

**Abstract**

The respect for human rights follows strong spatial patterns among countries. However, to understand and predict the spatial effects of policies and interventions, it is imperative to know whether these spatial patterns stem from countries' interactions and spillovers, or from common deep determinants, such as history and physical geography. This paper makes an effort to disentangle the two. The lion's share of spatial patterns is accounted for by time-invariant factors, while the evidence of contemporaneous spillovers is very marginal. This limits the scope of regional effects when individual countries change their human rights situations.