



V. Decision-making models for peer groups

In the section above on Community Building, I proposed one model of **decision-making** for a Type One Community. But what are the alternatives?

Negative models

There are two polar extremes here, with many distorted variants in between.

- **Oppressive autocracy.** The leader makes decisions unilaterally, without consulting others. The decision is made and acted on before anyone else can have a say. The leader has taken this power; it has not been freely and formally given by those who are subject to it.
- **Messy democracy.** A peer group in which everyone compulsively falls over backwards to avoid being seen to be authoritarian. This compulsion means that the group never clarify how decisions are to be made, but slips unawaresly into pseudo-consensus - there is a tacit assumption that a decision will somehow emerge out of the group as a whole. This model tends toward stagnation and disintegration of communities, with effective programme planning at a very low ebb.

Positive models

All the positive models, by definition, are intentionally chosen by the peer group - which commits itself to apply a model and follow it through for a given period, then review the matter.

- **Autonomous initiatives.** The group agree that it is open to anyone to start up some activity on her own initiative, and negotiate with others to pursue it. This is creative anarchism - in the original and constructive sense of that term. The group will, of course, need some regular forum for negotiating individual plans, and some publicity mechanism for circulating regularly details of forthcoming events.
- **Open agenda and majority vote.** It is open to anyone in the group to put forward items for decision, i.e. to help build the agenda. Each item is decided by majority vote after appropriate discussion. The group have to agree whether they use a simple majority, a 75% majority or whatever.
- **Open agenda and consensus.** As before about the agenda, but decisions are taken on an agreed majority vote but only when the opposing minority are satisfied that they have been adequately heard and that they have been properly understood.
- **Open agenda and unanimity.** As before about the agenda, but only those items are put into action about which everyone agrees. Either the group stay with an agenda item until they achieve unanimity, or they abandon it.

- **Open agenda and consultative leader (rotating).** As before about the agenda, but decisions are taken by the appointed (rotating) leader, after anyone who wishes has expressed an opinion on the item under discussion. The leader's decision, while it will wisely take into account the views expressed by those present, is not bound to reflect it. The leader exercises personal judgement and decision in the light of what has been said by others, but she does not simply echo or summarize or gather the sense of what they have said.
 - **Open agenda and gathering chairperson (rotating).** As before about the agenda. The appointed chairperson gives space for all who will to speak on an item, and then, without any voting procedure, gathers the sense of the discussion into a final decision. She seeks to be a mouthpiece for the balance of wisdom in the group.
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