Contagious Counterinsurgency

How Civilian Social Networks Shape Military Control

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Benguet

Union

Research Question

Why is counterinsurgency effective in some localities but not others?

My answer:

- Information on government credibility from surrounding area
- Spreads through civilian social networks

Hearts & Minds

Counterinsurgents attempt to elicit civilian-held information by promising:

1) Security
2) Economic development

What's missing

Civilians face a key information problem:

- Government may not follow through
- High costs to cooperating

How do civilians determine whether cooperating improves prospects for security & development?

Information and Social Networks

Answer: Gather information from surrounding area

1) Insurgent strength
   - Reduces uncertainty about future security
2) Development projects
   - Reduces uncertainty about future investment

Mechanism: Social Networks

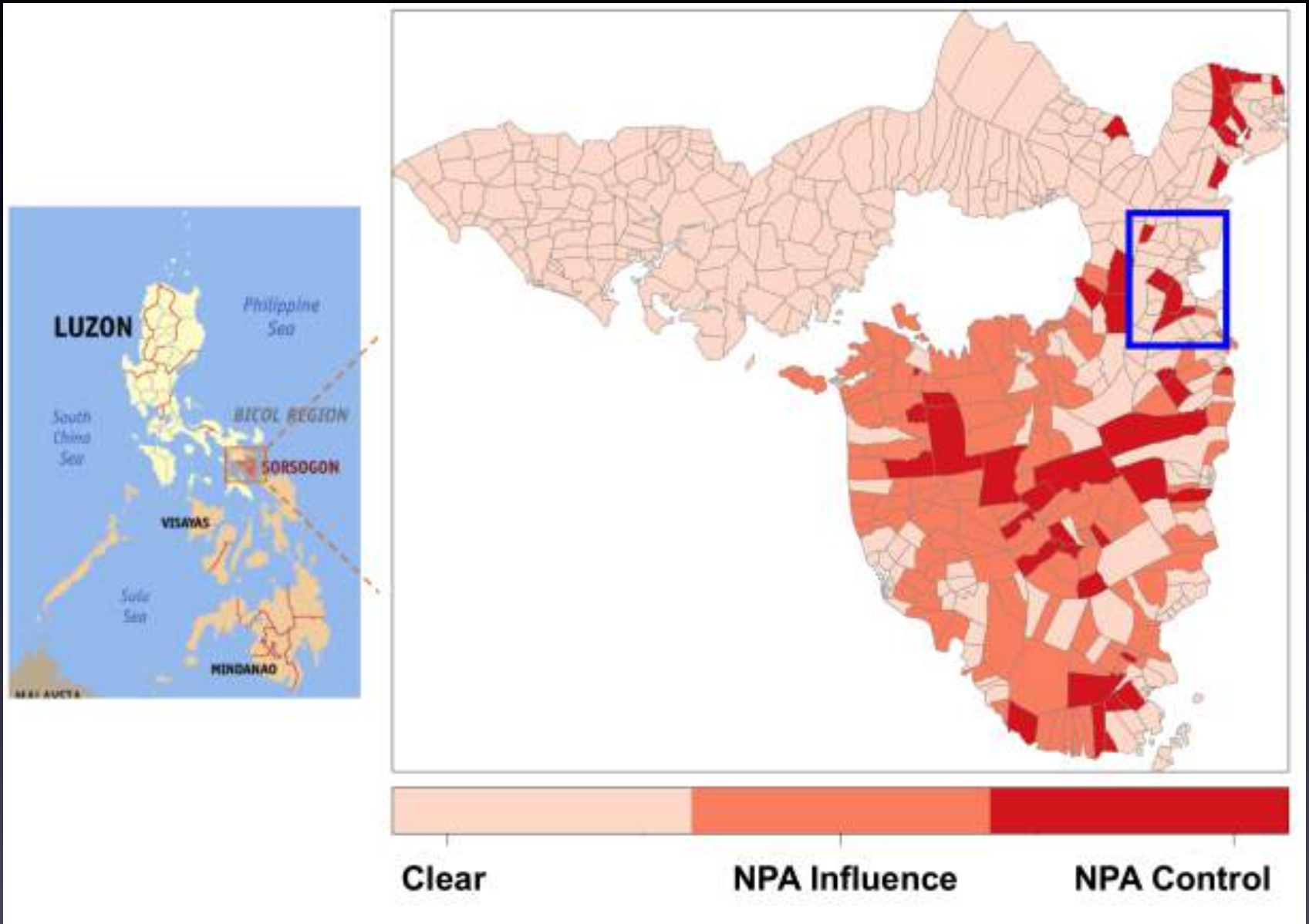
Hypotheses

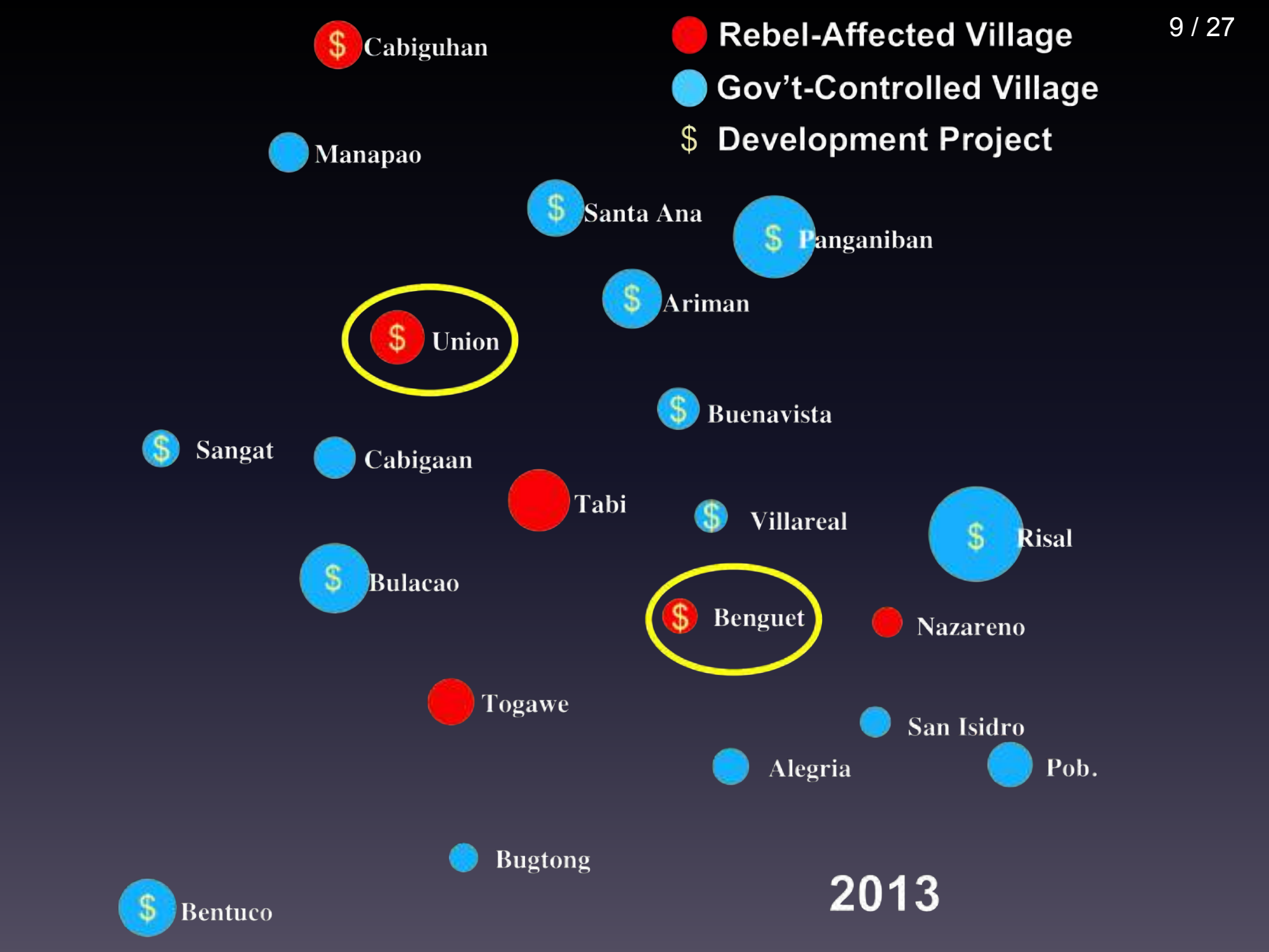
Counterinsurgency more effective when civilians have stronger social network ties to:

H1: Areas under government military control

H2: Areas that receive development projects

Insurgent Presence in Sorsogon Province, 2013

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Gov't-Controlled Village
$ Development Project
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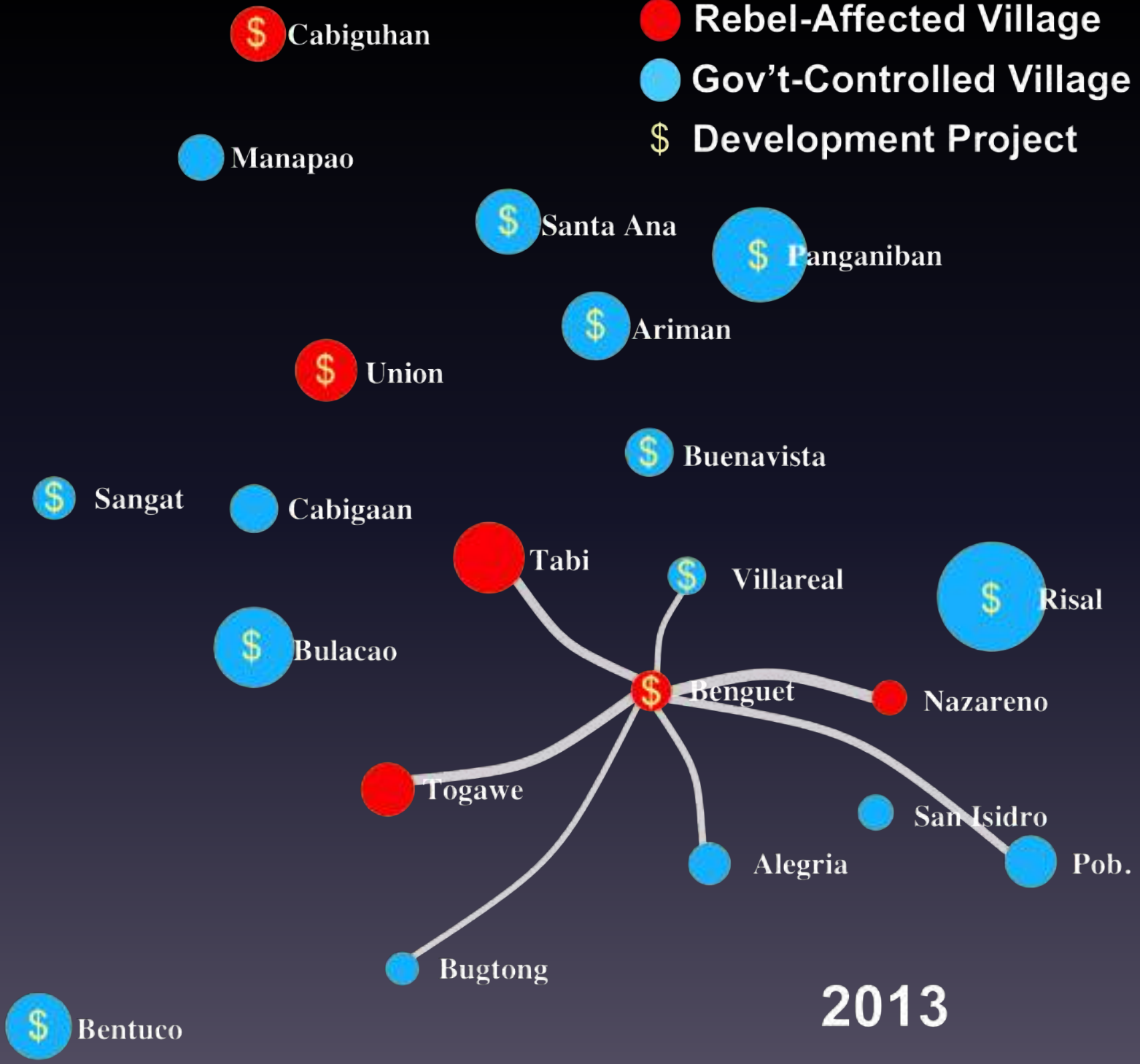
$ Bentuco
2013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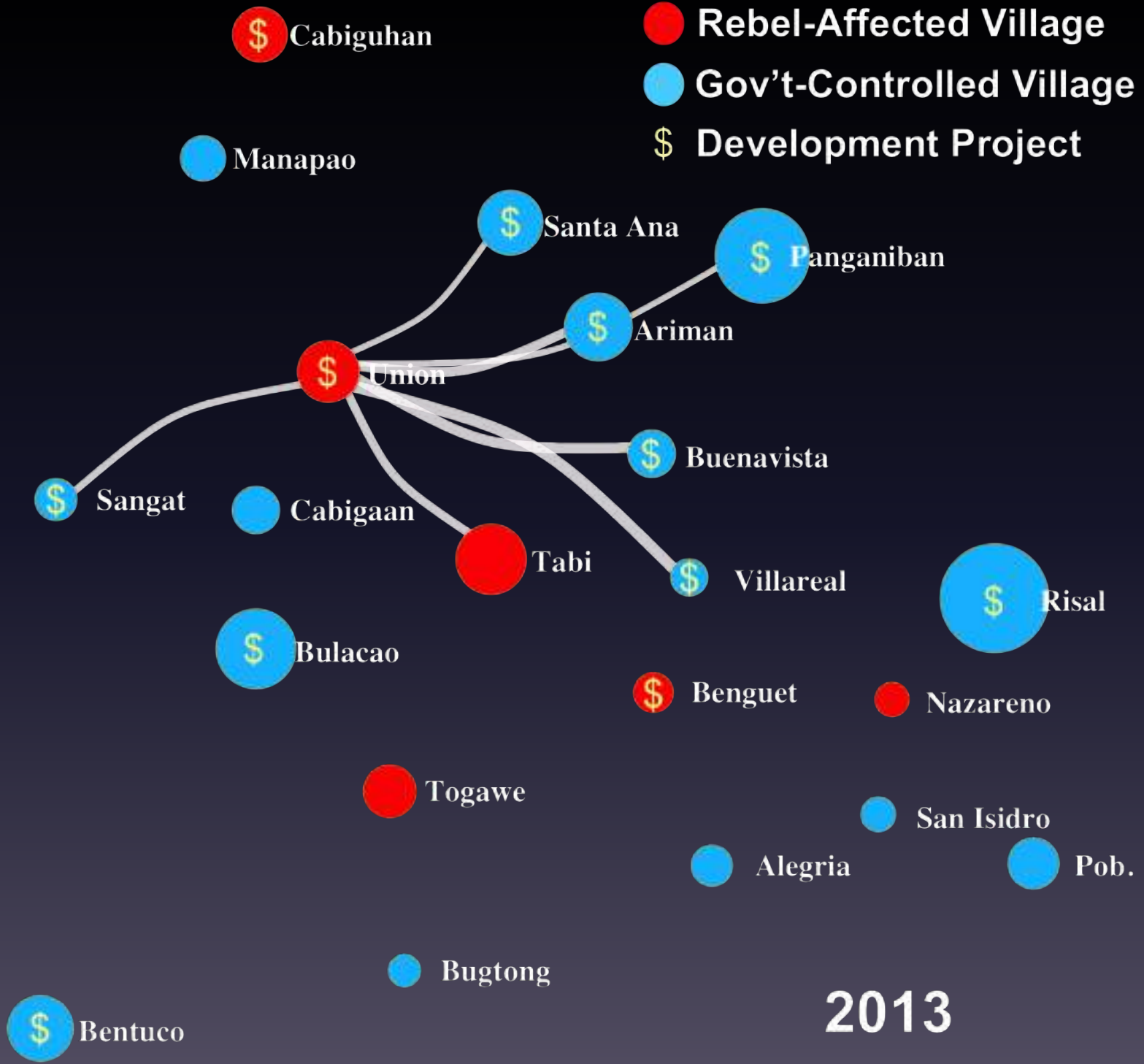
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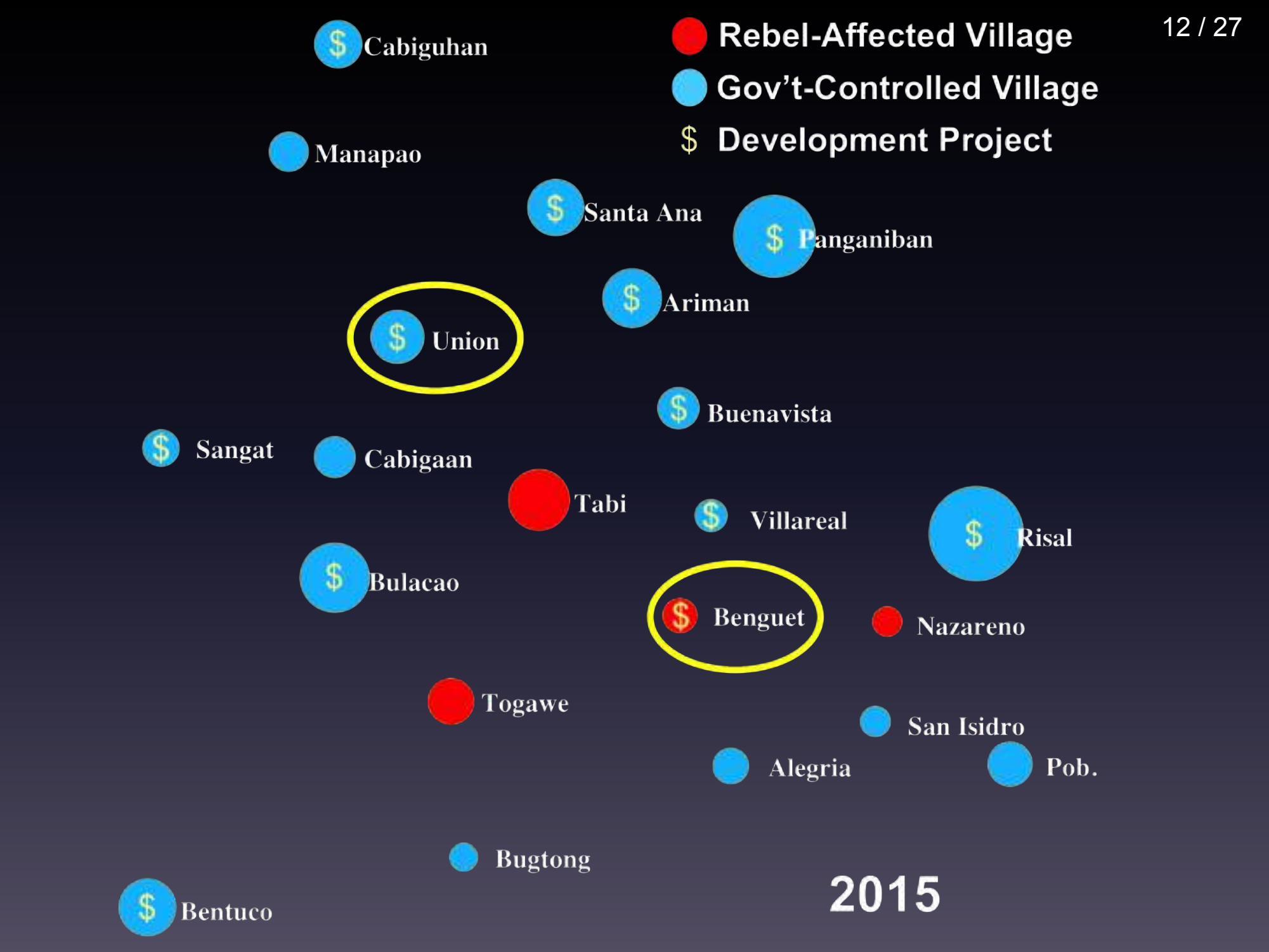
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2015

Rebellion in the Philippines

New People’s Army (NPA)

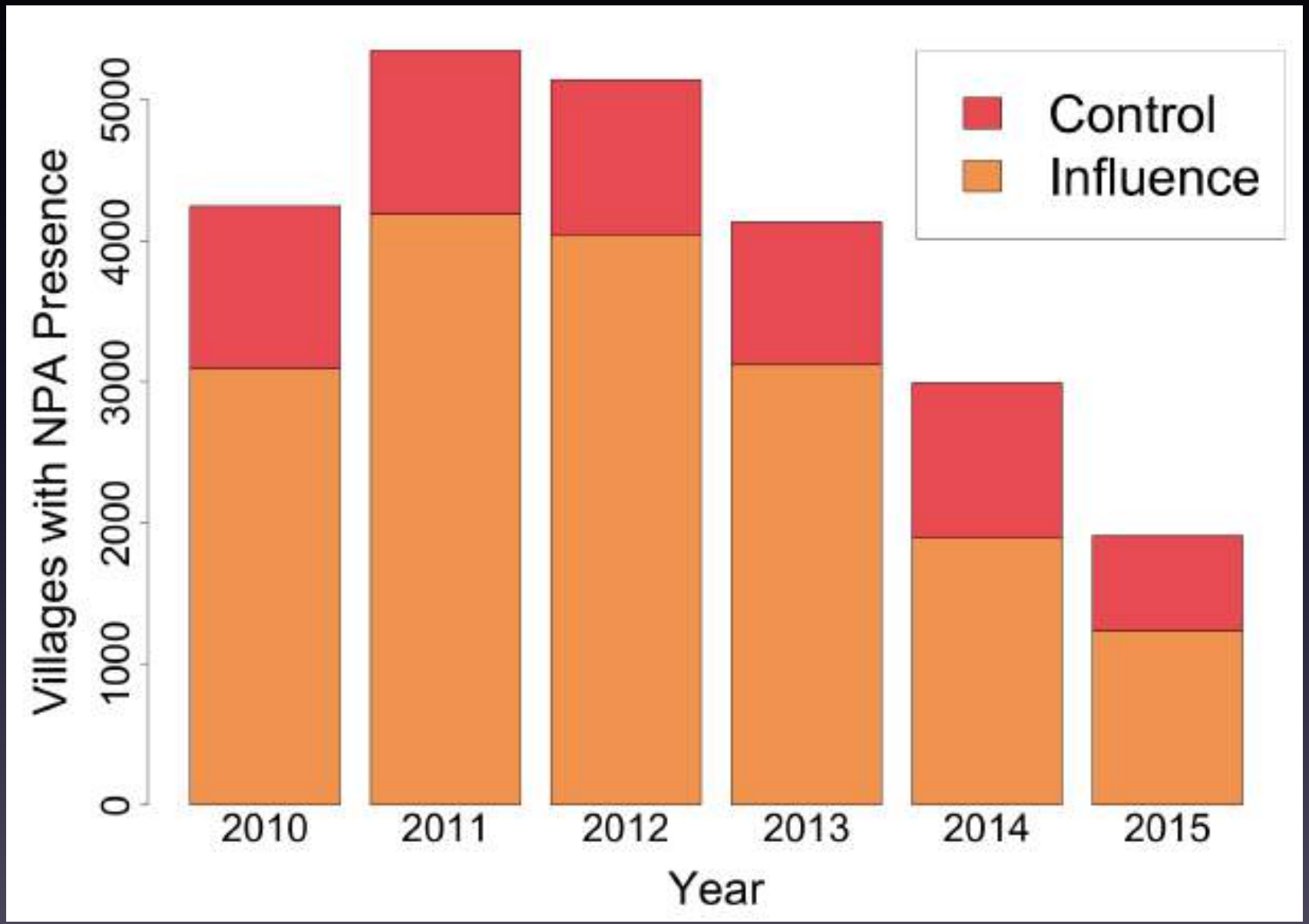
Outcome of Interest

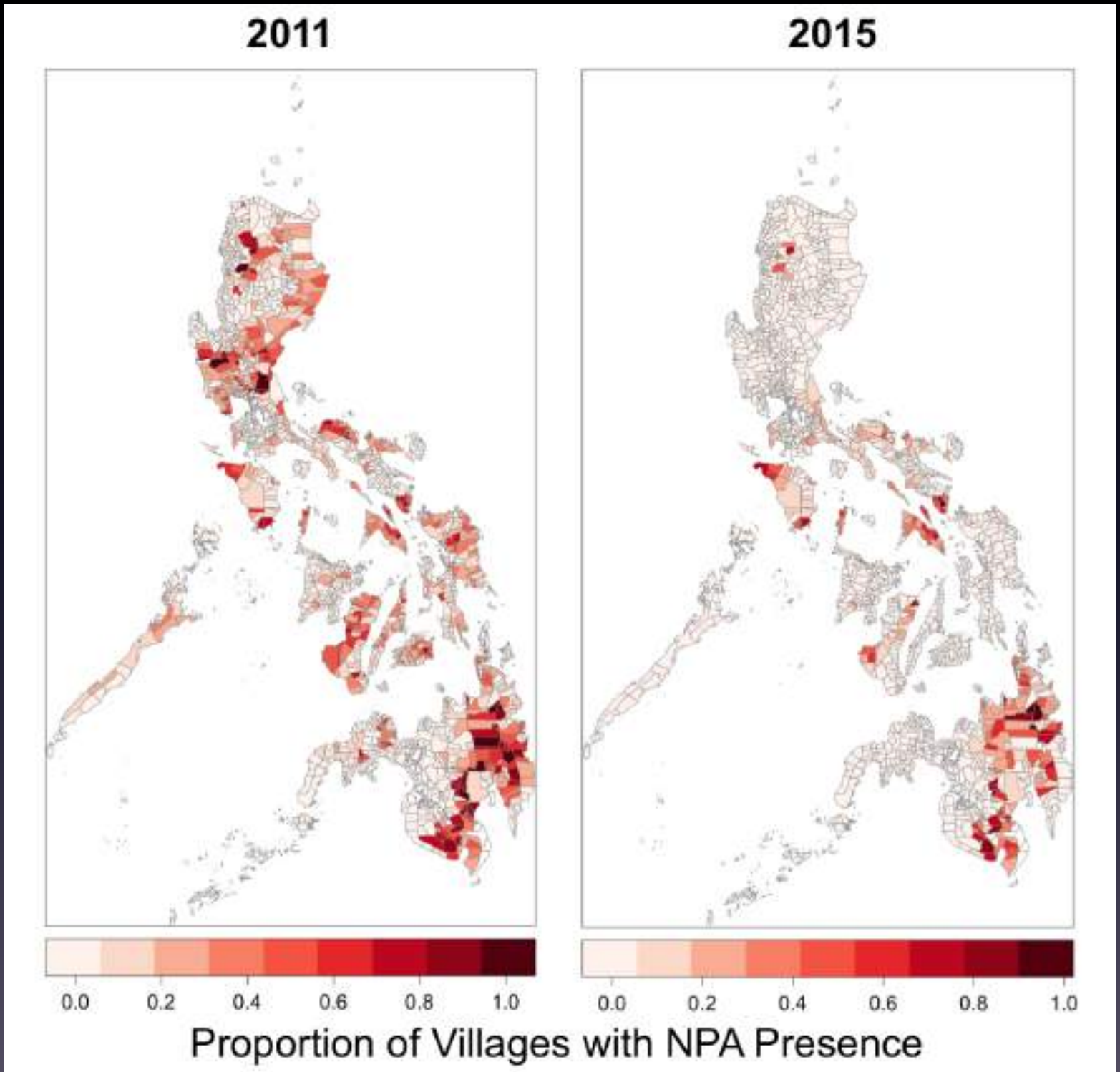
Counterinsurgency Effectiveness

- Year-to-year change in NPA Presence
- Village-level military intelligence reports

0 = Clear
1 = NPA Influence
2 = NPA Control

NPA Presence




2011
2015
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0
Proportion of Villages with NPA Presence

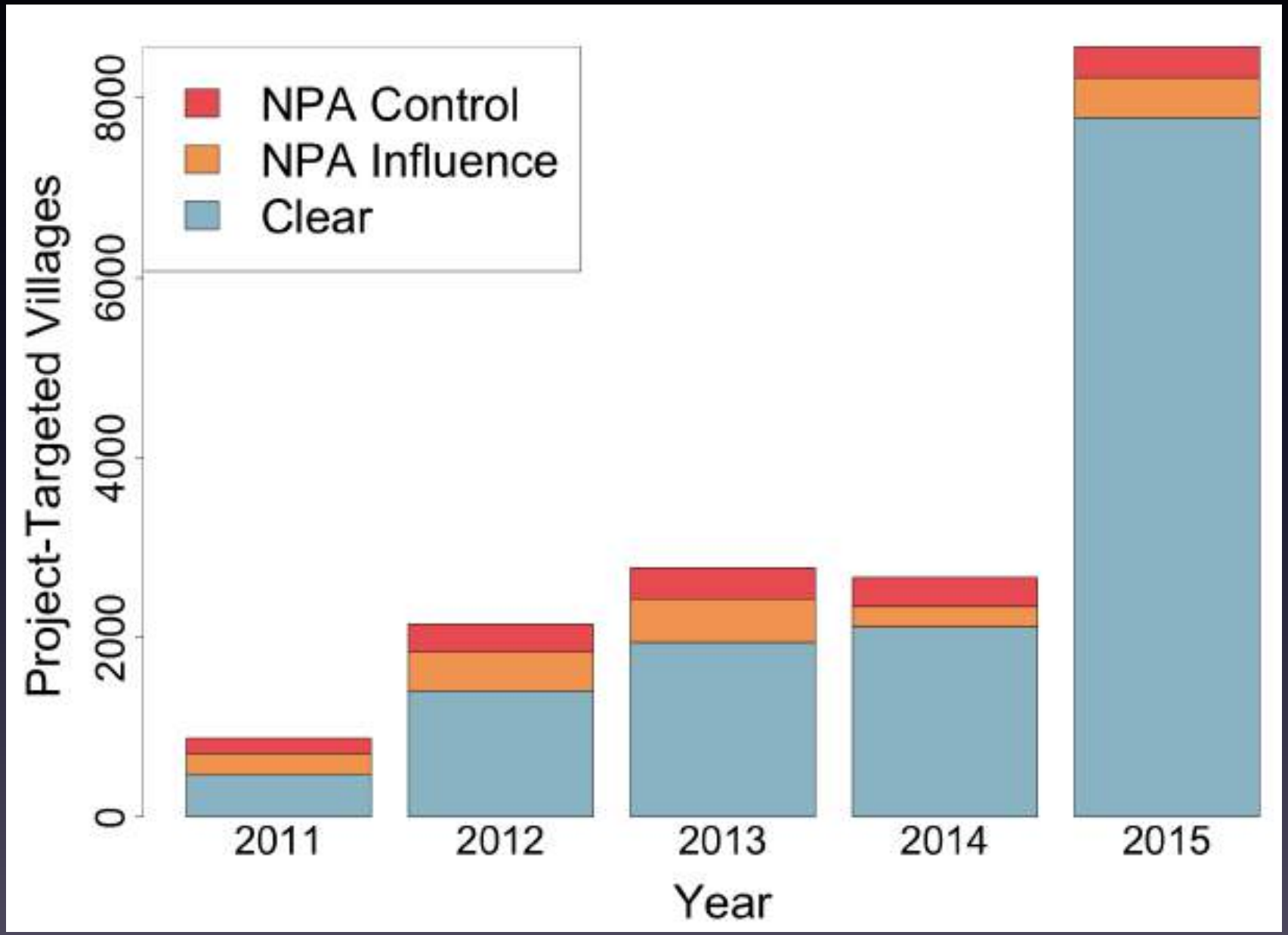
Two development programs

- KALAHI-CIDSS & PAMANA

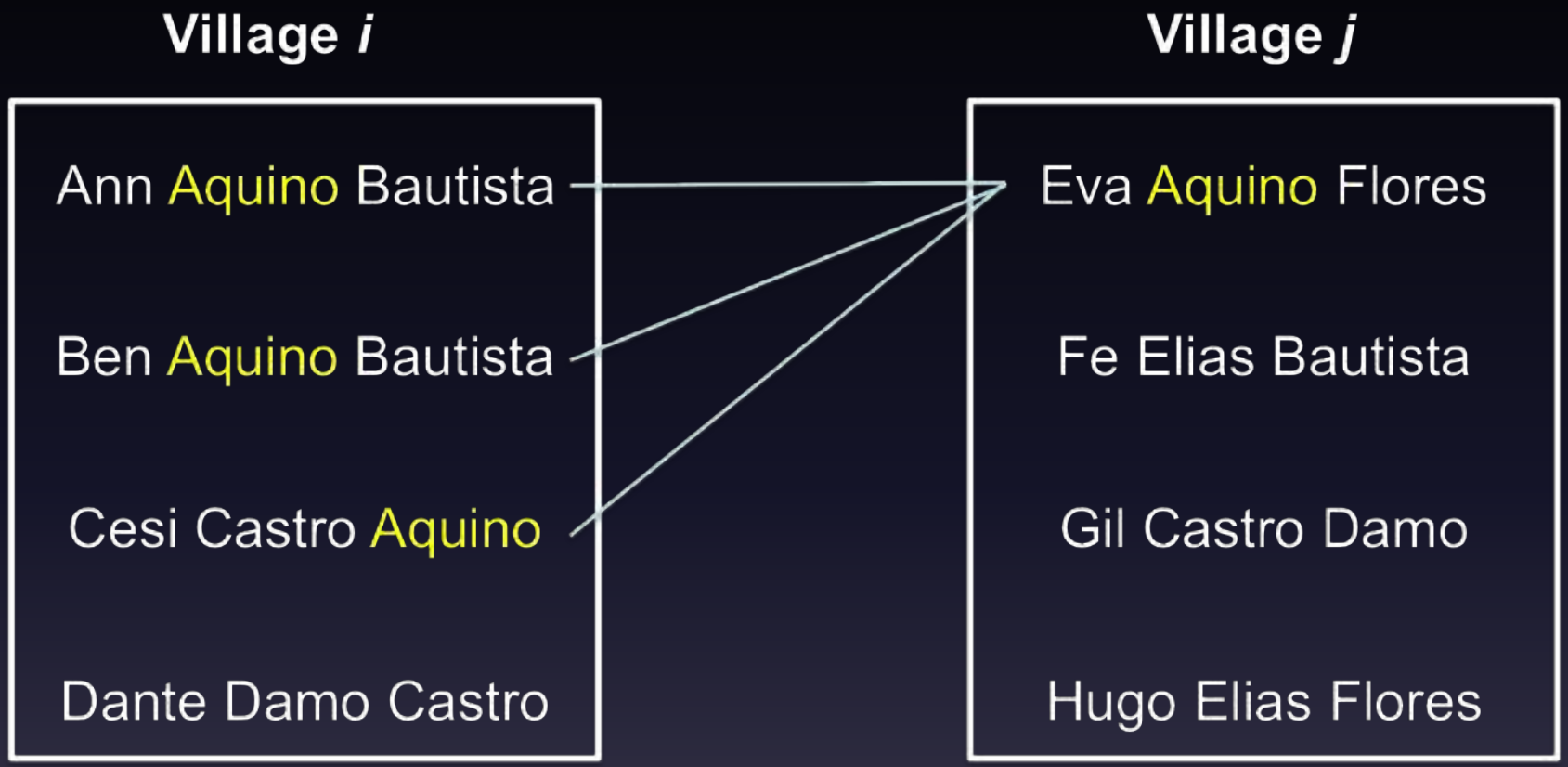
Project Types, 2010-2015

	Count	%
Roads & Pathways	4,912	34.27
Community Infrastructure	3,280	22.88
Agriculture	2,408	16.80
Water	1,128	7.87
Electricity	1,105	7.71
Skills Training	228	1.6
Other	1,273	8.88

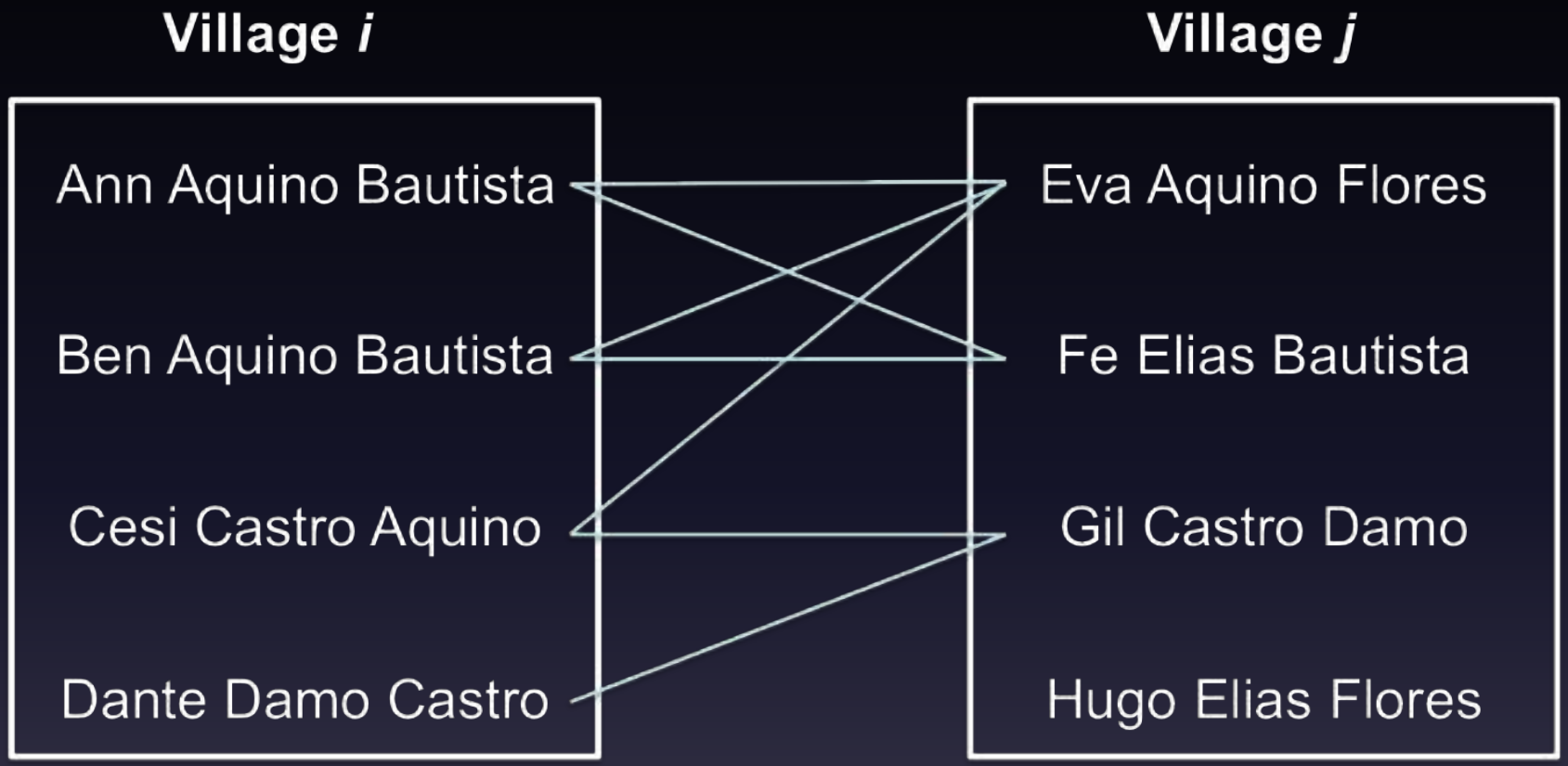
Development Projects by NPA Status



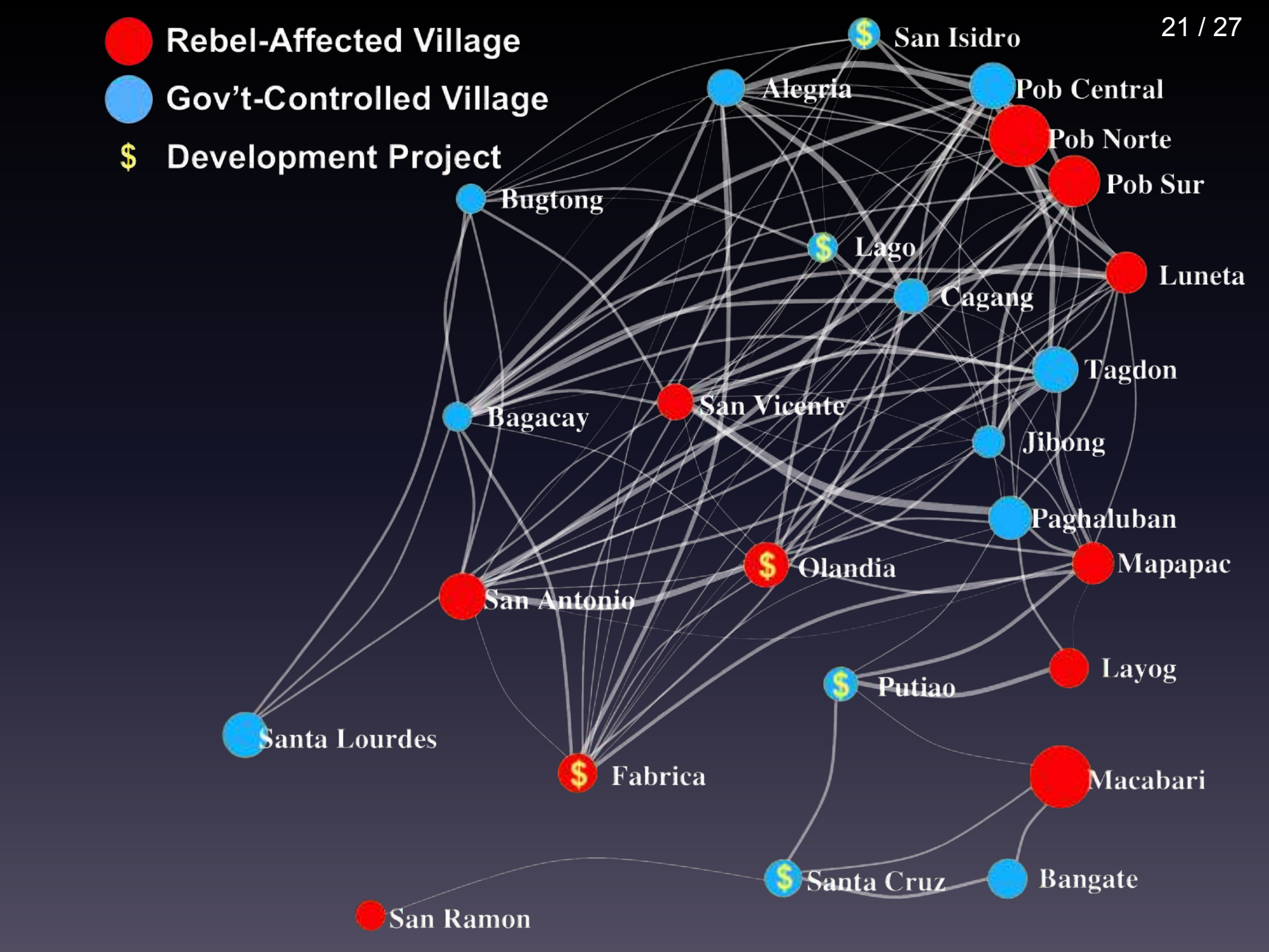
Social Networks



Social Networks



$$FamilyTies_{ij} = \frac{ties_{ij}}{N_i * N_j}$$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Pob Sur
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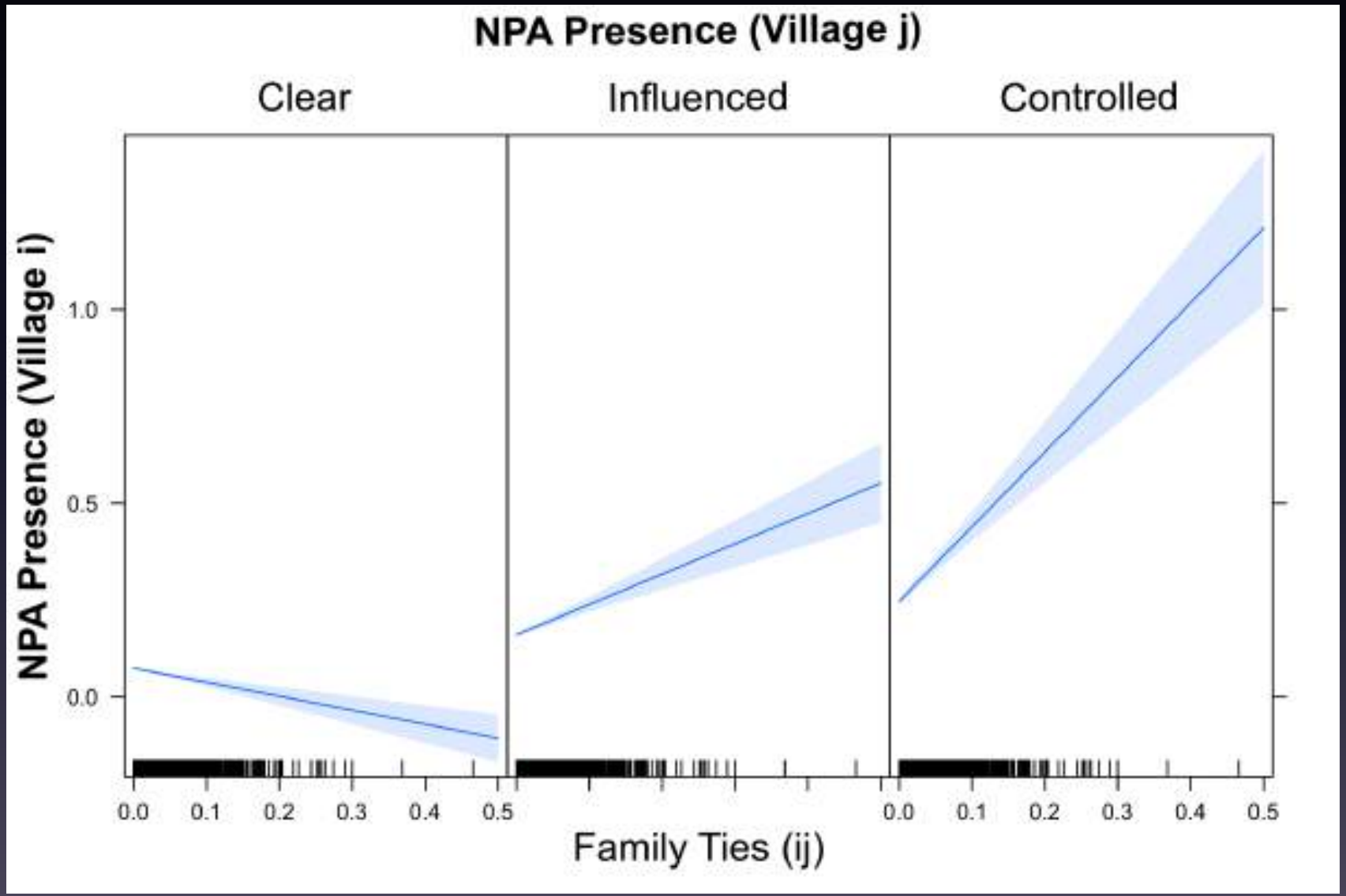
Lago
Luneta
Cagang
Tagdon
San Vicente
Bagacay
Jibong
Paghaluban
Olandia
Mapapac
San Antonio
Layog
Putiao
Santa Lourdes
Fabrica
Macabari
Santa Cruz
Bangate
San Ramon

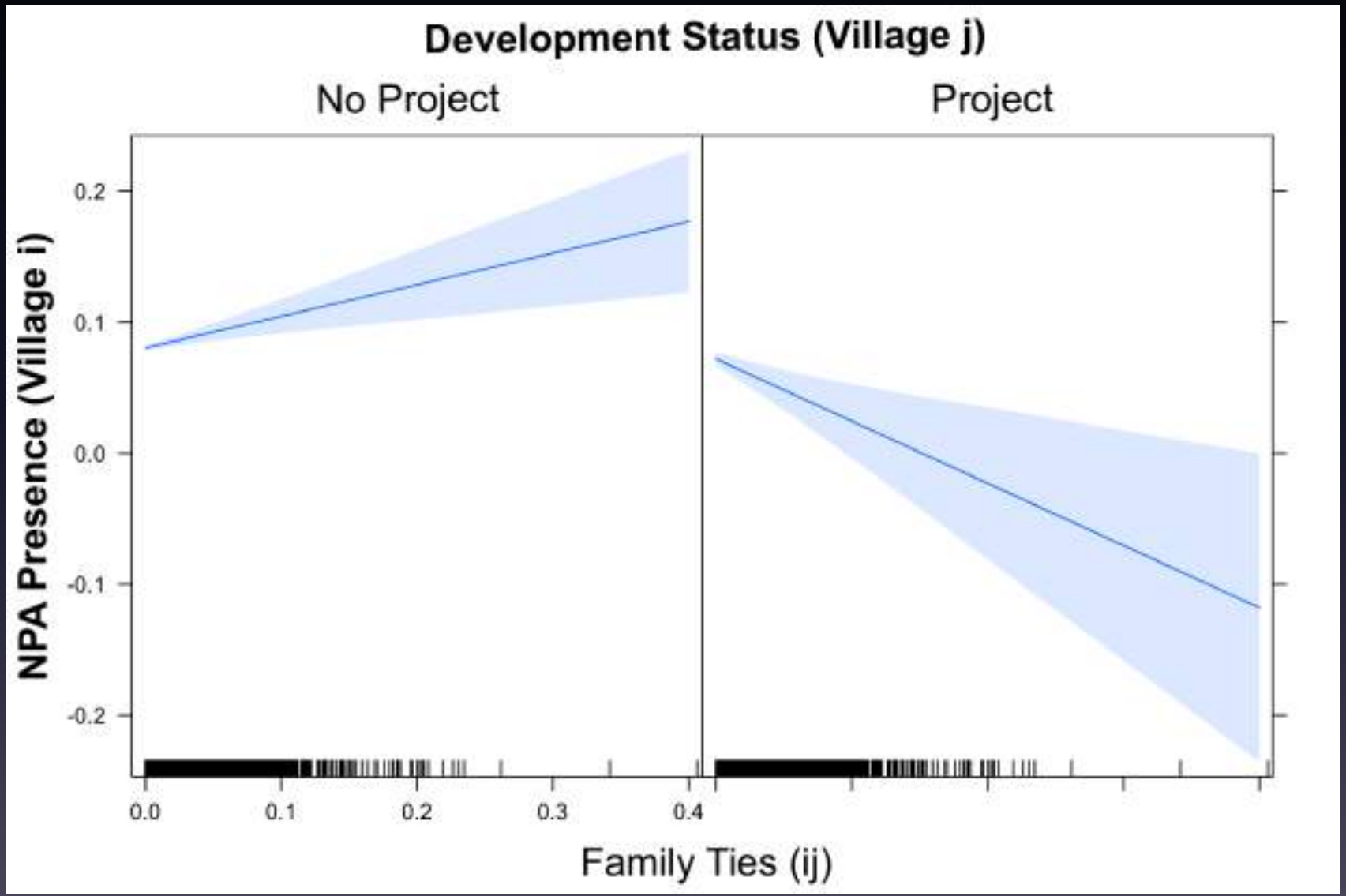
Model

- Data Structure: Dyadic
- Outcome: Change in NPA Presence
- Predictors:
  - Project in targeted village *i*
  - NPA Presence, Projects in nearby village *j*
  - Interacted with family ties *ij*
- Fixed Effects: Village *i*, Village *j*, Year
- Control: Geographic distance

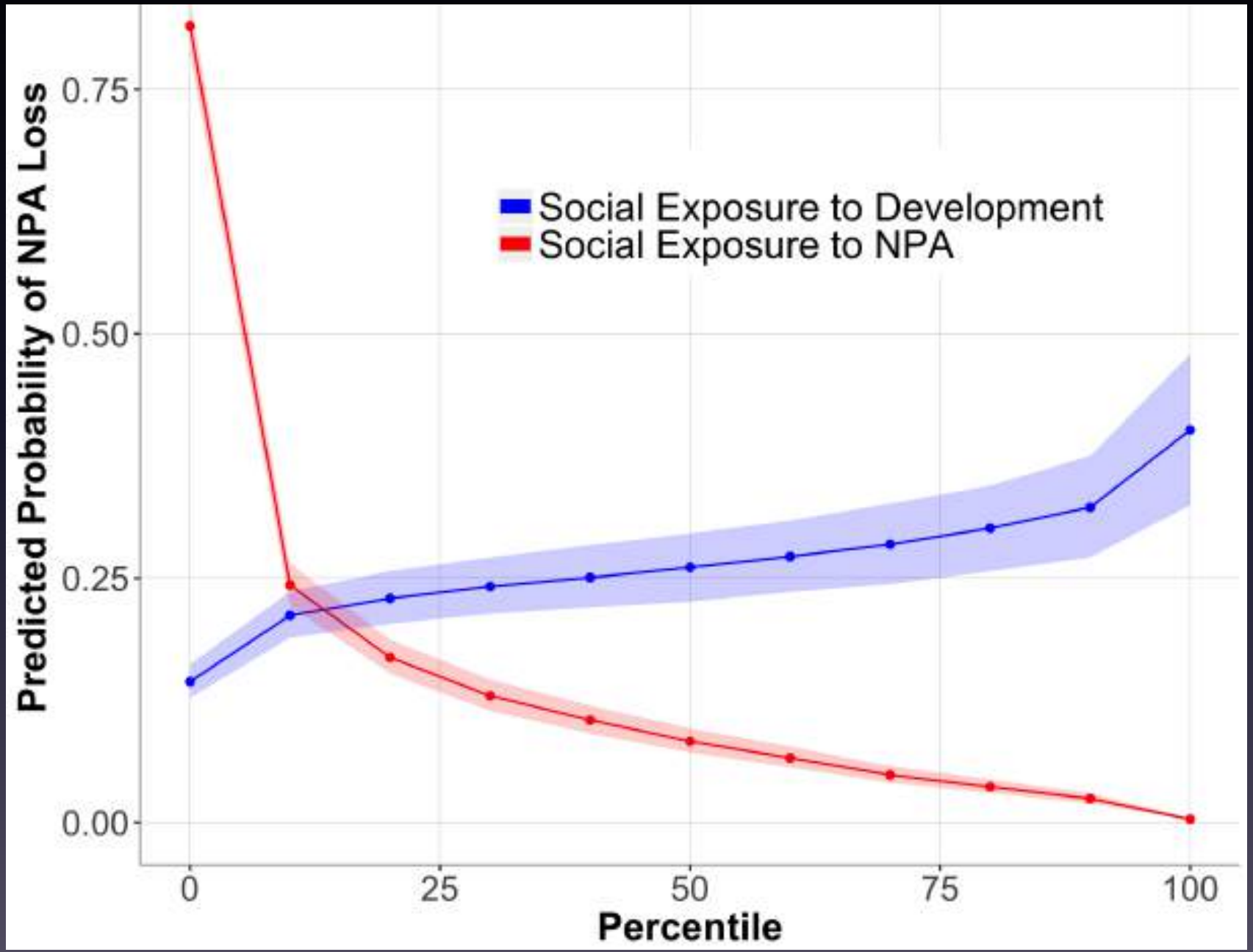
Result: Social Ties to Rebel Villages



Result: Social Ties to Development



Substantive Interpretation



Takeaways and Contributions

- Civilians are sophisticated actors
- Social networks solve information problems

"People must accept that your actions benefit them and trust your integrity and ability to *deliver on promises*, particularly regarding their security. In this battlefield, *popular perceptions and rumors* are more influential than the facts and more powerful than a hundred tanks."

- David Kilcullen

Policy Implications

- Target counterinsurgency on *social* terrain
- Importance of government actions in areas already under military control
- Defeating insurgency from the “outside-in”