What motivates French pork: Political career concerns or private connections?

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of intergovernmental connections on distributive politics, and aims at disentangling in a same framework between different possible underlying motivations. By using the detailed curricula of French ministers and financial accounts of French municipalities, we identify governmental investment grants targeted to specific municipal jurisdictions. We distinguish between municipalities in which a politician held office before being appointed as a government’s member and those in which current ministers lived during their childhood. We provide evidence that municipalities in which a minister held office during her career experience a 45% increase in the amount of discretionary investment subsidies they receive during the time the politician they are linked to serves as minister. In contrast, we do not find any evidence that subsidies flow to municipalities from which ministers originate. These evidence suggest that intergovernmental connections play a role through political career concerns instead of kinship considerations. Additional evidence advocates in favour of a key role of network and knowledge accumulated through connections, illustrated by a persistence of the impact of intergovernmental ties.

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