Distributive Politics as Behavioral Localism

Local Ties as Heuristics for Public Goods Allocation and Bureaucratic Oversight

> by Daniel Kovarek



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> Supervisor: Professor Levente Littvay

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Declaration

I, the undersigned Dániel Kovarek, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Central European University Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International Relations, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of work of others, and no part the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

Recent literature on friends-and-neighbors voting focused on explaining citizens' motives behind disproportionally supporting local candidates. This dissertation advances the literature by studying whether voters use politicians' local ties to make inferences about receiving tangible benefits. This speaks to the growing body of scholarship positing a cue-based explanation of how descriptive localism informs the electorate. It is composed of three independent studies that leverage original data collected via survey experiments and observational data capturing bureaucrat-citizen interactions in Hungary.

The first paper draws on an online survey experiment (N=2076) and tests whether pork barrel politics and clientelism are manifestations of behavioral localism using a vignette study. Respondents in the treatment and the control group were shown the same candidate profile of a fictive politician, differing only in their local roots. Results demonstrate that respondents who were told that the candidate was born and living in their hometown were more likely to believe that the politician will 'bring home the bacon' as opposed to those confronted with a randomly selected Hungarian settlement as the candidate's birthplace and residence. To better understand how preferences regarding distributive linkages shape expectations about local candidates, a choice-based conjoint experiment was also fielded. Promises of pork delivery increased, whereas clientelistic exchanges decreased the likelihood of selecting a particular candidate profile (with programmatic linkages set as baseline).

The second paper tests whether voters formulate expectations about politicians' future behavior concerning hiring decisions with respect to municipal and state jobs based on the local roots these candidates' possess. Using a nationally representative, probability sample (N=1000), the study utilizes vignettes to investigate whether respondents find it more likely that job-seekers who posses shared local roots with incumbents will be able to obtain jobs in the public sector. Furthermore, a conjoint demonstrates that respondents themselves are more willing to fire non-local employees, and they believe their decisions reflect the behavior of real-world top bureaucrats.

The third paper shows how civil servants use incumbents' local ties as proxies for monitoring. The literature suggests bureaucrats shirk when political oversight is limited or inefficient. When civil servants engage in multitasking, elected office holders have neither the capacity, nor the incentives to monitor bureaucrat–citizen interactions. I argue that under such circumstances, public servants prioritize responding to local anomalies which are located in the immediate vicinity of politicians' domiciles. Using a novel dataset on geolocated problem reports (N=25,733), matched to mayors' addresses, I find that proximity to mayors' domiciles is associated with more prompt responses from authorities. Results suggest local politicians generate positive externalities for their neighbors, as bureaucrats put reports that are invisible to their principals on the back burner. Moreover, response speed is positively associated with incumbent mayors' re-election chances. The findings refine our understanding of voters' expectations about elected politicians' non-programmatic behavior, political oversight of bureaucrats, political business cycles and representation in civil service.

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On Locals and Methods: An Introduction

Why do we like local politicians? Why do voters favor candidates who are from 'their own stock'? What makes us to electorally reward a politician solely on the basis of their innate attributes? Why do we witness increased turnout when candidates are native to their electoral districts, compared to races contested by 'carpetbaggers'?

Friends-and-neighbors voting, or the local candidate effect, describes the tendency of a candidate to generally "receive a greater proportion of support around his or her home area than elsewhere in a constituency" (Johnson, 1989, p. 93).¹ Early literature has focused on demonstrating the importance of local roots for candidates running for office in the United States in various institutional contexts — presidential, vice-presidential, national, gubernatorial, local and judicial races (Rice & Macht, 1987; Lewis-Beck & Rice, 1983; Aspin & Hall, 1989; Dudley & Rapoport, 1989).² This was shortly followed by empirical analyses of comparativists, highlighting the prevalence of the mechanism in consolidated democracies of Western Europe (Johnson, 1989; Shugart et al., 2005; Arzheimer & Evans, 2014; Jankowski, 2016; Fiva & Smith, 2017; Put et al., 2019), Central Eastern European countries democratized during the Third Wave (Tavits, 2010; Herron & Lynch, 2019; Kovarek, 2022; Górecki et al., 2022), as well as in Japan, Australia, and Kenya (McAllister, 2015; Hirano, 2006; Simiyu, 2010).

Local candidates can mobilize local voters, who would have otherwise abstained, to show up on election day or convert out-partisans by convincing them to cross the party line for the sake of local connection (Fiva & Smith, 2017, p. 130). A "strong consensus" exists that local

¹In this dissertation, I use *friends-and-neighbors voting*, *home area advantage* and *local candidate effect* as synonyms, capturing the same empirically observable phenomenon of electoral behavior.

²See Devine & Kopko (2013, 2016) for a more recent take on the mechanism (or lack thereof) in the United States.

roots of candidates are important determinants of vote choice, for national electorates and party selectorates alike (Put et al., 2017, p. 242). Popular candidates with the 'hometown effect' are able to improve voter turnout (Rice & Macht, 1987; Kavanagh et al., 2004), while their absence – or exit from the race in a runoff – leads to diminished turnout numbers (Fiva & Smith, 2017). In some contexts, as it was noted by Flanagan, hometown consciousness as a phenomenon of voting behavior might "transcend rather than substitute" the partisan affiliation of candidates (as cited in Hirano, 2006, p. 59). An electoral advantage "not limited to a particular part of the globe or a type of electoral system" (Górecki & Marsh, 2014, p. 11), the local candidate effect is present in urban and rural constituencies alike (Johnson, 1989).

Parallel to confirming the widespread and (electoral) context-independent character of friends-and-neighbors voting, there have been repeated calls to "address such important questions as «Why do individuals vote for hometown candidates?»" (Rice & Macht, 1987, p. 257). As Górecki & Marsh (2014, p. 19) once stated, "delv[ing] deeper into the motivations that drive voters to support candidates living within their own local area (...) should be the ultimate goal of future research on the topic". Consider the excerpt below from Devine & Kopko (2016, p. 178), suggesting there has been little progress in the discipline to explain the main drivers of supporting and electorally rewarding local candidates:

[W]hich of the four criteria of friends and neighbors voting, as defined by Key (1949), are most effective in convincing voters to support a home state running mate's ticket, when otherwise they would not have done so – is it familiarity with the candidate's record? Personal contact? Perceived knowledge of local concerns? A shared sense of identity?

These are the main questions motivating this dissertation. Until now, scholars of voting behavior have proposed a handful of hypotheses, but these conjectures were rarely accompanied by empirical tests. A relatively nascent branch of literature focused on how place identities and in-group considerations can become politically salient and subsequently act as drivers of political participation and vote choice, boosting homegrown candidates' electoral chances (Munis, 2020, 2021; Panagopoulos et al., 2017; Panagopoulos & Bailey, 2019). These works experimentally test earlier assumptions such as perceiving the candidate as "one of our own" (Key, 1950) or the local representative's identity being "valued in itself, above and beyond the balance of party forces in the legislature" (Cox, 1997, p. 81). Others have proposed a cue-based explanation, suggesting that voters use politicians' local roots to make inferences about their likely behavior.

This dissertation utilizes the theoretical framework of *behavioral localism*, developed by Campbell et al. (2019). It posits that descriptive localism is most predictive of voters' evaluations when alternative information about candidates' actual behavior is scarce. Accountability, familiarity with local needs and ideological similarity have all been argued earlier as expectations formulated by voters based on information shortcuts such as candidates' birthplace or residence (Jankowski, 2016; Collignon & Sajuria, 2018; Tavits, 2010; Campbell et al., 2019).

The three papers comprising this dissertation focus on the question what politicians' local roots serve as a cue for: Chapter 2 and 3 ask this with respect to voters, whereas Chapter 4 studies how bureaucrats' behavior is shaped by incumbents' localness. The mechanism hypothesized by Chapter 2 concerns local PVEAs being heuristics for manifestations of distributive politics: pork barrel politics and clientelism, respectively.³ Chapter 3 investigates the extent to which shared local roots (with incumbent politicians) are perceived as advantageous for those seeking jobs in the public sector, as well as population preferences for representation in civil service.

These mechanisms are tested in the context of Hungary, a country whose political system and electoral behavior have come under heightened scholarly scrutiny lately, not independently of its rapid democratic backsliding in recent years (Kelemen, 2017; Bozóki & Hegedűs, 2018; Krekó & Enyedi, 2018; Bogaards, 2018). More importantly for our purposes here, it is also a national context where pork barrel (Muraközy & Telegdy, 2016; Papp, 2019), clientelistic exchanges (Mares & Young, 2018, 2019a; Vasvári, 2022), patronage and frequent, politically motivated turnover of public servants have been well-documented (Meyer-Sahling, 2006, 2008; Meyer-Sahling & Toth, 2020). Nevertheless, friends-and-neighbors voting was

³An abridged version of Chapter 2 has been published in *Research & Politics* in September 2022 (Kovarek, 2022).

not demonstrated empirically in Hungary before; consequently, its main drivers have hitherto also remained unexplained by the literature.

1.1 Methodology

To answer these questions, I utilize survey experiments; vignette and conjoint experiments, specifically. Survey experiments are now a "standard part of the methodological toolkit in contemporary political science" (Pepinsky, 2022, 1); Mutz & Kim (2020) report a "dramatic increase" of published scholarly work using the method between 2000 and 2013. Their generalizability, external validity and replicability have been subject to much debate (e.g. Mullinix et al., 2015; Barabas & Jerit, 2010; Coppock, 2019); nevertheless, they have become not only accepted, but also a primary method within the discipline, leveraging online access panels and crowdsourcing platforms (Druckman & Green, 2021).

Vignette experiments, a version of stated preference experiments, are known for their versatility: vignette designs have been used by social scientists to study a variety of distinct topics (Banerjee et al., 2014; van der Meer & Reeskens, 2020; Carreras et al., 2021; Blackman & Jackson, 2021). Their main purpose is to evaluate objects (notional people, fictive scenarios or situations), as researchers vary attributes of such hypothetical descriptions of objects, to better understand the main determinants of individuals' choice or rating (Hainmueller et al., 2015).

Conjoint experiments, a form of factorial experiments designed to measure trade-offs, have been widely used in marketing research for decades (Green et al., 2001). In political science, however, they have only been recently popularized by Hainmueller et al. (2014). Their work integrates conjoint analysis with the potential outcomes framework and uses a fully randomized design via sampling each level (i.e. attribute value) independently when creating conjoint tasks, thus drastically reducing the costs and logistical difficulties associated with full factorial experiments. Their approach focuses on Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs), as the main quantity of interest, which tells us the overall effect of an attribute (an independent variable) across other attributes of profiles. In other words, AMCEs provide the average change (increase or decrease) in the probability that a profile will be chosen by respondents when a single attribute is changed from its baseline value to different one, holding all other attribute levels constant.⁴

Following the footsteps of Hainmueller et al. (2014), conjoint experiments have been since widely used to study population preferences on politicians, judges, immigrants and intra-party representation (e.g Mares & Visconti, 2020; Horiuchi et al., 2020; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015; Findor et al., 2022; Krewson & Owens, 2021; Wäckerle, 2022). The method, which Sniderman (2018, p. 265) referred to as the "most promising design innovation in survey experiments developed over the past decade", has been shown to be better in approximating real-world scenarios compared to unidimensional vignette experiments, particularly useful for testing competing hypotheses parallel, as well as for limiting social desirability bias (Leeper et al., 2020; Horiuchi et al., 2022).

In Chapters 2–3. I field choice-based conjoint experiments, which have become the "most widely used flavour of conjoint analysis" (Sawtooth Software, 2013), due to their ease of modeling and ability to approximate revealed preferences. They also have an edge over alternative designs⁵ by better approximating revealed preferences (as opposed to stated ones). forcing respondents to make trade-offs, enhancing reality. Moreover, presenting paired profiles is known to increase survey engagement of interviewees (Hainmueller et al., 2015). Recent work has shown that AMCEs are sensitive to the distributions used when constructing profile attributes, and argued for using real-world distributions when possible (de la Cuesta et al., 2022). However, the real world distribution of single-member district candidates (Chapter 2) or public servants (Chapter 3) in Hungary is unknown, I choose a uniform distribution when randomizing profiles. Previous studies have accumulated an impressive amount of data on parliamentary candidates seeking a mandate up until the 2014 general election (see Papp, 2016a), but they were not followed by similar data collection efforts for the 2018 or 2022 parliamentary elections, despite the emergence of new challenger parties, altered intraopposition dynamics and a shrinking pool of locally embedded opposition activists (Kovarek & Littvay, 2019; Jakli & Stenberg, 2021; Várnagy, 2022). When constructing fictive candidate

⁴To compute AMCEs, as well as marginal means for comparing descriptive preferences across population subgroups, I use the **cregg** package developed by Leeper et al. (2020).

⁵Such as ranking-based, rating, constant sum point allocation and adaptive conjoints (e.g. Green, 1984; O'Brien et al., 2020).

profiles for *vignette* experiments, however, I utilized existing information on Hungarian MPs' socio-economic background (Ilonszki & Kurtán, 2011; Kristóf, 2013) to present as realistic notional representatives to survey respondents as possible. All experimental studies presented in this thesis have been pre-registered to avoid underreporting of outcome variables and experimental manipulations, as well as other dubious research practices, commonly known as "p-hacking" (Franco et al., 2015; Brodeur et al., 2020). Chapters 2 and 3 join a small but growing body of literature, studying voting behavior in Hungary with an experimental toolkit (Körösényi et al., 2022; Anghel & Schulte-Cloos, 2022; Ahlquist et al., 2018; Simonovits et al., 2018). To my best knowledge, conjoint experiments specifically, have never been used to model voters' preferences in the Hungarian context.

Lastly, Chapter 4 is different from the previous ones in the sense that it leverages nonexperimental data. To study response time and selective priorities of bureaucrats, I obtained data from a website where citizens can submit problem reports, if they encounter anomalies in public places. This data, courtesy of the generosity of jarokelo.hu volunteers, is then subsequently matched with data on mayors' partisanship, incumbency and gender (Dobos & Papp, 2017), as well as municipal-level data on electoral results (from the National Election Office), revenues and taxes (from the National Regional Development and Territorial Information System) and population (from the Central Statistical Office). Clustering observations at the settlement level, I fit ordinary least square (OLS) regression models with municipality fixed effects, to study whether proximity to politicians' place of residence is a meaningful predictor of time elapsed until a (first) response from civil servants. Interaction terms are used to test conditional hypotheses (Brambor et al., 2006).

1.2 Theoretical and methodological contributions

In this thesis, I seek to make four contributions. First, the dissertation provides the first test of the relationship between candidate localness and voters' expectations concerning distributive politics. Local roots serving as heuristics for tangible benefits, the delivery of collective or individual goods, was hypothesized by many, but tested by none in the past (Hirano, 2006; Fiva & Halse, 2016; Górecki & Marsh, 2014; Campbell et al., 2019). Mechanisms explored

in this thesis, clientelism and patronage specifically, have been extensively studied through the analytical lenses of ethnicity and partisanship (Baland & Robinson, 2008; Frye et al., 2014; Banerjee et al., 2014; Gonzalez Ocantos et al., 2014; Weyland, 2021). Questions such as how these distributive linkages might be conditional on politicians' local ties, and whether either of them are manifestations of *behavioral localism* (Campbell et al., 2019), were however pushed to the blind spot of comparative research.

The second contribution of this thesis is studying population preferences about nonprogrammatic behavior of elected office holders. The factorial experiment in Chapter 2 demonstrates approval of pork barrel politics and disapproval of clientelistic exchanges by Hungarian voters – a pattern consistent in almost all population subgroups. These analyses made further progress in charting drivers of distributive linkages (Stratmann & Baur, 2002; Braidwood, 2015; Muñoz, 2014; Rains & Wibbels, 2022) by exploring demand-side preferences experimentally.

Findings also contribute to a vibrant literature that explores the impact of political oversight on service provision and development (Gulzar & Pasquale, 2017; Brierley, 2020; Raffler, 2022; Pepinsky et al., 2017). Echoing earlier claims about political influence being potentially favorable to prevent shirking, we see bureaucrats providing prompt responses to citizens when reported problems are in close proximity to an incumbent politician's domicile. However, this also suggests that local embeddedness does not only motivate civil servants to do their jobs, but also to engage in favoritism, raising normative questions about bureaucrats serving conflicting interests of their principals (elected politicians), the wide public, or rather subset of the latter (politicians' neighbors who enjoy positive externalities). Moreover, empirical models presented in Chapter 4 underscore that understanding bureaucrats' incentives concerning differential service provision (Tsai, 2007; Do et al., 2017; Einstein & Glick, 2017; Pfaff et al., 2021) should be a priority for future research.

Finally, the dissertation offers the first direct empirical test of friends-and-neighbors voting in the Hungarian context, experimental results demonstrating voters' preference for local politicians. Previously, candidate localness in Hungary was operationalized as possessing relevant political experience (Papp, 2018), such as local assembly member or mayor, and its effect on electoral support was never measured experimentally. I hope to see more scholars leverage an experimental toolkit to better elucidate the role localness plays in Hungarians' voting calculus.

2 Localness as Heuristic for Pork Barrel and Clientelism

Originally introduced by V. O. Key (1950) in his seminal book, friends-and-neighbors voting quickly become one of the most frequently scrutinized empirical phenomena of electoral behavior – not just in the United States and established democracies of Western Europe (Panagopoulos et al., 2017; Jankowski, 2016; Fiva & Halse, 2016), but also in countries like Japan, Australia or Kenya (Hirano, 2006; McAllister, 2015; Simiyu, 2010).¹ In a similar fashion, voters' propensity to favor local candidates was empirically demonstrated in countries with majoritarian (FPTP), proportional (PR), single transferable vote (STV) and mixedmember majoritarian (MMM) electoral systems (Arzheimer & Evans, 2012; Put et al., 2017; Górecki & Marsh, 2012; Herron & Lynch, 2019). Literature on friends-and-neighbors voting is predominantly concerned with legislative elections, but scrutiny of local (Arzheimer & Evans, 2014), judicial (Aspin & Hall, 1989) and intra-party races (Johnston et al., 2016) also showcase the relationship between political actors' local ties and increased levels of support they harness. Despite having been characterized as "one of the most widely studied spatial mechanisms of electoral politics" (Górecki & Marsh, 2014, p. 14), we have fairly limited knowledge about why voters have a tendency to favor politicians with local ties. Rice & Macht (1987, p. 257) have already proposed "moving our understanding of friends and neighbors voting beyond simply confirming its occurrence" more than three decades ago, but only recent scholarship made steps towards understanding citizens' motives behind casting a ballot (or simply cheering for) someone who grew up or lives in the same geographic area.

¹An abridged version of this chapter has been published in *Research & Politics* in September 2022 (Kovarek, 2022).

The approach predominantly took by these studies was to treat localness as a cue, which helped to clarify some of the candidate characteristics for which localness might potentially serve as a heuristic. Campbell et al. (2019) used vignettes and conjoint experiments to demonstrate that constituency service orientation and constituency policy representation are politician attributes for which voters use localness a cue, inferring candidates' likely behavior based on their local roots. Local ties are also perceived as cues of candidates being knowledgeable about local needs (Collignon & Sajuria, 2018). Besides being better informed about local problems (and better suited to offer solutions for these), Jankowski (2016) also hypothesized that localness makes politicians more accountable, as it might be easier for voters to monitor (and reward) if elected representatives cross the party line when it conflicts with local interests.

This paper examines if politicians' local roots serve as heuristics for voters about their future behavior involving *clientelistic exchanges and pork barrel politics*. That is, I test if voters' favoritism for a homegrown candidate is cue-based and if allocation of collective (or individual) goods to fellow citizens with the same local roots is an empirically demonstrable type of "behavioral localism" (Campbell et al., 2019). It has not been hitherto tested whether aforementioned expectations drive friends-and-neighbors voting, despite ample scholarship hypothesizing considerations of distributive politics serving as motives behind localism.

Unlike to electoral systems where candidates' residency is denoted on the ballot (e.g. Herron & Lynch, 2019; Jankowski, 2016), voters in Hungary have no easy way to evaluate politicians as being local or not. Politicians running for office do not need to share such data with the National Election Office, and not even MPs who obtained mandates are obliged to upload a "minimally sufficient" CV. Data on localness is collected and shared by academic databases and legislative almanacs, but these remain post-hoc sources voters hardly ever consult. This makes my experimental approach far superior than research designs relying on observational data, as it allows to disentangle campaign effects and voter responses to local ties as cues.

2.1 Local roots as heuristics for distributive politics

Distributive politics is one of the most often hypothesized reason behind localism. A handful of studies analyzing friends-and-neighbors voting – or simply confirming its existence – assume that voters expect tangible benefits once a politician from 'their own stock' is elected. Scholars have talked about the "clientelistic role of the elected deputy" (Johnson, 1989, p. 21), MPs acting as "intermediaries" for "extracting goods" from the state (Górecki & Marsh, 2014, p. 12), the importance of local representation in making distributive policy decisions and infrastructural developments (Fiva & Smith, 2017, p. 130–131) and "retrospective delivery of benefit to the community" (Arzheimer & Evans, 2014, p. 2), but failed to test or demonstrate such causal mechanisms. Voters born (or living) in settlements or electoral districts where candidates are natives (or residents) are often described as being spoilt by constituency-favoring legislations, pork barrel politics, and constituency service, such as monetary gifts, patronage positions, cultural events, excursions and other forms of personal favors (Shugart et al., 2005; McAllister, 2015; Hirano, 2006).

The hypothesis on the local candidate effect being driven by distributive politics is just as old as empirical attempts of capturing friends-and-neighbors voting. Already Key (as cited in Devine & Kopko, 2016, p. 57) listed perceptions of candidates being "inclined to direct government resources toward addressing [local concerns]" as one of his four proposed alternative explanations for politicians' outstanding electoral performance in their home counties. Recent scholarship has made important progress in identifying motives and reasons behind friends-and-neighbors voting, but assumptions on clientelism and pork barrel politics have hitherto remained untested. As Campbell et al. (2019, p. 949) suggested, voters might use candidates' localness as cues to formulate expectations about their "likely commitment to ensure pork barrel spending in their region". Fiva & Halse (2016) study regional governments in Norway, documenting a hometown bias in investment funding allocation to municipalities. Their results also suggest that party lists with top candidates possessing local roots are electorally rewarded by voters, an effect they attribute to the provision of "particularistic benefits to local groups" (p. 17). However, Fiva & Halse never test whether voters indeed expect this from politicians once elected, nor if such cues drive friends-and-neighbors voting. This paper primarily tests two distinct manifestations of distributive politics, primarily distinguished by whether they entail individual or collective allocation of goods, both being functions of partisan preference and support. In the case of the former, we talk about clientelism, understood as a conditional non-programmatic distribution, i.e. provision of goods and services to individuals, in exchange of their political behavior (Stokes et al., 2013). The existence of clientelistic linkages between politicians and voters has been repeatedly demonstrated in recent experimental studies in Hungary (Mares & Young, 2019a,b). Relying on various brokers, MPs and mayors condition access to entitlements, informal credit and welfare-for-work programs on electoral turnout and voting for Fidesz candidates. Pre-electoral entitlements are offered to core political supporters of Fidesz, who subsequently receive election-time threats, meant to serve as 'turnout buying'. Mares & Young (2018) show how decentralizing the distribution of social benefits and welfare programs incentivized mayors to offer e.g. unemployment benefits or participation in the public works scheme to co-partisans and to threaten them by cutting such inducements at the time of elections.

In a similar fashion, pork barrel politics – partisan-based allocation of central funds to legislators' own constituencies – is another mainstay of Hungarian politics. Incumbent MPs channel European Union Structural Funds to settlements in their constituencies based on mayors' partisan affiliation, and such funding is subsequently associated with better electoral performance of these legislators in towns with government mayors. Settlements led by the latter also tend to have higher application and success rates in such grants, boosting support for government mayors among retrospective voters (Papp, 2019; Muraközy & Telegdy, 2016).

2.2 Candidate preferences in Hungary

Before setting out to test whether politicians' local ties serve as cues for monetary or other tangible transfers, we shall understand if such behaviors are desirable in the Hungarian public's eye in the first place. The previous section has established that both clientelism and pork barrel politics are mainstays of Hungarian politics, but it is still possible that voters find these practices detestable. To better understand the voting age populations' preferences with respect to various types of linkages (and operationalizations of localness), I fielded a conjoint experiment in July 2020.

Conjoint experiments have gained popularity in political science recently, especially since the seminal paper of Hainmueller et al. (2014). Their analytical framework emphasize a single statistical quantity of interest: the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE), which tells us the change in favorability (in %.); more precisely, the change in the likelihood of selecting a given profile when only one level of a particular attribute is altered, holding everything else constant. Whereas conjoint designs have been applied for answering a wide variety of substantive questions, they are particularly well suited for modeling candidate choices (Campbell & Cowley, 2014; Campbell et al., 2019; Aguilar et al., 2015). In such cases, AMCEs describe the effect of changing one value (e.g. male vs. female) of a candidate attribute (sex) on the probability of respondents choosing a particular politician, while keeping values of all other attributes (e.g. partisanship and age) of the profile unchanged. AMCEs are obtained via simple regression (OLS), where levels of candidate profile attributes serve as predictors of the model, as dummy variables.

Given the clustered nature of conjoint data (multiple choice tasks performed by the same respondent), the units of analysis are *not* respondents, but rather conjoint tasks. Consequently, robust standard errors are calculated using robust variance estimators. To sum it up, instead of estimating the average treatment effect (ATE), our goal is to measure for the effect of attributes on choosing a particular profile. AMCEs tell us the %. increase in the likelihood of choosing a profile over another, caused by shifting a fictive candidate from e.g. "born and lives outside of the respondent's county" to "lives in the respondent's settlement".

2.2.1 Randomization

When designing the experiment, the goal was to approximate a fully randomized designed as much as possible. This means that levels of attributes were randomized, using a uniform distribution; that is, survey interviewees were presented by choice tasks where they had to pick one of the (fictive) candidate profiles with randomly selected levels for all attributes. Restrictions were only implemented where it was necessary to increase internal validity and to eliminate unrealistic counterfactuals. The manipulated variable capturing clientelistic/pork

barrel/programmatic politics was found to be an attribute where only 2 levels are plausible for *all* candidates, irrespective of their partisanship. Government and opposition politicians similarly engage in clientelistic practices (Mares & Young, 2018; Kovarek et al., 2017), and pork barrel politics has no party color either (Muraközy & Telegdy, 2016; Papp, 2019). The value for programmatic linkage was designed in a way to serve as a general heuristic; economic policy is not a policy domain associated with any major parties particular.² Respondents were told that the candidate will pursue left-wing/right-wing/centrist economic policy. Nevertheless, this introduced another problem: government candidates were only allowed to be paired with right-wing economic policy; being a Fidesz politician with leftist or centrist views would be seen as a 'maverick', someone aiming to break party unity (at best), or a counterfactual that is "too unrealistic to be evaluated in a meaningful way" (Hainmueller et al., 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, the possibility of respondents being confronted with two, entirely identical profiles was ruled out by design.

A pool of settlement names was constructed for the localness attribute; specifically, when it took the value capturing carpetbagger (i.e. non-local) candidates, respondents were told that the politician was born and lives in at a *random* settlement. That settlement was indeed randomly selected from a pool of settlement names, which included municipalities i) outside of their county and ii) of similar size. The second requirement was captured via the external survey firm's 'type of settlement' variable, included among the socio-demographic block of controls in all omnibus surveys; it distinguishes the capital (Budapest), county seats, towns and villages. Applying these two specifications together ensured to have a pool of alternative settlements unaffected by regional tensions and intra-county rivalry, whereas candidates were also perceived *just* as outsiders – but as outsiders from a comparable settlement. Consequently, no Budapest survey takers were assigned profiles with candidates living in villages competing for single-member district (SMD) mandates in the capital, or vice versa. Such scenarios are not only unlikely in real world, but could also confound place resentment (Munis, 2020; Jacobs & Munis, 2022) or other, unmeasured attributes of politicians (e.g. education or income). The survey company randomly picked from the pool

²For instance, the green party (LMP) has issue ownership over environmental policy; transparency or anti-corruption platform would have been understood as a distinctly opposition agenda; migration policy is almost exclusively associated with Fidesz (Bocskor, 2018; Farkas et al., 2022).

of alternative settlements every time the localness attribute took the value of 'carpetbagger politician'. Hence even if despite all pre-caution measures some respondents were confronted with a profile of a candidate hailing from a municipality they had strong (negative) feelings about, such effects should cancel out.

2.2.2 Attributes and levels of profiles

Respondents' choice set consisted of 5 candidate pairs; that is, they were required to choose between two SMD candidate profiles five times. A forced-choice design was implemented, and in order to avoid potential carryover effects, candidate pairs always appeared on a new screen, only after survey takers have marked their choice for the previous pair. The profiles were made up of 4 attributes, whose levels (values) were randomly varied at all times. These attributes were partisanship, home area advantage (or lack thereof), type of linkage and gender. In line with the recommendations of the literature (Hainmueller et al., 2014; Leeper et al., 2020), attributes were presented in the same order for each respondent, in order to ease cognitive burden.

Partisanship was measured on 2 levels: politicians were either described as government or opposition candidates. This dichotomy captures the recent trends of polarization and bipolar juxtaposition of the two major political camps (Vegetti, 2019), the growing popular demand pressuring the opposition to contest elections together, by fielding joint candidates in single-member districts (Kovarek & Littvay, 2019), as well as empirical reality of the latest municipal election in 2019: voters in most settlements have indeed witnessed a political landscape simplified to a government vs. opposition contest (Solska, 2020; Kákai & Pálné, 2020; Kovarek & Littvay, 2022). Furthermore, this configuration prevented the loss of statistical power (Stefanelli & Lukac, 2020), as inclusion of all opposition parties (DK, Jobbik, Momentum, MSZP, LMP, Párbeszéd) would have meant a high number of attribute levels.

Localism was captured by an attribute with 3 levels: the candidate was either living in the same settlement where the respondent lives; or was born in the settlement where the respondent lives; or was born and lives in a settlement outside of the respondent's county. The first two levels are hypothesized to be associated with higher levels of support, albeit to a different extent. These could also be understood as a direct test of contrasting various

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established operationalizations (birthplace or residence) of the local candidate effect. The randomization section of the paper explains how a pool of alternative settlements was created and used, when the candidate was depicted as a carpetbagger politician.

The next attribute was intended to capture the type of linkage between candidates and voters. The first level of the attribute described clientelistic behavior, as it is defined by Stokes (2007, p. 649): "the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support," where goods are distributed to those promising to support or having supported the patron. When this value was shown to respondents, the politician was described as someone who reportedly offered money, food or wood to his/her voters. Another level of the attribute operationalized pork barrel allocation: the candidate reportedly promised the delivery of infrastructural projects and new public buildings to residents of the respondent's settlement, if both (s)he and his/her party gains the plurality of votes. The latter clause ensured higher external validity: MPs in opposition could hardly count on successfully channelling funds to their settlement, given the strict party discipline and the government's tight control of the parliamentary agenda in Hungary (Zubek, 2011). Both pork barrel politics and vote buying are empirically demonstrated, fairly common phenomena in the Hungarian context (Muraközy & Telegdy, 2016; Papp, 2019; Mares & Young, 2019a, 2018).

The third level of the attribute described a programmatic linkage: the candidate was planning to pursue left-wing/right-wing/centrist economic policy and respondents were told that (s)he is likely to propose several motions and amendments in the National Assembly on that matter once elected. Ideological labels were randomized, with some restrictions employed to increase internal validity. Economic policy was selected as a fairly 'neutral' policy area, associated with national-level politics, as opposed to policy areas related to e.g. the Roma minority or agriculture, which could have a territorially heterogenous effect, as the importance of such policy areas vary depending on respondents' local area. Furthermore, the design aimed to avoid masking effects, i.e. respondents' inferring attributes not measured by the conjoint (ideological position) based on another one varied in choice tasks (partisanship), a common pitfall of conjoint experiments (Verlegh et al., 2002).

The share of female politicians is traditionally low in Hungary, but the importance of gender has increased in recent years; in 2018, one of the major parties have nominated a female candidate for Prime Minister (Tóka, 2019). Given the gender quotas employed primarily by smaller, new left parties (Kovarek, 2020), and the recently elected, relatively popular female MEPs of Momentum and DK, it would have undermined the study's external validity if no such attribute would have been included.

2.2.3 Data collection and results

The conjoint experiment, as well as the pre-treatment questions were embedded into an omnibus ran by TÁRKI Social Research Institute, using TAPI/CAPI interviewing. While originally scheduled for April 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced Hungary – similarly to other countries – to implement strict measures, such as a nation-wide lockdown, to restrict mobility and combat the spread of the virus (Cepaluni et al., 2022). Consequently, fieldwork was postponed to July 2020, when a suitable time window allowed the survey company to conduct face-to-face (TAPI/CAPI) interviews on a nationally representative sample. The sample contains N=1000 respondents from Hungary. Interview subjects were randomly recruited based on a representative sampling frame of the Hungarian voter-aged population. Table A.3 in the Appendix provide summary statistics.

Figure 3.5 presents AMCEs for all levels of candidate attributes. Results are in line with empirical realities of attitudes and political views of Hungarian voters. For instance, being an opposition candidate while holding everything else constant induces a -0.03 %. change in the likelihood of selecting the given profile. This is in line with the sample descriptives: more than half of those respondents (54.2%) who provided an answer to the questionnaire item on PID supports the governing Fidesz-KDNP. Male candidates are favored over females, and politicians promising delivery of pork to their constituents were more likely picked than those reportedly engaged in clientelistic practices or making policy-related, programmatic pledges. The average effect of promising pork delivery on the probability that a candidate will be chosen is 0.056 (SE = 0.013); note that this average change in probability comes with being described as making such promises for *the respondent's settlement*, an in-group/spatial unit narrower than a politician's constituency in general. The electoral penalty for offering goods in exchange of votes (-0.077; SE = 0.013) is not surprising: clientelistic practices might be frequently reported in media, but their relatively widespread nature does not mean a

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similarly high level of tolerance for them in the population.

More importantly, this conjoint survey provides, to my best knowledge, the first empirical test of the relationship between localness and favorability/vote choice in the Hungarian context. Results confirm that Hungarians prefer both local-born and locally residing candidates over parachutist ones; in other word, having been born and/or living at the respondent's settlement significantly increased the profile's likelihood of being selected compared to one describing the same politician as someone born and living outside of the respondent's county. Support for politicians living locally is 0.027 percentage points higher (SE = 0.012) than the baseline, in this case, being born at the respondent's settlement, whereas its 0.21 percentage points *lower* (SE = 0.012) for carpetbagger candidates.

Figure 2.1: Likelihood of selecting a profile when only a single level of an attribute is changed.



2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Data collection and fieldwork

Now that it has been established that voters in Hungary prefer politicians born or living locally, as well as ones campaigning on the basis of 'bringing home the bacon' – but dislike those running on a clientelistic platform –, we can proceed with scrutinizing whether localness acts a cue for distributive politics. To test whether voters indeed prefer homegrown candidates because they formulate expectations regarding distributive politics, I conducted a survey experiment in March–April 2021, using an online sample (N=2076), with experimental subjects recruited by a survey company based on a representative sampling frame of the Hungarian voter-aged population, with quotas applied for age, gender and geography. The experiment was pre-registered and a pre-analysis plan was made before data collection finished.³ Table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics for the sample. I also report sample characteristics by treatment group in the Appendix, in Table A.2, to show balance on demographics.

Respondents were presented with a vignette describing a fictive candidate running for parliamentary mandate in the interviewee's SMD at the upcoming election of 2022. Respondents in the treatment and the control group differed in being presented a politician born and living *at their own settlement*, a piece of information obtained from the survey's demographic block earlier, or at *another*, *randomly selected settlement* in Hungary.⁴

Settlements shown to control group participants were sampled from the population of all Hungarian settlements with a population ≥ 500 . The reason for limiting the list of alternative settlements for over 500 inhabitants is twofold. First, the survey platform used for programming the questionnaire (Qualtrics) did not allow for the inclusion of all 3145 municipalities in Hungary. Some criteria for filtering out settlements needed to be established: empirical reality of Hungarian politics suggests that parliamentarians hardly ever hail from

³The pre-registration can be found here: https://osf.io/d2qvz/?view_only= e233a42789bc4205915b95e8953afb06

⁴The experimental design did not rule out the possibility of someone in the treatment group being confronted with his/her own settlement, albeit its probability was very small. Nevertheless, as the survey recorded names of both settlements (provided by respondents and depicted as candidates' home areas, respectively), it was easy to identify such cases and exclude from further analysis.

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settlements smaller than 500 inhabitants. During the parliamentary cycle of 2018–2022, only a single MP was born in such a village, based on public résumés uploaded to the website of the National Assembly.

It is also arguable that we do not lose variance by presenting a trimmed list to survey takers in the control group: given the sheer size of the full list of Hungarian municipalities, most people are not familiar with such small villages, unless they are situated in the immediate neighborhood of their hometowns.

Respondents were asked using 5-point Likert-scales how likely they would be to vote for this politician, were this fictive candidate to run for seat in their respective SMDs in reality; how likely it is that this candidate would be able to secure central funds and realize infrastructural developments in their hometowns; to what extent they believe this candidate would engage in practices such as distributing money, food or wood before the election. They were also asked to locate the fictive candidate in the ideological space, using the same liberal/conservative scale previously used by interviewees for self-positioning. The latter item aims to test the hypothesis on ideological congruence, put forward by Campbell et al. (2019). This would stipulate that politicians with local roots will share voters' ideological outlook and policy preferences, providing an explanation to why voters prefer homegrown candidates.

Table 2.1: Descriptive statistics for socio-demographic variables. Ideology measures self-positioning on a liberal-conservative scale. Education is measured via an 8-point-scale, where '1' is elementary school and '8' is MA/MSc degree.

Statistic	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
female	$2,\!076$	0.53	0.50	0	1
age	2,064	49.21	16.96	16	90
ideology	2,076	2.88	0.88	1	5
education	2,076	5.17	2.20	1	8

2.3.2 Candidate profiles

Survey respondents were confronted with the vignette described below. Information was presented in a way, that it did *not* include details on partisanship; this way even if some manifestations of behavioral localism (e.g. engaging in clientelism or pork delivery) are perceived negatively by respondents, survey takers avoid formulating beliefs about *likely behavior* based on perceived beliefs about *partisan favorability* (or lack thereof). This non-partian approach also increases external validity, as some opposition or government candidates would have no plausible chances of obtaining SMD mandates, given the specificities of Hungarian electoral geography.⁵

Consequently, policy focus of the candidate was designed in a way to serve as a general heuristic; economic and cultural policy is not a policy domain associated with any major parties particular. Taking inspiration from Campbell et al. (2019), unobjectionable attributes were added to create a more realistic context, such as information about what leisure activities the candidate prefers and his intra-party political experience. Finally, socio-demographic attributes were chosen in a way to depict an 'average' parliamentary candidate in Hungary: we picked the average age of MPs (Ilonszki & Kurtán, 2011), described him as a male candidate – as the proportion of female parliamentarians stagnates at around 10% (Kovarek & Littvay, 2019, p. 576) –, as well as being married and a father, reflecting empirical realities (Kristóf, 2013, p. 98).

Imagine that the candidate described below is running for mandate in your single-member district at the general election of 2022. Please read the information below carefully and answer a couple of questions!

The politician is 47 years old, married, father of one. Was born and lives at **[the respondent's settlement / another random settlement]**. He was previously elected to a county-level leadership position in his party. The politician has a university degree. Once elected, he would like to work in

 $^{{}^{5}}$ Even at the height of its power and popular support, Fidesz could never win seats in Budapest's District XIII or Szeged.

the Economic and Cultural committees of the National Assembly; he would likely propose a couple of amendments in the Parliament on those subjects, too. In his free time, the politician likes jogging and reading.

2.4 Hypotheses and Models

Respective hypotheses for friends-and-neighbors voting, pork barrel politics and clientelism being manifestations of behavioral localism can be formalized as follows.

Hypothesis 1 (H_1) : Respondents in the treatment group will be more likely to vote for the fictive candidate compared to those in the control group.

Hypothesis 2 (H_2) : Respondents in the treatment group will be more likely to believe that the fictive candidate will realize infrastructural development projects in their settlement, via obtaining central funds, once he is elected, compared to respondents in the control group.

Hypothesis 3 (H_3) : Respondents in the treatment group will be more likely to believe that the fictive candidate gave away money, food or wood among his voters shortly before the elections than those in the control group.

The three equations below describe the analytical approach taken for testing these hypotheses, where $D_{treatment}$ indicates whether the respondent was shown the vignette with the local roots treatment. The three dependent variables capture respondents' beliefs about the likelihood of voting for the candidate, the candidate engaging in clientelistic exchanges and the candidate securing earmarked funds for the interviewee's settlement, respectively.

$$Y_{vote} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{treatment} + \epsilon \tag{2.1}$$

$$Y_{clientelism} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{treatment} + \epsilon \tag{2.2}$$

$$Y_{pork} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{treatment} + \epsilon \tag{2.3}$$

Equation 2.1 simply captures the local candidate effect: should one see a positive and significant relationship for $D_{treatment}$, it would signal the existence of friends-and-neighbors voting in Hungary. Equations 2.2 and 2.3 test the main hypotheses of the paper, namely that politicians' local roots serve as heuristics for distributive politics, as we expect the treatment group indicator to be positive and significant, if voters believe local candidates are more likely to obtain central funds or engage in vote buying than non-locals.

2.5 Analysis

This vignette experiment corroborates the findings of the conjoint: Hungarians prefer politicians with local roots, i.e. sharing the same settlement as hometowns with respondents as place of birth and residence, over parachutist ones. As shown on Figure 2.2, the estimate for treatment group is positive and statistically significantly different from zero. The same can be said about the questionnaire item capturing pork barrel delivery: those in the treatment group, who were told the fictive politician is someone from 'their own stock', we more likely to believe he will channel government funds to realize large-scale infrastructural developments than those shown a carpetbagger candidate. Contrarily, the difference between treatment and control groups is neither significant with respect to beliefs elicited about clientelism, nor does have the sign in the expected direction.

This suggests, that out of the two forms of distributive politics tested in this paper, pork barrel politics is indeed a form of behavioral localism; in other words, voters in Hungary perceive legislators' local roots as cues for subsequent pork delivery. Reasons for local roots acting as cues for pork delivery, but not for clientelism are potentially manifold. It could be that pork is simply more prevalent than vote buying: Mares & Young (2018, p. 1457) estimate that during the 2014 general election, 5–7 % of all Hungarians were targeted with mayor favors and vote buying. We lack comparable estimates for pork, but given the incentives provided by the majoritarian electoral system, frequent omnibus laws and available EU funds, it is safe to assume that respondents generally expect MPs to allocate more *collective* than *individual* goods.

Alternatively, in-group bias (Munis, 2020, 2021), combined with disapproval of clientelistic

Figure 2.2: Differences between treatment and control groups in likelihood of voting for the candidate, beliefs about clientelistic behavior and pork delivery.



exchanges could explain why vote buying is not a form of behavioral localism, expected by voters. If local candidates, described as born and living at the same municipality as survey respondents, are indeed associated with positive qualities, such as decency and integrity, local roots are hardly expected to signal future illicit behavior of homegrown politicians. Indeed, AMCEs estimated via the conjoint design above may be viewed as offering some empirical evidence for this conjecture. In the absence of further heuristics about the candidate's honesty, trustworthiness or even partisanship, respondents might have found it unrealistic that a politician with unobjectionable attributes would try to win mandates via such means.

As indicated in the pre-analysis plan, I proceed with exploratory analysis on distancedecay effects, as we can obtain a rather precise measure of how far respondents' hometowns and alternative municipalities are located from each other in the control group. Using the Google Maps API and harnessing the power of R packages geodist and ggmap (Padgham & Sumner, 2021; Kahle & Wickham, 2013), I assigned geo-coordinates to all settlements in the dataset, and subsequently calculated the distances between respondents' and candidates' hometowns.⁶ This allows for an alternative measure of friends-and-neighbors voting: whereas the vast majority of the literature uses categorical belongings when operationalizing whether a candidate is 'local' or 'non-local' (Tavits, 2010; Fiva & Smith, 2017; Put et al., 2017), one could hypothesize that cues about behavioral localism are a linear function of politicians' (physical) closeness to voters.

Next, I fitted the same three models, discussed above, which predict likelihood of voting, expectations about pork delivery and clientelistic exchanges as dependent variables, respectively, but this time using the newly obtained *distance* variable as predictor instead of $D_{treatment}$. As shown in Figure 2.3, distance is an equally useful predictor of friends-and-neighbors voting: the further away respondents' place of residence from the settlement denoted in the vignette, the less likely interviewees were to indicate their willingness to cast a ballot for the fictive candidate, were he indeed running for seat in their SMDs.

Turning our attention to the independent variables describing expected elite behavior, we see that the direction of relationships is consistent with the previous model. Nonetheless, this

 $^{^{6}}$ A small share of settlements – 7.2% and 7.3% of respondents' and candidates' hometowns, respectively – were assigned erroneous longitude and latitude figures. These were removed before calculating the Haversine distance between geolocations.

Figure 2.3: Predicting voting for the candidate, expectations about pork delivery and clientelistic behavior and pork delivery with the distance between hometowns of fictive candidates and those of survey respondents.


time it is the variable capturing vote buying and other forms of clientelistic exchanges that meets the conventional levels of statistical significance; contrarily, the estimate for beliefs about pork delivery clearly fails to do so.

This makes sense both empirically and from the perspective of our questionnaire wording. Distance is less of a useful predictor for legislators' future behavior when it comes to pork, as the survey item explicitly asked about realizing infrastructural developments *in your settlement*, and it would also be unreasonable to expect that 50km vs. 250km makes a difference with respect to channeling government funds to one particular municipality.

Contrarily, the further a candidate lives from the electoral district where they hope to win seat, the more likely the politician will be perceived as compensating for their lack of personal vote-earning attributes (PVEAs) (Shugart et al., 2005) with monetary incentives or provision of goods according to our respondents. The relationship between $\Delta distance(respondent - candidate)$ and voters' expectations about the fictive candidate's future clientelistic behavior suggests that clientelism might be used to offset the absence of other, spatially defined but not categorically measured advantages – network effects, familiarity or visibility (Johnson, 1989; Devine & Kopko, 2016) –, which politicians with local roots might possess.⁷

Another explanation could stem from the relative disapproval of clientelistic behavior. As demonstrated above, clientelistic exchanges, compared to pork barrel politics and running on a programmatic platform, are viewed negatively by voters in Hungary. Its respective AMCE (-0.077; SE = 0.013) obtained via the conjoint experiment demonstrates the electoral penalty for offering goods in exchange of votes.

Respondents receiving the local roots treatment have potentially developed in-group biases towards the fictive politician described as born and living locally by the vignette. Individuals categorize themselves by assigning themselves, as well as others to certain groups, thus creating categorical memberships and establishing who belongs to their *in-group* and *out-group* (Enos, 2017, p. 25). Moreover, they exert different behavior and attitudes depending on whether directed towards a member of one's in-group or someone outside of it.

⁷As it is unreasonable to expect respondents to be familiar with all Hungarian municipalities, we should be cautious when interpreting these results: most settlement names might not act as heuristics for distance.

A version of the halo effect, in-group biases denote the phenomenon of in-group members being consistently regarded being superior to others when it comes to unequivocally positive qualities (Enos, 2017, p. 27).

Thus, if clientelism is perceived negatively and in-group members are associated with positive qualities, respondents in the treatment group will expect the politician *less* to engage in vote buying and similar activities. This explanation goes against the hypothesis on 'localness-as-clientelism' hypothesis (Johnson, 1989, p. 21), but it would be consistent with the sign of the coefficient in Figure 2.2 and 2.3, albeit one would rather expect a categorical relationship than a continuously measured one.

One caveat to this finding is the small effect size. Someone living in Mátészalka (Eastern Hungary) and being confronted with a candidate from Vasszécseny (near Austria) has a calculated distance of 426 km, and would result in a 0.2 increase on the 5-point-Likert scale operationalizing expectations about future clientelistic exchanges. This is not surprising: it might have been easy for a respondent to associate a large city (or a historically important place) with its respective distance from one's hometown, but most settlement names would hardly act as heuristic for air (or driving) distance. Note, however, that this distance is experimentally induced; assignment of settlement names for those seeing politicians *without* local roots was just as random as assignment to treatment or control groups. Hence, whatever variance is captured, it is not driven confounders.

2.5.1 Ideology as behavioral localism

Finally, I use respondents' self-declared ideological position, as well as perceived ideological position of candidates to predict expectations about politicians' future clientelistic behavior. Both variables were measured on the same, 5-point Likert-scale, where '1' stood for 'Very liberal' and '5' denoted 'Very conservative'.

It has been argued recently by scholars of friends-and-neighbors voting that localness serves as a cue for ideological congruence between voters and politicians, hence the inclusion of the variable in the experimental design. In other words, sharing the same local roots with a candidate might make voters to believe that the candidate is also more likely to share their political views. For instance, Campbell et al. (2019, p. 938) suggests that ideological congruence "may be particularly strongly linked to local roots in voters' minds", adding that it can possibly stem from MPs (being perceived as) having similar background to voters, and consequently more likely to have a similar mindset and policy preferences. These assumptions were formalized as the following, as indicated in the pre-analysis plan.

Hypothesis 4 (H_4) : Respondents in the treatment group will perceive the fictive candidate ideologically closer to them than those in the control group.

$$Y_{ideology} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{treatment} + \beta_2 I_{self} + \beta_3 (D_{treatment} \times I_{self}) + \epsilon \tag{2.4}$$

where $D_{treatment}$ indicates whether the respondent was shown the vignette with the local roots treatment and I_{self} is respondents' liberal/conservative self-positioning on a 5-point-Likert scale.

The relationship described in Equation 2.4 captures the ideology-as-behavioral-localism hypothesis, with the fictive politician's ideological leaning as dependent variable.⁸

As it is common for interaction models (Brambor et al., 2006), Table 2.2 conveys little useful information, nevertheless the coefficient of *respondent ideology* demonstrates that survey takers' own conservative-liberal position serves as a significant predictor of fictive candidates' perceived ideological leaning for control group (treatment = 0) subjects. In other words, in the *absence* of local roots treatment, the more liberal respondents were, the closer they located the politician to the liberal endpoint of our ideological scale. To conclude whether the same holds true for those in the treatment group, I have to go beyond the traditional results table and visualize the marginal effects.

The slope in Figure 2.4 shows how the marginal effect on one's ideological self-positioning changes with receiving the local roots treatment. It is steeper for treatment group respondents, but as confidence intervals overlap, we cannot conclude that respondents who were shown a

⁸Another possible modeling approach could have been predicting the difference between respondents' and candidates' perceived ideological position, instead of estimating the absolute value of the latter. Nevertheless, this would have assumed that the distribution of *politicians* and *respondents* on the liberal-conservative scale is the same. This assumption seems far fetched, not just empirically, but also theoretically; as May (1973) noted, sub-leaders of political parties tend to be more extreme ideologically (i.e. more left- or right-wing) than both voters and party elites. The fictive candidate described in the vignette, being a member of his party's county-level leadership, would arguably be classified as such.

CHAPTER 2: LOCALNESS AS A HEURISTIC FOR PORK BARREL AND CLIENTELISM

Table 2.2: Politicians' perceived ideological position on a liberal-conservative scale, predicted by respondents' own ideological position, localness treatment and the interaction of the latter two.

	Dependent variable:		
	ideological position of candidate		
respondent ideology	0.115***		
	(0.026)		
treatment	-0.262^{**}		
	(0.109)		
respondent ideology \times treatment	0.086**		
	(0.036)		
Constant	2.632***		
	(0.078)		
Observations	2,069		
\mathbb{R}^2	0.039		
Adjusted \mathbb{R}^2	0.037		
Residual Std. Error	$0.724 \; ({ m df} = 2065)$		
F Statistic	27.765*** (df = 3; 2065)		

Note:

Figure 2.4: The marginal effect of respondents' own Conservative/Liberal position on fictive candidates' perceived ideological position.



vignette describing a locally born and living candidate were more likely to perceive fictive candidates closer to themselves ideologically. This is not surprising, given the Hungarian context.

In majoritarian (FPTP) electoral systems, incumbency and gerrymandering effects usually make it easy to distinguish between 'safe' and 'marginal' seats. This often times amplifies territorially heterogenous effects of ethnic, linguistic or religious cleavages (e.g. Collignon & Sajuria, 2018), but a similar argument could be made for districts with a predominantly working class character (Johnston et al., 2016). Nonetheless, Hungary is a rather homogenous, unitary state, where there is no ethnic or linguistic community with organized political representation; no political parties gather support (only) from a particular region of the country, and most SMDs consist of urban and rural areas alike.⁹ Territorial heterogeneity exists when it comes to religion (e.g. where Catholicism or Protestantism is prevalent), but no denomination is linked to any parties.

2.6 Conclusion

This article investigated the empirical basis of assumptions about local roots serving as heuristics for distributive politics (Hirano, 2006; Górecki & Marsh, 2014; McAllister, 2015) by utilizing a vignette study to compare respondents' expectations about politicians' future clientelistic and pork barrel behavior. Fielding a population-based, representative online survey (N=2076) in Hungary, respondents were shown a fictive candidate profile, running for mandate in their SMD, and subsequently asked whether they would vote for him, whether they believe the politician is likely to obtain government funds for their settlement or to engage in vote buying and other clientelistic practices, all measured on 5-point Likert-scales. Treatment and control group respondents only differed in being told that the candidate's hometown is the same municipality as their place of residence – or another, randomly selected Hungarian settlement.

The results suggest that pork barrel politics is indeed a form of behavioral localism

⁹Districts of Budapest being notable exceptions; furthermore, a handful of the largest cities (i.e. regional centers): Szeged, Székesfehérvár, Miskolc, Debrecen, Nyíregyháza, Pécs, Győr and Kecskemét are also divided into multiple SMDs.

(Campbell et al., 2019); that is, voters support politicians with local PVEAs (Shugart et al., 2005) in the hopes of politicians' future proclivity for obtaining government funds for their hometowns. Although unusual, we find that distance between respondents' and candidates' hometowns is *inversely* related to beliefs about clientelistic behavior. Consequently, this study documenting the *absence* of local roots serving as heuristic for vote buying also provides insights for understanding how politicians might 'compensate' for the lack of the local candidate effect. Our survey respondents clearly believed candidates living afar are more likely to make it up for being carpetbaggers via flooding their constituents with monetary, edible and other goods. Further research should test the trade-offs between localness and various types of electoral linkages.

My analysis has made further progress in charting population preferences for various forms of politician-voter linkages. Using observational evidence, obtained via a conjoint experiment, it was demonstrated that promises of pork delivery increase, whereas clientelistic exchanges before the elections decrease favorability in the context of single-member district candidates. This, combined with in-group bias and place identity, could also explain why local politicians were perceived by respondents as less likely to engage in vote buying.

How to generalize the argument of this paper beyond the Hungarian case? We argue that alternative operationalizations of distributive politics (pork delivery vs. clientelism) offer a good starting point for future studies. Whether countries be more characterized by constituency-favoring legislations (Herzog & Jankin Mikhaylov, 2020; Braidwood, 2015; Stratmann & Baur, 2002) or vote buying, material gifts and personal favors (Mares & Visconti, 2020; Carlson, 2018; Weschle, 2016; Matakos & Xefteris, 2016), politicians' local ties, especially in personalized electoral settings, likely function as some sort of cue for future distributive behavior of elected representatives.

This vignette survey provides, to my best knowledge, the first test of the relationship between localness and vote choice in the Hungarian context. Previously, candidate localness was operationalized as possessing relevant political experience, such as having been a local assembly member or mayor (Papp, 2018), and its effect on electoral support was never measured experimentally. This study may be viewed as offering some empirical evidence for Hungarians preferring homegrown politicians over parachutists ones. Whereas this paper has demonstrated causally that expectations of receiving distributive benefits are formulated conditionally on candidates' local roots, less instrumental considerations might also explain friends-and-neighbors voting. Arguments such as a "shared sense of identity", "symbolically charged geographies" as forms of social identity and "latent place identities" modifying individuals' voting calculus are common, although somewhat less frequently proposed explanations for home area advantage in the literature (Devine & Kopko, 2016, p. 176; Munis, 2021, p. 4; Panagopoulos et al., 2017, p. 870).

Using survey data from the USA, Munis (2021) finds that place identity is a significant predictor of perceived importance of candidates' local roots, irrespective whether respondents live in an urban or a rural setting. Our research design does not allow for testing of the potential impact of place identity on local candidate effect; but as settlements are expected to serve as primary sources of attachment (as opposed to regions or gerrymandered SMDs), this remains a plausible mechanism. Future studies can look into ways of contrasting the explanatory power of intrinsic and instrumental considerations behind friends-and-neighbors voting.

In relation to the literature on measuring local ties (Gimpel et al., 2008; Bowler et al., 1993), the findings above also stress the importance of careful operationalization of localness. Whereas benefitting from pork is clearly linked to a categorical membership in a territorial unit, the potential of clientelism to offset the absence of PVEAs might be more fittingly measured on continuous scale. Further research should evaluate the degree to which inferences about candidates' likely actions in office are a function of how (shared) local roots are measured.

3 Patronage as Behavioral Localism

Friends-and-neighbors voting, i.e. the advantage enjoyed by local candidates is "one of the most widely studied spatial mechanisms of electoral politics" (Górecki & Marsh, 2014, p. 14), but studies have rarely gone beyond documenting the phenomenon in yet another national context or electoral system (Put et al., 2017; Herron & Lynch, 2019; Simiyu, 2010). Scrutinizing the question why do voters support disproportionately homegrown politicians, recent work has argued for understanding local roots as heuristics, based on which the public makes inferences concerning candidates' likely future behavior once elected. Such advocates of the cue-based account conjectured that voters formulate expectations about politicians accountability, ideology and constituency service based on their place of birth or residence (Campbell et al., 2019; Jankowski, 2016).

In this paper, I test whether public perceptions on *patronage* are also conditional on candidates' local ties; in other words, if voters expect local politicians to be more likely to pack municipal and state institutions with their neighbors. If such perceptions indeed characterize the public, this might influence candidates' favorability: members of the electorate might approve or disapprove favoritism on the basis of local roots. For this reason, I also study whether voters demonstrate preferences for geographic representation in the context of public sector jobs.

Using a series of survey experiments, I investigate whether shared spatial attachments, between locals and incumbent MPs, are perceived as valuable for obtaining state jobs, as well as whether voters envision that elected politicians would have a preference to staff government offices with job-seekers who possess the same local roots as they do. Politicians often seek to influence the appointment of public servants, knowing that bureaucrats have the power to sabotage government programs (Wilson, 1989). Moreover, as voters might punish incumbents for an underperforming state sector, elected office-holders are incentivized to staff town halls and state offices with public servants who are not only qualified, but also possess contextual knowledge.

A vignette and a conjoint experiment was administered using personal interviewing (CAPI) on a nationally representative, probability sample (N=1000) of the voting-age population in Hungary, a country well-suited for testing this hypothesis given the politicization of public sector and frequent turnover of public servants (Meyer-Sahling, 2008; Meyer-Sahling & Toth, 2020). Results suggest being non-local increases the perceived probability of getting fired from a regional-level government office, respective effect sizes being comparable to those of being out-partisans with employees' immediate supervisor, a political appointee. Less qualified local applicants were also perceived as more likely to obtain the aforementioned job, but the sample size does not allow us to distinguish whether these expectations are driven by local roots *per se*, or their alignment with those of incumbent MPs. Similar patterns were absent with respect to better qualified applicants.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The second section reviews the implications of recent findings on friends-and-neighbors voting and conceptualizes patronage based on local roots as a form of behavioral localism. The next section discusses some alternative mechanisms, highlighting the instrumental benefits politicians might gain by staffing public institutions with employees who share their local ties. The fourth section elaborates on the case selection, whereas the fifth section discusses details of the data collection and the instruments used for survey experiments. The sixth section formally spells out the study's hypotheses. The penultimate section performs the statistical analyses needed to obtain estimates of vignette and conjoint experiments, and tests subgroup heterogeneity. The last section concludes, elaborates on the generalizability of findings and showcases avenues for future research.

3.1 Patronage as a mechanism of behavioral localism

Candidates with local ties have long been described as beneficiaries of friends-and-neighbors voting (Shugart et al., 2005; Key, 1950; Arzheimer & Evans, 2012; Herron & Lynch, 2019). Nevertheless, it is less clear *why* people favor someone from their own stock. A plethora of assumptions have been put forward, such as constituency service, pork barrel politics, monetary gifts and excursions (McAllister, 2015; Hirano, 2006); local identity and spatial attachment (Devine & Kopko, 2016, p. 176; Cox, 1997, p. 81); or local politicians being more likely to share their voters' ideological outlook (Campbell et al., 2019, see also Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

A further possibility, which insofar have not been hypothesized (or empirically tested), is that candidates' local ties serve as signals for their future behavior concerning patronage preferences with respect to municipal and state jobs. That is, the hometown of a politician could serve as a heuristic (and be indicative of) desired local roots of public officials. To put it simply, voters could formulate the assumption that elected politicians would prefer stacking town halls, schools, hospitals and municipality (or state) owned companies with someone from their own stock. Furthermore, voters might as well hypothesize that elected officials will have the necessary – formal or informal – powers to enforce such selection criteria (or make hiring and firing decisions themselves) where their preferences concerning employees' local roots come into fruition.

The paper will test patronage as behavioral localism for *national* politicians: MPs, whose likely behavior is at stake when voters have to choose between parliamentary candidates. Local roots of *mayors* could just as well serve as cues for patronage decisions in voters' eyes, but testing the hypothesized mechanism in the context of *parliamentarians*, whether a perception of them meddling in hiring and firing decisions is present, have some advantages over doing the same for mayors. First, one can expect more variance with respect to local roots of single-member district (SMD) candidates than sub-national politicians, as Europe-wide data suggest the "majority of all mayors were born or had spent the largest part of their childhood in the municipality they are heading" (Steyvers & Reynaert, 2006). Moreover, sub-national politics in Hungary lost most of its autonomy and resources since the regime change: centralization has characterized Fidesz's decade-long rule, nationalizing schools, hospitals and some forms of mass transit. Parallel to this, mayors themselves have reported the growing influence of MPs, ministers and other central party figures in municipal politics, as well as their frequent interference in local affairs (Dobos & Papp, 2017). Testing the hypothesis of friends-and-neighbors voting driven by expectations of future patronage positions at the national level also makes it comparable to other mechanisms of behavioral localism explored and tested in the literature (Campbell et al., 2019). Finally, exploring the mechanism at the level of electoral district constitutes a conservative test: if MPs in Hungary, in the absence of any formal powers, are able (and willing) to influence appointments of public servants in order to tip the balance in favor of local applicants, patronage as behavioral localism is likely to persist at lower levels among mayors as well.

Take the example of Makó, a small town in South-East Hungary: following the new electoral law introduced by Fidesz MPs in 2012 (Vegetti, 2019, p. 90), heavy gerrymandering resulted in wiping out its respective SMD from the map, merging the marginal seat district with neighboring Hódmezővásárhely, a long-time Fidesz stronghold. Incumbent MP János Lázár, the Prime Minister's Chief fo Staff, 'inherited' Makó and 14 neighboring villages and was re-elected twice (in 2014 and 2018, respectively). Ever since the two former SMDs coalesced, inhabitants of Makó are fretting about schools, administrative offices and healthcare facilities having been packed with residents of Hódmezővásárhely. The local opposition outrightly calls appointments of recent years as "colonization" and complained that "all public procurements" were won by companies based in Hódmezővásárhely. All this happened when the city ousted its incumbent mayor and elected another who, unlike her predecessor, was raised locally – hence one should have seen a takeover of homegrown public sector employees, if anything. Nevertheless, this anecdotical example demonstrates how MPs can matter just as much (or more) than mayors when it comes to job prospects of locals in the public sector.

Expectations related to the hypothesized effect of candidates' local personal vote-earning attributes (PVEAs) (Shugart et al., 2005) on hiring and firing decisions might be formulated by directly and indirectly affected voters alike. For those who already work in the public sector and/or have related qualifications and plan to do so, the voting calculus is simple.



(a) Local incumbent appoints their neighbors to public offices and fires non-locals



(b) Carpetbagger incumbent appoints their neighbors to public offices and fires locals

Figure 3.1: Visual representation of the hypothesized mechanisms.

Holding everything else constant, electing a local mayor or MP might boost (or diminish) their very own chances of being employed as public officials, depending on whether the local ties they possess tally with those of their elected representatives. Dwellers of a particular settlement cannot change their local roots – but as voters, they have some (limited) means of influencing whether such roots will pose an advantage for them, via electing (or ousting) a local politician. In a similar fashion, those with close relatives working at the town hall or in companies owned by a municipality or the state, will gain some direct or indirect benefits from local or parachutist candidates obtaining seats in their electoral district. It is important to see that the hypothesized relationship is not unidirectional: someone commuting to another settlement for work purposes might find it reassuring if a carpetbagger politician were to win the mandate, as it would likely decrease the chances of becoming a victim of a cleansing primarily motivated by shared local roots.¹

Constituents might also see an instrumental value in a "takeover" of public offices by locals; consequently, they might support a home-grown candidate on this platform. Familiar faces at state or regional offices, especially if they are located at another settlement, might help them to navigate the bureaucracy.

¹In a similar fashion, take person A living at settlement X, but working at settlement Z, where both municipalities (X and Z) belong to the same SMD. In this scenario, A could expect that their employability to increase once a politician residing at settlement X gets elected as MP and subsequently starts meddling with appointments for state jobs at settlement Z.

3.1.1 Potential benefits of patronage based on local ties

It could be rational for MPs to staff institutions with people from their hometown, as new employees are likely to reward said politicians with votes if they see a direct link between their appointment and shared local roots. Aforementioned MPs, trying to channel pork barrel funds to, or improve public services for, those belonging to their sub-constituency (Hirano, 2006), might also believe that such objectives would be best served by local expertise and officials familiar with the local context. That is, elected politicians might assume the existence of a broader mechanism, where replacing non-locals to locals (in the sense of MPs' neighbors) is just a first necessary step for delivering better services for a particular sub-constituency – and eventually obtaining their votes.

In-group bias would suggest that those living at the same settlement as the elected politician might be consistently regarded being superior to others, possessing more positive qualities (Enos, 2017, p. 27). In other words, if politicians have influence over the selection procedure, they will vouch for hiring locals partly because they *actually* believe they are better qualified and suited for the job. Gaikwad & Nellis (2021) demonstrated earlier that internal migrants, i.e. residents who recently moved to a municipality, are often met with animosity by long-term residents of urban localities and politicians catering to the tastes of their constituents. Consequently, it is fair to assume that *non-residents* would be similarly discriminated. Even if MPs have nothing against job applicants from neighboring towns, locals might cultivate place resentment against them (Munis, 2020). Under such circumstances, politicians might want to satisfy their electorate by inhibiting non-locals from obtaining jobs at state and municipal offices.

To wrap it all up, besides ethnicity, political loyalty or kinship, local roots might also serve as basis for patronage. Public jobs could be promised (and subsequently awarded) to public servants who share local ties with incumbent politicians. A multitude of reasons could explain this. First, in-group bias might make politicians genuinely believe locals are better qualified for such jobs. Alternatively, elected representatives might weight in to replace non-locals with locals, assuming this contributes to better service provision, as public servants will possess context-specific knowledge. Furthermore, politicians might expect that informal networks, to which locals obviously more belong to, will allow them to monitor and sanction future employees, as well as to reach out for them to seek advice or favors. Benefits of having a neighbor working at district offices, hospitals, town halls or as a school district appointee are mostly the same irrespective of political preferences.

It is important to note that aforementioned mechanisms can all serve as a heuristic for voters irrespective of *how exactly* politicians enforce localism as a primary selection criteria for public servants. It might be straight away illicit or entirely legal; politicians might have some discretion over appointments, e.g. as board members of foundations or associations. Alternatively, some of them have to rely solely on their informal power to recommend (or enforce the selection of) someone. The reason for the lack of further elaboration of such channels is twofold. It allows for the generalizability of the hypotheses: localness as cue for hiring/firing decisions in the foreseeable future is potentially just as relevant in autocratic and nepotistic regimes as in liberal democracies.

Furthermore, I argue that such channels fail to get disentangled in voters' minds: similarly to other hypotheses of behavioral localism, what matters is whether being local conveys a piece of information for voters, a promise of *some sort of* tangible benefit.² Understanding patronage as a form of distributive politics explains why a strict, step-by-step elaboration of the mechanism would be both futile and unnecessary for operationalization purposes. When pork barrel is discussed, for instance, it would be pretty hard (if not impossible) to disentangle whether channeling those particular funds to one's electoral district was a result of behind-the-door lobbying of MPs, a genuine bipartisan legislative deal forged in the Parliament or a pacifying measure to ease intra-party tensions (or some combination thereof).

²Take the example of local roots serving as cues for ideology (Campbell et al., 2019, p. 938): if the hypothesis is true, someone knowing that a candidate was raised at the same place would also assume that (s)he has a similar ideological position – or at least more similar than a parachutist candidate. Whether this similarity stems from gerrymandering or the predominantly working class character of the district, historically characterizing it for centuries, is largely irrelevant.

3.1.2 Case selection and national context

The paper tests the aforementioned hypothesis in Hungary, where friends-and-neighbors voting is empirically documented and local ties serve as heuristics for distributive politics.³ Furthermore, the public sector is characterized by high turnover, top official positions being politicized and hallmarked by a high degree of instability (Meyer-Sahling & Toth, 2020). Following the regime change, discretionary tools allowing the politicization of civil service were institutionalized (Meyer-Sahling, 2006), and changes of government often mean the partisanbased appointment of loyal senior civil service officials and the recruitment of outsiders (Meyer-Sahling, 2008).⁴ Knowing that incumbency for SMD MPs in Hungary is, somewhat counterintuitively, actually disadvantage, making current office-holders perform worse than their challengers (Papp, 2018), and factoring in the hyper-accountability characterizing Hungary and Central Eastern Europe (CEE) in general (Roberts, 2008), the country is an excellent venue to test the '*patronage-as-behavioral-localism*' hypothesis.

Appointments on the basis of shared geography might especially be relevant in Hungary, where, similarly to other post-Socialist countries, party membership is is traditionally low and on the decline (Van Biezen et al., 2012). Newly elected politicians, if they want to influence the turnover of public employees, have to reach out beyond trusted confidants from their party. Even Fidesz, by and large the biggest party in Hungary, with a membership of nearly 37,000 (Kovarek & Soós, 2016) had a hard time finding qualified public servants to ministries and government offices, as signaled by recent scandals.⁵ Quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate that the vast majority of Hungarians believe personal connections are of paramount importance for advancing the career ladder (I. G. Tóth, 2000) and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) were essential in obtaining jobs for many in Socialist and post-Communist Hungary alike (Kovarek & Sata, 2021; Bartus, 2003; Böröcz & Southworth,

 $^{^{3}}$ See Chapter 2 or Kovarek (2022) for results from a related survey experiment employing vignettes.

⁴There is even a specific word in Hungarian ($\delta rs \acute{e}gv\acute{a}lt\acute{a}s$) describing the politically-motivated, large scale replacement of public servants. Whereas originally used during the 1920s in the context of firing leftist and liberal intellectuals of predominantly Jewish origin and hiring conservative, right-wing Christian public servants instead, by now the word has lost its anti-Semite connotations. The term is routinely used by journalists and politicians alike to describe ideologically motivated, large-scale dismissal of dissenting staff and the subsequent hiring spree, intended to fill vacant positions with government loyalists.

⁵Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Szijjártó was infamous for hiring his futsal teammates to ministry positions, despite lacking both professional and political credentials (Magyar Hang, 2020).

1998).

3.2 Data and methods

I conduct a survey experiment, fielded in Hungary, on a sample of N=1000 using CAPI. The experiment was pre-registered and a pre-analysis plan (PAP) was made before data collection finished.⁶ It has two distinct components: a vignette-based study, where a fictive candidate profile is presented to respondents, who are subsequently asked about their beliefs regarding likely behavior of the notional politician. I report sample characteristics by treatment group in the Appendix, in Table A.4. Furthermore, I utilize a conjoint experiment design, which relies on perspective-taking. The vignette study asked about perceived chances of obtaining jobs at the District Office (*Járási Hivatal*) and looked like this:

• To what extent do you agree with this statement: "In today's world, it is impossible to advance and succeed without connections"? 1 (Fully disagree) — 5 (Fully agree)

Imagine that the politician described below has won mandate in your single-member district at the general election of 2022. Furthermore, the politician's party is now on government; meaning that this politician is part of the governing majority following the 2022 election. Please read the information below carefully and answer a couple of questions about how you envision Hungary (and your immediate surroundings) following the elections of 2022!

The politician is 47 years old, married, father of one. **[Was born and lives at the respondent's settlement** / **at another settlement, sampled randomly]**. He was previously elected to a county-level leadership position in his party. The politician has a university degree. Now that he is elected, he would like to work in the Economic and Cultural committees of the National Assembly; he plans to propose a couple of amendments in the Parliament on those subjects, too. In his free time, the politician likes

jogging and reading.

⁶The pre-registration can be found here: https://osf.io/jsf4e/?view_only= 17130fd0ea494174b7c52546507fd0a6

- Let's assume that following the elections in 2022, someone living at [respondent's settlement / parachutist politician's settlement] were to apply for a job at the District Office. (S)he has a university degree, having obtained a Master's degree; speaks English at an advanced level, confident about using computers and their previous experience includes having worked for 5 years as a public servant. How likely this person were to get a job as a public servant? 1 (Not likely at all) 5 (Very likely)
- Moreover, still shortly after the 2022 election, another person living at [respondent's settlement / parachutist politician's settlement] applies to a job at the District Office. (S)he finished high school (matura exam), has basic computer skills and speaks no foreign language. Previously (s)he never worked in state administration, nor has any similar job. How likely were they to get a job as public servants at the District Office? Remember, we are after the elections of 2022 and your SMD MP is the politician described above, who belongs to the governing majority. 1 (Not likely at all) 5 (Very likely)

The vignette was inspired by the design used in Chapter 2: allocation to treatment and control groups is the function of the MP being described as local or non-local (relative to respondents' own hometown). Non-local politicians and applicants are presented as someone living at another municipality, but in the same county, for reasons of external validity. It is rather rare that politicians living farther away (i.e. in another county) would contest SMD seats – as they would usually have to secure the support of some regional party organization (Kovarek & Soós, 2016). Similarly, long-distance commute or moving from one settlement to another for a district office job is hardly a plausible scenario, as every county has a handful of such government offices, which offer the same positions and state mandated, fixed salaries.

For the sake of presenting realistic profiles to survey takers, the text of the vignette also included some unobjectionable attributes (on the hobbies of the MP) and depicted him as the "average" parliamentarian of Hungary's National Assembly (w.r.t age, gender and relationship status), taking inspiration from Campbell et al. (2019). The politician was described as someone who succeeded in obtaining a mandate; and furthermore, someone who belongs to the governing majority after the 2022 general election. These bits of information about his party's electoral success assure that respondents believe in the MP's ability to enforce his priorities when it comes to state appointees, especially for positions in District Offices.

Having an MP with local roots *alone* is presumably not sufficient to act as heuristic for likely hiring (or firing) behavior of state officials; the MP needs to be part of the governing party/coalition. As the vignette does not specify the politician's PID, leaving the MPs' ideology open and up to respondents' judgement, it also does not specify whether the post-2022 government will be one with a Fidesz or an opposition majority.⁷ Nevertheless, tying the notional representative to the future governing majority is key; without this, respondents could envision an opposition MP, who has neither the leverage to influence appointments, nor the working relations with government officials. Being on an opposition MP's shortlist, even if purely for reasons of sharing the same hometown, could even decrease one's employability in state offices. Whereas it potentially varies how leftist, liberal or right-wing governments allocate patronage positions, if the aforementioned mechanism is universal, it should at least characterize both of Hungary's bipolar political blocks (Savage, 2013).

For respondents in the treatment group, shown a politician hailing from the same settlement, there is no reason to believe that effects associated with choosing the parachutist politician's hometown as job applicants' hometown would be any different from picking a 'true control' (i.e. a settlement which is neither the respondents' hometown, nor was described by the vignette as the parachutist candidate's hometown) for this purpose. As stated in the PAP, whilst measuring the overall 'bonus' associated with sharing a municipality with an elected politician is a key focus of the research design, separate analyses are further conducted below for carpetbagger applicants and for job-seekers applying for positions on home turf.

The vignette study was accompanied by a conjoint experiment, which uses perspectivetaking to clarify and identify the mechanism. Respondents were asked to imagine having disposal over hiring and firing decisions at a District Office. They were presented two profiles, where attribute levels are randomly selected, and subsequently asked whom they would

⁷At the time when this survey experiment was fielded, both outcomes seemed plausible. Eventually, in April 2022, Fidesz secured another legislative supermajority, obtaining 54.1% of votes. In the preceding six months, however, all major public opinion polls suggested it is going to be a neck and neck race.

fire. As the real-world population of public servants working in district offices in Hungary is unknown, the experiment used a uniform distribution for randomizing all attribute levels. The example below demonstrates the research design, with two randomly selected profiles:

Imagine for a moment that you are the head of the District Office. For austerity reasons, you have to fire some of your employees. Below you see the profile of two public servants who are working under your supervision. Which one would you fire?

	Employee No. 1.	Employee No. 2.		
Qualification	university degree (MA)	college degree (BSc)		
Gender	female	male		
Place of residence	[respondent's settlement]	[another settlement]		
Experience	3 years as public servant	5 years as public servant		
Wage	$500,000 \; { m HUF}$	240,000 HUF		
Political views	government supporter	opposition supporter		

- Which one of these two people would you fire, if you were the head of this government office? (Employee 1 / Employee 2)
- How likely it is according to you that the current head of the District Office would have made the same choices (would have fired the same employees) as you? 0 (Not likely at all) 5 (Very likely)

The set of alternative settlements, described as place of residence for non-local employees, was restricted: municipalities were randomly sampled from the respondent's home county. This increases external validity: as discussed earlier, it would have been implausible to have public servants commuting to work from another county. Consequently, we lose some of the variance, whilst this test being rather conservative: if respondents are more likely to fire employees who live at another municipality of the same county, they are probably even more likely to prioritize their neighbors over someone who lives at a more distant location. Such trade-offs are more likely to occur in other state institutions, such as hospitals, schools or utility companies, which – unlike district offices – are likely to recruit employees from a wider radius, looking for specialized skills and talent.

Study 1 and Study 2 complement each other. Whereas the vignette-based experiment directly tests the hypothesis on expectations of appointing locals as behavioral localism, the subsequent conjoint design examines if voters themselves are driven by in-group bias when given a free hand to pick whom to save from lay-offs. The design ensures external validity with a follow-up question linking respondent choices to expected behavior of real-life decision makers (Study 2), as well as presenting a vignette that describes a scenario taking place in the near future (Study 1). Conjoint experiments are also well-suited for modeling tradeoffs that occur in real life (Hainmueller et al., 2014), which is an added benefit when studying decisions such as hiring or firing individuals.

As we have no theoretical expectation regarding whether localism should be more relevant (i.e. a heuristic politicians would be more likely to rely on) for hiring new employees or firing existing ones, the design tests both mechanisms. Study 1 inquires about applicants' perceived chances of being hired, whilst Study 2 forces respondents to make a decision about firing public servants.

The reader might wonder about the attributes used for the conjoint experiment. For instance, one could feel that common independent variables, such as ethnicity are missing from the experimental design presented above. Studies from countries such as Kenya or Ghana demonstrate that patronage positions are often-times given to co-ethnics (McCauley, 2013; Marx et al., 2019). The only ethnic group whose inclusion would be potentially meaningful is the Roma: studies fielded in Hungary report on widespread prejudice and stereotypes towards them (Simonovits et al., 2018) and suggest Roma people are frequently discriminated on the job market (Messing & Bereményi, 2017).

Nevertheless, public service jobs would expect at least finishing grammar school, if not a college degree straight away. This level of education comes with the so-called 'matura exam', a type of secondary school exit exam common in CEE countries, which is essential for obtaining any kind of non-manual-labor job. Whereas 46 % of all Hungarians have successfully passed this matura exam (Eduline, 2017), the same figure is only 11% for the Roma. Knowing that in conjoint experiments it is essential to use population distributions for randomizing attributes (de la Cuesta et al., 2022), this would mean adding an attribute, which varies once in every 10 choice task. This seems like an overkill, especially that any effects of co-ethnics patronage would depend on subgroup heterogeneity; hence we were to test the effect for an even smaller group of respondents.

By randomly varying 'government' and 'opposition' supporter, these two levels of the partisanship attribute capture political preferences in a way that it reflects the empirical reality. Overcoming internal divisions and ideological cleavages, opposition parties in Hungary have adapted to the majoritarian electoral system in the last three years, contesting the 2019 municipal and 2022 parliamentary elections together (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022). These labels would also serve as clear heuristics for respondents fearing of (or advocating for) political-based cleansing at public institutions. Such incidents are usually reported in the media as someone being fired for being an opposition party.⁸ Knowing if your employee is, at large, supports or opposes policies of the government, in Hungary's highly polarized political environment (McCoy et al., 2018; Vegetti, 2019), is a reasonable assumption, especially if they worked under your supervision for years.

Contrarily, PID would distinguish between at least 6 different opposition parties⁹ – a detail which is unreasonable to expect from employers to be familiar with. Party membership is a piece of information that is highly sensitive and confidential in Hungary, but also largely irrelevant, given low membership figures (Kovarek & Soós, 2016). In a similar fashion, were respondents provided their employees' actual vote choice, say at the last parliamentary election, it would decrease the external validity of the experiment.¹⁰

⁸As an editor-in-chief of the public television famously said on record: "In this institution, one does not support the *opposition*. If this statement surprises anyone, they should go home now." (Kaszás, 2020)

⁹See Table 1 in Kovarek & Littvay (2019) for a fairly up-to-date overview of political parties and their leaders in Hungary.

¹⁰Furthermore, being aware of an employee's vote choice would suggest an element of *monitoring*, meaning we would test a mechanism adjacent to, but different from patronage: hiring (or refraining from firing) someone in exchange of her vote, i.e. *clientelism*. See Mares & Young (2019b, 2018) for prevalence and (dis)approval of clientelistic practices among the Hungarian electorate and Chapter 2 on whether they perceive localness as a heuristic for such future behavior of elected politicians.

The reason for framing the question in the context of district offices is twofold. First, hospitals or school districts are indeed on a tight leash, directed by government loyalists; but assessing the chances of getting hired for positions in such institutions would have been probably harder for survey takers, whose network of friends is characterized by *status homophily* (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954), i.e. who mostly make friends with people of similar professional and educational background. Consequently, they might not be familiar with the necessary skills and qualifications (e.g. MD) for such jobs, which could have generated heterogenous effects w.r.t capturing the (perceived) relationship between skills/qualifications and employability. Contrarily, district offices recruit a substantially wider selection of people, as they equally need social workers, as well as people with legal expertise or a degree in economics.

Secondly, the mechanism between MPs' local roots and localness as selection criteria for public jobs should be direct and plausible. This means that *any* position, about which voters formulate expectations conditional on politicians' local roots, should be at institutions that fall *within these politicians' sphere of influence*. Whether voters envision MPs legally exercising discretionary powers to appoint people, or putting pressure on top officials, the institution should be situated in the SMD where the fictive politician, described in the vignette, obtained mandate. For this reason, county-level government offices (*Kormányhivatal*) are not well-suited for the purposes of this study, as each county consists of multiple electoral districts (SMDs), but hosts only a single government office of this type.

Contrarily, SMDs consist of multiple districts,¹¹ and every district has its respective District Office (*Járási Hivatal*). Moreover, districts and SMDs alike stay within county boundaries – meaning a change at the level of SMDs (i.e. replacing the incumbent with the fictive politician described in the vignette above) might plausibly trigger a change in any district-level institutions, as long as the districts belong to the SMD.

In a similar fashion, municipalities clearly correspond to SMDs, and knowing the ever-

¹¹These districts (*járás*) are not to be confused with electoral districts (*választókerület*), despite their English translations being homonyms. These administrative units have their historical roots in the Kingdom of Hungary, and do not correspond to SMDs – particularly because they are notably smaller in size. A district usually encompasses 10–30 settlements and a population of roughly 50,000 people, whereas the Electoral Law of 2011/CCIII commands that no SMDs should have a population more than $\pm 15\%$ of the average size of SMDs, which is approx. 77,000 people.

growing influence of parliamentarians in municipal matters (Dobos & Papp, 2017), Town Halls – administrative centers of municipalities – might seem to be more obvious choices for the institutions used in Study 1 and 2. Nevertheless, this would have introduced a confounder, altering respondents' expectations: unlike state-controlled institutions, a notable share of settlements are controlled by opposition mayors (Solska, 2020; Kovarek & Dobos, in press), whose mandate extends beyond that of the current government. Consequently, mayors would have "outlived" politically the general election of 2022 – the context of this vignette study –, likely influencing responses given to the follow-up question intended to measure the extent of perceived agreement between one's own and politicians' assumed behavior. This would have introduced variance which the survey would have been unable to capture: for confidentiality reasons, the external survey firm does not provide researchers with the names of municipalities where respondents live.

Alternatively, I could have asked respondents to imagine that the politician described in the vignette has been elected as the mayor of their hometown in October 2024. Nevertheless, forcing survey takers to envision a scenario that is ought to take place nearly 4 years later, as well as making them to ignore the strong incumbency effects, from which mayors in Hungary benefit tremendously (Körösényi et al., 2009, p. 157–159), would have undermined external validity.

3.3 Hypotheses

Who is more likely to benefit from localness-induced patronage? What other variables might mediate the relationship between local residents' chances of becoming public servants and local PVEAs (Shugart et al., 2005) of elected politicians? I hypothesize that the the size of the settlement should be related to the likelihood of benefitting from patronage. I expect that settlement size should be *inversely* associated with the perceived plausibility of obtaining a job in the public sector, for the reasons explained below.

For some of mechanisms outlined earlier, such as a halo effect driven by in-group biases (Enos, 2017), we should not expect heterogenous effects; it is "earned" by those living at incumbents' hometowns simply by being locals. Contrarily, if patronage as behavioral

localism is driven by politicians' expectations that it will ease future monitoring, or that low-quality service provision will entail higher reputational costs for public servants, the effect is assumed to be moderated by the size of the settlement.

Take the example of the mechanism which could be summarized as "keeping public servants at arm's length", i.e. politicians believing that officials living in their hometown might be easier to reach, control or put under pressure. At various points during their career, politicians potentially need heads-up on ongoing (administrative) procedures and might feel inclined to monitor public sentiment via seeking bureaucrats' advice. All these is more likely, when the average path length (Albert & Barabási, 2002) is shorter between the politician and the public employee.

At settlements with a a couple of hundred inhabitants, chances are that it is easier for an MP to make contact with public servants who possess shared local ties. Reputational costs of acting against elected politicians' will also diminish rapidly once the public office is located at a large city. Consequently, shared local attachments might offer little help, when the politician and the official hail from the same metropolis.

Based on the above, I conjecture the following mechanisms and relationships. Hypotheses 5, 6 and 7 concern interviewees' elicited beliefs in response to the vignette study. I hypothesize that respondents will perceive it more likely that someone who lives at the same settlement as an incumbent politician will obtain state jobs. Furthermore, I expect treatment heterogeneity w.r.t. settlement size (of respondents' hometown) and beliefs about the importance of connections to succeed.

Hypothesis 8 and 9 describe two profile characteristics that I assume will drive respondents' decision w.r.t firing fictive employees in the conjoint experiment: shared local roots and partisan (dis)agreement, respectively. Hypothesis 10 is primarily meant to test external validity: as *all* current District Office heads (*Járási Hivatalvezető*) are appointed by the Fidesz government, I expect that opposition supporters will perceive their choices to diverge more from those of real-world appointees than respondents who exhibit pro-government attitudes.

HoDOs represent the government at the lowest administrative levels: as government officials, their "first generation" was appointed by the Minister of Public Administration and Justice in 2012, following the re-establishment of districts as administrative units. In theory, their legal status should prohibit them from engaging in any sort of political activities; nevertheless in practice, this hardly stops them from campaigning on behalf of Fidesz politicians, running for SMD mandates or "shadowing" (Papp, 2016b) opposition MPs. Whereas a large share of them have a legal background, regulations permit that someone, even without the mandated 5 years of experience in public administration, might be appointed as HoDO, if (s)he was previously a mayor or a parliamentarian. Indeed, following the shrinkage of the National Assembly, which reduced the number of MPs by almost half (Kovács & Vida, 2015), becoming HoDO turned out to be a viable escape route for Fidesz MPs whose SMD was wiped out from the map.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is relatively straightforward to see that HoDOs will be perceived through a partisan lens; government supporters will likely have a better evaluation of their work and judgement than opposition voters. This relationship is captured by Hypothesis 10: one could expect that pro-government respondents (i.e. Fidesz supporters) will perceive HoDOs more akin to themselves ideologically and trust their decisions better. Conversely, opposition sympathizer are assumed to perceive more incongruence between their choices and those of flesh-and-blood district leaders. Such respondents might believe that HoDOs fire employees on the basis of PID; that HoDOs have been appointed for reasons of loyalty instead of competence, hence they make erroneous decisions; or simply that hardline Fidesz supporters rarely think along the same lines as out-partisan respondents themselves. Whatever the reason be, one could expect less (perceived) agreement between (envisioned) choices of HoDOs and those of opposition supporters.

Hypothesis 5 (H_1) : In Study 1, respondents will associate higher likelihoods with fictive applicants getting a job at the District Office when these would-be employees are described as living at the same settlement which is presented as fictive MP's hometown in the vignette. This can be formalized as follows:

$$Y_{qetting \ a \ job} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{shared} + \epsilon \tag{3.1}$$

where D_{shared} is a dichotomous variable, capturing if the politician and the applicant shares

the same hometown (whether respondents' own hometown or another municipality).

Hypothesis 6 (H_2) : In Study 1, respondents who reported higher agreement with the statement "In today's world, it is impossible to advance and succeed without connections" will perceive it *more likely* that locals will be able to get a job at the District Office when the politician is described as having local ties by the vignette; in a similar fashion, such respondents will also associate higher likelihoods with non-local applicant being hired when these applicants' hometown is the same as that of the parachutist candidate.

$$Y_{getting \ a \ job} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{shared} + \beta_2 S_{connections} + \beta_3 (D_{shared} \times S_{connections}) + \epsilon \qquad (3.2)$$

where $S_{connections}$ is measured on a 5-point-Likert scale.

Hypothesis 7 (H_3) : In Study 1, respondents living in smaller settlements will perceive it more likely that someone from the same settlement as the MP will get a job at the District Office.

$$Y_{qetting \ a \ job} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{shared} + \beta_2 Pop + \beta_3 (D_{shared} \times Pop) + \epsilon \tag{3.3}$$

where *Pop* is measured on a 9-point ordinal scale, as reported by the survey company, capturing the number of inhabitants (population) of the respondent's place of residence.

Hypothesis 8 (H_4): In Study 2, respondents will be *more likely* to fire employees who are <u>not</u> from their own stock; that is, the AMCE of shifting an employee from living at the respondent's settlement to living at another settlement will suggest a %. increase in the likelihood of choosing a profile (=firing an employee) over another.

Hypothesis 9 (H_5): In Study 2, respondents will be *more likely* to fire employees who are <u>not</u> supporting the same political block (opposition or government). The AMCE of shifting an employee from $PID_{respondent} = PID_{employee}$ to $PID_{respondent} \neq PID_{employee}$ is expected to predict a *higher probability* of respondents' choosing a profile (=firing an employee) over another. Hypothesis 10 (H_6) : In Study 2, respondents who previously answered that they support the government, will on average report a higher likelihood that current heads of District Offices (HoD) would have fired the same employees.

$$Y_{current \, HoD \, behavior} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{government} + \epsilon \tag{3.4}$$

For Hypotheses 5–7, I will also conduct subgroup analysis, based on whether $D_{shared} = 1$ for respondents' own settlement or for the carpetbagger politician's settlement. That is, I test whether effect heterogeneity exists for subgroups where MP's hometown = applicant's hometown = respondent's hometown, as opposed to where MP's hometown = applicant's hometown \neq respondent's hometown. Note that these two experimental assignments describe markedly different real-world scenarios, albeit theoretically both scenarios should influence (expectations about) hiring decisions in the same way. Whereas MPs could have a vested interest in appointing people with the same spatial attachments, irrespective of *where vacant state jobs are to be filled* (provided that the settlement belongs to their SMD), it is unclear if the wide public perceives patronage on the basis of local ties as equally beneficial or important for homegrown and parachutist politicians. The subgroup analysis seeks to answer this question: whether D_{shared} is an equally valid predictor of obtaining a public servant position in contexts when the job seeker is an "intruder" (sharing the same hometown with the carpetbagger politician) and when (s)he is considered as a local.

3.4 Analysis and Discussion

As demonstrated by Table 3.1, when constructing D_{shared}^{12} in a way that it captures both instances when respondent's settlement = MP's settlement and respondent's settlement \neq MP's settlement, the dichotomous variable is not a significant predictor of expected legislator behavior. We are unable to reject H_0 for either applicants; that is, neither the fictive job seeker with an excellent resumé, nor the one with weak qualifications was perceived as someone whose chances of obtaining a position in public administration were boosted by

 $^{^{12}}$ The variable takes the value of '1' if the applicant's settlement = the MP's settlement.

	Dependent variable:								
	Likelihood of $\operatorname{\mathbf{more}}$ qualified applicant getting a job			Likelihood of ${\bf less}$ ${\bf qualified}$ applicant getting a job					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)			
$shared\ hometown$	0.074	-0.251	-0.258	0.068	-0.473	0.178			
	(0.060)	(0.243)	(0.134)	(0.077)	(0.309)	(0.171)			
connections		0.001			-0.101				
		(0.042)			(0.057)				
shared hometown \times connections		0.083			0.138				
		(0.061)			(0.078)				
population			-0.017			0.061**			
			(0.016)			(0.020)			
shared hometown \times population			0.063**			-0.023			
			(0.022)			(0.028)			
Constant	3.932***	3.926***	4.024***	3.019***	3.416***	2.698***			
	(0.043)	(0.167)	(0.098)	(0.054)	(0.224)	(0.117)			
Observations	975	969	975	964	960	964			
\mathbb{R}^2	0.002	0.005	0.011	0.001	0.004	0.014			
Adjusted R ²	0.001	0.002	0.008	-0.0002	0.001	0.011			
Residual Std. Error	$0.940 \ (df = 973)$	0.938 (df = 965)	$0.936 \; (df = 971)$	1.190 (df = 962)	1.189 (df = 956)	1.183 (df = 960)			
F Statistic	1.514 (df = 1; 973)	1.643 (df = 3; 965)	$3.733^* (df = 3; 971)$	0.797 (df = 1; 962)	1.411 (df = 3; 956)	4.608^{**} (df = 3; 960)			

sharing spatial attachments with the incumbent MP.

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 3.1: Results of the vignette experiment, when shared local roots include both carpetbagger and local job applicants.

I proceed with subgroup analysis, as indicated in the PAP earlier: creating variables D_{local} and $D_{parachutist}$ allows us to disentangle the effects when job applicants share a place of residence not only with their parliamentary representative, but also the interviewee, whereas the second dummy operationalizes situations when survey takers could be rightly worried about carpetbagger MPs staffing public institutions with job seekers living at such politicians' hometowns. As stated above, in the hypotheses section, both scenarios are empirically plausible, and based on the existing literature, we have no expectations which one should be a more frequently occurring form of behavioral localism.

Note:

One approach to test whether shared local roots between *respondents* and MPs enable (or inhibit) voters to form expectations about 'patronage-as-behavioral-localism' is to create and interaction model, where $D_{shared} \times D_{local}$ takes the value of '1' when politicians' hometowns, as shown in the vignette, are the same as that of respondents (and equals to zero otherwise). In a similar fashion, $D_{shared} \times D_{parachutist}$ would be a categorical interaction, taking the value of '1' when the putative incumbent MP lives at some other locality. As the last paragraph of the Hypotheses section suggested, testing Hypotheses 5–7 could yield different results for these distinct subgroups.



Figure 3.2: Marginal effect of notionally incumbent MPs' place of residence on shared local roots between MPs and job applicants.

Figure 3.2 presents results for the model $Y_{getting \ a \ job} \sim \beta_0 + \beta_1 D_{shared} + \beta_2 D_{local} + \beta_3 (D_{shared} \times D_{local}) + \epsilon$, where the dependent variable captures *less qualified* applicants' chances. As the model uses a categorical by categorical interaction as predictor, visualizing marginal effects allows us to scrutinize the impact of local and parachutist MPs alike. As

hypothesized, the highest estimate is associated with job seekers whose abode is the same municipality as that of the district's elected representative, who happens to be an incumbent with local PVEAs. This estimate is significantly higher than the predicted likelihood for both applicants possessing shared local roots with non-local MPs and non-local applicants attempting to secure a civil servant position at a district with a local MP. Marginal effects, however, prevent us to clearly disentangle mechanisms of patronage based on local roots from applicants' perceived advantage purely based on *their* local roots, as confidence intervals for these two estimates overlap. One possibility is that the small number of observations for each subgroup and the resulting low power makes us unable to detect a true effect.

I also detect some evidence for the presumption that sharing abode with incumbent politicians might 'compensate' for the lack of necessary qualifications in an almost identical replication¹³ of this experiment. Testing Hypothesis 5 on this additional batch of data suggests that less qualified job applicants somewhat benefit from shared local roots with politicians, increasing the perceived likelihood of securing the position by 0.14 (p< 0.069), whereas the same model demonstrates no evidence of this mechanism for better qualified job seekers (0.02, p< 0.78). These suggest that the mechanism under scrutiny, patronage as behavior localism, could characterize only *underqualified* and *local* job applicants. In other words, our interviewees might believe that locals, even if they lack the necessary qualifications¹⁴ will be more likely to secure employment as public servants when their future workplace is located in an electoral district with a local incumbent.

Interaction models with the size of the population of respondents' hometowns are in line with theoretical expectations: the smaller the municipality where our interviewee resides, the more like (s)he was to believe that local applicants' chances of securing public servant jobs will be boosted by incumbent MPs possessing local PVEAs. To better understand this relationship, I present marginal effects (Brambor et al., 2006). Figure 3.3 depicts a Johnson-Neyman interval plot (Long, 2019), indicating that as settlement size increases, the perceived

¹³Due to human error on the survey company's side, data was also collected using the same experimental design, only this time non-local job applicants were described as living at a third municipality (i.e. different from the parachutist MP's hometown).

¹⁴Interviewees were not told what qualifications applicants are expected to possess. Nevertheless, having no college education or experience in working in the public sector would likely put this fictive applicant to the bottom of the barrel in a real-world scenario.

bonus associated with being a local applicant in a SMD with a local incumbent decreases. For respondents living at municipalities coded as '7', '8' or '9', i.e. those living in municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants, this bonus disappears entirely. These findings are fully in line with our assumptions: whether incumbent MPs' incentives to push for the appointment of locals include beliefs about important contextual knowledge possessed by them or the (relative) ease of monitoring and sanctioning bureaucrats, 'patronage-as-behavioral localism' should be less prevalent at larger localities.



Figure 3.3: Marginal effect of the population of respondents' hometown on fictive applicants' localness.

Models including the variable capturing the importance of personal connections, measured via a questionnaire item adopted from Kürtösi (2007), were not significant at any conventional levels, irrespective whether applicants' localness was operationalized as shared local attachments with MPs or also with interviewees. This might be a result of the distribution heavily left-skewed, as disagreement with the statement was rare among respondents (see Figure 3.4). Alternatively, it could also indicate that patronage based on local roots is not a direct function of personal connections. In other words, MPs might deem it beneficial to have locals posted in public offices irrespective whether they know them personally or not.



Figure 3.4: Agreement with the statement: "In today's world, it is impossible to advance and succeed without connections".

Moving on to the results of the conjoint experiment, Figure 3.5 presents AMCEs for all levels of employee attributes. As respondents were asked to a pick a profile they would *fire*, positive AMCE values indicate higher likelihoods associated with dismissing a particular public servant.

Attribute values primarily included for improving the external validity of profiles, such as wage, gender, experience and education behave as expected. For instance, the higher the salary received by an employee (compared to a baseline of earning 160,000 HUF), the higher the change in the probability that (s)he will be fired. This makes sense, especially given the instructions provided to respondents: "austerity reasons" were cited to justify the experiment's forced-choice nature. In a similar fashion, profiles showcasing less education were associated with an increased probability of dismissal. Public servants with more experience were also more likely to survive the experimentally induced "firing spree". Being a rookie (with only half a year of experience) has increased selection probabilities for profiles to the



Figure 3.5: Average Marginal Component Effects, capturing the likelihood of firing a fictive employee when only a single level of an attribute is changed.

greatest extent.

More importantly, corroborating Hypothesis 3.5, non-local employees were significantly more prone to being fired than locals, holding everything else constant. The average change in the probability that a public servant will be dismissed when (s)he was not local instead of being local was 0.12 (SE = 0.01). This suggests underlying preferences in the population for local employees in state offices; a powerful incentive for politicians, who might consider using patronage as a form of behavioral localism.

But how does this increase in probability of being fired, a clear penalty for being non-local, compare to the partisanship variable (Hypothesis 9)? For answering this question, Figure 3.5 is of little help, as it shows overall effects for the whole population, which includes government and opposition supporters alike. Alternatively, Figure 3.6 visualizes marginal means for respondent subgroups. When respondents were out-partisans of fictive public servants,¹⁵ marginal means suggest that being non-local increased the probability of dismissal (0.60; SE = 0.01) to a greater extent than either fictive employees being government (0.54; SE = 0.01) or opposition (0.57; SE = 0.01) supporters. In other words, for public servants trying to survive purges and mass downsizings, having shared local roots with their supervisors helps just as much as being co-partisans with them, if not more. This is consistent with recent findings on a vast majority of Hungarians approving the politically motivated dismissal of public servants, irrespective of their partisanship (Hamrák et al., 2022).

What do these firing decisions made by survey takers tell us? Can we extrapolate from the way 'average' people behave to how politicians act? The good news is we do not have to; it is enough to see *perceived* congruence between citizens' and politicians' choices in order to corroborate the hypothesis about shared local ties between politicians and public servants shaping hiring or firing decisions. In order to obtain a measure of this perceived congruence (or lack thereof), the questionnaire asked respondents whether they believe *current* heads of District Offices (HoDO) would have fired the same employees – i.e. whether they expect politicians' decisions to tally with those of their own.

The presence of this relationship is crucial for external validity. If even the most ardent

¹⁵A respondent self-identifying as opposition supporter, shown a pro-government public servant; or a respondent supporting the government, seeing an employee described as an opposition supporter. Respondents without PID were neither coded as co-partisans, nor as out-partisans.



Figure 3.6: Subgroup preferences for dismissing public public servants, when the sample is split by out-partianship.


Figure 3.7: Perceived congruence between respondents' and current district heads' decisions, predicted by opposition/government voter dummy variables.

supporters of the government believe their firing/hiring decisions have nothing in common with those of government-appointed district heads (e.g. because people believe 'elites' think and act fundamentally fundamentally differently than 'ordinary people'), inferences drawn from the conjoint cannot be used to understand the expectations voters formulate about politicians with local PVEAs. Figure 3.7 demonstrates this relationship: self-declared government sympathizers were indeed more likely to claim that current HoDOs "would have fired the same employees", were they confronted with the same choice tasks. Conversely, supporting the opposition is negatively associated with respondents' choices being perceived as congruent with (envisioned) decisions of HoDOs.¹⁶

After it has been established that partial partial indeed influences how district heads are viewed, there is only one question left: what was *overall* distribution of responses to the question aiming to capture perceived congruence between political appointees and 'average' people? Figure 3.8 demonstrates that the share of respondents expecting real-life political

¹⁶Perceived congruence between one's own behavior and that of political appointees does not necessarily mean a normative endorsement of said behavior. Respondents could be convinced that 'purging' government offices from non-locals is something desirable, but it might also be the case that they disapprove such motives, yet respondents expect they would not be any more impartial than real-world political appointees.



Figure 3.8: Responses to "How likely it is according to you that the current head of the District Office would have fired the same employees as you?"

appointees to behave similarly is rather high. More than twice as many interviewees picked 'somewhat likely' or 'very likely' than those selecting a value standing for doubt or outright disbelief.

3.5 Conclusion

This article set out to capture whether patronage, based on shared local roots, is understood by voters as a distinct form of behavioral localism. Study 1 presented the results of a vignette experiment first, where treatment and control groups differed only in notional incumbent MPs' local PVEAs (or lack thereof), and interviewees were subsequently asked about perceived chances of fictive job applicants to obtain a public servant position. Local roots and level of qualification (strength of resumé) for these would-be employees were varied randomly. The analysis found only limited evidence for what I conjectured earlier: for applicants with little qualifications, the highest estimates were indeed reported for job seekers sharing their hom etown with a local MP, but it would take further research (or subgroups with larger sample sizes) to unequivocally distinguish the effect of being local *and* having shared local ties with elected representatives from the advantage solely stemming from would-be employees' localness. I also find that that these perceptions are absent vis-á-vis applicants residing at the same place where parachutist MPs live. Study 2 consisted of a perspective-taking conjoint experiment: sampled interviewees were asked to choose between fictive profiles of *currently employed* (fictive) public servants, and they had to fire one of them for austerity reasons. Results suggest that being local (compared to non-locals) significantly decreased the probability of a fictive public servant being dismissed. Follow-up questions also confirm that respondents believe actual political appointees would behave similarly in real-life scenarios. These findings also have implications for the study of representation in civil service more generally: as Hungarian respondents clearly preferred their in-group members in public office, this chapter may be viewed as offering some empirical evidence for claims on the importance of representative bureaucracy (Kuipers & Sahn, 2022; Baekgaard & George, 2018).

This study documenting the absence of such expectations with respect to parachutist job seekers also provides insights for understanding why Hungarian voters apparently never punished Fidesz for redistricting and amalgamating SMDs – sometimes hundred-years-old ones. If gerrymandering and the accompanying shrinkage of the National Assembly is perceived to limit chances of the opposition, but triggers no worries related to non-local MPs packing local institutions with "their men", such institutional changes are easier to come to terms with.

A few caveats are in order. I found no evidence for patronage as behavioral localism when fictive applicants were described as having a strong resumé. Whereas this can be a welcome news for some readers, who might interpret this as meritocracy prevailing over nepotism, it could be a sign of a ceiling effect. The better qualified fictive applicant was essentially a perfect fit for the job; hence respondents could have been convinced of their employability to such high levels that might be hard to match under real-life conditions.

Further research should test these hypotheses and evaluate the degree to which candidates' local roots serve as cues for expectations about patronage at other levels of public administration, in the context of other institutions. This study tested the aforementioned mechanism with respect to an institution of the subnational state (Kim & Warner, 2018), but it is unclear whether results should hold for, say, town halls, publicly owned companies or land registries. It is possible that only a subset of state and municipal offices are politically relevant (i.e. have the ability to make MPs' or mayors' lives harder); in a similar fashion, having someone local appointed might only be an asset for incumbents only when these appointees possess regulatory power, distribute public goods or can overrule decisions of municipal actors. The latter possibility, especially, also suggests that scrutinizing how the interplay of partisan politics and the institutional context inhibit or incentivize patronage could also be a fruitful avenue of future research. Dual mandates or co-habitation (Papp, 2019; Dobos, 2021), for instance, might alter voters' expectations about behavioral localism.

I argue that voters' expectations about incumbent politicians is important both for empirical and normative reasons. On the other hand, it is unclear whether packing public institutions with locals has normatively desirable qualities. If politicians' primarily motivation for doing so includes the relative ease of subsequent monitoring of (and exerting political pressure on) public servants, this is obviously harmful for the independence of public administration and for democratic societies as a whole. Contrarily, if appointing local employees increases the quality of services provided to citizens, the specific patterns of patronage explored in this article are not only beneficial for incumbents, but also improve the lives of everyday people.

4 Neighbors with Benefits: How Politicians' Local Ties Generate Positive Externalities

If he had not settled there, would not have been able to keep it. Because, if one is on the spot, disorders are seen as they spring up, and one can quickly remedy them; but if one is not at hand, they are heard of only when they are great, and then one can no longer remedy them.

Niccolò Machiavelli: The Prince

Politicians' local ties are generally understood by the literature as valuable resources. Homegrown candidates are disproportionately favored by the electorate, a phenomenon commonly known as friends-and-neighbors voting (Górecki et al., 2022; Put, 2021; Panagopoulos et al., 2017). Candidates' localness serves as a cue for voters about their constituency service orientation, policy representation, accountability or willingness to distribute public goods (Kovarek, 2022; Campbell et al., 2019; Jankowski, 2016). Mayors raised and embedded in the community they lead enjoy greater trust by their tax base and consequently are able to increase tax enforcement, making fiscal extraction more efficient (Paci, 2022). However, we know little about whether *bureaucrats* also use politicians' local roots as heuristics about their likely behavior. Information asymmetries between political principals and agents (Gailmard & Patty, 2012) might incentivize civil servants to make inferences about monitoring based on personal characteristics of incumbent office-holders.

How do bureaucrats prioritize citizen queries when multitasking makes political oversight inefficient? I argue that civil servants use elected officials' local ties as heuristics for monitoring. In other words, reported problems that are geographically proximate to incumbent politicians' domiciles are perceived by bureaucrats to be more salient for their principals. This suggests that public employees will provide a prompt response to queries that concern mayors' immediate vicinity and put other reported problems that are less visible for incumbents on the back burner.

In this article, I seek to make two contributions. First, I develop a theoretical account of elected politicians' place of residence carrying benefits to neighbors: locals witness prompt repairs and well-maintained public spaces as a consequence of heightened scrutiny from bureaucrats' side. In what follows, I make use of a novel dataset to empirically show how limited bureaucratic oversight incentivizes public servants to prioritize problem reports that are in the proximity of mayors' domicile.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The following section reviews recent literature on bureaucratic oversight and touches upon the asymmetric information characterizing tasks such as handling citizen queries. Against this backdrop, I theorize that problems reported in politicians' immediate vicinity will be prioritized, effectively creating positive externalities for citizens residing near mayors' domiciles. The subsequent section discusses the variables and methods used, whereas the fourth section presents the results. The last section concludes, elaborating on generalizability and showcasing avenues for future research.

4.1 Externalities of limited bureaucratic oversight

Public goods allocation is one of the areas where the interplay of institutions and political actors is crucial: questions such as "who gets what, when and how" (Lasswell, 1936) are not entirely up to elected politicians to decide. Whereas local issues, pertaining to neighborhoods or particular streets, remain politically relevant in Hungary and elsewhere – as demonstrated by a relatively high number of local referenda and NIMBY movements (Pomarański, 2018; A. Tóth, 2012) – it would be unreasonable to expect that politicians are personally involved in resolving street-level problems. These are instead taken care of by public servants, to whom such problems are addressed. If handled professionally and in a swift manner, most of these issues would never reach the plate of a mayor or an MP.

Nevertheless, the provision of public goods is known to be influenced by the extent to which politicians are embedded into local networks, religious and other solidary groups (Tsai, 2007). Politicians and state officials have more or less incentives to improve local services, depending on how deeply they are integrated into the lives of settlements; close-knit local networks, when encompassing and embedding, might improve the quality of governance locally.

In a similar fashion, I hypothesize in this paper that when it comes to everyday issues, such as problems related to roads, waste management, vandalism or accessibility, the geographical proximity of these problems to politicians is associated with more attention and quicker response speed from bureaucrats. This is because bureaucratic oversight (Gulzar & Pasquale, 2017; Brierley, 2020; Raffler, 2022) is limited: elected officials expect public servants to address all requests of citizens, but information asymmetry largely prevents them incumbents to monitor bureaucrat–citizen exchanges. Politicians, after all, are not CC-d to responses of town hall or government office employees, and the sheer number of (newly) reported problems makes it impossible to provide personal guidance with respect to priorities.

To quote Pepinsky et al. (2017, 254), multitasking for civil servants "generates a host of additional incentive problems (...) Principals might be able to effectively measure only one of the many tasks, inducing agents to neglect the other dimensions of their job". In the context of mayor-bureaucrat relations in Hungary, this suggests that when public servants in town halls and government offices get flooded with a multitude of reports, they will focus on addressing (or resolving) those where monitoring is easy and effortless for their political principals. Elected leaders of cities and towns are too busy to personally deal with online reports,¹ which would suggest that bureaucrats can simply ignore all of them.

It costs nothing for mayors, however, to closely follow the developments when problems are reported in their own neighborhood: assuming politicians spend at least some time at their registered addresses,² they are likely to be more up-to-date about nearby anomalies,

¹According to the latest Hungarian wave of the POLLEADER survey, which interviewed mayors of municipalities over 10,000 people – which demographically largely corresponds to the sample used in this study –, incumbents, on average, reported spending 64 hours a week with tasks related to their office (Heinelt et al., 2018).

²The Electoral Law in Hungary does not specify any requirement for mayors or MPs to reside at the place they contest or represent. Consequently, politicians have no incentive to deceive voters or authorities by registering "fake" addresses. Living in a municipality without registration would also disenfranchise mayors,

compared to problems reported in more distant corners of their municipality. One can expect that the personal importance of a particular reported problem increases mayors' incentive to motivate public servants. Bureaucrats could then rightfully assume that problems in politicians' immediate vicinity – at the street or in the neighborhood where they live – might end up becoming more salient; consequently, it is reasonable to assume that public servants will start by replying to these reports.

This is because politicians themselves might notice these problems (e.g. drive over a pothole) or obtain information about them relatively quickly (e.g. bump into their complaining neighbors). Fixing issues in politicians' neighborhoods (or at least calming down indignant locals) could potentially pay off for bureaucrats, especially in contexts where their supervisor/employer is an elected politician. Even if a particular bureaucrat is uninterested in maintaining a good relationship with the incumbent mayor or MP, their head of department and other, more senior civil servants would likely try to avoid getting summoned by an angry politician, who is outraged over a broken pipe flooding his driveway. While politicians' (geographically limited) oversight might have a direct effect (i.e. mayors holding low-level bureaucrats accountable for a pothole in their street), *perceptions* of such reckonings taking place may already be enough to shape the behavior of civil servants. After all, the scholarly literature suggests that for bureaucrats the possibility that politicians "may take punitive action against them" serves as a key motivation to exert effort in their work (Gulzar & Pasquale, 2017, p. 164).

When such mechanisms are in place, politicians' local personal vote-earning attributes (PVEAs) (Shugart et al., 2005) become heuristics about *positive externalities* (Meade, 1952; Pigou, 2002). Social benefits incur to third parties: politicians' neighbors witness prompt repairs and better chances of problems getting fixed in their vicinity.³ Testing whether neighbors are aware of these externalities and if this knowledge eventually shapes their voting calculus is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, conventional wisdom in Hungary

deprive them from resident perks such as free parking, or deny their children from enrolling to local K-12 schools.

³Note that this assumption does not exclude the possibility that being the neighbor of a politician might also have *negative externalities*. For instance, it is possible that neighbors will be bothered by the presence of loud (or violent) protesters from time-to-time in front of the incumbent's domicile. In case a local MP holds an important cabinet position, neighbors might also face restrictions with respect to parking and driving in their immediate surroundings.

would posit that politicians disproportionately channel public funds to infrastructural projects in the immediate surroundings of their domicile (see Figure 4.1 for an illustrative example).

In the Hungarian context, take the example of Miskolc's Vice Mayor, Marcell Zsiga, a politician and former MP of Fidesz. Just weeks after he purchased a new house in Miskolc's leafy suburbs, the local government allocated 7 Million HUF (approx. 19,500 EUR) to asphalt the dirt road leading to Zsiga's new home. Furthermore, the municipality decided to pave the road only till it reaches the politician's house; meaning positive externalities of Zsiga's local presence had a heterogenous effect, making some of his immediate neighbors happier and leaving others with an unpaved road in front of their porch (origo.hu, 2012).

Figure 4.1: Satirical poster of Two-Tailed Dog Party, depicting the joke party's chairman. The text reads "I will get the road fixed in front of my house!" Source: MKKP (2019)



reportedly ordered a number of changes, such as the reprogramming of traffic lights, the elimination of certain bus lanes and dismantling particular traffic surveillance cameras, in order to shorten the time it took for him to commute from his home (one of Budapest's northernmost suburbs) to the centrally located Town Hall by car (HVG, 2017). An NGO named Hungarian Transport Club even published a map, listing these seemingly unrelated changes, which together comprise the "Tarlós corridor". Now, we do not know if Tarlós had a home advantage in Óbuda, his home district; but voters were likely aware that reelecting their incumbent neighbor would also mean that transport management will keep prioritizing drivers' needs over those of mass transit, at least when it comes to the route leading from Óbuda to downtown Budapest. This probably benefitted some and harmed others, meaning Mayor Tarlós' shortened commute time likely incurred both positive and negative externalities.

4.1.1 Capturing externalities using street-level data

I test the proposition whether the proximity to a mayor's domicile entails positive externalities in public service delivery by using data obtained from a website aggregating problem reports, **jarokelo.hu**. Operated by volunteers, the NGO-run site receives submissions from citizens, who request that local authorities address vexing problems pertaining to public spaces, mass transit or commercial areas. The platform incentivizes people to file a report whenever they encounter something that needs fixing, such as a mislabelled sign, a broken elevator or a pothole. Volunteers then subsequently identify the responsible authority (municipality, state, private company, etc.) and forward the report to them. When authorities respond, their answer is displayed below the report; further questions or comments can be added by the original submitter, as well as other site users. According to the 2013/CVXV Law on complaints and announcements of public interest, municipalities and state authorities are obliged to provide a response to citizens who submit a written notice within a maximum of 30 days. Site administrators offer some extra leeway, providing authorities a maximum of 40 days to submit a response. Communication between site users and the responsible authority continues until a **jarokelo.hu** administrator categorizes the problem as *solved* or $unresolved.^4$

These exchanges likely take place without politicians' involvement, or even knowledge. Most of these problems are low-key, hence get no coverage in national or even local media. Fixing them might involve the allocation of fiscal resources; accordingly, it could reach the desk of those in elected office, but most politicians would not organize an event or hold a speech over a fixed pothole or a reinstated bike rack. This suggests differences in speed (or likelihood of something getting fixed) are to be explained by public servants' priorities – and the incentives inefficient bureaucratic oversight generates for them. Prioritizing issues which have a higher chance of being noticed by politicians is certainly rational. As Brierley (2020, p. 213) puts it, "bureaucrats who want to advance in their careers (...) may have to satisfy the demands of politicians". Fearing retribution (from their supervisors) or doing a favor (to powerful incumbents), I hypothesize that when two problems are reported on the same day, a bureaucrat would, *ceteris paribus*, start by replying to the one submitted closer to the incumbent politician's place of residence.⁵

This paper tests this conjecture for mayors: that is, whether proximity to a mayor's place of residence yields quicker responses from public officials and/or increases the likelihood of a problem getting fixed. From the perspective of bureaucrats' incentives, mayors have discretionary powers to appoint and dismiss notaries, who are, in turn, employers of town hall officials and manage the "administrative machinery" (Sootla & Grau, 2005). Brierley (2020) demonstrates that when politicians are perceived to possess more discretionary control, civil servants under their oversight are more willing to yield to pressure coming from politicians to engage in wrongdoings or policy distortions. In the Hungarian context, this points to studying bureaucrats' relationship with mayors, as the latter have "witnessed the increase of their powers vis-á-vis councils and other local actors since 2010" (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022,

⁴The label "unresolved" is used to characterize reports that have received an official response from authorities, nevertheless it did not help to eliminate or fix the problem. Reports between their submission and before receiving an answer get assigned to another category, namely "awaiting response". According to legal regulations, local authorities can take up to 30 days to address a query. If they fail to get back to submission even after a month, jarokelo.hu volunteers often times try to draw wider attention to the problem, writing short blog pieces about the report or posting it to social media.

⁵The mechanisms of "fear" and "offering favors" leave it open why *mayors* might get furious by unresolved or unanswered problem reports in their neighborhood. They might have selfish reasons (i.e. being personal users of a particular public infrastructure, which is currently out of order); or the social networks of the locality might be pressuring them, even if mayor are not personally affected (i.e. a bike path not used by politicians, only by their neighbors).

p. 384).⁶

International typologies classify Hungarian mayors as "strong" ones, who are "legally and in actuality in full charge of all executive functions" (Heinelt & Hlepas, 2006; Mouritzen & Svara, 2002, p. 55). Consequently, oversight is more direct: if public servants fear that they will face sanctions from elected politicians, their worries are likely to be associated with mayors' direct influence over hiring and firing policies, as well as their discretionary powers. As much as bureaucratic oversight tools are originally designed to limit shirking (Grindle, 1997), they might also be abused by politicians, who can "interfer[e] in promotion decisions, dock bonuses and administratively sidelin[e] noncompliant bureaucrats" (Brierley, 2020, p. 221). Contrarily, MPs' informal powers might overshadow those of mayors, but they lack the necessary discretionary tools to sanction those working in, say, government offices or state-owned companies.

Capturing distance from mayors' addresses is also a more conservative test of my theory than using a similar variable for MPs: in Hungary, as well as in Europe in general, the vast majority of mayors live in the municipality they lead (Steyvers & Reynaert, 2006). Contrarily, it is far more common for MPs to be parachutists in their single-member district (SMD); and, even if the MP is home-grown, SMDs usually consist of multiple settlements, inevitably meaning that some will have no incumbents who live locally. Consequently, the variance is expected to be smaller when using data on mayors. Moreover, relationships potentially uncovered are likely to be stronger when *several* incumbents live at great distances from reported issues.

In short, I expect an inverse relationship between distance (measured in kilometers) and response speed or chances of finding a solution to a reported problem:

Hypothesis 11 (H_1) : The shorter the distance between the location of a reported problem and the mayor's place of residence is, the less time will it take for local authorities to provide an answer.

Hypothesis 12 (H_2) : The shorter the distance between the location of a reported problem and the mayor's place of residence is, the more likely a reported problem will be resolved.

⁶Notaries, for instance, were previously employed by councils, not mayors; following this legislative change, "loyalty to mayors have become quintessential for notaries" (Dobos & Papp, 2017, p. 70–71).

4.2 Data and Methods

The study employs a novel dataset, including a large number (N = 25,733) of problem reports, submitted to local authorities in Hungary between 12 October 2014 and 13 October 2019. Each row corresponds with a unique issue report, as displayed on jarokelo.hu, a map based website where locals can submit problems and subsequently interact with responsible authorities in a forum-like interface. Well-known international predecessors of jarokelo.hu include *DansMaRue* (Paris), *FixMyStreet* (London) or *FiksGataMi* (Norway). Although these platforms differ in their initiations and the resources available to them,⁷ they share the same general idea: to overcome the obstacle of not knowing which authority to report a particular problem to. Hence volunteers' work, linking submissions to responsible state or municipal authorities, is essential for resolving problems.

This also holds true in the Hungarian context, where subnational government consist of local governments at the level of communities (villages, towns, cities and districts of the capital), autonomous governments of 19 counties, as well as the metropolitan self-government of Budapest, constituting a second level of the local government system in the capital – all of which are in a non-hierarchical relationship with each other (Soós & Kákai, 2010, 532–533).

Figure 4.2: Time series trends in submitting problem reports.



The dataset contains further variables, such as the number of uploaded images associated with each report, whether the report was eventually resolved or not, as well as the time

⁷ DansMaRue was created and run by the city administration, relying on public servants of the Paris Town Hall, whereas FixMyStreet and FiksGataMi are examples of open-source projects maintained by volunteers.

it took for local authorities to respond to each submission. Table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics for the main variables of interest of this study. It also speaks of municipalities fulfilling their legal obligations, as the maximum time elapsed until receiving (a first) answer is 29.5 days. Moreover, the dataset suggests that all reports are answered, given the absence of missing values for *time elapsed (days)*.

Figure 4.2 shows the longitudinal trends of submissions. Reporting the *same* problem again is only permitted if it has been unresolved for one full year. Consequently, a high number of reports on a particular day is never indicative of the same problem report being submitted multiple times. Sensible public anger over salient problems would rather manifest in different individuals commenting under the same report.

Originally all coded as 'Budapest', reports from the capital were further assigned to their respective districts (23 in total), as each district elects its own local government. Consequently, reported issues are also handled by staff of district town halls. For this, I relied on ZIP codes, which uniquely identify Budapest districts (as opposed to street names). Figures 4.3 and 4.4 denote municipalities and capital districts, respectively, with corresponding jarokelo.hu reports.

The main predictor of the study, capturing the physical closeness of reports to mayors' domicile, is a result of a separate data collection effort. Unlike countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany or Malta (Jankowski, 2016; Arzheimer & Evans, 2014), Hungarian ballots do not include information on candidates' place of residence, neither for municipal, nor for general elections. Consequently, mayors' addresses were collected by the author, consulting various online sources, such as local newspapers, parliamentary questions and public CVs. Mayors, before their tenure or *ex officio*, are also frequently appointed as board members of municipal companies and inter-municipal co-operations. For this reason, balance sheets, founding charters or minutes of such companies also served as useful sources of information. Using the Google Maps API and harnessing the power of R packages geodist and ggmap (Padgham & Sumner, 2021; Kahle & Wickham, 2013), I assigned geo-coordinates to mayors' addresses, and subsequently calculated the distances between these domiciles and every problem, for which longitude and latitude values were included in the jarokelo.hu dataset.⁸

⁸A handful of municipality-owned companies in the capital are under Budapest's direct ownership, with

Information on mayors' gender, partisanship and previous political experience was obtained from a dataset complementing the findings of the Political Leaders in European Cities (POLLEADER) survey (Heinelt et al., 2018), collected and coded by graduate student interns of the Hungarian Academy of Science in 2015.

For models presented in Table 4.4, the original data was collapsed, and averages were calculated for each municipality for the key variable of interest, *time elapsed (days)*. This was subsequently accompanied by municipality-level controls, such as local tax and business tax revenues, as well as all municipal revenues for a given budget year (measured in billions of HUF). These figures were collected from the National Regional Development and Territorial Information System (*Országos Területfejlesztési és Területrendezési Információs Rendszer*, TEIR). Furthermore, controls were added for population, taken from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), and for Budapest (i.e. a dichotomous variable capturing whether the municipality is a district of the capital or not).

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of issue reports during the 2014–2019 mayoral cycle based on jarokelo.hu data. Source: The author's own calculation.

Variable	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
time elapsed (days)	25,733	1.94	2.51	0	29.43
resolved	25,733	0.69	0.46	0	1
images	25,733	3.26	3.01	1	95
days until local elections	25,733	682.17	500.80	1	1,827
distance (km)	25,733	10.07	22.36	0.03	202.74

their board members appointed and budgets approved by the Budapest Metropolitan Assembly. For reports with any of these companies as the responsible local authority, the *distance* (km) variable is calculated using the address of Mayor of Budapest, as – irrespective of the reported problems' location – bureaucrats employed by such companies respond to Budapest's metropolitan self-government, not to the mayor of the respective district.

Figure 4.3: Settlements with issue reports on jarokelo.hu, submitted between 2014–2019. Lighter shades of blue indicate municipalities with higher numbers of problem reports.



Figure 4.4: Issue reports from Budapest and neighboring municipalities on jarokelo.hu, submitted between 2014–2019. Larger circles indicate districts with higher numbers of problem reports.



The dataset used for analysis includes 40 municipalities. This is after dropping less than 0.4% of all observations, to filter out five settlements with < 10,000 inhabitants. With an average population of 4832, these places markedly differ from the more urban municipalities forming the bulk of sample. Restricting analysis to this subset is customary among scholars of municipal politics in Hungary (Collini, 2021; Kovarek & Littvay, 2022). Party politics plays a smaller role in local governments with less than 10,000 inhabitants, where political competition is often limited and characterized by entrenched incumbents and independent mayors (Soós & Kákai, 2010). In fact, in one of these five localities (Martonvásár), the mayoral seat has been uncontested both in 2014 and 2019, resulting in a Fidesz nominee securing 100% of votes on two occasions. Smaller municipalities also vote in a plurality-at-large (MNTV) system, unlike citizens of more populous settlements.

This choice is furthermore informed by data availability constraints: variables capturing mayors' incumbency, partisanship and past political experience are only available for municipalities with a population of > 10,000 in the POLLEADER companion dataset. Lastly, small-town administrative staff is less likely to be aware of legal obligations to provide answers for reports in a timely fashion (as opposed to employees at cities or capital districts, who receive hundreds of such requests each week). In the aforementioned five settlements, the number of website users is also few – in some villages, there are literally one or two individuals behind a dozen submissions, which makes it harder to believe that reports in these localities are representative of local grievances.

4.3 Results

To test whether problems, reported in the immediate vicinity of mayors, received distinguished attention from bureaucrats at municipal and government offices, I fitted an OLS model with time elapsed (measured in days) between reporting an issue and getting a response as the dependent variable, predicted by how far mayors live from the specific problem (my main explanatory variable of interest), as well as other issue report characteristics, such as the number of images uploaded, whether the authority responsible for fixing the problem is the municipality or a state agency, as well as a variable controlling for political budget cycle

Dependent Variable:	tir	time elapsed (days)		
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Variables				
$distance \ (km)$	0.002^{*}	0.002*	0.002*	
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	
municipal issue	0.038	0.117	0.115	
	(0.102)	(0.093)	(0.098)	
stateissue	0.680***	0.603**	0.602**	
	(0.172)	(0.171)	(0.171)	
$number\ of\ images$	0.104***	0.074^{***}	0.074^{***}	
	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.010)	
$days \ until \ local \ elections$		-0.0021***	-0.0021***	
		(0.0001)	(0.0001)	
$distance~(km) \times municipal~issue$			0.0001	
			(0.0007)	
Fixed-effects				
municipality	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Controls				
Type of problem	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Fit statistics				
Observations	25,691	25,691	25,691	
R^2	0.06	0.22	0.22	
Within \mathbb{R}^2	0.04	0.19	0.19	

Table 4.2: The effect of reported problems' distance from the mayor's residence on response speed of local authorities. The author's own calculation.

 $Clustered \ (municipality) \ standard-errors \ in \ parentheses$

Signif. Codes: ***: 0.001, **: 0.01, *: 0.05

effects (days left until the next local election – see Lee & Min, 2021; Bojar, 2017). The model uses municipality fixed effects, accounting for variation between settlements. Models (1), (2) and (3) also include a vector of dummy variables, used as controls for the type of problems, such as "graffiti", "pothole", "parking", "trash" or "public transport". All issues were coded as belonging to one of these report categories by volunteers of jarokelo.hu.

As is visible in Table 4.2, distance is positively associated with the number of days that pass between reporting a problem and receiving an answer from authorities. In other words, public servants – whether they are town hall or government office employees – on average tend to respond more quickly to queries which concern the immediate surroundings of incumbent mayors. I hypothesize this is due to heightened attention for proximate problem reports from bureaucrats' side. Mayors, even if their schedule is considerably less busy than, say, that of MPs or cabinet members, most likely have no capacity to check jarokelo.hu submissions on a daily (or even weekly) basis. Furthermore, many of these issues might only bother a handful of individuals; in other words, the respective constituency (and potential electoral gains associated with it) is potentially fairly limited. If mayors aim to maximize votes, they are better off monitoring public sentiment via focusing on public hearings, Facebook groups with membership restricted to residents of the particular locality or local referendum initiatives. Consequently, variance in time elapsed is most likely explained by the behavior of *public servants*, not *elected politicians*.

Figure 4.5 provides a visual representation of the same association. Selecting 500 meters as an arbitrary threshold to classify reported problems as *close* to mayors' registered addresses, the Kaplan-Meier curve suggests that issues located just next to a mayor's domicile are answered relatively promptly, often on the same day, whereas reports pertaining to issues in more distant locations sometimes have to wait 20 to 30 days to get a response from authorities.⁹ The yellow line suggests that only reports which concern neighborhoods not adjacent to a mayor's place of residence have to wait more than two weeks for a response.

Table 4.3 suggests that the 'mayor-problem distance' only predicts response speed of local authorities, but not whether the reported problem will eventually get fixed or not. The main independent variable fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance in

⁹Using other specifications, such as 1 km as the cutoff, leaves the results unchanged.

Figure 4.5: Kaplan-Meier survival times curves for receiving the first answer from authorities. Problems are grouped based on whether they were reported in the immediate vicinity (max. 500 meters) of mayors' domiciles or not.



Distance from mayor's address – More than 500m – Less than 500m

Models (1), (2) and (3), and the direction is contrary to my theoretical expectations, too.

What could explain these different results obtained for these two related dependent variables (*time elapsed* and *resolved*)? I conjecture that providing locals with a speedy response is relatively inexpensive for bureaucrats: in most cases, it does not consist of more than acknowledging the receipt of the report and assuring submitters than a particular local authority is doing its best to fix it. When confronted with multiple reports per day (which is indeed the case, at least in cities and more populous districts of Budapest), government/municipality employees are assumed to be indifferent to prioritizing one report over another, as they lack any meaningful incentives for doing so.

Now, imagine that a report is submitted in the immediate vicinity of the mayor. Whereas it still costs effectively nothing to public servants to file that report, provide a brief response to **jarokelo.hu** and potentially forward it to a colleague or department better-suited to deal with it, suddenly some incentives might emerge. Bureaucrats might want to do a favor for mayors, especially if the nature of the problem would personally affect the locality's political leader. They might also be pressured by their supervisors or other high-level bureaucrats, instructed by their subordinates to prioritize accordingly. Bureaucrats are known to be motivated by potential career advancement and securing employment in desirable locations, and they are willing to do favors to politicians when non-compliance would undermine either of these goals: enraging the mayor could lead to written warning or dismissal (Brierley, 2020). Given the comparatively low levels of geographic mobility of the Hungarian society (Molnár et al., 2011, pp. 38–39), dismissal or transfer could effectively end many civil servants' career.¹⁰ Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that if mayors, notaries or senior civil servants ask street-level bureaucrats to speed up resolving issues which are of particular (personal) interest for themselves, they would hardly say no.

Contrarily, to *actually resolve* a problem, local authorities might need considerable resources. A budget needs to be allocated, blue collar state/municipal employees needs to be dispatched, traffic has to be restricted. The absence of statistically significant coefficients associated with *distance* (km) suggests that it is beyond the pay grade of civil servants to

¹⁰Either because they would refuse to commute, or due to the lack of alternative municipal offices, where bureaucrats could find a job under the supervision of a new principal, i.e. a different politician.

Dependent Variable:		Resolved	
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)
Variables			
$distance \ (km)$	0.001	0.001	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
municipal issue	0.329***	0.329***	0.321***
	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.072)
state issue	-0.195	-0.195	-0.199
	(0.130)	(0.129)	(0.129)
$number\ of\ images$	-0.027***	-0.027***	-0.027***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
$days\ until\ local\ elections$		-0.000003	-0.000003
		(0.00005)	(0.00005)
$distance~(km) \times municipal~issue$			0.001
			(0.002)
Fixed-effects			
municipality	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls			
Type of problem	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics			
Observations	25,691	25,691	25,691
Squared Correlation	0.04	0.04	0.04
Pseudo \mathbb{R}^2	0.03	0.03	0.03
BIC	31,349.57	31,359.71	31,369.62

Table 4.3: The (non-)effect of reported problems' distance from the mayor's residence on probability of issues being fixed. The author's own calculation.

Clustered (municipality) standard-errors in parentheses

Signif. Codes: ***: 0.001, **: 0.01, *: 0.05

prioritize fixing anomalies in mayors' backyards.

This makes sense theoretically: whereas all bureaucrats share the incentives for responding more quickly to someone reporting a problem in the mayor's neighborhood, *solving* the problem requires municipal or state resources. To influence the allocation of municipal resources, mayors need the majority of councillors for passing the budget, which is especially challenging when a local government is characterized by co-habitation. Furthermore, small-scale development projects are often financed by councillors' personal budgets, which councillors can decide how to spend within their electoral district. When the responsible authority is a government institution or a state-owned public company, it has even less incentives for prioritizing issues that are dear to mayors.

Lastly, the controls behave largely as expected. The variable capturing political business cycles (*days until local elections*) is negatively related to the dependent variable in Table 4.2, suggesting that the closer a problem is reported to 13 October 2019, the faster citizens receive a response. That is, as Election Day approaches, local authorities are prompter in filing a request. The negative relationship between the *number of images* and getting a speedy response from authorities or the likelihood of a reported problem getting resolved (Tables 4.2–4.3) demonstrates reverse causality. The increasing number of images potentially signals the frustration of locals, who try to get the ball rolling upon witnessing the idleness of municipal or state authorities.

As demonstrated by Table 4.4, this response speed of local authorities also shapes political outcomes: the same *time elapsed* variable, used in the previous model, is inversely related to mayors' vote share at the 2019 local elections.¹¹ The effect is substantive: increasing a municipality's average response speed just by one day decreases the incumbent's vote share by nearly 3.5%, when controlling for mayors' political experience and settlement characteristics.

This notable effect size is partly explained by the composition of the sample: urban, more populous areas tend to be more volatile in their voting behavior in Hungary (Soós & Kákai,

¹¹Whereas we have good reason to believe that faster response speed is positively associated with the personal vote (Cain et al., 1987), not necessarily the overall vote share, it is impossible to estimate the former in the context subnational elections in Hungary. Citizens only cast votes to party lists when electing *county* assemblies, and even that ballot is not available for those living in 'cities with county rank' – urban, more populous settlements from where most reports come in this dataset. Consequently, there is no available direct measure of party support at the municipal level: mayors and councillors alike are elected in a FPTP system.

	Dependen	t variable:	
	Vote share in 2019 local elections		
	(1)	(2)	
$ime\ elapsed\ (days)$	-3.73*	-3.49^{*}	
	(1.60)	(1.46)	
Budapest	-1.87	-1.54	
	(2.64)	(2.42)	
female	-6.22	-5.80	
	(5.18)	(4.71)	
$Fidesz\ mayor$	-8.10^{*}	-6.95	
	(3.72)	(3.40)	
jears as mayor	-0.08	0.09	
	(0.25)	(0.24)	
jears as MP	0.36	0.22	
	(0.22)	(0.21)	
$ote\ share\ in\ 2014$	0.48**	0.51***	
	(0.15)	(0.13)	
opulation		0.07^{*}	
		(0.02)	
$ocal\ tax\ revenues$		0.04	
		(0.04)	
Constant	40.57***	30.78**	
	(9.76)	(9.55)	
Observations	34	34	
\mathbb{R}^2	0.61	0.70	
Adjusted \mathbb{R}^2	0.50	0.59	
Residual Std. Error	$6.64 \; ({\rm df}=26)$	$6.01 \; ({ m df} = 2)$	
^r Statistic	5.80^{***} (df = 7; 26)	6.36^{***} (df =	

Table 4.4: Predicting incumbent mayors' vote share with the number of days between reporting an issue and receiving an answer from authorities. The author's own calculation.

2010). I am measured in my interpretation of my findings, as it might be a spurious result owed to endogenous factors.¹² As Pepinsky et al. (2017, 252) aptly put it: "bureaucratic structures are both endogenous and highly correlated with other potential sources of economic performance. Identifying the causal effects of bureaucracies (...) is a hard problem".

One could argue that elapsed time between reports submitted and receiving a reply might mask heterogeneity in resources possessed by municipalities: better-off local governments could hire a larger staff or more competent public servants and they might also dispose over a larger budget that could potentially speed up fixing problems which are other otherwise expensive to address. To guard against estimates of *time elapsed (days)* picking up the effect of municipalities' financial status, Model (2) employs a control variable for local tax revenues. Table A.1 in the Appendix shows that this relationship remains statistically significant (and produces remarkably similar effect sizes) when using alternative specifications capturing a municipality's wealth by all revenues, or only business tax.¹³

The variable capturing incumbent mayors' vote share in 2014 – their electoral result at the previous local election – adds another powerful control. Furthermore, models in Table 4.4 also include a dummy variable for mayors' partisanship, capturing if they were nominated by Fidesz. The negative coefficient associated with this variable is in line with theoretical expectations: voters used the 2019 municipal election to punish the ruling party for an explosive sex scandal, which broke out just nine days before the election (Kovarek & Littvay, 2022). As it involved a high-profile Fidesz mayor, the opposition could capitalize on the topic in Budapest districts and county seats (i.e. the vast majority of settlements in our sample). The persistence of the effect associated with response speed even after controlling for partisanship (Fidesz) and the ideological leaning of the municipality (vote share in 2014) suggests an accountability mechanism blind to political constellations.

¹²Reverse causality is a possibility I cannot rule out: response speed of bureaucrats might be driven by mayors' re-election concerns. That is, swing seats (municipalities where political competition is neck and neck) might incentivize incumbents to pay more attention to citizen submissions and the way bureaucrats handle them. As elected leaders can still only easily monitor problems that are geographically proximate to their domiciles, this would not change the underlying mechanism proposed earlier in this article. However, in this case bureaucratic oversight would not be motivated by self-interest or social networks, but by accountability.

 $^{^{13}}$ The most significant source of revenue for local governments is the business tax, hovering around 10% of all local revenues. The same figure is 1–5% for vehicle tax and 2.6% for parking fees in municipalities operating parking zones, but this share is substantially higher (6.5%) for Budapest districts. For a few municipalities, tourism tax provides more than 10% of their total revenue (Kovács, 2020).

Results in Table 4.4 also speak to the growing literature on misattribution of responsibility (Marsh & Tilley, 2010; Hobolt et al., 2013). Vote shares of incumbents are higher at municipalities where bureaucrats respond to citizens more promptly, even though most of the reported problems are too minor and triffing for mayors to vindicate their direct intervention (or even getting briefed about them). In this regard, running a tight ship pays off electorally to mayors, despite elected office-holders' involvement in day-to-day managing of responding citizen queries is likely to be minimal. Bureaucrats are getting the job done, but mayors harvest the benefits.

4.4 Conclusion

Politicians assume that citizens reward prompt responses from authorities. Replying to problem reports, however, is neither the most salient, nor the most intellectually stimulating aspect of public servants' job. Bureaucrats would sometimes rather put these reports on the back burner, and the sheer number of reports and newly arising problems waiting to be fixed even in mid-sized cities makes it impossible for incumbents to closely monitor bureaucrat behavior.

Oversight, however, is more likely for issues that elected officials themselves stumble upon. Hoping to score some points with mayors, or fearing punishment, public servants prioritize responding to reports which deal with problems in the neighborhood of the mayor's domicile. Nonetheless, when it comes to *actually* fixing a problem in the mayor's street (not just assuring citizens that someone is "working on it"), bureaucrats' priorities are insufficient. I do not detect higher likelihoods of issues getting resolved in mayors' immediate vicinity, hinting at the possibility that priorities for *resource-allocation* are beyond bureaucrats' pay grade and necessitates the coordination of multiple actors.¹⁴

This study joins other recent papers seeking to explain factors shaping local leaders' stability and their political capital. Others have shown how electoral clientelism and coercion (Mares & Young, 2018, 2019b), changes made to local government regulations designed to

¹⁴Mayors need a majority in city councils, as they cannot pass a budget without enough votes from councillors. They might also need support from MPs or county assembly representatives (to secure funds for renovations and fixes) or elected leaders of neighboring settlements (to solve a problem in the framework of an inter-municipal cooperation).

reduce oversight (Jakli & Stenberg, 2021), EU structural funds (Papp, 2019) or the public work scheme (Szikra, 2014) boost Fidesz mayors' re-election chances and vote share. In this regard, these findings also contribute to a vibrant literature that explores municipal-level determinants of Hungary's de-democratization (Szombati, 2021).

A few caveats are in order. The data used for the analysis almost exclusively consists of urban, more populous municipalities, where reporting and problem–aggregating websites are arguably more needed. Whether such dynamics also characterize smaller towns or villages is yet to be explored. One could hypothesize that in smaller localities, distance effects are even more pronounced, similarly to politicians' home area advantage (Disarro et al., 2007; Devine & Kopko, 2016). Alternatively, the mechanisms explored in this article might be entirely absent in villages: instead of submitting an a report online, locals might rather personally confront mayors (or civil servants) about potholes or broken playground elements. Future research could update the theoretical framework of this paper by conducting case studies in less populous localities, as smaller cities are generally understudied in the literature (Kumar & Stenberg, 2022).

Readers should also note another important limitation of this study: the self-selected nature of the dataset. Individuals without a phone or computer are unable to submit reports; furthermore, jarokelo.hu is likely used by those with less political capital to reach local authorities. Findings thus might not be indicative of public servants' priorities or behavior when more influential, well-networked citizens seek remedies for problems at the local level. This also means that compared to bureaucrats studied by a large chunk of the literature on service delivery (Gulzar & Pasquale, 2017; Frey & Santarrosa, 2022), these civil servants interact with middle-class individuals instead of marginalized or poor populations when corresponding with report submitters.

In relation to the literature on retrospective voting, the findings above also stress the importance of bureaucrats in helping elected politicians to deliver public goods – and to deliver them promptly. The results suggest that local authorities are more likely to respond in a timely manner for reports about problems in close proximity to mayors' residences. What motives drive these public servants (Harris et al., 2022), however, remains an open question in this chapter.

It is possible that some of them are looking for jobs in politics, as bureaucrats in polarized countries often times use their acquired political capital to join parties while in office (Frey & Santarrosa, 2022). Helping out mayors, especially in more populous, politically important cities, could open gates for party membership; their contextual knowledge might allow them to run for elected office locally in the near future. Alternatively, high turnover (Meyer-Sahling, 2006, 2008) might incentivize bureaucrats to "tie their fate" to a politician, expecting that once voters oust the incumbent, it will likely also entail their dismissal. In other words, even if public servants wish for a strictly non-political career, they potentially have plenty of incentives to pay special attention to problems in mayors' immediate vicinity.

In documenting a positive relationship between response speed for problem reports and incumbent mayors' vote share, this study also provides insights for understanding how opposition politicians might be able to perform well despite the constraints of an illiberal state. Recent literature has shown how opposition-led cities were targeted by austerity measures during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary, Turkey and elsewhere. Fearing that mayors might emerge as potent challengers if they are able to realize good governance at the municipal level, autocratic governments attempted to "fiscally suffocate" such cities (Somer et al., 2021; Ádám & Csaba, 2022; Stenberg et al., 2022; Kovarek & Dobos, in press). Results suggest that focusing on responsiveness in day-to-day interactions between citizens and bureaucrats is an electorally rewarding form of public delivery, while also costing less than large-scale infrastructural projects, for which opposition mayors will anyway struggle to secure funds.

The knowledge of local context and embeddedness to the community is not only depicted as an asset for bureaucrats, but also as normatively desirable in the literature, as it contributes to better policy outcomes (Paci, 2022; Tsai, 2007; Do et al., 2017). This study, however, demonstrated that embeddedness to the local environment yields favoritism, especially when multitasking makes monitoring unlikely. Normatively, this suggests that rotation would incentivize public employees to prioritize reported problems following other criteria – which might align less with the preferences of their principals, but more with those of the public.

Lastly, the paper also holds some lessons about centralization and subsidiarity. Irrespective of model specifications, issues that required state institutions or state-owned companies to take action were resolved notably slower than reports with municipalities as addressees. This is hardly welcome news for Hungary, a country that recently underwent heavy centralization involving sectors such as education, mass transit, healthcare and waste management (Enyedi, 2018; Hajnal & Rosta, 2019). Future studies could look into differences in efficacy and response speed between municipal and state authorities in other national context, analyzing data from similar platforms.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis I have shown that descriptive localism – politicians' birthplace and residence – serves as a cue for citizens and bureaucrats alike. Voters expect homegrown candidates being more likely to 'bring home the bacon', i.e. to secure government funds from the central budget for their respective settlement. I also detect some evidence that clientelism is perceived to have the potential to offset the *absence* of local personal vote-earning attributes (PVEAs) (Shugart et al., 2005). When multitasking and low salience of reported problems makes monitoring unlikely, public servants prioritize responding to citizen queries that concern anomalies in the immediate vicinity of mayors' domiciles.

The first paper (Chapter 2) fielded conjoint and vignette experiments, to study population preferences for distinct forms of distributive politics, as well as their expectations about candidates' likely behavior once they are elected. The second paper (Chapter 3) investigated perceptions about shared local roots with incumbent MPs being valuable resources for job applicants who seek employment in the civil service. It also underscored respondents' preference for descriptive representation in the public sector: when asked to choose between profiles of notional employees, and dismiss either of them, the penalty associated with nonlocalness was similar in size to that of out-partisanship. Lastly, the third paper (Chapter 4) used data from an NGO-run website, where people can report problems encountered in their own municipality, and their submissions are subsequently forwarded to responsible authorities by volunteers (jarokelo.hu). Matching the data with incumbent mayors' registered addresses, I found that civil servants prioritize submissions proximate to the mayor's domicile. Further analyses demonstrated response speed is also positively associated with elected office-holders re-election chances, suggesting the presence of an accountability mechanism. Ultimately, the evidence from my analyses strengthens the arguments that suggest localness acts as a heuristic for public service delivery – would it manifest as receiving tangible collective goods or heightened attention and responsiveness from civil servants. Conceptualizing such benefits as positive externalities is nothing more than a necessary first step – more work is needed. It should invite further study about macro and micro-level determinants of the size and geographic extent of voter groups that benefit from shared spatial attachments with candidates or elected representatives. For this, moving beyond categorical operationalizations of localness and focusing on distance-decay effects (Gimpel et al., 2008; Arzheimer & Evans, 2014; Górecki & Marsh, 2014) could be a fruitful avenue of future research.

There is mounting empirical evidence buttressing the concerns that reversing Hungary's democratic backsliding will take not only the "attraction of European legal and cultural norms" (Greskovits, 2015, p. 35) and "sustained international scrutiny" (Jenne & Mudde, 2012, p. 153), but also a qualitative improvement of opposition politics (Solska, 2020; Krekó & Enyedi, 2018; Bernhard, 2021). Voters' preferences for politicians with local PVEAs, repeatedly demonstrated experimentally in this thesis, should inform the scholarly literature and opposition actors alike. Political parties juxtaposed to the Orbán government perceive only a fraction of the seats contestable and witness huge geographical imbalances in rank-and-file membership figures, to the extent that some of them have "functionally died out" at the local level (Jakli & Stenberg, 2021). This is hardly helpful when presenting a candidate with local roots, as opposed to parachutist ones, could already give them the edge in certain electoral districts.

Findings on favoritism by bureaucrats, demonstrated using observational data in Chapter 4, would be best corroborated by audit experiments. Previous research in Hungary used audit experiments to study the behavior of civil servants in municipal offices, testing whether Town Hall employees discriminate against Roma individuals when responding to information requests (Simonovits et al., 2021; Buda et al., 2022). A countrywide audit experiment in India also demonstrates how residents, who recently moved to a municipality, are ignored by incumbent politicians, who rather answer requests for constituency service that come from long-term residents (Gaikwad & Nellis, 2021). In particular, future work should combine

data from citizen complaint-aggregating websites with audit experiments on public servants.

The third paper has also provided empirical evidence in support of political business cycles in Hungary, using novel data. Findings highlight a significant negative association between the time it takes for local authorities to reply to problem reports and the number of days left until the next local election. As other national variants of citizen report submission platforms are available in a handful of European countries (Pak et al., 2017; De Filippi & Cocina, 2022), scholars of political business cycles should try to assemble appropriate open-source time series data from *FixMyStreet*, *DansMaRue* or *Odkaz pre starostu* to assess similar questions. Moreover, according to a recent constitutional amendment, municipal elections in Hungary will be held on the same day as the European Parliamentary elections, effectively shortening incumbent mayors' tenure.¹ This provides an excellent opportunity to study the elasticity of political business cycle effects. Future studies can look into the extent to which political actors or bureaucrats adjust their (strategic) vote-seeking behavior when suddenly confronted with abrupt institutional changes, imposed in a top-down fashion (Brinks et al., 2019; Cunha Silva, 2021).

What general lessons can we draw from the experience of Hungary? The dissertation purposefully choose phenomena such as patronage, clientelism and pork barrel, which are mainstays of politics in a wide array of national contexts (Braidwood, 2015; Mares & Young, 2019a; Oliveros & Schuster, 2018; Golden & Min, 2013). Nevertheless, despite the relevance of (at least some of) these linkages in contemporary democracies and electoral autocracies and the universality of friends-and-neighbors voting (Górecki & Marsh, 2014, p. 14), future studies should probe the intersections of distributive politics and macroinstitutional variables, shaping voters' expectations on representation and public service delivery in different countries.

The findings contribute to a vibrant literature that explores distinct aspects of behavioral localism. Future research would be well served to investigate other hypothesized mechanisms, either experimentally or using observational data. A logical next step could be eliciting voters? expectations concerning *accountability*, which remains hitherto untested by the literature

¹Whereas mayors will remain in office until October 2024, as originally planned, the amendment stipulates that their successors need to be elected already in May 2024.

providing evidence for the cue-based account. As Jankowski (2016, p. 74) put it, supporting politicians with local ties "can also be used by voters as a means of holding the local candidate accountable." Alternatively, matching cross-national data infrastructures on protest events (Raleigh et al., 2010; Kriesi & Oana, 2022) with elite survey data on incumbents' local PVEAs would provide some sort of measure of the extent to which elected office-holders are subject to more civil society pressures when their constituents are also their neighbors. A mechanism like this would explain why local MPs are more prone to break party unity (Tavits, 2009) and also why fiscal redistribution, particularly intergovernmental transfers, are influenced by protests at the local level (Archibong et al., 2022).

What I have found in Chapter 3 also has some important implications in terms of elitepublic gaps in political behavior (or lack thereof). As shown in Figure 3.8, respondents of the conjoint experiment perceive their behavior to be largely congruent with the expected behavior of real-world political appointees (specifically, district office heads). This may be viewed as offering some empirical evidence for claims of Kertzer (2022, p. 5), who finds that our discipline overstates the magnitude of elite-public gaps in decision-making, arguing that elites and masses "respond to experimental treatments in strikingly similar ways".

For the models presented in Chapters 2–4, I assembled data from various different sources to capture incumbent politicians' local PVEAs, and manipulated fictive job-seekers' local ties experimentally. What role *civil servants*' spatial attachments play in selective responsiveness and whether local embeddedness makes them more resilient or vulnerable vis-á-vis their political principals (Bhavnani & Lee, 2018; Hassan, 2020), however, remain open questions in this dissertation.

At a theoretical level, the analysis furthermore suggests that if politicians have discretion over "advertis[ing] their objective attributes" (Shugart et al., 2005, p. 439) (or hiding them, for that matter), candidates might also have the agency to alter voters' expectations regarding their behavior. Pioneers of the friends-and-neighbors voting literature treated various manifestations of descriptive localism as fixed and unchangeable (Key, 1950; Audemard & Gouard, 2020). For some local cues, such as surname or accent (Swalve & Leininger, 2022; Put et al., 2020, p. 3), this might still hold true. However, examples of carpetbagger candidates renting accommodation in their electoral district for the purposes of providing a home address, or downplaying their local roots in campaigns are abound (Arzheimer & Evans, 2014; Munis, 2021). As the link between altering your own local ties (as a politician), and subsequent changes in voters' expectations about representatives' likely behavior remains underexplored, I hope to see more scholars dissect the malleability of inferences, formulated on the basis of (innate) candidate attributes.

Finally, I contend that studying preferences for vote buying and other forms of clientelistic exchanges is important both for normative and empirical reasons. Distaste for candidates giving away money, food or wood among their voters, especially when such attitudes are measured experimentally by non-obtrusive survey instruments known for their ability to counter social desirability bias (Horiuchi et al., 2022; Myers et al., 2022), should give us some hope. If most respondents in Hungary, where 5–7 % of all voters are targeted with mayor favors and vote buying in general elections, disapprove electoral clientelism irrespective of their partisan preferences, it might come as welcome news to NGOs, volunteers and activists fighting for cleaner and fairer elections.

A Appendix: Descriptives and Robustness Checks

Figure A.1: Number of problem reports submitted to jarokelo.hu between 12 October 2014 and 13 October 2019 in each municipality.


Figure A.2: Distribution of *time elapsed* (*days*) across the entire database of problem report submitted to jarokelo.hu between 12 October 2014 and 13 October 2019.



Figure A.3: Distribution of *time elapsed* (*hours*) across the entire database of problem report submitted to jarokelo.hu between 12 October 2014 and 13 October 2019.



	Dependent variable:						
	Vote share in 2019 local elec						
	(1)	(2)					
$time\ elapsed\ (days)$	-3.50^{*}	-3.62^{*}					
	(1.46)	(1.44)					
Budapest	-1.49	-1.41					
	(2.42)	(2.38)					
female	-5.81	-5.72					
	(4.72)	(4.66)					
Fidesz mayor	-6.93	-6.92					
	(3.40)	(3.36)					
$y ears \ as \ may or$	0.09	0.12					
	(0.24)	(0.24)					
years as MP	0.22	0.21					
	(0.21)	(0.21)					
$vote \ share \ in \ 2014$	0.52^{***}	0.52***					
	(0.13)	(0.13)					
population	0.07^{*}	0.06^{*}					
	(0.03)	(0.02)					
$business\ tax\ revenues$	0.00						
	(0.00)						
all revenues		0.00					
		(0.00)					
Constant	30.79**	30.82**					
	(9.57)	(9.45)					
Observations	34	34					
\mathbb{R}^2	0.70	0.71					
Adjusted \mathbb{R}^2	0.59	0.60					
Residual Std. Error $(df = 24)$	6.02	5.94					
F Statistic (df = 9 ; 24)	6.34^{***}	6.56***					

Table A.1: Predicting incumbent mayors' vote share with the number of days between reporting an issue and receiving an answer from authorities. The author's own calculation.

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

		Treat	ment	Control						
Statistic	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
female	$1,\!045$	0.51	0.50	0	1	1,031	0.54	0.50	0	1
age	1,040	48.98	16.49	17.00	90.00	1,024	49.44	17.42	16.00	88.00
ideology	1,045	2.88	0.89	1	5	1,031	2.88	0.87	1	5
education	1,045	5.17	2.23	1	8	1,031	5.17	2.17	1	8

Table A.2: Summary statistics and balance on demographics. Ideology measures self-positioning on a liberal-conservative scale. Education is measured via an 8-point-scale, where '1' is elementary school and '8' is MA/MSc degree.

Table A.3: Descriptive statistics for socio-demographic variables. Education is measured via an 9-point-scale, where '1' is less than elementary school and '9' is MA/MSc degree.

Statistic	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Female	998	0.58	0.49	0	1
Education	998	4.20	1.98	1	9
Age	998	51.69	15.64	18	90
Unable to pay utility bills	989	0.08	0.27	0.00	1.00
Unable to pay mortgage	984	0.02	0.13	0.00	1.00
Unable to pay debt	985	0.03	0.18	0.00	1.00
Roma	948	0.06	0.24	0.00	1.00
Consumption of political news (minutes/day)	906	30.08	27.78	0.00	240.00

Table A.4: Summary statistics and balance on demographics. Education is measured via an 9-point-scale, where '1' is less than elementary school and '9' is MA/MSc degree.

All							$D_{shared(firstapplicant)}=1$				$D_{shared(firstapplicant)}=0$				
Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Ν	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
age	1,009	50.56	15.87	17	91	506	50.54	16.03	18	91	503	50.59	15.73	17	88
education	1,009	4.42	1.96	1	9	506	4.27	1.88	1	9	503	4.57	2.02	1	9
female	1,009	0.60	0.49	0	1	506	0.60	0.49	0	1	503	0.60	0.49	0	1

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