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Vote Buying with Multiple Distributive Goods

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September 15, 2011

Comparative Political Studies, Forthcoming

Abstract:

Within the rich literature on distributive politics, models of vote buying treat the distributive logic of different particularistic incentives as theoretically similar. This article relaxes that assumption, focusing on how the nature of a good affects the political logic of its distribution, and then uses data from a new compilation of land transfers and rural investment projects from the 1958-90 agrarian reform program in Venezuela to empirically test the resulting theoretical implications. By comparing the distribution of land and rural investment, the analysis demonstrates that a party may simultaneously target both swing and core groups of voters with particularistic goods, the choice being determined by the distributive good. Whereas land was primarily distributed in areas where political competition was highest, rural investment projects were targeted at parties' core constituencies.

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Keywords: Clientelism, distributive politics, core and swing voter models, land reform, Latin America

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