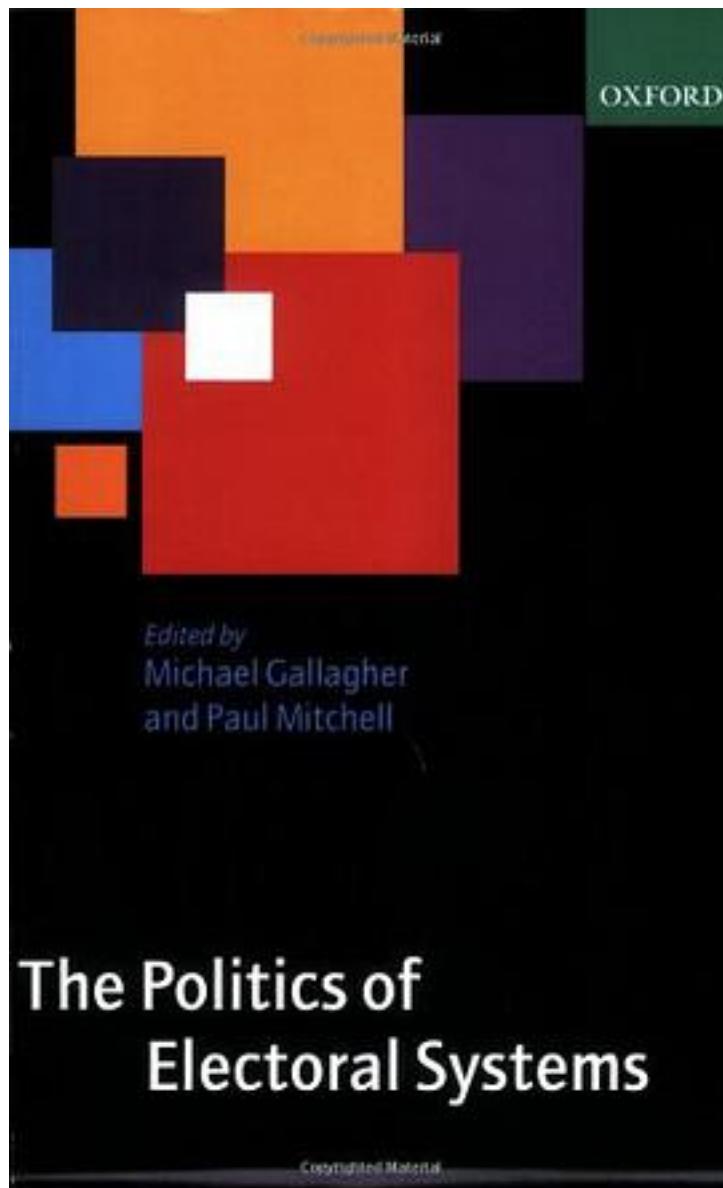


The Politics of Electoral Systems



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出版者:Oxford University Press

出版时间:2008-3

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780199238675

Electoral systems matter. They are a crucial link in the chain connecting the preferences of citizens to the policy choices made by governments. They are chosen by political actors and, once in existence, have political consequences for those actors. They are an important object of study for anyone interested in the political process, and in this book we subject them to systematic analysis. In addition to some comparative chapters, the book contains full accounts of the operation of electoral systems in 22 countries: France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Israel, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Ireland, Hungary, Russia, Australia, Canada, India, the USA, Japan, New Zealand, Chile, and South Africa. The book provides detailed analyses of the operation of a diverse set of electoral systems in their national context. Each chapter explains how the electoral system really works in the given country, examining the strategic incentives the system provides to voters, candidates, and parties. All country chapters have a common format and structure. Successive sections analyse: the institutional context; how each electoral system was chosen historically; how the current electoral system operates (the rules, mechanics, and ballot structure); and the political consequences of the current system (the impact on the party system, the internal life of parties, and the impact on parliament and government formation). Each country chapter then contains a final section which focuses on the politicization of electoral institutions. In recent years many countries have changed their electoral systems, either entirely or in part so there is a strong focus on the processes of electoral reform, both historically and prospectively. The book concentrates on the real world 'politics', as well as the 'political science' of electoral systems. The book will be of interest to those concerned with the practical political business of electoral reform. The book contains a wealth of evidence about the performance of various kinds of proportional representation and of non-PR systems. This will be invaluable for anyone interested in the question: 'What would be the best electoral system for my country?'

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目录: PART I INTRODUCTION: ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS RESEARCH

1 Introduction to Electoral Systems

2 Comparative Electoral Systems Research: The Maturation of a Field and New Challenges Ahead

3 Why Are There So Many (or So Few) Electoral Reforms?

PART II SINGLE - MEMBER CONSTITUENCY SYSTEMS

4 Australia: The Alternative Vote in a Compliant Political Culture

5 Canada: Sticking to First - Past - the - Post, for the Time Being

6 France: Stacking the Deck

7 India: Two - Party Contests within a Multiparty System

8 The United Kingdom: Plurality Rule Under Siege

9 The United States of America: Perpetual Campaigning in the Absence of Competition

PART III MIXED SYSTEMS

10 Germany: Stability and Strategy in a Mixed - Member Proportional System

11 Hungary: Holding Back the Tiers

12 Italy: A Case of Fragmented Bipolarism

13 Japan: Haltingly Towards a Two - Party System

14 New Zealand: The Consolidation of Reform?

15 Russia: The Authoritarian Adaptation of an Electoral System

PART IV CLOSED - LIST SYSTEMS

16 Israel: The Politics of an Extreme Electoral System

17 South Africa: One Party Dominance Despite Perfect Proportionality

18 Spain: Proportional Representation with Majoritarian Outcomes

PART V PREFERENTIAL LIST SYSTEMS AND PR - STV

19 Austria: A Complex Electoral System with Subtle Effects

20 Belgium: Empowering Voters or Party Elites?

21 Chile: The Unexpected (and Expected) Consequences of Electoral Engineering

22 Denmark: Simplicity Embedded in Complexity (or is it the Other Way Round)?

Chapter 23 Finland: One Hundred Years of Quietude

24 The Netherlands: The Sanctity of Proportionality

25 Ireland: The Discreet Charm of PR - STV

PART VI CONCLUSION

26 Conclusion

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政治制度论

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