

The proportionality principle and the weighted majority rule

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In order to reveal how the principle of proportionality, which advocates the distribution of influence in a decision in proportion to individual stakes, can be morally justified by the lights of the principle of utility, we need to spell it out in terms of a specific democratic decision rule. The weighted majority rule can be suggested as such an – ideal – decision rule. In order for the justification to go through, voters are assumed to be rational, self-interested, informed about their stakes, and to vote "sincerely": only if voters get votes in proportion to their stakes and actually vote according to their stakes, will the decision rule ensure optimal outcomes, in terms of utility.

It may be objected that the sincere vote assumption is unnecessary, since there is a way of handling strategic voting, understood in terms of logrolling: if we take into account all the options involved in logrolling, and recalculate the stakes, the problem will disappear. However, it can be shown that in some cases, "insincere" voting is both rational for the self-interested, stakes-informed voter and effects suboptimal outcomes.

Thus, the sincere vote assumption is necessary. But can it be squared with the assumptions of rationality, self-interest, and stakes-informedness? I argue that this presupposes yet another assumption: that every voter is ignorant regarding the other voters' stakes. This specific ignorance assumption, however, has problematic implications for the other assumptions: either the self-interest assumption must be interpreted to exclude other-regarding considerations, or the stakes-informedness assumption collapses. The latter is unacceptable; thus, the weighted majority rule ultimately relies on the problematic ideal of the self-regarding (egoistic) voter.