

# Governance By Design - Sociocracy

## *Values, principles, definitions and resources*

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### Values

- Equivalence – individuals function as peers in deciding how to accomplish their collective aims
- Effectiveness – designing for action; continuous development for efficiency; process design
- Transparency – direct access to all policy documents and records relating to one's work.
  - Supports equivalence, effectiveness and responsibilities of co-leadership.

### Principles

- **Consent**
  - Consent governs decision-making. Consent means there are no argued and paramount objections to a proposed policy decision (a proposal for a policy).
    - “Argued” means reasoned or explained. “Paramount” means all-important.
    - An objection is not a veto or block; it is a valid reason why a particular decision will prevent a member of the group from doing their job or otherwise supporting circle aims.
    - Objections are solicited because they provide useful and positive information (feedback) for designing a better decision. Reasons given for objections are used to improve a proposal so that all members of the group can work toward their aim more effectively.
- **Circles**
  - A circle is a semi-autonomous and self-organizing unit that has its own domain and aim. It makes policy decisions within its domain; delegates leading, doing and measuring functions to its own members; maintains its own memory system; plans its own development (learning, adapting).
    - Circles essentially correspond to organizational working groups, such as departments, divisions, teams, task forces, etc.. Each circle has its own aim and steers its own work by performing functions of leading, doing, and measuring on its own operations. Together the three steering functions establish a feedback loop, making the circle self-correcting, or self-regulating.
- **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. That is, feedback travels up and down and across an organization through double-linked circles.
- **Elections**
  - Circles elect people to functions, tasks and roles by consent and with transparency.
  - This can be seen as an extension of the Consent principle specifically to fill roles, functions and tasks.
  - Elections can also be used to decide among a fixed number of options/choices (color of uniform shirts, menu items for a banquet, size of new delivery truck, etc.)

## ***Resources and definitions:***

### **What it means**

Sociocracy vests power in the “socius” (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, with equivalence, in consideration of the needs of each person in the context of the aims of the group or organization.

### **Other decision-making methods**

Chaos; Theocracy/Ideology/Magical; Autocratic; Majority Vote; Consensus; Solidarity; Parliamentary; ??

### **Policy decision**

Governs (constrains) a set of future operational decisions by setting aims, standards, limits, parameters, guidelines. May allocate resources, clarify values, establish plans, specify general procedures for repetitive (production) processes.

### **Operational decision**

Flows/follows from or executes specific or implied 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.

### **Resources – print and online**

“We the People – consenting to a deeper democracy,” by Sharon Villines and John Buck

**Sociocracy dot Info** – How to Design Fair and Effective Organizations – information and resources - <http://www.sociocracy.info/>

**International sociocracy e-mail group** - <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/sociocracy/>

**Wikipedia entry** - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociocracy>

**The Sociocracy Consulting Group** - <http://sociocracyconsulting.com>  
(see also linked member consultants and/or businesses)

**A Deeper Democracy** - “We the People” co-author Sharon Villines' blog/site - <http://www.a deeperdemocracy.org/>

**GovernanceAlive** - “We the People” co-author John Buck's consultancy site - <http://www.governancealive.com/>

**Global Sociocratic Center** (based in The Netherlands) - <http://www.sociocratie.nl/global>

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