The Family, the Mafia and the State: Essays on the Political Economics of Social Ties.

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Abstract:

The exact role and influence of social relations for socio-economic outcomes has long remained under-developed in theoretical and empirical economic analyses. In this dissertation, I take some steps towards addressing this research gap. Specifically, I explore the socio-economic effects of social ties via four independent, though closely related articles. The key research questions thereby are:

i) How do social ties affect decision-making patterns of economic agents?,

ii) To what extent are any observed effects of social ties on socio-economic outcomes heterogeneous across diverging institutional settings?

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 stress the political effects of a specific set of strong social ties: namely, the Mafia and the political dynasties. Both chapters are based on novel data from Italian municipalities in the period 1985-2012 (in Chapter 1) and the period 2000-2013 (in Chapter 2).

Subsequently, the analyses in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 predominantly focus on the heterogeneous effects of social ties across different countries, and are based on individual level surveys (European Value Survey, World Value Survey and European Social Survey).