# Evolving From Fragmented Individual Decision Making to Coordinated Collective Decision Making

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Our greatest challenge is how we operate with each other to make decisions. Individually and collectively we face an untold number of decisions that will either be handled well or handled poorly, depending on how effective our approaches to decision making are. While individually and collectively (in our organizations and in our governments) we have different decision making processes, affecting them all is the (r)evolution that is now taking place in decision making.

Because of advances in technologies that can connect us and coordinate us, a (r)evolution is taking place that is moving us from individual decision making (which generally now isn’t working so well because it’s so fragmented) to collective decision making (which has the potential of working much better because it can bring out the best thinking and coordinate us in ways that we can’t coordinate individually). Observe these changes. The next major step toward collective decision making will come with 5G which will connect and direct us much more than we are connected and directed now. This connectedness (r)evolution will gain momentum because coordinated collective decision making can work much better than fragmented individual decision making when managed well. For that reason I urge you to understand it and think about how to employ it well. If you don’t, you will be left behind. How you employ it is up to you, especially if you run an organization and get to determine the decision making approach used. With time, you will see many different collective decision making approaches emerge, some that operate from the top down and others that operate from the bottom up.

I’m especially keen on idea-meritocratic decision making. For reasons I explained in Principles: Life and Work I believe, and I have experienced, that great collective decision-making can be vastly superior to individual decision-making. My own version of a collective decision making system is based on my beliefs in the power of 1) an idea-meritocratic decision making process that establishes goals and principles for achieving them and systematically brings out disagreements and helps people work through them to make decisions, combined with 2) the collection and processing of lots of data and the use of algorithms to help us understand people’s strengths and weaknesses and to help them make better decisions. While it’s not a perfect collective decision making process, it is the reason for whatever success I and Bridgewater have had and it’s a tangible example that you can look at. However my real hope is that you will create your own well-coordinated collective decision making systems that work well for you.

At the same time, I worry that some of our existing decision making systems might be breaking down, particularly at the whole society level, because individuals are so attached to their own perspectives that they unwilling to operate in pursuit of what is best for them collectively. I am especially worried about the political decision making process in the hands of such a fragmented population because it is not clear to me what cherished principles we share that are more important to us than the issues we are fighting over.

Now is a good time to step back and observe how effective all our decision making systems are and, if they are producing outcomes that we don’t like, to think about how they might be improved.