

SOCIOCRACY – INFO DOCUMENT

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GENERAL INFO

What is Sociocracy?

- Sociocracy is a dynamic governance system
 - Making good decisions in a community in an efficient and complete way
 - Everyone has the opportunity to voice and participate in decision
- Used in the profit- as well as non-profit oriented world (communities, activism, projects, group work, household)
- Effective decision-making and meetings
- Everybody's voice is honoured
- Collaborative decision-making: those who are in relation decide together
- Democracy (what sociocrats say about it)
 - No real choice
 - Too many political identities
 - Even petitions have very little influence (e.g. Brexit)
- Power is put into all people's hands and is equally and effectively distributed
 - And those who do not care don't have to decide
- 3 main pillars:
 - 1) Consent vs consensus
 - Consent
 - no objection, at least OK with it, I can live with it, good enough, safe enough
 - Giving permission, absence of objection
 - Consensus
 - of the same opinion, convinced by an idea
 - *Get back to this later*
 - 2) Specific organisational structure with circles
 - 3) Feedback culture
 - *These three will be covered in the workshop, and other factors will be learned depending on needs and time*
- Most important basics
 - Specific culture
 - Common vision (!!!)

Need for Sociocracy

- So many things can go wrong in groupwork!
 - slow
 - hierarchies
 - disconnection between members
 - miscommunication
 - emotions
 - not daring to say (important) things
- Humans are flexible, and we can avoid these things with the right framework
 - Sociocracy gives a framework that tries to avoid these things!

- ...without spending too much time on governance (long discussions, perfectionism etc)

History

- Term first coined in 1850's by August Comte
 - First philosopher of science
 - Founded the academic discipline sociology
 - Comte believed that a government led by sociologists would use scientific methods to meet the needs of all the people, not just the ruling class
- Different stages
 - 1.0 → first version
 - 2.0 → classical
 - 3.0 → newly adjusted, pick and chose
 - *That's what we will be doing here*

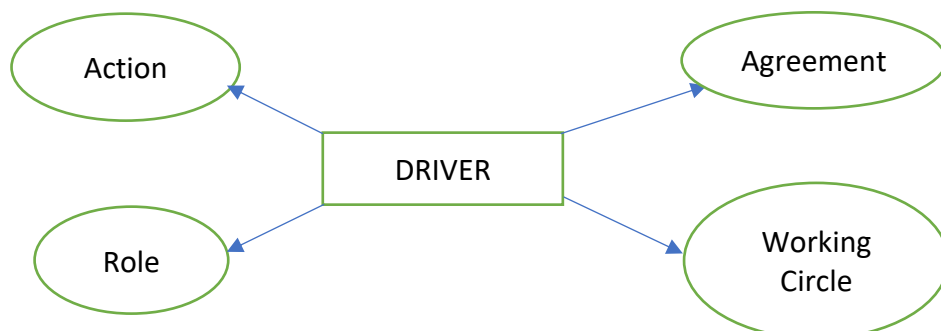
CULTURE/MINDSET/MANTRAS

Perception of Objections

- Does not mean that you hold back your wisdom
- You are welcomed to object
 - → It's a gift and perceived as fuel for action
- Objections are harvested until they are gone
- It's the knowledge of the group → there are always different perspectives
 - If they are not explicitly harvested, they will pop up somewhere else
 - Maybe even in another form
- Sociocracy is a framework that sees objections as fruitful

Navigation through tensions

- Tensions are important symptoms of a problem within the bigger system
 - One person communicates a tension = communicates a symptom of the system via the tension
 - It's the spark to start a decision-making process
 - Gets reformulated as a driver of change
 - Group goes through a process of properly defining the driver, then agrees on whether it is important to act upon it, and if so,
 - A proposal of a driver is formed and a consented on
 - And then there are several options to work on the driver



Continuous Evaluation and Improvement

- Trying out together
- Reflecting
- Tweaking
- ... always.
- Requires that decisions are always set with a timeframe!!!
 - Super important aspect

Artful Participation

- Everybody commits to balance own and group needs
- Behaviour should be the best possible contribution to work towards the common vision
- If a member does not participate in the tools chosen by the facilitator, the member is sabotaging him/herself
 - Because facilitator should know what is best for the group
 - *Will get back to this later*

Types of people in a group

- Types:
 - Dreamers
 - Doers
 - Reflectors
 - Celebrators
- Usually all covered in a group
- Interesting to find out for role allocation

Time management

- Minimum governance to avoid long discussions
 - Doers are lost if governance takes too long
- But if there is an important topic popping up, a time and space for this discussion is consciously allocated

“Mantras” / Basic mind-set

- Good enough for now, safe enough to try
 - Stay dynamic, short-term decisions to make needed experience to form long-term decisions
 - If there is the expectation to do sth perfectly, it may create frustration → not very enriching
 - Creates trust by pulling down expectations of life and achievements
 - Expect to fail → will make you do anything you want
- Crisis = opportunity
- Fail fast and pivot
 - Failure is the best possible information about reality → then the wisdom of that experience can be integrated
 - Small steps and failure → get experience, balance, tweak
 - No perfectionism, rather just start, see where we get, adjust, add
 - Failure is a success because you have learned something important
- Is this within my range of tolerance?

- Adjust to the needs of the community
 - When a certain thing is ineffective in a certain group, find alternative
- Interdependence and transparency
 - Since decision-making is distributed throughout the organization, all members of the organization must have access to information
- Sharing gains and losses
 - Feedback rounds
 - No one person carries guilt or fault
 - Everybody owns the outcome of a process
 - Active responsibility taking
 - Celebrating or grieving together
- What would you do? What is your preferred reality?
- Anything is possible with the right tools
- IKIGAI
 - Japanese word for “the reason why you get up in the morning”
- Balance between
 - Radical honesty
 - Only take over tasks you are actually motivated for, otherwise someone else should take over the task
 - *Will get back later on this point*
 - Radical responsibility
 - Stay aware and see where help / action / expression of a tension is needed
- Tools and schedules exist to help but not to stress

FIRST STEP – CREATING A COMMON VISION

The group needs to be clear on why they are coming together, and need to agree upon a common vision to work on. This is an extremely important step because this forms the framework and basis of criteria of the decisions and actions made in the work!!! There are different tools, such as Dragondreaming or just simply creating a VMA (and Culture)

Dragondreaming

- From the aboriginal culture
- 4 different stages of a project
 - 1) Dreaming
 - Should be the natural start of the project
 - Dream full on without thinking about the reality or resources
 - Create a vision
 - Be a “dragon” → symbolic for having a big vision
 - 2) Planning
 - Not dreaming anymore
 - Related to resources, capacity, capabilities
 - Concrete vision and plan
 - Use tools like

- SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Time Bound)
 - VMA (Vision Mission Aims)
 - Give it a time limit!!
 - 3) Doing
 - Go into experience
 - Meetings, do tasks etc.
 - 4) Celebrating
 - As important as the rest!
 - Includes reflection and feedback
 - Celebration energy, be proud
 - Creates energy for new ideas
 - ... and then into Step 1) again, because of new ideas
- 4 stages can have any timeframe: one hour, one year...
- Society often only does step 2) and 3), and forgets step 1) and 4) → burnout!
 - Because steps 1) and 4) are regenerative and give energy and creativity
- Clearly separate these steps!
 - If they get mixed, the process is confusing and things get messy and unclear
- Think: at which step are you right now?

Vision Mission Aims

- Vision = main goal = WHY
 - Ultimate framework for all decisions
 - Hard to evaluate decisions without this
 - Needs to be explicit, one to three sentences
 - Vision creation:
 - 1) Everyone expresses their individual passion and interest in why they are here
 - 2) All wishes are collected and formed into a vision sentence to be proposed
 - Find highest common denominator to make as many people as possible agree
 - *Example for today: "We are a temporary community learning and practicing Sociocracy together while having fun"*
 - 3) Consent round
 - Any vision is temporary!!! It has a time limit and expires!!
 - Therefore, set an expiry date
 - It needs to be reviewed and renewed regularly
 - Needs to be presented to newcomers!! Then they can decide if they agree and want to partake. If they have concerns about it, they can still partake and present their concern when the vision is renewed
 - Should not take too much time → good enough! Can also be rough in the first place and have a short time limit
- Mission = HOW
 - How the organisation will sustain and realise its vision
 - Several statements that describe what the group is generally going to do to realise the vision

- Aims = WHAT
 - Different to mission because more specific
 - Specific to-do's for the group, practical solutions
 - What the group exactly has to deliver to realise the vision
 - Always check if the aims really go towards the vision!!
 - Creation:
 - Can be done by group, subgroup or individuals
 - Proposal forming and consent
- The "group" can also be an individual! Extremely useful tools for personal/academic/work life

Culture formation

- How do we ensure fruitful, honest, open, respectful collaboration?
- Collect some ideas and tools for the preferred culture of the group
- Proposal forming and consenting

DECISION-MAKING

Kinds of decisions

- Policy making
 - General appliance / rules
 - E.g. VMA, culture, etc
- Generic decision
 - Specific tasks, decisions within processes

Proposal Forming

- Present driver / proposal
- Consent to driver / proposal
- Questions about driver (round)
- Record considerations
- Collect ideas
- If not agreed upon yet: create tunes → roles of people to create a new proposal for next meeting
- Create proposal either on spot or in another meeting with tuners

Consent Rounds

- 1) Present proposal
- 2) Clarifying questions
 - Does everyone clearly understand what the proposal is about?
- 3) Brief response / Quick reaction round
 - 1-3 words, sound, temperature check
- 4) Consent round
 - Everyone voices in a round / shows with hand-sign whether
 - Consent → gives permission for the proposal to go through
 - Consent with concern → Has a tension / concern but still gives permission for the proposal to go through

- Proposal goes through but only once concerns are voiced (in next round) → can help to update the proposal after it's expiry date if the concern is realised
- Objection → no permission
 - Proposal does not go through if anybody objects
 - Different to veto because after objection is voiced, group decides whether this objection is valid and if so, proposal is adjusted
 - Objection is only valid if it genuinely shows that the proposal would not help the group to get to its common vision
 - For example
 - Vision: buy an energy efficient house
 - Proposal: we have found one that we would like to buy
 - Valid objection: The windows actually aren't isolated enough
 - Invalid objection: I don't like the colour of the house
 - Vision does not say anything about the colour of the house. Yet if the group agrees that the colour of the house is actually important, the vision is updated and the objection becomes valid.
- 5) Round of concerns and objections
- 6) Integrate wisdom of objections
- 7) Celebrate agreement!
- 8) Agreement added to logbook
 - Try to not discuss about specific meanings of different words... (minimum governance, good enough)

Hand-signs

- Preferably not using hand signs so that everybody actually has the chance to say something
- But in case they are needed
 - Thumb up → consent
 - Thumb down → object
 - Thumb middle → consent with concern
 - Hand open and up → new proposal
 - In this case do not address directly but only after concerns and objections are harvested

If no consent is found

- Create circle to work on a new proposal for another meeting
- Or there is something wrong with the emotional level of the group
 - Tensions that aren't clear or emotional problems
 - They need to be addressed in a process meeting (regenerative culture meeting)

FEEDBACK

Main Ideas /Culture

- Trustbuilding
- Radical and constructive honesty
- “Subject” is not a subject because invites and starts
- Everyone collaborating
- Bonding and trusting effect

Performance Reviews

The performance is based on the role description as criteria for evaluation. This helps to identify what the reviewed can change and what needs to be changed in the role description.

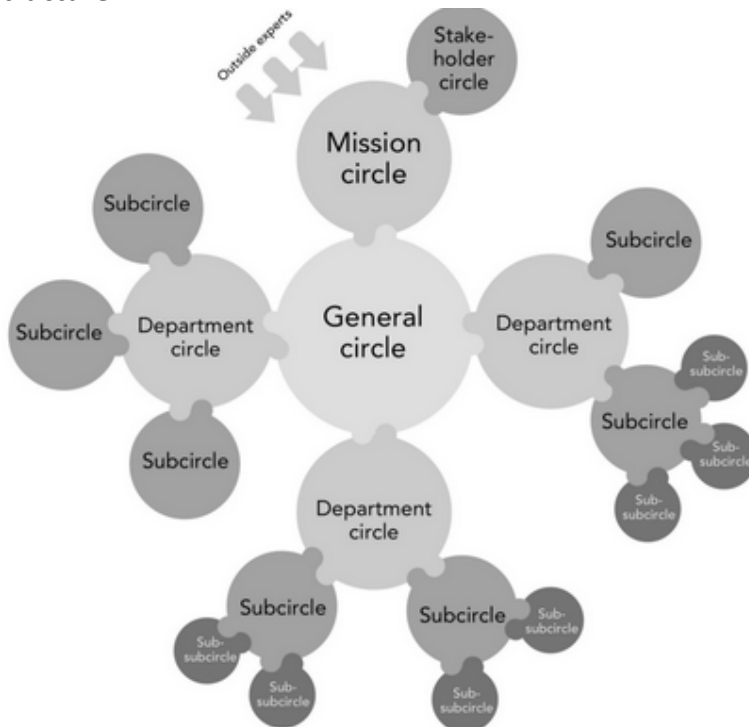
- 1) Invitation
 - Person who runs the performance review is the one who’s performance is reviewed!
 - This person invites two people for a review (of their choice)
 - We all want to get to the end goal of this project; therefore we want to improve and choose people who will be honest with us
- 2) Appreciation round
 - Person who is reviewed starts the appreciation
 - What he/she thinks he/she did well
 - Then reviewers give the appreciation
- 3) Suggestion of improvements
 - Same process as 2)
- 4) Improvement plan
- 5) Consent round on improvement plan (only among the three people)

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Why Circles

- Decisions are made by the people that are actually affected
- More effective

Circle Structure



- Each circle has its own VMA!
- Vision upholder checks if visions of all relevant circles are in line with each other and upheld
- Representative represents the smaller group in the bigger group
- General circle usually only with representatives (and one logbook keeper)
 - Or at least only with representatives

ROLES

Role

- Meeting Facilitator
 - Understands the needs of members of the group and fulfils them
 - “Servant” to help others to get where they want to get to
 - Picks best tools /means) to get to end
 - Checks into the group energy, sees if they agree
 - Switches between being a participant and being a facilitator
- Meeting Organiser
 - Organises time and place
 - Helps to make agenda for policy meetings
 - Asks for agenda points (16 days before)
 - Sets agenda points together with facilitator (10 days before)
 - Shares agendy points with rest of the group (7 days before)

- Responsible for sharing the info in any kind of way (email etc)
- Logbook Keeper
 - Keeps logbook
 - Not minute-taker!
 - Keeps logbook constantly updated
 - Shares online with everyone
 - Keeps track of expiry dates and reminds the rest of the group when renewals are needed
- Minutes Taker
- Vision Upholder
 - Checks if subgroup / circle works towards the vision
 - Keeps spirit alive and appropriate
- Representatives
 - Takes care of the needs of the subgroup
 - Represents the group but cannot make decisions on behalf of the group
 - Needs to bring back ideas to the group to consent on them

Role Description Process

- Statements of what a certain role should fulfil are gathered
- Description of tasks
- Skills needed by the person taking over the role
 - E.g. skills needed by meeting facilitator:
 - Organised
 - Technology skills
 - Proactive
 - Reliable

Role Election

- 1) Nomination round with pieces of paper: write name of preferred person for a role (can also be oneself)
- 2) Collect papers and read out names
- 3) Round of who nominated who and why → transparency
- 4) Round of extra information – anything you know which was not stated yet
 - e.g. thank you for nominating me but I really don't want that / and I would love to do that
 - or explain that a nominated person might not be the best person to do this job
 - honesty for vision upholding! For the sake of the group
- 5) Second nomination round (not "vote")
 - final nomination: person with most nominations gets the role
- 6) Time limit?
 - According to general policy: role is given to the person only for a certain amount of time. Then renewed!
 - Gives others the opportunity to live the role too
- 7) Consent round
- 8) Logbook

MEETINGS

Types of meetings

Note: Members cherry-pick which meetings are most relevant for them / where their role is most important

Meetings with * are the most recurring meetings e.g. weekly – the others can be held e.g. once a month or less

- Proposal forming meeting
 - Only for people who are passionate about a certain decision and have time and capacity
- Proposal clarification meeting
 - Only for people who have not understood the proposal
- Policy meeting
 - Can change the steering of the project
- *Operational meeting
 - Deciding who is going to take over which tasks
 - Different to aims because it shows how to reach the aims
 - Guidance by policies
- *Status meeting
 - Only 30 minutes
 - Opportunity to check where we are
 - Opportunity to voice policy changes when sth does not go well
- Social meeting
 - In any form
 - Games/playful
 - Sharing circle
 - Can happen right after status meeting
- Performance review meeting
- Role elections meeting
 - Can also be integrated in policy meeting
- *Working group meeting
 - Small group working on a specific task
- Heart and soul meeting
 - About deeply connecting
 - Opportunity to resolve issues and challenges
 - Forum / sharing circle

ADMINISTRATIVE

Logbooks

- Not minutes!
- Keeps all elements with their expiry date
 - Vision
 - Mission
 - Aim
 - Policies
 - Tasks

- Role descriptions
- Role nominations
- Available for everyone
- Minutes can be in an extra document or in the appendix

COLLABORATION TOOLS

Tools

- Check-Ins
- Check-Outs
- Energy Upholders

STARTING SOCIOCRACY

Starting a Project

- Put idea/VMA out and see if it resonates with people
- Gather people who want to participate
- Create strategy to collect more people
- Create VMA together – variation of first VMA
 - Drop first VMA and have a collective VMA!

Embedding into an Existing Project

- **Note: Sociocracy cannot be forced onto a group – people have to want it**
- Create a circle which studies Sociocracy
 - They need to teach everyone
- Start small and bit by bit
 - Do consent rounds and proposal forming
 - Create a common vision (never forget expiry date!)
 - Even if vision already exists, renew it altogether!! Brings consciousness into the ever-learning process
- Create circles
- Create roles
- Do performance reviews
- Remind the group of the culture / mantras and the vision
- Train people