

Introduction

As argued by James Buchanan and many other leading scholars of constitutional political economy, choosing between rules is the subject matter of this branch of economic research. In this part of the study, the constitutional choice between alternative rules is examined through a comparison of two different electoral systems regulating Italian local elections (municipal and provincial elections). The two electoral systems whose peculiarities are investigated here are proportional representation and a system incorporating many elements of plurality. The aim here is to move beyond the theoretical discussion and provide empirical evidence of the electoral properties of the two different voting schemes. The comparison has been made on the basis of the effects generated by the two electoral rules on several variables: the information level of voters, commitment in participating in the electoral process, dilution of the power enjoyed by elected representatives and the degree of proportionality in translating votes into seats. Several new measures relating to the properties of the two competing electoral systems are developed and compared to measures drawn from the literature.