

Decision Making Tools

Online decision making tools and projects

The Decider - <http://labs.riseup.net>

A very simple site that helps groups to make decisions online. It enables the creation of "issues" (e.g. how should we spend this £1000?) and "options" (e.g. i) go on holiday ii) put it in a saving account iii) other). Users can then vote on how good they think each option is and/ or create a new option.

VoSnap - <http://vosnap.com>

VoSnap allows you to rapidly solicit the opinion of your social or business networks. Working seamlessly with SMS and email their system allows you to solicit a vote in a snap.

Smartocracy - <http://smartocracy.net/>

Smartocracy is an experiment in "augmented democracy", a meritocratic social network for collective decision-making. Each participant gets 10 votes to give away, and gets to exercise those votes given to them.

Smartocracy is a dead-simple social network, where a link from User A to User B is effectively a "proxy assignment" of one vote. In giving User B a proxy, User A is designating them as someone they trust to make good decisions.

The idea is to combine the best of direct and representative democracy and creates a true meritocracy where merit is decided at the individual level, but aggregated for collective use. See also, *Liquid Democracy* links under Further Reading

DemoEx - <http://demoex.net/eng>

The "Democracy Experiment", DemoEx is Direct Democracy Political Party in Sweden that enables members to propose and vote on policies. *Your Party* <http://yourparty.org.uk> is a similar effort in the UK (although the law here means members cannot dictate how their councillor or MP, if elected, votes). Mikael Nordfors (author of Democracy 2.1, see Further Reading below) was involved with this project but they eventually adopted a non-delegative voting system.

Gnuvernment – <http://decisions.gnuvernment.org>

Offline decision making tools

Dotmocracy - <http://dotmocracy.org>

Dotmocracy is an established facilitation method for collecting and prioritizing ideas among a large number of people. It is an equal opportunity & participatory group decision-making process. Participants write down ideas and apply dots under each idea to show which ones they prefer. The final result is a graph-like visual representation of the groups collective preferences.

Who Wants To Be? - <http://whowantstobe.co.uk>

A unique gameshow where the players design and enact the rules about how they are going to spend the prize money.

Further Reading

Democracy 2.1: How to make a bunch of selfish people work together -

http://open.coop/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=88

! get description from open.coop/background+docs page

Liquid Democracy

! get text from wiki.uniteddiversity.com/liquiddemocracy

Collective Book on Collective Process - <http://www.geocities.com/collectivebook/>

A handbook exploring democratic process within egalitarian collectives. Its focus is on the often unrecognised negative dynamics that can occur when people try to work collectively, the problems that develop and possible approaches toward fixing those problems. It is a collaborative word-in-progress and everybody is invited to contribute

Participation Works - 21 techniques of community participation

The rhetoric says that Participation Works! But what does participation really mean and what makes it really happen? Participation Works! contains twenty-one proven techniques from around the world. It shows how to choose between them, how to use them properly and where to go for more information. With this book, you can prove that the rhetoric is true:

Participation Works! Published by the new economics foundation

<http://www.neweconomics.org>

Seeds for Change – <http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk>

Offer training and facilitation in consensus decision making. Lots of very helpful info sheets and downloads on their website.

Deliberative Structure -

http://www.uk.openingpolitics.org/index.php?title=Deliberative_structure

A deliberative structure is central to an online deliberation scheme. It allows participants to express their views in a semi-structured way (that is, a little more disciplined than plain text and a little less disciplined than formal databases).

The best-known lineage of deliberative structures was started by Horst Rittel at Berkeley in the US in the 1970s; It was eventually developed into the gIBIS hypertext system in the 1980s, a predecessor to the World Wide Web that supported many semantic web features. The most interesting of which was the division of statements into issues and positions so that a neutral issue statement and biased position statements could be accommodated on the same page. There were two direct descendants of this work by 2007:

- The question/idea/pro/con model championed by Jeff Conklin, suitable for dialogue mapping and early brainstorming
- The issue/position/argument or issue/policy/argument model implemented by the

Green Party of Canada Living Platform, Living Agenda, openpolitics.ca, and let.sysops.be, first documented fully (as time/ issue/ position/ argument/ source/ evidence/ authority form by anonymous trolls at meta.wikipedia.org; This mimics the classic deliberative structure used in adversarial process such as a criminal court, and merely accelerates it via online deliberation in mediawiki or tikiwiki, for which software the conventions have been must fully developed to date.

Arguments for IPA

- Issues are presumed to be stable and persistent, and to change only slowly with broad public opinion or scientific consensus, possibly over decades - this favours input from a huge number of people over a long period of time and makes deep framing by one faction more difficult than in the other forms which favour moderators and regular users
- Positions are not just "ideas" but are ideally actual committed political or legal positions to which someone has attached a name or reputation - for instance, the positions taken by parties during actual elections
- When the legitimacy of an argument is questioned, IPA allows for regress along the same lines exactly as academic matters require: evidence/source/authority. First evidence is examined, and also its source if that is questioned, and ultimately an authority that can state the source to be valid or unbiased (e.g. a magistrate) may have to declare whether a source is valid or not. For instance, whether evidence came via legal channels or not.
- IPA maps easily onto meeting agendas as was done by openpolitics.ca and facilitates pre-existing organization protocols as required by corporate or party or agency charters.