

Webinar: Sociocracy - democracy as it could be!

Information and practical demonstration session 5th May 2026

Presented by A Fairer Society

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<https://afairersociety.com/>



Agenda

Arrivals - 5 mins

Introducing Sociocracy - 20 mins

- Examples of where it is being used in governments world wide
- Q&A

Consent based decision making - demonstration - 35 mins

- Explanation & gathering volunteers 5 mins
- Presenting proposal, test for consent 8 mins
- Feedback from participants - 10 mins
- Offers & get in touch - 5

Introducing Sociocracy

Sociocracy was developed in the 1970s at Endenburg Electrotechniek (a marine electronics firm in the Netherlands)

It has spread to every populated continent and is used by businesses, charities, governments, and community groups.

It's most often adopted by organisations that are also cooperatives, employee owned, lean or agile organisations, or learning organisations. Sociocracy makes those ways of organising easier.

Four Principles:

Consent

Circles

Feedback (double-linking)

Open Election (election by consent)

Principle of Consent

CONSENT SIGNALS

TRAFFIC LIGHT



ANDON CORDS



Operations (Playing the Game):

Use the working methods that are best for your organization.

Often this is a mix of agile project management and standard work, with clear delegation.

Policy (the rules of the game; delegating power): Decide by **consent**.

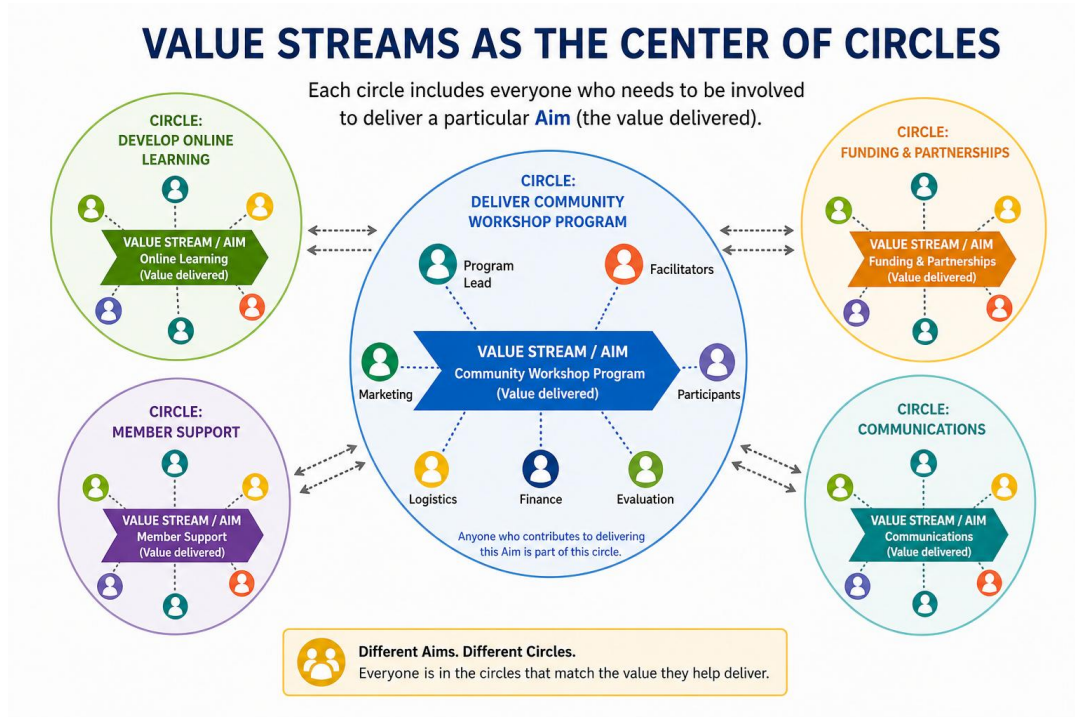
Is it safe enough to try and good enough for now?
“Is there any reason we can’t afford to try this experiment?”

We want to know!!

Principle of Circles

A circle is...

- A self-managed team
- Of all the people needed to deliver a specific **aim** (stream of value defined from customer / beneficiary's perspective)
- That makes its own policy about how it works.



THE PRINCIPLE OF FEEDBACK (DOUBLE LINKING)



A sociocratic organisation is a **learning organisation**.



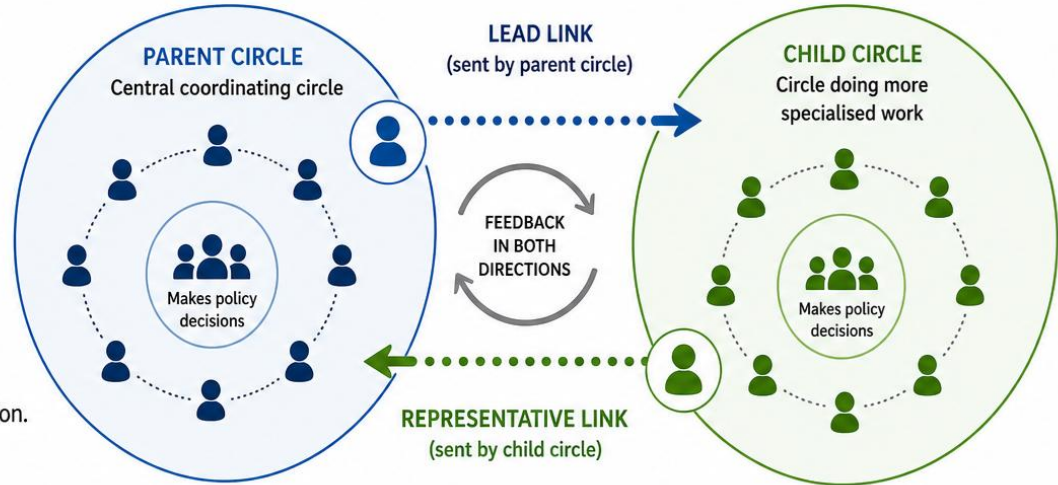
It runs on **feedback**.



We include feedback everywhere... especially in the **structure** of the organisation.



Double-linking hard-wires **feedback** into the structure.



Lead Link (sent by parent circle)

- Brings information from the parent circle to the child circle.
- Participates in policy decisions of **both** circles.



Representative Link (sent by child circle)

- Brings information from the child circle to the parent circle.
- Participates in policy decisions of **both** circles.



The people playing these linking roles each participate in the policy decisions of **both** circles.

Principle of Open Elections (election by consent)

Using Consent, we can write the rules of the game to delegate just about any sort of decision-making to just about any person, process, or group.

But!

We can't delegate the selection of people for significant enduring roles.

We fill any roles that matter by an Election by Consent.



How Sociocracy is being used in governments worldwide

- The city council of Utrechtse-Heuvelrug (NL) have been using it for over a decade, reporting more efficient decision making and a more cooperative atmosphere (more in this [video](#) and [paper](#)).
- The city of Augsburg in Germany has been using Sociocracy in its city administration since 2020. We can put you in touch if you like!

UK examples

- Frome Neighbourhood Networks
- YPIP Community Panel

Sociocracy is being used in District level governments in India
And we've experienced it be used in the UN.

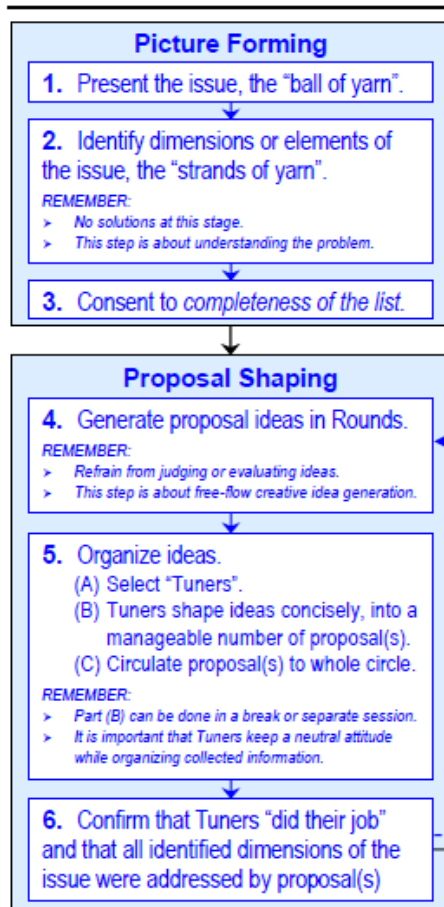
Some more reading and resources:

Academic papers and [Case Studies on Sociocracy](#)



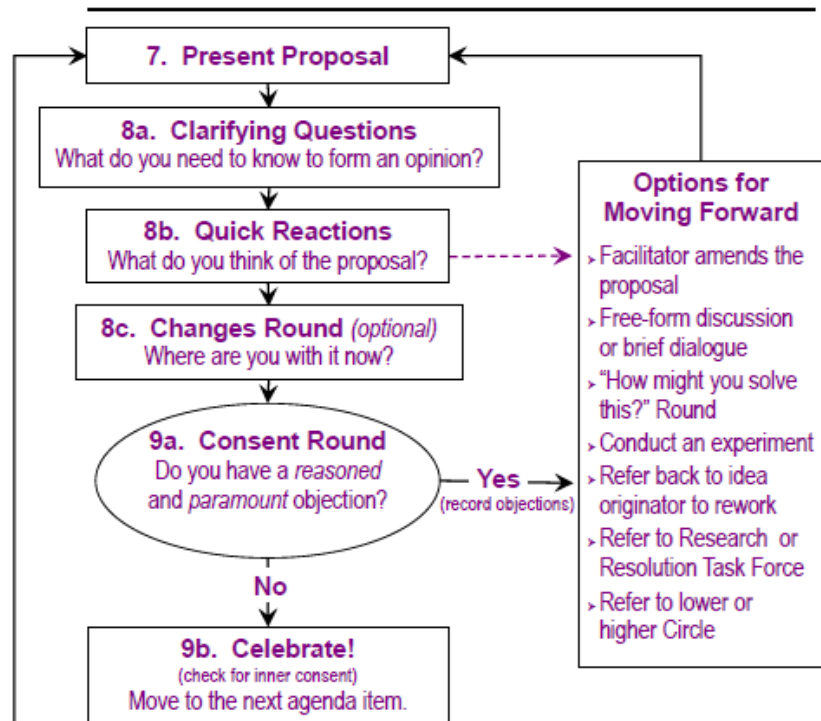
Practical Demonstration: Consent decision making

PROPOSAL FORMING



Dynamic Governance Summary

CONSENT DECISION MAKING



GLOSSARY

- Round(s)* — every participant gives input in turn, with no group dialogue.
Tuners — individuals appointed to make information more manageable by organizing it, without additions or modifications in meaning.

Role play scenario

Your council will be commissioning a £300k youth services contract, and the proposal is to use a 'Maximum Public Benefit' commissioning approach, whereby taking into account social, environmental and economic benefits, is as important as financial cost.

It will be the first time the council uses social value accounting for evaluating and selecting tenders.

We need 3 volunteers to play the role of council officers considering this proposal, who care about these things:

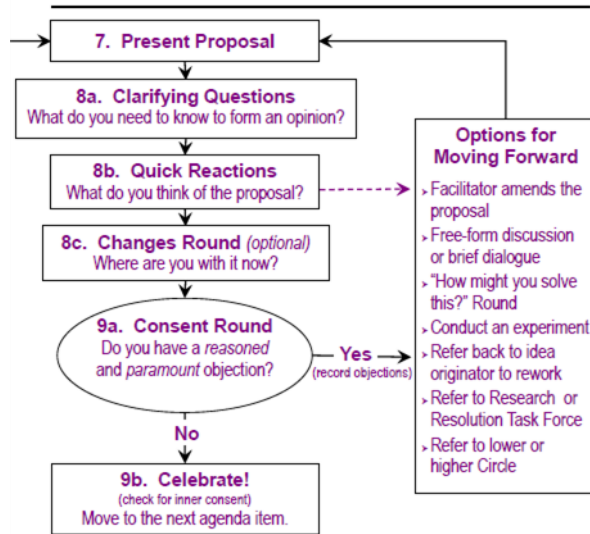
- Youth leader - delivering the best service for our youth. Championing this proposal. - Name: Morgan
- Financial officer - balancing the books - Name: Ann Marie
- Team leader - getting good media attention for the council - Name: Jonathan

1. Consent decision meeting

240-406-9604 ~ Contact@GovernanceAlive.com GOVERNANCE *Alive*

Dynamic Governance Summary

CONSENT DECISION MAKING



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Welcome to the decision making meeting!

Present: (Switch off cameras if you are not part)

Facilitator: Carolina

Note taker: Nate

1. Presenting the proposal

For the upcoming £300k youth services contract for after school activities for teenagers across the borough, we will use a new “Maximum Public Benefit” commissioning approach, where taking into account social, environmental and economic benefits, is as important as financial cost.

This will be the first time your council uses social value accounting. The tender will include criteria weighted in support of for local employment, cooperative/social enterprise participation, environmental benefit, and resident involvement.

We will pilot this on one contract, review after six months, and report learning to the council leadership.

2. Consent decision making

2. Clarifying questions - what do you need to know to form an opinion? (no opinions! Carolina can help answer qs)

- Q: How many young people will benefit?
- A: 200, which is 100 more than previous contract
- Q: Is this a recommissioning of existing service?
- A: No
- Q:
- A: The proposal is add'l contract; no complaints about loss of existing services;
- Q: What's the driver? Why are we doing this?
- A: This supports outcomes for teens - access to education and training opportunities.

The proposal

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3. Consent decision making

3. Quick reactions - what do you think of the proposal? Are there any changes you would suggest?

- Sounds great. Announcement needs to sound engaging and resident friendly.
- I might have issues of why we're piloting social value accounting on this contract. Is this the right thing to continue on? Why are we experimenting on this particular contract?
- The whole purpose of the contract is to improve service and improving outcomes; using social value helps ensure that there are multiple dimensions of value for this key group

The updated proposal

For the upcoming £300k youth services contract for after school activities for teenagers across the borough, we will use a new "Maximum Public Benefit" commissioning approach, where taking into account social, environmental and economic benefits, is as important as financial cost.

This will be the first time your council uses social value accounting.

The tender will include criteria weighted in support of for local employment, cooperative/social enterprise participation, environmental benefit, and resident involvement.

We will pilot this on one contract, review after six months, and report learning to the council leadership.

When we come to announcing this, has to be done in an engaging and resident friendly manner.

Outcomes are to identify and deliver 15 apprenticeships for the children of in the cohort.

Options for Moving Forward

- ▶ > Facilitator amends the proposal
- ▶ > Free-form discussion or brief dialogue
- ▶ > "How might you solve this?" Round
- ▶ > Conduct an experiment
- ▶ > Refer back to idea originator to rework
- ▶ > Refer to Research or Resolution Task Force
- ▶ > Refer to lower or higher Circle

4. Consent decision making

The updated proposal

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Outcomes are to identify and deliver 15 number of apprenticeships for the children of in the cohort.

4. Changes round - where are you with it now

- Improved proposal
- V happy
- Might consider involving young people in deciding what the activities are

5. Consent round - do you have any objection to this proposal?

- A: consent
- J: consent
- M: consent

6.. If not... celebrate! If so...plan to keep working on the proposal?

Feedback on the consent based decision making process

Feedback from participants

Ann: Really good tool that could be used in senior leadership meetings; get past emotion to get faster better decisions; getting people to use evidence and reason would take “wind out of sails”

Jonathan: Importance of good facilitation can't be underestimated. Strong facilitator can make it work well; I've seen it get derailed with big personalities. Need to be able to manage that. In partnership working we need someone brave enough to facilitate firmly.

Morgan: I really like the rounds approach. Forces patience on people. Democratise; helps force people to give everyone time to participate.

Facilitator is different from chair; chair is chief exec and final arbiter. External facilitator can ensure every voice can be heard. In Sociocracy team lead and facilitator are distinct roles.

Feedback from audience (cameras back on)

C: Really interesting; discussion brought out add'l considerations and added value

A: Really interesting to see how a quick go-round can improve proposal. Question: would it look that smooth if we have someone with a completely different agenda? [Carolina: I've seen it work w/ different opinions and stress in the room. Knowing your voice will be heard reduces worry. Structure of the process is very similar to the conflict resolution]

M: How would it work if there's not a consensus? Is it done on majority? [We just need “good enough for now and safe enough to try”. If there's an objection, meaning that someone identifies a cost or risk that we can't afford, then we say “thanks” and we have to stop or change the proposal.]

Feedback on the consent based decision making process

Feedback from audience (cameras back on)

- *What if there are continuous objections?*
 - *One outstanding objection can stop the process, even after many rounds of working on the proposal or perhaps bringing more intelligence in, it may still be an unaffordable experiment. E.g. it will cost +20% and we cannot afford it!*
 - *Sometimes, there may be an urgent and important issue, and there is an objection or unknowing what to do next, so we cannot resolve it in the timeframe to resolve it - can be handed to the next higher circle.*
- *Doing course w/ Happy; Gemma*
 - I'm doing a course at the moment that focusses on re-inventing organisations which fits with this, i've been using it practically in elected members neighbourhood groups with groups of 6 - 9 members and have used liberating structures like 1,2,4 All and What, So what, What now to help guide, how do you think this fits into this process?
- Liberating structures is very complementary here. The process here - picture forming works with 1,2,4 all, or research parting; proposal shaping similarly. The consent decision making which we just demonstrated is what you would come to in the end, to make the decision. E.g. even the wisdom council approach can end with consent. So the final stages can be added as a final step ensuring voices heard.
- Things being vetoed at a more senior level - how to deal with that?
 - This only works if you have buy in from the power structure or have clarity about the power structure. If the next level up isnt using this approach then the next level can veto. The senior can participate in the decision making to avoid this. Do it in a sincere way.
 - Classical Soc. each team is semi-autonomous. Right to make decision for their areas of operations. No perfect system of delegation. If we're in charge of the website and something new is included... and its vetoed by the higher level. That can happen, its not clear what has actually been delegated. Can adjust as we go along, the coordinator can veto, but Sociocracy introduces more information between teams.
- Bad faith actors - how to tackle

Offers & get in touch

If you'd like to discuss the use of Sociocracy in your organisation with our senior team, get in touch! We are able to offer a **FREE 30 minute strategy call**

Further, our certification candidates have an special offer on at the moment. **You may qualify for free of charge support, including:**

- Facilitation of one meeting using the method
- Hands on Sociocracy consulting implementation support, tailored to your needs, for many months. Read more about it here <https://afairersociety.com/free-participatory-governance-support/>

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<https://afairersociety.com/>

MEETING CHAT NOTES

Steve added read.ai meeting notes to the meeting (recording enabled). View Privacy Policy: <https://www.read.ai/pp>. To opt out and delete this recording, click here: <https://app.read.ai/analytics/opt-out/01KQVRRK6QAT0SAZZ7GBDHSVJ8K>

Does anyone mind if I use transcription for this meeting?

And welcome, Nate!

Some helpful reading from Coops UK on sociocracy: Sociocracy in co-operative organisations | Co-operatives UK

Does the UN use any aspects of Sociocratic decision making or consensus decision making?

The question I was about to ask was just answered before I needed to ask it!

LAVALLIN Clayton

Does the UN use any aspects of Sociocratic decision making or consensus decision making?

Thanks that distinction between consent and consensus is really helpful to distinguish the approach

would do it but having mic issues

I love a dog intervention Nate

Got to go, but thanks for the session!

Sorry I have to leave now, as got an appointment this afternoon. Thanks for the demonstration. Its a similar approach I have used on funded projects with participants from different organisations/departments. It usually works well, but on occasion we've come to an agreement at a meeting, and afterwards, someone senior - despite agreeing at the meeting - has vetoed the result! So a lot depends

Have to leave now but thanks for this! Super interesting

Sorry to add to chat - but my microphone is still bust:

I do find that with bad faith actors in a discussion what often happens is other participants forget to express their own views and thoughts - and actually get sucked into responding instead of contributing - is there a way to tackle that?

Apologies. Have to leave. Very interesting session and I like the model.

Thanks for participating Ann-Marie.

Gemma: I'm doing a course at the moment that focusses on re-inventing organisations which fits with this, i've been using it practically in elected members neighbourhood groups with groups of 6 - 9 members and have used liberating structures like 1,2,4 All and What, So what, What now to help guide, how do you think this fits into this process?

Ann-Marie Johnstone

apologies, I need to leave - thanks this was useful - I do wonder if anyone is considering how this could work in community settings e.g agreeing what needs to be done to make improvements in pride in place...

Martin Bell

That's my thoughts Ann-Marie - will be a suggestion I take to the Pride in Place chairs for the Neighbourhood Boards
Would be very keen to hear how this develops.

Toby Forster - Medway Council

Sorry to add to chat - but my microphone is still bust: I do find that with bad faith actors in a discussion what often happens is other participants forget to express their own views and thoughts - and actually get sucked into responding instead of contributing - is there a way to tackle that?

My recent example of this is an O&S committee cross party proposing to open up the councils petition scheme to 3rd party systems, officers went away and looked at this, came back with proposals. Most people expect this then to follow a similar flow to the role play just now, but one council decided to derail the conversation by making odd political points about change.org which didn't even make sense, and from that moment, even with the chair wanting to steer things back to reality people wanted to spend the time taking apart those points, not discussing the proposal

- Answer from Carolina: I believe both the structured process and the role of the facilitator could mitigate this, by preventing tangents and ensuring that all voices are heard on the topic of the agenda (not responding to bad faith comments).

I do really like this approach. The issue in the political sphere is where you have bad-faith actors who actively benefit from division and from structures not working. You may need to focus on working with those who are willing to work with the system. Even great tools don't work on every challenge

Thanks both

Centre for Thriving Places are hosting an event with Coops UK on Building Care Friendly Communities which will draw on the report Pete's mentioned https://www.linkedin.com/posts/centre-for-thriving-places_core-activity-7455562866591571968-pKc8?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAeLUNUBNIP3KPU8hPcb8i0B_8MK1OnQ6Bs