

Embeddedness and Policy Attitudes: An Exploratory Study Involving a Social Network of Mayors in Bohol, Philippines

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ABSTRACT. This paper is an exploration of the different measures of embeddedness within a social network of mayors in Bohol, Philippines. Inquiry was perched on the prospects of elucidating policy transfer mechanism through the social network approach (SNA). SNA was applied in the characterization of embeddedness traits of the mayors. Results of the survey indicate higher incidence of policy attitude similarity between a mayor and his immediate (ego) network peers compared to the similarity with peers in the broad network. The paper paints an intriguing picture of local policy transfer dynamics from a network perspective whereby interactions beyond local jurisdictional boundaries can be examined for possible influence on policy attitude similarities. It submits recommendations for further application of SNA in local policy process research and practice.

Keywords: *social network, mayors, policy transfer, attitudes, Philippines, organic farming*

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INTRODUCTION

At any level of government, policy processes do not occur in a vacuum. Communities often deal with issues that others simultaneously face and it is more often the case that solutions subscribed to are not unique. In a world where the flow of information is more fluid than ever, it would be difficult to imagine the absence of any transfer mechanism at work when local governments formulate means to address issues in their respective communities. Policy transfer embodies how goals, content, instruments, programs, institutions, ideologies, ideas, attitudes, and even negative lessons in one policy setting become external inputs to the formulation of policies in another (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). Exchange and processing of information across policy communities often lead to voluntary emulation through either learning or leadership example (Grupp & Richards, 1975). As in the case of British local authorities, neighbor-influence can explain policy transfer (Wolman & Page, 2002). Moreover, personal interactions between key officials have many times been depicted in literature as channels of emulation (Walker, 1969; Gray, 1973; Balla, 2001).

Owing to decentralization reforms that came with the 1990 Local Government Code (LGC), local governments in the Philippines have been exercising greater direct authority over the delivery of devolved public services in their localities. The devolution counted on local government units (LGUs) to effectively assess local conditions and directly respond through a more autonomous system of governance. However, local determinants only partly explain policy choices of these subnational governments. As argued in policy diffusion research (Berry & Berry, 2007), external influences also matter to policy adoption through the process of policy transfer. To date, however, the extent to which policy transfer influences policies in the Philippine local governance system has yet to be explored.

With increasing awareness of interlinked policy communities and actors, the social network approach has been gaining ground in policy transfer research. Studies on information systems and innovations adoption exhibit the utility of social networks in explaining interdependent attitudes in organizational settings (Ahuja, 2000; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Powell, Koput & Smith-Doerr, 1996). The approach has also proven to be useful in explaining policy innovation via transfer processes since social ties can serve as conduits of policy learning between adjacent jurisdictions (Wellman, 1983; Rogers, 2003; Adam & Kriesi, 2007). Other studies have applied SNA to performance and knowledge transfer, focusing on the relevance of tie strength within

networks (Granovetter, 1973; Granovetter 1982; Burt, 1992; Krackhardt, 1992; Hansen, 1999). Villadsen's (2011) investigation of the relationship between the structural embeddedness of mayors and policy isomorphism in Danish municipalities most closely illustrates the applicability of SNA in explaining local policy processes.

This paper investigated the utility of the network approach in making out local policy transfer mechanisms in terms of municipal mayors' policy attitudes, which are crucial to the adoption and implementation of policy innovations. Using social network data from participating mayors in the island-province of Bohol, it explored measures of social network embeddedness, considering the extent of their prominence in the web of relations shared with fellow mayors, as well as the efficiency of those social ties. It also considered the possible influence of social embeddedness on the similarities of mayors' policy attitudes.

The role of mayors as consumers of information and the network relations that rendered them as conduits of ideas across municipal boundaries are highlighted in this research. This study demonstrates how social networks may be tapped for the improved understanding of the dissemination of new local policy initiatives. Mayors were the focus in the study because they are the most influential policy and governance actors in their localities, providing executive leadership over the daily affairs of the LGU and exerting extensive influence on the local legislation process through powers of agenda-setting, persuasion, and veto. This study has offered an alternative take on policy transfer research in terms of three aspects.

First, the study concentrated on policy attitudes as targets of socially influenced policy learning process. Inquiry into policy attitudes has shed light into intermediate outcomes of an ongoing policy transfer process en route to the realization of policy actions. Secondly, it directed investigation toward the role of social influence in the policy transfer process. It adapted the social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which has been used much in organizational innovation research, to local policy process research. Finally, this study presented a decentralized developing country perspective to the inquiry on policy transfer processes. Earlier studies have had tendencies toward pluralist assumptions and empirical bias for industrialized country settings (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996; Benson & Jordan, 2011), leaving out the context of countries like the Philippines.

This paper is organized to, first, lay out the arguments about how embeddedness may be linked to policy learning. It then proceeds to discuss the different measures of embeddedness that were used to characterize embeddedness traits of surveyed mayors. The paper also reports the policy attitude similarities between the mayors and peers. Subsequently, it considers how embeddedness characteristics and the policy learning may be linked. Finally, the paper concludes with some final insights and recommendations for future work.

Embeddedness and Policy Learning

The social information processing model posits that the social environment is an important source of information and normative cues for forming individual attitudes (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Correspondingly, this study generally argues that social relations have a significant bearing on local policy learning and transfer processes such that embeddedness in the social network can influence the incidence and extent of similarities between a mayor's policy attitudes and that of his mayor-peers. Be it due to coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures, or lesson-drawing (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Rose, 1993), policy attitudes among interacting local officials are expected to become more alike. Researches on policy diffusion (as reviewed by Berry & Berry, 2007) and a more recent study on policy isomorphism (Villadsen, 2011) refer to such dynamics in explaining adoption behavior arising from socially mediated influences from other jurisdictions.

Most valuable in elucidating the mechanism of social influence on policy attitudes is the social network perspective. Formal and informal mayoral ties make up a social network in which knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms are exchanged between mayors through direct personal interactions. This study directed attention to the traits that characterize a mayor's embeddedness in social networks. Embeddedness has been largely applied to how economic behavior is influenced by social relations (Granovetter, 1985). Later on, the concept became popular in organizational research as determinant of exchanges and performance (Borgatti, 2003).

In the simplest sense, embeddedness in this study referred to a mayor's position in a social network brought about by repeated interactions with other mayors. It is proposed here that embeddedness of mayors in the social network affects how policy-related information are transferred and processed by local government officials. Such

influence can manifest in the incidence and extent of similarity between a mayor's attitude and the collective attitudes of his fellow mayors, which is illustrated here using the case of selected local executives in the province of Bohol. This paper examined two groups of embeddedness measures: prominence in the broad network and the structural holes in an ego network.

Prominence refers to one's visibility to other actors in the network and is differentiated into centrality and prestige (Knoke & Burt, 1983; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Centrality is an actor's degree of involvement with other actors in the network regardless of whether he is an initiator or receiver of that relation. On the other hand, prestige is the degree to which one is at the receiving end of positive social relations. Prestige in the network connotes status as an object of attention and deference. This measure is closely related to the concept of power, which is inherently relational and a consequence of relationships (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). Prestige provides an actor with opportunities to exert social influence on fellow actors in the network. An actor who enjoys a status of prestige can be an object of emulation and a trusted conduit of ideas by peers.

On the other hand, a network may be composed of strong and weak ties. Strong ties point to greater cohesion between actors as a result of repeated interactions while weak ties are associated with bridging roles to crucial information in the network (Granovetter, 1973). Burt (1992) qualifies the bridging role of weak ties in the transfer of information between groups separated by structural holes, that is, the absence of a relationship between individual and subgroups of network actors. A mayor who has weak ties reaching over structural holes has an advantage in obtaining information from other subgroups in the broad network. Having more of these non-redundant ties in one's ego network may lead to greater chances of exposure to information exchanges in the broad network.

Hanneman and Riddle (2005) describe such relations as highly efficient because reaching a wider network would require less effort from the actor. Having less efficient ties in a network implies that the actor has more connections who are themselves interacting with each other. Social capital is higher in an ego network where redundant ties give way to uninterrupted flow of information because there are more alternative means of access to one contact (Burt, 2001). When a mayor's contacts share ties with each other, it can become difficult to eliminate the mayor's connection to a contact even if his or her direct ties to that

individual were cut off. Forms of social capital that can be associated with this kind of network are improved levels of trust, norms, reciprocity, and other values, which serve both information and material exchanges among actors (Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1985). When a mayor has more of these redundant ties, his or her network ties may be considered less efficient, and this becomes a constraining property to the mayor's ego network as more of the same set of information flows toward the focal actor.

Using social network data from Bohol, this study characterized the dimensions of embeddedness discussed above. Further, it considered how these measures may be useful in understanding policy learning at the local level.

METHODOLOGY

Social network data were generated from a survey of participating Boholano mayors in 2012. From the survey questionnaires initially sent to local executives in all 47 municipalities, a total of 24 interviews were completed for the study. A network map of the mayors was drawn from the responses and the scores for centrality, prestige, and ego network efficiency scores were derived from the map. Respondents' perceptions about the benefits of organic farming and its promotion in the locality were also gathered.

In the network map, ties exist if either respondent named another mayor as one of his/her most frequent interactions. Such information is based on a mayor's response to the question to name a maximum of three other mayors with whom he/she most frequently interacts. Given the phrasing of the question, the relations identified by each respondent are interpreted as strong ties.

The use of fixed number of choices in social network surveys is criticized for the risk of introducing measurement errors in the analysis of some network properties of subgroups (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). This study makes an exception for two reasons: 1) letting respondents name more than one mayor-cohort provided for existence of similarly frequent relations, and 2) limiting the responses to a maximum of three compelled the respondent to try to first assess ties and identify the most relevant mayor-cohorts in the province. As to whether a response limit greater than three would have excluded some relevant ties, this did not turn out to be a concern because only one of the respondents named three ties.

Recognizing that an actor's prominence in the network is perceived in different aspects, centrality was measured in terms of four specifications. Wasserman and Faust (1994) and Rusinowska, Berghammer, De Swart, and Grabisch (2011) served as guides for the derivation of the first three centrality measures. For the specification of the fourth measure, the number of mayor's connections along with the number of connections of other mayors with whom he/she is connected was considered (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). The centrality measures used in this study are as follows:

- i) The degree centrality indicates how well one (or a node) is connected in terms of direct ties, and it is an index of the node's communication activity (see Figure 1). A mayor's degree centrality corresponds to the number of direct ties to other mayors in the province. The sum of such ties is standardized by the maximum number of possible connections with other mayors.
- ii) Closeness centrality is based on proximity and measures how easily an individual (or a node) can reach other actors (nodes) in a network. It is kind of a measure of the node's independence or efficiency. Closeness centrality is measured in terms of the inverse of the total distance to all other actors in the network, standardized similarly as degree centrality.
- iii) The betweenness centrality is based on how important an individual (or a node) in terms of connecting other actors in the network. It is useful as an index of the potential of an actor for control of communication. Betweenness centrality indicates a mayor's role in controlling or mediating relations between other non-adjacent mayor-actors in the network. It is the sum of the ratios of the shortest paths or geodesics between two mayors that contain a third mayor, to the total number of geodesics between the first two mayors, standardized by the maximum value of their possible connections with other actors.
- iv) The specification of the fourth measure, Bonacich centrality is a modification of the degree centrality approach. It measures centrality and power as a function of the connections of the actors in one's neighborhood. The more connections the actor in a neighborhood has, the more central the actor is. Also, the fewer the connections in a neighborhood the actor has, the more powerful the actor is. Bonacich centrality score was derived as the sum of all connections

to other mayors in the network weighted by the centralities of those other mayors iteratively in consideration of the degree and direction of dependence between them.

Prestige in the network is closely related to the concept of power, which is inherently relational and a consequence of relationships (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). Mayoral prestige was based on responses to the survey question, "Is there a municipal mayor in the province whose opinion you value most in terms of policy and program implementation decisions?" Prestige score, which is the sum of in-degrees or peer-votes for an actor, standardized by the maximum number of possible connections with other actors in the network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994), was first derived for each of the mayors. Only about half of the respondents were nominated and there was very little variation in the computed prestige scores of those who were named as such. While the scores were useful in preliminary comparisons of the mayors' prominence in the network, it appeared that the best way to test the influence of prestige on policy attitude gaps and similarities was by operationalizing it as a status.

Prestige status was hence defined here as a binary valued variable representing a position that enjoys any level of positive regard from other mayors in the network. This variable was assigned a value of "1" if a mayor has a non-zero prestige score and "0" if otherwise.

The ego network model was applied to compute efficiency of each mayor's ties (Burt, 1992). Such measure of structural holes in the ego network treats each mayor as an ego and considers each mayoral ego network as separate from the rest of the broad network. Efficiency was measured as the effective ego network size, that is, the number of alters minus the average degree of alters within the mayor's ego network (not counting ties to ego network), divided by the number of alters in the ego network. Scores for network efficiency, along with centrality and prestige were derived using the SNA tools in UCInet (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002).

Policy attitude was defined in the study as the level of a mayor's receptiveness toward the prospective local policy of organic farming promotion. Scores for this variable were drawn from seven-point Likert-scale responses indicating respondents' levels of agreement to statements about the benefits of organic farming and its promotion. Statements about perceived benefits of organic farming were aggregated into three main categories: environmental and health benefits, economic

or income benefits, and combined environmental, health, and income benefits of the technology. Statements pertaining to perceived municipal government’s motivations for adoption of the policy were reported under the aggregated category for political motivations. An over-all measure of policy attitude toward the promotion of organic farming was created. To quantify mayors’ policy attitudes, corresponding response scores for survey statements aggregated under each category were averaged. The over-all policy receptiveness score was treated as the mean of the response scores in all twelve survey statements. Preliminary summary of scores indicated the number of mayors falling into the same category score.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Embeddedness of Mayors

Figure 1 is a simple representation of the mayoral social network of the Boholano mayors, who participated in the study. Dark-colored nodes signify survey participants while the white nodes correspond to non-participants. The size of nodes indicates the Bonacich centrality scores, which are reported in Table 1, along with other computed centrality scores. Since mayoral interactions and relationships tend to shift over time, the network graph is a mere snapshot of the network from the perspective of respondents at the time of the survey.

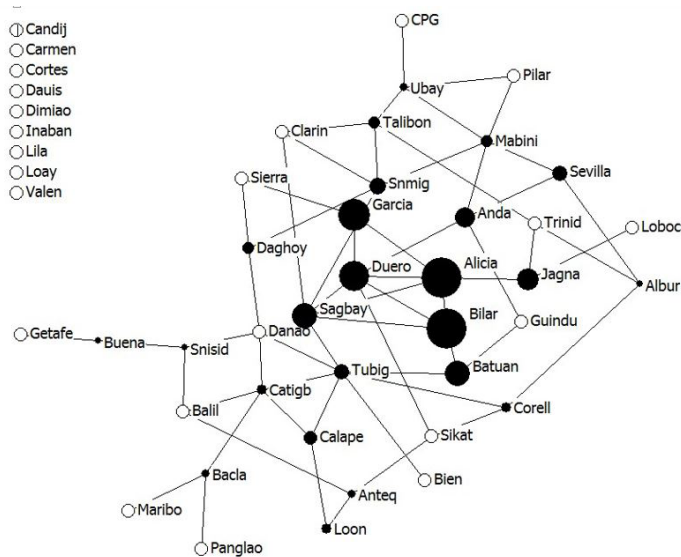


Figure 1. Social network of surveyed mayors and their peers

The scores reported in Table 1 reveal the different aspects of centrality by which a mayor's embeddedness in the broad social network may be appreciated. Degree centrality, which is the most straightforward measure, points to a mayor of Tubigon as the most embedded in terms of the number of direct ties to other mayors. The trait coincides with having the highest closeness centrality score, validating that having the most direct ties in the network enables a mayor to depend least on intermediaries for information access and other transactions. Betweenness centrality scores also show the same mayor as positioned in the path of the most mayor-pairs, demonstrating that having more direct ties can come with greater opportunities to perform mediating roles in the network. Thus far, these embeddedness measures indicate the strategic opportunities for consuming and bridging information available to a centrally positioned mayor in a social network.

On the other hand, Bonacich centrality scores show that when the centrality of one's contacts is considered, the mayor who has more well-connected peers, such as those of Bilar and Alicia in the network, may be considered better embedded than the one with the most number of direct ties. Applying the second half of a popular adage — "it's who you know...", the value of a mayor's Bonacich centrality provides alternative ways of viewing strategic actors in a policy learning and transfer network.

Prestige scores were computed from the relations that place the mayor at the receiving end of a specified tie — being an object of respect and emulation. For this measure of prominence, a non-respondent of the survey may turn out to be a key actor, as in the case of the mayor of Maribojoc (labeled 'Maribo' in Figure 2) who got the highest score. Figure 2 illustrates the same network of interactional ties among the mayors, with prestige status marked by a red ring around the node and the prestige score indicated by the node size. What can also be gleaned from the network is that centrality does not necessarily come with enjoying a status of prestige as evidenced by the case of Bilar's mayor who was not nominated at all as object of respect or emulation but was among those who had more direct ties in the network. In the case of Loay's mayor, it can be noted that enjoying a status of prestige does not necessarily come with sharing a direct tie with a fellow mayor. Finding very little variation in the prestige scores, the binary variable for prestige could be used in the subsequent analyses to signify the "status of prestige" as the more meaningful representation of this type of prominence measure.

Table 1. Network centrality scores of mayors in Bohol, 2012

MUNICIPALITY	DEGREE	CLOSENESS	BETWEENNESS	BONACICH
Albuquerque	0.065	0.304	0.040	0.004
Alicia	0.109	0.347	0.060	3.269
Anda	0.087	0.329	0.050	1.264
Antequera	0.065	0.289	0.029	0.145
Baclayon	0.065	0.270	0.069	0.177
Batuan	0.065	0.320	0.028	1.822
Bilar	0.087	0.327	0.011	3.269
Buenavista	0.065	0.224	0.035	0.014
Calape	0.065	0.309	0.021	0.673
Catigbian	0.109	0.350	0.121	0.374
Corella	0.065	0.329	0.050	0.376
Dagohoy	0.065	0.320	0.070	0.465
Duero	0.130	0.377	0.081	2.266
Garcia	0.065	0.296	0.014	2.463
Jagna	0.065	0.289	0.042	1.459
Loon	0.043	0.255	0.002	0.302
Mabini	0.109	0.333	0.076	0.561
Sagbayan	0.130	0.392	0.140	1.822
San Isidro	0.065	0.285	0.072	0.018
San Miguel	0.109	0.361	0.099	1.024
Sevilla	0.065	0.298	0.013	0.821
Talibon	0.087	0.312	0.046	0.465
Tubigon	0.152	0.407	0.215	0.818
Ubay	0.087	0.285	0.042	0.218

About one-third of the ego networks form a center-periphery structure in which the other contacts pass through the ego (Figure 3). Such ego networks are composed of non-redundant ties and exhibit optimal efficiency, with the focal mayor (labeled as E for ‘ego’) linked to the peers (labeled as A for ‘alter’) solely through direct ties to them (Table 2). In this type of network structure, a mayor is at the intersection of communication exchange, a position of learning advantage.

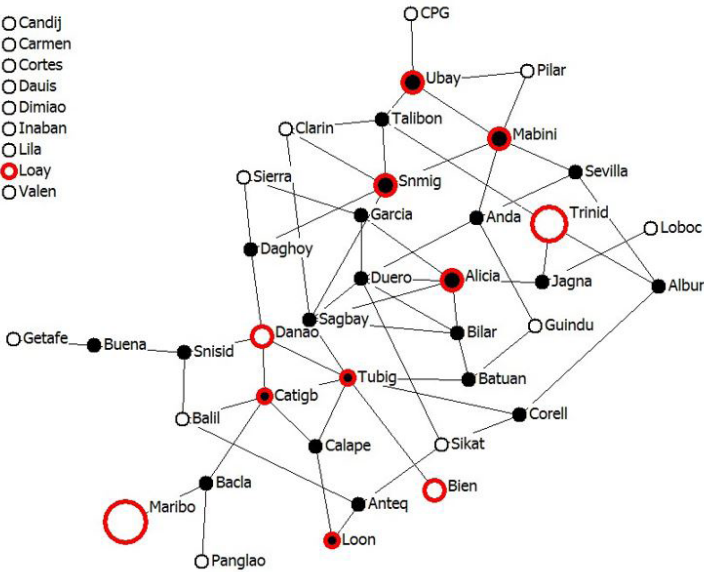


Figure 2. Social network of surveyed mayors and other peers by prestige status and score

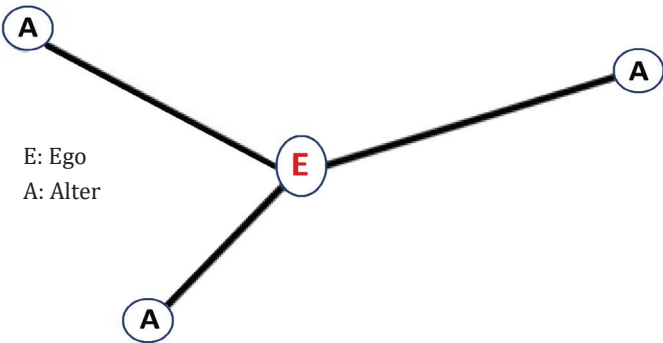


Figure 3. Ego network structure with optimal efficiency score

Table 2. Ego network traits for surveyed mayors (n=24)

EGO NETWORK	NO. OF ALTERS	REDUN- DANCY	EFFEC- TIVE SIZE	EFFI- CIENCY	CONS- TRAINT	HIE- RARCHY	SHAPE
Loon	2	0.000	2.000	1.000	0.556	0.278	D
Buenavista	2	0.000	2.000	1.000	0.556	0.278	D
Alburquer- que	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Antequera	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Baclayon	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Batuan	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Corella	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Dagohoy	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Jagna	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
San Isidro	3	0.000	3.000	1.000	0.333	0.000	A
Calape	3	0.667	2.333	0.778	0.611	0.052	C
Garcia	3	0.667	2.333	0.778	0.611	0.052	C
Sevilla	3	0.667	2.333	0.778	0.611	0.052	C
Anda	4	0.500	3.500	0.875	0.406	0.055	B
Ubay	4	0.500	3.500	0.875	0.406	0.055	B
Talibon	4	0.500	3.500	0.875	0.406	0.055	B
Bilar	4	0.857	3.143	0.786	0.571	0.125	F
San Miguel	5	0.750	4.250	0.850	0.387	0.146	K
Catigbian	5	0.800	4.200	0.840	0.382	0.091	G
Mabini	5	0.800	4.200	0.840	0.400	0.023	I
Alicia	5	1.417	3.583	0.717	0.560	0.152	E
Sagbayan	6	1.125	4.875	0.813	0.388	0.072	J
Duero	6	1.214	4.786	0.798	0.432	0.168	H
Tubigon	7	0.500	6.500	0.929	0.227	0.088	L

Mayors' Policy Attitudes

The policy idea used in this study pertains to the promotion of organic farming aligned with Republic Act 10068, also known as the "Organic Agriculture Act of 2010" (OAA). OAA defines organic agriculture according to ecological, social, economic, and technical standards. It discourages the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and other synthetic inputs in lieu of the practice of soil fertility management, varietal breeding and selection under chemical and pesticide-free conditions, and the use of ecologically sound biotechnology and other cultural practices. OAA calls for the development and dissemination of organic farming technology through the National Organic Agricultural Program (NOAP) and the formation of local technical committees (LTCs) at the local levels for the implementation of NOAP. At the time of the study, only about 20 percent of municipalities in the Philippines have formed LTCs in accordance with OAA guidelines (Department of Agriculture, 2012).

The provincial government of the island-province of Bohol has been openly promoting organic agriculture (Chatto, 2011). However, none of the Bohol municipalities have formed LTCs or signified formal commitments to the OAA through local policy adoption by 2012. A welcome progress was the effort of the Bohol Integrated Area Development (BIAD) V, an economic cluster of rice-producing municipalities, to position these localities in the organic rice market (LGSP-LED, 2013). Some municipalities have also embarked on isolated projects involving use of organic technology such as the promotion of backyard vegetable farming and operation of vermiculture composting facilities (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2013). These observations show growing local awareness of the idea of organic technology promotion without definitive act of municipal-level policy adoption. Such developments aptly correspond to this research's focus on policy attitudes toward organic farming promotion as objects of transfer mechanisms.

The respondents were generally receptive to the use and promotion of organic farming. Unsurprisingly, incidences of shared policy attitudes between mayors and their peers were more prevalent in the ego networks than in the entire network (Figure 4). Such trend demonstrates advantage of direct ties in closing gaps in policy attitudes. When it comes to the environmental and health benefits of organic farming, none of the mayors were at the same attitude level with broad network peers. On the other hand, over half of the mayors shared the attitude of peers in their ego networks with regard to this category. In

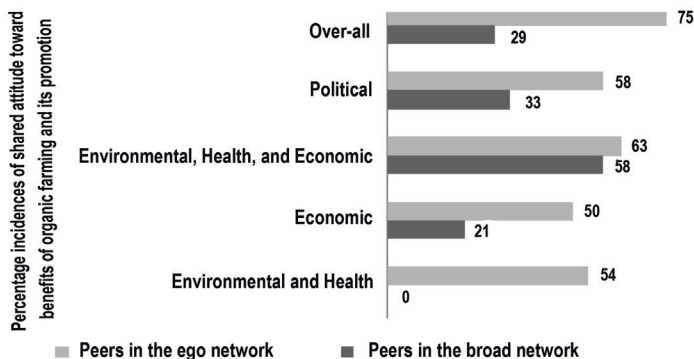


Figure 4. Percentage of mayors sharing similar attitudes with network-peer

terms of economic and combined benefits (economic, environmental, and health) of the technology and the political motivations for its promotion, the proportion of mayors who shared the same attitude level with other mayors in their respective ego networks were consistently higher than those of mayors in the entire network. The same pattern holds for over-all receptiveness to the policy, with an overwhelming 75 percent of the respondents sharing the same attitude level with other mayors in their ego networks. The lower proportions of mayors who shared the same attitudes with other mayors at the broad network level hint at the early stage in the process of information exchange pertaining to the policy idea. Such trend shows how the smaller ego networks with more direct ties and shorter paths than the broad network can coincide with relatively higher incidences of shared policy attitudes.

Network Traits and Policy Transfer

Observations from the network of mayors mapped in this study present some points for reflection regarding the influence of social embeddedness on policy learning transfer. For one, the higher incidence of policy attitude similarity found between mayors and their respective immediate ties (e.g., ego networks) corroborates the advantage of direct ties in effecting “like-mindedness”. Moreover, the structure of the ego network can enlighten the relational dynamics that each mayor directly faces, thereby, making sense of transfer mechanisms being referenced.

Going back to the embeddedness traits earlier described, the number of direct ties represented by degree centrality renders the measure as a key determinant that can be considered in linking policy attitude similarity with embeddedness. A comparable measure to degree centrality is closeness centrality, the use of which can facilitate interpretation of embeddedness in terms of the dependence on other peers to reach others in the network. On the other hand, direct ties were also closely related to opportunities to play bridging roles in the network. Appreciating the role of embeddedness in policy learning and transfer can, hence, focus on the betweenness centrality measure as a more substantive measure in investigating intermediary functions of policy actors. Additionally, the mayoral social network mapped in this study exhibited how consideration of indirect ties by way of the Bonacich centrality can provide an alternative take on the meaning and relevance of embeddedness.

These centrality measures demonstrate that multiple direct ties can position mayors in paths that directly and indirectly enhance their access and involvement with fellow local officials in the network. However, while the existence of social ties may be deemed to serve as communication mechanism between mayors, it cannot be immediately assumed that consensus-building information exchange can bring about similarities in policy attitudes. The influence of centrality on policy attitude similarity as well as that of prestige, which in turn can be argued as working its influence through emulation and influence, has yet to be covered in a subsequent study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has featured how a mayoral social network may be characterized in terms of various embeddedness measures. Comparison of prominence scores have shown that positional advantage in the network is not singly captured by the number of direct ties to or from an actor. Network structure can also fill-in the transfer mechanism dynamics at work among the mayors. The case of selected Boholano mayors surveyed in 2012 provide evidence of greater policy attitude similarities within mayors' ego networks compared to the broad network. Such result invites further inquiry into the link between embeddedness and local policy transfer.

There is much potential in engaging local policy research and governance in the application of social network perspective for enhanced understanding and handling of diffusion processes. Noting that this paper is largely exploratory, it is hoped to trigger the appropriation of SNA in scholarship tackling policy attitudes and processes at the local government level, especially as local policymaking has now become more autonomous in practice. The research presented here merely scratches the surface in presenting a social network perspective to understanding relative policy attitudes of local officials in the Philippines. The inquiry has yet to be expanded to include dynamic relationships affecting the patterns of local policy learning, convergence, and outcomes. Extension of research to other policy venues and toward a longitudinal focus is aptly the subject of a follow-up work. Research can also be stretched toward the social organization of other policy actors such as other elected officials, bureaucrats, and community group leaders. SNA stands to become an informative tool in the study of local policy processes in the Philippines.

Findings of this study point to the potential of tapping into mayors' social networks for the diffusion of new local policy initiatives. It demonstrated that SNA can be applied in the identification of strategically positioned policy actors who can become crucial agents in an area-wide dissemination of policy information. If mayors are to be encouraged to forge social ties that put them in the loop of information exchange, there is value in coupling such efforts with policy-focused discourse. The arena is not void of mechanisms for the exchange of policy ideas. The League of Municipalities of the Philippines, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, provincial governments, and non-government organizations are institutions in the country that have been fostering the development of interactions among local government executives. For example, Boholano mayors are organized into a provincial league that holds monthly meetings in the provincial capital.

Apart from pre-set assemblies, there are many other institutional settings in which these mayors have opportunities for various forms of interaction. Such occasions can serve as venues for activities, workshops, and other programs designed to educate mayors about the advantages of networking with peers and about the skills and approaches that help create strategic ties. Networks that can arise from these efforts are ones strategically formed for smoother exchange of information regarding current policy issues and initiatives as well as regional and national policy agenda.

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