Social movement groups and freedom of information: frames, techniques, and networks

Jeff Yaremko and Kevin Walby

Abstract

Some social movement groups use freedom of information (FOI) law to push for greater transparency and gain access to records that reveal the conduct of the state, exposing information with social, economic, environmental, or racial justice implications. To examine the use of FOI by social movement participants and groups, we draw from literature on social movements and framing processes. We analyze a sample of 30 social movement groups and organizations in 21 countries engaging with FOI in numerous ways. The idea of framing helps us to better understand what role FOI plays in the research and mobilizations of social movement groups and how they conceive of information requests to the government. We argue that FOI-engaged movement groups use three frames in accessing government information: protection and promotion of human rights, open government and civic participation, as well as collaboration and partnership. We discuss the techniques these movements use and the networks created through FOI-based research by movement groups and FOI training. We conclude by discussing how our findings contribute to literatures on FOI and frames in social movements.

Keywords: frames; freedom of information; social movements; tactics; transparency

Introduction

Information and data politics are increasingly more important to social movement groups. Use of freedom of information (FOI) is just one approach within a broader focus on information and data within social movements (Beyer 2014) that mobilize for greater government transparency. Sociologists, other scholars, and journalists have long sought records about governments as a means of investigating the conduct of the state as well as catalyzing scandals and social change (Marx 1984). Meanwhile, many organizations and movements have engaged in advocacy for FOI, among the often-large variety of activities they undertake. Social movement participants and activists have their own relationship with freedom of information, which is important to examine to understand both how FOI is used and how movement participants strategize and act.

We are interested in social movement groups that use freedom of information requests as part of their work or that are somehow connected to questions of information access. Our interest in this topic stems from our sense that FOI can

be an important facet of critical inquiry into state practices. We are users of FOI and have a working knowledge of the benefits of using FOI in the social sciences as well as the challenges (Walby and Yaremko 2020; Walby and Luscombe 2019; Brownlee and Walby 2015). In this paper, we examine how movement groups concerned with transparency and accountability issues, including some formal organizations, use FOI as well as how they conceptualize it in relation to their broader strategies and frames for action. A content search for the FOI-based organizations and movements themselves was conducted. To examine the use of FOI by movement participants and activists, we draw from literature on social movements and framing processes. Referring to the vocabularies of motive that generate and support collective action (Benford and Snow 2000; Benford 1993), frames are only one aspect of social movements but they can galvanize struggles for change. Some of the groups we focus on are more grassroots while some are ensconced within non-governmental organizations or other formal organizations. The idea of frames helps us to understand what role FOI plays in the research and mobilizations of movement groups and how they conceive of information requests to the government or advocate for policy changes for open government and heightened civic participation.

The social movement groups and organizations in our sample have experiences with using FOI as well as the barriers that FOI entails, and these groups often push to hold the government (or private sector) accountable through records that can expose secrets or injustices. The numerous technicalities regarding the letter of FOI law are important to know to maximize the chances of a successful disclosure (McNairn and Woodbury 2009), and these groups develop some techniques to access information. However, as the groups we examine are also aware of, FOI requests are a state-sanctioned tool and have not gone without warranted criticism. Pozen (2016) offers a persuasive argument that access to information must go beyond current FOI laws and protocol given the many barriers to disclosure and bureaucratic cultures of secrecy in government that prevent full release of information and data. We also sympathize with Birchall's (2021) critique of openness and transparency as reifying state legitimacy. We know that FOI might be thought of as esoteric or irrelevant in some movement organizing. Indeed, many of the movement groups in our sample have a politics that negates the oppression and domination of the state and of capital. Many social movement users of FOI do so agonistically or ambivalently, aware that FOI is a state-created mechanism that has inherent and manifold limits. There is debate about whether FOI leads to more transparency or simply more clever attempts by government to evade scrutiny (Hazell et al. 2012). This reflects a broader understanding of co-option and capture that are significant in discussions of social movements in relation to the state and large organizations (Ismail and Kamat 2018). It is in part these tensions and ambivalences in the use of FOI by social movement groups that we explore.

The definition of social movements we use here may be seen as particularly broad. Our sample includes NGOs. The organizations and movements within our sample have all engaged with or used FOI law in different capacities. There is literature contrasting social movement groups with NGOs and CSOs

(Bornstein and Sharma 2016; Jad 2007), and some see NGOs as less contentious than CSOs or more independent movements. As a result, some NGOs are distancing themselves from the label by referring to their organizations as "voluntary organizations" (Brown 2012). Jad (2007) argued that professionalization and "project logic" may lead to more power being concentrated to technocrats and administrators. We define social movements as groups and organizations that are non-state actors engaging in activities that have the potential to create progressive social change, which goes beyond mere attempts to foster good governance. Progressive social change involves agitating for institutional transparency and accountability, dismantling discriminatory practices that harm marginalized populations, advocating for redistribution of resources, and working toward a more informed and sustainable society (Dixon 2014).

We begin by reviewing literature on freedom of information, social movement groups, and government transparency. We also situate our work in the literature on framing and social movements. We then explore the way that networks of movement groups use FOI as part of their campaigns and mobilizations for transparency and accountability in government and other institutions. Some movement groups use FOI to gain access to records that reveal the conduct of the state, or expose other information with social, economic, environmental, or racial justice implications, while others aim to educate and empower individuals or groups on utilizing FOI. We examine the frames these groups invoke as well as how these are reflected in techniques they use to access information and in the networks they form (see Crossley 2008). We show that social movement groups focused on government transparency and FOI use three frames to pursue their interests: 1. the protection and promotion of human rights; 2. open government and civic participation; and 3. collaboration and partnership. These frames provide a basis for the distinctive strategies used by movement groups, such as monitoring government institutions, engaging in research and litigation, as well as collecting, storing, and sharing information. We conclude by discussing how our findings contribute to literature on FOI and social movements.

Literature and conceptual framework

Freedom of information (FOI) law allows citizens to make requests for government records. Though this approach can be used to access revealing documents, there are many challenges and no guarantees when it comes to disclosures. In this section, we summarize some of the key findings from past research on FOI and we connect this to social movement organizing.

While most FOI, access to information (ATI), or right to information (RTI) laws have been adopted recently, the ideas behind public access to government records have been recognized for around two centuries. The first FOI law was accepted in 1766, when Sweden approved a Freedom of the Press Act which also allowed for public access to government information (Banisar 2002). The

establishment of the United Nations in 1945 had led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, involving freedom of expression and freedom of information as human rights. Article 19 of this charter states, "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (International Bill of Human Rights 1948). Article 19 of the charter now serves as a basis for many organizations and social movements that advocate for freedom of expression and freedom of information. Omotayo (2015) cited Article 19, noting that FOI as a concept emerged due to the rights of freedom of expression and opinion in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a part of Article 19. Costa (2013) adds that FOI legislation helps to keep voters informed and oppose corruption through allowing the press to directly monitor and observe a government's actions.

Social scientists and activists have a history of using FOI to access government records (Walby and Luscombe 2019; Brownlee and Walby 2015). Globally, journalists, lawyers, researchers, activists, and concerned citizens use FOI to access government records in the name of transparency and accountability (Florini 2007). Michener (2011) notes that grassroots involvement, NGO activism, and the media are essential for FOI to function. Some jurisdictions have higher submission fees, others take longer to respond to initial requests, while others still may have politicized and overbroad sections of the FOI legislation that allow government agencies to redact and sever records (Holsen 2007).

One practical dimension that social scientists and activists share in common when using FOI is that both are "studying up" (Nader 1974), that is to say they are both examining the actions or inactions of elite figures and powerful political players in government (Larsen and Piché 2009). However, there are barriers to using FOI, including fees, delays, political interference, and amendments that have eroded FOI laws over time and made them less potent (Monaghan 2015). Many governments continue to restrict access to information and vouchsafe secrecy (Jiwani and Krawchenko 2014). Even when records are released, FOI users can be disappointed if the files are redacted using exemptions (Nath 2013). Given these limits, social movement groups are using freedom of information beyond FOI law through methods that include web scraping, hacking, leaks, whistleblowing, and other tactics (Beyer, 2014). Nonetheless, despite the limits of the notion of transparency (Birchall 2021) and the barriers and challenges of using FOI, we focus on the use of FOI by social movement groups advocating for transparency and openness to assess how movement groups are using it and why.

Below we examine how social movement groups rationalize use of FOI in their work. Social movements are shaped by assumptions, values, and goals. This assemblage of ideas and information is referred to as a frame (Benford and Snow 2000; Benford 1993). Frames animate the mobilizations and activities of social movement groups (Aslanidas 2018; Benford 1993), providing

vocabularies for motive and action. However, frames take several different forms. As Terriquez et al. (2018) puts it, diagnostic frames help activists conceptualize problems, prognostic frames help activists think of solutions, while motivational frames help to inspire actions. Past grievances can be a powerful motivating factor for social movements (Kuhn 2018). Social movement frames can change over time, even within one movement in one region or jurisdiction (Gahan and Pekarek 2013; Frickel 2004; Franceschet 2004). Even for online groups who have no direct or in-person interaction, frames can be shared in digital communications (Nulman 2017). Relatively autonomous actors in different jurisdictions can deploy the same frame (Söderberg 2013; Kubal 1998). When "schemata that integrate the specific agendas of diverse movements into central interpretative frameworks" (Carroll and Ratner 1996: 411) emerge, these are referred to as master frames.

Methodology

We conducted a web search and content analysis of the websites of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-profit organizations (NPOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), grassroots movements, among other types of movements or organizations that are dedicated to freedom of information (FOI) or right to information (RTI) issues. We acknowledge the line between social movements and non-governmental organizations is porous (Martens 2002), and there may be a sense that non-governmental organizations are disconnected from movements and vice versa. While there may be those who oppose the inclusion of NGOs (even an international NGO) within a sample of social movements, we consider this addition appropriate because there are NGOs that engage in advocacy and social change work. While our original focus was on small scale grassroots FOI organizations and movements, larger organizations that have dedicated themselves to FOI issues were included. An example is the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) based in Nova Scotia, Canada, which addresses FOI issues internationally. CLD is an NPO and NGO that has advocated for human rights issues but have also dedicated much of their programming to FOI and RTI. Similarly, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) was added to our sample as it fit all other criteria. We are aware of the excellent work done by organizations such as National Security Archive, but organizations that are part of universities, colleges, transnational (humanitarian) sub-organizations or government agencies were not considered as we sought organizations that are largely "independent."[1] In addition, transnational organizations such as Article 19 were also excluded despite their productive international work on human rights and FOI issues.

---

[1] We define independent here as organizations or movements that are not part of or connected to government, universities, colleges, or transnational organizations (such as Transparency International).

Due to the universality of FOI issues, a broad range of organizations and movements involved in advocating for government (and institutional) transparency were selected with differing politics and organizational structures. We created profiles for a sample of 30 FOI-based NGOs, NPOs, CSOs, and social movements from multiple parts of the world (see Table 1).[2] To understand the context of this work, we examined FOI or RTI policies throughout various countries. We used thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling 2001) to decipher trends in the data.

Table 1: *Sample of Social Movement Groups and Organizations by their Country of Origin*

Country of Origin	Social Movement Group or Organization	Sample Total
Canada	Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD)	2
	Right to Know Nova Scotia (RTKNS)	
United States	MuckRock	4
	Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (TCOG)	
	Californians Aware	
	American Society of Access Professionals (ASAP)	
Mexico	Collective Citizens for Transparent Municipalities (CIMTRA)	1
Uruguay	Centre for Archives and Access to Public Information (CAinfo)	1
Argentina	Infociudadana	1
United Kingdom	Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI)	2
	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)	
Spain	Access Info Europe	1
Croatia	GONG	1
Bulgaria	Access to Information Programme Bulgaria (AIP)	1
Czech Republic	Otevrena Spolecnost (Open Society in Czech Republic)	1
Georgia	Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)	1
Armenia	FOI Centre of Armenia (FOICA)	1

---

[2] We recognize this sample is limited and there are many other organizations and grassroots movements working with FOI and RTI. Our work is meant to provide a snapshot and understanding of those working for the right of access to information throughout different parts of the world as opposed to providing a comprehensive list.

Israel	The Movement for Freedom of Information	1
India	Mazdoor Kisan Shakti (MKSS) National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information (NCPRI)	2
Nepal	Freedom Forum Citizens' Campaign for Right to Information (CCRI)	2
Pakistan	Coalition on Right to Information	1
Philippines	Action for Economic Reforms (AER) FOI Youth Initiative (FYI)	2
Bangladesh	Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB)	1
Uganda	Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC)	1
Nigeria	Media Rights Agenda (MRA)	1
South Africa	South African History Archive (SAHA)	1
International	Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIAnet)	1
	Sample Total	**30**

FOI movements and developments throughout the world

Baroi (2018) observes that literature on FOI considers the increase in FOI laws around the world as indexed to democratization. For countries that have experienced this "transition to democracy," FOI could allow citizens to address past harms for the victims, victims' families, and society to better understand these past harms (Banisar 2006). Some of the social movement groups request and archive records from the past while others focus on the present issues. Whichever the case, these organizations and movements are contributing to the broader FOI and RTI movement across the world.

In a country where press freedom has been restricted due to military rule, Omotayo (2015) considered Nigeria's FOI bill a relief when it was signed into law in 2011. The Nigerian government had a culture of secrecy, classifying most government information. The movement for an FOI bill in Nigeria began in 1993 with three organizations: Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) (Omotayo 2015). Media Rights Agenda has been a leading organization in Nigeria's FOI movement and has a Freedom of Information Advocacy Programme dedicated to FOI advocacy and promotion. MRA was established in 1993 as an independent NGO and NPO for the protection and promotion of freedom of expression and media freedom in Nigeria, which involves FOI issues (Media Rights Agenda n.d.). Similarly, Freedom Forum in Nepal is an NGO that focuses on democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, press freedom as well as the right to information. Freedom Forum was founded in 2005 with a mission

to work and advocate to safeguard the fundamental freedoms of citizens. Freedom Forum's objectives includes the advocacy for media practitioners' rights for "unhindered Access to Information" and improved conditions for press freedom, freedom of expression, and other democratic rights of citizens (Freedom Forum n.d.). MRA and Freedom Forum share similarities in their goals focused on freedom of expression, press freedom, and FOI, as the suppression of these rights have been experienced by their members.

South African History Archive (SAHA) is an NPO and "independent human rights archive" that is based in Johannesburg and was involved in a court case in 2018 that could have resulted in disaster for SAHA, activists, and FOI work in South Africa. SAHA requested information from the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) for apartheid-era records that SARB refused to release, leading to the court case that could have bankrupted SAHA. When the denied access request was taken to the South Gauteng High Court, the court sided with SARB and left SAHA with court expenses that threatened the organization's future (Pather 2018). In 2020, SAHA prevailed in the Supreme Court of Appeal after an appeal to acquire access to the information requested from SARB while also securing the right of access to information for South Africans, ending the six-year court battle (SAHA 2020). The apartheid-era secrecy being manifested by SARB and the South Gauteng High Court was exposed through the challenges SAHA and the right of access to information faced in this court case.

Independent organizations and movements that challenge government secrecy domestically or internationally view secrecy as a social problem. In Eastern Europe, Armenia and Georgia (which were once part of the Soviet Union until its collapse) have adopted FOI laws that organizations such as the FOI Centre of Armenia (FOICA) and the Institute for Development and Freedom of Information (IDFI) are promoting to ensure transparency and accountability of their respective governments. FOICA was founded in 2001 and aims to promote the Armenian FOI law, and advocate for government transparency and openness in Armenia. FOICA utilizes FOI as a tool to fight corruption in Armenia, where secrecy practices dating back to the Soviet era can continue to be a hindrance to information access (Banisar 2006). The FOICA was successful in advocating for the development of Armenia's RA Law on FOI which was adopted in 2003 (FOICA n.d.). North of Armenia, IDFI has been an FOI advocate in Georgia. IDFI aims for empowerment and inclusion in society through promoting human rights, good governance, open government, civic awareness, and advocacy. IDFI focuses on four "major strategic directions:" "good governance," "economic and social policy," "strategic communications and study of the past," as well as "media, internet, and innovations" (IDFI n.d.). Georgia's FOI law was established in Chapter 3 of the General Administrative Code of Georgia that was approved in 1999 (Banisar 2006).

Movements for FOI and the right to access government information can take different forms as every country has different histories and social challenges, with movements in India and Pakistan for example involving more grassroots movements to incite participatory citizen action. Throughout India, CSOs and

grassroots social movements have been pushing for RTI. The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information (NCPRI) are among the most notable and recognizable FOI social movement examples in India. MKSS began as a grassroots movement that represented workers and peasants in villages to "strengthen participatory democratic processes," with their first struggle involving implementing the legal right to statutory minimum wage, leading to the struggle for RTI. Mishra (2003) noted that the MKSS movement encouraged the idea of the people's right to information as being fundamental for the "basic human right to survival and livelihood" (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan n.d.). Since its founding in 1990, MKSS is among the various CSOs and grassroots movements that paved way for an RTI Act which was officially enacted in 2000. Among these grassroots movements is NCPRI, which aims to question the Indian government over a range of issues such as land acquisitions, defence procurement, social security, functioning of hospitals, among many other issues through the use of RTI (NCPRI n.d.). Joint meetings held by MKSS and the Press Council of India in 1996 led to the creation of the NCPRI movement which involved various activists, professionals, and intellectuals for the draft RTI bill (Mishra 2003). Mishra (2003) noted how the intensive advocacy from NCPRI had contributed to an atmosphere that made the RTI Act in India more feasible.

The movement for information access and public records in neighbouring Pakistan has faced its own challenges. Banisar (2006) noted the Freedom of Information Ordinance in Pakistan that was promoted by President Perviz Musharraf. However, this ordinance had many limitations because it was promoted as a result of pressure from the Asian Development Bank (Banisar 2006). Since then, Pakistani CSOs have lobbied for an improved FOI act or law. In 2012, the Coalition on Right to Information (CRTI) was established and provides a network for NGOs, NPOs, CSOs, and community organizations to collaborate. CRTI aims to promote open information and communications policies at all levels of government (national, provincial, and district). CRTI has been involved in drafting model FOI bills and advocating for improvement and amendments to Pakistan's FOI bills (CRTI n.d.). In 2017, the Government of Pakistan enacted a more recent Right of Access to Information Act (The Right of Access to Information Act 2017).

Western "developed" nation-states in the Global North are not exempt from FOI movements. In a previous article (Walby and Yaremko 2020), we referred to FOI audits performed by the National Security Archive and News Media Canada where both federal governments in the United States and Canada were recognized as having unsatisfactory FOI performance in terms of compliance and release of records. As described earlier, CLD was founded in 2010 and is among the Canadian NGOs and NPOs in the movement working on local, national, regional, to international issues. In Canada, CLD has worked to ensure accountability of governments, while also collaborating internationally to support FOI movements (CLD n.d.). Right to Know Coalition of Nova Scotia (RTKNS) is focused more locally and nationally. RTKNS engages in local, provincial, and national issues while using education and advocacy to encourage

the use and development of FOI in Nova Scotia (RTKNS n.d.). The US has an overall higher number of organizations with FOI and open government focuses compared to Canada and other Western countries. Organizations such as Tennessee Coalition for Open Government, Californians Aware, MuckRock, among many others are based within various US states to advocate for governmental transparency and compliance with FOI law.

After the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre, the US justified restricted access to information on the basis of national security. Banisar (2002) noted that Canada also followed suit. Yet activists, organizations, and social movements in Canada and the United States continue to challenge the restrictions to FOI. Tim Crews is an example of this as a founding member of Californians Aware and owner of *The Mirror* before his passing, who was recognized as a "controversial, bulldog investigator." Tim Crews often challenged (with an already limited income) local government agencies in court if the agencies failed to disclose the information or records he was requesting, while reporting on the records he had received (such as injustices within the community) (August 2020; Funke 2017). Whether in Canada, the US, India, or Pakistan, FOI movements benefit from organizing, participation, and collaboration that is inclusive and driven by grassroots organizations.

Frames

FOI-based social movement groups employ frames collectively to gain access to, or assist others in accessing, information that is held by governments and other institutions. While the promotion and protection of the right of access to information is a crucial driver for many of the sample organizations, advocacy for the "average" citizen and ensuring human rights are being met are among the factors that motivate these social movements and organizations. Thus, the movement for the right to information goes beyond FOI but can also begin with FOI. Berliner (2015) noted how FOI goes beyond merely accessing public records as it can further seek to guarantee citizen participation, government transparency, and deter corruption. We observed three frames: (1) protection and promotion of human rights, (2) open government and civic participation, as well as (3) collaboration and partnerships. We consider the first two "master frames" (Carroll and Ratner 1996) since they are frames shared across groups and movements that generate action. We also suggest collaborating and partnering is not simply an action or result/outcome but a frame, since networking itself becomes a value and goal for these groups.

The protection and promotion of human rights is a prevalent frame for social movements and organizations found within our sample. For example, SAHA is dedicated to the documentation, support, and promotion of increased awareness of current and past struggles in human rights issues. SAHA was founded by anti-apartheid activists and freedom fighters in the 1980s and considers themselves to be not politically affiliated. According to their website,

SAHA is committed to "recapturing lost and neglected histories," "recording aspects of South African democracy in the making," and "extending the boundaries of Freedom of Information in South Africa," among their additional commitments (SAHA n.d.). Indeed, the collection of public records to archive independently (especially those pertaining to historical or recent human rights abuses) might prove effective in the event that such records are destroyed by government officials, while also making these records accessible to the public. Moreover, SAHA's objectives and beliefs are notably entrenched in the promotion and protection of human rights in South Africa. As noted, FOI is a citizenship right that the public is entitled to, and honest operation of FOI by the government can establish a basis for transparency and allow for the public's confidence in their government (Omotayo 2015). Similarly, organizations such as Freedom Forum in Nepal, GONG in Croatia, IDFI in Georgia, CLD in Canada, CHRI around the Commonwealth, and Access Info Europe have defined human rights as a crucial element in their operations and movements. Clearly this frame builds on broader framing of human rights as a social good within liberal democratic regimes (see McEntire et al. 2015).

Another frame appearing across organizations and movements within our sample is the concept of open government and civic participation. Ackerman and Sandoval-Ballesteros (2006) advised that the ideas of open government alone will not bring significant social change. The contributions and efforts of CSOs and NGOs is considered to be "absolutely necessary" to achieving this while accelerating the global movement for open government and FOI (Ackerman and Sandoval-Ballesteros 2006). These elements are visible throughout all organizations within our sample. Certain organizations and movements with varying roles and services such as IDFI, Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (TCOG), Californians Aware, FOICA, as well as the Centre for Archives and Access to Public Information (CAinfo) in Uruguay actively refer to "open government" and "informed citizen participation" as their main objectives. Such organizations and movements can impact open government and civic participation through their advocacy, public education, raising awareness, and presenting their research findings in a way that most citizens can understand.

Finally, collaboration and partnership are a frame among the majority of organizations and movements to the extent that networking and movement building itself is defined as an important value and goal for these groups. The prominent method or feature for these elements are the networks created among international, national, and local RTI or FOI organizations and movements. These networks will be discussed more below. Collaboration also allows the organizations and movements to share knowledge (through workshops or training), gain support (for projects or monetary needs), exchange ideas and research, among many other possibilities. Imhonopi et al. (2013) noted collective behaviour and social movements as being instrumental in provoking and promoting social change as well as impacting societies' policy spaces. Examples of this are evident in several forms. CLD and Access Info Europe collaborated to develop a tool that displays an assessment of RTI and

quality of information access laws in different countries throughout the world. In Nigeria, MRA had collaborated and partnered with grassroots community organizations to enhance support for a viable FOI law (Media Rights Agenda n.d.). These elements were also observed in the establishment of NCPRI through the joint meetings between MKSS and the Press Council of India. Themuto (2013) reflected on the importance behind collaboration between CSOs and the press in reinforcing their anti-corruption impact and potential in reducing FOI barriers. The collaborations and partnerships of these organizations take different forms but can lead to more productive and creative outcomes.

Techniques

While the FOI-based organizations and social movements that we analyzed hold many similar techniques, each organization and movement have their unique programs, projects, or services that respond to the needs of their own community or constituents. The categories can range from advocacy or research activities to empowering citizens, collaborating, or educating various groups on their FOI rights. These categories of strategies and techniques include the following:

1. Capacity building and empowerment

2. Archiving and information sharing

3. Monitoring and watchdog activities

4. Public interest research

5. Public interest law and lobbying

Risley (2006) observed that many of the NGOs in Argentina that promote FOI interests perform their services through monitoring the state, elites, and political institutions, while certain NGOs are also involved in public interest law and legal advocacy. Infociudadana (or Centre for Citizen Information Civil Association) is among the independent Argentine organizations advocating for FOI that engage in activities such as research, training workshops, and collaborating with CSOs and universities. One program that Infociudadana coordinates is "Preguntar al poder" (which translates to "ask power") which invites politicians, officials, and leaders to a press conference that includes journalists and students for a space of public dialogue, while promoting information accessibility and distribution (Infociudadana n.d.). FOI and RTI advocacy can be achieved through different creative techniques in different countries. Yet, as noted, these groups also share techniques for accessing information.

Collecting and storing FOI requests for public access is one method found to be used by some organizations. An example of this is the US based NPO MuckRock that acts as a repository for public record requests and responses that can be accessed by users, while users can submit, track, and share their own public record requests through the website (MuckRock n.d.). Through this initiative, MuckRock's website allows researchers, journalists, activists, and citizens to contribute to the transparency in politics and governments. In Croatia, GONG along with partners had developed a similar web portal called "We Have the Right to Know," which allows citizens to demand information from authorities. Similarly, SAHA utilizes their Freedom of Information Programme to collect and preserve information retrieved from South Africa's ATI Act for the archive to make this information more accessible for research. SAHA has also been involved in a diverse range of projects such as their FOIP Capacity Building Project that provides communities with the knowledge and strategies to use FOI as an effective advocacy tool for empowerment through a "series of multiple workshops" (SAHA n.d.). Programs with training and workshops involving citizens, public servants, CSOs, or entire communities relating to FOI and public records access were found to be common throughout our sample of organizations and movements. Among the many organizations that engage in training and workshops are Californians Aware, IDFI, FOICA, American Society of Access Professionals (ASAP), Access to Information Programme Bulgaria (AIP), Collective Citizens for Transparent Municipalities (CIMTRA) in Mexico, Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) and Infociudadana.

Monitoring or watchdog activities is another prominent activity of groups in our sample and a critical element among FOI-based organizations and movements considering that FOI and RTI entail transparency of governments. Baroi (2018) advises that the implementation processes of the FOI or RTI Acts will require CSOs to act as watchdogs. The Movement for Freedom of Information NGO in Israel serves this function as it aims to advocate and promote transparency in public institutions, increase oversight of public institutions' activities, and inform citizens in Israel on using their right to information. The Movement for Freedom of Information had criticized the Israeli government for undermining the FOI Act during the COVID-19 pandemic by failing to provide members of the public with raw information on COVID-19 such as morbidity data (The Movement for Freedom of Information n.d.; Sadan 2020). Furthermore, GONG is a CSO in Croatia established with original goals of monitoring elections but have since extended their methodology to include RTI and FOI. According to their website, GONG aims to enhance democracy and the democratic political culture with a focus on decision making processes relating to good governance, rule of law, and human rights (GONG n.d.). During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, GONG warned of the Croatian government's attempts to suspend parliament's work and enact laws that would enable the government to monitor citizens' locations through cell phones (Preserve Democracy in the Time of Coronavirus 2020). Another example is provided by the FOICA in Armenia, which monitors Armenia's FOI legislation implementation through sending over 1000 information requests to national and local government bodies (FOICA

n.d.). Likewise, AIP monitors Bulgaria's FOI legislation, among their many additional activities (AIP n.d.). Around two-thirds of our sample (out of 30 organizations and movements) were involved in monitoring and watchdog activities.

Many organizations and movements focusing on transparency issues have also been involved in research, litigation, providing legal assistance, as well as advocacy for legislation and policies. In Bangladesh, RIB considers itself to be one of the "front runners to champion the cause of RTI" in the country. RIB was founded in 2002 for the promotion of knowledge relating to poverty alleviation in Bangladesh, while focusing on communities which are marginalised and socially excluded. Their main objective has been to support research that can contribute to these poverty alleviation strategies and support NGOs within Bangladesh (RIB n.d.). RIB has an additional webpage dedicated to RTI. In Nepal, Freedom Forum conducted a research study that involved evaluating the transparency of several major donor agencies such as USAID, UKAID, World Bank, among other international organizations. The study found that the donors openly provided government with information but showed reluctance in providing information to CSOs and the general public (Donors Working in Nepal Lack Transparency 2012). Alternatively, FOICA's website notes that they engage in "legal counselling" and "strategic litigation" among their many activities, which is akin to several other organizations within our sample. Further, the public interest group called Action for Economic Reforms (AER) in the Philippines (with FOI as one of six core programs) has employed research and analysis, legal action, building coalitions, public education, and lobbying (AER n.d.).

Organizations and movements within our sample have also been involved in influencing the FOI or RTI legislation and transparency-based policies through lobbying. Examples include MKSS and NCPRI in India (as demonstrated earlier), Otevrena Spolecnost (Open Society in Czech Republic) which had influenced Czech Republic's Information Act enforcement, FOICA in Armenia's FOI law development, as well as Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI) which successfully drafted and promoted several information access bills in the UK. CFOI was established in 1984 in the UK with goals of promoting and defending FOI while engaging in enhancing public awareness of FOI and public information access. Their website notes that the CFOI drafted and promoted bills which have become law in the UK such as the Access to Personal Files Act 1987, the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, the Environment and Safety Information Act 1988, and the Access to Health Records Act 1990 (CFOI n.d.). The techniques described above including workshops, the collection of FOI requests, monitoring FOI institutions, and lobbying for FOI provide insight into the different techniques that social movement groups pursuing FOI issues utilize to either maintain, build on, or establish FOI law.

Networks

Collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships are critical for FOI-based organizations and movements to widen their support base, expand projects and enhance their influence in the political arena. Baroi (2018) advises that CSOs and NGOs must engage different stakeholders with RTI while making FOI or RTI law known to people. Engaging these stakeholders can improve the impact that organizations and movements have within communities, within the political arena, or with different organizations. We focus on the networks and coalitions between and among the sample organizations and movements. The majority of organizations and movements within our sample have engaged in transparency and FOI focused networks. Among the networking-specific organizations within our sample are Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIAnet), FOI Youth Initiative (FYI) in the Philippines, the Collective Citizens for Transparent Municipalities (CIMTRA) in Mexico, and CRTI in Pakistan. Nearly every organization within our sample has demonstrated the use of partnerships with other organizations as well as the use of coalitions to extend their influence or impact.

Social movement groups that focus on networking facilitate membership from organizations and movements that advocate or work toward related issues such as FOI, while further promoting engagement between these organizations or movements with similar interests and goals. AFIC is a pan-African civil society network based in Uganda with over 40 CSO "members" that engage in FOI or RTI promotion and advocacy across Africa. AFIC networks and partners with local groups, community organizations, CSOs, international NGOs and groups (including Oxfam and FOIAnet), among others in numerous African countries to promote and enhance FOI laws and government transparency. MRA in Nigeria is among those member organizations within this network. AFIC also produces reports on the state of ATI or RTI throughout Africa (AFIC n.d.). On the other hand, FOIAnet provides more international networking. This website (founded in 2002) provides an "information-sharing" network of organizations and individuals internationally focused on issues relating to FOI and working toward promoting the right of access to information. FOIAnet had established a discussion list for issues relating to the right of access to information, with involvement of various civil society representatives, academics, lawyers, among others (FOIAnet n.d.). Over one-third of the organizations within our sample are members of FOIAnet.

The following examples are more nationally based or local networks for FOI advocacy and transparency-driven movements. CIMTRA (while a member of FOIAnet) focuses on the "collective" of CSOs and community organizations throughout Mexico. The objectives of CIMTRA include promoting, monitoring, and evaluating the transparency of local governments in Mexico. The CIMTRA collective includes different local groups throughout Mexico such as organized citizens, CSOs, community organizations, universities, among others. The main activities that CIMTRA engages in include monitoring, measuring, and

evaluating the transparency in municipal governments, delegations of the
Federal District, and local congresses. Additionally, CIMTRA develops reports,
provides forums, workshops, and acts as an alliance of organizations with
similar interests of government transparency (CIMTRA n.d.). FYI in the
Philippines provides a network example as a coalition of various youth groups
and organizations from across the country. FYI consists of over two hundred
youth and student organizations in the Philippines that demand government
transparency, accountability, and citizen participation through an FOI Act. FYI
has been involved in the promotion and advocacy of a People's Freedom of
Information Act in the Philippines. This was the first youth-led campaign for an
FOI Bill and this network has also held an annual FOI Youth Congress with the
various member groups in solidarity with the FOI campaign (FYI n.d.). Finally,
CRTI in Pakistan has engaged as a coalition of CSOs similar to CIMTRA. CRTI
has been involved in publishing reports, advocating for RTI, and collaborating
with organizations. CRTI has also been conducting an Annual RTI Champion
Award that acknowledges common people (citizens, journalists, and even
government officers) for their efforts in the use of RTI laws (CRTI n.d.).

Organizations and movements that are focused nationally or locally are
invaluable for their role in coordinating with other CSOs, community
organizations, as well as local groups in FOI advocacy and activism. Larger FOI-
based organizations in the international community (or international NGOs) are
found to influence the passage of stronger laws (including FOI laws) that are
advocated to be the "international norms" that are often set by these
international NGOs (Berliner 2016). CHRI is one such organization that can
communicate with and assist a range of actors such as CSOs and grassroots
movements, especially within the commonwealth countries. CLD is another
international NGO that engages and collaborates with other international
organizations, networks, and CSOs for FOI developments across the world. The
global RTI rating tool mentioned earlier provides an example of partnership
between CLD and the Spain-based Access Info Europe. The networks,
coalitions, and partnerships allow for more coordinated efforts to fight for more
access to government information and prompt improvements to government
transparency. These connections could increase the likelihood of cross-
movement solidarity and what Meyer and Whittier (1994) call "social movement
spillover" between movements.

Learning from movements

Many organizations and movements working toward open government and
more acceptable FOI systems have had successes to share and failures or
mistakes to learn from. Calland and Bentley (2013) advised that sustaining
momentum at the local community level along with understanding the macro
political environment is fundamental for organizations (and movements),
noting that MKSS in India and Open Democracy Advice Centre in South Africa
have succeeded using this approach. Working with the local communities at the
grassroots level while engaging with national or international communities can

be beneficial to movements. Collaboration and coordination can strengthen the FOI movement and generate shared resources, shared knowledge, and heightened support for the movement. Unfortunately, there are often cases where the FOI movement is suppressed by the government despite collaborative efforts such as that experienced by the FOI Youth Initiative in the Philippines when the 16th Congress failed to pass the People's Freedom of Information Act in 2016 (FYI n.d.). While several FOI networks already exist, perhaps an increase in collaboration, coordination, and inclusion between and within these networks can facilitate more awareness of new strategies (also see Choudry 2015). The following are recommendations for activists, lawyers, journalists, among many others involved in FOI-based organizations and movements based on our findings:

- Engage with social movement groups at all different levels (including internationally), but with a focus on grassroots and community level organizations and movements;

- Share released information retrieved from FOI requests and disclosures to raise the issue of transparency into the public realm and maintain momentum of the issue through various creative means;

- Collaborate, coordinate, and communicate with FOI-based organizations and movements with similar interests and goals while concentrating efforts on a plan that stakeholders support. Educate and spread awareness to those who may be unaware of transparency issues and how access to information can benefit them.

Discussion and conclusion

We have shown how social movement groups use multiple techniques to collect, share, and amplify information, among their many other strategies in promoting information accessibility. We have also explored how frames and techniques enable the extension of networks including cross-movement collaboration and solidarity. FOI movement groups engage in multiple strategies and techniques motivated by three frames: (1) protection and promotion of human rights, (2) open government and civic participation, as well as (3) collaboration and partnerships. As a result, their strategies and techniques span capacity building and empowerment, archiving and information sharing, monitoring and watchdog activities, public interest research, as well as public interest law and lobbying. Reflecting on the frames of a movement and those of others help movements see commonalities and build cross-movement solidarity (Vicari 2015). These findings show that social movement groups concerned with transparency and accountability use FOI in their work mobilizing for justice. The movement groups varied in terms of their level of formal organization and their political ideology, yet they all found ways to incorporate FOI as a technique for advancing toward their goals. At the same

time, some groups fought for greater government transparency but remain ambivalent about FOI and the liberal democratic state.

Though FOI is a state-sanctioned mechanism with its limits being well known, access to information is a part of movement actions, and can inform movement goals as well as campaigns that promote the transparency and accountability of government institutions. Most social movement groups have an agonistic relationship with power structures and state agencies, and this carries over into their use of FOI even. FOI requests are a government mechanism so there is little impression FOI itself will create drastic social change or that the state will naturally become more transparent and participatory. Some of the movements (and we as authors) are aware of the limits of liberal democracy and we do not wish to reify liberal politics (also see Vahabzadeh 2003; Hurl 2021). Several of the groups in our sample conceptualize their work as within and against the state. However, our analysis has shown that FOI disclosures can provide wins for movement groups as demonstrated by many of the groups in our sample. These disclosures continue to assist in opening the door wider to government transparency and accountability. FOI disclosures can also be shared among movement groups, public interest lawyers, and journalists who may collaborate on campaigns.

Social movement groups pushing for government transparency and FOI across the world are facing different barriers with governments or regimes. As we have found, geopolitical position does not entirely determine the success or failure of such movements as certain governments in Western "developed" countries have often failed to model participatory transparency and FOI policies. The power differences between many citizens and politicians will prove to be an obstacle to government transparency and openness. As Mishra (2003) notes about India, MKSS stressed the people's right to information as crucial to the human right to survival and livelihood, while NCPRI had assisted in forging an atmosphere that led to more support for RTI law through intensive advocacy. Such power differences may become almost irrelevant through enough support, motivation, and intense advocacy for FOI and transparency as displayed in the India experience. The suggested next steps for the academic community then would be to develop the necessary methodology to assess these advances and impacts (Choudry 2015; Calland and Bentley 2013), to learn from social movement and help mobilize knowledge about FOI and RTI.

The question of NGOs' connections to state and donors arises, with Bornstein and Sharma (2016) suggesting that NGOs can act as Trojan horses by challenging the state from within. Berliner (2016) presents evidence that international NGOs use their influence to guide leading policymakers in passing stronger laws, with the international NGO Article 19 and the passage of FOI laws cited as the focus in his study. We acknowledge that NGOs still have benefits to offer the FOI movement to varying degrees, but the debate around NGOs and movements continues. Further studies on NGOs, social movements, and CSOs (or community organizations) and their impacts on freedom of information are needed.

Building on these findings, it is important in future research to examine how social movement groups are drawing on digital and computational approaches (such as data scraping) to data collection and analysis (Gutiérrez 2018) in their struggle for access to information. FOI laws do change over time, usually toward decreased openness (Roberts 1999), although through struggle and advocacy social movement groups can force governments to pass progressive rather than regressive amendments. Use of FOI by social movement participants and activists stands to contribute to this change either through direct advocacy or indirect influence through disclosures and knowledge mobilization by movement groups.

References

Ackerman, J. & Sandoval-Ballesteros, I. 2006. The global explosion of freedom of information laws. *Administrative Law Review* 58(1): 85-130.

Aslanidis, P. 2018. Populism as a collective action master frame for transnational mobilization. *Sociological Forum* 33(2): 443-464.

Attride-Stirling, J. 2001. Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research* 1(3): 385-405.

August, J.W. 2020. *CalAware Mourns the Death of Founding Member, Tim Crews*. Californians Aware. Retrieved from: https://calaware.org/calaware-mourns-the-death-of-founding-member-tim-crews/

Banisar, D. 2002. *Freedom of Information: International Trends and National Security*. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

Banisar, D. 2006. *Freedom of Information Around the World 2006: A Global Survey of Access to Government Information Laws*. Privacy International.

Baroi, H. 2018. The role of civil society organizations in the implementation of the right to information act: A case of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research* 3(1): 153-170.

Benford, R. 1993. "You could be the hundredth monkey": Collective action frames and vocabularies of motive within the nuclear disarmament movement. *Sociological Quarterly* 34(2): 195-216.

Benford, R., & Snow, D. 2000. Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26(1): 611-639.

Berliner, D. 2016. Transnational advocacy and domestic law: International NGOs and the design of freedom of information laws. *Transnational Advocacy and Domestic Law* 11: 121-144.

Beyer, J. 2014. The emergence of a freedom of information movement: Anonymous, WikiLeaks, the Pirate Party, and Iceland. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19(2): 141-154.

Birchall, C. 2021. *Radical Secrecy: The Ends of Transparency in Datafied America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Brown, T. 2014. Negotiating the NGO/social movement dichotomy: Evidence from Punjab, India. *Voluntas* 25(1): 46-66.

Brownlee, J. and K. Walby (eds). 2015. *Access to Information and Social Justice: Critical Research Strategies for Journalists, Scholars and Activists*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing (ARP) Books.

Buckley, S. 2018. *Advocacy Strategies and Approaches: Overview*. Association for Progressive Communications. Retrieved from: https://www.apc.org/en/advocacy-strategies-and-approaches-overview

Calland, R. & Bentley, K. 2013. The impact and effectiveness of transparency and accountability initiatives: Freedom of information. *Development Policy Review* 31(1): s69-s87.

Carroll, W., & Ratner, R. 1996. Master frames and counter-hegemony: Political sensibilities in contemporary social movements. *Canadian Review of Sociology* 33(4), 407-435.

Choudry, A. 2015. *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Costa, S. 2013. Do freedom of information laws decrease corruption? *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 29(6): 1317-1343.

Crossley, N. 2008. Social networks and student activism: on the politicising effect of campus connections. *The Sociological Review* 56(1): 18-38.

Daruwala, M. & Nayak, V. 2015. Taking freedom of information into the commonwealth: The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative at work. *The Round Table* 104(6): 727-737.

Dixon, C. 2014. *Another Politics: Talking across Today's Transformative Movements*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Donors Working in Nepal Lack Transparency. 2012. Freedom Forum. Retrieved from: http://freedomforum.org.np/donors-working-in-nepal-lack-transparency/

Florini, A. (Ed.). (2007). *The Right to Know: Transparency for an Open World*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Franceschet, S. 2004. Explaining social movement outcomes: Collective action frames and strategic choices in first- and second-wave feminism in Chile. *Comparative Political Studies* 37(5): 499-530.

Frickel, S. 2004. Building an interdiscipline: Collective action framing and the rise of genetic toxicology. *Social Problems* 51(2): 269-287.

Funke, D. 2017. *Meet the 'cranky country publisher' who files lawsuits instead of tweets*. Poynter. Retrieved from: https://www.poynter.org/business-work/2017/meet-the-cranky-country-publisher-who-files-lawsuits-instead-of-tweets/

Gahan, P., & Pekarek, A. 2013. Social movement theory, collective action frames and union theory: A critique and extension. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51(4): 754-776.

Gutiérrez, M. 2018. *Data Activism and Social Change*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hazell, R., Bourke, G., Worthy, B. 2012. Open house: freedom of information and its impact on the UK parliament. *Public Administration* 90(4): 901-921.

Holsen, S. 2007. Freedom of information in the UK, US, and Canada. *Information Management Journal* 41(3): 50-55.

Hurl, C. 2021. Accounting from below: activists confront outsourcing in a London borough. *Critical Policy Studies*, online first. https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2021.1989006

Ismail, F., & Kamat, S. 2018. NGOs, social movements and the neoliberal state: Incorporation, reinvention, critique. *Critical Sociology* 44(4-5): 569-577.

Imhonopi, D., Onifade, C., and Urim, U. 2013. Collective behaviour and social movements: A conceptual review. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3(10): 76-85.

Jiwani, F., & Krawchenko, T. 2014. Public policy, access to government, and qualitative research practices: conducting research within a culture of information control. *Canadian Public Policy* 40(1): 57-66.

Kubal, T. 1998. The presentation of political self: Cultural resonance and the construction of collective action frames. *Sociological Quarterly* 39(4): 539-554.

Kuhn, A. 2018. Explaining ethnic mobilization against resource extraction: How collective action frames, motives, and opportunities interact. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 41(5): 388-407.

Larsen, M., & Piché, J. 2009. Exceptional state, pragmatic bureaucracy, and indefinite detention: The case of the Kingston Immigration Holding Centre. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 24(2): 203-229.

Martens, K. 2002. Mission impossible? Defining nongovernmental organizations. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 13(3): 271-285.

Marx, G. 1984. Notes on the discovery, collection, and assessment of hidden and dirty data. In J. Schneider and J. Kitsuse (Eds.), *Studies in the Sociology of Social Problems*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, pp. 78-113.

McEntire, K., Leiby, M., & Krain, M. 2015. Human rights organizations as agents of change: An experimental examination of framing and micromobilization. *American Political Science Review* 109(3): 407-426.

McNairn, C., and Woodbury, C. 2009. *Government Information Access and Privacy*. Toronto: Carswell.

Meyer, D., & Whittier, N. 1994. Social movement spillover. *Social Problems* 41(2): 277-298.

Michener, G. 2011. FOI Laws around the world. *Journal of Democracy*. p. 145-159.

Mishra, N. 2003. *People's Right to Information Movement: Lessons from Rajasthan*. Human Development Resource Centre and United Nations Development Programme.

Monaghan, J. 2015. Four barriers to access to information: perspectives of a frequent user. In J. Brownlee J and K. Walby (Eds.), *Access to Information and Social Justice: Critical Research Strategies for Journalists, Scholars and Activists*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing. pp. 53-74.

Muir, A. & Oppenheim, C. 2002. National information policy developments Worldwide IV: Copyright, freedom of information and data protection. *Journal of Information Science* 28(6): 467-481.

Mueller, M., Page, C. & Kuerbis, B. 2004. Civil society and the shaping of communication-information policy: Four decades of advocacy. *The Information Society* 20(3): 169-185.

Nader, L. 1974. Up the anthropologist: perspectives gained from studying up. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Vintage Books. pp. 284-311.

Nath, A. 2013. Beyond the public eye: on FOIA documents and the visual politics of redaction. *Cultural Studies<->Critical Methodologies* 14(1): 21-28.

Nulman, E. 2017. Neo-imperialism in solidarity organisations' public discourses: Collective action frames, resources and audiences. *Third World Quarterly* 38(11): 2464-2481.

Omotayo, F. 2015. The Nigeria freedom of information law: Progress, implementation challenges and prospects. *Library Philosophy and Practice* 1: 1-18.

Pather, R. 2018. Court order could bankrupt South African History Archive. *Mail & Guardian*. Retrieved from: https://mg.co.za/article/2018-04-03-court-order-could-bankrupt-south-african-heritage-archive/

Pozen, D. 2016. Freedom of information beyond the Freedom of Information Act. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 165: 1097-1158.

Preserve Democracy in the Time of Coronavirus. 2020. Gong. Retrieved from: https://www.gong.hr/en/good-governance/access-to-information/preserve-democracy-in-a-time-of-coronavirus/

Press Release: Openness prevails in victorious judgement in SCA appeal. 2020. South African History Archive. Retrieved from: https://www.saha.org.za/news/2020/May/press_release_openness_prevails_in_victorious_judgment_in_sca_appeal.htm.

Relly, J., Rabbi, M., Sabharwal, M., Pakanati, R. & Schwalbe, E. 2020. *World Development*. p. 105088-105102.

Risley, A. 2006. The Political Potential of Civil Society: Advocating for Freedom of Information in Argentina. *The Latin Americanist* 49(2): 99-130.

Roberts, A. 1999. Retrenchment and freedom of information: recent experience under federal, Ontario, and British Columbia law. *Canadian Public Administration* 42(4): 422-51.

Sadan, O. 2020. Government representatives are underestimating the Freedom of Information Act and this is hurting the fight in Corona. *Globes Israel*. Retrieved from:
https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001335026&fbclid=IwAR2K4 rUPGebvfhFkRXBhceBmDSsjBe9vNYK2QlQRdTqai7rmkRSLKclZ7Tc.

Söderberg, J. 2013. Determining social change: The role of technological determinism in the collective action framing of hackers. *New Media and Society* 15(8): 1277-1293.

Terriquez, V., Brenes, T., & Lopez, A. 2018. Intersectionality as a multipurpose collective action frame: The case of the undocumented youth movement. *Ethnicities* 18(2): 260-276.

Themudo, N. 2013. Reassessing the impact of civil society: Nonprofit sector, press freedom, and corruption. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 26(1): 63-89.

UN General Assembly. 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Paris.

Vadlamannati, K. & Cooray, A. 2017. Transparency pays? Evaluating the effects of the freedom of information laws on perceived government corruption. *The Journal of Development Studies* 53(1): 116-137.

Vahabzadeh, P. 2003. *Articulated Experiences: Toward a Radical Phenomenology of Contemporary Social Movements*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Vicari, S. 2015. The interpretative dimension of transformative events: Outrage management and collective action framing after the 2001 anti-G8 summit in Genoa. *Social Movement Studies* 14(5): 596-614.

Walby, K. and J. Yaremko. 2020. Freedom of information audits as access advocacy. *Journal of Civic Information* 2(2): 22-42.

Walby, K. and A. Luscombe (eds). 2019. *Freedom of Information and Social Science Research Design*. London: Routledge.

Sample organizations cited

Access Info Europe. https://www.access-info.org/

Access to Information Programme Bulgaria (AIP). http://www.aip-bg.org/en/

Action for Economic Reforms (AER). https://aer.ph/

Africa FOI Centre (AFIC). https://africafoicentre.org/

American Society of Access Professionals (ASAP). https://www.accesspro.org/

Californians Aware. https://www.calaware.org/

Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFOI). https://www.cfoi.org.uk/

Centre for Archives and Access to Public Information (CAInfo).
https://www.cainfo.org.uy/

Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD). https://www.law-democracy.org/live/

Citizens' Campaign for Right to Information. http://www.ccrinepal.org/

Coalition on Right to Information. http://www.crti.org.pk/

Collective Citizens for Transparent Municipalities (CIMTRA).
http://www.cimtra.org.mx/portal/

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).
https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/index.php

FOI Center of Armenia (FOICA). http://www.foi.am/en/

FOI Youth Initiative (FYI). http://youth4foi.blogspot.com/

Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIAnet).
http://foiadvocates.net/

Freedom Forum. http://freedomforum.org.np/

GONG. https://www.gong.hr/en/

InfoCiudadana. http://www.infociudadana.org.ar/

Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI). https://idfi.ge/en

Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). http://mkssindia.org/about/

Media Rights Agenda (MRA). https://mediarightsagenda.org/

MuckRock. https://www.muckrock.com/

National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information (NCPRI).
http://righttoinformation.info/

Otevrena Spolecnost (Open Society in Czech Republic).
https://www.otevrenaspolecnost.cz/

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB). http://www.rib-bangladesh.org/

Right to Know Nova Scotia (RTKNS). https://nsrighttoknow.ca/

South African History Archives (SAHA). https://www.saha.org.za/index.htm

Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (TCOG). https://tcog.info/

The Movement for Freedom of Information. https://www.meida.org.il/

About the authors

Jeff Yaremko has his BA in International Development Studies from the University of Winnipeg and is working as a research assistant with Dr. Kevin Walby on freedom of information law and policy, police accountability, and social movements, among other issues. He is also involved in projects for the University of Winnipeg's Centre for Access to Information and Justice. Jryaremko AT gmail.com

Dr. Kevin Walby is Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Winnipeg. He is co-author with R. Lippert of *Municipal Corporate Security in International Context* (2015, Routledge). He is co-editor of *Brokering Access: Power, Politics, and Freedom of Information Process in Canada* with M. Larsen (2012, UBC Press) as well as the co-editor of *Access to Information and Social Justice* with J. Brownlee (2015, ARP Books). He is also co-editor of *Corporatizing Canada: Making Business Out of Public Service* with Jamie Brownlee and Chris Hurl (2018, Between the Lines Press) and the co-editor of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*. k.walby AT uwinnipeg.ca