

Power and Influence at the Universal Periodic Review: A Brief on Social Network Analysis

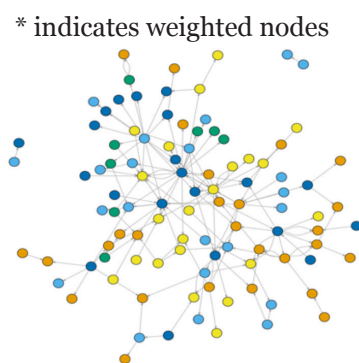
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I. Social Network Analysis: An Introduction

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a set of tools and theories used in the analysis of social structures, which has been applied in a range of academic disciplines including sociology, political science, and statistics. Social network analysis tools create a means and framework for understanding *how* and sometimes even *why* relationships (ties, edges) between actors (nodes) form. Colloquially-known ideas like the “strength of weak ties” emerged from the study of social networks.

II. Case Study: Business and Human Rights

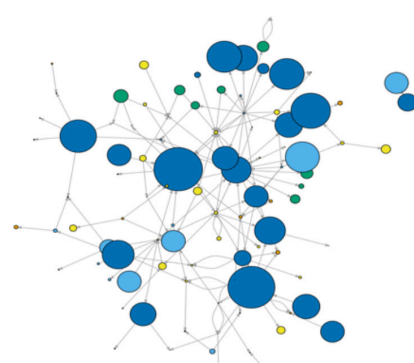
* indicates weighted nodes



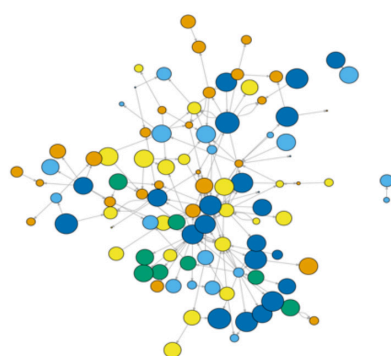
All Countries



Number of Ties*



Gross National Income*



Democracy Index*



Incoming Recommendations*



Outgoing Recommendations*

Graphs:

- Graph 1 (All Countries): Initial visualisation reveals diverse set of actors across UN regional groups
- Graph 2 (Number of Ties): Nodes weighted by number of recommendations given or received
- Graph 3 & 4 (Gross National Income and Democracy Index): Nodes weighted by external features, i.e. GNI or DI
- Graph 5 & 6 (Incoming/Outgoing): Nodes weighted by who has given and received the greatest number of recommendations
- In order to account for how external factors might affect the recommendation system, additional statistical models (not pictured here) employ GNI, DI, and Regional data

Key

Orange	Africa Group (AG)
Yellow	Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)
Light Blue	Asia and Pacific Group (APG)
Dark Blue	Western Europe and Other Groups (WEOG)
Green	Eastern European Group (EEG)

Data Sources:

- UPR database: All recommendations classified as ‘Business and Human Rights’ recommendations (100 nodes, 156 edges, directed network, geocoded*, 2005-2019)
 - Economist Intelligence Unit: Democracy Index (scale:0-10,2018)**
 - World Bank: GNI (nominal, Atlas method, \$USD, 2018)
- * Geocoded according to UN categories. Palestine attributed to APG (but has no official group).
 ** Not ranked: Belize, Marshall Islands, the Maldives, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands

III. Key Findings

- **Low amount of density** in the network (certain nodes are not overwhelmingly targeted over others). However, **ties were likely to be reciprocal** (countries were more likely to both recommend and receive recommendations from each other)
- Controlling for external factors like GNI, The Economist Democracy Index, and Regional groups revealed a number of mixed correlations that warrant further study:
 1. The greater the difference in GNI, the more likely a tie was likely to exist (a recommendation either given or received)
 2. The inverse was true for the Economist Democracy Indicator: the greater the difference in DI, the less likely a country has either given or receive a recommendation from the other
 3. Mixed results for regional groupings (the likelihood that countries in the same regional group will give/receive recommendations from each other): EEG countries are less likely to both recommend or receive others in the same group, GRULAC and WEOG countries are more likely to. AG and APG were not statistically significant

IV. SNA and UPR: Implications

Using social network analysis on Universal Periodic Review data has both academic and practical implications which can lead to innovative understandings of the recommendation system:

- Visualisations allow for more **spatial awareness** and **relational understanding** of member states at the UPR
- If published in a media, open-platform, or other format, social network analysis can also bring about more **awareness and exposure** to the UPR system, both within the international community and amongst the general public of/for member states
- Building models that include other external factors (like GNI and Indexes) may allow for more **nuanced comparison** and **possible predictive trends** for how and why recommendations may occur at the UPR
- Employing open source tools for UPR open data **puts academic theories and tools in practice**, as well as re-enforces the **importance of transparent and open data practices**

IV. Further Applications and Next Steps

These initial visualisations demonstrate a proof-of-concept, and set the foundation for further analysis that can lead to innovative findings within the UPR system

- Apply framework and tools of analysis to other thematic groups at the UPR
- Employ other additional external factors to analysis (i.e. alternative indexes or other factors)