

Good neighbours really do matter, according to a new study

29 March 2018



Credit: University of Nottingham

Poorer countries with 'bad' neighbours are more likely to perform less well when it comes to human rights according to new research from the University of Nottingham.

In the paper, "Good [neighbours](#) matter: economic geography and the diffusion of [human rights](#)" published in the journal *Spatial Economic Analysis*, Professor Todd Landman from the University of Nottingham and his co-authors, use data from a wide range of countries to investigate the geopolitical and economic aspects of human rights performance.

The findings show that the human rights performance of individual countries depends (primarily) on their wealth and their proximity to 'good' and 'bad' neighbours.

The team not only looked at income levels within countries to assess human rights performance, but also use modelling to look at the impact that good or bad neighbours had on their performance.

Their analysis focussed on whether having a good neighbour (in terms of HR performance) affected a country's level of HR; whether the distance from a good neighbour affected a country's level of HR performance; and whether clusters of good HR performers are a result of both their level of wealth and their proximity to good neighbours.

Economic trends

The team used previous research along with their own data to look at spatial and economic trends in human rights performance across the globe.

Using a relatively simple spatial weighting model the team initially compared each country's human rights performance with predicted regression on a weighted average of its neighbour's performance.

The team's findings confirmed earlier results that human rights [performance](#) tends to be linked to socioeconomic variables.

Beyond the income patterns evident in the data, the team also found clear regional patterns that are explained through the idea of diffusion.

Professor Todd Landman, from the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham, and lead researcher on the study, says:

"Our results contribute to the ongoing discussion about how countries across the globe deal with human rights. Despite the costs of putting into place formal laws to promote uniformity with other countries and global human rights norms, conformity may happen because of a country's proximity to good neighbours, even in the world's poorer and more troubled regions.

"Our findings also tend to suggest that there are key 'beacon' countries that can play a vital role in disseminating good human rights practice to neighbours."

Professor Landman is Executive Director of the Rights Lab Beacon of Excellence at the University of Nottingham and the analysis that features in this article is now being deployed to explain and understand the global variation in the prevalence of modern slavery.

More information: T. Huw Edwards et al. Good neighbours matter: economic geography and the diffusion of human rights, *Spatial Economic Analysis* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/17421772.2018.1412087](#)

Provided by University of Nottingham

APA citation: Good neighbours really do matter, according to a new study (2018, March 29) retrieved 19 June 2019 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-good-neighbours.html>

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