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Law enforcement in a federal system: Endogenous timing of decentralized enforcement effort

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Highlights

- This paper explores inter-jurisdictional competition in the fight against crime.
- We endogenize the timing of moves by jurisdictions.
- It results that a Stackelberg sequence is in many cases the equilibrium outcome.
- This contrasts with the treatment in the literature.
- The difference is relevant, for instance, with respect to the sum of expenditures.

Abstract

This paper explores how inter-jurisdictional competition in the fight against crime unfolds. Local law enforcement reduces the local level of crime, partly by diverting it elsewhere. We highlight that the commonly considered game structure (i.e., the simultaneous-move game) usually does not arise endogenously, that is, when local law enforcement agencies can choose when to exert effort. This has important implications (e.g., for the equilibrium enforcement levels).

JEL-Classification: K42

Keywords: Law enforcement; federalism; competition; timing

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