

The state plays a prominent role in the process of regional development. State interventions might bring radical influences into the entire socioeconomic system, to which the other actors of regional development have to adapt. Importantly, the state administers a large amount of funds, creates large numbers of jobs, and it is led by "elites" which might influence the other people's opinions. The need for studying of the role of the state and the expenditure side of its budget for an understanding of the mechanisms of regional development is recognized by many authors. However, deep discussions of the function of the state could be hardly found in regional development theories.

The aim of this dissertation thesis is to contribute to understanding of the role of the state as one of major actors in regional development via investigation of the regional impacts of public support programs. To provide concrete scrutiny, parliamentary grants (so-called "pork barrel") were depicted through which deputies annually sent large sums of money from the state budget during its approval process in the Chamber of Deputies on projects with local impact. The topic of parliamentary grants is a traditional topic for international studies within the concept of the so-called pork barrel politics, which includes all activities of political parties on the allocation of state finances (and posts) on the basis of clientelistic and political influences. This dissertation attempts to follow and in certain ways supplement these approaches.

The thesis consists of the two consecutive parts. First, a critical discussion of the theories of regional development in terms of the assessment of the significance of the state's role in regional development is provided. Further, the methodological pros and cons of studying public support programs are drawn. Second, the outcomes of empirical study of parliamentary grants are presented as publication outputs. The first paper included in the thesis deals with spatial analysis of parliamentary grants and the implications of their spatial distribution for regional development. The second article is targeted at factors influencing the spatial distribution of parliamentary grants. The third paper introduces the effect of MPs on ministerial grants after the finish of the parliamentary grants. The last article extends the current issues associated with pork barrel politics on the local implications of parliamentary grants, namely through the assessment of the importance of parliamentary grants for recipients' localities. Apart from the summary and discussion of the main conclusions in the first section of the thesis, the particular articles also point to the other research challenges in the study of parliamentary and ministerial grants.