

## **Abstract (Peter Spáč, habilitation thesis)**

This thesis provides a comprehensive study of pork barrel politics in Slovakia. More specifically, it deals with distribution of public resources from national to local level and studies its outcomes and consequences. The study covers three national funding programs controlled by governmental political parties. These programs include the grants for individual municipal purposes directed by Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, the Environmental fund and the Reserve of the Prime Minister. The thesis focuses on the allocation of sources from these programs during the period of 2003 to 2017.

The thesis has two main objective. First, it analyses whether the distribution of grants to municipalities in Slovakia follows political and partisan interests or whether it is immune to such potential pressures. Second, it focuses on direct mayoral elections in Slovakia and studies whether the allocated grants provide advantage to incumbents who seek reelection. Hence, unlike most studies in the field that are more narrow, the presented goals cover a complex issue, as they combine the analysis of the distribution of resources together with its potential consequences on the local electoral arena.

The findings show the presence of pork barrel politics in the distribution of public resources to municipalities in Slovakia. The analysis showed that allocation process systematically advantages towns that are linked to governmental parties and among them primarily to the parties that directly control the distribution. These include municipalities where the mayors are elected with the support of the respective parties or where these parties scored better in general election. Some support was also found for benefits provided to municipalities where representatives of the governmental parties live, although only for some time periods. The crucial point is that the advantage in the distribution process given to municipalities with linkages to governmental parties concerns only the access to grants while it does not occur when the amount of grants is taken into account. Hence, these municipalities have higher probability of obtaining grants (mostly at the expense of towns led by mayors from the opposition parties) but they do not enjoy any privileged status when it comes to amount of money that is given to them.

In respect to local elections, the thesis found that grants are beneficial to mayors who seek reelection. Based on the analysis several patterns of distribution have been identified that provide support to local incumbents to a higher extent. Mayors are given better ground for reelection when their towns receive grants repeatedly, if these sources are allocated in the final part of the term or if the grants are of higher value. Governmental political parties thus are able to apply specific tactics in the distribution to support the chances of selected mayors in the upcoming elections. On the other hand, this study found that the overall effect of grants on local elections results is limited and that there are other factors with substantially stronger influence. Among these, the number of challengers to incumbents has been identified as a crucial determinant of chances for reelection of mayors. In general, the local elections in Slovakia are affected by the outcomes of the distribution but only in a limited way.

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