared to the fuzzy and often overlapping boundaries of empires (e.g.,

[15] Empires also displayed a nested character. On how Latin American feminist organizations became increasingly nested into global networks, see Alvarez (2000).

Adelman and Aron 1999). Even clearly bounded domains that do not overlap with or are not nested within other domains rarely represent closed universes, however. They are often connected to other domains through the sparse ties that brokers establish (Gould and Fernandez 1989). This is the emphasis of the "connected histories" approach to global history (see Subrahmanyam 1997), which focuses on rare and comparatively unsystematic but potentially consequential connections such as those between the Portuguese and Mogul empires in the early modern period.

Third, domains distinguish themselves by the *density* of ties within them. In some domains, many actors are connected with many others, perhaps simultaneously through economic, political, and social ties as well as through membership in a shared social category. The modern nation-states of Western Europe constitute such high-density domains. On the other end of the continuum, the actors connected through the Silk Road maintained fewer ties that were almost exclusively of a commercial nature. Domain density is likely related to size: geographically large domains are often thinner, in terms of the number of connections between individuals and organizations, than tiny domains where one often finds a graph with connections between almost all nodes (for the microlevel, see the discussion in Friedkin 1981, pp. 48–50; Faust 2008) and where mutual observation and thus arena characteristics are more common.

Fourth, domains are more or less *institutionalized*, as discussed above. Following up on Buchholz (2016), fully institutionalized global domains are spheres of specialized practices (e.g., law, arts) characterized by their own vision or ideology, distinct from those of lower-level (e.g., national) fields, their own standards of evaluation, and specific globally operating institutions.[16] Nation-states are fully institutionalized, while the domain established by the Silk Road was not.

Political, economic, and social mechanisms should result in different domain characteristics because, on average, the type of actors and thus their goals, strategies, and available resources differ. Political elites in the modern world have state bureaucracies at their disposal, for example, while diasporas do not. Economic actors care about the moral implications of establishing ties only at the margin, while social movements are primarily concerned with these. Social movements try to create alliances with as many congenial actors as possible, while economic actors seek to limit alliances and to monopolize the profits they may generate. Religious organizations typically try to expand their domain as much as possible, while diasporas have no aspirations beyond the circle of coethnics, and so forth.

A first set of hypotheses follows from this intuition. By virtue of the characteristic goals, resources, and strategic dispositions of political actors,

[16] For a similar definition, see Vauchez (2008); less demanding is Sapiro (2013; Sapiro et al. 2018).

political domains are more likely to be institutionalized, monocentric, and hierarchical and to display clearly defined boundaries and high tie density (hypothesis 1, or H1). *Social movements establish domains that are often polycentric* (see Baldassari and Diani 2007), *overlapping, and weakly institutionalized, and the density of ties is low and their boundaries blurry* (hypothesis 2, or H2). *Domains generated by migration processes often show a polycentric structure and are nonhierarchical, weakly institutionalized, and without much overlap with other diasporic domains* (hypothesis 3, or H3). Other hypotheses along these lines could be formulated. These are broad tendencies and average effects, however, as we find considerable variation within domains generated by the same mechanism. The Catholic Church looked more like a state during much of its history, while many historical empires were polycentric and weakly bounded; the Comintern network of movements was highly centralized and bounded; and so forth.

Domains emerge, expand, contract, and eventually disappear according to their own logic—which remains outside of the scope of domain theory. Empires extended and lost domains following a military-economic dynamic. Religious networks spread following different principles, sometimes following the sword and sometimes preceding it, and so do domains that extend through chain migration. The domain concept introduced here is therefore largely descriptive. It charts relationships between individuals and organizations as well as their horizons of observation over time—a moving topography of connectivities and arenas. These coalesce into multiple domains that overlap or drift apart from one another, extend their geographic scopes or reduce them, exist for a generation only or survive for thousands of years.

Figure A1 in the appendix summarizes the three axiomatic assumptions underlying domain theory as well as the three descriptive hypotheses linking domain-generating processes to their characteristics. The figure also indicates the nature of these hypotheses: whether they merely posit the existence of certain empirical characteristics (descriptive hypotheses), make a claim about the co-occurrence of certain features (correlational hypotheses), or seek to establish a causal connection between them (causal hypotheses). Finally, figure A1 summarizes how far these axioms and hypotheses differ from those associated with the other theoretical perspectives discussed above. (Similar summary figures for the following sections appear in the appendix as well and hopefully facilitate the reader's orientation.)

DIFFUSION MECHANISMS AND PROCESSES

Five Mechanisms of Diffusion

It is now time to explore how the four domain characteristics—levels of inequality, boundedness, density, and institutionalization—influence the nature

of the diffusion process: its speed and reach as well as the mechanisms through which it occurs. To identify mechanisms, I rely on a long established tradition in political science and organizational sociology as well as Gabriel de Tarde's theory of imitation.[17]

The first mechanism is *coercion*: the imposition of a policy by powerful national or international institutions that control resources on which subordinate actors depend. Coercion can therefore only operate in a domain with certain structures, giving rise to the following hypothesis: *The more institutionalized and centralized a domain and the steeper its power hierarchies, the more likely there will be diffusion through coercion* (hypothesis 4, or H4). Many empires and nation-states have coerced provincial and local governments to adopt certain organizational structures, bureaucratic routines, and policies. Most modern nation-states have used their school systems, among other institutional devices, to force the adoption of certain understandings of history, the use of national languages, and much more (see again Weber 1979).

The second mechanism is *competition*.[18] Organizations such as dynastic states, social movements, religious orders, or car manufacturers adopt the ideas, routines, bureaucratic structures, and so on, of those organizations that are most efficient within the domain. Competition should be more likely in domains that resemble how economists imagine markets. Putting this into the form of a hypothesis, one can say that *the less hierarchical a domain and the less bounded, the more likely there will be diffusion through competition* (hypothesis 5, or H5). A large literature in marketing research shows how innovations—such as a new type of cellular phone or production technique—spread in competitive markets from consumer to consumer (Peres, Muller, and Mahajan 2010, pp. 98–100) or from firm to firm (Robertson and Gatignon 1986). The competition mechanism also seems to have driven the adoption of new military technology by the dynastic states of early modern Europe, one of the few uncontested facts in the debate about the military revolution (Rogers 2018).

When the third mechanism, *emulation*, is at work, actors adopt a new organizational or cultural template because it conforms to an accepted normative standard. Emulation stands at the core of the sociological branch of diffusion research influenced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), on the one hand, and John Meyer and his students, on the other. Emulation often proceeds through professional organizations and educational institutions, which set the standards of "best practices," which are then propagated throughout

[17] For political science, see the reviews by Simmons et al. (2006), Dobbin et al. (2007), and Gilardi (2012); for sociology, see and Everton and Pfaff (2021).

[18] To be sure, the different mechanisms are not mutually exclusive and can operate simultaneously or subsequently with one another, as shown by Tolbert and Zucker (1983).

a domain (see the literature reviewed in Strang and Soule [1998], 271–72). Emulation depends on a center that has managed to establish a sort of Gramscian hegemony, a set of cultural principles and normative standards that subordinates at least partially embrace. It follows that *the more institutionalized and monocentric a domain and the more legitimate its power center, the more likely there will be diffusion through emulation* (hypothesis 6, or H6).

From the point of view of domain theory, the widespread adoption of Western, liberal, egalitarian principles that world society scholarship has documented so richly might depend on a specific and historically rare domain structure: the hegemonic status that the United States enjoyed from the Second World War until perhaps the 2003 Iraq War made emulating Western legal and institutional principles attractive for political elites outside of the Communist world. Today, that legitimacy is eroding and competing centers—China, Russia, Saudi Arabia—have emerged from which other, certainly modern but not necessarily liberal, democratic, and egalitarian, templates diffuse (see, e.g., Ferguson 2020). World society theory, therefore, may be best suited to understand a particular period of global history—similar perhaps to the hegemony of Rome in the classical world or of the imperial court in the Chinese sphere of influence up until the early 19th century.

The fourth mechanism of diffusion is *learning* (termed "mimetic isomorphism" in DiMaggio and Powell [1991]).[19] In the face of uncertainty (p. 69), organizations observe their peers in order to determine which of the available institutional templates appears to be most effective. In contrast to emulation, learning is based not on the normative legitimacy of a practice but its perceived success or its sheer availability when no one knows how to proceed. In contrast to competition, organizations may learn from one another even if they do not operate within the same markets. This mechanism is emphasized by the literature on policy learning, which shows that countries often copy the perceived successes of their peers, transforming not only social policies but also broader understandings of the root causes of the problem a policy is supposed to address (Elkins and Simmons 2005; Haas 2009).

I hypothesize that *the less bounded and the more nested, overlapping, or polycentric a domain, the more likely there will be diffusion through learning* (hypothesis 7, or H7). Why should this be the case? These domain structures contain many bridging ties: across the boundary of the domain into neighboring domains (through brokerage positions), or between different levels of differentiation, or between various centers of power and their respective peripheries. Bridging ties have been associated, since Burt's (2000, p. 366) seminal article, with increased organizational capacity to learn (see also Phelps,

[19] See Dobbin et al. (2007); for "bounded," nonrational learning, see Weyland (2007).

Heidl, and Wadhwa 2012, pp. 1123–24, 1132). To illustrate, a federal polity such as the United States or the European Union with many clusters of (state-level) political ties connected through fewer bridging ties to the center (Washington or Brussels) should encourage learning processes more than a monocentric, nonnested, and strongly bounded domain such as world Catholicism.

Many cultural ideas and practices spread through individuals, however, rather than organizations. Individuals often copy each other's behavior and start to wear white sneakers, read books about "white privilege," practice "mindfulness meditation," and so on. According to Tarde (1890), such imitation proceeds top-down, from the more powerful and prestigious individuals, classes, and nations (p. 198) to the bottom of the hierarchy. This process is motivated by emotions and desires, most importantly the envy of the more well-to-do and prestigious (p. 201). Quite obviously and as noted by Tarde (p. 367), *the steeper and the more legitimate the prestige hierarchy within a domain, the more likely there will be diffusion through imitation* (hypothesis 8, or H8).

Examples are the bibelots and tchotchkes of bourgeois households in prerevolutionary France, which imitated the antique statues and vases displayed in the villas and gardens of the nobility. Somewhat overlooked by Tarde, subordinates reinterpret and thus transform the diffusing practices and ideas according to their own, already established standards of taste (on bourgeois bibelots, see Charpy [2007]), a theme to which I will return below. It should also be noted that sometimes elites adopt cultural practices from the popular classes—a point emphasized in Sorokin's ([1927] 1959, pp. 549–640) critique of Tarde. A contemporary example would be the adoption of hip-hop by white middle-class youth of the American suburbs. But such "cultural appropriation" does not necessarily diffuse spontaneously from bottom to top, and more often trickles down from cultural elites, after they have adopted a popular item, to the middle classes.[20]

Reach and Speed of Diffusion Processes

The characteristics of a domain influence not only which of the diffusion mechanisms will be most likely to operate but also how fast and far-reaching the process will be. A series of well-known hypotheses can be briefly summarized here. Most of them have been formulated with regard to the individual level, as in research on the spread of innovations, or with regard to organizations. As far as I can tell, these hypotheses await testing at the

[20] In other words, innovations might be adopted or generated first at the bottom or the top of a social hierarchy (see Philipps and Zuckerman 2001) but spread more widely into the middle strata only if elite actors have picked up innovations produced at the bottom.

more macrolevel with which this article is concerned—a challenging task given the difficulty to empirically observe a sufficient number of macrolevel domains to comparatively test these hypotheses.

First, *the more hierarchical and monocentric a domain, the faster and more far-reaching the diffusion of nonrisky innovations. Riskier innovations diffuse slower and reach less far in such domains* (hypothesis 9, or H9; see Valente 1995, pp. 51–54; Claudy, Garcia, and O'Driscoll 2015). Second and as has been discussed widely in many disciplines from physics to sociology under the term "small world phenomenon," *in a multipolar domain with many tight-knit clusters and a few bridging ties between them diffusion is fast and far-reaching, perhaps even assuming the form of a cascade* (hypothesis 10, or H10; for a formal exploration, see Watts 1999*a*).

Third, *the more domains overlap, the faster and more far-reaching diffusion* (hypothesis 11, or H11), because overlap increases the number of conduits along which new templates can spread. For example, cultural exchanges are enhanced if trade networks overlap with a religious domain, as they do in the trans-Saharan exchange networks dominated by Muslim traders (Lydon 2012).

Regarding the boundedness of domains, existing research is somewhat more ambiguous. Many researchers have studied how brokers (both individuals and organizations) serve as conduits for diffusion processes across domains (Tarrow and McAdam 2005; Halliday and Carruthers 2007; Dezaley and Nay 2015).[21] But *diffusion should be faster and more far-reaching within rather than across domains* (hypothesis 12, or H12), if my basic theoretical intuition is correct. This seems to be the case empirically, as shown, for example, by network studies of knowledge diffusion at both the individual and organizational levels: network density is positively associated with the speed and reach of adoption (Phelps et al. 2012, pp. 1123–24, 1132). For the same reasons, *the higher the density of ties within a domain, the faster and more far-reaching the diffusion* (hypothesis 13, or H13), as many network diffusion scholars have argued (with regard to knowledge transfer, see the summary by Phelps et al. [2012], pp. 1123–24, 1132).

Finally, *the more institutionalized a domain, the faster and more far-reaching the diffusion* (hypothesis 14, or H14), for the following two reasons: First, thanks to a shared (even if contested) standard of evaluation, individuals and organizations can agree which cultural ideas or institutional innovations are worth noticing and adopting (on consensus as diffusion enhancing, see Rowan [1982]). And second, fields are held together by an institutional infrastructure, such as the Documenta shows in the visual arts,

[21] See also in the field of comparative literature Even-Zohar (1978).

the Nobel Prize in the hard sciences, or Apple in the domain of consumer technology. These institutions can broadcast information, ideas, and products and thus prepare the ground for widespread adoption (for a comparative case study, see Cole [1985]). Figure A2 summarizes the main propositions made in this section and outlines how they relate to other theories of global diffusion.

LOCAL ADAPTATION AND INCORPORATION

So far, I have analyzed, at the level of entire domains, the dynamics that might lead some organizations or a group of individuals to adopt a new cultural or institutional form. At the local level, these early adopters compete with other organizations and groups for power, recognition, and rewards. We now need to ask under which conditions these other actors will adopt the new forms as well, such that they become part, eventually and perhaps after generations, of the taken-for-granted ways to think and behave.[22]

I suggest paying attention to two factors: the intrinsic characteristics of a template that make it more attractive to adopt as well as the local configurations of power that moderate—suppress, allow, or encourage—the five diffusion mechanisms discussed above. Local power configurations vary independently of the structural features of the domains that encompass them, as stated in A3. For example, who represents the politically dominant group may differ from village to village and from city to city across the regions of a polity.

Three Aspects of Power Dynamics

The first step in the analysis of power configurations is to determine whether early adopters are at all motivated to spread the new cultural or institutional template—or whether on the contrary, they attempt to monopolize its use and prevent others from enjoying its advantages. From Veblen ([1899] 1992) to Bourdieu (1984) and beyond, many sociologists of consumption have observed that cultural and economic elites acquire new ways for displaying their wealth (Veblen's emphasis) or refined taste (Bourdieu's interpretation) to set themselves apart from the poor and unsophisticated masses and thus to cement status differences (see Ridgeway 2014). Widespread adoption would obviously undermine these distinction gains.

This is how cricket, recently imported from England, was treated in the United States and in Canada during the 19th century: as a gentleman's sport that should remain reserved for the cultured upper classes (Kaufman

[22] See the classic two-step model of opinion formation formulated by Lazarsfeld, Gaudet, and Berelson (1965).

and Patterson 2005).[23] Successful monopolization, in other words, puts a break on the competition, emulation, learning, and imitation mechanisms discussed above and prevents, at least temporarily, the further diffusion of a new cultural idea or organizational template.

In other cases, early adopters are keen on further diffusion, for a variety of reasons: it may be more efficient to communicate with individuals or organizations who display the same taste or organizational routine ("network externalities" in the language of economists); it may bring prestige to have been the first who saw the light of progress before others did; or it may simply be profitable if a new product is bought by everyone (see, e.g., Illouz and John 2003). In other words and somewhat trivially, *the more early adopters promote a new cultural or institutional template and the less they try to monopolize it, the more likely it will be locally adopted* (hypothesis 15, or H15).

To illustrate, in former British colonies that were not settler societies like the United States and Canada, colonial elites were actively spreading the use of cricket as they felt secure in their social and political position and saw encouraging the sport as part of their mission to spread British "civilization" to the conquered populations (Kaufman and Patterson 2005). This in turn legitimized the colonial endeavor and thus the political and social standing of these elites.

The second element of this analysis is to understand how power hierarchies influence whether nonelite groups and organizations seek to adopt the new template. I start with the simple axiom that individuals and organizations embrace new cultural or institutional templates that foster what they perceive to be their interests—whether these relate to gaining or maintaining political power, normative legitimacy, social prestige, self-esteem, or economic resources. Individuals with better education, for example, will find the idea of meritocracy more appealing and will likely adopt it (Duru-Bellat and Tenret 2012).

As the example illustrates, individual interests are related to the position actors occupy in the distribution of political power, social status, economic resources, or cultural capital. It follows that the configuration of power determines whether an overlap of interests between early adopters and other actors emerges. To be sure, these interests may be heterogeneous: actors may adopt a new template to gain status (as in the imitation mechanism), outdo competitors, do the right thing (emulation), or learn from what seems to work for others. A straightforward hypothesis is derived from these assumptions: *The steeper the inequalities in power, prestige, and resources and the less legitimate these are perceived, the less likely a new institutional*

[23] In the world of capitalism, many companies fiercely guard an innovation they have adopted (or invented) from spreading to their competitors, trying to establish a monopoly (see Murphy 1988).

or cultural template will be locally adopted (hypothesis 16, or H16) because the more difficult it will be to establish a zone of overlapping interests within which the new template can diffuse. H16 can also be further specified for the case of coercion, which evidently depends on a well-established power hierarchy. *Local adoption will remain superficial ("decoupled") or actively resisted if the new template is coerced on subordinates and if individuals have no interest in adopting it other than to avoid punishment* (hypothesis 17, or H17).

Third, the nature of the local configuration of power also explains how a new cultural or organizational element is reinterpreted and transformed if it is locally adopted. For example, Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb (2002) studied the diffusion of market-based (or "neoliberal") reforms across countries. In Mexico and France, the corporatist power structure, in which the state mediates between capital and labor, prevented a shift in the balance of power in the face of globalizing pressures. Neoliberalism therefore came to mean a project of state-guided market liberalization. In Chile and Britain, the lack of corporatist structures allowed advocates of total reform to capture the state and lead a "monetarist" revolution that dismantled much of the existing Keynesian institutions. Generalizing from this example, we can hypothesize that *a new institutional template will be locally reinterpreted in line with the perspectives and interests of actors who conjointly hold veto power over policy decisions* (hypothesis 18, or H18).

This hypothesis obviously does not hold for those individual practices and ideas that are not subject to collective decision making—such as privately embracing the ideal of gender equality or watching the YouTube video "Gangnam Style." The degree to which a template diffuses therefore also depends on whether it contains institutional elements that need to be agreed on by veto players. Accordingly, *institutions are less likely to be adopted locally than ideas* (hypothesis 19, or H19). Similarly, *revolutionary ideas and institutions, which demand a restructuring of local configurations of power, are less likely to be adopted locally* (hypothesis 20, or H20; Fourcade 2006, p. 155) because they will mobilize resistance by those who fear losing out in the process. Democracy, for example, should be more difficult to spread in autocracies than the idea of mindfulness. Conversely, new templates that imply or demand a change in the balance of power are often adopted in the wake of a dramatic shift in that balance of power, such as in the aftermath of revolutions.

Three Elements of the Diffusibility of Templates

As these last two hypotheses already indicate, local incorporation is also influenced by the characteristics of the templates themselves that make them easier or more attractive to adopt for a wider range of actors—a fact that is

neglected by most of the theories discussed above.[24] We first have to take the intrinsic *advantageousness* of a template into account, which was often emphasized by the pioneers of diffusion research (see Rogers 1995, chap. 6) and continues to be researched in economics and marketing research (e.g., Geroski 2000). To put it simply, *the more advantageous a new cultural or institutional template compared to existing templates, the more likely it will be locally adopted* (hypothesis 21, or H21).

For example, the metric system is easier to use, given the limited mathematical capacities of the average human, than the imperial system or other traditional measures derived from agricultural or crafts units. It takes a massive amount of organized resistance (on Britain, see Velkar 2018) to create exceptions to the rule of universal adoption of the metric system. Superior technologies certainly do not crowd out inferior ones automatically—as shown by the large literature on the path-dependent reasons why better technologies fail to spread (Arthur 1994). But intrinsic advantageousness is nevertheless an important component of diffusion processes that sociologists, who like to emphasize the socially "constructed" nature of everything, should not ignore.

Second, cultural sociologists have explored the *cultural characteristics* that help an object to diffuse beyond the circles of initial adopters.[25] According to Molnár, "it is the capacity to trigger multiple (but not arbitrary) meanings that endows cultural objects, ideas, and knowledge with the power to channel international influences into local context" (2005, p. 115). To illustrate, nationalism represents one of the most widely adopted ideologies of the modern age and at the same time one of its most poorly elaborated. This might have contributed to its global success, as nationalism can easily be combined with a variety of other, more elaborated political ideologies (Freeden 1998) such as communism, anti-imperialism, nativism, fascism, liberalism, and so on. *The more polysemantic a cultural or institutional template*, in other words, *the more likely it will be locally adopted* (hypothesis 22, or H22).[26]

Third, we also have to take into account that individuals—leaving early adopters on the side—are on average conservative and shy away from the cognitive, emotional, informational, and behavioral costs of adopting a new cultural or organizational template. A range of authors, from early diffusion scholars (Rogers 1995, pp. 240–56) to more recent cultural sociologist and

[24] Tarde (1890, p. 141) called these "logical" forms of imitation and dedicated an entire chapter to it, mostly relying on examples from linguistics.

[25] Griswold (1987) shows that novels with certain artistic qualities (with "cultural power") tend to be more successful than others. On the adaptability (and thus diffusibility) of neoclassical economic theory, see Fourcade (2006).

[26] Students of social movements speak, in a similar context, of "modularity" (see Tarrow 1998, 2013).

from organizational sociologists (Strang and Soule 1998, pp. 276–79) to international relations scholars (Cortell and Davis 2000, pp. 73–76), have therefore argued that *the more compatible a new cultural or institutional template with already established templates, the more likely it will be locally adopted* (hypothesis 23, or H23). Guillén (1994), for example, demonstrated that the nature of collective mentalities—Catholic versus Protestant, liberal humanist versus modernist technocratic—had a profound influence on whether and how major models of organizational management were adopted by companies in Germany, Spain, the United States, and Great Britain.[27]

The idea of cultural compatibility is somewhat in tension with the argument that creative entrepreneurs can adapt new templates to fit almost any local cultural context, as emphasized by a prominent strand of research (see Robertson 1992; Czarniawska and Sevon 1996; Amitav 2004; Levitt and Merry 2009). Cultural and political elites who are interested in further diffusing a new template, so the argument goes, can always craft a new, more acceptable version by tailoring it to the taste of the local population. Mao Zedong, for example, blended Soviet Communism with rhetorical, ritual, and literary elements of the established canons of Chinese culture, thus encouraging the peasant masses to embrace the new ideology (Perry 2012).[28]

Cultural compatibility is therefore a matter of degree. At one end of the spectrum, not much creative reinterpretation is needed because the cultural environment is receptive—such as when a new scientific theory spreads among a global community of scholars. On the other end, even the most creative adaptations will have little chance of winning many followers if individuals find a new idea shocking, repulsive, or simply incomprehensible, however it is packaged. Repeated attempts to convert Japanese Zen Buddhists to Christianity may have failed, among other reasons, because the concept of sin is rather implausible from a Buddhist point of view.[29] As before, I summarize the main hypotheses, both descriptive and causal, presented in this section in a figure (fig. A3).

FOUR CONSEQUENCES

Having concluded the argument about why, how, and to what extent diffusion and local incorporation occurs, I now turn to the cumulative, aggregate consequences of diffusion for the local, regional, and global levels—a topic rarely addressed by diffusion scholars. Most of these consequences are

[27] World society scholars have come to acknowledge this point as well (Wotipka and Ramirez 2007; Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015).

[28] Other examples are analyzed by Snow (1993), Alvarez (2000), Saguy (2000), Amitav (2004), and Cho (2009).

[29] From a Christian point of view, see the analysis of Lee (2014).

derived from two of the axiomatic assumptions of domain theory: from the idea of multiple, overlapping domains and from the principle that local configurations of power vary within them.

Historical Consequences: Indigenization

The first long-term consequence of diffusion is indigenization: it ceases to be associated with a foreign origin. I hypothesize that *the more widespread the local adoption of a new cultural or institutional template, the sooner its foreign origins will be forgotten* (hypothesis 24, or H24). Because if everyone within the local society has adopted a practice, it no longer serves to distinguish between the avant-garde and the laggers, or those prone to foreign influence and those defending the ways of the ancestors, or the faddish and the traditional. Over time, the diffused template may even become a diacritical element used to characterize the particularity and uniqueness of the local society. For example, almost all Western European countries point at the rule of law, gender equality, and democracy as core elements of their national traditions that need to be defended against domestic and foreign challengers[30]—conveniently forgetting that most of these ideals and institutions were imported during the 19th century into feudal, patriarchal, and autocratic societies.

Local Consequences: Layered Cultural Complexity

A second long-term consequence of diffusion is its path-dependent recursivity. As argued above (H23), already taken-for-granted cultural and organizational patterns shape how new elements are interpreted and adapted. From a long-term historical point of view, most of these established patterns are themselves residues of previous waves of diffusion—even if their foreign origins are often forgotten. In other words, the results of past diffusion shape the possibilities of future diffusion by defining the range of culturally compatible templates. Historical institutionalists have called this process of path-dependent, cumulative change "layering" (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Formulating this as a hypothesis, I suggest that *a new cultural or institutional template will be more likely adopted if previous diffusion processes have left a legacy of compatible cultural and institutional templates* (hypothesis 25, or H25, a further specification of H23).

This has a third consequence. Because domains overlap with one another and because local power configurations vary within domains, every locale is characterized by a specific combination of elements from past processes of

[30] See the recent debates about a German "Leitkultur" and the similar debate about "Britishness" in the United Kingdom.

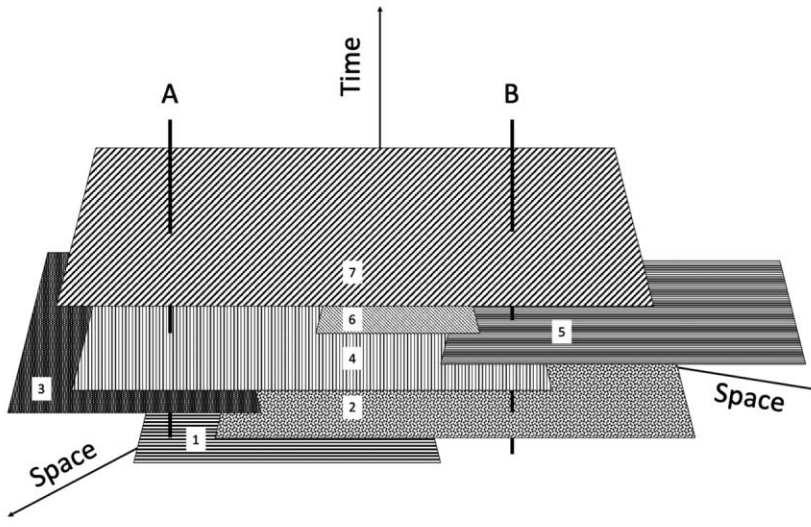

FIG. 1.—Layered complexity

diffusion. These specific combinations shape the outcome of future diffusion through the mechanism of cultural and institutional compatibility, thus leading to further differentiation of local cultural and institutional ecologies. As a result, *every locale is characterized by a unique set of templates* (hypothesis 26, or H26). Taking a long-term historical point of view, we therefore see a local system of layered complexity, not unlike in archeological excavations or geological formations.[31] If the historian of cultural and institutional forms drilled a hole, as it were, from the most recent to the older sediments of diffusion, she would discover a series of strata, each subsequent stratum being shaped (through path-dependent reinterpretation) by the older ones (see fig. 1). To illustrate, local society A was shaped by diffusion waves 1 (related to the domain established by the Roman empire), 3 (connected to the Silk Road), 4 (a now defunct dynastic state), and 7 (a contemporary nation-state), while B adopted elements from waves 2 (the migration of Norman tribes), 4 (the same dynastic state as for A), 5 (another such state), and 7 (the same contemporary nation-state as A). The local versions of wave 4 elements, although common to A and B, differ from one another, as they were adapted to the residues from waves 1 and 3 in the case of A, while they were shaped by the results from wave 2 in the case of B.

We thus come back to the first axiom of domain theory. Seen from a long-term historical vantage point, diffusion is not a rare exception to the regular

[31] See also the "sedimentation" of past experiences in the form of collective memory in Berger and Luckman (1966), pp. 85–89.

state of affairs—the stable equilibrium of a bounded society à la Durkheim—but the rule of how cultural and institutional templates are assembled into local configurations over generations and centuries.

Regional Consequences: Polythetic Cultural Areas

As discussed above, cultural and institutional templates are more likely to diffuse widely in overlapping (H11), bounded (H12), dense (H13), and institutionally fully developed (H14) domains. We could call such domains "consolidated." They generate areas of similarity where many similar cultural and organizational themes are found in their local variations. Or stated as a hypothesis: *the more overlapping, bounded, dense, and institutionalized a domain, the more similar local institutional and cultural templates and the more clearly identifiable the area of cultural similarity generated by the domain* (hypothesis 27, or H27). However, since domains overlap only partially (following A2) and since local incorporation varies within domains (a consequence of A3), *areas of cultural and institutional similarity also overlap only partly* (hypothesis 28, or H28). Membership in cultural areas is therefore best considered a matter of degree, as in fuzzy set theory (see Ragin 2000), rather than principle. In the language of biology, *cultural areas are polythetic: members of an area will share many cultural and organizational features with some other members, but no single feature characterizes all members* (hypothesis 29, or H29), as is the case in monothetic, common-feature taxonomies.[32]

Diffusionist anthropologists assumed a similar perspective during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, albeit often in a rather blurry way (see, e.g., on Froebenius, Marchand [1997]). Perhaps it is time to revitalize the theoretical perspective that the early diffusionists assumed—although certainly without relying on their more problematic theoretical ideas and research practices. Today, two other approaches to cultural areas are popular among social scientists. They are largely descriptive and thus differ from the generative approach of multiple domain theory. In sociology, Inglehart et al. (2014) established a major global survey enterprise (the World Values Survey) to identify populations that hold on to similar norms. Using these surveys, they identify a series of mutually exclusive zones of cultural commonality, such as Latin America, Protestant Europe, the African-Islamic area, or Orthodox Christian Eastern Europe. In political science, Huntington (1993) famously identified a number of mutually exclusive civilizations—again defined on the basis of shared religion and geographic proximity—that were competing with one another for global power after the East-West confrontation of the Cold War had ended.

[32] This terminology was subsequently adopted by anthropologists (see Needham 1975).

From the point of view of domain theory, these two attempts to identify cultural areas suffer from an overly simple understanding of cultural similarity and difference and largely disregard the multiple longer-term forces of diffusion that generated them. Rather than a series of mutually exclusive blocks, we need to imagine a range of cultural areas, generated by past and contemporary domains, that are stacked on one another, from regional clusters to transcontinental spheres (see again fig. 1). To know what overall patterns of similarity and difference result from these overlapping cultural areas, an inductive procedure would therefore be more appropriate in order to avoid forcing the empirical pattern into the commonsense categories of creed and continent.

Global Consequences: A Rhizomatic Diffusion Network

To explore the global consequences of diffusion processes, we can map the chains of diffusion made up of dyads of actors who influenced one another. Three hypotheses will be offered. First, if there are multiple, partly overlapping domains (in line with A2), *the global diffusion network should have multiple channels originating in different centers* (hypothesis 30, or H30). Seen in the aggregate, this network will therefore display a polystenopoid pattern (from the Greek word for pathway: *stenōpó*). To illustrate, actor A in figure 2 adopted a new cultural template in domain 1 from B, while A also

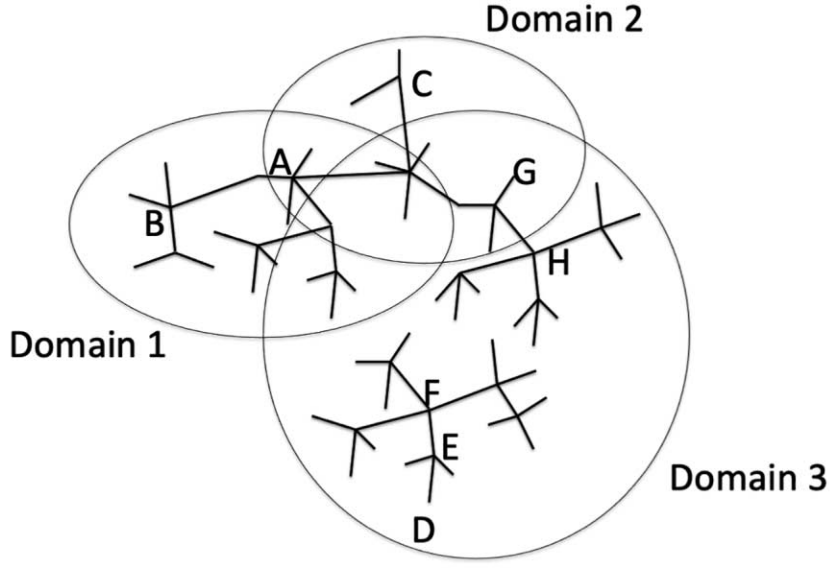

FIG. 2.—Diffusion in overlapping domains

adopted an organizational template from C in domain 2. For example, Switzerland got the idea of equal citizenship from France but its bicameral parliament from the United States. There should therefore be only a few routes through which multiple items from the same source "traveled" to the same destinations. In other words, the global system of adoption should not resemble a network of highways taken by many different diffusing objects but instead a collection of crisscrossing country roads with only a few objects traveling on each of them.

Second, since diffusion sometimes occurs in chains—D got an idea from E, who in turn was inspired by F—and in overlapping domains, *the diffusion network should display a rhizomatic structure, that is, a pattern in which many places are connected to many others* (hypothesis 31, or H31; see Deleuze and Guattari 1987; contra the tree metaphor of diffusion used by Moretti [2000]). Third, since many domains are organized around multiple centers, cultural ideas and organizational templates can diffuse simultaneously from different origins and in separate (or only loosely linked) networks of adopters: D was inspired by E, but G got a similar idea from H. Many anti-imperial forces of the 19th century looked to the French Revolution as a model, but in the Middle East of the 20th century, German romantic nationalism had many followers among anticolonial intellectuals and politicians. This should again contribute to the polystenopoid and rhizomatic character of global diffusion chains (H29 and H30).

Contemporary research on policy diffusion is not meant to capture these aggregate characteristics of diffusion networks, as it focuses on a single diffusing element in one domain (as noted by Strang and Soule 1998, p. 285). More attention to the overall diffusion pattern is given in network diffusion research (more recently in computational social science or artificial intelligence research), which seeks to understand how network structures influence the speed and reach of diffusion processes (Valente 1995; Cowan and Jonard 2004). Little has been done, however, to explore the aggregate diffusion networks that result from multiple, simultaneous processes of adoption on a global scale. Recent work by Bail, Taylor, and Wimmer (2018) reaches for such a perspective. They analyzed how Google search terms diffuse between country populations around the world and indeed find a polystenopoid and rhizomatic structure, in line with the argument outlined here. Figure A4 summarizes the hypotheses, most of them of a descriptive nature, about the aggregated and long-term consequences of diffusion.

CONCLUSION

The main conceptual tools are now outlined: multiple more or less overlapping, institutionalized, and hierarchical domains that influence which mechanisms of diffusion operate within them and how widely a diffusing element

is initially adopted; the conditions for further diffusion within a local society and the transformation of diffusing elements, both structured by local configurations of power; the layered cultural and institutional complexity that results from the accumulation of diffusion processes over time and that gives each locale a unique, specific cultural and institutional character; the polythetic cultural areas that emerge at the regional level as a result of overlapping domains; and the macropattern of diffusion chains that overlapping domains produce at the global level. Figure 3 offers an overview of the main elements of this theory.

Obviously, it does not cover all aspects of the diffusion process. It does not seek to explain which type of domain-generating mechanism will be at work, for example, when and where empires come into being. It also does not incorporate a theory of innovation. Where newly diffusing templates come from is thus left to another body of scholarship. Relatedly, the theory does not incorporate much individual agency as a source of variation but has a rather structuralist and macro-oriented bent. Finally, it does not elaborate on possible feedback mechanisms, for example, how the establishment of cultural areas may stabilize the domains that generated them in the first place.

Now that all its elements are on the table, let me compare domain theory with some of the alternative theoretical programs in order to highlight their paradigmatic differences and the advantages, in terms of explanatory depth and breadth, that domain theory offers. I do so with the help of a macropolitical example of diffusion, with which I am familiar from my own previous research: How do or would researchers working within these different paradigms empirically analyze the global rise of the nation-state over the past two centuries?

From the point of view of world society theory, the nation-state template forms a crucial part of the world culture that emerged over the past 200 years and eventually became institutionalized in the League of Nations and the United Nations. This world culture gradually forced state elites and political challengers alike to adopt nationalism as the standard template of political legitimacy and the nation-state as the organizational model of statehood (Meyer et al. 1997), replacing empires, tribes, and dynastic kingdoms. From a cross-sectional point of view, world society theory predicts that the more local elites are exposed to world culture, for example, as measured by the local presence of international NGOs (Li and Hicks 2016), the more likely they will eventually create a nation-state. Over time, the likelihood of additional transitions to the nation-state in the world should increase the larger the number of territories that have already made that transition, further contributing to the normative power and appeal of the nation-state model (Strang 1990).

From the point of view of domain theory, the process looks rather more complex and needs to be analyzed in three steps. First, nationalism as a new

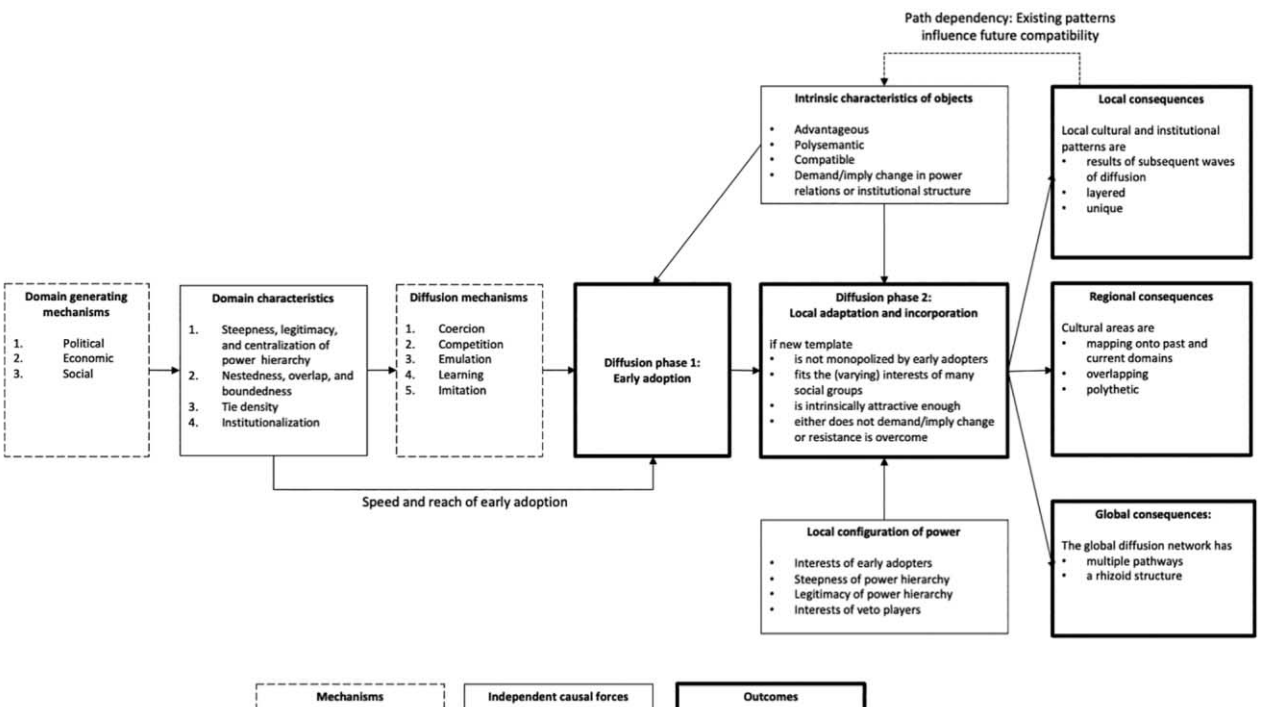

FIG. 3.—Theory of diffusion and its consequences

template of legitimacy spreads within multiple domains (according to A2). In the 19th and 20th centuries, these domains were constituted by empires (British, French, Ottoman, Habsburg, etc.), rather than encompassing all of humanity, as in world society theory. Nationalism is adopted by local elites not so much because of its alignment with world cultural models but because of its polysemantic nature (H22) as well as the intrinsic advantages that the nation-state template promises to average subjects (following H21): equality before the law, public goods provision for the masses, and the dignity of belonging to a chosen people. Nationalism will diffuse faster and more completely in domains characterized by a high density of ties (H13) or high levels of institutionalization (H14; as in the network of Communist parties during the Comintern) or with a multipolar structure characterized by many tight-knit clusters and bridging ties between them (H10).

Second, whether the template spreads beyond early nationalists and is adopted by the local population as well depends on the local configuration of power. It is more likely if nationalist pioneers and the wider population share a common political fate and less likely, conversely, if nationalists belong to a distinct and detached power elite (H16). Since the nation-state model implies a complete overturn of dynastic or imperial power structures (H20), nationalists need to overcome the resistance of the colonial or dynastic regime. They are more likely to succeed if the balance of power tilts radically in their favor: if the imperial center is weakened by war or has lost global power to competitors, if nationalists have time and resources to mobilize followers, and so on.

Third, a domain theoretic account would pay attention to how already established institutional templates and ideas shape the diffusion process. Nationalism will take root more quickly and develop into a more powerful political movement if a colonial territory looks back on a long history of independent statehood before the Western or Japanese colonizers arrived (H23). And following the idea of layered complexity, how the nation-state model is adopted, once nationalist have won the battle against the old regime, and with what consequences (e.g., for levels of state capacity and thus "decoupling") will depend on this history of precolonial statehood as well (H25; for evidence, see Wimmer 2018, chap. 5).

From the point of view of policy diffusion research, the world represents a set of dyadic relationships between metropoles and imperial dependencies. The nation-state model diffuses within this matrix of dyads depending on the density of ties: colonies that trade with one another, are politically linked through membership in the same empire, host local chapters of the same global social movement (such as a communist party), contain the same ethnic or religious communities, or are geographically adjacent are more likely to influence one another and adopt the nation-state model. The researcher would then determine, from the shape of the diffusion curve or from

a series of well-chosen case studies, which diffusion mechanism is at play: Was the nation-state model coerced on the world by a global hegemon, perhaps by the United States after Wilson declared, at the end of World War I, his 14 point plan containing the right to national self-determination or perhaps later by the United Nations (Strang 1990)? Or did diffusion proceed through a process of normative emulation à la John Meyer? Or perhaps the European powers learned from one another after the Second World War that getting rid of the colonies and the responsibility to care of their populations turns out to be economically beneficial?

Global field theory (see Go 2008) would start with the rules of global politics during the long 19th century. The field was composed of heterogeneous actors, most importantly the elites of Western nation-states and the indigenous elites of colonial states. The dominant rules—widely taken for granted and acknowledged even by colonial subjects—assumed that the "civilizationally superior" Western states could conquer and subsequently educate and "uplift" the less civilized peoples around the world. The field was characterized by intense competition between Western powers for colonial domains, mostly for geopolitical, strategic reasons but also because colonies brought prestige (or "symbolic capital" in Bourdieusian language) to the metropoles, displayed, for example, in the colonial exhibitions held regularly in Western metropoles until the late 1930s. This explains the scramble for establishing overseas colonies by newcomers to the colonial game, such as recently unified Italy and Germany and newly modernized Japan.

These taken-for-granted assumptions of field participants (the *doxa*, as Bourdieu would say) were soon questioned by the subordinate elites of the colonial states, however. They started to apply the doctrine of national sovereignty to themselves, claiming that they had made enough civilizational progress to be put on equal political footing with the European nations. Anticolonial nationalism became the new *doxa* after the Second World War because the global political field was restructured through the Cold War: the Soviet Union, in order to undermine Western global power, embraced anticolonial nationalism more fully and started to support a number of national liberation movements. The United States could no longer afford to back the European colonial enterprise, as it had done after the Second World War (Go 2008), because this would have risked losing its moral and political standing in the Global South. Out of this logic of competition between dominant field actors, therefore, national sovereignty was born as the new standard for defining membership in the field, and a series of declarations of independence followed from the late fifties onward.

As these short paragraphs make clear, the different theoretical traditions are not entirely mutually exclusive, and they complement one another by highlighting different aspects of the overall historical process. Yet, some of the arguments and empirical expectations stand in stark contrast to

one another. For example, domain theory sees the eventual dominance of the nation-state model as a consequence of diffusion processes within empires, while world society theory and global field theory situate the process at the global level.

This is not the place to adjudicate empirically between the varying hypotheses that these different theoretical accounts generate (see Strang 1990, 1991; Roeder 2007; Wimmer and Feinstein 2010, 2016; Li and Hicks 2016). The point of this exercise was to elucidate how the theoretical approaches differ in the way they approach a concrete empirical example and to show that in terms of comprehensiveness, precision, and scope, domain theory offers some advantages over other theoretical approaches. Only world society theory and domain theory offer an explicit explanation of why the nation-state model and not some other model was widely adopted (due to its intrinsic advantages in domain theory and its conformity with world cultural models in world society theory). Domain theory's predictions as to why this model was adopted here and not there are more precise because of the multilevel nature of the theory and the explicit modeling of local power processes that this allows (absent from all other approaches). In contrast to all other approaches, its focus on variation in domain structures adds an important element to our understanding of how widespread diffusion will be. Its understanding of diffusion processes is enriched by attention to long-term legacy effects of previous waves of diffusion that shape future diffusion processes—a perspective absent from the other theoretical approaches.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the various figures in the appendix. They compared the roughly 30 hypotheses generated by domain theory with the equivalent arguments derived from other theoretical accounts. Many of the domain theoretic hypotheses are new and entirely untested, others have been formulated with regard to the microlevel and have not been scaled up, and others have been derived from case studies and await further testing.

To make use of this conceptual apparatus for more focused empirical research, several strategies come to mind. One could start with domains as units of observation and test whether their characteristics influence the speed and reach of diffusion as well as the mechanisms through which it occurs. Another possibility is to study a particular place and investigate how its participation in various domains, over the long run, has shaped its unique cultural and institutional characteristics. Alternatively, the focus could be on a sample of templates to explore whether their intrinsic characteristics help to explain whether they diffused and how widely. Finally, we could study a very large number of locales and see how local power configurations, already established templates, and participation in various domains shape how and what kind of adoption processes will be observed over the long run.

I conclude by noting some limitations of the theoretical architecture. It certainly errs on the side of complexity, rather than parsimony, because

of its processual, multilevel, and historical nature: different factors and mechanisms come to the fore during different phases of the overall process and at the level of domains or local societies. The theory is therefore unapologetically nonreductionist: diffusion is not all about the golden variable X or master mechanism Y but involves a range of factors and processes. To be sure, some trimming of the theoretical tree might be possible. I could imagine, for example, reducing the range of mechanisms of diffusion to those actually observed most frequently or eliminating those domain characteristics from consideration that do not have any demonstrable consequences. It is thus very much a theory awaiting systematic empirical testing and further reformulation.

APPENDIX

Diffusion shapes cultural and institutional developments around the world and throughout history (A1).	Axiomatic assumption	Contrast with Durkheimian traditions in the social sciences that perceive diffusion as the exception to the rule of stable, integrated, culturally coherent societies.
The world is poly-centric, divided into multiple domains that only partly overlap (A2).	Axiomatic assumption	Contrasts with world society theory that conceives the world as a unified cultural sphere
Local configurations of power vary within domains (A3).	Axiomatic assumption	Variation in local power dynamics are not a systematic part of world society theory or mainstream policy diffusion scholarship.
Political processes establish domains that are institutionalized, monocentric, hierarchical, and with clearly defined boundaries and high tie density (H1).	Correlational hypothesis	With the exception of some accounts of globalization, other theories do not systematically discuss how different mechanisms give rise to different overall network characteristics
Social movements establish domains that are polycentric, overlapping, weakly institutionalized, with low tie density, and without clearly defined boundaries (H2).	Correlational hypothesis	
Migration establishes domains that are polycentric, non-hierarchical, weakly institutionalized, and without much overlap with other diaspora domains (H3).	Correlational hypothesis	

FIG. A1.—Domain-generating processes and domain structures

The more institutionalized and centralized a domain and the steeper its power hierarchies, the more likely there will be diffusion through coercion (H4).	Causal hypothesis	Other theories do not link the characteristics of diffusion networks to the mechanisms observed
The less hierarchical a domain and the less bounded, the more likely there will be diffusion through competition (H5).	Causal hypothesis	
The more institutionalized and monocentric a domain and the more legitimate its power center, the more likely there will be diffusion through emulation (H6).	Causal hypothesis	
The less bounded, the more nested, overlapping, or polycentric a domain, the more likely there will be diffusion through learning (H7).	Causal hypothesis	
The steeper and the more legitimate the prestige hierarchy within a domain, the more likely there will be diffusion through imitation (H8).	Causal hypothesis	
The more hierarchical and monocentric a domain, the faster and more far-reaching the diffusion of non-risky innovations. Riskier innovations diffuse slower and less far-reaching in such domains (H9).	Causal hypothesis	These arguments are derived from the literature on the individual adoption of innovation within a single population. They have not been applied to diffusion at the macro level.
In multipolar domains with many tightly knitted clusters and few bridging ties between them, diffusion is fast and far reaching, assuming the form of cascades (H10).	Causal hypothesis	
The more domains overlap, the faster and more far-reaching diffusion (H11).	Causal hypothesis	
Diffusion is faster and more far-reaching within domains rather than across domains (H12).	Causal hypothesis	
The higher the density of ties within a domain, the faster and more far-reaching diffusion (H13).	Causal hypothesis	
The more institutionalized a domain, the faster and more far-reaching diffusion (H14).	Causal hypothesis	

FIG. A2.—Domain structures and diffusion mechanisms/processes

The more early adopters promote a new cultural or institutional template and the less they try to monopolize it, the more likely it will be locally adopted (H15). This is the case if it is more efficient to communicate with other actors who have adopted the same template, or if it brings prestige to early adopters to be followed by others, or if it is economically profitable for early adopters if the new template spreads further.	Causal hypothesis	Contrasts with world society theory and mainstream policy diffusion studies, in which local power dynamics remain neglected or under-theorized.
The steeper inequalities in power, prestige, and resources and the less legitimate these are perceived, the less likely a new institutional or cultural template will be locally adopted (H16).	Causal hypothesis	
H16 can be further specified: Local adoption will remain superficial ("decoupled") or actively resisted if the new template is coerced upon subordinates and if individuals have no interest in adopting it other than to avoid punishment (H17)	Causal hypothesis	
A new institutional template will be locally re-interpreted in line with the perspectives and interests of actors that conjointly hold veto power over a policy decision (H18).	Descriptive hypothesis	
Institutions should be less likely adopted locally than ideas (H19)	Descriptive hypothesis	
The less a new cultural or institutional template demands or implies a change in local power configurations, the more likely it will be locally adopted (H20)	Causal hypothesis	
The more advantageous a new cultural or institutional template compared to existing templates, the more likely it will be locally adopted (H21)	Causal hypothesis	Contrasts with most diffusion theories that • de-emphasize intrinsic advantages (as in much of sociology) • do not play much attention to the characteristics of diffusing objects (as in mainstream policy diffusion research) • or only focus on compatibility with word society templates (as in world society theory)
The more polysemantic a cultural or institutional template, the more likely it will be locally adopted (H22).	Causal hypothesis	
The more compatible a new cultural or institutional template with already established templates, the more likely it will be locally adopted (H23).	Causal hypothesis	Widely acknowledged by different theoretical traditions

FIG. A3.—Conditions for local adoption

The more widespread the local adoption of a new cultural or institutional template, the sooner its foreign origins will be forgotten (H24).	Causal hypothesis	Most existing diffusion research • focuses on recent diffusion where foreign origins are still remembered • do not conceive of diffusion as a cumulative process with multiple items diffusing simultaneously • do not look at the aggregate, long-term cultural and institutional consequences of subsequent waves of diffusion of multiple templates • does not study the aggregate, global network of adoption of multiple templates.
A new cultural or institutional template will be more likely adopted if previous diffusion processes have left a legacy of compatible cultural and institutional templates (H25).	Causal hypothesis	
Every locale is characterized by a unique set of templates (H26).	Descriptive hypothesis	
The more overlapping, bounded, dense, and institutionalized a domain, the more similar local institutional and cultural templates and the more clearly identifiable the area of cultural similarity generated by the domain (H27)	Causal hypothesis	
Areas of cultural and institutional similarity overlap only partly (H28).	Descriptive hypothesis	
Cultural areas are polythetic: members of an area will share many cultural and organizational features with some other members, but no single feature characterizes all members (H29).	Descriptive hypothesis	
The global diffusion network has multiple channels originating in different centers (H30).	Descriptive hypothesis	
The global diffusion network has a rhizomatic structure, connecting many locales to many others (H31).	Descriptive hypothesis	

FIG. A4.—Long-term and aggregate consequences of diffusion

REFERENCES

Acemoglu, Daron, Davide Cantoni, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2011. "The Consequences of Radical Reform: The French Revolution." *American Economic Review* 101:3286–307.

Adelman, Jeremy, and Stephen Aron. 1999. "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History." *American Historical Review* 104 (3): 814–41.

Albrow, Martin. 1997. "Travelling beyond Local Cultures: Socioscapes in a Global City." Pp. 37–55 in *Living the Global City: Globalization as Local Process*, edited by John Eade. London: Routledge.

Alderson, Arthur S., and Jason Beckfield. 2004. "Power and Position in the World City System." *American Journal of Sociology* 109 (4): 811–51.

Alim, H. Samy, Awad Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook, eds. 2009. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities and the Politics of Language*. London: Routledge.

Alvarez, Sonia E. 2000. "Translating the Global: Effects of Transnational Organizing on Local Feminist Discourses and Practices in Latin America." *Meridians* 1 (1): 29–67.

Amitav, Acharya. 2004. "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism." *International Organization* 58:239–75.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Arthur, Brian. 1994. *Increasing Returns and Path Dependence in the Economy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Baldassari, Delia, and Mauro Diani. 2007. "The Integrative Power of Civic Networks." *American Journal of Sociology* 113 (3): 735–80.

Barkey, Karen. 2008. *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Becker, Sascha O., Katrin Boeckh, Christa Hainz, and Ludger Woessmann. 2016. "The Empire Is Dead, Long Live the Empire! Long-Run Persistence of Trust and Corruption in the Bureaucracy." *Economic Journal* 126 (590): 40–74.

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckman. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. London: Penguin.

Blau, Peter. 1986. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction.

Bockman, Johanna, and Gil Eyal. 2002. "Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism." *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (2): 310–52.

Botzem, Sebastian, and Sigrid Quack. 2005. "Contested Rules and Shifting Boundaries: International Standard-Setting in Accounting." Working paper. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

———. 2002. "Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées." *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145 (5): 3–8.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Boyle, Elizabeth H., Minzee Kim, and Wesley Longhofer. 2015. "Abortion Liberalization in World Society, 1960–2009." *American Journal of Sociology* 121 (3): 882–913.

Browning, Lauren. 2014. "The 26 Most Hipster Neighborhoods in the World." *Business Insider*, November 21. https://www.businessinsider.com/hipster-neighborhoods-around-the-world-2014-10.

Brubaker, Rogers. 1992. *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Buchholz, Larissa. 2016. "What Is a Global Field? Theorizing Fields beyond the Nation-State." *Sociological Review* 64 (2): 31–60.
Burt, Ronald S. 2000. "The Network Structure of Social Capital." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22:345–423.
Casanova, Pascale. 2004. *The World Republic of Letters*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, vol. 1, *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Chabot, Sean, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2002. "Globalization and Transnational Diffusion between Social Movements: Reconceptualizing the Dissemination of the Ghandian Repertoire and the 'Coming Out' Routine." *Theory and Society* 31 (6): 697–740.
Charpy, Manuel. 2007. "L'ordre des choses: Sur quelques traits de la culture matérielle bourgeoise parisienne, 1830–1914." *Revue d'histoire du XIXs siècle* 34:104–28.
Chaudoin, Stephen, Helen V. Milner, and Xun Pang. 2015. "International Systems and Domestic Politics: Linking Complex Interactions with Empirical Models in International Relations." *International Organization* 69 (2): 275–309.
Cho, Younghan. 2009. "The Glocalization of U.S. Sports in South Korea." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 26:320–34.
Chorev, Nitsan. 2012. "Changing Global Norms through Reactive Diffusion: The Case of Intellectual Property Protection of AIDS Drugs." *American Sociological Review* 77 (5): 831–53.
Claudy, Marius C., Rosanna Garcia, and Aidan O'Driscoll. 2015. "Consumer Resistance to Innovation—a Behavioral Reasoning Perspective." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 43 (4): 528–44.
Cohen, Robin. 2008. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, 2d ed. London: Routledge.
Cohen, Robin, and Shirin M. Rai, eds. 2006. *Global Social Movements*. London: Continuum.
Cole, Robert E. 1985. "The Macropolitics of Organizational Change: A Comparative Analysis of the Spread of Small-Group Activities." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30 (4): 560–85.
Cole, Wade M. 2015. "Mind the Gap: State Capacity and the Implementation of Human Rights Treaties." *International Organization* 69 (2): 405–41.
Cortell, Andrew P., and James S. Davis. 2000. "Understanding the Domestic Impact of International Norms: A Research Agenda." *International Studies Review* 2 (1): 65–87.
Cowan, Robin, and Nicolas Jonard. 2004. "Network Structure and the Diffusion of Knowledge." *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control* 28 (8): 1557–75.
Czarniawska, Barbara, and Guje Sevon. 1996. *Translating Organizational Change*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
Centola, Damon. 2018. How Behavior Spreads: The Science of Complex Contagions. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. "Introduction: Rhizome." Pp. 3–25 in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 2. Edited by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
della Porta, Donatella, and Sidney Tarrow. 2005. "Transnational Processes and Social Activism: An Introduction." Pp. 1–20 in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, edited by Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
Dezaley, Yves, and Bryant G. Garth. 1996. *Dealing in Virtue: International Commercial Arbitration and the Construction of a Transnational Legal Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Dezaley, Yves, and Olivier Nay. 2015. "Le marché des savoirs de réforme: Circulations de l'expertise de gouvernement et reproduction des hiérarchies internationales." In *Duide l'enquete globale en sciences sociales*, edited by Johanna Siméant. Paris: CNRS.

Diani, Mario. 2003. "Leaders or Brokers? Positions and Influence in Social Movement Networks." In *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, edited by Mauro Diani and Doug McAdam. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48:147–60.
———, eds. 1991. *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Djelic, Marie-Laure. 1998. *Exporting the American Model: The Postwar Transformation of European Business*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dobbin, Frank. 1994. *Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dobbin, Frank, Beth Simmons, and Geoffrey Garrett. 2007. "The Global Diffusion of Public Policies: Social Construction, Coercion, Competition, or Learning?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (1): 449–72.
Downey, Liam, Elizabeth Lawrence, Micah Pyles, and Derek Lee. 2020. "Power, Hegemony, and World Society Theory: A Critical Evaluation." *Socius* 6:1–22.
Duru-Bellat, Marie, and Elise Tenret. 2012. "Who's for Meritocracy? Individual and Contextual Variations in the Faith." *Comparative Education Review* 56 (2): 223–47.
Elkins, Zachary, and Beth Simmons. 2005. "On Waves, Clusters, and Diffusion: A Conceptual Framework." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 598:33–51.
Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1978. *Papers in Historical Poetics*. Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics.
Everton, Sean, and Steven Pfaff. 2021. "Historical and Comparative Research on Diffusion." *Social Science History*, forthcoming.
Faust, Katherine. 2008. "Triadic Configurations in Limited Choice Sociometric Networks: Empirical and Theoretical Results." *Social Networks* 30:273–82.
Feld, Scott L. 1981. "The Focused Organization of Social Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 86 (5): 1015–35.
Ferguson, James. 2020. "The Great Refusal: The West, the Rest, and the Geopolitics of Homosexuality." Unpublished manuscript. University of California, Berkeley, Department of Sociology.
Fourcade, Marion. 2006. "The Construction of a Global Profession: The Transnationalization of Economics." *American Journal of Sociology* 112 (1): 145–94.
Fourcade-Gourinchas, Marion, and Sarah L. Babb. 2002. "The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (3): 533–79.
Fowler, James, and Nicholas Christakis. 2011. Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives. New York: Little Brown Spark.
Frank, David John, Ann Hironaka, and Evan Schofer. 2000. "The Nation-State and the Natural Environment over the Twentieth Century." *American Sociological Review* 65 (1): 96–116.
Freeden, Michael. 1998. "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?" *Political Studies* 46 (4): 748–65.
Friedkin, Noah E. 1981. "The Development of Structure in Random Networks: An Analysis of the Effects of Increasing Network Density on Five Measures of Structure." *Social Networks* 3:41–52.
Genovese, Federica, Florian G. Kern, and Christian Martin. 2017. "Policy Alteration: Rethinking Diffusion Processes When Policies Have Alternatives." *International Studies Quarterly* 61 (2): 236–52.
Gereffi, Gary, John Humphrey, and Timothy Sturgeon. 2005. "The Governance of Global Value Chains." *Review of International Political Economy* 12 (1): 78–104.
Geroski, Paul A. 2000. "Models of Technology Diffusion." *Research Policy* 29 (4–5): 603–25.

Gilardi, Fabrizio. 2012. "Transnational Diffusion: Norms, Ideas, and Policies." Pp. 453–77 in *Handbook of International Relations*, edited by Carl Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede, and Michael D. Ward. 2006. "Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization." *International Organization* 60:911–33.
Go, Julian. 2008. "Global Fields and Imperial Forms: Field Theory and the British and American Empires." *Sociological Theory* 26 (3): 201–29.
Gould, Roger V., and Roberto M. Fernandez. 1989. "Structures of Mediation: A Formal Approach to Brokerage in Transaction Networks." *Social Methodology* 19:89–126.
Griswold, Wendy. 1987. "The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies." *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (5): 1077–117.
Guillén, Mauro F. 1994. *Models of Management: Work, Authority, and Organization in a Comparative Perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
———. 2001. *The Limits of Convergence: Globalization and Organizational Change in Argentina, South Korea, and Spain*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Haas, Peter M. 2009. "Do Regimes Matter? Epistemic Communities and Mediterranean Pollution Control." *International Organization* 43 (3): 377–403.
Habermas, Jürgn. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
Halliday, Terence C., and Bruce G. Carruthers. 2007. "The Recursivity of Law: Global Norm Making and National Lawmaking in the Globalization of Corporate Insolvency Regimes." *American Journal of Sociology* 112 (4): 1135–202.
Hannerz, Ulf. 1987. "The World in Creolization." *Africa* 57 (4): 546–59.
Heilbron, Johan. 1999. "Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System." *European Journal of Social Theory* 2 (4): 429–44.
Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. 2001. *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
Hopper, Paul. 2007. *Understanding Cultural Globalization*. Cambridge: Polity.
Howes, David, ed. 1996. *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities*. London: Routledge.
Huntington, Samuel. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72:22–49.
Illouz, Eva, and Nicholas John. 2003. "Global Habitus, Local Stratification, and Symbolic Struggles over Identity: The Case of McDonald's Israel." *American Behavioral Scientist* 47 (2): 201–29.
Inglehart, Ronald, C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin, and B. Puranen. 2014. "World Values Survey: All Rounds—Country-Pooled Datafile Version." JD Systems Institute, Madrid. http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWVL.jsp.
Katz, Elihu. 1999. "Theorizing Diffusion: Tarde and Sorokin Revisited." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 566 (1): 144–55.
Kaufman, Jason, and Orlando Patterson. 2005. "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket." *American Sociological Review* 70 (1): 82–110.
Keck, Margaret, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
Kentikelenis, Alexander E., and Sarah L. Babb. 2019. "The Making of Neoliberal Globalization: Norm Substitution and the Politics of Clandestine Institutional Change." *American Journal of Sociology* 124 (6): 1720–62.
Kentikelenis, Alexander E., and Leonard Seabrooke. 2017. "The Politics of World Polity: Script-Writing in International Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 82 (5): 1065–92.
Kraidy, Marwan M. 2006. "Hybridity in Cultural Globalization." *Communication Theory* 12 (3): 316–39.

Krause, Monika. 2014. *The Good Project: Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Krücken, Georg, and Gili S. Drori. 2009. *World Society: The Writings of John W. Meyer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kuipers, Giselinde. 2011. "Cultural Globalization as the Emergence of a Transnational Cultural Field: Transnational Television and National Media Landscapes in Four European Countries." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55 (5): 541–57.
Lazarsfeld, Paul Felix, Hazel Gaudet, and Bernard Berelson. 1965. *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. 2d ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
Lee, Samuel. 2014. *The Japanese and Christianity: Why Is Christianity Not Widely Believed in Japan*. Amsterdam: Foundation University Press.
Levitt, Peggy. 1998. "Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion." *International Migration Review* 32 (4): 926–48.
Levitt, Peggy, and Sally Merry. 2009. "Vernacularization on the Ground: Local Uses of Global Women's Rights in Peru, China, India, and the United States." *Global Networks* 9 (4): 441–61.
Levitt, Peggy, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2006. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society." *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 1002–39.
Li, Xue, and Alexander Hicks. 2016. "World Polity Matters: Another Look at the Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001." *American Sociological Review* 81 (3): 596–607.
Liu, Xingjian, Ben Derudder, and Peter Taylor. 2014. "Mapping the Evolution of Hierarchical and Regional Tendencies in the World City Network, 2000–2010." *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems* 43:51–66.
Luhmann, Niklas. 1984. *Soziale Systeme*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Lydon, Ghislaine. 2012. *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mahoney, James, and Kathleen Thelen. 2010. "A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change." Pp. 1–37 in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, edited by James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mansbridge, Jane J., and Katherine Flaster. 2007. "The Cultural Politics of Everyday Discourse: The Case of 'Male Chauvinist.'" *Critical Sociology* 33 (4): 627–60.
Marchand, Suzanne. "Leo Frobenius and the Revolt against the West." *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no. 2 (1997): 153–70.
McAdam, Doug, and Dieter Rucht. 1993. "The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528:56–74.
McDermott, Kevin, and Jeremy Agnew. 1996. *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin*. Houndmills: Macmillan.
Meyer, John, John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez. 1997. "World Society and the Nation-State." *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1): 144–81.
Molnár, Virág. 2005. "Cultural Politics and Modernist Architecture: The Tulip Debate in Postwar Hungary." *American Sociological Review* 70 (1): 111–35.
Moretti, Franco. 2000. "Conjectures on World Literature." *New Left Review* 1 (January/February): 54–68.
Morley, David. 2006. *Media, Modernity, and Technology: The Geography of the New*. London: Routledge.
Murphy, Raymond. 1988. *Social Closure: A Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion*. Oxford: Clarendon.
Needham, Rodney. 1975. "Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences." *Man* 10 (3): 349–69.

Notoji, Masako. 2000. "Cultural Transformation of John Philip Sousa and Disneyland in Japan." Pp. 219–26 in *Here, There, Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, edited by Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England.
Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123 (1): 139–76.
Osterhammel, Jürgen, and Niels P. Peterson. 2005. *Globalization: A Short History*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Patterson, Orlando. 1975. "Context and Choice in Ethnic Allegiance: A Theoretical Framework and Caribbean Case Study." Pp. 305–49 in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, edited by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Pellis, Lorenzo, Frank Ball, Shweta Bansal, Ken Eames, Thomas House, Valerie Isham, and Pieter Trapman. 2015. "Eight Challenges for Network Epidemic Models." *Epidemics* 10:58–62.
Peres, Renana, Eitan Muller, and Vijay Mahajan. 2010. "Innovation Diffusion and New Product Growth Models: A Critical Review and Research Directions." *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 27:91–106.
Perry, Elizabeth J. 2012. *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Phelps, Corey, Ralph Heidl, and Anu Wadhwa. 2012. "Knowledge, Networks, and Knowledge Networks: A Review and Research Agenda." *Journal of Management* 38 (4): 1115–66.
Philipps, Damon J., and Ezra W. Zuckerman. 2001. "Middle-Status Conformity: Theoretical Restatement and Empirical Demonstration in Two Markets." *American Journal of Sociology* 107 (2): 379–429.
Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. 2015. *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
Polletta, Francesca, and Edwin Amenta. 2019. "The Cultural Impacts of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 45:279–99.
Pope, Shawn, and John W. Meyer. 2016. "Local Variation in World Society: Six Characteristics of Global Diffusion." *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 3 (2–3): 280–305.
Ragin, Charles. 2000. *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2014. "Why Status Matters for Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79 (1): 1–16.
Ritzer, George. 1993. *The McDonaldization of Society*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Pine Forge.
Robertson, Roland. 1992. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.
Robertson, Thomas S., and Hubert Gatignon. 1986. "Competitive Effects on Technology Diffusion." *Journal of Marketing* 50 (3): 1–12.
Roeder, Philip G. 2007. *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Rogers, Clifford J., ed. 2018. *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*. London: Routledge.
Rogers, Everett M. 1995. *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. New York: Free Press.
Rowan, Brian. 1982. "Organizational Structure and the Institutional Environment: The Case of Public Schools." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 27 (2): 259–79.
Saguy, Abigail C. 2000. "Employment Discrimination or Sexual Violence? Defining Sexual Harassment in American and French Law." *Law and Society Review* 34 (4): 1091–128.
Sapiro, Gisèle. 2013. "Le champ est-il national? La théorie de la différenciation sociale au prisme de l'histoire globale." *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 200 (5): 70–85.
———. 2016. "How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)? A Sociological Approach to World Literature." *Journal of World Literature* 1 (1): 81–96.

Sapiro, Gisèle, Tristan Leperlier, and Mohamed Amine Brahimi. 2018. "Qu'est-ce qu'un champ intellectuel transnational?" *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 200:4–13.
Savelsberg, Joachim J. 2011. "Globalization and States of Punishment." Pp. 69–86 in *Comparative Criminal Justice and Globalization*, edited by David Nelken. London: Ashgate.
Savelsberg, Joachim J., and Ryan D. King. 2005. "Institutionalizing Collective Memories of Hate: Law and Law Enforcement in Germany and the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (2): 579–616.
Simmons, Beth A., Frank Dobbin, and Geoffrey Garrett. 2006. "Introduction: The International Diffusion of Liberalism." *International Organization* 60 (4): 781–810.
Simmons, Beth A., and Zachary Elkins. 2004. "The Globalization of Liberalization: Policy Diffusion in the International Political Economy." *American Political Science Review* 98 (1): 171–89.
Smith, David A., and Douglas R. White. 1992. "Structure and Dynamics of the Global Economy: Network Analysis of International Trade, 1965–1980." *Social Forces* 70 (4): 857–93.
Snow, David A. 1993. *Shakubaku: A Study of the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Movement in America, 1960–1975*. New York: Garland.
Solli, Rolf, Peter Demediuk, and Robert Sims. 2005. "The Namesake: On Best Value and Other Reform Marks." Pp. 14–30 in *Global Ideas: How Ideas, Objects and Practices Travel in the Global Economy*, edited by Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges and Guje Sevón. Advances in Organization Studies 13. Malmö: Liber and Copenhagen Business School Press.
Sorokin, Pitirim A. (1927) 1959. *Social and Cultural Mobility*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.
Soule, Sarah A. 1997. "The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest." *Social Forces* 75 (3): 855–83.
Steinmetz, George. 2008. "The Colonial State as a Social Field: Ethnographic Capital and Native Policy in the German Overseas Empire before 1914." *American Sociological Review* 73 (4): 589–612.
Strang, David. 1990. "From Dependency to Sovereignty: An Event History Analysis of Decolonization, 1879–1987." *American Sociological Review* 55:846–60.
———. 1991. "Global Patterns of Decolonization, 1500–1987." *International Studies Quarterly* 35:429–54.
Strang, David, and John W. Meyer. 1993. "Institutional Conditions for Diffusion." *Theory and Society* 22:487–511.
Strang, David, and Sarah A. Soule. 1998. "Diffusion in Organizations and Social Movements: From Hybrid Corn to Poison Pills." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1): 265–90.
Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. 2009. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Suarez, David F., and Patricia Bromley. 2016. "Institutional Theories and Levels of Analysis: History, Diffusion, and Translation." Pp. 139–59 in *World Culture Recontextualized*, edited by Jürgen Schriewer. London: Routledge.
Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. 1997. "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia." *Modern Asian Studies* 31 (3): 735–62.
Sun, Yanfei. 2017. "The Rise of Protestantism in Post-Mao China: State and Religion in Historical Perspective." *American Journal of Sociology* 122 (6): 1664–725.
Sutton, John R. 2000. "Imprisonment and Social Classification in Five Common-Law Democracies, 1955–1985." *American Journal of Sociology* 106 (2): 350–86.
Tarde, Gabriel. 1890. *Les lois de l'imitation*. Paris: Patterson.
Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. *Power in Movements*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
———. 2013. *The Language of Contention: Revolutions in Words, 1688–2012*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Tarrow, Sidney, and Doug McAdam. 2005. "Scale Shift in Transnational Contention." Pp. 121–50 in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, edited by Donatella della Porta and Sidney Tarrow. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Tolbert, Pamela S., and Lynne G. Zucker. 1983. "Institutional Sources of Change in the Formal Structure of Organizations: The Diffusion of Civil Service Reform, 1880–1935." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28 (1): 22–39.
Valente, Thomas W. 1995. *Network Models of the Diffusion of Innovations*. Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton.
Vauchez, Antoine. 2008. "The Force of a Weak Field: Law and Lawyers in the Government of the European Union (for a Renewed Research Agenda)." *International Political Sociology* 2 (2): 128–44.
Veblen, Thorstein. (1899) 1992. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. London: Routledge.
Velkar, Aashish. 2018. "Imperial Folly: The Metric System, Popular Politics and a Britain Inching towards Europe, ca. 1965–80." Unpublished manuscript. University of Manchester, Languages and Cultures School of Arts.
Wasserfallen, Fabio. 2018. "Global Diffusion through Policy Flexibility." Unpublished manuscript. University of Salzburg.
Watts, Duncan J. 1999*a*. "Networks, Dynamics, and the Small-World Phenomenon." *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (2): 493–527.
———. 1999*b*. *Small Worlds*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Weber, Eugen. 1979. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870–1914*. London: Chatto & Windus.
Wejnert, Barbara. 2002. "Integrating Models of Diffusion of Innovations: A Conceptual Framework." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (1): 297–326.
Westney, D. Eleanor. 1987. *Imitation and Innovation: The Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns in Meiji Japan*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Weyland, Kurt. 2007. *Bounded Rationality and Policy Diffusion: Social Sector Reform in Latin America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Wimmer, Andreas. 1996. "L'État-nation: Une forme de fermeture sociale." *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 37 (1): 163–79.
———. 2018. *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
Wimmer, Andreas, and Yuval Feinstein. 2010. "The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001." *American Sociological Review* 75 (5): 764–90.
———. 2016. "Still No Robust Evidence for World Polity Theory." *American Sociological Review* 81 (3): 608–15.
Woodberry, Robert D. 2012. "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 106 (2): 244–74.
Wotipka, Christine Min, and Francisco O. Ramirez. 2007. "World Society and Human Rights: An Event History Analysis of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." Pp. 303–43 in *The Global Diffusion of Markets and Democracy*, edited by Beth Simmons, Frank Dobbin, and Geoffrey Garrett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Yoon, Hesu, and Hans Schattle. 2017. "The Gangnam Style Phenomenon as a Global Manifestation of Hybridity." *Asian International Studies Review* 18 (2): 1–20.
Zhou, Min, Gang Wu, and Helian Xu. 2016. "Structure and Formation of Top Networks in International Trade, 2001–2010." *Social Networks* 44:9–21.