Some Examples of Cooperative Decision-Making

Eight people want to go out to dinner together and are trying to decide on a restaurant
(thanks to Susan Sandler for this example)

Decision Process	Description	Comments
Unanimity	Everyone's first choice happens to be a Mexican restaurant.	Nice if it works out that way and quick to decide, but doesn't happen very often.
Convincing Argument	One person likes a French restaurant — after describing it, everyone is convinced that this option is better than their original preference.	Sometimes works but frequently doesn't.
Follow a Popular Leader	One person wants to go to a German restaurant — everyone else wants to do whatever that person wants more than they want their own food preference; or they believe that that person knows better what is best for the group than they do.	Easy to make decisions this way, but often based on people's low self-esteem or cultish devotion to a leader
Compromise	Some want to go to a Vietnamese restaurant, some want to go to a seafood restaurant, and some want to go to McDonalds so they decide to go to the seafood restaurant this time, the Vietnamese restaurant next time, and to McDonalds after that; or they decide to go to another Vietnamese restaurant that serves Vietnamese dishes, seafood, and hamburgers, but none of the food is very good.	Nobody gets exactly what they want, but everyone gets part of what they want and everyone is treated fairly.
Implicit Majority	If 5 people want to go to the Vietnamese restaurant, 2 want to go to the seafood restaurant, and 1 wants to go to McDonalds, they could decide to go the Vietnamese restaurant since that is what most people want — the others agree that they do not want to get in the way of what most people want. Without a formal vote, the group goes with the majority.	Usually satisfies most people, but the minority may feel ripped off, especially if they must defer too many times.
Intensity of Preferences	Maybe the 5 who want Vietnamese food are mostly interested in eating unusual food, the 2 who want seafood don't like spicy food, and the person who wants to go to McDonalds cannot afford to spend more than $3. Here the people who don't like spicy food have a stronger reason not to go to a Vietnamese restaurant than the people who like unusual food have a reason **to** go so it takes precedence; but the person who wants to go to McDonalds absolutely cannot go to the other more expensive places, whereas everyone else can go to McDonalds — so they decide to go to McDonalds.	A type of least-common-denominator process that is often not very satisfying.
Meeting Everyone's Needs ("True Consensus")	They decide to go to a Japanese restaurant (unusual, but not spicy) and everyone chips in to cover the cost for the poor person	• Everyone's true needs are met and a solution is found that everyone feels excited about. • Not a compromise or amalgam of people's original preferences, but a "third way."

- People trying to use consensus, use all of these processes
- The last option is probably the best and is usually thought of as closest to the spirit of consensus — a "true consensus"
- Notice that each of these solutions could have been reached **cooperatively** (everyone truly agrees that the solution is best), **through coercion** (people reluctantly go along with the decision only because they are intimidated or mesmerized), or **through exhaustion** (people go along because they are tired or they don't know how to come up with a better solution) — consensus is the spirit, not just the process
- All are fine as long as they are cooperative, but strive for the last one