

Einführung in das **SK-Prinzip**



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Respect for one people shows up in dealing with his no

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SK-Principle®

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foreword

For advocates of gender neutral language and on our own behalf (Insert - off topic)

Originally, I made an honest effort to "gender" my writings and lectures. But the many inner iss and slashes were, in my eyes, a crime against the aesthetics of the German language. And it was a gauntlet run. Because, to be honest, I don't think in slashes.

I do not like to commit crimes or run the gauntlet. So the second attempt was a foreword with the usual blah blah blah: I would always use the masculine form in cases that apply to both sexes and ask the women to feel addressed by that as well.

That did not please me.

I didn't like it because I'm a systems analyst. So I know that systemic conditions shape how people behave, think, and feel. So language (it is part of the system we live in) also shapes our behaviour, thinking and feeling.

Therefore a theoretical "self-experiment": what if I always use the female form?

I didn't like that either. To feel meant as a man when I say, for example, »the Citizen" writing somehow made me uncomfortable. Also, I don't think it's a wise solution to solve a problem by moving the exact same problem somewhere else (there may be exceptional cases, but generally...as I said).

The third attempt was quite traditional, only in male form - eyes closed and through. But I'm not satisfied with that either. As I said, as a systems analyst, I know that system conditions shape people's behavior and I don't want to be made an accomplice in a system that disadvantages women.

So I propose a different thought structure. Let's take the gender of words and articles and reduce them to what they are: just words. Let's drop the "gender" as a grammatical category. "Sex" is a biological property of the beings denoted by the words. Only beings have biological properties –

not words.

Then we have genderless articles: "der", "die" and "das". And we have three genderless categories of nouns: "the-words," "the-words," and "the-words."

For example, "door" is a (genderless) "the-word", "oven" is a (genderless) "the-word". And "girl" is a genderless "the-word." Nobody comes for that

to the idea that a girl is not female. The article says nothing about the biological sex of the being described. No one believes that the fork and the spoon can produce offspring together (the knife?), we know: not all finches are male, not all tits are female and not all robins are asexual. Nature (fortunately) proves us wrong. The "woman" is certainly not neuter, the "team" is not (always) female, and if the "bottom" were really male, I would have a big problem with being trampled on. The list of examples enumerated could be extended almost indefinitely considering the many non-biological words assigned a gender through this misuse of biological categories. Even "the thing," though eponymous for the "neuter" category, is "feminine."

Because of this way of thinking, "citizen" is a genderless "the-word" in the singular, and a genderless "the-word" in the plural. All plurals are genderless "the-words." Up to this point, the symmetry of the language seems to me to have been well preserved. Since all plural forms are "the-words," the rare exceptions (e.g., "person" is a genderless "the-word" in both singular and plural; the "girl" quoted above is also an exception) a slight overhang of "the words". But these exceptions are so rare that I don't believe that one arises

could become a problem.

I have thus "emasculated" all "citizens" and designated them by a genderless word.

Of course, that can't go well in the long run. We need both male and female citizens (what nice, easy spelling is now possible!). So for women there is still "the citizen" and "the citizen". In order not to put men at a disadvantage, I suggest adding the German language. In analogy to the female form (and to other languages) I will refer to the male citizen as »Bürgeron« and the majority of male citizens as »Bürgerone«. There is the "Doktoron" (that's always a man), the "Doktorin" (that's always a woman), the "Doktorinnen" (those are only women), the "Doktorone" (those are only men), and then the genderless "doctor" (that is a man or a woman) as well as the genderless "doctors" (that are men and women). Even the abbreviations could be symmetrical: Dr.in and Dr.on.

It will take some time to get used to the new thought structure. But at some point (I hope soon; maybe Germanists and standardization committees can also contribute something) it could really be common knowledge that men are really only meant if there is an "on" or "one" at the end. Women could then (I hope) move away from »der

Citizens" feel just as addressed without inner discomfort as men do today with "the person"¹ .

A clear definition of the term, adopted by those affected, would suffice to solve a social problem. I wish it was more often would be that easy...

PS: I developed the ideas developed here on the basis of a consensus. Many women also have this - they were even slightly in the majority; including active feminists – participated. We approached the solution presented here step by step: initially with great resistance to the proposals, which were continuously improved and thus pointed the way to the current proposal. So far it has met with great acceptance from all my previous test readers² – including the active feminists mentioned.

¹ Of course, like nouns, all pronouns are genderless and fall into the same categories as nouns. Not even "he", "she" and "it" have a gender, but "he" is a "of the word", "she" is a "the-word" and "it" is a "the-word". But we're used to that, too, because I can say grammatically correct: "A person just walked in. *It* was a man." Or: "A person just walked in. *She* was male"

² I propose the following declension of the ending in the four cases: -one, -one, onen, -one

Part I: Systemic consensus

1. Introduction to Systemic Consensus

I would like to introduce you to a new process for making decisions with many participants. If I just wrote "new procedure," that's not entirely true. Because the process is ancient. You have used it many times yourself. It's so natural to us that we didn't even have a name for it until recently.

To show this, I invite you to observe with me a group of four friends who want to go to a good place to eat together. There are four restaurants to choose from: a Chinese, a Greek, an Italian and a Styrian. Each of the friends has a clear preference. Rainer is for the Chinese, Aaron and Xaver for the Greek and Volker for the Styrian restaurant. For good democrats, the result is clear: the Greeks have a relative majority of two votes and are therefore decided (Table 1).

Now, however, Rainer speaks up and says he has bile problems. He wouldn't eat the mostly greasy food in Greek restaurants, so he really wants to don't eat at the Greek.

How will the four friends decide? Will they say to Rainer "Be quiet, we have voted and the

	Chinesisch	Griechisch	Italienisch	Steirisch
Rainer	X			
Aaron		X		
Xaver		X		
Volker				X
	1	2		1

The four friends vote for their desired restaurant

Table 1

majority decides, so

don't make stories"?

Would friends like that

act would be the

mood at

Restaurant visit safe

disturbed, maybe even the

friendship endangered.

You probably know similar situations and know that friends who respect each other and make sure that everyone feels good when they go to a restaurant together will not make such reckless decisions. On the contrary, they will take Rainer's rejection seriously and no longer consider the Greek restaurant.

Now Aaron and Volker are also reporting concerns about Chinese food, which they don't particularly like. And then Xaver objects to the Styrian restaurant that he was served unfriendly there last time.

When you finally get opinions on Italians, everyone realizes that they really like Italian food. Nobody has any serious objections to this and it is therefore decided...

You decide to go to the Italian. Friends, people who respect each other and take the opinions of others seriously, make accommodating decisions. This makes them stay Friends.

The problem with the decision-making process shown here is, of course, that it can only be used with groups that are small enough to be able to communicate and keep track of dislikes. For larger groups or more alternatives, one has to formalize the procedure for reasons of feasibility.

Measurement of resistance by W voices

Therefore, by allowing each stakeholder to rate their level of opposition to any proposal with opposition votes (W votes), it is possible for anyone to express that opposition express.

0 W votes mean: I have no objection to this proposal.

10 W votes mean: This proposal is unacceptable to me.

Intermediate values are assigned according to feeling.

These were the values of our four friends (Tab. 2):

	Chinesisch	Griechisch	Italienisch	Steirisch
Rainer	0	10	2	2
Aaron	10	0	0	4
Xaver	3	0	3	10
Volker	10	3	0	0
Gruppenwiderstand	23	13	5	16

Table 2

Note the ratings: "0" (i.e. no rejection) is where pro votes were given in the vote, and "10" where one of the friends expressed dislike. The values in the other positions are the emotional intermediate values mentioned.

As you can see, Aaron and Volker have no objections to the Italian either.

If you add up the W votes in each column, you obviously get the resistance that the whole group has towards the respective restaurant. It is easy to see that the group as a whole is in the restaurant with the lowest

group resistance will feel most comfortable. As you might expect, the Italian restaurant received the fewest W votes.

It is obvious: The proposal with the lowest group resistance

- generates the least dissatisfaction in the group, • is accepted most easily by all,
- creates the lowest potential for conflict,
- will be the least combated during implementation and is therefore a sustainable one solution and
- comes closest to consensus.

We call it "consensual". And the process that leads to the consensus proposal is called "consensus."

2. Consensus is not the »path of least resistance«

At this point, the objection is raised again and again that through consensus one would only get lukewarm solutions that nobody stands behind, that nobody wants, for which nobody feels enthusiasm. So none of the four friends voted for the Italian.

In this context, I ask you the question: "If you had to evaluate two proposed solutions to a problem and one of them represents a satisfactory solution to the problem for you, but the other does not, which of the two proposals would you oppose more strongly?" May I assume you would be more opposed to the proposal that *does not solve the problem satisfactorily* ?

That's the way it is with most people, maybe even with all of them. Suggestions that do not satisfactorily solve a problem are met with great resistance and are not consensual. This also applies to the "path of least resistance". If he were proposed and if he didn't solve the problem sufficiently... he wouldn't stand a chance!

We therefore formulate it the other way around: A consensus solution receives a high level of acceptance because it solves the problem satisfactorily and has a minimum of unpleasant side effects. From the group's point of view, it is the most satisfactory solution - taking into account the "side effects". And so it is clear that it is also a high-quality solution.

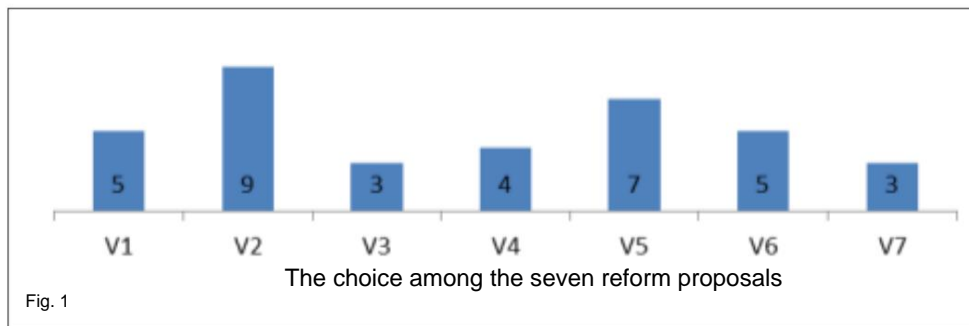
Now you might be wondering what would have happened if Italian food hadn't been to our friends' liking. Well, Systemic Consensus has an answer for that, too. But I can't give you that until later, when you've delved deeper into the process. I promise I'll get back to it.

3. The Language Institute³

Admittedly, the example of the four friends is very simple. I'll tell you now report on a serious conflict in which the SC principle had to prove itself.

It was in the language institute of a large German-speaking university. Students whose native language was not German had to take an exam in German – and of course there were preparatory courses for that. In the beginning there were only a few students who took these courses, but over time the number increased and the original course structure was no longer able to cope with the growing demand.

What do you do in such cases? A working group is set up to work out proposals for reorganizing the study regulations. Seven such proposals were made

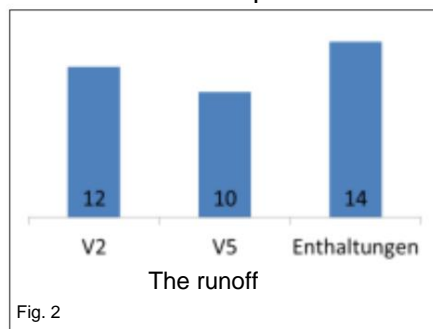


worked out. Her details are for further meaningless, so I won't go into detail on it.

36 instructors and lecturers were employed at the institute. A majority vote among them resulted in (Fig. 1):

- 9 votes (25% of stakeholders) were for proposal V2 and
- 7 votes for V5 second.

If one were to accept V2 because of the 9 supporters (relative majority), 25% of the



Lecturers determined what the remaining 75% would have to follow. An unsatisfactory situation.

How do you react in such a case? A runoff election is organized between V2 and V5. It resulted in (Fig.2)

- 12 votes for V 2,
- 10 votes for V5,
- with 14 abstentions.

³ Due to its resounding success, this example has now become a teaching example and has therefore been published several times: "Paulus, Schrotta, Visotschnig: "Systemic consensus - the key to mutual success", Dank-Verlag, Holzkirchen, 2010" and "Siegfried Schrotta (ed.): "How we make smarter decisions", Styria Printshop Druck GmbH, Gratkorn, 2011", Erich Visotschnig ...

In other words, the real winner of this runoff was the abstentions. Or to put it another way: 14 of the 36 people who took part in the election did not agree with either V2 or V5. It was clear that whichever of the two proposals was accepted, there would be great dissatisfaction among the lecturers.

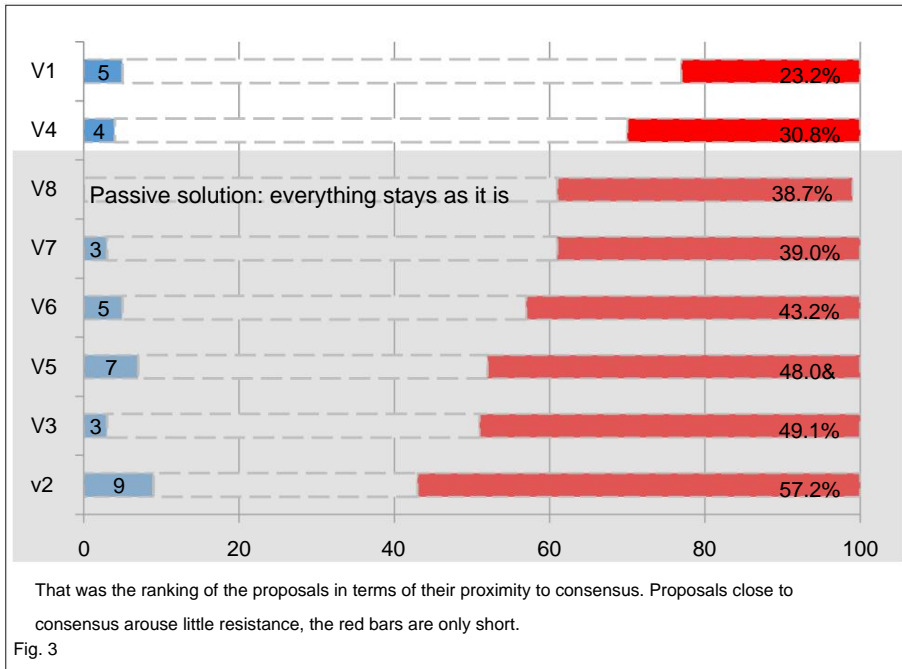
This is when we were contacted. It was just before the holidays, and we made an agreement with the institute management that at the beginning of the new semester we would try to solve the conflict within the framework of a seminar on systemic consensus and subsequent moderation. A week before the scheduled date, we were called by the management of the institute and asked about our cancellation policy. The atmosphere at the institute was already so tense that one had to fear that if the subject were to be taken up again in a seminar, the situation would explode like a bomb and the institute would no longer be able to be controlled.

We were able to reassure the institute management and hold the seminar. At the beginning we told the story of the four friends. And we did something else: Although we didn't understand anything about the subject, we brought in the passive solution as a further suggestion: »Everything stays as it is«. Then we asked those present to all - now 8 - Evaluate proposals with W votes. The result is shown in the diagram in Fig. 6. The blue bars on the left show the number of pro votes for each proposal, as we already know from the diagram in Fig. 10. The red bars on the right represent the percentage of W votes given by all participants. In other words, if all participants had given a proposal 10 W votes, the red bar would go all the way to the left. Accordingly, short red bars mean that the proposal has received little rejection.

The result was not particularly impressive at first glance. However, that changed immediately when we sorted the suggestions according to their group resistance – as shown in Fig. 3 here: It was clear to everyone that all suggestions that were rated equal to or worse than the passive solution we had introduced were not suitable for implementation came.

Suddenly there was cheering among the participants. The unloved proposals V2 and V5 were obviously off the table. And the diagram also showed the origin of the tension that had previously shaped the mood in the institute: proposal V2, which was favored in the vote with a relative majority, was rejected by over 50%, i.e. an absolute majority of the lecturers.

We don't know which of the two best-ranked proposals, V1 or V4, ended up in the



Institute realized
has been, but one
week after ours
We have a seminar
email the
Institute
management received, in
which they thanked and
has reported that
atmosphere at the institute
would have been since the seminar
harmonious again.

With the SK principle, a
large number of
suggestions

be introduced. Theoretically, there can be any number of them. It is only limited by the willingness of those involved to laboriously work their way through a forest of proposals. We have already reached consensus with over 200 proposals, with great enthusiasm from those involved. One of the greatest strengths of consensus lies in this variety of proposals that can be processed. With a large number of suggestions, the chance of a good solution is greater than if there are only a few or even only two. It is therefore possible for all those affected to make suggestions themselves. And finally, we can say goodbye to the black-and-white thinking that we have been used to (and necessary due to the majority principle), and the »And«

allow.

4. The passive solution

In the previous section we spoke of the passive solution. It plays an important role in consensus. As an introduction, a little story:

When Riet Campell was appointed director of the Swiss Ski School Association, he set up an office at home with everything that goes with it. He proudly showed it to his father. He said: "There something missing"

"What's missing? Look, computer, telephone, fax machine, printer, everything is there!"

"There is no sofa"

"I don't need a sofa in my office"

"Don't say that. First thing in the morning when you get into the office is lie down on the sofa and think about what you have to do that day. When you realize that, you think about what will happen when you do that don't get done today, and if nothing happens, you stay just lie down."

I hope you laughed as much as I did at this story. I told you about it as an introduction because I haven't given you a precise definition of the passive solution so far. I remind you that – unlike in history – we are talking about group decisions, in which the consensus-closest alternative is selected from a number of alternatives. This makes it clear that every decision that is made is an active decision of the group. It must also be possible to decide to reject all alternatives offered. But then it is important that everyone involved understands what the consequences are.

Definition of the passive solution

With this we can define the passive solution as "that situation which occurs when the group does not reach a common decision". Therefore, please never forget the passive solution.

Accordingly, to formulate it, please ask yourself the question: "What happens if we don't make a common decision?" and package the situation into a proposal.

"Everything should stay the way it is", "We decide that there will be no joint celebration" or "The boss decides at his own discretion" would be examples.

Formulation of the passive solution

Since it can be difficult to express a well-measured resistance to a negatively formulated statement, you should always formulate the passive answer positively. Or do you find it easy to express measured resistance to the statement "We will not leave"? Rather formulate: "We will stay at home". If the nature of the passive solution requires a negative statement, then use a simple one

"We decide," before the negative statement. Just like we did in the example above "We decide not to have a celebration together". With this little trick the participants can express their resistance to the passive solution without any knots in their brains.

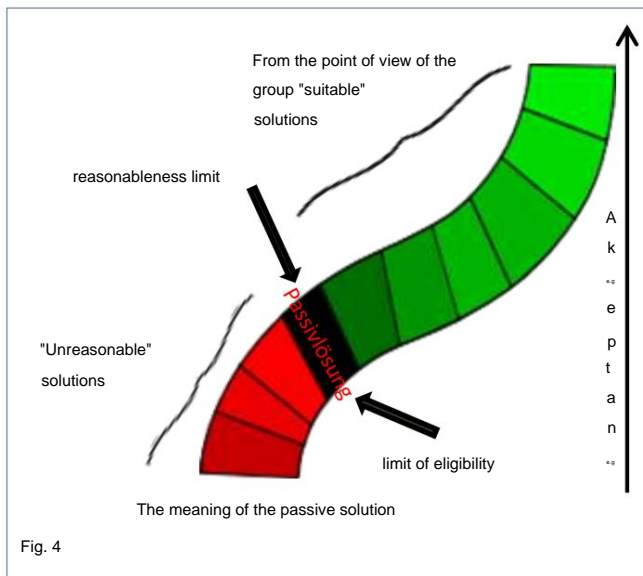
And please: When consensual, *never* forget the passive solution. She fulfills important Features:

The passive solution as a basis for evaluation

Although in Systemic Consensus each proposal can theoretically be evaluated independently of all others, this is more of a theory. In practice, we humans involuntarily compare the individual suggestions with each other, we compare with what we have experienced, with our value system or norms. So before the group can evaluate further suggestions, they should know what happens if they don't come to a joint decision. It is therefore important that the passive solution is known before the assessment begins.

The passive solution as a limit of reasonableness and suitability

As we have seen through our example from Sprachinstitut, the passive solution plays and



their acceptance plays a special role in any consensus. In the graphic Fig. 4 we have sorted the suggestions in a "solution volume" according to their acceptance. The acceptance of the passive solution shows the extent to which the group accepts the unaffected course of events. Because of their definition, "What happens if we don't make a common decision?", the passive solution is the solution that occurs when the group is unwilling to make any joint effort. All other solutions require effort from the group. Therefore, no solution that receives less acceptance than the passive solution is

reasonable for the group:

- the passive solution represents the reasonableness limit for the group.

In addition, any solutions with higher acceptance are obviously preferred by the group to the passive solution. They are therefore all suitable for realization in the eyes of the group:

⁴ except for the order consensus and possibly the choice of persons

- the passive solution represents the limit of suitability, above which the proposals from the group can be considered realizable.

If some proposals are mutually exclusive, those closer to consensus will have priority. For example, in a relationship conflict, the suggestions "Go dancing together again", "Eat in a good restaurant", "In the morning a friendlier good morning greeting" and others could be implemented without mutually excluding one another. On the other hand, dancing and going to the theater at the same time are mutually exclusive.

The passive solution as a measure of the size of the problem

Furthermore, the passive solution is a measure of how serious the problem is in the eyes of the Group is - and thus for the willingness of the group to get involved in the upcoming task / the upcoming problem and its solution:

- if the passive solution has high acceptance, there is little willingness in the group to invest energy,
- If the passive solution has low acceptance, the group will be willing to deal with it
To devote energy and verve to the task at hand/the problem at hand.

The passive solution as a basis for joint discussions

Please imagine the following situation: the neighbors of a kindergarten in a residential complex are fighting against the children using the outdoor area because of the noise pollution. The parents of the children in the kindergarten are of course in favor of it. It seems to be a yes or no question. Both parties try to influence political decision-makers through appropriate lobbying. Due to the tense atmosphere, there have not been any conversations with each other, a first conversation will be held by an SK moderator

moderated.

The atmosphere crackles with tension as the moderator formulates the passive solution: "The decision is made by a political decision-maker". The considerations and motivations that will significantly influence his decision could be:

- Is he a friend of children? Does he have children himself?
- Does his circle of acquaintances consist more of children's friends or children's enemies?
- Are acquaintances or friends directly affected by it? And if so, on which side?
do these stand?
- What power-political effects does the decision have? What influence does he have
Decision on his possible re-election?
- How is he doing on the day of the decision? Was he maybe just angry about children? Or was he perhaps
happy about her?

From the list it can be seen that the well-being of children and local residents either plays little or no role. Actually, the residents of the residential complex deliver themselves to a random decision, they could almost just as easily roll the dice.

Can you imagine that the willingness to talk of those involved increases almost by leaps and bounds after the description of such a passive solution?

The passive solution in conflict moderation

In the case of deeply divided groups, there is always the paradoxical behavior that, in their eyes, the passive solution is completely unacceptable, but that they are nevertheless not willing to constructively seek a solution with all those involved. In such cases, it can be helpful to make these groups aware of the paradox of their behavior by presenting the following three alternatives for their evaluation:

1. I am content with the situation as it is
2. I think I can resolve the conflict completely and in the foreseeable future
realistic
3. I am willing to contribute to solving the conflict in a way that is good for everyone involved
can live with that

Working with a group where the third alternative doesn't get the highest acceptance is at least a gamble...

5. The Power Paradox and Behavior Reversal



The footballer wants to score goals: he doesn't score any value grace

Fig. 5

Please look at those two pictures Fig. 5 and Fig. 6. see in both You athletes in action. But the footballer is focused on scoring goals: for him is Grace totally irrelevant, he spits possibly also on the

Floor. From the dancer couple

but surely no one would spit on the ground on the right. Your success criteria are completely different than those of the footballer.



For the dancers, grace is the A and O of their appearance

Fig. 6

We recognize that people's behavior depends on the success criteria that apply to them. In systemic consensus, a suggestion is agreed if it arouses as little resistance as possible in the group. So, in order to be successful with a proposal, one must try to discern what would and would not arouse resistance in the group. To do this, one must try to understand others and explore their needs in order to accommodate them as much as possible. *The recipe for success in consensus is to be as accommodating as possible.* The art of consensus is therefore to pair one's own interests with the greatest possible accommodation. The latter is no longer based on moral demands, but out of self-interest. What we call the "power paradox" applies: anyone who wants to "push through" egoistic or power-oriented⁵ proposals will reap resistance and will therefore be unsuccessful in systemic consensus-building

sentenced.

What I write here so casually and what sounds so obvious is the end of a long development process. My colleague, Siegfried Schrotta, and I sat together for many hours and brooded over it. When we first understood the connections described above, we were almost euphoric. "Systemic consensus is a decision-making tool unsuitable for abuse of power," we wrote. And for the first time we had an idea of what this new decision-making principle could move and change.

⁵ I always use "power" in this script in the sense of "having the authority, opportunity or freedom to decide over people - possibly even against their will".

The new system conditions would, with systemic consistency, result in a total reversal of behavior in groups that make decisions with the help of systemic consensus: Anyone who, as before, tried to push through their wishes more or less casually and as best they could would have to rethink. Those who were not able to do this would deprive themselves of their influence in the group. Only those would have influence in the group who were willing to think not only of themselves but also of the others. Only those who cared about the overall good of the group, who were willing to think collectively, could make a difference. Power-seeking types would be denied influence.

And indeed, we could observe it again and again: groups in which there is consensus,

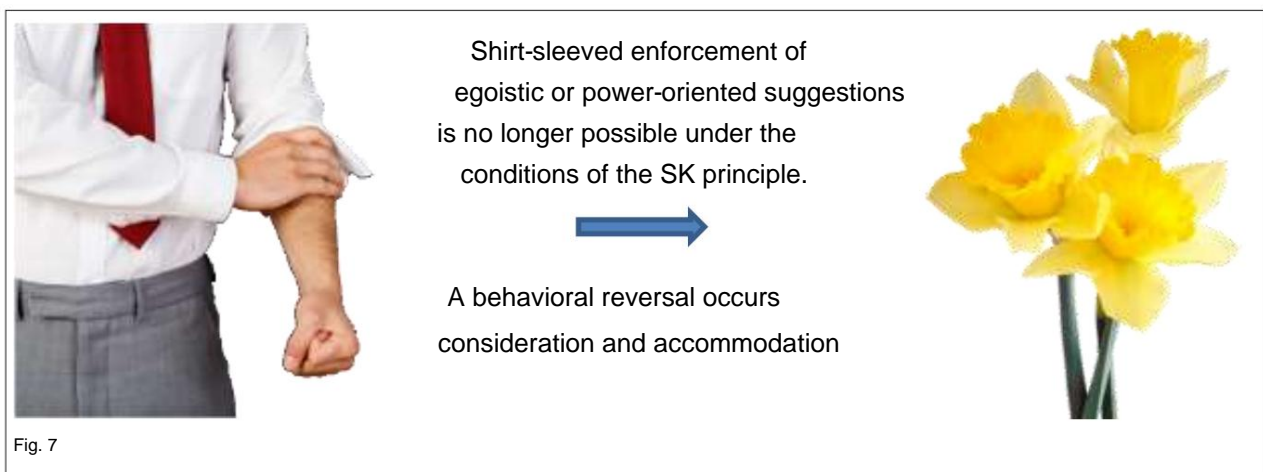


Fig. 7

treat each other with respect, the members feel respected, they feel that they are being listened to, they can contribute by bringing in solutions⁶ themselves, they feel understood, they feel comfortable. Decisions that are made by consensus also encounter little resistance when implemented and are supported by many.

The groups are capable of self-organization. Your decisions are no longer shaped by coincidences that stem from the mindset of individual decision-makers.

It is no longer power games and clever intriguing or tactics in the network of the powerful that bring success, but creativity and collective thinking. This is the reason why the procedure is called "systemic" consensus: it is the system conditions of the consensus that bring about the mutual accommodation of the participants and not appeals to their mental attitude.

⁶ I'll go into more detail on that later

6. The self-cleaning effect

The self-cleansing effect and strategic consensus

Consensus and its conditions of success change people's behavior. Recall Nevertheless, some people can not get out of their skin so quickly: We have

Experienced powerful people who wanted to push through their desired solution even when consensual. Some of these have fared like my two children, who engaged in some kind of power struggle at our first consensus. It was about the banal problem: What's for lunch today (for your understanding: it wasn't everyday life, we were on a camping holiday). The suggested vegetable patties were "hated" by both children (see the 10 W votes in the "Vegetable patties" line in Fig. 8 and Fig. 9). However, the children initially rated it "strategically" (see the columns: "Rainer" and

	Vater	Mutter	Rainer	Volker	Gesamt
Linsen mit Speck	0	8	10	10	28
Gemüse-Laibchen	0	0	10	10	20
Pizza	7	4	0	10	21
Spagetti	4	8	10	0	22

That was the strategic evaluation: the vegetables Patties were consensual

Fig. 8

»Volker« in Fig. 8): they accepted their own desired solution with a 0 W vote, everything else was rejected with a »10«. You can see the result again in Fig. 8: The unloved vegetable jerky agreed.

The two children protested loudly. They wanted to repeat the consensus.

The second time they didn't evaluate strategically anymore. They've used their honest resistance values, whichever suits their tastes at the moment (Fig. 9). They had learned very quickly: people who absolutely want to push through their desired solution by voting 0 for it and all other suggestions with 10

	Vater	Mutter	Rainer	Volker	Gesamt
Linsen mit Speck	0	8	6	7	21
Gemüse-Laibchen	0	0	10	10	20
Pizza	7	4	0	4	15
Spagetti	4	8	5	0	17

That was the honest evaluation: the vegetable fritters were rejected, the pizza was consensual

Fig. 9

Evaluating W votes need a lot of luck for their strategy to work. If they're not that lucky, they leave the decision entirely up to others. They then deprived themselves of their right of co-decision. And it is possible that this will lead to a consensus on a solution that they don't want at all

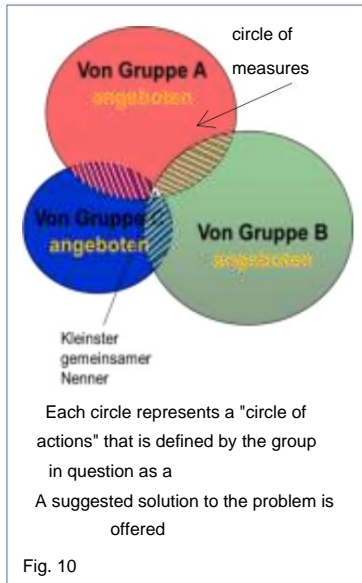
do not want.

Like my children, most learn a lot

quickly how the system conditions of the systemic consensus work and that power-oriented strategies remain unsuccessful. They begin to offer accommodating solutions and honestly evaluate them. We call this the »self-cleaning effect«.

7. Consensus, compromise and the lowest common denominator

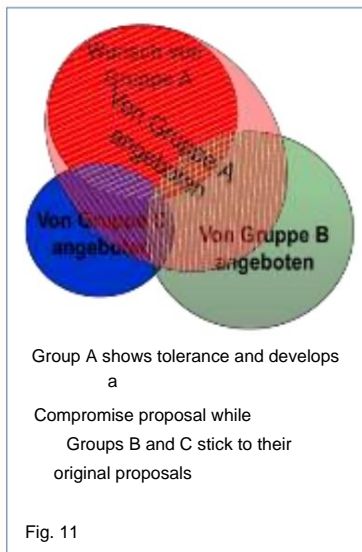
Consensus, compromise and the lowest common denominator are fundamentally different. I would like to demonstrate this to you graphically. And I look at it



three groups – “Group A”, “Group B” and “Group C” – each of which has developed a set of measures as their desired solution to a given problem. Each group offers the others their desired solution as a total solution for everyone.

The overlaps are hatched in the graphic in Fig. 10. It is those parts of the solutions offered that two groups could easily agree on because they are parts of their desired solution. The small white triangle in the middle of the graphic is the part where all three desired solutions overlap: it is the lowest common denominator.

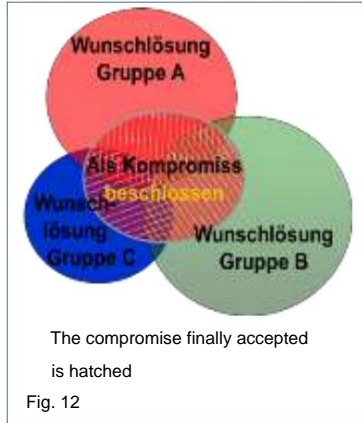
In the graphics, it seems almost absurd that sometimes really only the lowest common denominator is the result of a discussion round. But above all in politics we have seen it happen that one could only agree on the date or the seating arrangement for the next meeting.



Here we shall assume that the groups are more willing to compromise. For demonstration purposes, let's just assume this from Group A, who make a compromise offer while Groups B and C still stick to their preferred solutions. The compromise offer from A (the slightly transparent large pink oval in the graphic Fig. 11) encompasses the entire desired solution of this group, but clearly accommodates the other two groups. The hatched areas indicate which part of a group's desired solution is included in the compromise offer.

Usually, these areas are now the subject of bitter haggling. No negotiator wants to be said to have “let himself be ripped off”

because he allowed another group to achieve a larger part of their desired solution. He would feel shamed, felt he had failed and in front of the group he represents as a bad negotiator

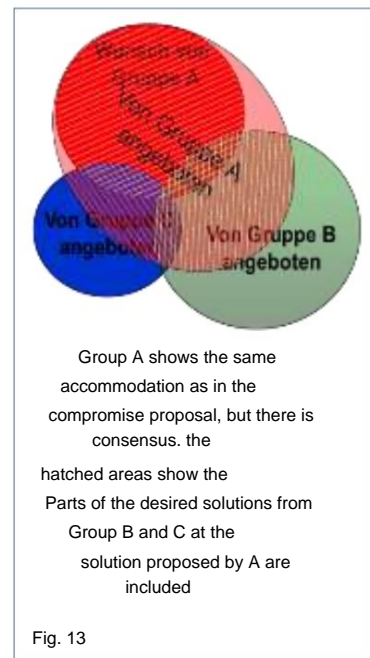


standing there. At least in general this is so. Of course, that makes the negotiations all the more difficult. The solution that results from this compromise offer after long negotiations will probably look like the graphic

Fig. 12.

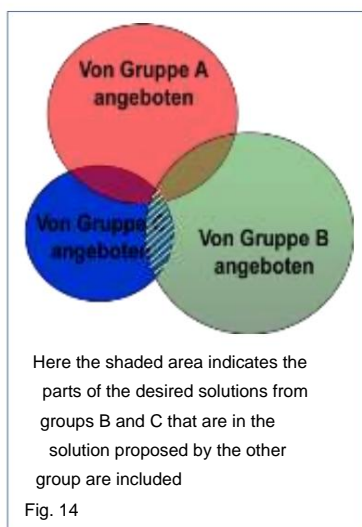
Now we turn to the case when there is consensus. We make the same assumptions as A's compromise offer, so assume the same graph.

For the sake of simplicity, we present the graphic that results from this again in Fig. 13. Again we look at the hatched areas, where we this time focus on groups B and C. As I said, the hatched areas are those parts of the desired solution of the two groups that are included in A's compromise offer. Now let's compare those parts of the desired solutions of the two groups B and C that would be contained in the offers of the other group. This gives us graph 14.

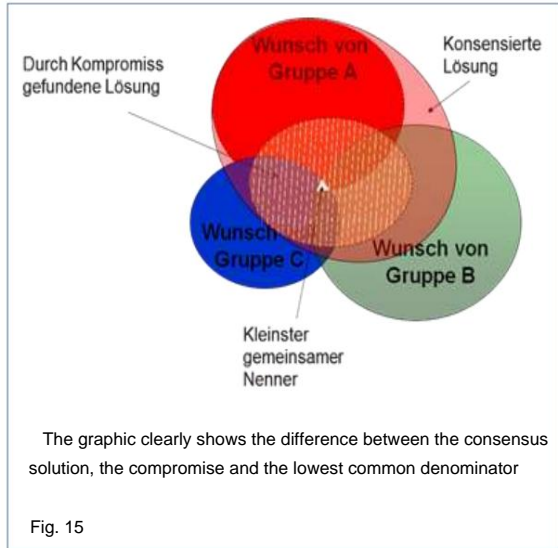


One can easily see that the shaded parts in Graph 22 are much larger than those in Graph 23. In other words, if Group A's proposal is implemented, both Groups B and C will get larger shares of theirs

Desired solution fulfilled, as if the offer of B or C were accepted. One can therefore assume that A's proposal would be agreed upon.



What do we learn from this? Well actually nothing new, we already knew anyway that being accommodating in consensus is the key to success. Group A, which has shown accommodation, can see their entire desired solution accepted, while the other two groups B and C, which have shown no accommodation, only have parts of their desired solution fulfilled. Accommodating is no longer an expression of good will, it is not the fulfillment of a moral or religious requirement, it is simply an expression of self-interest. If you want to be successful, you show concessions.



But what we clearly see is that the lowest common denominator, the compromise and the consensus solution differ significantly. In the order mentioned

through it the pending problem or the upcoming task solved better and better. We do this again in the graphic (Fig. 15). clear.

Let me give you an example: At

A compromise is reached on a fair division a piece of bread. In consensus one seeks

the answer to the question: "How do we satisfy the hunger

of everyone involved?" As a consensual solution, one receives the piece of bread and bacon, while the other receives a piece of cake and an apple.

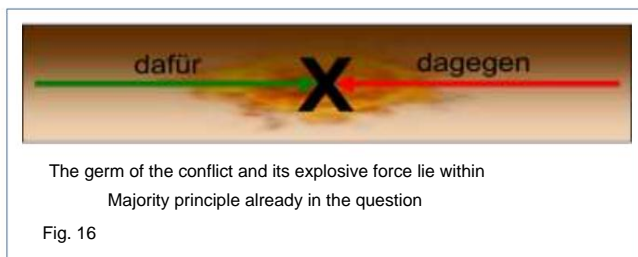
8. Consensus compares only comparables and creates no conflict

If you are a participant in a meeting and someone makes a motion that should be decided by majority vote, the moderator first asks, "Who is in favor of the motion?" A number of hands are raised.

The moderator counts. Then comes the question, "Who is against the motion?" some hands.

Again the moderator counts to finally ask the control question: "Who is abstaining from voting?" Again the votes are counted and if the sum of the counted votes corresponds to the number of people present, the moderator announces the result (Let's hope that there is a match, otherwise the moderator will have problems).

Feel the content of the two questions: "Who is for?" and "Who is against?" not also



already the opposition contained in these questions (Fig. 16)? In addition, when we compare approval and rejection, apples and pears become compared: "Who would like to win a trip to Paris?" "Who would like to eat an apple?"

The answers to both questions are numbers, but their meaningfulness in comparison is rather limited. Just as going to Paris and eating an apple are completely different things and cannot be compared, so too are approval and rejection completely different. I'll address that in the Why Not Pro-Vote?

Do wishes come up short when consensual?"

With the SK principle, on the other hand, similar things are always compared with one another: the acceptance of one suggestion with the acceptance of the others.

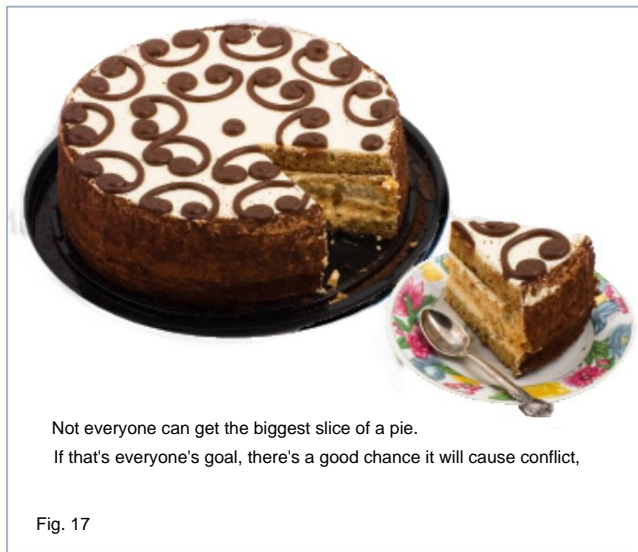
And the procedure creates no cause for conflict. Of course, it is possible that the consensus solution was totally rejected by me. But is that why all those who have not totally rejected this solution are my enemies? Possibly many of them also gave my desired solution a good rating.

On the other hand, are those who totally reject my ideal solution my enemies? Perhaps many of you have the same attitude as I have regarding the consensus solution. And maybe – if the consensus solution is quite acceptable to me – they will pull through

their evaluation helped that I did not agree on solutions that were much more unpleasant for me became.

And one more thing: let's think of a cake that everyone wants the biggest piece of. The conflict that can break out is probably imaginable for all of us. The reason is that there is not an unlimited amount of the cake. Whatever one can gain for oneself is lacking in the other who would like it also.

It's the same with majority voting: everyone wants to rally as many supporters behind them as possible. And since the number of possible followers is limited by the number of voters, it's like the pie where everyone has the biggest piece



would like. There is a high chance that conflicts will arise as a result.

With systemic consensus, on the other hand, you have to try to overcome the resistance minimize. Also resistance is only limited available. The difference is however, that with systemic Consensus nobody have of it would like. Therefore, no battle for rejection will break out. That is why decisions based on the SK principle are so much more peaceful than those based on the majority principle.

Consensus does not produce camp thinking. The conflict energy that would otherwise be wasted in the struggle between the individual camps against each other is diverted into creative energy to search for "better" solutions that can be accepted by as many as possible.

9. Four important questions

When we make a majority decision in a group today, we are used to recognizing it as the final decision. As we have presented systemic consensus up to now, the same applies to the consensus solution proposal. We at the SK team only had to learn over time that the theory behind the decisions made too little difference here. We were totally focused on which of the existing proposals the group should choose. But there were four other questions - the question of authority, concern, obligation and continuation - that were mixed up with it.

The rain dance and the question of authority

So that things don't get too theoretical and dry, let's look at this using a practical example. In a dry summer, twelve men and one woman, who run an organic farm together, sit together. They want to use Systemic Consensus to decide how to deal with the increasing water shortage at the facility. It's a happy group, always ready for a joke.

As a first solution to be implemented immediately, they therefore decide on a rain dance. But after obviously not everyone is in the mood to dance, the question arises: "Who's dancing?"

Again, systemic consensus is used to decide. There are three suggestions to choose from: everyone dances, only the men dance, only the woman dances. How do you think the decision was made given the above composition of the group (twelve men and only one woman)? You guessed it: the woman should dance.

She is outraged. It questions the SK principle as a permissible decision-making principle. Right?

Wrongly, because the problem is different. The root of the problem in this case does not lie in the decision-making principle. The same problem would have arisen with a majority vote. It's a matter of authority. The group does not have the authority to decide on an individual member. She would only be authorized to do so if the woman had been employed as a dancer (with her consent!) by the group. If this is not the case, however, the group is not authorized to make the above-mentioned decision - regardless of the decision-making principle used.

When is a group empowered to make a decision? There is a simple answer: if everyone involved agrees. Those affected can give this consent either express it explicitly or express it by belonging to a group or

Join an organization in which the question of authorization has been properly clarified. This "joining" to the "state" organization can also have occurred through birth in this state.

The commitment and the continuation question

There are resolutions that are not binding for a group but are nevertheless important. The logo of the ecological farm was such a case. A logo should also have an effect on outsiders, so in our case the operators of the farm invited their friends and acquaintances to participate in the decision and both to make designs available and to evaluate the designs. In terms of a fair agreement, it was necessary to inform friends and acquaintances that their judgment would be appreciated, but that the final decision on the logo would remain the sole responsibility of the operators. The consensus of friends and acquaintances was therefore not a binding decision but only a »cooperative decision recommendation«.

Responsible decisions can only be made if everyone is aware of the importance and binding nature of the decision. For this reason, the »binding issue« must be clarified first, especially in the case of important and sensitive problems. "Is the decision we are making here a binding one that all group members are willing to support? Even if it is directed against the interests of individuals? Or is it just a recommendation? Is it just a mood picture of the group?" Perhaps there are other possibilities.

For any clarification of the questions addressed here, a decision is of course necessary again. And that's how we go from bad to worse. Does the group have the authority to make the relevant decision? We postponed this question until later. But even if the group is authorized and answers the binding question with "binding," we have a problem. Actually, one should first have decided whether the decision on the question of liability is binding. And before that, whether the decision on the binding nature of the binding issue is binding. Etc.

This vicious circle is difficult to break out of without patronizing the group. We currently save ourselves by defining: consensus is to clarify the question of liability binding.

The continuation question as an investment in mindfulness

Let us now assume that in the case under consideration the question of binding nature has been clarified and answered with "binding". If a binding decision is then made, this can still lead to problems. And this also applies to systemic consensus.

Those people who feel that they and their 'no' have been ignored because a suggestion is consensual

has been rejected, which they have maximally rejected, can then feel like a loser. We are told of situations in which those affected have turned away from systemic consensus in disappointment.

These situations usually only arose because the process was only partially understood by those involved. If a decision is to be made by a group that is binding for those affected, then it is not enough to reach consensus on a proposal in a single pass. Should this proposal have been totally rejected by individual members, then the »continuation question« must be asked. It is plain and simple: "What do we do next?" This question is then decided by the group through consensus - whereby there is no follow-up question in this decision.

In fact, the follow-up question should *always* be asked: consensus proposals are never final until the follow-up question has been asked and decided. There are two completely different reasons for the continuation question.

I have just indicated reason number one: if there is still strong rejection of the consensus proposal among the members of the group. In this case, please never forget it! I call this form of follow-up question the »mindfulness question«. Most of the time it is not a question at all, but a suggestion that is made. For example: "We should also take into account the remaining rejections better." The reaction of the group is again decided by consensus. It then depends on the energy of the group, on the mood of the group, on their assessment of the chances of finding suggestions that receive less rejection, etc. It can only do so if the group decides not to continue the search for a solution. Give 'losers' whose 'no' is passed over. However, this is no longer a consequence of the procedure, but a decision of the group. The collective 'No' of the group against further search for a solution must be respected and weighs more heavily than the individual 'No' of the individual 'losers'.

However, if the group decides to invest energy to consider the still existing 'no' of some members, then it is our experience that the latter appreciate this effort. And even if bother in then some cases remains unsuccessful, those affected still feel the appreciation that was expressed by it, and they do not leave the decision with the feeling of a loser, but often richly rewarded.

Before I get into the second form of the follow-up question, I can keep a promise. The question of what would have happened if even Italian food had not been to our friends' liking is still open⁷. Well the obvious answer is it would have been one of the other restaurants consensual. After that, an agreement would have been reached on how to proceed as part of the follow-up question. Perhaps one of the friends would have withdrawn his objections. Or you might have thought about putting in a little more effort and considering one or more restaurants that are further away. Perhaps it would have taken several more steps - even the jointly agreed decision: "We're giving up, there is no restaurant in our current environment that we would like to visit together" would have been possible. Be that as it may, all decisions would have been taken with respect for the resistance of each of the friends, nobody would have felt left out.

The continuation question as a test of feasibility

This brings me to the second reason for the follow-up question and the reason why the follow-up question should *always* be asked. The consensus proposal must *always* be checked for feasibility:

- Is it clear to everyone what exactly is meant?
- Is the group authorized to make such a decision?
- If someone is needed to take responsibility for the execution: is there someone who agrees?

- Are there people who are willing to roll up their sleeves to help when running to work?
- Is the necessary expertise available?
- Are the necessary resources available?
- Etc.

Please do not forget the energy that is required for implementation. If no one in the group and the group as a whole is not willing to invest this energy, the proposal cannot be implemented and the consensus is not over yet. The continuation question is as before: "How do we continue?"

The question of voting weight

This is probably the most difficult question to answer. The simplest answer is: a participant's voting weight is based on the degree to which they are affected. But that only shifts the problem.

Example: Motorway through Salzburg – should a speed limit of 80 km/h be introduced to protect residents? If there is consensus on this question (the question is actually not suitable from the point of view of consensus, since there is no open wh-question

⁷ from the section »Consenting Is Not the Path of Least Resistance«

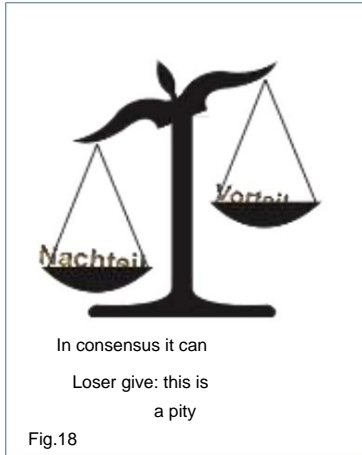
is; but the problem of the degree of impact does not change as a result): How great is the degree of impact of the immediate residents, the people of Salzburg who live further away and the drivers who use the motorway? Do all motorists have the same degree of concern? Those who only drive through occasionally and those who use the Autobahn several times a day?

We currently do not have a universal answer to this question. It seems a promising approach to carry out your own consensus in advance to clarify the voting weight of those affected. In this second consensus, not only those affected should be involved, but a multiple number of participants. These participants would have equal voting weight and should all have an interest in a good outcome of the first consensus. Then the chances are high that, through the wisdom of the many, a fair voting weight distribution for the first consensus will be found

becomes.

10. Are there losers in consensus?

Unfortunately, I have to answer this question in the affirmative: there can be losers. Namely those people who totally rejected the consensus proposal. This is a pity. But it is also an advantage at the same time: the decision cannot be blocked by a veto. And that means two things: first

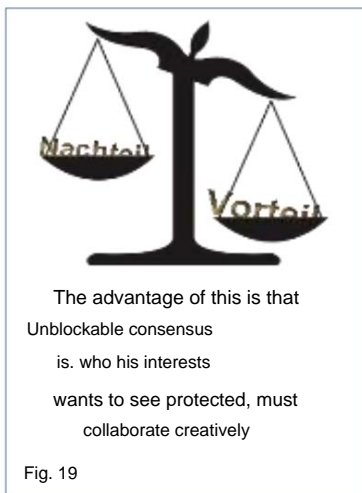


the group is always able to make decisions, and secondly - we will explain this below - this increases the willingness of the individual and thus the group to put creativity into the development of a good solution.

So here's the rationale. When people know they can block any decision they don't like, that's it

Great temptation to sit back: "It should be fine with me if you struggle to find a good solution, I will prevent anything that doesn't suit me anyway." They see no need to make any special effort or being creative, they can protect their interests by saying "no" in the

right place. In addition, often enough their willingness to tolerate them decreases. No wonder: intolerance is becoming a certain thing



rewarded: the veto of the intolerant outweighs the effort of the entire group, which is powerless in the face of the veto. The voting behavior of the five permanent member states in the UN Security Council shows the intolerance that has its origin in the right of veto.

However, if it is clear to everyone that at the end of the search for a solution When the final decision is made and the only way to protect your interests is to package them in a proposal that is acceptable to the group, everyone makes an effort and mobilizes all their creativity to come up with such a proposal.

Please also note what I said about the follow-up question: if the group deals intensively with the "no" of individuals, then they often feel richly rewarded and not as a loser, even if their "no" is ultimately - regrettably - ignored becomes.

11. The different forms of consensus

As already indicated, it is a complex process that leads to a decision. if

If this is made using the SK principle, the process runs differently than if it is made by majority decision or by an individual in an authoritarian manner.

The name of this process, systemic consensus, is intended to indicate that the behavior of the participants during this process is shaped by the systemic laws that are effective through the success condition of the SK principle.

This success condition, coming as close as possible to consensus, also produces the behavioral reversal we have been discussing.

Different conditions lead to different forms of systemic consensus. Here's a quick overview to make it easier for you to figure out what you should use where.

selection consensus

priority consensus

In-depth consensus

quick consensus

Shortened quick consensus

Before that, a few brief comments on the possible types of evaluation.

12. Types of Valuation



In our introductory chapter on the SK principle, we presented an evaluation that is carried out on a scale of ten (Fig. 20). This is not the only possible rating scale. In fact, any scale is possible. However, since we are used to the decadal system, the ten-point scale was obvious and it has proven itself up to now. Regardless of the scale used, one can calculate both the current group resistance and the acceptance as a percentage of the possible maximum values, and then both different group sizes and consensuses that have been carried out with different scales can be compared with each other (see the section »The characteristics of the consensus«).

"Simplified evaluation" with a resistance scale from 0 to 2 has proven particularly useful for some simple



problems (Fig. 21). It consists only in the participants expressing their resistance through gestures

to express. thereby mean

0 = No objection (no hand)

1 = concerns (1 hand)

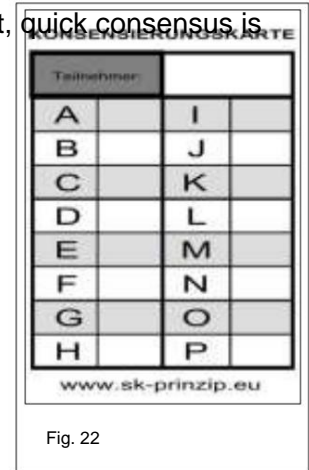
2 = Strong rejection (2 hands)

If the participants raise their hands a bit, the raised hands can be counted very easily to get a quick result. Depending on the importance and sensitivity of the problem, you can opt for one or the other type of assessment

decide.

Note: In Simplified Rating, it is not immediately possible to express "total rejection". If this is important to you, you should point this out in the context of the follow-up question or, after a quick consensus, make the suggestion to ask the follow-up question (by default, quick consensus is carried out without a follow-up question)

Small rating cards can be used to rate anonymously (Fig. 22)



13. Choice Consensus

Choice consensus is the simplest form of consensus. At first glance it is

It is the direct implementation of the SK principle: the group develops a large number of proposed solutions and then selects the one that generates the least resistance among all of them.

However, that is not all.

In order for them to be able to make decisions in a group through selection consensus, selection consensus must be accepted as a decision-making process in the group. Read more about this in the section "The decision-making ability of a group". Don't forget to clarify the liability issue and include the passive solution as a suggestion. And when you've reached consensus on a proposal, please don't forget to ask the follow-up question. The stamp of finality then weighs much less heavily and often enough a suggestion is only bearable because everyone involved has felt that despite the most intensive search, no "better" one could be found.

In the case of sensitive consensations, you can also collect the "wishes for a good solution" from everyone involved before starting the search for a solution. In a live moderation, the participants write each request in large letters on their own moderation card.

Then one participant after the other comes out and pins the moderation card with his wish on the pin board and reads the wish out loud or rings it briefly.

If everyone reads only one wish while doing so, the group's attention will be kept until the end. It has been shown that the participants' feeling that they have the group's attention to their personal wishes and needs and that these are being respected has a very harmonizing effect on the group atmosphere. A feeling of togetherness arises and is the basis for fruitful later cooperation.

14. Priority Consensus

Priority consensus allows you to rank a number of proposals according to a certain criterion. Priority consensus follows the same process as choice consensus, but it's important to have an evaluation statement so that everyone is clear about which criterion is being applied and what they are expressing opposition to

target:

- "...is particularly important"
- "...is particularly suitable"
- "...I think it's particularly economical"
- "...I think it is particularly effective in advertising"
- "...I find it particularly beautiful"
- Etc.

The assessment statement should not contain any superlatives. That would get you into trouble for very logical participants. Strictly speaking, a superlative such as "...is most effective" can only be used for a single suggestion and would therefore have to be totally rejected for all others - which contradicts the sensitive and graded evaluation of the SK principle.

If necessary, you can have the group develop an appropriate evaluation statement through selection consensus.

Let's say a company invites its employees on a trip. You can choose between two days each in Paris, Berlin, Rome, Madrid and Lisbon. Employees can use this

choose freely. Now the employees have priority consensus

may have trouble registering resistance to individual targets since all of them are attractive after all. In such special cases one can first ask whether nobody really feels any resistance to a proposal. If the whole group is really willing to go along with everything without resistance, you can leave the resistance rating and go to pro votes (from 0 to 10 pro votes can then be given by each employee for each suggestion). But we would like to point out very clearly here that it must first be ensured that there really is no suggestion for which anyone feels rejection. Because if someone should feel rejection and not be able to express it - they could seriously disturb the group mood by either being reluctant to go on the selected trip or not at all.

15. Fast consensus

If you carry out selection consensus with the help of »Simplified Evaluation« in the context of a live moderation, you are in »Fast Consensus«. Not quite, there are other simplifications. The question of liability is not asked, because quick consensus is inherently binding. No follow-up question is asked either: in general, the consensus of the first round of evaluation is the result. I will describe an exception to this below.

But rapid consensus can do even more. We use it to be able to react to the wishes of individuals, their discomfort or erupting discussions. All that is then required is the prompt, "Please make a suggestion to the group based on your discomfort/desire/position." The suggestion can be simple - "I suggest 10 minutes break" - or complex - "I suggest propose to consider my point of view as ... (outline type of solution)"

I'll give you a little example. When I'm moderating a decision with a group, it's important to me to present "rapid consensus" soon. This happens, for example, with the words: "In the course of our joint work, we will probably have to make a number of smaller decisions together. So that this happens quickly and without conflict, I would like to introduce you to a new decision-making process and demonstrate it immediately. Do you have any objections to that?" I wait a bit. Normally no hand is raised.

After a while: "Does anyone need more time?" Normally everything stays calm now.

"Then I would like to thank you, because the demonstration is already over. You have just decided by consensus that I can present the new decision-making process to you."

That's how quickly decisions about an individual's proposal can be made with the help of quick consensus. In the following, I will familiarize you with quick consensus and its most important elements.

The objection question

The question "Are there any objections to this?" is an important element of the quick consensus. If there are no objections, the decision is made immediately. Therefore, at the first introduction, the explanation is important: "Please keep in mind that decisions made by quick consensus are generally final. So listen to yourself very carefully so as not to ignore your objections or resistance." The question "Does anyone still need time?" was precisely intended to enable the group to listen to themselves without stress.

Consideration of the group mood

Rapid consensus should not only lead to a decision quickly, but also offer each group member the opportunity to influence the group process in such a way that he or she feels comfortable with it. We have learned that any discomfort felt by one of the group members can be a source of diversity that enriches the group.

Through rapid consensus, each group member has the opportunity to contribute themselves and their needs. It is then up to the group to decide to what extent they are willing to respond to those needs. The decision itself should not require much effort, otherwise the group will react angrily.

Suppose there is a proposal, the objection question is asked, and objections are raised. Often enough, given the objections, the suggestion is not important enough even to the author to warrant the group's attention any longer. As a moderator, I would now give the author the opportunity to withdraw his suggestion.

I would ask, "Does the proposal stand?"

If the suggestion stands, I write it down and ask the participants to rate it with resistance. Then the passive solution is evaluated. Both are done through simplified evaluation by defensively stretching out one or both hands.

If the resistance to the proposal is greater than to the passive solution, the proposal is rejected.

Proposal collection and evaluation

If resistance to the proposal is lower than resistance to the passive solution, this may be a sign that the group is committed to improving the current passive solution.

So now the question is, "Is it important to anyone to come up with another suggestion?"

The introduction "Is it important to someone..." should not be forgotten. Otherwise there is a risk that overzealous group members will feel compelled to develop further suggestions and thus inflate the group process without a real concern behind it.

Then the group resistance to the new suggestions is determined and noted by simplified evaluation. After everyone has been evaluated, the group recognizes the suggestion that evokes the least resistance. In addition, there is a ranking of the proposals.

The follow-up question as a feasibility check must always be asked (see the section: "Four important questions"). If necessary, it will again be decided by rapid consensus.

The continuation question as an investment in mindfulness

is not set automatically. After all, rapid consensus should take place "quickly". It is up to the participants to ask for a follow-up question if someone is too uncomfortable with the consensus solution

summary

We learned the following six elements of quick consensus:

1. the suggestion interrupting an ongoing process,
2. the objection question,
3. the passive solution,
4. the collection of proposals,
5. the simplified assessment,
6. the question of feasibility/mindfulness regarding the agreed solution.

Sometimes this may seem too extensive or complicated. But trying to simplify and omit an element of it either leads to indecisiveness or leads to massive dissatisfaction of individuals or the whole group.

complications

I don't want to hide the fact that complications can also arise with quick consensus. For example, if individual group members are not satisfied with the quick consensus decision. Or if, in the middle of a consensus, further action is called into question and a decision has to be made.

But these complex situations are a matter for trained facilitators: see the section "Stacking Consensuses." Suffice it to say here that these difficulties can also be mastered with rapid consensus and that there is no need to intervene in a controlling manner (and therefore perhaps not entirely impartially). Rapid consensus allows the group to self-manage until the final decision is reached.

The advantages of quick consensus

Fast consensus is suitable for self-organization of the group. If a group has learned quick consensus as a means of self-organization, it does not need a hierarchical form of organization. The collective intelligence of the group is fully released and used efficiently. Since everyone is involved in the decision, they identify with the result and share responsibility.

Not only does the group as a whole benefit, but also the individual members. Through the intensive listening to themselves, the individuals often develop a new feeling for themselves and find a hitherto unknown wholeness and authenticity.

16. The stacking of consensuses

Let's assume you want to make a group decision through quick consensus. The process is so advanced that you are about to start evaluating the proposals. A participant answers: "I have a process proposal. The issue is too important for me to decide by simplified rating: I suggest that we use the scale of 10 to rate it."

If you ignore the wish of this participant, you can be sure of your dissatisfaction. A passed over, an unnoticed »No« by the participant to the simplified evaluation would remain in the room - contrary to the basic principles of consensus.

So the ongoing consensus is interrupted and the participant's wish is taken up: "It has been suggested that we rate using a scale of 10". Then the objection question is asked: "Are there any objections to this?"

A participant reports: "I need a day off to analyze the existing suggestions more closely before I can evaluate them."

You see, relatively simple situations can become complicated when divergent desires are present. With quick consensus, you can unravel the tangle.

Namely, Quick Consensus allows you to stack consensuses. In our case, the following stack would result (Fig. 23).



You must always handle the top entry in the stack. That is, the wish of the participant is taken up again: "The suggestion was made that we take a day off" and the objection question is asked: "Are there any objections to this?"

Apparently all the participants feel the need to study the proposals more closely (perhaps they are already too tired to continue now), in any case there are no objections. The proposal is thus accepted by consensus, the consensus can be popped off the stack.



The next day, after the break, we continue. The remaining stack can be seen in Fig. 24: On the flipchart are the two suggestions relating to the evaluation scale for the suggestions for the »course structure« 8 : »evaluation with the scale of ten« and »simple evaluation«. More suggestions

* see below: "Linking the Stacks"

are not made, so these two can be evaluated. They concern the type, the process of your further procedure, so they are process proposals. Process proposals are decided by rapid consensus. Thus, the evaluation is simplified. Because the topic

"Course structure" is obviously complex and sensitive, the proposal for the scale of ten receives the higher acceptance. In this way, the entries on the flipchart can be marked as completed and this consensus can also be removed from the stack. What remains is the consensus on the course structure (Fig. 25), whose proposed solutions are now evaluated on a scale of ten.

One of the great advantages of rapid consensus is that even complex situations can be mastered with it.



Without a method such as quick consensus, in complex situations one is often forced to forgo joint group decision-making. In extreme cases, it can prevent a jointly supported decision.

Rapid consensus, on the other hand, allows orderly progress to a valid decision.

Link the stacks

Whenever the objection question raises an objection, the suggestion and the passive response should be written down immediately on a new piece of flip chart. It is also advisable to give the consensus a consecutive number and write it down on the flipchart at the top right.

If a consensus is interrupted due to a process proposal with objections, i.e. if a new consensus is opened on a new flipchart sheet, then the serial number of the interrupted consensus is noted on the top left of the sheet.

As a result, there are two numbers at the top of the page: the consecutive number of the current one is on the right

Consensus, on the left the consecutive number of the consensus, with which one has to continue when the current consensus is finished.

17. Shortened rapid consensus

If it is clear in a group that there is *always* room for objection in rapid consensus, then there is no need to ask the objection question explicitly. It is always unspoken in the air, so to speak.

With that we have already explained »Abridged Rapid Consensus«: it is like

Fast consensus, only that the objection question is not asked explicitly, but is nevertheless effective implicitly.

18. Deeper consensus

In-depth consensus

After these preparations, I would like to introduce you to »Deepened Consensus«. It is the gentlest and most sensitive form of consensus that has emerged from our practical experiences with sensitive or complex problems and conflicts. In a step-by-step and repeated improvement process, the group works out the solution together. If we want to solve society-wide problems with our decision-making system, we also have to reckon with demanding tasks. We will therefore incorporate into our decision-making system all of the elements that have been found to be important in Live Consensuses. So here is the flow of a live consensus:

basics

• *Task:*

Someone formulates a problem. In his own interest, he also describes all the framework conditions that everyone needs to know in order to find a feasible solution be able.

If other group members see the problem differently: Now they have the opportunity to also present their point of view.

In some cases, a brief personal reflection from each group member helps (or is even necessary): "What are my personal associations with the problem?" to raise awareness of the problem.

• *Suitable questions:*

Now the group tries to find an open W-question that is suitable for finding possible solutions for all problem views. The group should not be characterized by a yes-no or either/or formulation. You should look for open W-questions, for

Example in the event of a conflict: "What can we do to solve this problem for everyone involved and to resolve those affected satisfactorily?"

The group does not have to agree on a single question.

• *Clarifying the question of liability:*

There is a consensus on this.

• *Info session:*

The framework conditions are now defined and recorded for each suitable question.

This framework includes all information that is relevant to the resolution of the overarching issue and about which the group agrees. Anything that goes beyond that must find its place in the later proposed solutions.

A very special framework is the passive solution. It is important that the group is clear about what will happen if there is no common decision

takes. At least when all proposed solutions are evaluated later, the passive solution should also be included. However, if evaluated immediately, its level of acceptance will indicate the importance the group attaches to solving the problem/task at hand: if acceptance is high, the group will be reluctant to put much energy into solving it. If acceptance is low, however, one can count on the group working with commitment and energy to solve the problem

will work.

To wish

- *Wishes for a good solution:*⁹

Due to the basis for success under the conditions of the SK principle, the group is interested in hearing these subjective wishes in order to be able to take them into account in their solution approaches. Therefore - as with "brainstorming" - no wish should be criticized, prejudiced or rejected.

However, it is also in the interest of each participant to justify their individual wishes, perspectives and needs, since often enough the key to solving the problem or fulfilling the wish lies in their justification. If the group knows the need that gives rise to a specific desire, they can get creative to meet the need, while a specific desire leaves little room for creativity.

Of course, the group's attempt to accommodate a participant's individual desires is doomed to fail if those desires are too intolerant and selfish.

In such cases, the selfish participant risks that his or her concerns will not find a place in the group's balance of interests. You should therefore think carefully about which wishes of the group are reasonable and which are not. The chance of fulfillment reasonable wishes is high.

- *Solution search:*

All interested parties can participate equally. Those involved should be made aware that, according to the SK principle, the proposal that is the least likely to be rejected by everyone is sought. Therefore, only those suggestions can be successful that take into account the overarching issue and individual wishes as well as possible.

Normally, there are many proposed solutions. Some of them take individual wishes into account in particular.

- *Advantages and disadvantages:*

Now is the time to examine the proposals that have been developed. Are they feasible at all? Has the what, when, where, with what etc. been clarified? On the one hand, questions about understanding can be asked, on the other hand, the suggestions can be put through their paces. To do this, you can use brainstorming – or other methods suitable for this purpose – to examine each proposal for advantages and disadvantages.

Decide

⁹ Of course, other methods for finding a vision and assessing needs can also be used here

- *Preliminary assessment:*

The proposals that have been made so far are now being evaluated by all those involved with W votes.

- Determine *the ranking of the proposals:*

The decision is made quickly and easily, mostly with the help of group resistance on a scale from 0 to 10. In sensitive cases - e.g. when electing people - only the acceptance are indicated.

This gives those involved an initial picture of the probable ranking of their proposals. Those who want to be successful will try to improve their positions in the hierarchy. There is therefore interest in finding out in a further step which resistances have not yet been overcome.

- *The follow-up question is asked:*

It consists of the mindfulness and the feasibility question.

The *mindfulness* question determines to what extent the agreed solution is rejected by individual group members and, if so, how to deal with it.

The standard case of in-depth consensus provides that at least one attempt is made to improve the consensus solution. However, it would also be possible for the group to be so satisfied with the existing result that they immediately jump to implementation.

The *feasibility* question clarifies whether an "implementation team" with sufficient energy and resources is available, which is willing and able to implement the agreed solution, and whether all associated factual issues and the question of authority have been clarified. If no, the process must be continued accordingly.

To enhance

- Exploring *the residual resistances:*

Those who want to be successful with their proposals will try, in their own interest, to eliminate as much resistance as possible. Therefore, the remaining residual resistance and objections are now being raised. This does not require an argument, but the effort to understand and process what has been said. In doing so, we often observed something very important: through these discussions, the members of the group felt that they were being taken seriously and that their wishes and needs were being taken seriously.

The atmosphere of mutual benevolence and community that arose as a result left a lasting mark on the group mood as the event progressed.

We've seen the bottom-ranked proposal in the preliminary evaluation improve, based on the information the author gained from these interviews, to the point where he eventually won the consensus.

- Customize *suggestions:*

Now everyone has the opportunity to adapt their suggestions, combine them with others, withdraw them or introduce new ones. In order to take the needs of others even better into account and thus reduce their resistance.

- Customize *Pros and Cons:*

The advantages and disadvantages are now also being adapted to the changed or new proposals.

Normally, individual disadvantages are eliminated and advantages are added.

After that, it goes back to stage 9 and the continuation question is asked again.

implementation

reflection of the process

In many cases there is an urgent need for the group to reflect again on the process that has just taken place. Even groups for which in-depth consensus is part of their usual routine always learn something new about themselves and the process when they reflect.

To celebrate:

A good result in a sensitive or important area is definitely a cause for celebration.

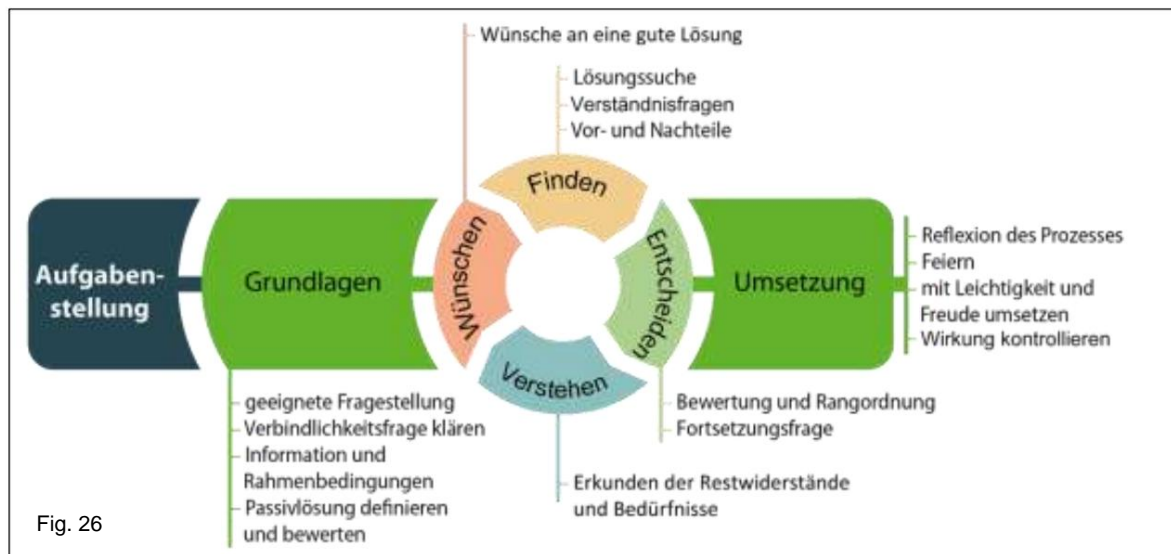
Implement with ease and joy

control effects

We have graphically illustrated the process of the in-depth consensus in Fig. 41. If since »Deepened Consensus« is performed live, there are still a few special features, but they are irrelevant here.

That's enough of the preparations. The list of points to consider when designing the new social system is long enough. If we want to proceed responsibly in the following, we have to start where we already have experience: with small units. We must start in the churches.

We must gain experience there that we can build upon as we progress to greater things. And indeed, this *progression* should be gradual.



19. The choice of people

The choice of person essentially follows the steps of in-depth consensus. The problem is usually clear: there is a position to be filled or a delegate to be elected or something similar. The appropriate question is also unspokenly present with "Which person should be entrusted with the task in question?". In this case, the question of liability is a question of the framework conditions. Clarifying the framework conditions is therefore the first step in the process. In the following I will list the corresponding steps of the deepened consensus in brackets for each step of the person selection.

Before the election (information session)

should the framework conditions such as task, function, responsibility, duration, success criteria, etc. clarified and known to all voters.

After that, the actual election begins with a

Round of suggestions (requests for a good solution, search for a solution; a passive solution is mostly not permitted)

people who are suitable for the task are nominated. Anyone can nominate, including themselves. All nominated people are put on a list.

This is followed by one

Appreciation round (first part of screening round: benefits of suggested solutions)

in which those people who submitted a suggestion now express what they value about the person in relation to the task in question and why they believe that this person is particularly well suited for the task. Everyone present can add strengths to each candidate.

If, after this round of explanations, one of the candidates wishes to reject his or her nomination, this must be granted. However, it is also possible to withdraw your candidacy after the election has taken place.

In a

Round of possible concerns (second part of the screening round: disadvantages of the suggested solutions)

- similar to in-depth consensus - the disadvantages/weaknesses of the individual candidates can also be shown. The candidate whose disadvantages are being discussed leaves the room.

We recommend that

Conduct

assessment anonymously. The acceptance of each candidate is calculated on the basis of the ratings given. This results in a ranking of the candidates in terms of their acceptance.

That follows from that

Election result (clarification of the continuation question)

The best ranked candidate and his acceptance will be announced. If he rejects the choice, there are usually two options (decision through quick consensus):

- The group wonders if there is anything they can do to persuade the candidate to accept the election
- the next candidate is considered elected
- It depends on the general conditions of the election whether further solutions to the follow-up question are possible.

Closing the election (a reflection on the election process and a final celebration is harmful

Rare)

The ranking of the other candidates and their acceptances should only be announced if this is absolutely necessary for reasons of transparency.

20. The quality of the solution: the evaluation statement

Let's look again at the example described at the beginning of the four friends who wanted to go out to eat together in a good restaurant. The four friends have reached a consensus by expressing their opposition to the individual bars. But on closer reflection, it wasn't resistance to the four bars. None of the friends have anything against one of the places themselves: that this place shouldn't exist or something. Rather, the resistance values of everyone related to their own, unconscious idea of how eating with friends in the restaurant would go and how they would like it.

As with the four friends, one can generally leave it up to the participants what they evaluate: it will be those aspects that seem most important to them in their unconscious ideas. This leads to viable solutions.

However, there are cases where it is important that all participants evaluate the same aspect of the proposals. For example, if individual suggestions are to be examined specifically for their cost-effectiveness. Or that they can be implemented as quickly as possible. Or that they are particularly environmentally friendly, etc.

In such cases, whenever the solution is to have a special quality, an "evaluation statement" is formulated. For the cases listed, it could be something like: "I think this suggestion is particularly economical", "I think this suggestion can be implemented particularly quickly" and "I think this suggestion is particularly environmentally friendly".

As with priority consensus, the same applies here: Please do not formulate any superlatives. So not: "I think this proposal is the most economical". Then a differentiated evaluation becomes impossible because only the "most economical" proposal would have to receive 0 W votes, while all others would actually have to be rejected with 10 W votes. The word "special" is a helpful magic word here.

With the evaluation statement "I am particularly enthusiastic about this suggestion", it is even possible to search for the suggestion that the group as a whole received with the greatest enthusiasm. At present, however, there are no scientific research results on the viability of proposals that have been agreed in this way. We therefore currently advise against using this rating statement

– unless it has been ensured beforehand that there are no objections to any of the proposals.

21. General information about decisions, the decision-making ability of a group and the elements of consensus

When is a group capable of making decisions at all? Are people who are waiting together at the bus stop for public transport, or a motley group of travelers who want to change their travel route, decision-making groups?

In order for a group to be able to make decisions, there must be clarity about the valid decision-making process. In many groups this clarity is given. In a hierarchically organized company, for example, it is always the manager who decides. In democratic bodies, decisions are usually made according to the majority principle. In the UN Security Council, every resolution must receive the approval of at least nine of the members, but with due regard to the veto rights of the five permanent members China, England, France, the Russian Federation and the USA.



Normally, our travel group is therefore not authorized to change the itinerary, as this is part of the contract that the organizer has concluded with the group participants. But the group may decide to request a route change. And here I emphasize: since there is no decision-making process in the group that is accepted by everyone, this decision can only be made if it is voluntarily supported by all participants, i.e. it can only be made by consensus.

We state: as long as there is no clarity in a group about a decision-making process supported by all participants, a decision can only be made voluntarily, i.e. by consensus. If a decision-making procedure applies in the group, a change can be decided either using the applicable procedure or by consensus

will.

Let's look again at our group on the organic farm. This time they decide on the distribution of work for the next day and everyone involved agrees with the decision that has been made. They don't talk about it any further, but they assume that it is binding for everyone. The group would be outraged if there was no lunch at the table the next day because the two people who did the cooking worked in the fields instead of cooking. What I'm saying is, the group needs

Clarity about the degree of binding nature of the decision she is supposed to make. And just as there must be clarity about the binding nature, 16 questions must actually be clarified for every decision. I have summarized them in the table below:

	Question	Type of clarification / SK view
	1. Who is authorized to make a decision to apply for?	To be clarified by the entire group or its initiators with the valid decision-making process
	2. Who is from the decision affected?	concern question. In many cases unclear SK: If necessary through a consensus of all who are interested in a conflict-free solution
	3. Who can/should be involved in finding a solution?	SK: Everyone affected should be able to participate in the search for a solution; in some cases it is necessary to relieve the general public of those affected and to find a sub-group that feels responsible for it
	4. Who is authorized to make decisions?	This is the question of authority. It must be clarified before the substantive decision. SK: All those affected together
	5. What is the voting weight of each key figure?	Clarification in the context of the question of authority. SK: Every person affected has exactly the voting weight of their degree of being affected. However, he can delegate this voting weight
	6. In what degrees are those affected affected?	Clarification in the context of the concern question SK: If necessary through a consensus of all who are interested in a conflict-free solution
	7. To what extent can/should they be involved?	SK: If a sub-group as mentioned in point 3 exists, it should participate with full commitment; all other concerned at their own discretion
	8. Voting openly or anonymously?	By the decision-makers with the valid to clarify decision-making processes

Table 3

The 16 Questions on How to Make a Successful Group Decision - continued

	9. How is the decision to be applied for?	To be clarified by the entire group or its initiators with the valid decision-making process
	10. According to which procedure will made the decision?	There are two possibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is no recognized one in the group If there is a decision-making process, such a decision can only be made by consensus • If there is a recognized procedure in the group, this will be applied. The decision to use a new decision-making procedure can only be made using the recognized procedure
	11. How will the application be decided?	To be clarified by the entire group or its initiators with the valid decision-making process
	12. How binding is the Decision?	This is the liability issue. It must be clarified before the substantive decision is made, preferably at the beginning of the search for a solution
	13. When is the decision final?	Will be resolved by follow-up question
	14. What point of view the factual decision should be in the foreground? A particularly economical/sustainable/leicht feasible ... solution?	SK: Determined by the rating statement; the Rating statement may be authorized by those authorized to their Level of authority to be determined in accordance with; except at order consensus, we recommend not to use any particular evaluation statement: then the participants unconsciously evaluate those Evaluation statement that is in the foreground for you
	15. What is the appropriate question?	SK: it should be an open wh-question
	16. What is the decision?	This is the real substantive decision that should be made. SK: Depending on the form of consensus used, different elements come into play. See Tab. 4 in the section "What - when - where?"

Luckily, many of the questions are usually self-explanatory or irrelevant, so not all of them need to be dealt with in detail. Nevertheless, it is good to know where to find the table of questions so that in case of a problem you have help to solve the problem.

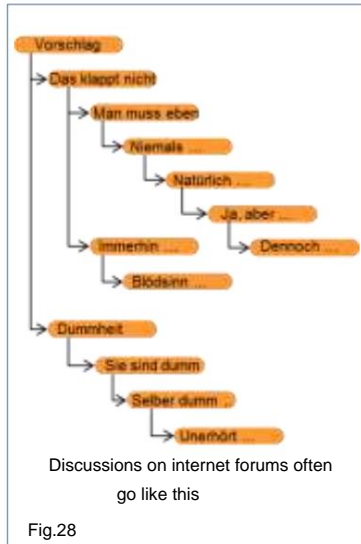
At least when a group is newly formed, one should consider all 16 questions and their clarification. Any question left unanswered can lead to difficulties or even conflict later on.

22. What - when - where?

element of consensus	selection consensus	deepened consensus	Series consensus	Quickly consensus	Ver shortest Quickly consensus ate
Appropriate questions		Yes*)			
Objection question				Yes	no
assessment statement	In special cases**)	In special cases**)	Yes	In special cases**)	As Quick consensus ate
passive solution	Yes	Yes /		Yes	
wishes to one good solution	With sensitive consensus	Yes	no	no	
liability	Yes	Yes	Yes	is binding	
continuation question	as feasibility ask. As a mindfulness question if still strong Rejection of the consensus proposal is available	yes, after each evaluation round		as feasibility ask. As a mindfulness question only if one correspond to the Procedural proposal made and Is accepted	
result	consensual Proposal or according to the result of the continuation.	through selection consensus above sequel	suggestions are after Ordered acceptance	consensual Suggestion	
rating scale	2/5/10	5/10	2/5/10	2	
Table 4					

23. The Creative Communication

Charles Tschopp¹⁰ defines a discussion: "A discussion is a series of monologues that mutually interrupt each other"



But it gets worse. If you've had discussions

If you have followed what is going on in Internet forums, you will notice again and again how quickly they slip into the personal (Fig. 28). This danger comes from the fact that discussions are always about standpoints with which the discussants identify and which they therefore vehemently

and vigorously defend. The represented point of view and the person representing form themselves to a certain extent into a whole and are also perceived as such. Any criticism of the point of view therefore mutates almost automatically and inevitably into a criticism of the one behind it

Person.

When different points of view meet, there is sometimes an unsolved problem behind them. Sometimes, however, the problem arises precisely because of this clash of viewpoints and thus becomes a problem for the entire group. The SK principle was created to solve group problems. We have discussed how this is done in the previous chapters. If necessary, the group needs to start a process of deepened consensus about the problem.

Fortunately, in most cases this is not necessary. Nevertheless, one will also try to steer the conflict energy present in the discussion along creative paths. In the context of "satisfactory communication" we have discussed in more detail how to proceed. For example, by asking the participants to formulate the common problem in an open W-question in a way that everyone can understand.

Do you notice the difference? Suddenly the discussants are no longer working against each other, but working together on a demanding common task.

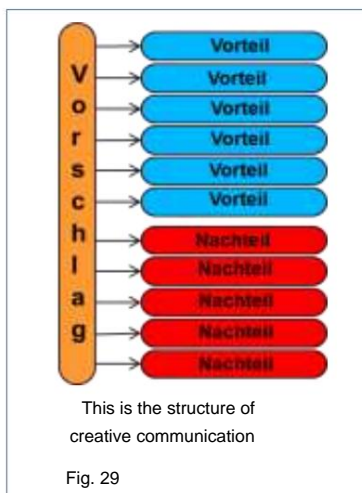
They may support each other in this. They are then asked to formulate their points of view as possible solutions to the underlying problem. That too

¹⁰ Swiss writer and author of aphorisms

distracts attention from the "opponent", it is bound by a new and demanding task and no longer by the conflict.

If you now ask the group for further alternative suggestions to the problem addressed, the problem is the focus of general attention, the conflict recedes even more into the background, everyone devotes themselves to the search for solutions, there is an additional feeling of togetherness instead of against each other.

With in-depth consensus, all suggestions are examined with advantages and disadvantages. Then it is important that these advantages and disadvantages relate exclusively to the proposal and - ideally also optically - are collected strictly separately from each other (Fig. 29). No one can respond to an advantage by dissecting or invalidating it, at most they can formulate a disadvantage of the proposal and place it in the "Cons" column.



And what we said about advantages also applies to disadvantages, of course. Any advantage or disadvantage relates to the proposal and not to any other advantage or disadvantage. This

The suggestions are screened by the entire group in a brainstorming process, a creative process that focuses on a suggestion and not a person. And the proposal remains at the center of the process because every advantage or disadvantage must relate to it.

Since all proposals are then evaluated by W votes, targeted aggressiveness against a specific proposal would be a complete waste of time. Anyone who has an interest in solving a problem in

a certain way that suits them is much better off formulating their proposal in such a way that those who think differently do not register much resistance to it, rather than attacking the attempts of others to solve it.

Members of groups who are used to consensus have understood this and are no longer tempted to act aggressively.

24. What do I have to rate?

Members of groups who have not yet had any experience with consensus are often unsure and do not know how to judge. Should they have a suggestion from the purely



evaluate selfish perspectives of their own interests? Or should they put the well-being of the group in the foreground?

Our answer is quite simple: Neither – nor.

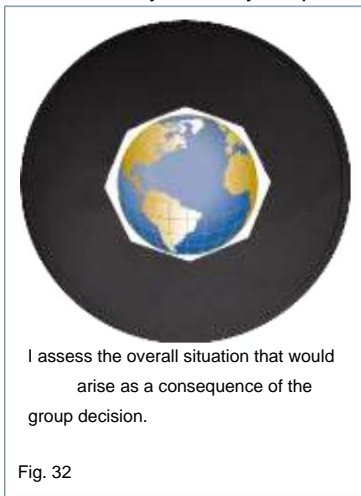
What I need to evaluate in consensus is the situation with which I have to live after the decision. And in all of them aspects.

Let's assume that I judge purely egoistically, that I primarily want to implement my desired solution. If everyone acts like this

and the result would be a decision that bursts the group: would I be happy with that? Or would it have been more important to me to do without parts of my desired solution and instead still being able to remain a member of an intact group?



So when you evaluate, you should evaluate *all* aspects, including those that relate to you and your position in the group. Will the group survive?



Does this change my position in the group? Will I then possibly experience rejection? From the whole group? Or just parts? Can I strengthen the group and be happy about it? And if you do

If you take everything into account, you will notice that from this point of view, the best solution is one that takes your own and the group well-being into account in a balanced manner¹¹.

In any case, you should know very well how satisfied you would be with the situation that would arise as a result of each proposal. The reason for this is again simple: If the

If the proposal is implemented, you have to live with it.

¹¹ This is in a sense an analogy to the Nash equilibrium of game theory (see for example: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nash-Equilibrium>)

25. The characteristics of consensus

You already know the group resistance as a parameter of consensus. It has one big disadvantage: it depends on the group size. This means that if two groups of different sizes evaluate the same proposal, nothing is known about which group has less or greater resistance. To find out, you have to go to the average resistance. So you have to divide the group resistance by the number of group members.

The statement I just made is inaccurate. Suppose you have ten members in your group. Please also assume that all members have assigned 4 W votes to a proposal. Then the group resistance is obviously $10 \times 4 =$

40 and the average resistance is $40 / 10 = 4$. So far so clear.

Now we imagine the same situation, but only five of the ten members evaluate the proposal, the other five abstain. This gives us the group resistance of $5 \times 4 = 20$. Now if we divide by the number of group members -

so dividing ten - we would get $20 / 10 = 2$ as the average resistance. Which is obviously wrong. Since only five group members rated, we can only divide by five. Then the calculation is correct again: $20 : 5 = 4$.

So we need to modify the above formula: the average group resistance of a suggestion is its group resistance divided by the number of group members who actually rated the suggestion. If five of the ten group members give the proposal a 4 vote and the other five give a 0 vote, we get the group resistance as $5 \times 4 = 20$. But now that all group members have voted, we get the average group resistance as $20 : 10 = 2$. As you can see, when group members abstain from voting on a proposal, it has a different effect than if they voted 0 against the proposal. Because 0 W votes mean: I don't have one

Objection.

The average group resistance has another advantage: the number we get is within the scale that we used to express our resistance ourselves. This gives us a sense of what the level of average group resistance expresses. The value 2 in our example gives us the feeling that the group as a whole is quite willing to support the proposal (even the maximum values of 4 are not really high).

However, the average group resistance calculated in this way still has a disadvantage. In fact, it depends on the scale used by the group when evaluating the proposals. If the group rated using a scale of 10, the numeric value of the average group resistance will be significantly higher than if they had rated using a scale of 2. To overcome this difficulty, we divide the result that we would have obtained according to the above formula by the maximum number of W votes that would have been possible according to the scale used.

Let's stick to our example. It was rated using the scale of ten. So we still have to divide by ten and we get $2 / 10 = 0.2$ as the average resistance of the group related to the scale size. By multiplying this by 100, we convert this amount into a percentage and get the statement: the suggestion is rejected by the group with an (average) resistance value of 20%. This value is now independent of both the group size and the scale used. It is therefore suitable for comparing thematically different consensus, consensus in groups of different sizes and those with different scales.

Look at the graphic Fig. 43. The red bar expresses - as we just considered - the resistance of the participants as a percentage (the black "4" in the red bar is the average group resistance using a scale of ten). The rest of the bar can accordingly be interpreted as the group's willingness to accept the proposal without resistance, i.e. to support it without resistance. This part of the group consists of all those who support the proposal (blue part of the bar, in this case a person) and those who do not object (white part of the bar). In other words, the red part of the bar represents the percentage of those who can only "growl" at the suggestion, it is a measure of the potential for conflict in the group if the suggestion goes through. And the rest of the bar is a measure of the acceptability of the proposal.

Since acceptance and potential for conflict are given as a percentage, they are also suitable for comparing consensus with groups of different sizes.

26. Online Konsensieren: www.konsensieren.eu

Whether you want to agree privately with your friends on which restaurant you want to celebrate together, whether you want to make decisions together with a team whose employees are scattered all over the world, or whether you want to prepare the agenda for a local team meeting or whether you, as a representative of a political party, want to find out which standpoints the "grassroots" represents - with OnlineKonsensieren you can do this quickly and unbureaucratically. Use is free for private individuals and non-profit organizations and you do not even need to register. You don't have to provide an email address either. Is there an easier way?

When you create a consensus, you can invite participants to it. It's up to you to decide what security levels to apply. You can invite the participants specifically, or publish a link so that anyone who knows him can enter and participate in the consensus. When inviting specifically: do you want to be the only person inviting? Or do you want to pass on the right to invite to others? Whether the greatest possible secrecy and security is required or the consensus, for example, should take place among acquaintances in mutual trust and without any security precautions: you can control it. You can control the amount of information about participants' identities that should be publicly visible.

You can see which of the invitees actually accepted their invitation and you can assign moderator rights to individual ones. And if you invite the same group of people over and over again, you can create distribution lists and the invitation is already done with one click. Sending out reminder emails is also easy.

If the invitees participate, you as the initiator of the consensus can set deadlines.

You can specify within what period of time suggestions can be made and these can be thoroughly examined or from when to when can be evaluated. And you

can control whether or not the assessment should be visible to the participants during the assessment period.

Now let's assume that you are not the initiator, but a participant in a consensus. Then you can make suggestions, explain them in detail and provide additions, you can comment on the suggestions of others with advantages and disadvantages, you can ask the authors for clarification and of course you can also rate all suggestions. You can do the whole thing in an open identity or hidden behind a pseudonym and you can even control to what extent your pseudonym or identity should be visible to the other participants. You can be sure that nobody but you can change the values you have entered, and you can be sure that a suggestion that you have evaluated will not be changed afterwards -

as a result of which their assessment may no longer correspond to their views.

In Fig. 33 you can see an excerpt from our internal proposals for the development of online consensus. By clicking on the various fields, the information behind them becomes visible. B. clicks on the "Rate" field for a suggestion

the colored W voice scale visible here. The proposal can be discussed using the "More", "Advantages", "Disadvantages", "Questions for the author" and "Additions" fields. The yellow field with "New" in the middle indicates that the participant has not yet seen the information behind it. If you click on the "More..." field, the author's explanations for this proposal would appear.

If you attend a consensus, you probably want it to be as lively an exchange of ideas as possible. So you can choose which events you want to be notified about: all, new suggestions, new pros and cons, etc. And you can choose whether you want to be notified immediately or just once a day. And when there are important consensuses, you may want to see that the deadlines set can no longer be changed by the moderators.

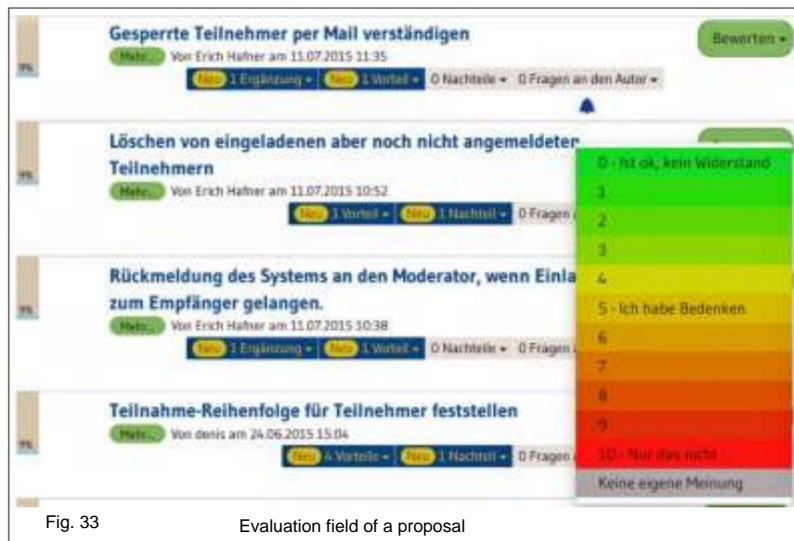


Fig. 33 Evaluation field of a proposal

We have very lively
 Experienced consensuses, however
 never could we hurt
 Register statements.
 The reason is that only the author of a
 proposal to the question of a
 participating person only
 can answer personally and
 this answer only for this
 person is visible. There is no other
 formal way to refer to the utterance of a

participating person. All other discussion posts must be attached to a suggestion as a pro or con and can therefore only refer to this one. Theoretically, of course, it would be possible to refer to an utterance by quoting it. However, the effect would be questionable since utterances are rendered in an indefinite order. The quote could thus refer to an expression that potential readers have never seen before. In addition, consensus is a process based on respect for all participants. Violators will be disqualified and

usually harms itself.

And while we're on the subject of the author answering a question: If they think the answer to that question is relevant to all participants, then it can be added to the suggestion there - and only there - in general be made visible.



This brings us to the result of a consensus. The program calculates the acceptance of all suggestions, arranges them in the appropriate order and

creates one from it

Bar graph. In Fig.34 is a section of ours

internal constantly running consensus on

further development of

See online consensus.

In addition to the acceptance of 96%, the top suggestion on the left shows that only 9% of the contributors have rated the suggestion.

This all sounds very diverse and complex. It is. You don't need to worry about being overwhelmed by this complexity. On your first participation, you will automatically be offered a sensitive introduction that will guide you slowly and step by step into the program. And with the "What can I do?" button, they can get help at any time.

By using professional graphic designers, we have tried to make the program visually appealing and user-friendly. You can filter the suggestions displayed according to various aspects - chronologically ascending or descending, by the number of reviews, etc. You can decide which category of suggestions you want to display: only the active ones, only your own, only those who have not rated them yet, only the new ones, possibly those that the authors have considered adequate, those that have been withdrawn or those that have been blocked by the moderators.

This point probably deserves special mention: moderators have the right to block individual posts. This is necessary for legal reasons. However, to prevent arbitrary acts, each such blocking is recorded in the system. It must be justified by the moderators and the justification must be visible to everyone.

Moderators have the option of deleting illegal text passages, but this deletion must also be justified for everyone to see.

The program has other strengths. If you want to prepare the agenda of a meeting, the participants can suggest the agenda items that are important to them. Then evaluate

all participants all proposed agenda items by expressing their opposition to the "evaluation statement". This reads: "The treatment of this agenda item is particularly important to me."

When the meeting starts, you will have ranked all the agenda items according to the importance of their treatment from the participants' point of view. You can work through one point after the other and be sure that the unimportant ones only come at the end or that they can no longer be dealt with at all due to time constraints.

If you don't absolutely need a record of the conversation, but are satisfied with a decision record, you don't even need a recorder.

Accordingly, the participant who brought up the agenda item that is currently being discussed in the meeting marks it as "dealt with" and notes which decisions were made on it. You always have well-prepared and well-documented meetings.

Confidentiality is important to us. That is why there is an expiry date for every consensus. After this date, the consensus is "gone". And when it says "away" here, it's meant seriously. According to our programming guidelines, once the daily backup copy has been destroyed after the expiry date, there is no longer any possibility of reconstructing the contents of the consensus.

For reasons of confidentiality, we cannot allow advertising either: advertising programs want to analyze the content of the pages in order to be able to determine the areas of interest of the users which can be effectively reached with advertising.

I specifically mentioned the option that you don't need to register. However, the program provides a registration option that allows use according to individual points of view. You can upload an "avatar" or a photo of yourself and have it displayed on all your posts if you wish. You have easy access to all your consensuses and you can display them clearly and according to different aspects. We are planning more "treats" for registered participants in the future.

This is the status of the program as of this writing (September 2016).¹²

¹² Since we make the program available to private individuals and non-profit organizations free of charge, we currently have little income to finance the maintenance and development costs of the program. If you have an idea how we can generate income without betraying our ideals, such as independence from advertising or the influence of financiers, we would be grateful for a message: post@sk-Prinzip.at. The ideal would be idealists who recognize the benefits of the program for the development of society and therefore us

help.

We still have big plans. For political consensus, the program should be suitable for the masses. This means that it must be able to point out identical or very similar suggestions and it must use an intelligent evaluation system to ensure that the participants are not overwhelmed by a veritable flood of suggestions. The necessary algorithms are already being developed. There must be search functions and it must be possible to assign the suggestions to different categories, etc.

In the case of the political consensations mentioned – insofar as these are also to be politically effective one day – it is important that on the one hand the anonymity of all participants is ensured, while on the other hand it must be prevented that individual persons with fictitious identities participate without authorization or participate more than once. The results must be verifiable without jeopardizing the anonymity of the participants. And finally, the whole thing has to be hacker-proof so that the consensus results cannot be disturbed or even changed by a skilled hacker. Doing justice to these different objectives requires a great deal of development and programming work. The ideas are there. We continuously adapt the program to the needs of the users.

Part II: Why resistance?

1. Resistance is necessary and desirable

Resistance has a negative connotation. At least for many. "Resistance prevents success. Resistance is hard work". Hearing "resistance" doesn't mean "ease".

Resistance is extremely important. In many areas of life, resistance is even essential for survival. Without frictional resistance we could not walk. Cars could neither drive nor brake. Without electrical resistance, a lightbulb would never have glowed. And without political resistance we would still be living in the worst dictatorships. Anyone who pays careful attention to their inner resistance develops sensitivity for themselves and thus perhaps also for others. And when consensus is reached, resistance to individual proposals is seen as a source of creativity, from which new, more viable proposals emerge. We have since learned that a certain amount of disagreement in the group can certainly affect the quality of the solutions that are worked out elevated.

If a desired solution wants to support, everything else is just annoying. With consensus this is different. If consensus is reached, the participants evaluate all suggestions with their resistance and thus deal intensively with each individual solution (Fig. 1). Dealing with the wide range of alternatives offered leads to a comprehensive, holistic picture of the situation.



If you want to evaluate all existing proposed solutions with your resistance in a differentiated way, you have to deal intensively with each one of them. He receives a comprehensive, holistic picture of the situation.

Fig. 1

It is only possible to register the potential for conflict in a group if one pays attention to resistance. And the reversal of behavior in consensual groups based on the new criteria for success only occurs when proposals are sought in the search for a solution that experience minimal resistance from all those involved. you know

certainly the expression "perfect". When something works perfectly, everyone is happy. Now I'll spell the word a little differently: "immaculate". Nobody objects. Creating such situations or at least coming close to them is the goal of systemic consensus. However, one can only establish impeccability if one – that is to say the resistance - noted.

Small note: children first know what they don't want, long before they know what they do want. And now you will probably be amazed: the same statement also applies to adults. For example, if I ask you, "What are you going to do on vacation in two years?" You'll probably shrug your shoulders rather indecisively. However, if I asked you specifically, "Will you be taking a three-week Antarctic trip to the South Pole in two years' time?" I'm pretty sure most people would have no hesitation in answering me with a resounding "no".

2. Respect for the “no”

»Respect for a person shows itself in dealing with his 'no'«. Most people can probably agree with this sentence without difficulty.

I would like to explain in more detail what I am talking about here. I do believe that there are reasons to ignore an individual's 'no'. For example, when a small child's need for protection requires holding their hand when crossing the street - even if they would rather walk alone and carefree. Even with systemic consensus, the 'no' of the individual is not a veto. *In my opinion, the "right to have your 'No' taken into account" means the right of every individual to have their arguments dealt with fairly. To a dispute that is not suppressed by authorities, but takes place among equals. In which the weight of the argument counts and not who the argument comes from.* This right also ensures respectful consideration of the needs of each individual.

The parents who take the child's hand while crossing the street do so (hopefully) out of concern for the child's safety, and not "because they have the right to do so". And they (hopefully) respond to the child's questions and objections and (hopefully) explain why they are doing so. These are parents who pass on the respect they demand for themselves.

Now let's look at our world. Perhaps you were lucky enough to grow up in a family where children's 'no's were treated with respect. But - I quote a passage from a comment by the Vatican press secretary in February 2015: "After all, who has not spanked their child or been spanked by their parents while growing up?" From this statement I can only conclude: you are an enviable exception, the respect for children's 'no' is an exception.

Now the positive thing about the situation described: The comment (and the Pope's statement on which it is based) triggered a storm of public outrage. The appreciation of children's 'no' is growing in society. A lot has also changed for the better at school in the decades since I was at school – even if a lot is still going on
remains to do.

You may now think that the test should not deal with children but with adults. So let's look at the 'no' of adults, let's look at the world of work, for example. Is the employee's 'no' respected when employers give instructions?

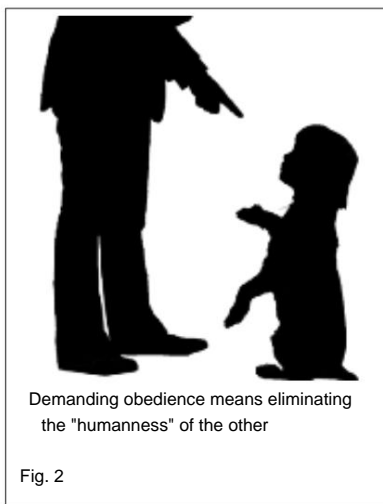
Employees who go through the company portal would do well to use their democratic

Giving self-esteem to the porter. Saying 'no' to a management decision is a test of courage in most companies. It can certainly endanger the professional existence of the courageous.

Here, too, changes are beginning to emerge that give hope. There are already companies in which management decisions are made jointly by all those affected. I know a company in which even the salary of the board members is decided jointly by consensus. The board members are happy too. ...

obedience

Disregarding the 'no' of others and demanding obedience from them means eliminating their will and thus their individuality. It means not considering the other to respect people of equal value and therefore to violate their dignity. In general, there is still little awareness of the problem, because mental injuries are not as obvious as physical ones. But psychotherapists know about the deep wounds and damage that this leaves behind in people. If there were clearly visible injuries, there would have been laws against it long ago and probably no perpetrator would get away with it scot-free. Most would most likely have scruples about such an act. But as it is, we have remained "unscrupulous" in the truest sense of the word.



Therefore, there are (too many) people who feel that because of their position, their office or perhaps just because of their physical superiority, they do not need a fair confrontation with those who are "below" them. There are people who have the power to demand obedience and use them (far too often) without hesitation. We still accept that children are "disciplined" by the educator and that they are expected to obey without resistance. There is little doubt that management decisions need to be executed. And that soldiers are not allowed to refuse an order is the basis of "soldier's obedience". Not once in matters of faith doubt is allowed. For the

Hierarchy is the church even eponymous (*hierarchia*: "order of consecration") and Obedience is commandment there.

Consensus introduces a paradigm shift here. In a certain respect, consensus is the "decisive principle of charity": respect, without which real love is probably not possible, is a necessary criterion for success in consensus.

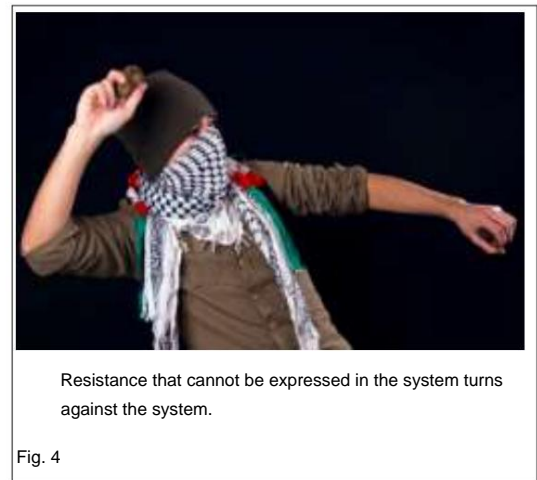
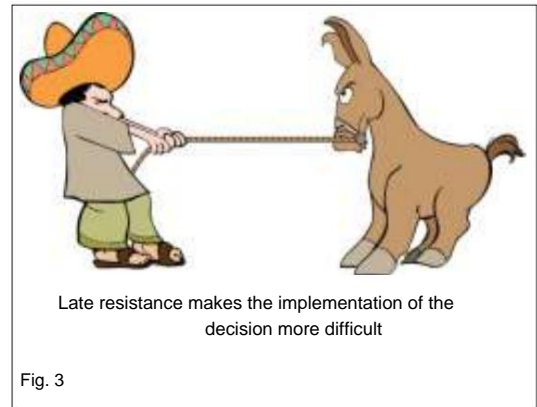
3. Passed Resistance is harmful

Opposition to a resolution that was not considered prior to the decision is overridden by the resolution, but it does not reduce or eliminate it. At best, it remains as passive dissatisfaction,

otherwise it can massively hinder the implementation of the decision (Fig. 45).

Or even worse: resistance that cannot be expressed in the system turns against the system. We could avoid such actions (Fig. 4) if the people in the system were given opportunities to effectively express resistance to decisions. With a decision-making system that takes into account the resistance of those affected, we could save ourselves some destruction and expensive police operations. That would be worth a try, right?

And finally, I'm sure you know the expression »Voting cattle«. He characterizes the feeling dissatisfied voters who have no way of expressing their dissatisfaction, but are again only allowed to give approval. The expression clearly shows how much many politically interested citizens feel abused in elections. Does it surprise you if they refuse to go to the ballot box? It does not go far enough to simply attribute the low turnout in longstanding democracies to a lack of political interest. Maybe it's even the other way around, and the refusal to vote expresses a very differentiated assessment of the political landscape: too differentiated to be expressed by a single pro vote.



4. Why Not Pro Votes? Are wishes neglected in consensus?

Pro votes instead of W votes

We are always asked why systemic consensus is not evaluated using pro votes. You could also award pro votes on a scale of 0-10 for each suggestion and then look for the maximum. That would be somehow more satisfying, because it also allows you to express your wishes and thus your enthusiasm

could.

The deeper background to this question is often the impression that this approach would give the same result as with resistance votes. One gets the impression that approval and rejection are just two sides of the same coin and that therefore a proposal's rating of "x" W votes would automatically result in its rating of "10-x" Pro votes. And vice versa. So you could score all proposals with pro votes and then add them up for each "group endorsement" proposal. If you then pick the suggestion that got the most group endorsement, you should get the same result as with Systemic Consensus.

Well, it is easy to see that this impression is wrong. I think each of us can think of a proposal that we "don't care". This proposal will neither be particularly favored nor particularly opposed: it would receive 0 per votes with a per vote rating and 0 w votes with a w vote rating. The connection from which we assumed above, that the pro-vote rating can be calculated from the W-vote rating as an addition to 10, is obviously wrong.

This means that pro-vote ratings will generally yield different results than W-vote ratings.

Pro votes only

Irrespective of this, one could still provide for a pure per-vote rating of 0-10 per votes per suggestion. The method addressed by this is known and is used in sports, for example in ice dancing or ski jumping, where the judges rate the performance of the individual candidates with plus points.

It may work quite well in sports. However, if one uses this method for group decisions, it has a serious disadvantage. This is known in science as the "problem of cardinal utility theory". It is that a relatively small sub-group may be able to offer the whole group their desired solution

impose by giving the latter maximum scores, thereby ensuring a high overall score.

In systemic consensus, of course, a relatively small subgroup can also turn off one or more solutions by evaluating them with an extremely large number of W votes.

However, this is not a disadvantage, but rather a strength of systemic consensus.

If the sub-group were not able to do this and one of these rejected solutions was thereby agreed upon, then the rejection of the sub-group could only take effect after the decision – possibly even through acts of sabotage. But avoiding that is the aim of systemic consensus.

Pro votes and W votes

As the example of the proposal we don't care showed, approval is not the absence of opposition and vice versa. This almost inevitably leads to the question of why don't we measure pro *and* w votes?

In terms of a complete picture of reality, that might be desirable. However, we would then have to find a sensible way of selecting the "best" as a group decision from the measured approval and rejection of the proposals.

And that's where it gets difficult. Even when we can decide on our own, we don't have a recipe for it. If we had that, we would never have trouble making decisions. Here's the example of the proposal that we don't care about. You all certainly know proposals that you are inwardly torn about, totally ambivalent, because there is so much that speaks for it and so much that speaks against it. Your feelings about these suggestions are very different from your feelings about suggestions you don't care about. The "ambiguous" suggestions may make you totally agitated and even have trouble sleeping.

Conversely, suggestions you don't care about won't bother you or interfere with your night's sleep. But the perceived endorsement and disapproval of the conflicting proposals remain and don't cancel each other out, allowing you to remain calm and indifferent. Even after the decision, nagging doubts may remain, proving that there is no clear path from rejection to approval to a clear decision.

From this we must conclude that the usual view that one can balance approval and rejection of a proposal is wrong. Nevertheless, it is the basis of the traditional majority rule, in which approval is weighed against rejection of a proposal. It is also the basis for the meaning of the Facebook thumbs ("likes"), which – pointing up or down – are mutual

cancel. It arises not least from the fact that approval and rejection are measured with the same unit »vote« or »Facebook thumb«. However, as we have seen from our considerations, the »approval voice« (pro voice) has just as little to do with the »rejection voice« (w voice) as, for example, degrees of angle have to do with degrees of temperature. A different feeling is measured even if the units have the same name.

I repeat: approval and rejection cannot be offset against each other. From my point of view, it is not only logically nonsensical, but it is also ethically unacceptable to offset the wishes of some against the suffering of others.

The essence of systemic consensus

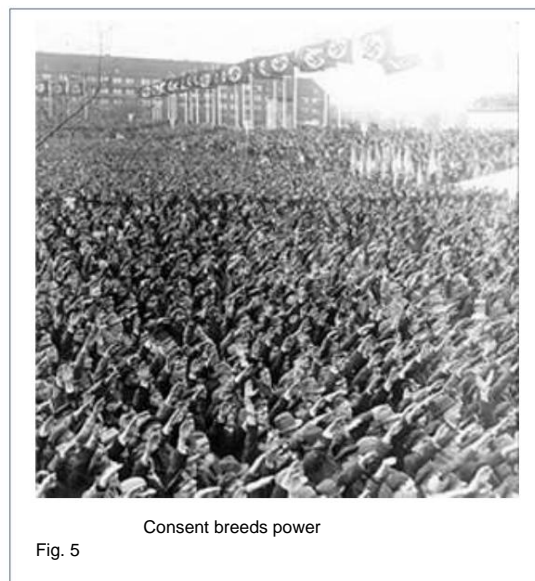
Voting in favor can give emphasis and enthusiasm to one's desires to express. Both can trigger strong forces in people.

When strong forces are at work in a group, conflict is inevitable as soon as there is resistance or the forces are not pulling in the same direction. *It is the essence of consensus not to offer these strong forces in the decision-making process any starting points.*

And without demanding a certain mindset from the participants. This is the reason why consensus, while benefiting from the diversity of opinion and dissent among the participants, can still take place so conflict-free.

It is therefore dangerous to bring these conflict-creating forces to light through pro-voices. It's like dancing on a volcano. For it is almost inevitable that when people are united in a large group by a common desire, they will feel they have great power. And from feeling that the power is there to being willing to use it is a small step. The "game of

Forces" then leads too easily to the law of the strongest – who, with sufficient strength, is capable of each override other rights. Where is that in extreme case, we experienced in the last century (Fig. 5).



Consent breeds power. And where there is power, abuse of power is not far away. Therefore, if we want decision-making systems that limit abuse of power as much as possible

to stop it, we must ensure that there is no sense of superior power or power, either in groups or individuals.

It is also inherent in systemic consensus that proposals are based on of their content. Not the author's name or person, nor the number the advocates behind it should be decisive for the effect.

And finally, I would like to remind you of the sentence »Respect for a person shows itself in dealing with his 'No'«. Respect for those affected - and thus for their resistance - is a central element of systemic consensus. However, it follows quite clearly from this that *the resistance must be the decisive measurement variable*. Approval may only play a role in the evaluation if several proposals have received the same minimal resistance. To raise them beforehand is to risk the dance on the volcano alluded to above. It means creating a system that is not stable because of the prevailing system conditions, but whose stability depends on the mindset of those involved. And every little excursion into our history shows where such systems can lead. There is even a risk that not even our democratic structures will survive.

The desire in systemic consensus

My comments up to this point have been a rejection of any kind of pro-vote evaluation in decisions, unless it is to rank solutions of equal acceptance based on the degree of agreement¹³. This does not mean, however, that wishes cannot play a role in systemic consensus. To this end, I would like to ask you again for a little thought experiment: The assumption is that I am participating in a consensus that is intended to determine the order of the agenda items for our next meeting.

30 agenda items are brought in, they are all important to someone in the group. I really have no objection to any of them. However, I know that due to the length of the meeting, a maximum of 10 agenda items can be covered. And I have an agenda item of my own that is extremely important to me to deal with. In this case, I have a measurable resistance to all other suggestions. I will grade them very precisely and sensitively. I will only give 0 W votes to those that I personally consider to be about as important as my own agenda item. It may be that not a single one of me will still be rated zero.

¹³ Strictly speaking, a majority vote is only correct if the proposals are 100% accepted, otherwise individual participants might still use their voice to express minimal disapproval. With the same level of acceptance - especially if it is high - the simplicity of majority voting still speaks for its use.

In other words, in consensus, one can express one's desires by delicately assigning one's resistance. And since all participants have the opportunity to bring their preferred solution to the consensus as a suggestion, all participants can also favor their preferred solution. In addition, you can see many other places where requests can be made. In the case of in-depth consensus, for example, there is a separate point in which »wishes for a good solution« are collected. Further, in examining the proposals, anyone can appropriately enthusiast benefits those who best meet their desires. And finally, everyone can express and emphasize their wishes again in the discussions with the authors of the proposals.

And then there is the possibility of an "evaluation statement", which can be formulated in a suitable way so that the proposal that best corresponds to the *group*'s wishes is agreed upon. But for that I have to refer you to the section »The quality of the solution: the evaluation statement« refer.

There are many ways of expressing one's wishes in systemic consensus.

**They are crucial
concerned**