

The Policy Mobility of Police Interactions Open-Data

Brennan Field¹, Scott Bell¹

¹ Geography, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK

Research Context

Emerging Open-Data policies in the United States are expanding the amount of government information available to the public in machine-readable data sets. One such policy that is rapidly spreading across different jurisdictions focuses on data detailing interactions between citizens and police officers, such as police uses of force and vehicle stops. The uptake of this new policy marks a significant shift from the former status quo, as information that details interactions between citizens and police officers of this sort has traditionally been difficult for citizens to access. Given the variety of spatial information contained within many of these newly released data sets (both socio and physical), the opening of this previously restricted information has a variety of implications for society.

Goal

The goal of this research is to explore the spread of this emergent policy (referred to as police interactions Open-Data) through following its *mobility* as enabled by the White House led “Police Data Initiative”. Using original qualitative interview data from key actors within the Police Data Initiative (PDI) and participating police departments, this research will discover the key factors behind the successful mobility of police interactions Open-Data across the United States.

Methods

This research will utilize key-informant interviews, focusing on actors within the PDI and participating police departments. Key-informant interviews are an appropriate choice to examine policy mobility as this method can focus on “transfer agents” and their role in policy mobility. Document analysis of materials from the PDI will also be utilized. Reviewing these documents will allow for analysis of the concrete manifestations of “situations”, and the associated relations between “transfer agents” and policymakers important for understanding policy mobility.

Anticipated Results

It is anticipated that the successful mobility of police interactions Open-Data can be explained by three key factors: the use of PDI summits as sites of learning and interaction between policy actors, “solutions starved” urban policy actors seeking ready-made policy solutions and these being available from the PDI, and the mobility of certain cities as “places” to emulate in the narratives used by PDI transfer agents.

Expected Impacts

This research will further our understanding of the factors behind policy mobility broadly while also providing the first scholarly investigation of police interactions Open-Data. Beyond contributing to literature on policy mobility, examining these policies has implications for Canada. Currently, while many police departments in Canada have

Open Data policies on information they gather about reported crime, these policies do not cover data on other interactions between police and citizen. Understanding how police interactions Open-Data became mobile across the United States could be important to understanding the potential expansion of these policies to Canada.