

Sociocracy / Dynamic Governance

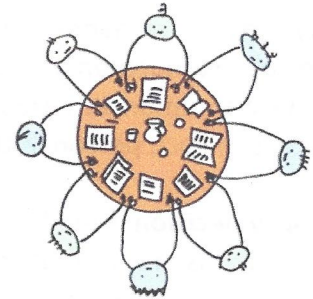
Values, Principles, Definitions, and Resources

Values

- **Equivalence:** Individuals function as peers in deciding how to accomplish their collective aims.
- **Effectiveness:** Designing for action; continuous development toward accomplishing aims and goals.
- **Transparency:** Direct access to all policy documents and records relating to governance and decision making.

Principles

- **Consent**
 - Consent governs decision-making. Consent seeks a decision with which everyone can live, and for which there is no argued and paramount objection. "Argued" means reasoned or explained. "Paramount" means all-important.
 - An objection is different from a veto or block. An argued and paramount objection is a valid reason why a particular decision would prevent a member of the group from doing their job or otherwise supporting circle aims.
 - Rather than seeking agreement, or the best or ideal decision, consent seeks a decision that is good enough for now to move forward.
 - The group solicits objections because they provide useful information (feedback) to design a better policy. The group uses reasons given for objections to improve a proposal so that all members can work toward the aims more effectively.
- **Circles**
 - A circle is a semi-autonomous and self-organizing group of people united by a common aim.
 - All members of the organization participate in regular circle meetings, where they make policy decisions by consent, where all voices in the circle are equivalent.
 - Circles make decisions and carry out work within limits set by the next broader circle.
 - Each circle elects its own facilitator and secretary from among its members by consent (see below). The facilitator may be the functional leader or it may be someone else.
- **Double-linking**
 - A double link between one circle and another is formed by the circle's operational leader and one or more elected representatives who are full members of both circles.
 - Double-linking ensures that information moves in both directions between circles. This enables transparent feedback to travel up and down and across an organization through double-linked circles, and leads to adjustments in policy that are workable for all those affected by a decision.
- **Election by Consent**
 - Circles elect people for functions, tasks, and roles by consent.
 - The process ensures that the person selected is one the circle considers qualified, and that that person understands the responsibilities.
 - The process fosters openness, trust, and accountability among the circle members.



These four principles produce exceptionally strong, adaptable, and productive teams and organizations. The structure supports accountability and the development of leaders. The structure ensures that everyone has a voice. When people know their voice matters, they become more engaged and creative, and take more initiative. The result is teams, organizations, and companies that are vibrant and effective.

Assorted Definitions and Explanations

What it means

Dynamic Governance is also known as Sociocracy. Sociocracy vests power in the “socios” (from Latin, socius, “companion”) – companions, colleagues, people who regularly interact with one another and have a common aim. Decisions are made in consultation with each other, in consideration of the needs of each person in the context of the aims of the group or organization.

Policy decision is made using sociocratic methods based on the above values and principles. Governs (constrains) a set of future operational decisions by setting aims, standards, limits, parameters. May allocate resources, clarify values, establish plans, specify general procedures for repetitive (production) processes.

Operational decision is made by an operational leader. Carries out policy decisions in day to day functioning of an organization. May determine daily job assignments, handling of correspondence, operation of machinery, delivery of specific services, etc.

The difference between policy and operational decisions:

- An operational decision is a decision to do something.
 - We want to eat lunch; shall we buy it or make it?
- A policy decision is a decision that governs operational decisions.
 - We’ll make lunch 3 days and buy lunch 2 days a week.

Some decision-making methods:

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Autocratic edict | You do this. |
| Chaos | It’s every person for him or herself. |
| Majority vote | Yay or Nay. |
| Tradition | This is the way we do it. |
| Consensus | Do we all agree? |
| Consent | Any objections? |

Note that a group operating by Dynamic Governance can consent to use another decision-making method for some specific case or type of situation.

Some Resources

"We the People: A Guide to Sociocratic Principles and Methods," book by John Buck and Sharon Villines, available from sociocracy.info.

The Sociocracy Consulting Group, sociocracyconsulting.com. See also linked member consultants and/or businesses.

SocioNet, education, networking, advocacy, outreach. Consider becoming a member. Socionet.us.

Sociocracy.Info and **A Deeper Democracy**, information and resources on sociocracy from "We the People" co-author Sharon Villines, sociocracy.info and adeeperdemocracy.org.

International sociocracy e-mail group, tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/sociocracy.

Wikipedia entry, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociocracy.

GovernanceAlive, "We the People" co-author John Buck's consultancy site, governancealive.com.

Creative Learning Solutions, Sheella Mierson's consultancy site, CLSolutionsInc.com.

A Co-Creative Path, Ron Czecholinski's consultancy site, acocreativepath.com.

Global Sociocratic Center, based in The Netherlands, sociocratie.nl/global.

For additional resources, do an online search on **sociocracy** or **dynamic governance**.

Workshop Leaders

Sheella Mierson, president of Creative Learning Solutions, Inc. (CLSolutionsInc.com) and member of The Sociocracy Consulting Group (SociocracyConsulting.com), helps build organizations and relationships that thrive and where great ideas come from every level. She works simultaneously on organizational and interpersonal planes, empowering people to address the challenges they face. Sheella draws on broad experience as a teacher, business trainer, facilitator, and organizational consultant. She has made sociocracy central in her consulting practice as the most effective method for making decisions and for creating organizational cultures that support strong collaborative skills. She is a Certified Facilitator for the *Blueprint of We Collaboration Process*, used to build trust, creativity, effortlessness, and resilience into relationships. She has worked with organizations across several continents in both for-profit and non-profit sectors. Her passion is to create joyful, productive relationships, communities, and workplaces. She can be reached at sheella.mierson@sociocracyconsulting.com, (302) 738-4173.

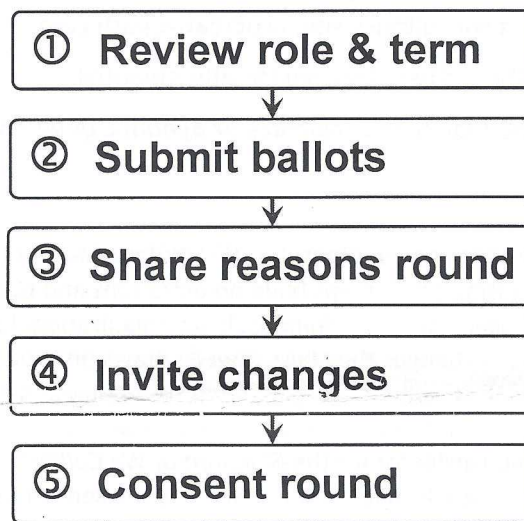
Ron Czecholinski, consultant at A Co-Creative Path (ACocreativePath.com) and Habitat Re-Imagined (HabitatReimagined.com) and member of The Sociocracy Consulting Group (SociocracyConsulting.com), has a passion to empower collaborative relationships through awareness, communication, agreement, and decision-making. He loves to work with groups that desire a stronger sense of community in their living and working environments, and to help them increase creativity, synergy, and harmony with the sociocratic process. He has facilitated community building for more than 25 years, many of them spent living in Intentional Communities and working in cooperative-oriented businesses. Ron also has been involved in issues of sustainability for all of his adult life. He holds certification in Permaculture Design and has balanced his work in community building with the creative and grounded work of green building. He can be reached at ron.czecholinski@sociocracyconsulting.com, (608) 669-8226.

Ted Millich studied video production and foreign languages--including Dutch--in the 1980's. In 1990 he worked in three co-operative businesses in Minneapolis. In 1991 he moved to Twin Oaks, where members were examining issues of self-governance, power, and organizational structure. In 2001 he learned about sociocracy from John Buck, a Washington, DC sociocracy consultant. He was part of a practice circle in the community and helped train other areas of Twin Oaks to use some sociocratic principles. In 2007 he decided to make a documentary about sociocracy. He traveled to the Netherlands to interview members of the Dutch Sociocracy Center, plus CEOs and staff of Dutch organizations that use sociocracy. He also interviewed sociocrats in Vermont, Washington, D.C., and Charlottesville, where he lives. The result is a 28-minute video called "Introduction to Sociocracy" (BeyondDemocracyTheFilm.com). He can be reached at teddidread@earthlink.net, (434) 977-1221.

Sociocracy is a system of principles and concrete, practical strategies for guiding the work of a group of people toward a common aim (Sociocratisch Centrum, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2006).

Sociocracy is a system of governance, using consent-based decision making among equivalent individuals and an organizational structure based on cybernetic principles (Wikipedia, 2012).

Dynamic Governance Election Process



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Election Do's for Consent Round

1. Facilitator proposes the candidate with the strongest arguments relative to qualification.
2. Numeric majority is less important than "weight" of the reasons.
3. Ask for candidate's consent last.

Election Don'ts

1. Elect for an unlimited term.
2. Have dialogue during a Round
3. Inquire who is interested or not.
4. Ask for a volunteer.
5. Seek the *perfect* candidate.

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