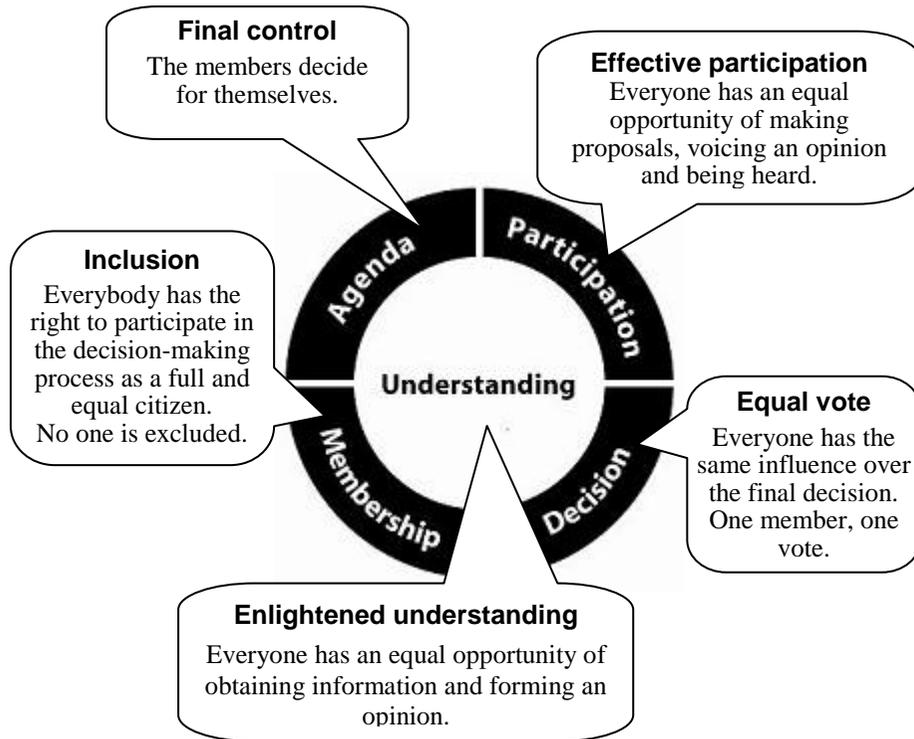
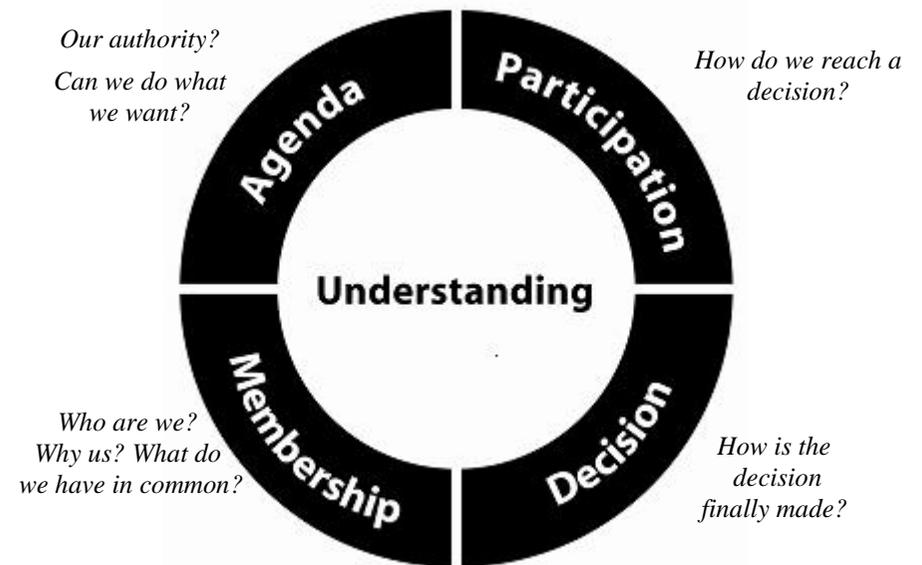


C. Characteristics of a democratic process



From the time when people first realize they have something in common until they have got down to business, it may take quite a while to reach a decision and carry it out. But whether this process takes an hour or a year, it can be divided into four phases. And be it within a working team, a sports association or a country – a wholly democratic process must meet a set of five conditions or criteria: *Inclusion*, *Final control*, *Effective participation*, *Equal vote* and *Enlightened understanding*.



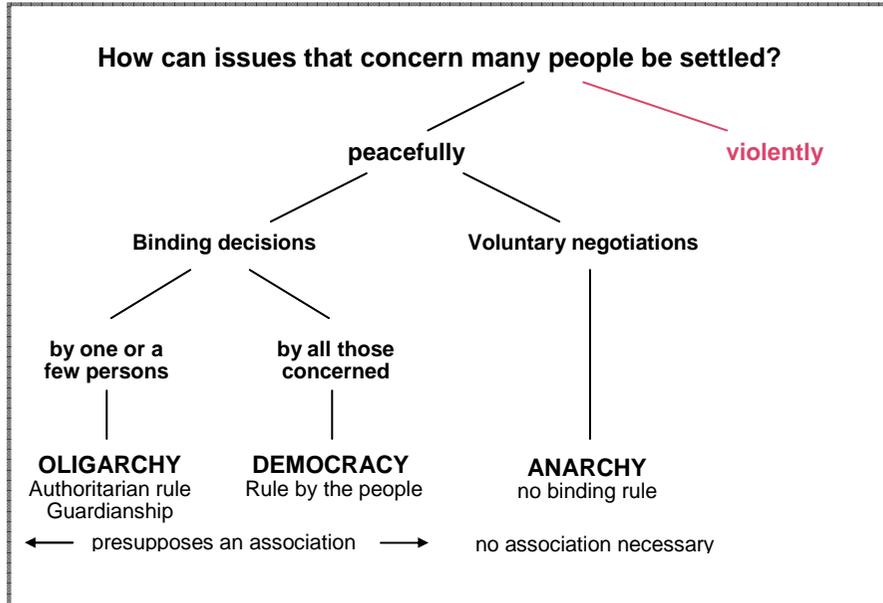
An ABC of democracy

Every day and in a variety of situations decisions are made that affect many people. When should that process be democratic? Or, to be more specific:

- A. What are the alternatives to democracy?
- B. When is democracy to be preferred, and on what grounds?
- C. If one wants a democratic process, how to set about it?

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A. What alternatives are there?



This general outline of alternative forms of rule was put forward by Aristotle more than 2 500 years ago. Today this approach has been elaborated into a general theory by the political philosopher Robert A. Dahl in his book *Democracy and its critics* (Yale 1989).

One of the main points of this model: if you want to make decisions in a democratic way, it must be done within the framework of an association. Without a community, no democracy.

Authoritarian rule also presupposes an association, but does not allow all those concerned to participate in the decisions, either directly or indirectly.

B. Why democracy?

Guardianship rests on the assumption that there is an elite more qualified than others to make decisions for all concerned.

Which issues call for collective decision-making? When is personal freedom so important that *anarchy* – a system without any binding rules – is preferable?

Democracy is a middle course, based on a sharing of power, where the following fundamental principles apply:

1.

There is actually an association that can make joint decisions on certain matters.

Community

2.

Equal consideration is paid to the interests of each and every member.

Equal consideration

3.

The members are sufficiently mature to be the best judge of their own interests.

Personal autonomy