

## **CCOI Cooperative Governance Workshop - Terms & Definitions Handout**

**WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?** One useful definition of governance is: “The systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, supervision and accountability of an organisation.” (Chris Cornforth Governance Overview, Governance and Participation project, Co-operatives UK, 2004)

**Cooperative Governance** is the act of steering cooperatively-owned enterprises toward economic, social, and cultural success. It consists of answering key questions, **defining** roles and responsibilities, and establishing processes for setting expectations and ensuring accountability

**Consensus Decision Making** is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using **consensus** is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with.

As a decision-making process, consensus decision-making aims to be:<sup>[2]</sup>

- **Agreement Seeking:** A consensus decision-making process attempts to generate as much agreement as possible.<sup>[2]</sup>
- **Collaborative:** Participants contribute to a shared proposal and shape it into a decision that meets the concerns of all group members as much as possible.<sup>[3]</sup>
- **Cooperative:** Participants in an effective consensus process should strive to reach the best possible decision for the group and all of its members, rather than competing for personal preferences.
- **Egalitarian:** All members of a consensus decision-making body should be afforded, as much as possible, equal input into the process. All members have the opportunity to present, and amend proposals.
- **Inclusive:** As many stakeholders as possible should be involved in the consensus decision-making process.
- **Participatory:** The consensus process should actively solicit the input and participation of all decision-makers.<sup>[4]</sup>

**Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with.** This ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. Through listening closely to each other, the group aims to come up with proposals that work for everyone. By definition, in consensus no decision is made against the will of an individual or a minority. If significant concerns remain unresolved, a proposal can be blocked and prevented from going ahead. This means that the whole group has to work hard at finding solutions that address everyone's concerns rather than ignoring or overruling minority opinions.

### **Majority Rule Democracy/ Decision Making:**

Majority rule decisions are made when more than half the group votes in favor. This process is used frequently in democracies, and rarely in organizations. Majority decisions, as with any voting situation, risk that you won't have full support and that those not in agreement with the majority may do something less than helpful later. It also carries the possibility of establishing an "us" versus "them" mentality. Some groups set varying majority rule minimums, instead of 51% percent of the group agreeing, it might be that 80% or 90% majority must agree on a decision to implement it. Source: <https://www.artsfwd.org/6-types-of-group-decisions/>

### **Sociocracy (Dynamic Governance) / Consent-Based Decision-Making**

Sociocracy is a system of governance that is an effective method of organizing collaborative and productive organizations as well as a social ideal that values equality and the rights of people to decide the conditions under which they live and work. The method was developed in the Netherlands and is practiced worldwide by various types of organizations, both small and large. A key innovation is its structural approach to improving communication and decision-making.

There are three principles that are essential to sociocracy- consent-based decision-making, circles, and double linking. Decisions are made with the consent of those they most directly affect. Consent is defined not as agreement, but as "no objections." One can consent as long as the proposed decision will not adversely affect one's ability to work toward the aims of the group.

Resource for Intentional Communities/Cooperatives Using Sociocracy:  
<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/community/>

### **People's Assembly Model**

A People's Assembly is a gathering of people organized and assembled to address essential social issues and/or questions pertinent to a community. Social Movements throughout history and around the world have used assemblies to make decisions. Movements, particularly in the Global South – Africa, Asia, and Latin America have used assemblies to advance the practice of people power, self-determination, and governance.

People's Assemblies can take place on different levels. It's up to the participants of the Assembly to set up the agenda and the way to facilitate. The dialogue can start by participants answering a survey and engaging in a discussion regarding any issues in their communities. Participants come up with solutions or alternatives through a consensus-building process, meaning that if there are two opposing or related ideas then through further discussion a new idea might be born that embraces the collective consciousness of the group. Participants might decide to establish commitments to action and if needed, take up tasks or committees before they re-convene. An Assembly can take from a couple of hours to several days.

Resources: <http://www.peoplesmovementassembly.org/what-is-an-assembly/>  
[http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/hrccr/c\\_huerta\\_pa.html](http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/hrccr/c_huerta_pa.html)