Problems (and Solutions) in the Measurement of Policy Diffusion Mechanisms

Online Appendix

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A1 Sampling procedure

Our meta-analysis considers all journal articles found in the online database Web of Knowledge ("All Databases") with the search topic "policy diffusion" that were published between 1990 and 2012. Using these criteria, the search yielded 165 results.[3] All articles containing the term "policy diffusion" in their title or abstract have been included in the dataset. Additionally, titles containing the terms "policy transfer," "convergence," "race to the bottom," "harmonization," and "contagion" have been taken into account (Graham, Shipan and Volden 2013). Furthermore, all articles citing those included in the dataset have been listed to capture the relevance (number of citations) of the articles in the dataset. The citing articles provided further cases to which the search criteria mentioned above were applied. These articles—including their citing articles that also respected the same criteria—were included into the dataset. This first sample contained 235 journal articles. In order to reduce this dataset to the most relevant articles in the field of policy diffusion, the following criteria have been applied. First, the most cited titles were included into the final dataset, while articles that have seldom or never been cited, and thus can be considered as less relevant in this research area, were excluded from the dataset.[4] Second, titles that have not been published in a political science (including the fields of administration and economic and/or political geography, as well as law) or sociological journal were dropped from the dataset to exclude articles that do not analyze policy diffusion. Finally, we only kept empirical works. The final, definitive dataset contains 114 articles. The full list is shown in Appendix A7.

A2 Coding rules

High level of aggregation. This condition concerns the operationalization of the level where the units of analysis are observed. The local level corresponds to municipalities, towns and cities. The regional level corresponds to regions, districts, provinces and counties. The state level corresponds to federal states. The country level corresponds to nation-states.

Economic policy. This condition distinguishes between economic policies, fiscal policies and regulations concerning lotteries and gaming, on one hand, and other policies, on the other hand. Examples of the former include: the privatization of

[3]On September 2, 2012.

[4]The average article was cited 21.77 times. We excluded articles with fewer than 10 citations. Because the articles published at later stages of the observed time span were, of course, cited less frequently than those articles published at an earlier stage, this criterion was progressively relaxed and, from the year 2011 onwards, articles without citations entered the dataset.

public utilities; corporate tax policies; capital account liberalization; and state lotteries.

Quantitative analysis. This condition distinguishes between empirical studies based on qualitative case studies and those based on statistical analyses.

Geographic proximity. This condition refers to the spatial proximity of the observing entities, e.g., sharing a border, or any other measure of geographical distance or neighborhood. Examples include: the number of neighbouring states that have already adopted educational policies; the adoption of competitive state lottery policies in states that share a border; and the proportion of neighbouring states with smoking bans in restaurants.

Joint membership. This condition relates to any form of direct contact or interaction among the subjects of diffusion processes, which typically encompass co-membership in executive boards and active participation in different kinds of groups. Examples include: shared membership of countries in IGOs with social and cultural functions; the proportion of states in the same regional conference that has previously introduced similar healthcare polices; and co-membership in transnational networks that produce environmental standards.

Success of policy. This condition refers to the assessment of the success of the diffusing policy, either in instrumental or in strategic terms, from the point of view of the adopters. Examples include: the success of other countries in attracting foreign investment; the policy outcomes of other countries, measured in terms of the difference between the unemployment rate at the end and at the beginning of the electoral term; and the adoptions of children's health insurance programs that have been successful at lowering the uninsurance rate of poor children in other states.

Structural equivalence. This condition concerns the real or perceived similarity of entities in structural terms (e.g. to hold an equivalent position in a network) or regarding their ideology. Examples include: the number of countries sharing the same language, the same predominant religion and/or the same colonial past, for which there exist preferential trade agreements; the proportion of countries belonging to the same group of welfare states that have already privatized their public utilities; and the structural equivalence of whether countries compete in the same international export and import markets.

Number of previous adopters. This condition operationalizes the effect of a critical mass of previous adopters. Examples include: the cumulative percentage of prior adopters of liberalized stock exchanges; the percentage of countries that have previously adopted gender quotas; and the share of regulatory agencies that already exist in other countries.

Trade flows. This condition relates to interdependence deriving from trade partnerships or trade flows between entities. Examples include: the total trade flows among countries, with reference to tax policy; the amount of bilateral trade

between countries, as a predictor of the adoption of environmental policies; and the trade diversions between two countries in a dyad weighted by share of country B's total exports to country A.

Learning. This outcome condition accounts for the conceptualization of learning as a diffusion mechanism. Examples include: learning conceived as the process of using pieces of information from other states to make policy-relevant decisions; learning as a process whereby policymakers use the experience of other countries to update their beliefs on the consequences of a policy; and learning as the observation of the politics of policy adoption by other governments and the impacts of those policies.

Emulation. This outcome condition accounts for the conceptualization of emulation as a diffusion mechanism. Examples include: emulation as the process of simply copying the policies adopted by other governments; emulation as the adoption of policies that are socially valued and increase the legitimacy of the decision-makers; and emulation as the tendency to adopt a shared policy model.

Competition. This outcome condition accounts for the conceptualization of competition as a diffusion mechanism. Examples include: competition as the process whereby policies diffuse when countries compete for capital and export markets; competition as a response to (usually negative) policy externalities created by others; and competition as the process of adopting policies after a shift in the incentives of adopters caused by direct competitors.

A3 Intercoder reliability

The intercoder reliability of a coding procedure must be ensured through the recoding of a random sample of articles by another researcher. The level of intercoder reliability measures "the extent to which the different judges tend to assign the same rating to each object" (Krippendorf 2004). In other terms, it assesses the reproducibility of the coding. Krippendorff's alpha is the most general agreement measure with appropriate reliability interpretations in content analysis. The basic idea is to ensure that data do not deviate too much from perfect intercoder agreement (and not that they do not deviate from chance). Concretely, the alpha algorithm "counts pairs of categories or scale points that observers have assigned to individual units, treating observers as freely permutable and being unaffected by their numbers" (Hayes and Krippendorff 2007). Thus, the alpha scale defines two points: 1.000 for perfect reliability and 0.000 for the absence of reliability. Following Krippendorff, the benchmark value for the minimum satisfactory level of intercoder reliability is 0.667, while a value of 0.800 or above indicates a very reliable measurement. To implement this procedure, we defined a random sample of 15 observations (representing about 10% of the sample) to be recoded by another analyst. These 15 observations represent diffusion mechanisms and are treated as nominal data. (We focused specifically on outcome variables because, since we coded the underlying concept instead of the formal label, some kind of judgment can be involved. Instead, the coding of conditions such as

quantitative/qualitative analysis, or to what extent the mechanisms are operationalized with a measure of proximity or something else, is a much simpler operation that refers to the objective characteristics of each study.) Each observation involves the appraisal of values on four categories: (1) learning, (2) competition, (3) emulation and (4) none. Then, the agreement between the two pairs of judgments (by the main coder and by the recoder) can be appraised. The result was a very satisfactory level of intercoder reliability: 0.895.

A4 Technical appendix on the fuzzy-set QCA

Based on Fiss' procedure, Table 2 shows all intermediate solutions. Parsimonious solutions can be derived from the table, as explained below. In line with Fiss' approach, complex solutions are not presented, because the intermediate solution including simplifying assumptions based on "easy" counterfactuals is more appropriate to provide meaningful insights into the investigated configurations (Fiss 2011, 403). As usual, the solution table does not include configurations that do not lead to the outcome, were not observed empirically or did not pass the consistency threshold. Our analytical assumptions are that proximity, interaction, success, similarity, critical mass and trade are always present, while the other conditions are either always present or always absent. This is because operationalization-related conditions should be positively associated with the underlying mechanisms, while design-related conditions should be considered as neutral. The baseline frequency threshold was 1. Although higher frequency thresholds are sometimes helpful for dealing with measurement error, in this piece we aim at achieving a fine-grained mapping of the state of the field, whereby treating empirical instances as logical remainders is not recommended (Maggetti and Levi-Faur 2013). Following the usual robustness checks, minor changes were observed regarding the permutations and the number of solutions, but the interpretation of the results remained substantively unchanged. Alternative frequency thresholds used for the robustness checks were 2 and 3. Alternative consistency thresholds were 0.7, 0.8 and 1. Alternative simplifying assumptions for the intermediate solution were: presence of success in the first analysis, presence of critical mass in the second analysis and presence of trade in the third analysis, respectively, while all other conditions where absent.

A5 Truth tables

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	11	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	11	0	0.19	0.19	0.19
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	0	0.43	0.43	0.43
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	7	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.41	0.41	0.41
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.39	0.39	0.39
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	6	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	1	0.80	0.80	0.80
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0.06	0.06	0.06
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	0	0.27	0.27	0.27
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	0.33	0.33	0.33
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0.42	0.42	0.42
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	0.23	0.23	0.23
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0.33	0.33	0.33
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0.40	0.40	0.40
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0.29	0.29	0.29
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	0.27	0.27	0.27
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0.86	0.86	0.86
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0.33	0.33	0.33
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0.50	0.50	0.50
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.60	0.60	0.60
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0.14	0.14	0.14
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00

1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.33	0.33	0.33

Table A1: Truth table for the outcome "Learning." A = Proximity, B= Interaction, C = Success, D = Similarity, E = Nr of adopters, F = Trade, G = Quantitative, H = Economic policy, I = Level, J = Number of cases, K = Competition, L = Raw consistency, M = PRI consistency, N = SYM consistency.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	11	0	0.45	0.45	0.45
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	11	0	0.25	0.25	0.25
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	0	0.52	0.52	0.52
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	7	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	6	0	0.14	0.14	0.14
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	0	0.20	0.20	0.20
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0.35	0.35	0.35
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	1	0.73	0.73	0.73
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	1	0.67	0.67	0.67
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0.58	0.58	0.58
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	0	0.25	0.25	0.25
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	0.46	0.46	0.46
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0.47	0.47	0.47
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0.43	0.43	0.43
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0	0.00	0.00	0.00

0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	1	0.73	0.73	0.73
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0.14	0.14	0.14
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0.33	0.33	0.33
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.50	0.50	0.50
0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0.50	0.50	0.50
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0.43	0.43	0.43
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0.25	0.25	0.25
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table A2: Truth table for the outcome "Emulation." A = Proximity, B= Interaction, C = Success, D = Similarity, E = Nr of adopters, F = Trade, G = Quantitative, H = Economic policy, I = Level, J = Number of cases, K = Competition, L = Raw consistency, M = PRI consistency, N = SYM consistency.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	11	0	0.55	0.55	0.55
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	11	0	0.56	0.56	0.56
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	0	0.05	0.05	0.05
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	7	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	6	0	0.05	0.05	0.05

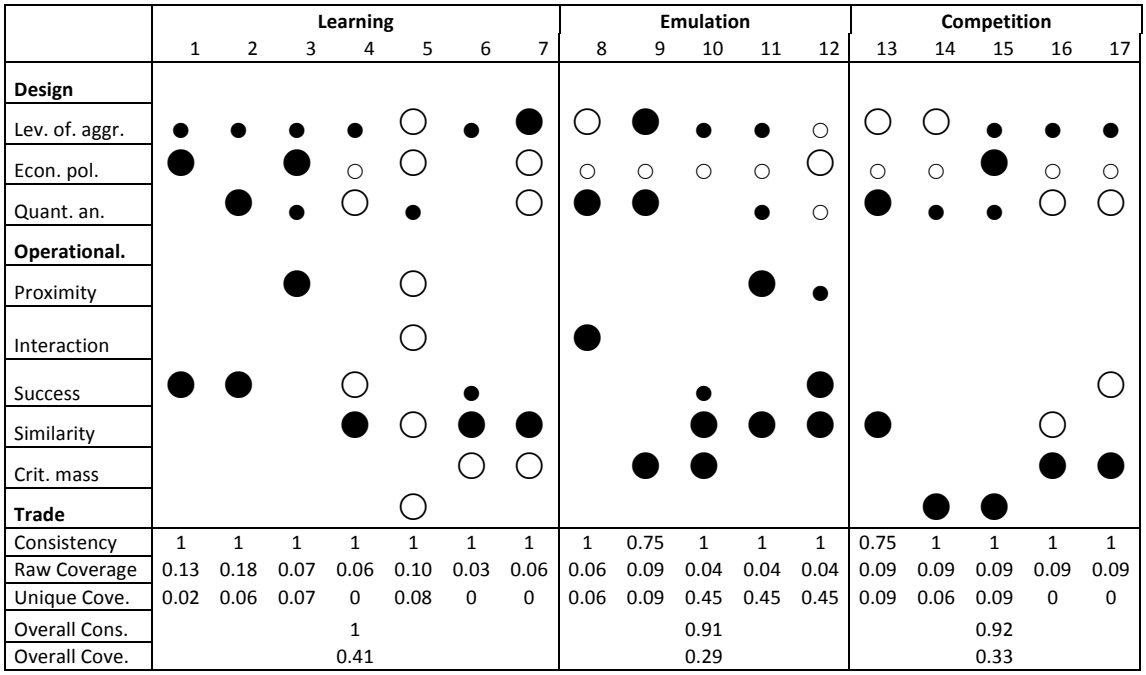
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	0	0.20	0.20	0.20
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0.18	0.18	0.18
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	1	0.75	0.75	0.75
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	0.31	0.31	0.31
0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0.22	0.22	0.22
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0.13	0.13	0.13
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0.33	0.33	0.33
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.50	0.50	0.50
0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0.43	0.43	0.43
1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0.75	0.75	0.75
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1.00	1.00	1.00
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table A3: Truth table for the outcome "Competition." A = Proximity, B= Interaction, C = Success, D = Similarity, E = Nr of adopters, F = Trade, G = Quantitative, H = Economic

policy, I = Level, J = Number of cases, K = Competition, L = Raw consistency, M = PRI consistency, N = SYM consistency.

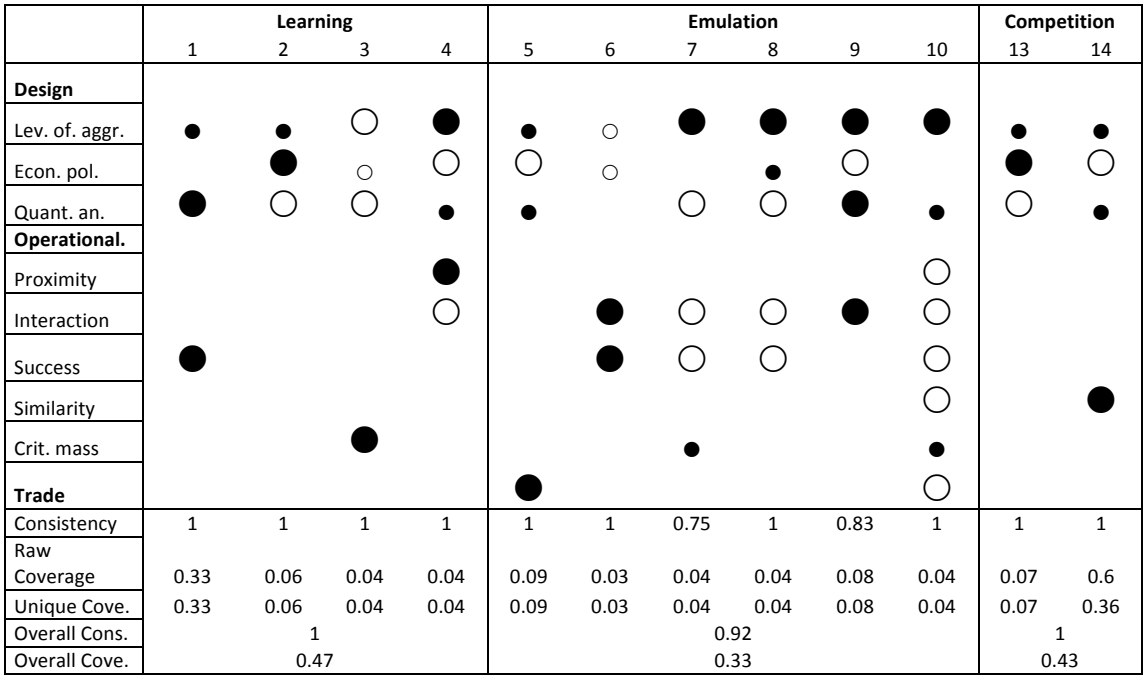
A6 Re-analysis for two subsamples

1993–2008 (84 cases)



	Learning							Emulation					Competition				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Design																	
Lev. of. aggr.	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●
Econ. pol.	●		●	○	○		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Quant. an.		●	●	○	●		○	●	●		●	○	●	●	●	○	○
Operational.																	
Proximity			●		○						●	●					
Interaction					○			●									
Success	●	●		○		●				●		●					○
Similarity				●	○	●	●			●	●	●	●			○	
Crit. mass						○	○		●	●						●	●
Trade					○									●	●		
Consistency	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.75	1	1	1	0.75	1	1	1	1
Raw Coverage	0.13	0.18	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09
Unique Cove.	0.02	0.06	0.07	0	0.08	0	0	0.06	0.09	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.09	0.06	0.09	0	0
Overall Cons.				1						0.91					0.92		
Overall Cove.				0.41						0.29					0.33		

2009-2012 (68 cases)



	Learning				Emulation						Competition	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	13	14
Design												
Lev. of. aggr.	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
Econ. pol.		●	○	○	○	○		●	○		●	○
Quant. an.	●	○	○	●	●		○	○	●	●	○	●
Operational.												
Proximity				●						○		
Interaction				○		●	○	○	●	○		
Success	●					●	○	○		○		
Similarity										○		●
Crit. mass			●				●			●		
Trade					●					○		
Consistency	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.75	1	0.83	1	1	1
Raw Coverage	0.33	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.07	0.6
Unique Cove.	0.33	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.07	0.36
Overall Cons.			1					0.92				1
Overall Cove.			0.47					0.33				0.43

Fuzzy-set meta-analysis of three diffusion mechanisms. ● *= core condition (present);* ○*= core condition (absent);* ● *= peripheral condition (present) ;* ○ *= peripheral condition (absent).*

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