

Three ways to make democratic choices

(www.WiseDemocracy.org)

	<u>#1 Voting</u>	<u>#2 Consensus</u>	<u>#3 Co-sensus</u>
Result	A group “ decision ” where one option is selected from many, weighing options then judging.	A consensus , where a proposal is made and adapted as people share their concerns. Ultimately most everyone consents.	A “ co-sensus ” ... a unanimous choice that evolves via creative shifts and breakthroughs. People seek what’s best until everyone “just knows.”
Description	Voting is a summing of individual judgments allowing large groups to make decisions in a short time. There are many schemes for voting besides just “majority rule.”	Proposals evolve until they become acceptable to each person. Individuals can block progress, so for it to work, people need to trust one another and possess high communication skills.	The quality of thinking is “choice-creating,” where people face a difficult issue collaboratively and creatively, seek win/win answers, and achieve a unanimous choice through shifts and breakthroughs.
Strengths	Voting is explicit, like Parliamentary Procedure. Group decisions can be reached quickly and openly, even among many.	Decisions are characterized by thoughtfulness and caring. The process builds individual relationships and a spirit of community.	Breakthroughs on impossible-seeming issues can be achieved. Diverse views help to generate a unified perspective, and an empowered “we.”
Weaknesses	Can generate adversarial battles and a disaffected minority; people can use the rules as an obstacle to progress. The battling and procedures can deaden people’s support.	Can only be used among small numbers; can take a long time; one person can hold the group hostage; and end results can be overly compromised. Requires skill and willingness from each person.	Dynamic Facilitation (DF) skills are needed. It requires authenticity so doesn’t work well with representatives. Can feel chaotic to participants and it’s difficult to track group progress, until shifts happen.
The facilitator or moderator ...	Helps the group proceed through pre-set steps. This requires knowledge of the process but not lots of training.	Has broad powers but relies on participants to follow the guidelines. Skills of participants can compensate for an unskilled facilitator.	Must be skilled in Dynamic Facilitation, which makes people’s gifts available, even when they are emotional and prone to lash out.
The ideal participant ...	Is rational, articulate and knowledgeable about the topic and the procedures.	Diplomatically speaks his/her truth and adjusts his views for the good of the group.	Cares about the issue and speaks authentically from the heart, without self-censoring.
Feelings and conflicts are ...	Not addressed ... may be declared out of order.	Often pursued as a goal in themselves.	Reframed into concerns or challenges. People are helped to speak with feeling.
Model of change is ...	Trust in judgment, reason and logic. Independent judgments can be summed into a collective judgment.	Trust in the consciousness of people to be respectful of one another and to give up something to help the whole.	Trust in the ability of the DF’er to create a thinking field, where genius is released and where something new emerges.
Forms of democracy	“Representative Democracy,” “Deliberative Democracy,” “Direct Democracy,” etc. These processes ultimately result in a power struggle.	True democracy is held to be an ideal, requiring that the people come together in consensus. But as long as we assume “decision-making” it is impossible to reliably achieve consensus on a large scale.	“Wise Democracy” is where all people are included, express themselves naturally, yet where a unanimous voice emerges. To achieve this requires choice-creating, not decision-making.

*This chart benefitted from an article by Tom Atlee and Rosa Zubizarreta, *Comparison of Roberts Rules of Order, Consensus Process and Dynamic Facilitation*.