"Buying" votes: Municipal investment expenditures versus election results in the region of Łódź, Poland

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Abstract

The problem of interdependence between municipal expenditures, mainly investment expenditures, and electoral cycle was widely discussed. The main conclusion of previous studies is that municipal investment expenditures significantly increase in the electoral year and in the year before elections (Napierala, 2017; Veiga & Veiga, 2014). However, the cause of diagnosed relation must be emphasized: politicians are motivated by the chance of being re-elected rather than by social benefits (Cunha, da Conceição Santos Ferreira, & José Fernandes, 2016). The goal of this study is to assess, if the increase of municipal expenditures, particularly investment expenditures, in the electoral year or the year before elections, significantly influence the chance of local authorities to be re-elected. A provocative question can be asked: When being a mayor, how much public money should be spent on municipal purposes just before elections to become re-elected? The study was conducted for all 177 municipalities in the region of Łódź in Central Poland. The binary logistic regression was employed to assess the impact of value of investment expenditures per capita in the years in electoral cycle on the probability of re-election of mayors. Three separate models were estimated for the following electoral cycles: 2003-2006, 2007-2010, and 2011-2014. Thus, the context of social transition after EU eastern enlargement was also discussed. Moreover, cartographic analysis of residuals allowed to implement qualitative methods for investigating unexplained electoral results.

Keywords: municipal investment expenditures, electoral cycle, electoral accountability, electoral geography, Central Poland

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