Construction of facilities under asymmetric information: do constitutions matter?∗

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Abstract

A country consists of two non-overlapping regions, each ruled by a local authority. The federal government plans to construct a facility in one of the regions. If the facility is constructed, it generates a social value in the host region and has spillover effects in the rest of the country. The federal government does not observe the local value (which can be high or low) because it is in fact the local authority’s private information. To deal with this informational gap, the federal government designs an incentive-compatible mechanism, specifying if the facility should be constructed and a scheme of interregional transfers. But the federal government is constitutionally constrained to respect a given measure of both regions’ welfare. The shape of the optimal mechanism depends on the values of the local and spillover effects and on the type of constitutional constraint that the federal government faces.

Keywords: Fiscal federalism - Constitutional constraints - Facilities - Intergovernmental transfers - Asymmetric information

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1 Introduction

Federal governments intervene in regions, states or localities, even in countries where decentralization prevails, like in the USA. For example, federal governments construct facilities like prisons, waste disposals, airports or dams. In order to decide whether or not to construct such facilities and how to finance them, federal governments need to know their impact on the welfare of different regions. But, as it has long been recognized [e.g. Oates, 1972], local authorities know some of their constituency’s characteristics better than federal governments. So local authorities may be tempted to use this information opportunistically, in order to induce the federal government to adopt a decision that favors its constituency. This paper deals precisely with incentive problems that emerge in institutional contexts where federal decisions about construction of facilities are taken under asymmetric information.

As Tresch (1981) suggested, such problems can only be rigorously analyzed in second-best asymmetrical information environments. The public economics literature that adopted such approach has studied two different issues. The first issue is related to NIMBY, an acronym that describes the well-known controversy of siting noxious facilities. Whereas such facilities are supposed to benefit the majority of the population, the community designated as the host often views the project’s impact to be negative and thus try to oppose its construction. Among others, Goetze (1982), Kleindorfer and Kunreuther (1986), Easterling and Kunreuther (1992, 1996) and Frey et al. (1996) have analyzed different mechanisms (auctions, monetary compensations, insurance) designed to obtain the acceptance of host localities. The second issue concerns the design of intergovernmental transfers to finance a national public good (or a local public good with externalities) under asymmetric information. Cremer et al. (1996) and Lockwood (1999) have studied the impact of incentive problems on the design of interjurisdictional transfers and on the level of public goods.

These papers suffer from an important drawback: they do explicitly consider neither prerogatives that federal governments have nor constitutional constraints they face. On the one hand, papers that analyze mechanisms to obtain the acceptance of noxious facilities assumed that the federal government is obliged to respect the local status quo, i.e. the level of welfare without the facility being constructed. But often federal governments have

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1 Concerning noxious facilities, Goetze (1982) points that, in host localities, expressed fears of risk are regarded as exaggerated and perhaps strategically motivated.
the constitutional power to implement policies that do not respect everybody’s status quo, if it is in the general interest to do so.2 On the other hand, papers that deal with intergovernmental transfers under asymmetric information implicitly assume that federal governments, because of their pre-eminence, are not constrained towards local authorities. Bordignon et al. (2001) state that “Given the coercitive powers of the federal government, it is natural to assume that both regions are forced to play this game and thus we do not impose any participation constraint”. But federal governments seldom are completely free, specially if national projects yield negative values for some regions. In fact, federal governments are constitutionally constrained to respect lower levels of government.3 The purpose of this paper is precisely to add these two features to the existing literature.4 Our goal is to characterize, in a ..scal federal setting under asymmetric information, the optimal system of interregional transfers to ..nance a facility when the federal government is constitutionally constrained to respect local authorities but it does not have to ensure necessarily their status quo.

We present a simple model of a country consisting of two non-overlapping and equally wealthy regions, each ruled by a local authority. Following an

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2 On January 10, 2002, the U.S. Secretary of Energy S. Abraham decided to recommend to President Bush approval of the Yucca Mountain site (Nevada) for the development of a nuclear waste repository. In spite of Nevadans strongly resistance to the project, Abraham justi..es his decision because “there are compelling national interests that requires us to complete the sitting process and move forward with the development of a repository” (Headquarter’s press release, U.S. Department of Energy).

3 In some countries, when local authorities consider that federal decisions are arbitrary, they can resist them judicially. In 1985, the U.S. Congress enacted the Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Amendments Act. Among other things, this law imposes upon States the obligation to provide for the disposal of waste generated within their borders. The act contained three types of incentives to encourage the States to comply with that obligation. New York State and two of its counties ..led a suit against the United States, seeking a declaratory judgement that the three incentives were unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court decided that executively one of the incentive schemes proposed by the Congress were inconsistent with the Tenth Amendment - which states that “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States”. See New York v. United States 505 U.S. 144 (1992).

4 These aforementioned considerations also apply to the theoretical literature that deals with revelation of preferences for public goods. On the one hand, it is well known that Clarke-Groves mechanisms may not respect participation constraints. On the other hand, both static mechanisms [Green and Lafont (1979)] or dynamic procedures [Malinvaud (1971), Drèze and De la Vallée Poussin (1971)] ensure each agent with the status quo. Makowski and Mezzetti (1994) is closer to our analysis because, in the second part of their paper, they consider the possibility of weakening the ex-post individual rationality constraints. But, as they impose ex-ante budget balancing (whereas we impose ex-post budget balancing), they ..nd results that go in an opposite direction than ours.
utilitarian objective, the federal government plans to construct a facility in one region. If it is undertaken, the facility generates a social value in this region and also has spillover effects in the other region. Both the local value and the spillover effect can be positive or negative. The utilitarian federal government should decide whether to construct the facility and, if so, how to finance it. The federal government is constitutionally constrained to set transfers in order to maintain each region's welfare above a certain value. But the federal government does not observe the facility's local value (which can be high or low) because it is the local authority's private information. To deal with this informational gap, the federal government designs an incentive-compatible mechanism, specifying if the facility should be constructed and a scheme of interregional transfers. Therefore, the shape of the optimal mechanism will depend upon the local value, the spillover level and how the constitutional constraint is stringent.

The most important results are the following. First, in a full-information framework, the traditional rule that equalizes marginal utilities of private consumption does not always apply when the project is undertaken. Indeed, it may be optimal to undertake a project when one of the constitutional constraints is binding. In that case, the region with the lowest value will be compensated with respect to the case where marginal utilities are equalized.

Second, in the asymmetric information framework, the distortions depend upon how stringent are constitutional constraints. In particular, when only Pareto improving projects are undertaken, the federal government faces a unique type of local misbehavior, namely the underestimation of the facility's local value. This problem occurs when the project is relatively "bad" for the region for which the government imperfectly observes the local value. The way to deal with this problem is to distort downward inter-regional transfers or the decision to undertake the project. Projects yielding relatively low local values are optimally shutdown whereas they should have been constructed under full-information. However, when the constitutional constraints are less stringent, another type of local misbehavior appears, namely the exaggeration of the local value. This problem occurs when the project is relatively "good" in the region for which the government imperfectly observes the local value. Therefore, additional distortions appear.

In the next section we present the model and we analyze the full-information case. Then we study the problem when the federal government faces asymmetric information. In particular, we will give a special attention to extreme values of the constitutional constraints. Finally, we conclude. All proofs are in the Appendix.
2 The model

The nation. The country is composed of two separate regions $i = \{L; R\}$, each ruled by a local authority. Due to high communication or transaction costs, we rule out the possibility of agreements between the regions. On the top, the federal government has to decide whether to construct, in region $L$, a national facility of a given size.\(^5\) We formalize this decision as an index variable

$$\pm = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if the facility is constructed} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The other region $R$ represents the “rest of the country”.

The facility. We assume that, if the facility is constructed, it generates a local value $v_L$ (in region $L$) and a spillover value $v_R$ (in the other region $R$): But we do not restrict the signs of both values $v_L$ and $v_R$: we want to study all possible cases of public facilities, which can be the following:

2 $v_L > 0$ and $v_R > 0$: the facility is beneficial for the entire national population.

2 $v_L > 0$ and $v_R < 0$: the project is beneficial only for region $L$ but generates a negative externality in the other region $R$ (e.g. an upstream dam in $L$).

2 $v_L < 0$ and $v_R > 0$: a typical noxious facility, that is beneficial for the rest of the country but to the detriment of the host region $L$ (e.g. a prison or a waste disposal).

The facility costs $c$, which is common knowledge: If it is undertaken, the federal government bears this cost.

The regions. We formalize the local authority as the representative agent of each region. For the sake of simplicity, we assume that both regions have the same income, so $y_L = y_R = y^6$: With this income $y$, region $i$ can consume a private good in quantity $q_i$. Each region derives the same utility from the

\(^5\)Our paper does not analyze the choice of the place where the national facility should be constructed. Although this is a crucial problem for some kind of facilities (e.g. prisons), there are many others for which their construction’s place is not an issue (e.g. nuclear waste disposals, dams...). For such facilities, it may be the case that there exists only one locality that has the appropriate hydrological and geological characteristics to become the host.

\(^6\)This rules out any redistributional concerns.
consumption of this good. We formalize this as a strictly increasing and concave utility function \( u \); with \( u(0) = 0 \).

In order to ensure the project's financing, the federal government designs a scheme of intergovernmental transfers \( t_i \).\(^7\) When \( t_i < 0 \), the federal government subsidizes region \( i \); when \( t_i > 0 \), region \( i \) is taxed. Taking into account each region's budget constraint \( q_i = y_i - t_i \), the utilities of both regions will be \( U_L = u(y_i - t_L) + \pm v_L \) and \( U_R = u(y_i - t_R) + \pm v_R \). That is, we assume that the utility is separable between the private and the public good. Given the discrete approach adopted in the paper, the utility ends out to be quasilinear in the facility's value.

The federal government's goal is to maximize an utilitarian national social welfare given by \( W(t_L; t_R; \pm) = U_L + U_R \), subject to \( t_L + t_R \leq \pm \); which is the federal budget constraint (BB):

The federal government controls the decision variable \( \pm \). On the one hand, it can impose to the region \( L \) the project's undertaking, even if the value \( v_L \) is negative. On the other hand, it can prohibit the facility's construction, even if \( v_L \) is so high that region \( L \) wants to undertake it by itself. Although this seems to be a command economy, the country's constitution impose to the federal government another type of constraint on the allocations \( (\pm t_L; t_R) \) that it can set. This restriction, denoted by \( CC_i \); has the following form:

\[
U_L = u(y_i - t_L) + \pm v_L \geq k \quad CC_i
\]

The federal government is constrained to leave to both regions a minimal level of utility \( k \leq u(y) \). The greatest minimal utility \( u(y) \) is the status quo level and ensures only Pareto improving construction of facilities. We can think that the constitution prohibits the federal government to exploit a region, at the detriment of the other. The lowest bound corresponds to the case of a non-constrained utilitarian government. In this last case, every project that has a high value for the country as a whole will be undertaken. As we mentioned in the introduction, one of the objectives of this paper is to characterize the optimal allocations for different constitutional constraints, or equivalently, for different levels of the minimal utility \( k \). Next we analyze the full-information benchmark.

\(^7\) For the sake of simplicity, we rule out the possibility of transfers \( t_i \neq 0 \) when the facility is not constructed. Although our formalization precludes any redistribution, such transfers could help to relax incentive problems. Nevertheless, the main results of the paper would remain unchanged.
2.1 Full-information

Assume that the federal government is able to observe the value of \( v_L \) and \( v_R \): Hence it has to solve the following program denoted by \( P \):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Max} & \quad u(y_i \ t_L) + u(y_i \ t_R) + \pm(v_L + v_R) \\
\text{subject to} & \\
& u(y_i \ t_L) + \pm v_L, \quad k \quad \text{CC}_L \\
& u(y_i \ t_R) + \pm v_R, \quad k \quad \text{CC}_R \\
& t_L + t_R, \quad \pm c \quad \text{BB}
\end{align*}
\]

The following lemma completely characterizes the optimal full-information allocations \((\pm \delta, t_L^\ast, t_R^\ast)\):

Lemma 1 The decision \( \delta(v_L; v_R) = 1 \) if and only if either condition (A) or (B) or (C) holds.

2 Condition (A): \( v_L \geq \frac{1}{2} u(y_i) i u \frac{y_i}{2} k i v_R \), \( k i u \frac{y_i}{2} \delta \) and \( v_L \), \( 2u(y_i) i u \frac{y_i}{2} k i v_R \)

In this case, transfers are \( t_L^\ast = t_R^\ast = \frac{\delta}{2} \).

2 Condition (B) \( v_L \leq \frac{1}{2} u(y_i) i u \frac{y_i}{2} k i v_R \), \( 2u(y_i) i u \frac{y_i}{2} k i v_R \)

In this case, transfers are \( t_L^\ast = y_i u \frac{1}{2}(k_i v_L) < \frac{\delta}{2} \) and \( t_R^\ast = c_i y + u \frac{1}{2}(k_i v_L) > \frac{\delta}{2} \).

2 Condition (C) \( v_R \leq \frac{1}{2} u(y_i) i u \frac{y_i}{2} k i v_R \), \( 2u(y_i) i u \frac{y_i}{2} k i v_R \)

In this case, transfers are \( t_R^\ast = y_i u \frac{1}{2}(k_i v_R) < \frac{\delta}{2} \) and \( t_L^\ast = c_i y + u \frac{1}{2}(k_i v_R) > \frac{\delta}{2} \).

Condition (A) describes the parametric area where marginal utilities are equalized between the two regions, i.e. \( t_L = t_R = \frac{\delta}{2} \). The first two inequalities insure that each region's constitutional constraint is satisfied, while the third one means that total welfare must be higher than the one obtained when the facility is not constructed.

Conditions (B) and (C) describe parametric areas for which the facility is undertaken when the constitutional constraint of one of the regions is
binding. If $CC_i$ is binding, transfer $t_i$ is given by the binding constitutional constraint and region $i$ is compensated with respect to the transfers given by the equalization of marginal utilities. When $k \neq 1$, equalization of marginal utilities always applies so conditions (B) and (C) vanish.

For further use, we will denote $v_L^*(v_R; k)$ the value of $v_L$ (as a function of $v_R$ and $k$) above which a facility is constructed under full-information. Straightforward use of lemma 1 leads to:

$$v_L^*(v_R; k) = \begin{cases} 8 \frac{2u(y) + k_i u(2y_i) c_i u^1(k_i v_R))}{2u(y) + k_i u^1(2u(y) + k_i v_R)} & \text{if } v_R \cdot k_i u^1(y_i) \frac{c}{z} k \cdot v_R ; \\
\frac{\frac{2u^1(2u(y) + k_i v_R)}{2u(y) + k_i u^1(y)}} & \text{if } v_R \cdot 2u(y) + k_i u^1(y) \frac{c}{z} k \cdot v_R .
\end{cases}$$

Full-information allocations can be seen in the following graphic, where each couple $(v_R; v_L)$ represents a facility.

The function $v_L^*(k; v_R)$ is represented by the bold curve. Below this curve, no projects are undertaken. We can easily show that this frontier is decreasing and convex in $v_R$. In the parametric area denoted by $A$, the project is financed following the equalization of marginal utilities. Note that, in this area, the utility of region $i$ with $v_i \cdot u(y) + u^1(y) \frac{c}{z} k \cdot U_i = u(y)$, in other words, every undertaken project that verifies $v_i \cdot u(y) + u^1(y) \frac{c}{z} k \cdot U_i$ is not Pareto improving for region $i$ (except for the extreme case when $k = u(y)$). In area $B$, the constitutional constraint $CC_L$ binds and, in area $C$, $CC_R$ binds.

In the next figure, we can see how full-information allocations vary with $k$:

When $k \neq 1$, the bold curve becomes a straight line above which each region shares equally the cost of the project. When $k = u(y)$, the curve is strictly convex. Obviously, the less stringent are the constitutional constraints, the more projects will be undertaken.

### 2.2 Asymmetric information on $v_L$

The facility generates a benefit $v_R$ in the other region that is observable. But we assume that, although the region $L$ knows the value of $v_L$ (it's type); the
The federal government is unable to observe whether $v_L$ is in fact high ($v_L^H$) or low ($v_L^L$). The federal government has some beliefs about this local value $v_L$: Let’s denote these beliefs by $\hat{v}_L = P(r[v_L = v_L^H]$ and by $1 - \hat{v}_L = P(r[v_L = v_L^L]$; Next we completely characterize the optimal allocations under asymmetric information.

It is convenient to solve this problem adopting a mechanism design approach, as advocated by Cremer et al. (1996). The federal government will ask the region $L$ to announce its type $e_L$ and will commit to implement the allocation $(\pm t_L(e_L); t_R(e_L))$. In this setting, the Revelation Principle applies. So the federal government can set incentive-compatible allocations $(\pm; t_L; t_R)$ that are conditional on both possible values of $v_L$. We denote those allocations by $(\pm; t_L; t_R)$ when they concern a high local value region (i.e. a region $L$ with $v_L^H$) and by $(\pm; t_L; t_R)$ in the other case.

Now, in order to maximize the national social welfare, the federal government solves the new program $P^0$

$$\max_{\pm; t_L; t_R} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \hat{v}_L u(y_i t_L) + u(y_i t_R) + \hat{v}_L (v_L + v_R) \\ + (1 - \hat{v}_L) [u(y_i t_L) + u(y_i t_R) + \pm (v_L + v_R)] \end{array} \right\}$$

subject to

$$u(y_i t_L) + \pm v_L, k \underline{CC}_L \quad u(y_i t_R) + \pm v_R, k \underline{CC}_R$$

$$t_L + t_R, \pm \underline{BB}_L \quad t_L + t_R, \pm \underline{BB}_R$$

$$u(y_i t_L) + \pm v_L, u(y_i t_R) + \pm v_R \quad \pm \underline{IC}$$

$$u(y_i t_L) + \pm v_L, u(y_i t_R) + \pm v_R \quad \pm \underline{IC}$$

where $\underline{IC}$ and $\underline{IC}_L$ represent the incentive-compatibility constraints, for region $v_L$ and $v_R$ respectively. It is straightforward to realize that an incentive-compatible allocation must set $\pm; \pm$. This monotonicity result, fairly com-

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8 For example, the federal government may want to construct a new airport in region $L$. A federal agency with technical expertise, like the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, may know the value of improvement in air traffic for both regions $L$ and $R$. But only $L$’s local authority is able to observe how damaging, in terms of the increase in noise, the installation of the airport is.
mon in agency theory, implies that under asymmetric information, there may be at most 3 configurations of facilities. They are the following:

2 Configuration I: regardless of the local value \( v_L \), the facility is always undertaken \( \frac{\partial I}{\partial I} = 0; \frac{\partial I}{\partial I} = 1 \)

2 Configuration II: only a facility that has a high local value \( v_L \) is constructed \( \frac{\partial II}{\partial II} = 0; \frac{\partial II}{\partial II} = 1 \)

2 Configuration III: no matter its local value \( v_L \), the project is abandoned \( \frac{\partial III}{\partial III} = 0; \frac{\partial III}{\partial III} = 0 \)

2.2.1 When full-information allocations are not implementable

Under asymmetric information, some full-information allocations are incentive-compatible. This comes from the quasilinearity of the regions utility function. For example, for relatively high values of \( v_R; v_L \) and \( v_L \), transfers are given by equalization of marginal utilities. These transfers are incentive-compatible because the region \( L \) has the same level of private consumption if it pretends to have \( v_L \) or \( v_L \).

But this is not always the case. The following lemmas describe the parametric areas, in the \( (v_L, v_R, v_L) \) space, where full-information allocations are not implementable. To clarify the exposition, we will first present the case when the project is relatively detrimental for region \( R \); i.e. when \( v_R \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot \frac{c^2}{2} \). Then we turn to the case where the project is relatively beneficial for region \( R \); i.e. when \( v_R \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot \frac{c^2}{2} \). The proofs are in the appendix.

Lemma 2 When \( v_R \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot \frac{c^2}{2} \), full-information allocations are not implementable if and only if \( (v_L; v_R; v_L) \) belongs to the parametric area defined by either (a) or (b):

\[
\begin{align*}
(a) & \quad \frac{1}{2} v_R \cdot k_i \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot \frac{c^2}{2} \cdot v_L \cdot v_L \cdot (v_R; k) \cdot v_L \\
(b) & \quad \frac{1}{2} k_i \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot \frac{c^2}{2} \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot u(y) \cdot \frac{c^2}{2} \cdot v_L \cdot v_L \cdot (v_R; k) \cdot v_L 
\end{align*}
\]

Suppose that the federal government offers the menu \( (\frac{\partial i}{\partial i}; \frac{\partial i}{\partial i}; \frac{\partial i}{\partial i}) \) and \( (\frac{\partial i}{\partial i}; \frac{\partial i}{\partial i}; \frac{\partial i}{\partial i}) \). Given that in (a) and (b), \( v_L \cdot v_L \cdot v_R \cdot k \), the full-information configuration of projects is II \( m \) (i.e. \( \frac{\partial I}{\partial I} = 1 \) and \( \frac{\partial II}{\partial II} = 0 \)). Given that the
facility is detrimental for region $R$, the government sets full-information transfers such that $k \cdot U_R (t^*_R (k)) \cdot u(y)$. In this case, the high local value region benefits from an utility $U_L (t^*_L (k))$, $u(y)$ since it is optimal to undertake the project$^9$. Thus, if $v_L$ is sufficiently large, the low local value region (i.e., the region $L$ with $v_L$) finds optimal to mimic the high local value region, by announcing $e_L = v_L$, in order to obtain the construction of the facility and have an utility $U_L (t^*_L (k))$; with $U_L (t^*_L (k)) = u(y) \cdot U_L (t^*_L (k)) \cdot 2u(y) i.k$.

In the extreme case where the federal government ensures that a project is undertaken only if the status-quo is respected ($k = u(y)$), a project is abandoned if and only if the utility of a region is strictly lower than $u(y)$. Therefore, in this particular case, the low local value region has no incentives to mimic the high local value region:

Corollary 3 When $v_R \cdot u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2}$, full-information allocations are always implementable if $k = u(y)$.

We now turn to the study of facilities that generate a relatively high value $v_R$ to the region $R$.

Lemma 4 When $v_R \cdot u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2}$, full-information allocations are not implementable if and only $(v_L, v_L, v_R)$ belongs to the parametric area defined by either (c) or (d):

(c) $u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2}$ \quad \begin{align*} & v_L \cdot v_L (v_R; k) \cdot v_L \cdot u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2} \\ & v_L \cdot v_R (v_R; k) \cdot v_L \cdot u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2} \\ & v_L \cdot v_L \cdot v_L \cdot u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2} \end{align*}

(d) $\frac{1}{2} 2u(y) i k i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2}$ \quad \begin{align*} & v_R (v_R; k) \cdot v_L \cdot k i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2} \\ & v_R (v_R; k) \cdot v_L \cdot k i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2} \\ & v_R (v_R; k) \cdot v_L \cdot v_L \cdot u(y) i u i y i \xi \frac{\epsilon}{2} \end{align*}

A gain suppose that the federal government offers a menu that sets the optimal full-information allocation. In the parametric areas characterized in (c) and (d), the high local value region wants to mimic the low local value region.

Indeed, when (c) holds, $v_L \cdot v_R (v_R; k) \cdot v_L$, so the full-information configuration of projects is $\Pi^*$ (i.e., $\frac{\epsilon}{2} = 1$ and $\frac{\epsilon}{2} = 0$). Given that the project is detrimental for the high local value region $L$, the government sets full-information transfers such that $k \cdot U_L (t^*_L (k)) \cdot u(y)$. Thus, the high local value region finds optimal to mimic the low local value region in order to mimic the high local value region:

$^9$Recall that, in order to construct the facility, $U_L (t^*_L (k)) + U_R (t^*_R (k)) \cdot 2u(y)$ must hold.
obtain the rejection of the project and have a utility \( U_i(t^n_i(k)) = u(y) > k \). It is straightforward to see that, in the extreme case where the government insures that a project is undertaken if the status-quo is respected \( (k = u(y)) \), the high local value region has no incentives to mimic the low local value region.

Corollary 5 In case (c), full-information allocations are implementable if and only if \( k = u(y) \).

If (d) holds, the full-information con..uration of projects should have been \( I^n \) (i.e. \( x^L = x^H = 1 \)). Under this circumstance, the full-information transfers \( t^L_i \) increase with \( v_L \). So the region \( L \) with \( v_L \) would like to pay less for the project, pretending to be \( L \). In the extreme case where \( k = 1 \) (pure utilitarianism), there is no such problem of mimicking since both high and low regions \( L \) pay the same cost \( \frac{c}{2} \) in the full-information case.

Corollary 6 In case (d), full-information allocations are implementable if and only if \( k = 1 \).

To sum up, when the facility is detrimental for \( R \), we observe (for some parameters) upward mimicking. When the project is bene..cial for \( R \), we observe downward mimicking. In the extreme case where \( k = u(y) \) (the central government implements only Pareto improving projects), there is no problem of mimicking in areas described by (a), (b) and (c). In the opposite case where \( k = 1 \) (pure utilitarianism), the downward mimicking observed in (d) vanishes.

In all other parametric areas, the full-information allocations are implementable. We now turn to the description of the second best allocation problem in the particular cases presented above.

2.2.2 Optimal allocations under asymmetric information

Suppose that, for speci..c values of the parameters \( v_L \) and \( v_R \), full-information allocations are not implementable. Let’s denote by

\[ t^i_j; f_i = L; R; j = I; II; III g \]

transfers paid by region \( i \) in con..uration of projects \( j \).

Let’s assume that the federal government wants to implement the con..guration \( I \). In that case, the binding incentive-compatibility constraint yields

\[ \frac{\partial t^L_i}{\partial v_L} = (u^{I})^0(i, v_L) > 0; \]

\[ 10 \text{Recall that, in this case, } t^L_i = u(y) \text{ so } \frac{\partial t^L_i}{\partial v_L} = (u^{I})^0(i, v_L) > 0. \]
to \( u(y_i - t_L) = u(y_i - t_L) \): This implies that optimal (second-best) transfers are such that \( t_L^{10} = t_L^{0} \). Thus, solving problem \( P^0 \) is equivalent to solve problem \( P \) with three regions \( (v_L; v_L; v_R) \) and an equal transfer for the low and high local value regions.

Now let's assume that the federal government wants to implement the configuration II. The analysis of such configuration depends upon which incentive-compatibility constraint is binding:

1. If \( IC_L \) is binding, then the transfer is such that the low local value region is indifferent between doing the project or not, i.e. \( u(y_i - t_{II}^{10}L) + v_L = u(y) \).

2. If \( IC_L \) is binding, then the transfer is such that the high local value region is indifferent between doing the project or not, i.e. \( u(y_i - t_{II}^{110}L) + v_L = u(y) \).

2. Else, \( t_{II}^{110}L = t_{II}^{110}L \).

Finally, if the federal government plans to implement the configuration III, no transfers are made so \( t_{III}^{110}L = t_{III}^{110}L = t_{III}^{110}R = 0 \).

Optimal second-best transfers define, for each configuration of projects, a level of welfare. This permits the characterization of the parametric area where a particular configuration is preferred to the other ones. The computations can be found in the appendix. We just present in the following section the shape of second-best optimal allocations for each configuration and we compare them to the full-information one. Additionally, we give a graphical illustration of the parametric areas defining the optimal configurations.

For ease of exposition, we will present in the following part the optimal design of transfers when \( IC_L \) is binding (i.e. in cases (a) or (b) of Lemma 2) and then turn to the case where \( IC_L \) is binding (cases (c) and (d) of Lemma 4).

Optimal second-best allocations when the project yields a low local value to region R. Let's assume that \( v_R \cdot u(y) \geq u(y_i) \). If the federal government plans to implement configuration I, \( IC_L \) is binding. Moreover,
CC_R is binding in case (a), so second-best transfers should be
\[
L_0^{II} = L_0^I = L_c = \frac{1}{2} c \left( y + u^i(k_i v_R) \right) \quad \text{in case (a)}
\]
\[
I_0^{II} = 0 \quad \text{in case (b)}
\]

In other words, both high and low local value regions pay the transfer \( L_c \) that would be optimal in a full-information world, with \( v_L = v_L \). Since configuration II was adopted under full-information, these second-best transfers, if implemented, yield an upward distortion of \( \pm \).

If the federal government plans to implement the configuration II, given that \( Ic \) binds, second-best transfers are given by
\[
( \quad L_0^{II} = y + u^i(y) + v_L \quad )
\]
\[
I_0^{II} = 0
\]

In other words, if these transfers are implemented, there is an upward distortion of the transfer paid by the high local value region.

Graphically, Figure 3 represents an illustration of the second-best configuration of projects in case (a) in the \((v_L; v_L)\) space. 12

Insert Figure 3 here

Now, for a given value of \( v_R \); a couple \((v_L; v_L)\) represents a facility, from the federal government’s point of view. Remember that in (a), the full-information configuration is II; with \( L_c = c \left( y + u^i(k_i v_R) \right) \). Under asymmetric information, we observe two kinds of distortions with respect to the full-information allocations: the government implements either another configuration of projects or sets another transfer \( L_c \); paid by the high local value region \( L \).

In the parametric area \( I^0 \), the federal government implements the same configuration than under full-information but there is an upward distortion of the transfer paid by the high local value region \( L \), that is \( L_0^{II} > L_c \). As \( v_L \) increases, this distortion increases. Thus, above a threshold value of \( v_L \), the federal government prefers to implement configuration I 0 with non-distorted transfers. This is an upward distortion of \( \pm \). Finally, for a low level of \( v_L \), implementation costs dominate the high social value of the project. Therefore, in the parametric area denoted by \( III^0 \), the project is optimally shutdown. This is a downward distortion of \( \mp \).

12 Case (b) implies similar distortions.
Optimal allocations when the project yields a high local value in region $R$. Now let's assume that $v_R > u(y) \mathrm{i} u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$: If, in cases (c) and (d), the federal government plans to implement the configuration $I$; $\Gamma C_L$ is binding. Moreover, for $k_i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$, $\nu_i; CC_L$ also binds so
\[
\text{If implemented, configuration } I^0 \text{ represents a downward distortion of the transfer } \tau_L \text{ in case (d); while in case (c), configuration } I' \text{ represents an upward distortion of } \pm.
\]

If the federal government plans to implement configuration $II$; $\Gamma C_L$ is only binding when $\nu_L < u(y) i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$; so that second-best transfers are given by
\[
\begin{align*}
\tau_L^{I^0} &= \tau_L^0 = \frac{1}{2} y_i u^1 (u(y) i \nu_L) \mathrm{if} \ \nu_L < u(y) i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2} \\
\tilde{t}_L^{I^0} &= 0
\end{align*}
\]

If implemented, configuration $II^0$ represents a downward distortion of the transfer $\tau_L$ in case (c); while in case (d), configuration $II'$ represents a downward distortion of $\pm$ combined with a downward distorted transfer $\tau_L$ when $\nu_L < u(y) i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$: In other words, implementing $II'$ requires a double distortion when $\nu_L < u(y) i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$, because the government wants to prevent the fact that the high region mimics the low region in order to shutdown the project.

Figure 4 gives an illustration of the second-best configuration of projects in case (c) and (d):

Insert Figure 4 here

To understand these distortions, note that, under full-information, configuration $I^\infty$ is adopted when $\nu_L ; \nu^\infty_L (v_R ; k)$ (case (d)); else configuration $II^\infty$ is adopted (case (c)). Hence, when $\nu_L ; \nu^\infty_L (v_R ; k)$, the area $I^0$ represents the space where there is a downward distortion of the transfer paid by the high local value region. This distortion increases as $\nu_L$ decreases. In the area $II^0$, there is a downward distortion of $\pm$ with a downward distorted transfer $\tilde{t}_L^{II^0}$ when $\nu_L < u(y) i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$. This distortion on the transfer is higher the lower is $\nu_L$. Therefore, when $\nu_L ; u(y) i u^1 y i \frac{\xi}{2}$, configuration...
$I^0$ is preferred below a threshold value $V_L$. When $V_L < u(y) \frac{\partial y_i}{\partial V_L}$, configuration $I^0$ is preferred for low $V_L$ and for high $V_L$.

When $V_L < v_{L}^{C}(v_{R};k)$, the full-information configuration was $I^{m}$. The area $I^{0}$ is the space where there is a downward distortion of $t_L$. This distortion is higher the lower is $V_L$. Area $I^0$ represents the space where there is an upward distortion of $\pm$, which implies higher implementation costs the lower is $V_L$. Thus, for high $V_L$ and low $V_L$, configuration $I^{0}$ is preferred to $I^{0}$. Moreover, below a threshold value for $V_L$, configuration $I^{0}$ is preferred, that is, it is optimal to distort downward $\pm$.

3 Conclusion

We have formalized a country consisting of two non-overlapping regions, each ruled by a local authority. The federal government has planned to construct a public facility in one region. If it is undertaken, this project generates a social value in this region and spillovers in the rest of the country. Both the local value and the external effect can be positive or negative.

The federal government should decide whether to undertake the work and how to finance it. But it does not observe the local value (which can be high or low) because it is in fact the local authority’s private information. To deal with this informational gap, the federal government designs an incentive-compatible mechanism, specifying if the project should be undertaken and a scheme of interregional transfers. In its choice, the federal government is constitutionally constrained to respect the regions’ welfare.

In this very simple model, we have completely characterized the optimal allocations under asymmetric information. We have also shown the impact of different constitutional constraints on these allocations, specially the distortions that appear in the decision about which projects undertake. The most important result is the emergence of different patterns of misbehavior according to different constitutional rules.

This model enables us to pursue this research in different directions. First of all, we can extend the informational asymmetries, to consider the case where all social values are unknown to the federal government. A second direction could be to endogenize the constitutional setting. We could obtain some insights concerning constitutional design for rising federations, which could serve in political discussion, for example at the European level.
Appendix

A Proof of Lemma 1

For \( \pm = 1 \); substituting the budget constraint (B), the Lagrangian of the problem can be written as:

\[
L(t_R; t_L; \bar{\alpha}_I; \bar{\alpha}_2; \bar{\xi}_1; \bar{\xi}_2) = u(y_i t_L) + u(y_i c + t_L) + \nu_R + \nu_L + \\
+ \bar{\xi}_1[u(y_i t_L) + \nu_L i k] \\
+ \bar{\xi}_2[u(y_i c + t_L) + \nu_R i k]
\]

where \( \bar{\xi}_1 \) are the Lagrangian multipliers associated with the CC\(_I\) constraints. First order conditions with respect to \( t_L; \bar{\xi}_1; \bar{\xi}_2 \) are respectively:

\[
\begin{align*}
8^i u(y_i t_L) + u(y_i c + t_L) &= 0 \quad (1) \\
\bar{\xi}_1[u(y_i t_L) + \nu_L i k] &= 0 \quad (2) \\
\bar{\xi}_2[u(y_i c + t_L) + \nu_R i k] &= 0 \quad (3) \\
\bar{\xi}_1; \bar{\xi}_2 &= 0 \quad (4)
\end{align*}
\]

Note that the project will be undertaken if (1) to (5) are fulfilled, together with \( w(t_L; t_R; 1) \), \( w(0; 0; 0) = 2a(y) \): We prove point (i) to point (iii) of the lemma successively:

(i) Suppose that \( \bar{\xi}_1 = \bar{\xi}_2 = 0 \); then \( t_L = t_R = \frac{c}{\nu_R} \). In this case, \( \bar{\xi}_1 = \bar{\xi}_2 = 0 \) if and only if \( v_L = k_i u'y_i \frac{c}{\nu_R} \) and \( \nu_L = k_i u'y_i \frac{c}{\nu_R} \) by (CC\(_L\)) and (CC\(_R\)). Moreover, the project will be done if and only if \( w(t_L; t_R; 1) \), \( w(0; 0; 0) \), \( 2u(y) \), \( v_L \), \( c_i u'1(k_j v_R) \).

(ii) Suppose that \( \bar{\xi}_1 > 0 \) and \( \bar{\xi}_2 > 0 \) then \( u(y_i c + t_L) + \nu_L = k \).

With point (i), we know that \( \bar{\xi}_2 > 0 \) if \( \nu_R \leq k_i u'y_i \frac{c}{\nu_R} \); moreover, for the project to be undertaken, we need further \( w(t_L; t_R; 1) \), \( w(0; 0; 0) \), \( u(y_i t_L) + \nu_L + k \), \( 2u(y) \), \( v_L \), \( 2u(y) i k_i u'2y_i c_i u'1(k_j v_R) \).

(iii) Symmetric argument.

B Proof of Lemma 2

Consider that condition (a) or (b) is fulfilled. Then
Consider that condition C

Proof of Lemma 4

Consider that condition (c) or (d) is fulfilled. Then

2 in case (a):

\[ u_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) = u(y) \]
\[ u_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) = u^2 \bar{y}_i \bar{c}_i \bar{u}^{1}(k_i \bar{v}_R) + \bar{v}_L \]

where \( u_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) \) represents the utility of a low value region that behaves like that and \( u_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) \); the utility of a low value region that misbehaves. One thus have \( u_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) \); \( u_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) = \bar{v}_L + u^2 \bar{y}_i \bar{c}_i \bar{u}^{1}(k_i \bar{v}_R) \); \( u(y) = \bar{v}_L + u(y) \); \( k_i \bar{v}_L^2(k_i \bar{v}_R) \). Given that \( \bar{v}_L \), \( \bar{v}_L^2(k_i \bar{v}_R) + k_i u(y) \):

2 in case (b):

\[ u_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) = u(y) \]
\[ u_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) = u^2 \bar{y}_i \bar{c}_i + \bar{v}_L \]

If the low local region wants to mimic the high local value region in case (a) and (b).

C Proof of Lemma 4

Consider that condition (c) or (d) is fulfilled. Then

2 in case (c):

\[ t_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) = \frac{1}{2} u \bar{y}_i \bar{c}_i + \bar{v}_L \] \( k \)
\[ t_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) = u(y) \]

where \( t_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) \) represents the utility of a high value region that behaves like that and \( t_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) \); the utility of a low value region that misbehaves. One thus have \( t_L(t^a_i; \bar{x}) \); \( t_L(t^b_i; \bar{x}) = u(y) \); \( u \bar{y}_i \bar{c}_i \); \( u(y) \) \( k \); \( u(y) \) \( k \); \( u(y) \) \( k \)

If the low local region wants to mimic the high local value region in case (a) and (b).
One thus have 

\[ \nu_L(t_L; \pm) = \begin{cases} \nu_L(t_L; \pm), & \text{if } v_L \\ u_i(y_i \pm \frac{c}{2}) \end{cases} \]

Thus, \( \nu_L(t_L^0; \pm) \) is given that \( v_L > u_L \pm y_i \pm \frac{c}{2} \) and \( v_L > v_L \). It follows that the high local region wants to mimic the low local value region in case (c) and (d).

D Second Best implementation in cases (a) and (b)

Let's denote by

\[ F_{k:m}(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) = W_k(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) - W_m(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) \]

the di\( \text{e} \)rence between the expected welfare values in configuration k and m. Clearly if \( F_{k:m}(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) > 0 \), the federal government strictly prefers configuration k to configuration m. Equalizing \( F_{k:m}(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) \) to 0 gives the frontier for which the government is indifferent between configuration k and m as an implicit function of \( \nu_L \) and \( \nu_R \).

Given the optimal second best transfers given in section 2.2.2, one has:

\[
\begin{align*}
W_{I0}(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) &= 2u(y) + \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) + \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) + \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) \\
W_{II0}(\nu_L; \nu_L; \nu_R) &= (2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) \\
&+ u_i(2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) + \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) \\
&+ u_i(2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) + \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k)
\end{align*}
\]

It follows that

\[
\begin{align*}
F_{I0II}(\nu_L; \nu_L) &= 1^{\nu_L} + \nu_L + \nu_L + u(2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) \\
F_{II0II}(\nu_L; \nu_L) &= 1^{\nu_L} + \nu_L + u(2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) \\
F_{IIII}(\nu_L; \nu_L) &= 1^{\nu_L} + \nu_L + u(2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) \\
&+ u(2^{\nu}_i(\nu_L; \nu_R) + 1) \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k) + \nu_L^0(\nu_R; k)
\end{align*}
\]

E Second Best implementation in cases (c) and (d)

Similarly, one obtains easily:
\[ W_{10}(L; v_L; v_R; k) = \]
\[ W_{110}(L; v_L; v_R; k) = \]

It follows that
\[ F_{0111}(L; v_L; k) = \]
\[ F_{1011}(L; v_L; k) = \]
\[ F_{1101}(L; v_L; k) = \]
References


[11]


Figure 1
Figure 3