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From Social Network to Big Data, Future Forecasting, and Collaboration

Inho Cho¹

The seven papers are outstanding original works presented at the 2015 WATEF International conference held in Daegu, South Korea. The theme of the conference was “Social Network, Big Data, and Future Strategy” with various scopes such as ‘big data and changes of human life’, ‘specific industry and big data’ and so on, which aimed to understand how social network approach could enhance our understanding of diverse phenomena. It is true during the past two decades, the emphasis on and the applicability of social network approaches has been increased theoretically as well as practically. In addition, the possibility of the combination between social network methodology and big data becomes reality. However, few studies offer empirical linkage between social network approaches and big data. Thus this special issue of JCEA can help us take the initial steps toward addressing how social network approaches can be joined with different types of data and why the combination is valuable to understand our future. In this regard, each of seven articles reviewed here begins to plot a path forward.

The piece by Rich provides tries to extend our understanding of losers’ consent through multilevel conception of electoral success, based on an analysis of Taiwan’s first election under a mixed system. Under three separate measures of perceptions, which are satisfaction with democracy, system fairness and ability to elect qualified legislators, and viewing both total respondents and those who self-reported as voting, the study shows that supporting a national winner produces a significantly positive boost in perceptions beyond that of supporting a district candidate. However, with the exception of one model, identifying as a winner at the national and district level both show a statistically meaning positive boosts in views. Overall, the study confirms that the concept of losers’ consent can be applied to mixed systems.

The piece by von Feigenblatt utilizes the Theory of Harmony through Holistic engagement to understand Japan’s foreign policy. The authors, after reviewing Japan’s post-war foreign policy with other countries including China, concludes that Japan pursues regional stability and prosperity through a combination of dialogue, negotiation, and competition, with the aim of creating a regional community based on norms of trust and non-violence. This study uniquely contributes to the understanding Japan’s constructive engagement with other countries,

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thus providing a more nuanced explanation of her foreign policy behavior which goes beyond exceptionalism.

The piece by Yang and Jung uses a network approach to investigate the structural characteristics of sub-organizations with public institutes in order to obtain their implications for organizational structure. The authors examine how sub-units are organized based on their structural features and compare them between three public research institutes in different countries such as Korea, Germany and the United States. The authors found little common ground in the research areas between the Government-funded Research Institutes in Korea, which might hinder the collaboration among them. This study shows how structural properties can help us to understand the possibility of collaboration among institutions with a network.

The piece by Okura, Tkach-kawasaki, Kobashi, Hartwig, and Tsujinaka attempts to assess the factors associated with implementing an energy policy, 'Feed-In Tariff Law' in 2012, in Japan as well as the roles of the relevant major actors who were involved in its implementation. For those purposes, the authors focus on identifying the policy networks among government, political parties, and interest groups. Based on the data obtained from the 'Global Environmental Policy Network Survey 2012-2-13', the authors suggest that the Feed in Tariff Law's network structure is similar to the information network and support network. This study shows that by assessing the policy networks for individual issues and comparing them overtime we can reveal new dimensions in political relationships and policy formation.

The piece by Meier attempt to extract valuable information from the hyperlink networks of the 367 international non-governmental organizations' websites. The author shows that the network of international NGOs is only very weakly crosslinked overall, yet there are measurable networking activities within the social movement groups. In addition, the author suggests that the combination of social and spatial network analysis proves a low level of interconnectedness between the NGOs and at the same time a strong spatial concentration of all embedded network actors. This study show how network information and spatial information can be jointly used to elicit new insights.

The piece by van Geenhuizen tries to present critical factors of Living labs, which have been a popular methodology to enhance innovation, in boundary-spanning between Triple Helix actors. Derived from a mixed-method approach and applications in the healthcare sector, the author suggests that 1) an adequate user-group selection and involvement, specifically a rich interaction and absorption of its results, 2) a balanced involvement of all relevant actors, and 3) a sufficient (early) attention for values, both values of user-groups and values of the management, are the three main factors of Living labs. The author also shows that people-oriented Living labs tend to differ from institution-oriented Living labs regarding these critical factors.

Finally, the piece by Jung attempts to understand the essential role of working across levels of governments and sectors in building resilient community based on two theoretical grounds, socio-ecological systems approach and institution & governance perspective. The author, after reviewing qualitative and quantitative research on community resilience, concludes

that current literature tends view resilience as either the capacities of a community or organization to prepare for disasters through joint planning, or as an outcome when responding to disasters or external shock. Based on the conclusion, the author suggests that future research should attempt to link factors before an event to tangible outcomes resulting from organizational resilience after the event.