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Jeannine E. Relly

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Freedom of Information Laws and Global Diffusion: Testing Rogers's Model

Jeannine E. Relly[1]

Abstract

This exploratory study applied Everett Rogers's diffusion framework to the global phenomenon of countries adopting freedom of information laws. The external influence of geographic proximity and the internal influence of news media were examined over time. The models indicated that a strong environment for news media had a significant influence on legislation adoption in United Nations member states (N = 192). The models also showed that Europe, followed by the Americas, had the greatest influence on diffusion among the regions, with a predicted trajectory indicating 80% of nations adopting the legislation by 2025 in challenging environments.

Keywords

Everett Rogers, diffusion theory, freedom of information laws

Globalization and the diffusion of international norms have led nation after nation to replicate media systems, laws, policies, and constitutions.[1] And as the democratization movement and anticorruption campaigns have spread around the world in the past two decades, so have companion movements to prod legislatures to pass freedom of information legislation and to assist with developing news media that hold governments accountable.[2] Every continent in the world with elected political officials now has nations with freedom of information laws.[3]

As diffusion theorists note, internal and external influences, including cross-national communication, have been key to spreading international laws and policies.

[1]University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA

Corresponding Author:
Jeannine E. Relly, University of Arizona, School of Journalism, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, 845 North Park Avenue, Third Floor, Tucson, AZ 85721, USA
Email: jrelly@email.arizona.edu

This exploratory study investigates the extent that this, too, has been the case with country after country adopting freedom of information legislation.[4]

More specifically, this research tests the potential influence of geographic proximity as a factor in the diffusion of freedom of information laws, and whether countries with conducive environments for news media are more likely to adopt freedom of information laws than nations with poor societal conditions for this democratic institution. The study also examines how time and a critical mass of nations adopting freedom of information legislation may serve as predictors of future adoptions.

This study contributes to the cross-national diffusion literature in general and is the first in the journalism and mass communication field to apply Rogers's conceptual framework[5]—which has dominated diffusion research for more than half a century[6]—to the global phenomenon of nations adopting freedom of information laws. This is demonstrated by examining the process in which the policy innovation is communicated through channels in time to members of the social system of United Nations member states.

Geographical Setting as
an External Influence on Diffusion

The practice of nations adopting policies from other countries has a long history, dating to when imperial powers transferred political institutions, legal codes, and administrative structures to their colonies.[7] However, as Dolowitz and Marsh suggest, there has been a meteoric rise in communication among countries in the post–World War II years.[8] More recently, globalization has sped the pace of diffusion of ideas, among other things.[9] A number of studies have focused on diffusion across nations,[10] though many of them have focused on the phenomenon within a single nation.[11]

As early as the first two decades of the twentieth century, anthropologists and archaeologists used spatial analysis to carry out diffusion research.[12] Decades later, Hägerstrand was among the first to investigate how proximity or geographical contiguity factors into innovation adoption.[13]

More than 160 studies have examined the influence of geographic proximity on diffusion.[14] One study demonstrated that in the period from 1850 to 2000, when democracy spread to 130 countries, political institutions in one-fourth of the nations were influenced by countries within the same region.[15] Another study of global economic competition linked regions with diffusion of regulatory approaches in a "race to the top."[16] And Bennett found that as more countries adopt a reform, "the pressure on non-adopters increases."[17] Geography can serve as a proxy for interconnectedness, as it does in the present study, for "policy entrepreneurs" communicate information to political and business elites, and others, in a social system, about policy innovations from other countries.[18]

News Media as an Internal Influence on Diffusion

Diffusion research also uses internal factors to predict whether a policy will be adopted in a nation.[19] In discussing diffusion theory, Rogers and others have suggested that "change agents"[20] play a role in whether an "innovation" is adopted because these individuals, often from inside the system, attempt to partner with leaders in the system through communication networks,[21] to influence members to adopt new ideologies or ideas.[22] These networks often work synergistically with the news media. In the case of freedom of information legislation adoption, they are sometimes led by coalitions of journalists.[23]

The literature also suggests that the news media can become "a channel of influence on adoption"[24] when citizens are able to access information from newspapers, television, radio, mobile devices, and other communication tools.[25] Recent research also indicates that in countries where authoritarian governments have censored news media, online social networks have enabled information sharing.[26]

Rogers suggested that the rate of innovation adoption generally is measured by the proportion of the system members that adopt over a time period, given the number of targeted adopters.[27] Some scholars argue that when the novelty of a new innovation wanes, there is less risk with adopting, and the rate of adoption tends to accelerate.[28] According to Rogers, there comes a point when enough members in "a system have adopted an innovation so that the innovation's further rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining."[29]

Though the first freedom of information law was adopted in Sweden in 1766 during the Age of Enlightenment,[30] nearly all of the nations with laws were adopted in the post–World War II period,[31] after United Nations member countries signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states the public has the right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas."[32] The diffusion literature suggests that influences from inside and outside nations (some weak and some strong links), coupled with transnational communication, have been key to the spread of global norms related to information access.[33] As Table 1 indicates, a host of declarations, conventions, charters, and other policy instruments,[34] which have increased at least threefold in the past two decades when compared with the previous forty years, have established "right to information" and "freedom of expression" as international norms.

As Figure 1 demonstrates, the cumulative adoption of these international and regional policy instruments resembles the early shape of a classic sigmoid diffusion curve.

Global Research on Freedom of Information Legislation

Several studies have examined the phenomenon of nations adopting or drafting freedom of information laws in Latin America,[35] Asia,[36] Africa,[37] Europe,[38] and, specifically,

Table 1. Instruments Advancing the Global Diffusion of Access-to-Information Policy (1948–2010)

Name of the instrument	Year signed	Organization advancing
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	United Nations
European Convention on Human Rights	1950	Council of Europe
Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	1950	Council of Europe
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	United Nations
American Convention on Human Rights	1969	Organization of American States
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	1981	African Union
Recommendation No. R (81) 19 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Access to Information Held by Public Authorities	1981	Committee of Ministers to Council of Europe
Council Directive 90/313/EEC on the Freedom of Access to Information on the Environment	1990	The Council of the European Communities of the European Union
Rio Declaration on Environment and Development	1992	United Nations
Treaty on European Union	1992	European Community
Chapultepec Declaration	1994	Inter American Press Association
Aarhus Convention	1998	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Declaration on Human Rights Defenders	1999	United Nations
The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union	2000	European Union
Inter-American Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression	2000	Organization of American States
Protocol Against Corruption	2001	Southern African Development Community
Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Deliberate Release into the Environment of Genetically Modified Organisms and Repealing Council Directive 90/220/EEC	2001	European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union
Anti-Corruption Action Initiative for Asia and the Pacific	2001	Asian Development Bank/ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa	2002	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

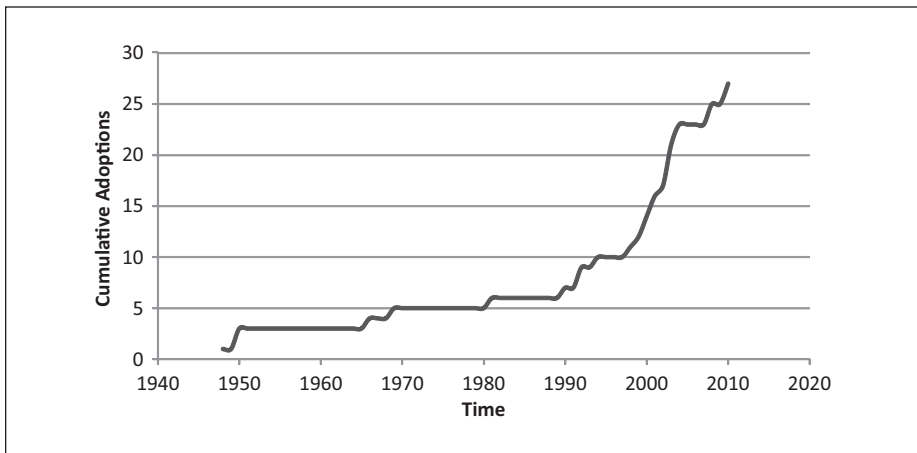| Name of the instrument	Year signed	Organization advancing
Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on Public Access to Environmental Information and Repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC	2003	European Parliament and of the Council of European Union
Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption	2003	African Union
United Nations Convention Against Corruption	2003	United Nations
Freedom of Information Act/Model Bill	2003	Commonwealth Secretariat
Arab Charter on Human Rights	2004	League of Arab States
Declaration of Nueva León	2004	Heads of State and Government of the Americas
Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents	2008	Council of Europe
Principles on the Right to Access Information	2008	Inter-American Juridical Committee
Model Inter-American Law on Access to Information	2010	Organization of American States
Brisbane Declaration—Freedom of Information: The Right to Know	2010	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Figure 1. Regional and global adoptions of freedom of information instruments in time

Arab states.[39] A few cross-national studies have investigated the implementation of the legislation,[40] and governance in countries with the law.[41] However, empirical research has not applied the influence of geographic contagion and strength of news media rights

to Rogers's diffusion model, nor has this approach been used to examine the actual rate in which nations are adopting the legislation in order to project future adoptions around the world. As Rogers pointed out, most diffusion studies are post hoc, but diffusion of an innovation can be studied while the process is occurring,[42] which is the case in this study, given that the evidence indicates that the diffusion process is still ongoing.[43]

Conceptual Overview of the Study

This study employs Rogers's diffusion theory as a conceptual framework. The innovation, defined as an idea or practice that is new to the adopting unit, is represented by the year a country adopts a freedom of information law.[44] The study explores potential indicators of influence on adoption, which in diffusion theory would be time and the internal and external channels of communication that influence freedom of information law adoption in a country.[45]

Against the backdrop of previous diffusion studies of policy contagion, this study uses geographic region as a proxy variable for external influences. Because the literature has shown news media to be strong catalysts and proponents of adopting freedom of information legislation in many countries,[46] the study also utilizes a "news media rights" variable to examine the extent of the indicator's influence on the adoption of freedom of information legislation.

To study the pattern of diffusion, Rogers's innovation adopter categories were included: the innovators (the first 2.5% to adopt), early adopters (the next 13.5%), the early majority (the following 34%), the late majority (the next 34%), and those that adopt last (16%).[47] As Rogers has suggested, there can be an issue of innovation overadoption, when the attributes of adopting may overshadow the drawbacks, or when there are compatibility limitations between the innovation and the ethos of the environment in which the adoption is embedded.[48]

The following research questions were asked to determine the interplay between diffusion of innovation and adoption in the global context:

RQ1: Are the majority of countries in innovator and early adopter regions more apt to adopt freedom of information laws than regions with fewer observed adoptions in these categories?

RQ2: Are countries with political, legal, and economic environments conducive for news media more apt to adopt freedom of information laws than nations with weaker democratic environments?

RQ3: To what extent have the regions, or the status of the news media, influenced the rate in which freedom of information legislation has been adopted in time?

RQ4: Given the adoption rate of freedom of information legislation over the past half century, what is the predicted adoption pattern in the future?

Method

The study first examines the relationship between geographic region and news media rights in countries that have or have not adopted freedom of information laws.[49] It then utilizes parametric and semiparametric models to determine the influence of geographic region, news media freedom, and time on the nations. The observed adoption data were used to predict future adoptions. Given that many scholars who study diffusion do so at the "macro-structural" level,[50] the unit of analysis is the member state of the United Nations ($N = 192$).[51]

Freedom of information law adoption. The criterion variable is the innovation, which is a nation adopting a freedom of information law. The study uses Vleugels's data set of nations with freedom of information legislation,[52] which has been used by a number of other scholars.[53] The countries in the database have laws that provide a legal right to request and obtain information from the government, which, at a minimum, allows access to information from the executive branch of government, with an appeals and complaints option written into the legislation.[54] Table 2 outlines the seventy-seven nations that adopted the laws from 1949 through 2008. The original year of adoption is used for the purposes of this diffusion study, with two exceptions.[55]

Geographic region and news media rights. Potential influences on diffusion of freedom of information laws were examined using indicators for geographic regions and news media rights. The regions were classified based on the United Nations Statistics Division category for macro-geographical regions: Africa, Americas,[56] Asia, Europe, and Oceania. The news media freedom indicator measures the environment in which journalists work in each nation.[57] The Freedom House measurement was selected because the method that is used is comparable across years,[58] because it contains the longest duration of time-series data that are available for news media rights, and because, unlike other databases, it includes the widest range of countries. Furthermore, scholars have noted this measure of news media rights holds "considerable consistency,"[59] and is highly correlated with other commonly used measurements.[60]

The 0 to 100 scale focuses on the political, legal, and economic environment for journalists in each country.[61] Freedom House's status ranking for news media rights was reverse coded for each country as follows: 0 to 39 points (*not free*), 40 to 69 points (*partly free*) and 70 to 100 points (*free*).

The study used cross-tabulation to uncover the relationships between geographic region in nations that have adopted freedom of information legislation and those countries that have not adopted the law (countries with draft legislation and those without a draft or law). Similarly, descriptive statistics were used to map the relationship between levels of news media rights in nations with a freedom of information law and those without the legislation. To identify the regional relationship, if any, of the majority of innovator (first 2.5%) and early adopter nations (the next 13.5%) on the rest of the observed adopters, the study scrutinized the regions of origin in the innovator and

Table 2. Nations with Freedom of Information Legislation by Year Law Adopted
(1949–2008; *N* = 77)

Nation	Year law adopted	Law
Sweden	1766, 1949[a]	Freedom of the Press Act
Colombia	1888, 1985[a]	Law Ordering the Publicity of Official Acts and Documents (1985)
Finland	1951,[a] 1999	The Act on the Openness of Government Activities, replaced the 1951 law titled Act on Publicity of Official Documents
United States	1966	Freedom of Information Act
Denmark	1970,[a] 1985	The 1970 Act on Access of the Public to Documents in Administrative Files was replaced in 1985 by the Access to Public Administration Files Act
Norway	1970	Freedom of Information Act
Netherlands	1978,[a] 2009	The Government Information (Public Access) Act replaced the 1978 Act on Public Access to Information
France	1978	Law on Access to Administrative Documents
New Zealand	1982	Official Information Act
Australia	1982	Freedom of Information Act 1982
Canada	1982	Access to Information Act
Greece	1986,[a] 1999	Article 5 of the Code of Administrative Procedure in 1999 replaced Article 16 of Law 1599/1986
Austria	1987	Federal Law on the Duty to Furnish Information
Italy	1990	No. 241 of August 7, 1990
Ukraine	1992	Law on Information
Hungary	1992	Act on Protection of Personal Data and Disclosure of Data of Public Interest
Portugal	1993	Law on Access to Administrative Documents
Belgium	1994	Law on the right of access to administrative documents held by federal public authorities
Belize	1994	The Freedom of Information Act
Iceland	1996	Information Act
South Korea	1996	Act on Disclosure of Information by Public Agencies
Ireland	1997	Freedom of Information Act
Thailand	1997	Official Information Act
Uzbekistan	1997,[a] 2002	The Law on the Principles & Guarantees of Freedom of Information adopted in 2002 replaced the 1997 Law on Guarantees and Freedom of Access to Information
Israel	1998	Freedom of Information Law
Latvia	1998	Law on Freedom of Information
Albania	1999	The Law on the Right to Information for Official Documents
Czech Republic	1999	Law on Free Access to Information
Georgia	1999	General Administrative Code of Georgia (Chap. 3 of the code is titled "Freedom of Information")

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Nation	Year law adopted	Law
Japan	1999	Law Concerning Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs
Liechtenstein	1999	Information Act
Trinidad and Tobago	1999	Freedom of Information Act
Bulgaria	2000	Access to Public Information Act
Estonia	2000	Public Information Act
Lithuania	2000	The Law on the Right to Obtain Information from State and Local Government Institutions
Moldova	2000	The Law on Access to Information
Slovakia	2000	Act on Free Access to Information
South Africa	2000	Promotion of Access to Information Act
United Kingdom	2000	Freedom of Information Act
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2001	Freedom of Access to Information Act
Panama	2001	The Law on Transparency in Public Administration
Poland	2001	Law on Access to Public Information
Romania	2001	Law Regarding Free Access to Information of Public Interest
Angola	2002	Law on Access to Administrative Documents
Jamaica	2002	Access to Information Act
Mexico	2002	Federal Transparency & Access to Public Government Information Law
Pakistan	2002	Freedom of Information Ordinance
Peru	2002	The Law of Transparency & Access to Public Information
Tajikistan	2002	The Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Information
Zimbabwe	2002	Access to Information & Privacy Protection Act
Armenia	2003	Law on Freedom of Information
Croatia	2003	Act on the Right of Access to Information
Slovenia	2003	Access to Public Information Act
St. Vincent and Grenadines	2003	Freedom of Information Act, 2003
Turkey	2003	Law on the Right to Information
Antigua and Barbuda	2004	Freedom of Information Act
Dominican Republic	2004	Law on Access to Information
Ecuador	2004	Organic Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information
Serbia	2004	Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance
Switzerland	2004	Federal Law on the Principle of Administrative Transparency
Azerbaijan	2005	Law on Access to Information

Table 2. (continued)

Nation	Year law adopted	Law
Germany	2005	Act to Regulate Access to Federal Government Information
India	2005	Right to Information Act
Montenegro	2005	Law on Free Access to Information
Uganda	2005	The Access to Information Act, 2005
Honduras	2006	Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information
Kyrgyzstan	2006	The Law on Guarantees of Free Access to Information Held by State Bodies and Local Government
Macedonia	2006	Law on Free Access to Information of Public Character
China	2007	Open Government Information Regulations
Jordan	2007	Access to Information Law
Nepal	2007	Right to Information Act
Nicaragua	2007	Law on Access to Public Information
Bangladesh	2008	Right to Information Act
Chile	2008	Law of Transparency of the Public Function and Access of Information
Guatemala	2008	Law for Free Access to Public Information
Indonesia	2008	Freedom of Information Law
Uruguay	2008	Law on the Right of Access to Public Information

[a]The year that was used in the diffusion model.

early adopter groups and the extent that geographic region is mirrored in the early majority adoptions (the next 34%).

Parametric and semiparametric models were employed to assess the influences of geographic region, level of news media rights, and time on the adoption of freedom of information legislation. The study first used the cumulative normal model used by Rogers for time-series extrapolation research.[62] The cumulative normal model analyzes influences on adoption and predicts future adoptions:[63]

$$X_t = a \int_{\infty}^{t} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \cdot EXP\left[-\frac{(Y-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2} \right] DY + \varepsilon_t$$

Rogers defines the rate of adoption as "the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted by members of a social system."[64] The criterion variable (X_t) represents the rate of government adoption of freedom of information legislation in nations around the world in time. The value for "a" is set at a 100% saturation level for the adoptions of a law among 192 nations. However, given that the literature notes saturation levels typically are lower and in some cases may reach less than 70%, the study conservatively estimates 80% saturation.[65]

Initial parameters for the cumulative normal model were provided in the function for the predicted mean value of y, represented by *μ* for the time in which diffusion of the law occurred. The standard deviation is represented by the symbol σ. For the initial

parameters in each cumulative normal diffusion model, the study used the descriptive statistics function in the SPSS 19 software program for the time period from 1949 (as time 1) to 2008 (as time 102), to obtain a mean of 51.50 years with a standard deviation of 29.50.

Cumulative normal model. Given that the first adoption of freedom of information legislation was in Europe, the study divided the nations into two groups, European and non-European, to look at the regional influence of European nations on the diffusion of freedom of information law adoption in nations around the world. Because the Americas also were among the innovators by region, the study divided the group of nations into Americas and non-Americas to measure each group's influence. A bivariate categorical news media variable was developed for the model by grouping "free" and "partly free" countries as one group and "not free" nations as the other group. These data were run using the cumulative normal model.

Cox proportional hazards model. Some researchers have suggested the Cox model circumvents the right-censoring data issue presented with the cumulative normal model.[66] The Cox model is used to add depth because of its widespread use in the social sciences, its capacity to test for external and internal influences on diffusion without parameters,[67] and its ability to examine the influence of a range of multiple categories, rather than requiring bivariate categorical variables as does the cumulative normal model.[68] The hazard rate $h(t)$ in this semiparametric model is the ratio of the probability density for a random variable to the survival function that is projected in time, at value (t).[69]

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \times \exp(b_{geog} + b_{newsmedia})$$

The models tested the baseline hazard function based on the year of adoption of a freedom of information law with geographic region and news media as covariates. Because European countries were the first to adopt freedom of information legislation, Europe is used as a reference region in model 1. The Americas were used as a geographic reference group in model 2 because nations in this region were among the innovators. The "not free" press category was used as a reference group for news media.

Predicting the adoption of freedom of information laws. To predict future adoptions of freedom of information laws, the study once again used the cumulative normal model because it takes the theoretical curve and fits it to the empirical set of data;[70] in this case, the study compares the observed to the predicted global diffusion of freedom of information laws. These observed data also were used to predict the future rate of adoption. To check the peak year(s) in which a critical mass would be approached in nations that adopt the legislation, the change in the rate of adoption for each consecutive year was plotted.

Findings

The study initially addressed **RQ1**: Are the majority of countries in innovator and early adopter regions more apt to adopt freedom of information laws than regions with

Table 3. Geographic Regions for Nations With and Without Freedom of Information (FOI) Laws (*N* = 192)

	Geographic region									
	Africa		Americas		Asia		Europe		Oceania	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
FOI law status										
Nations with FOI law (*n* = 77)	4	5.2	18	23.4	18	23.4	35	45.5	2	2.6
Nations with FOI draft (*n* = 38)	13	34.2	10	26.3	8	21.1	4	10.5	3	7.9
Nations without a law or draft (*n* = 77)	36	46.8	7	9.1	21	27.3	4	5.2	9	11.7

Table 4. News Media Rights in Nations With and Without Freedom of Information (FOI) Laws (*N* = 192)

	News media rights					
	Free		Partly free		Not free	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
FOI law status						
Nations with FOI law (*n* = 77)	42	54.5	25	32.5	10	13.0
Nations with FOI draft (*n* = 38)	11	28.9	16	42.1	11	28.9
Nations without a law or draft (*n* = 77)	20	26.0	16	20.8	41	53.2

fewer observed adoptions in these categories?[71] The majority of the twenty-five countries in the innovator and early adopter categories were European (60%), followed by the Americas (16%) and Asia (16%); Oceania had the smallest representation (8%), and Africa had no representation. The region that led among the fifty-two countries in the early majority category was Europe (38.5%), with the Americas and Asian nations each representing 26.9%, followed by Africa (7.7%); Oceania had no representation in the early majority. As Table 3 demonstrates, the largest proportions of nations that had either a draft of the legislation or a freedom of information law were in Europe (90.7%) and the Americas (80%).

Table 4 addresses **RQ2**, which states, "Are countries with political, legal, and economic environments conducive for news media more apt to adopt freedom of information laws than nations with weaker democratic environments?" The majority of nations with a freedom of information law had free news media, and the majority of nations without the law had not-free news media. The descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of nations with a freedom of information law (87%), or a draft of the legislation (71%), had a free or partly free news media, whereas the majority of nations without a draft of the law or the legislation had a "not-free" news media (53.2%).
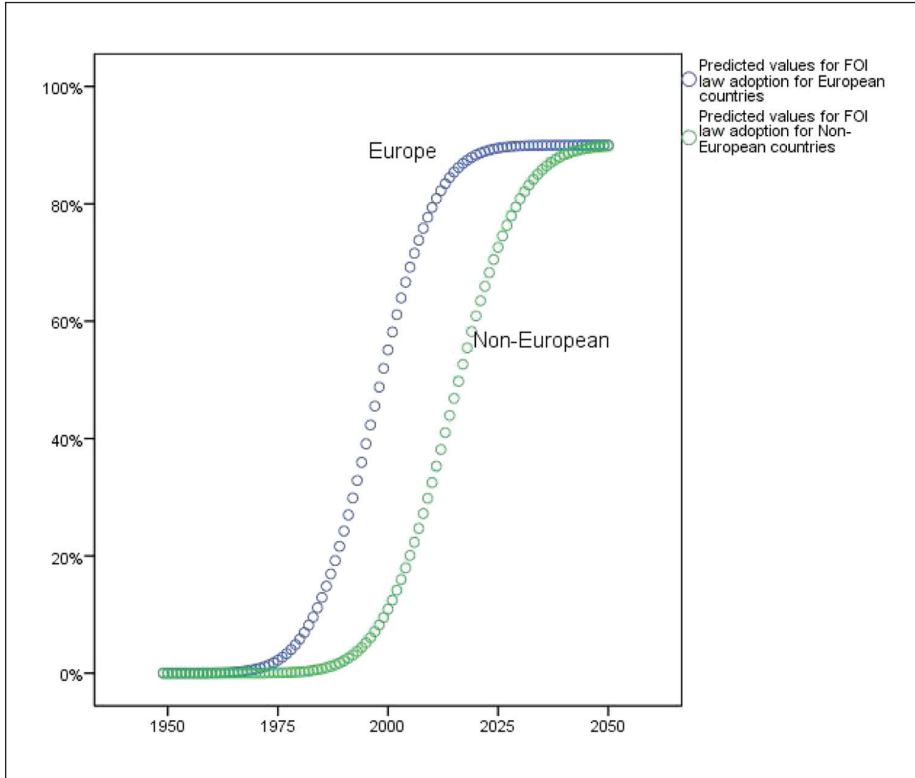
Figure 2. Predicted freedom of information (FOI) law adoption for European and non-European countries

It is important to note, however, that nations with democratic norms did not necessarily adopt the legislation in the early periods. This phenomenon is evident in Oceania, a region where all but one of fourteen nations had a "free" or "partly free" news media, yet the region had not had any adoptions of freedom of information legislation since 1982.

Cumulative normal model by region. In addressing **RQ3**, the study first used a cumulative normal model to inspect the extent that the regional setting influenced other nations adopting freedom of information legislation over time. The study found a significant difference in the influence of European nations on the diffusion of the legislation compared with other nations (Figure 2). The program arrived at these findings after completing twelve iterations on two derivatives (the mean and standard deviation) to attain the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) of 48.83, σ = 11.11. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the mean was 47.91 to 49.75. And the standard deviation had a 95% CI of 9.65 to 12.57. The R^2 = .93. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the non-European countries lagged behind the European countries in their influence on adoption of freedom of information laws. The program completed eleven iterations on
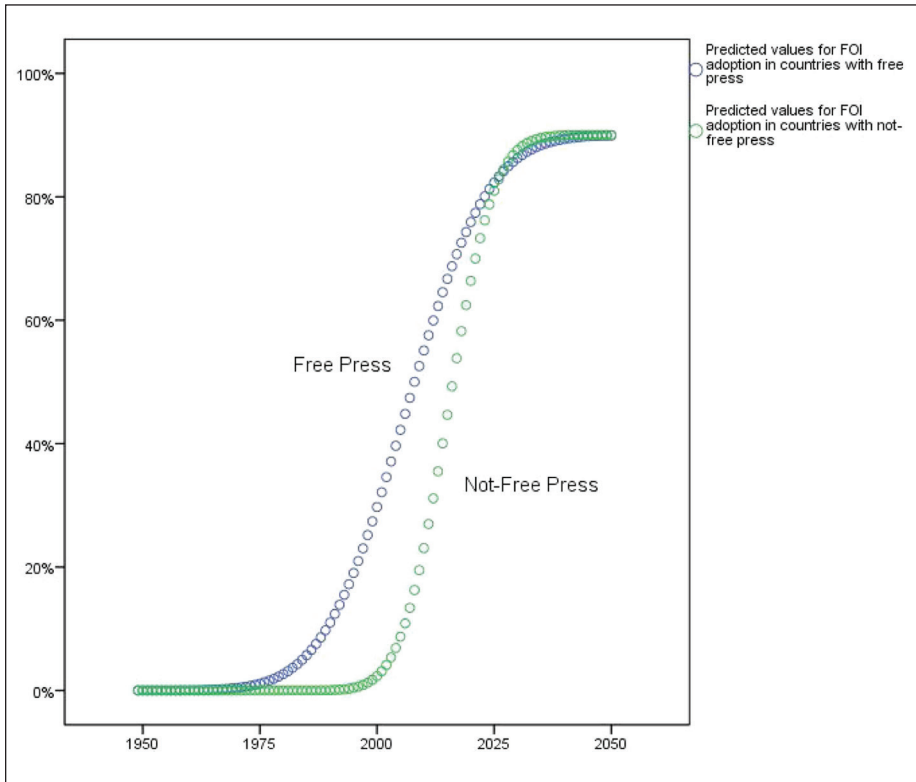
Figure 3. Predicted adoptions of freedom of information (FOI) laws in nations with and without a free press

the initial mean and standard deviation parameters and arrived at an MLE of 66.37, σ = 12.29. The 95% CI for the mean was 65.50 to 67.23 and 11.40 to 13.19 for the standard deviation. The model fit was strong, with R^2 = .98. The difference between the Americas and the non-Americas region was significant, but much less pronounced than the difference between Europe and non-European nations in rate of adoption. Thus, the Americas influence was tested later in the study with the Cox model to provide nuanced differences among regions.

Cumulative normal model for news media influence. For **RQ3**, the predicted influence of news media on the adoption of freedom of information legislation, the study performed ten iterations on the two derivatives (mean and standard deviation). The model showed that nations with a not-free press lagged on adoption of the laws when compared with nations that had free news media. As Figure 3 shows, the model predicted that free news media had the strongest influence on freedom of information legislation adoption, with an MLE of 58.06 and σ = 13.82. The 95% CI for the mean was 57.32 to 58.81 and 12.67 to 14.96 for the standard deviation. The R^2 = .97. The MLE for

Table 5. Factors Influencing the Likelihood of Nations Adopting Freedom of Information Laws (*N* = 192)

Models	Model 1: Geographic region/ Europe			Model 2: Geographic region/ Americas		
Independent variable	Hazard ratio	SE	CI	Hazard ratio	SE	CI
Geographic region						
Africa	0.07***	0.04	0.02–0.20	0.19*	0.11	0.06–0.57
Americas	0.37**	0.11	0.21–0.67	—	—	—
Asia	0.54	0.19	0.26–1.09	1.44	0.55	0.68–3.05
Europe	—	—	—	2.69**	0.80	1.50–4.82
Oceania	0.083**	0.07	0.020–0.35	0.22*	0.17	0.05–0.97
Lagged news media rights						
Not free	—	—	—	—	—	—
Partly free	3.09*	1.25	1.40–6.83	3.10*	1.25	1.40–6.83
Free	4.36**	1.90	1.86–10.24	4.36**	1.90	1.86–10.24

*$p < .05$. **$p < .001$. ***$p < .0001$.

not-free news media was 67.07 and σ = 7.75. The 95% CI for the mean was 66.37 to 67.78 and 7.18 to 8.33 for the standard deviation. The R^2 = .98.

Most interesting are the findings showing that although the diffusion of the adoption of freedom of information laws was predicted to be fastest in nations with the strongest news media rights, the diffusion in nations *without* free news media actually was about the same around 2025 (the year of predicted saturation).

Cox model. To obtain another assessment for **RQ3**, the study used the Cox model to examine geographic region and news media rights as independent prognostic factors to predict diffusion of freedom of information laws. As the results in Table 5 indicate, model 1 confirmed previous findings that showed the European region was the strongest region predictor for adoption of freedom of information legislation, followed by the Americas in model 2, when controlling for the influence of the news media. This corresponds with the cumulative normal model findings.

In the Cox model, the hazard function is the probability that a nation would adopt a freedom of information law in the observed period between 1949 and 2008. In model 1, after four iterations with censored and uncensored data, none of the geographic regions had values over 1.0, with Europe as the reference region. In model 1, the Americas region had a significant hazard ratio of 0.37, lagging behind Europe in influencing the adoption of the legislation. Thus, the model suggests that Europe had the strongest influence on the global diffusion of freedom of information legislation. After four iterations in model 2, Europe (with a significant hazard ratio of 2.69) clearly dominated in terms of influence over the Americas reference region. Asia's influence appeared not to be significant in both models; and Africa and Oceania lagged in each model.
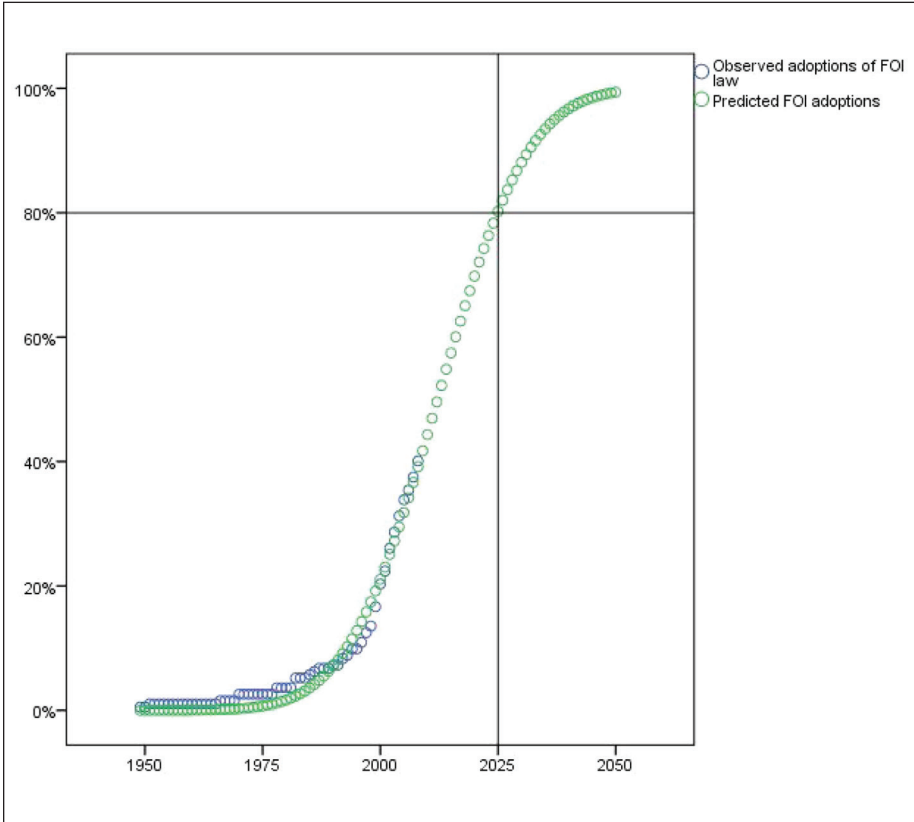
Figure 4. Observed and predicted freedom of information (FOI) law adoption in time

Furthermore, as models 1 and 2 in Table 5 demonstrate, when controlling for geographic region, nations with the highest news media rights had a stronger likelihood of adopting freedom of information laws than nations with news media that were partly free and not free. However, nations with news media with some rights (partly free) were more likely to adopt the laws than nations with news media without rights. In both models, it appears that news media rights status within a country had a stronger influence on adoption than geographical setting.

Future adoptions. The findings in Figure 4 indicate that, as a whole, the predicted global cumulative rate of freedom of information law adoption in this study, like the earlier models, follows the trajectory of a Sigmoid (S)-shaped curve.[72] The findings support other researchers' work that shows that with the initial pioneers of the innovation, the diffusion is slow to take off,[73] though the inflection point is later than is common with diffusion curves.

In addressing **RQ4** (Given the adoption rate of freedom of information legislation over the past half century, what is the predicted adoption pattern in the future?), the study found a close model fit between the observed cumulative adoptions of freedom of information laws (1949–2008) compared with the predicted diffusion (Figure 4). The data from the model show that the peak (critical mass) for adopting the legislation would occur after 2012. This is late, given that the first innovation was in 1949 and considering some technology innovations diffuse within a few years.[74]

As the predicted model in Figure 4 shows, by 2025 nearly 80% of 192 nations would have adopted the laws, which is the point where the cumulative normal curve begins to level.[75] The program arrived at these findings after completing ten iterations on two derivatives (the initial mean and standard deviation) to attain an MLE = 64.15, σ = 15.12. The 95% CI for the mean was 63.24 to 65.07. And the standard deviation had a 95% CI of 14.01 to 16.23. The R^2 = .97. According to the model, at the current rate and projected from the observations, the complete blanketing of nations around the world with freedom of information legislation would not occur until 2050. However, this would be doubtful, given the tenuous political, social, and economic environments in a number of nations that may not be hospitable to freedom of information legislation.

Discussion and Implications

This study is the first to apply Rogers's diffusion theory framework to the contagion of nations around the world adopting freedom of information legislation. The study found that the global diffusion of freedom of information laws from 1949 to 1995 were nearly all in the West. By the time of the study, data show that fewer than 10% of the nations in Europe and the Americas were without a freedom of information law or draft of the legislation, indicating that both regions are close to saturation. Between 45% and two-thirds of the countries in the other three regions did not have freedom of information legislation or drafts of the law.

The parametric and semiparametric diffusion models both indicate that the European nations led in influencing nations to adopt freedom of information laws. Sweden's post–World War II version of the freedom of information law is considered by some scholars to be the starting point in the world for the policy,[76] which spread first in Scandinavia through geographic connection and on to other European countries.[77]

The uptick in diffusion of the legislation, following a fairly slow start, occurred after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union breakup two years later, as there was a mobilization toward institution building in the region in postcommunist countries.[78] Another critical juncture was the information scarcity after the Chernobyl, Ukraine, nuclear power disaster, which later spurred an environmental movement that led the first nations in that region—Ukraine and Hungary—to adopt freedom of information legislation in the early 1990s.[79] These changes sparked a realignment approach toward adopting a Western democracy model of government accountability, which

included millions of dollars in investment from governments and transnational and intergovernmental organizations for lobbying and drafting freedom of information legislation and training public officials and citizens in using it, as well as developing independent and free news media. Governments also adopted the legislation to strengthen their nations' potential for membership in the European Union.[80]

The Cox model showed that the Americas region was the next strongest and significant among regions of influence. In the Americas region, with the exception of the innovator and early adopter nations of Colombia, the United States, and Canada, the adoption of freedom of information laws initially gained momentum in the Caribbean in the 1990s, with the majority of countries adopting in Latin America in the new millennium. This accounts, in part, for the late inflection of the diffusion curve. These regional adoptions, to an extent, reflect external pressures by the Organization of American States and, in some cases, directives from lenders, including the World Bank.[81] Inside nations, journalists and civil society groups often participated in the efforts to advance model freedom of information law adoption. In 2002, for example, Mexico's law became a global model after a campaign by a group of editors, reporters, academics, and nongovernmental organizations named the Grupo Oaxaca drafted and submitted a freedom of information bill in advance of then president Vicente Fox Quesada's administration.[82] As Doyle noted, the lobbying measure was rare in the region, but it started catching on in other nations in Latin America.[83]

Other regions in the world have shown less interest in the legislation. For instance, the first nation on the African continent to adopt freedom of information legislation was South Africa in 2000, just six years after democratic elections that followed the dismantling of apartheid. A decade later, when former U.S. president Jimmy Carter led the opening session at a conference focused on advancing freedom of information legislation on the continent, fewer than half a dozen countries had adopted a law among the fifty-three countries in the region.[84]

In addition to testing for the influence of geographic contagion, the models examined news media influence on freedom of information law adoption. According to the Cox models, the nations with the strongest news media rights had the most influence on freedom of information law diffusion. The two regions with the largest proportion of nations with "not free" news media, Africa and Asia, were among the regions with the least influence on the global diffusion of freedom of information legislation. Slightly more than half of the African nations had "not-free" news media, and more than half (67.92%) did not have a freedom of information law or a draft. In Asia, nearly 45% of forty-seven nations in the region did not have a draft of the legislation or a freedom of information law; and nearly two-thirds (63.83%) of the countries did not have a free news media. Though this bolsters past research that suggested democratic societies tend to support the flow of public information more than environments with autocratic regimes,[85] there appears to have been a shift in the past decade, with a greater number of countries with not-free news media adopting the legislation.

It was just before the point of inflection in the new millennium that a number of autocratic regimes began adopting the laws for a host of reasons that were not directly,

or necessarily, related to advancing democratic institutions. Those efforts included adopting freedom of information legislation to become part of the global "information society";[86] adopting transparency policies for World Trade Organization accession, fulfilling International Monetary Fund requirements;[87] or focusing on curbing corruption as United Nations affiliates pressed members for more government accountability.[88]

Though Rogers wrote about innovation overadoption, when the innovation and environment may not be compatible, some have argued that having freedom of information legislation, even in a hostile environment, holds much more institutional weight than international agreements, covenants, conventions, and declarations that advance the "right" to access public information. With 2025 as the year the model predicted more than three-fourths (80%) of the nations in the world would have adopted freedom of information legislation, it appears that a much more diverse group of countries would be adopting the legislation, many with autocratic governments.

The implication of a critical mass of countries adopting freedom of information laws in these environments could be a harbinger of nations opting for a hybrid approach to implementing the legislation. In some cases, public records laws would become "dead letters," given the proportion of nations currently with a draft of the legislation that have autocratic rule, government-controlled news media, or a lack of institutions to allow participation in the process.[89] Still, transnational organizations have dispatched staff to assist in filing information requests and developing news media in countries where civil society and news media are weak.[90]

As noted, too, the rise of vibrant online social networks could, to varying extents, lessen the suppression of communication within and across borders of autocratic countries and thus better enable the dissemination of information from public records requests. Indeed, the Internet has allowed advocates for freedom of information to launch listservs, blogs, online workshops, videos, websites, and networks across continents. As scholars have pointed out, in nations where governments have controlled the work of journalists, there are unprecedented advantages with digitally networked spaces that provide a public sphere for political discourse.[91] Yet as Mou and colleagues noted, caution should be exerted to avoid "jumping to overly optimistic conclusions."[92]

Future Research

Though scholars have historically separated policy diffusion and policy networks,[93] development of new measurements of geopolitical connections—online and otherwise—associated with the diffusion of freedom of information legislation, and communication related to it, would strengthen future studies. While geographic setting and news media rights served in this study as proxies for external and internal influences on adoption of freedom of information legislation, when the data are available, these proxies should be replaced by indicators that even more closely represent the networks involved with the diffusion of the innovation.

Furthermore, as Rogers suggested,[94] there are assumptions made with members of a system adopting an innovation, and these parameters may, for a host of reasons, not fit as circumstances change. Researchers must make assumptions in studies when diffusion is in progress that would not be made when the work is post hoc. Given that the data in the study reflect the period before a critical mass has been reached in the diffusion process, findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research should examine the potential influence of the critical mass of nations adopting freedom of information legislation by testing whether diffusion becomes self-sustaining once a critical mass is reached.[95]

Conclusion

This exploratory study of the global diffusion of freedom of information laws indicates that with the exception of the influence of Europe and, to a lesser extent, the Americas, geographic region had less of an influence on the diffusion of freedom of information laws than did a conducive environment for democratic norms, specifically an environment for strong news media rights. Though it appears the two regions with the greatest proportion of countries with weak environments for journalists—Africa and Asia—are the largest percentage of nations without the legislation or drafts of the law, the model predictions indicate these nations may be nearly in the same proportion as the other adopters at the estimated time of global saturation, 2025.

The predicted trajectory of nations adopting freedom of information legislation in the future, along with the existence of dozens of draft laws or lobbies for the legislation, indicate that these laws will be adopted in challenging environments for journalists in a number of countries. Still, the burgeoning area of online social networks has, to an extent, enabled the mobilization of groups that have been silenced in the past. Given these rapidly changing circumstances, how freedom of information legislation will survive in these new environments is one of the great experiments of the new millennium.

Notes

1. Elia Armstrong, *Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration: Recent Trends, Regional and International Developments and Emerging Issues* (New York: United Nations, Economic & Social Affairs, August 2005), 3; Colin J. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects: The Cross-National Adoption of Policy Instruments for Bureaucratic

Accountability," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration* 10 (July 1997): 213–33; Adam J. Newmark, "An Integrated Approach to Policy Transfer and Diffusion," *Review of Policy Research* 19 (summer 2002): 152–80, 162.

2. David Banisar, *Freedom of Information around the World 2006: A Global Survey of Access to Government Information Laws* (London: Privacy International, 2006), 19; Ann Florini, "The Battle over Transparency," in *The Right to Know: Transparency for an Open World*, ed. Ann Florini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1–16, 5; Toby Mendel, *Freedom of Information: A Comparative Legal Survey* (Paris: UNESCO, 2008); Alasdair Roberts, "Three Patterns in the Diffusion of Transparency Rules: Money, Guns, and Human Rights" (Social Science Research Network paper, March 12, 2003), http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1439722.

3. Banisar, *Freedom of Information*; Helen Darbishire and Thomas Carson, *Transparency & Silence: A Survey of Access to Information Laws and Practices in 14 Countries*, ed. Stephen Humphreys, Sandra Coliver, David Berry, Chuck Sudetic, and Halle Czechowski (New York: Open Society Institute, 2006). The article defines freedom-of-information legislation as the presence of a law that allows the public to request and obtain information from government offices at the national level; Martin Halstuk, "Freedom of Information," in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), http://www.blackwellreference.com.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9781405131995_chunk_g978140513199511_ss47-1; Roumeen Islam, "Does More Transparency Go Along with Better Governance?" *Economics & Politics* 18 (July 2006): 121–67; Banisar, *Freedom of Information*, 5.

4. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects"; Per-Olof Busch, Helge Jörgens, and Kerstin Tews, "The Global Diffusion of Regulatory Instruments: The Making of a New International Environmental Regime," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 598 (March 2005): 146–67; Newmark, "Integrated Approach"; Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

5. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects"; Show-Ling Jang, Shau-Chi Dai, and Simona Sung, "The Pattern and Externality Effect of Diffusion of Mobile Telecommunications: The Case of the OECD and Taiwan," *Information Economics & Policy* 17 (March 2005): 133–48; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

6. Carole A. Estabrooks, Linda Derksen, Connie Winther, John N. Lavis, Shannon D. Scott, Lars Wallin, and Joanne Profetto-McGrath, "The Intellectual Structure and Substance of the Knowledge Utilization Field: A Longitudinal Author Co-citation Analysis, 1945 to 2004," *Implementation Science* 3 (November 2008): 49–70.

7. Diane Stone, "Learning Lessons and Transferring Policy across Time, Space and Disciplines," *Politics* 19 (February 1999): 51–59, 55.

8. David Dolowitz and David Marsh, "Who Learns What from Whom: A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature," *Political Studies* 44 (June 1996): 343–57.

9. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects."

10. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects"; Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion"; Zachary Elkins and Beth Simmons, "On Waves, Clusters, and Diffusion: A Conceptual

Framework," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 598 (March 2005): 33–51; Jang, Dai, and Sung, "Pattern and Externality Effect."

11. Frances S. Berry, "Sizing Up State Policy Innovation Research," *Policy Studies Journal* 22 (September 1994): 442–56; Michael Mintrom, "Policy Entrepreneurs and the Diffusion of Innovation," *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (July 1997): 738–70; Thomas W. Valente and Rebecca L. Davis, "Accelerating the Diffusion of Innovations Using Opinion Leaders," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 566 (November 1999): 55–67; Newmark, "Integrated Approach," 161; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, xviii.

12. Scholars dating back to University of California, Berkeley anthropologist Alfred Louis Kroeber have conducted spatial analysis. Purnima Sinha and D. P. Sinha, "Alfred Louis Kroeber: His Contribution to Anthropological Theories," *Anthropos* 63–64 (1968–69): 793–807; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 43.

13. Torsten Hägerstrand, *The Propagation of Innovation Waves* (London: Royal University of Lund, 1952).

14. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

15. Peter Leeson and Andrea Dean, "The Democratic Domino Theory: An Empirical Investigation," *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (July 2009): 533–51.

16. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects," 152; Busch et al., "The Global Diffusion of Regulatory Instruments: The Making of a New International Environmental Regime," 152; Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

17. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects," 223.

18. Mintrom defines policy entrepreneurs as those who advance policy ideas and policy change through "identifying problems, networking in policy circles, shaping the terms of the policy debates, and building coalitions." This is done by "seeding" policy ideas, in some cases in multiple systems in other countries or other states/provinces through contacts with political and business elites. Mintrom, "Policy Entrepreneurs," 739–40; James W. Dearing, "Applying Diffusion of Innovation Theory to Intervention Development," *Research on Social Work Practice* 19 (September 2009): 503–18; Michael Mintrom and Sandra Vergari, "Networks and Innovation Diffusion: The Case of State Education Reforms," *The Journal of Politics* 60 (February 1998): 126–48.

19. Newmark, "Integrated Approach," 161, 165.

20. Rogers describes a change agent as an individual influencing "innovation-decisions in a direction deemed desirable" by an employer, the "change agency" (Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 27). Dearing notes that "the change agent's role is one of advocacy, information, and implementation support," and most often the activity is within a system. Thus, change agents have distinctly different roles from policy entrepreneurs and communicate with stakeholders at different levels. Dearing, "Applying Diffusion of Innovation Theory," 514; Sallie Hughes, "From the Inside Out: How Institutional Entrepreneurs Transformed Mexican Journalism," *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 8 (summer 2003): 87–117; Newmark, "Integrated Approach," 163; Stone, "Learning Lessons."

21. Dolowitz and Marsh, "Who Learns What."

22. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 26–27; Banisar, *Freedom of Information*; Darbishire and Carson, *Transparency & Silence*; David E. Kaplan, *Empowering Independent Media: U.S. Efforts to Foster Free and Independent News around the World* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for Democracy, 2008).

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25. Russell S. Sobel, Nabamita Dutta, and Sanjukta Roy, "Beyond Borders: Is Media Freedom Contagious?" *Kyklos* 63 (February 2010): 133–43.

26. Yi Mou, David Atkin, and Hanlong Fu, "Predicting Political Discussion in a Censored Virtual Environment," *Political Communication* 28 (special issue 2011): 341–56; Wen-fang Tang and Shanto Iyengar, "The Emerging Media System in China: Implications for Regime Change," *Political Communication* 28 (special edition 2011): 263–67; Carol Soon and Hichang Cho, "Flows of Relations and Communication among Singapore Political Bloggers and Organizations: The Networked Public Sphere Approach," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 8 (1, 2011): 93–109; Bruce Etling, John Kelly, Robert Faris, and John Palfrey, "Mapping the Arabic Blogosphere: Politics and Dissent Online," *New Media & Society* 12 (8, 2010): 1225–43.

27. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 20.

28. Wejnert, "Integrating Models of Diffusion."

29. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 344.

30. John M. Ackerman and Irma E. Sandoval-Ballesteros, "The Global Explosion of Freedom of Information Laws," *Administrative Law Review* 58 (winter 2006): 85–130; Banisar, *Freedom of Information*; Stephen Lamble, "Freedom of Information, a Finnish Clergyman's Gift to Democracy," *Freedom of Information Review* 97 (February 2002): 2–8.

31. Colombia is the second exception. The Latin American nation adopted its first law in 1888. However, its more contemporary version was adopted in 1985. Banisar, *Freedom of Information*.

32. United Nations, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948), Article 19, http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr//.

33. Bennett, "Understanding Ripple Effects"; Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion."

34. Banisar, *Freedom of Information*, 11–18; Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion"; Mendel, *Freedom of Information*, 19–29, 39–48; Asian Development Bank/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Anti Corruption Action Initiative for Asia and the Pacific" (2001), http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/24/35021642.pdf; Commonwealth Secretariat, Model Laws, "Freedom of Information Act," http://www.thecommonwealth.org/shared_asp_files/uploadedfiles/%7BAC090445-A8AB-490B-8D4B-F110BD2F3AB1%7D_Freedom%20of%20Information.pdf; Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, "Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents" (2008), https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1377737&Site=CM; European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, "Directive 2001/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 March 2001 on the Deliberate Release into the Environment of Genetically Modified Organisms and Repealing Council Directive 90/220/EEC" (2001), http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2001/l_106/l_10620010417en00010038.pdf; European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, "Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on Public Access to

Environmental Information and Repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC" (2003), http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:041:0026:0032:EN:PDF; Organization of American States, "Model Inter-American Law on Access to Information" (2010), http://www.oas.org/DIL/CP-CAJP-2840-10_Corr1_eng.pdf; United Nations, "United Nations Convention Against Corruption" (2003), http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026_E.pdf; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Brisbane Declaration—Freedom of Information: The Right to Know" (2010), http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/world-press-freedom-day/previous-celebrations/2010/brisbane-declaration/.

35. Juliet Gill and Sallie Hughes, "Bureaucratic Compliance with Mexico's New Access to Information Law," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22 (June 2005): 121–37; Toby Mendel, *The Right to Information in Latin America* (Quito, Ecuador: UNESCO, 2009); Juliet G. Pinto, "Transparency Policy Initiatives in Latin America: Understanding Policy Outcomes from an Institutional Perspective," *Communication Law & Policy* 14 (January 2009): 41–71.

36. Sheila S. Coronel, "Fighting for the Right to Know," in *The Right to Know: Access to Information in Southeast Asia*, ed. Sheila S. Coronel (Bangkok: Raintree, 2001), 1–19; Jamie P. Horsley, "Toward an Open China?" in Florini, *Right to Know*, 54–91; Suzanne J. Piotrowski, Yahong Zhang, Weiwei Lin, and Wenxuan Yu, "Issues for Implementation of the Chinese Open Government Information Regulations," *Public Administration Review* 69 (suppl. 1, December 2009): S129–35; Alasdair Roberts, "A Great and Revolutionary Law? The First Four Years of India's Right to Information Act," *Public Administration Review* 60 (November–December 2010): 925–33; Kyu H. Youm, "Access to State-Held Information: The Korean Experience," in *Freedom of Information: An Asian Survey*, ed. Venkat Iyer (Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Center and the School of Communication Studies, Nanyang Technological University, 2001), 19–53.

37. Colin Darch and Peter G. Underwood, *Freedom of Information and the Developing World: The Citizen, the State and Models of Openness* (Oxford, UK: Chandos, 2010); Jeannine E. Relly, "Corruption, Secrecy, and Access-to-Information Legislation in Africa: A Cross-National Study of Political Institutions," in *Research in Social Problems and Public Policy*, vol. 19, ed. S. L. Maret (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2011), 325-352.

38. Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion"; Henry H. Perritt Jr. and Zachary Rustad, "Freedom of Information Spreads to Europe," *Government Information Quarterly* 17 (4th quarter 2000): 403–17.

39. Jeannine E. Relly and David Cuillier, "A Comparison of Political, Cultural, and Economic Indicators of Access to Information in Arab and Non-Arab States," *Government Information Quarterly* 27 (4, 2010): 360–70.

40. Darbishire and Carson, *Transparency & Silence*; Darch and Underwood, *Freedom of Information*.

41. Islam, "More Transparency"; Jeannine E. Relly and Meghna Sabharwal, "Perceptions of Transparency of Government Policymaking: A Cross-National Study," *Government Information Quarterly* 26 (January 2009): 148–57; Alasdair Roberts, *Blacked Out: Government Secrecy in the Information Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

42. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 112.

43. Banisar, *Freedom of Information*; Roger Vleugels, "Overview of All FOIA Laws" (2010), http://www.scribd.com/doc/63702424/Fringe-Special-Overview-FOIA-Sep-20-2010.

44. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 12.

45. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*; Thomas W. Valente, "Diffusion of Innovations and Policy Decision-Making," *Journal of Communication* 43 (March 1993): 30–45.

46. Kristin M. Lord, *The Perils and Promise of Global Transparency* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

47. Those that adopted last were titled "laggards." Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 279–85.

48. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 240.

49. To further understand the context in which nations may be adopting the legislation for descriptive analysis, nations that have not adopted a law are further divided into nations with a draft of the legislation and those without a draft.

50. James W. Dearing and Do Kyun Kim, "Diffusion of Information and Innovation," in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, vol. 3, ed. Wolfgang Donsbach (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 1299–1304.

51. United Nations, "United Nations Member States" (2006), http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml.

52. Vleugels, "Overview of All FOIA Laws." Vleugels's list includes the Cook Islands, Kosovo, and Taiwan, which are not UN member states. Banisar's 2006 original adoption years were used when the original adoption year was not available with Vleugels's data set.

53. Piotrowski et al., "Issues for Implementation"; Darch and Underwood, *Freedom of Information*.

54. Banisar, *Freedom of Information*, 166–68; Vleugels, "Overview of All FOIA Laws," 2, 6–7.

55. Based on Busch, Jörgens, and Tews's research, the diffusion model in this study uses the years that Sweden (1949) and Colombia (1985) adopted a contemporary version of the freedom of information law. Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion."

56. In the category for Americas are North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

57. Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press Methodology* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2009).

58. Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press Methodology*.

59. Lee B. Becker, Tudor Vlad, and Nancy Nusser, "An Evaluation of Press Indicators," *International Communication Gazette* 61 (February 2007): 5–28.

60. The study used news media rights alone because of the high correlations between news media rights and civil liberties ($R = .72$) and between political rights and press freedom ($R = .72$).

61. Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press Methodology*, 2. The news media rights ratings were performed by a team of several dozen scholars, regional experts, and analysts who examined international and domestic news media reports, news media and human rights organization reports, and reports from consultants and staff, multilateral organizations, and journalists in the field. Values from 1980 were used for the democratic countries that adopted freedom of information legislation before the year that the values were available. The study used a one-year lag for new media rights in each country for the year before

freedom of information legislation was adopted through 2008. The study used 2009 values for news media rights in countries that had not adopted the legislation.

62. Nigel Meade and Towhidul Islam, *Forecasting the Diffusion of Innovations: Implications for Time-Series Extrapolation in Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*, ed. J. Scott Armstrong (Norwell, MA: Kluwer, 2001).

63. SPSS Statistics for Windows, v. 19 (Chicago: SPSS Inc., 2010).

64. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 23.

65. Meade and Islam, *Forecasting the Diffusion of Innovations*; Thomas W. Valente, *Network Models of the Diffusion of Innovations* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1995).

66. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Bradford S. Jones, "Time Is of the Essence: Event History Models in Political Science," *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (October 1997): 1414–61.

67. Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, "Time Is of the Essence," 1432.

68. Unlike other hazard models, the Cox model allows the distribution of the time duration to be unspecified, and the covariates are what parameterize the duration times. Thus, the hazard rate is similar to the criterion variable used in regression. The duration times are parameterized only with respect to the covariates. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Bradford S. Jones, *Event History Modeling: A Guide for Social Scientists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 21.

69. Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, *Event History Modeling*.

70. Valente, "Diffusion of Innovations."

71. The analysis used the projection of 80% of the countries in the study adopting freedom of information legislation to calculate the frequencies of innovator and early adopter countries.

72. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*.

73. Jang, Dai, and Sung, "Pattern and Externality Effect."

74. Jang, Dai, and Sung, "Pattern and Externality Effect"; Catie Snow Bailard, "Mobile Phone Diffusion and Corruption in Africa," *Political Communication* 26 (July 2009): 333–53; Mark Tremayne, Amy Schmitz Weiss, and Rosental C. Alves, "From Product to Service: The Diffusion of Dynamic Content in Online Newspapers," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (autumn 2007): 825–39.

75. About 154 countries would have adopted and 38 nations would have been without the legislation.

76. Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion."

77. Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion," 161.

78. Darbishire and Carson, *Transparency & Silence*, 68.

79. Darbishire and Carson, *Transparency & Silence*, 68.

80. Banisar, *Freedom of Information*; Busch, Jörgens, and Tews, "Global Diffusion"; Kaplan, *Empowering Independent Media*; Roberts, *Blacked Out.*

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