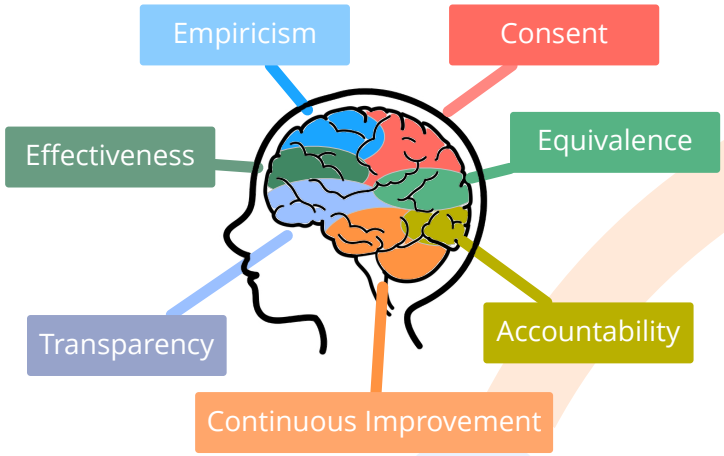
Sociocracy 3.0 - Effective Collaboration at Any Scale



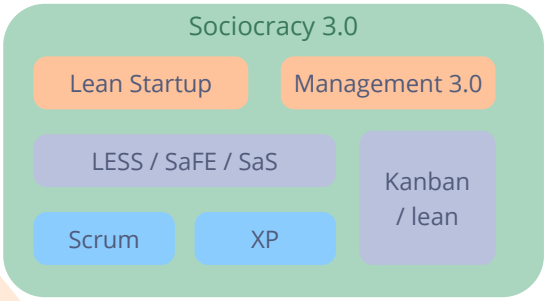
The Seven Principles for successful collaboration

What's in it for me?

Sociocracy 3.0 — a.k.a. "S3" — helps you discover how to best reach your objectives and navigate complexity, one step at a time, without the need for sudden radical reorganization or planning a long-term change initiative:

Simply start with your area of greatest need, select one or more patterns to try, move at your own pace and develop skills as you go.

Regardless of your position in the organization, you will find patterns that are relevant and helpful for you.



S3 and the family of lean and agile methodologies

Free and Open Source

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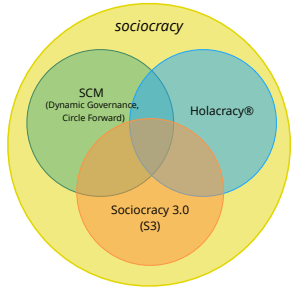
The most up-to date description of S3 is the Practical Guide, which is available as a website at https://patterns.sociocracy30.org

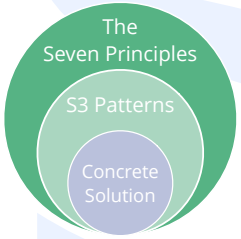


Patterns and Principles

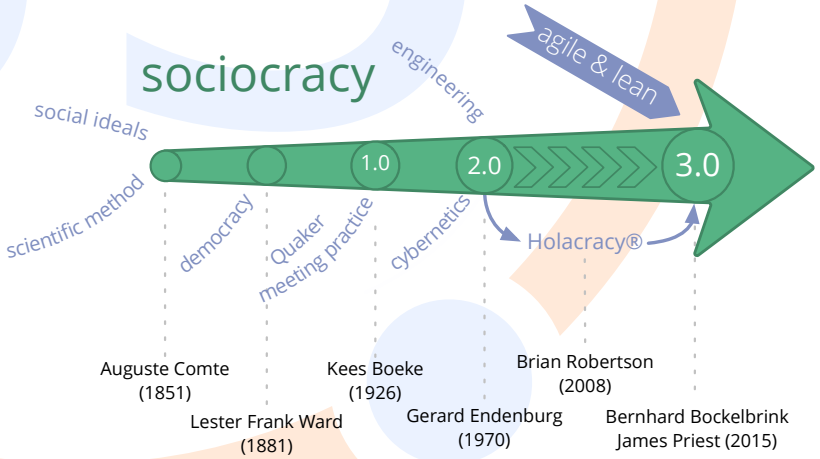
Sociocracy 3.0 contains around 70 different patterns that can help organizations resolve the impediments to successful collaboration.

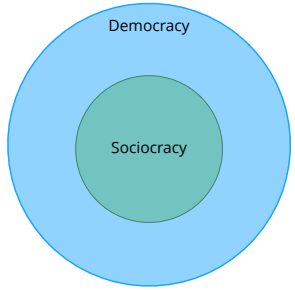
Each pattern is a template for navigating a specific kind of problem or complex challenge with an agile* and sociocratic** mindset. Patterns in S3 are simple, (mostly) independent and mutually reinforcing.

When using a pattern in your organization, you need to adapt it to your context, and evolve your concrete implementation with what you learn. When adapting and evolving patterns, use the Seven Principles as a guide.



History of Sociocracy 3.0





Driver for Creating Sociocracy 3.0

In 2014 we came together to co-create a body of Creative Commons licensed learning resources, synthesizing ideas from Sociocracy, Agile and Lean. We discovered that organizations of all sizes need a flexible menu of practices and structures – appropriate for their specific context – that enable the evolution of a sociocratic and agile mindset to achieve greater effectiveness, alignment, fulfillment and wellbeing.

James Priest and Bernhard Bockelbrink

*Agile: A mindset for navigating complexity through an iterative, collaborative, value-based, and self-organized approach.

**Sociocracy: A mindset where everyone who is affected by a decisions can influence those decisions.

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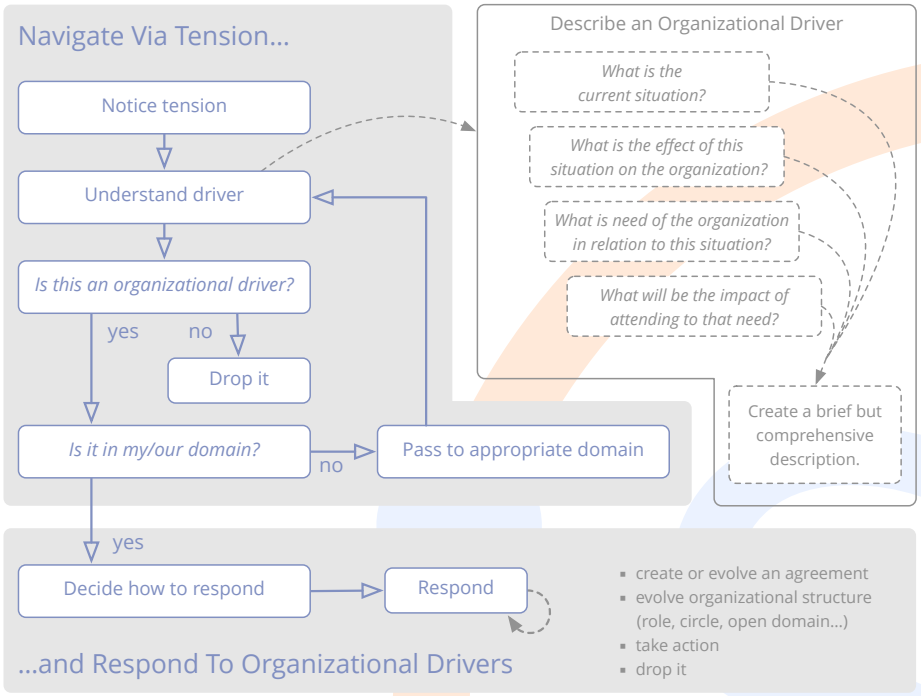
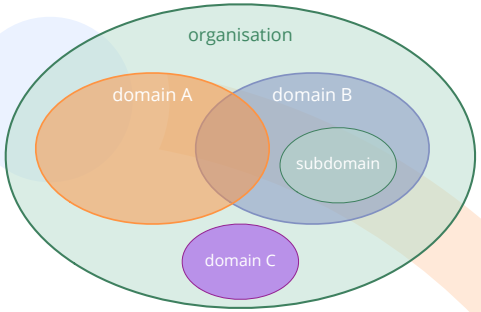
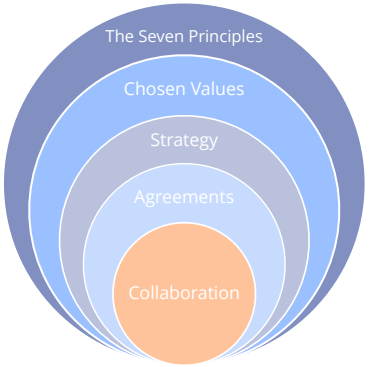
Making Sense of Organizations



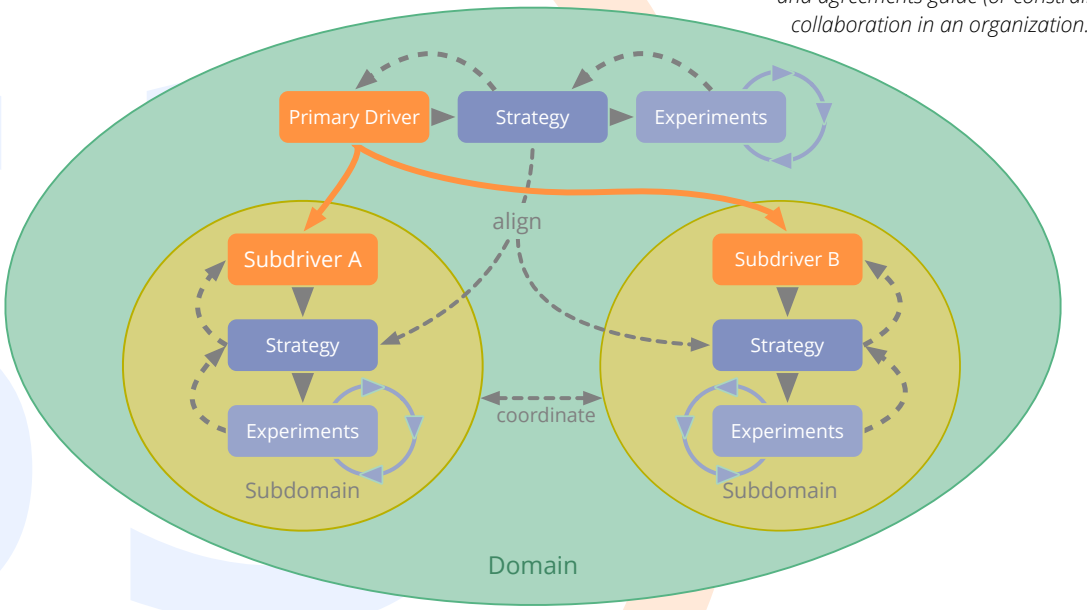
How to Navigate Via Tension, Describe Organizational Drivers and Respond to Organizational Drivers



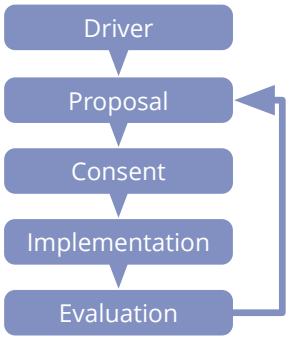
Domains in an organization



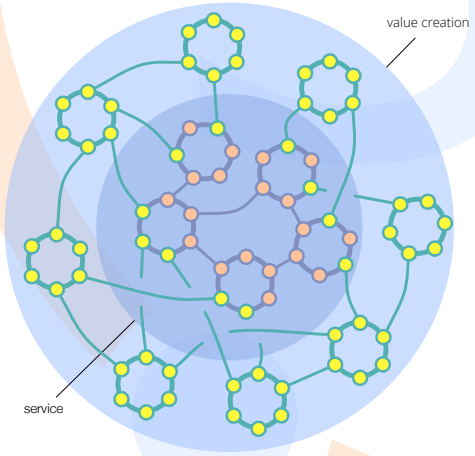
The Seven Principles, chosen values, strategy and agreements guide (or constrain) collaboration in an organization.



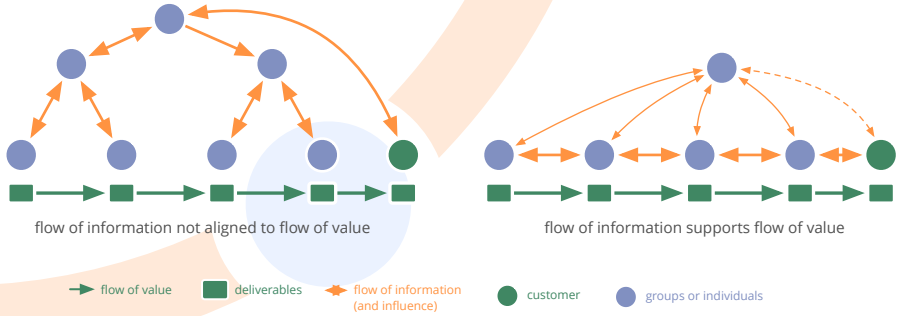
Drivers, strategies and experiments in domains and subdomains



Decision-making in complex situations



Peach Organization: An example of post-hierarchical structures.



Align the flow of information to the flow of value.

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Responding to Complex Challenges

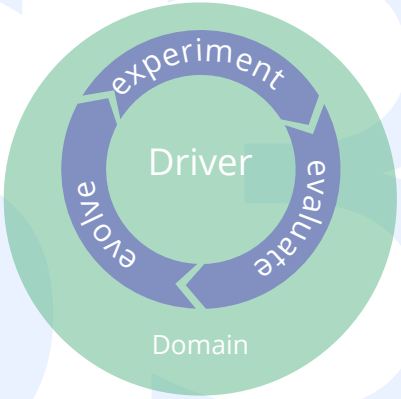
S3 promotes a collaborative and hypothesis-driven approach to decision making:

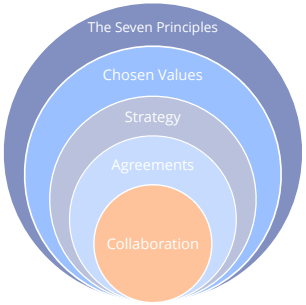
Identify Motivation → Co-Create Experiment → Run Experiment ↔ Evaluate and Evolve

Current situation
Effect on the organization
Need of the organization
Impact of attending to the need
→ Organizational Driver

Organizational Drivers: Understanding An Organization's Motive To Act

Identify Motivation	Co-Create Experiment	Run Experiment	Evaluate and Evolve
Navigate Via Tension	Those Affected Decide	Agreement	Evaluate And Evolve Agreements
Respond to Organizational Drivers	Describe Organizational Drivers	Develop Strategy	Clarify Intended Outcome
Driver Mapping	Clarify Domains		Describe Deliverables
			Evaluation Criteria





Complexity: An environment where unknowns are unknown, cause and effect can only be understood in retrospect, and actions lead to unpredictable changes. Since governance decisions always affect people's behavior, there is inevitably a degree of complexity involved in governance.

Domain: A distinct area of influence, activity and decision making within an organization.

Driver: A person's or a group's motive for responding to a specific situation.

Governance in an organization (or a domain within it) is the act of setting objectives, and making and evolving decisions that guide people towards achieving them.

Governance

- Allocate resources and capacity
- Set constraints on actions
- Determine specifics of deliverables and priorities of their delivery.
- Guide future decisions
- Define scope of domains and delegate them to people

Governance Backlog | Governance Meeting | Logbook | Governance Facilitator | Logbook Keeper

Proposals and Consent

Co-Create Proposals	Resolve Objections
Proposal Forming	Consent Decision Making
Objection	Role Selection

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Building Structures for Collaboration

Delegate Influence

design new domains and*

delegate them to people

- Role
- Circle
- Open Domain
- Helping Team

Delegate Influence

- Clarify Domains
  - Describe Deliverables
  - Evaluation Criteria
- Role Selection
- Develop Strategy
- Peer Review
- Development Plan
- Peer Feedback

Peer Development Process

Peer Review → Development Plan → Delegator Consent → Act On The Plan

Align Flow

align flow of influence to the flow of value

- Representative
- Linking
- Double Linking
- Delegate Circle
- Service Circle

Linking

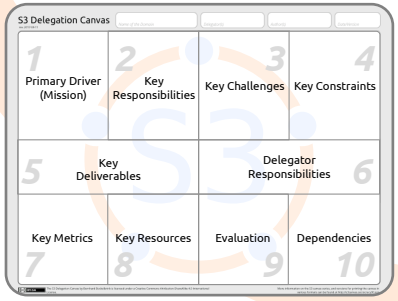
Double Linking

Service Circle

Delegate Circle

*Domain: A distinct area of influence, activity and decision making within an organization.

S3 Delegation Canvas



Macro- and Meta-Structures

- Double-Linked Hierarchy
- Service Organization
- Peach Organization
- Fractal Organization

Mapping Organizational Structure: First clarify the domains, then add the connections, i.e. how deliverables, information and influence flow between domains.

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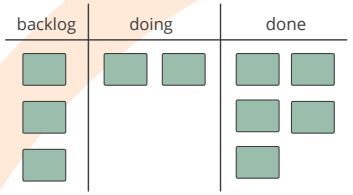
Operations

Organizing and doing the work.

Kanban

- Continuous Improvment Of Work Process
  - Visualize Work
  - Pull-System For Work
  - Limit Work In Progress



A simple Kanban board

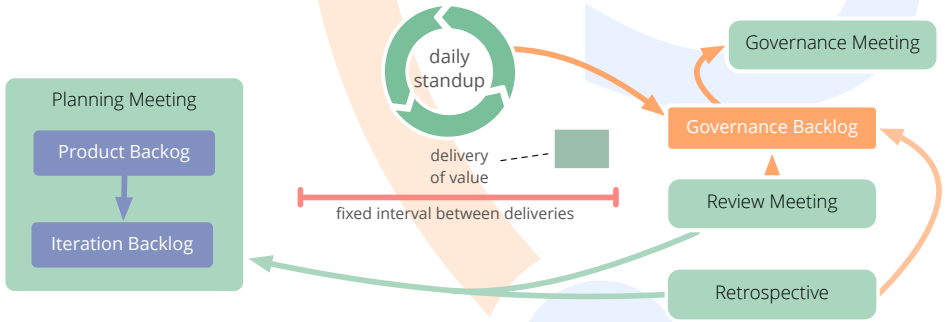
Measuring cycle-time

Effective Meetings

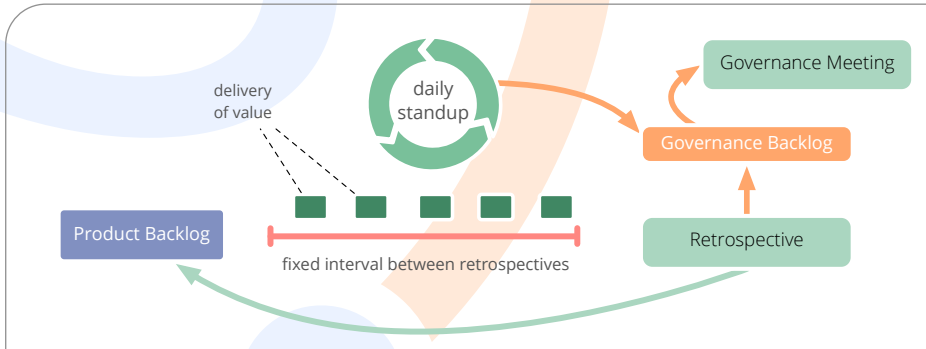
- Prepare For Meetings
- Facilitate Meetings
- Evaluate Meetings
- Rounds
- Check In
- Meeting Host

Coordination

- Daily Standup
- Coordination Meeting
- Coordinator



delivery of value in iterations



continuous delivery of value

- Backlog
- Prioritize Backlogs
- Timebox Activities
- Retrospective
- Planning And Review Meetings

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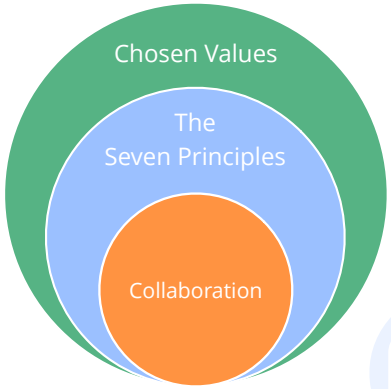
Enabling Engagement

Guiding Organizations Toward More Conscious Collaboration



Agree On Values

Adopt The
Seven Principles

Pull-System For
Organizational Change

Open Space
For Change

Adapt Patterns To Context

Empiricism

Consent

Ask For Help

Contracts For Successful
Collaboration

Effectiveness

Equivalence

Invite Change

Transparent Salary

Bylaws

Transparency

Accountability

Be The Change

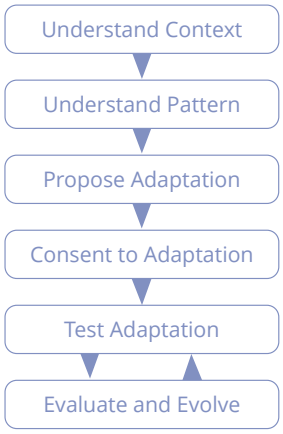
Continuous Improvement

Support Role

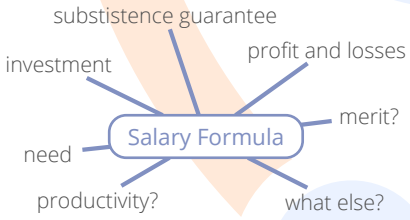
Artful Participation

Open Systems

Breaking Agreements



Adapt Patterns to Context



Transparent Salary: Some ideas for components of a salary formula

Supporting Change in Teams and Organizations

Help identify the biggest impediment to successful collaboration, co-create a plan what to do about it in your circle of influence (taking into account any patterns in S3 that might apply), consider any objections to that plan, and then implement it, evaluating the results and evolving the plan as you go. Repeat this process with what is now the biggest impediment. Avoid introducing S3 to people beyond suggesting specific patterns if they don't indicate interest, and avoid introducing new language (like drivers, consent, etc.) if there is no need to do so.

"Is my behavior in this moment the greatest contribution I can make to the effectiveness of this collaboration?"

Artful participation in a nutshell

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Making Decisions

Proposal Forming

- Consent to Driver
- Questions about Driver
- Record Considerations
- Gather Information
- Prioritize Considerations
- Collect Ideas
- Choose Tuners
- Design Proposal(s)

Title of Proposal

Evaluation Date and/or Frequency

Driver

Who is accountable for what?

Description

Evaluation Process and Criteria

A Template For Proposals

Consent Decision Making

- Present Driver
- Consent to Driver
- Present Proposal
- Clarifying Questions
- Brief Response
- Check for Objections
- Resolve Objections
- Celebrate Agreement
- (Consider Concerns)

Title of Agreement

Date/Version — Review Date

Driver

Who is accountable for what?

Description

Evaluation Criteria

(Concerns)

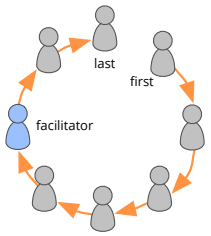
Appendix

Background Information

Previous Versions

References

A Logbook Entry For An Agreement



Rounds

To maintain equivalence and support effective dialogue, give everyone the chance to speak in turn. Sit in a circle, begin each round with a different person, and change direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) to bring variation to who speaks first and last, and to the order of contributions.

Understanding Objections

When seeking out potential objections, consider:

- **effectiveness:** why the intended outcome would not be (fully) achieved
- **efficiency:** why it would be wasteful to proceed as proposed (or previously agreed)
- **side-effects:** the negative consequences something would have elsewhere (in the same domain, in the wider organization, or beyond)

The information revealed by objections can be used to improve:

- current and planned action
- how people execute on decisions
- existing agreements
- proposals
- shared understanding of drivers

Not all arguments raised are objections. Distinguish between objections, which always reveal useful information, and other arguments that are based only on assumption or preference.

A **concern** is an assumption that doing something (even in the absence of objections) might stand in the way of (more) effective response to an organizational driver.

Resolving Objections — From Disagreement To Synergy

An **objection** is a reason why doing something stands in the way of (more) effective response to an organizational driver (i.e. an organizational requirement).

Objections reveal information about **unintended consequences**, or about **viable ways to improve**. When all objections are resolved, all available information is processed and so a decision is **good enough for now and safe enough to try**.

Resolve objections — one at a time

facilitator amends proposal

Pick the most promising option (repeat until resolved)

drop the proposal

individual

- ask member with objection to amend proposal
- ask proposal owner to amend proposal
- ask "who can resolve this?"

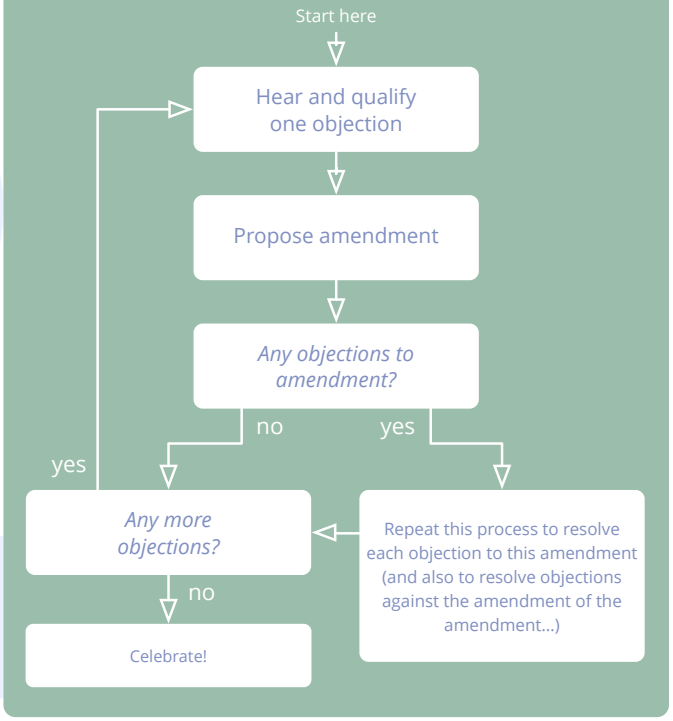
group

- round: "how would you solve this?"
- timeboxed group discussion
- timeboxed dialogue (2 or 3 people)

defer

- co-create a new proposal
- form group to review, research, revise
- re-work – send back to superset/subset circle

A process for resolving objections



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Group Processes

Driver Mapping

- Consent To Primary Driver
- Identify Actors
- Identify Needs
- Identify Expertise
- Identify Domains
- Populate And Define Domains
- Sort And Prioritize Drivers
- Connect Domains
- What's missing?

A Domain Description (e.g. for a Role or Circle)

Name of the Domain

Date/Version — Review Date

Primary Driver — Term (for a role)

Key Responsibilities

Constraints

Resources

Evaluation Criteria and Schedule for Reviews

Role Selection

- Present Role Description
- Record Nominations
- Reasons for Nominations
- Information Gathering
- Nomination Changes
- Propose a Nominee
- Check for Objections
- Address and Resolve
- Celebrate

Role Selection

A group process for selecting a person for a role on the strength of the reason.

Instead of simply assigning people for roles, or making a choice based only on majority, use the role selection process to:

- tap collective intelligence by hearing and deliberating on reasons for nominations
- increase ownership over the decision
- ensure support for the role keeper by those affected.

A prerequisite to the selection process is a clear description of the role's domain.

This pattern can also be used in any situation where there is a need to choose between a variety of options.

Peer Review

The role keeper — or team — leads the peer review by setting up the process and speaking first in each step..

Ensure you invite people with complementary perspectives.

Improvement suggestions may relate to personal development, collaboration, updates to the domain description (including the driver) and strategy.

Peer Review

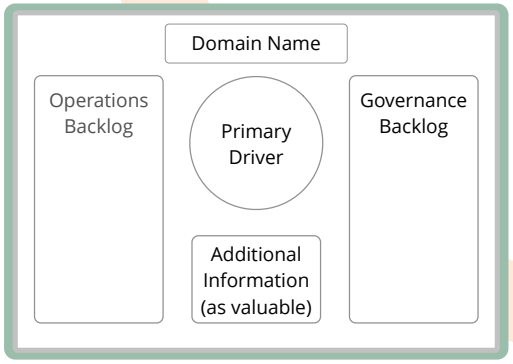
- Invite Contributors And A Facilitator
- Present Domain Description and Strategy
- Collect Appreciations
- Collect Improvement Suggestions
- Co-Create Development Plan
- Consent to Plan

Driver Mapping

A workshop format to identify an effective response to a complex situation: organize start-ups, kick-off projects, tackle major impediments or opportunities, develop organizational structure to better enable the flow of value.

A (small or large) group identifies and clusters drivers, to then progress quickly from concept to action in smaller and self-organizing teams.

A Template For Collecting Information About A Domain During Driver Mapping



Development Plan

A plan for how to develop more effective ways of accounting for a domain, agreed between delegator and delegatee.

The development plan may be created for a person in a role, or for a team (e.g. a department, circle or open domain).

Development may happen in the form of refining the description of the driver and the domain, making amendments to strategy, or new or updated agreements and specific actions to be taken, either within the domain of the delegator, or the domain of the delegatee.

A development plan (and any accompanying recommendations for changes to the descriptions of the domain and the driver) requires consent from both the delegatee and the delegator.

Development Plan
for <Domain Name>

Date/Version — Review Date

Amendments to Strategy

Action Items

Evaluation Criteria

Amendments to Domain Description

Minutes of Peer Review

Current Domain Description

Appreciations

Actionable Improvement Suggestions

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Sociocracy 3.0 - The Patterns

Co-Creation And Evolution

- Respond to Organizational Drivers
- Navigate Via Tension
- Describe Organizational Drivers
- Consent Decision Making
- Objection
- Resolve Objections
- Evaluate And Evolve Agreements
- Those Affected Decide
- Co-Create Proposals
- Proposal Forming
- Role Selection
- Driver Mapping

Focused Interactions

- Retrospective
- Governance Meeting
- Daily Standup
- Planning And Review Meetings
- Coordination Meeting

Defining Agreements

- Agreement
- Develop Strategy
- Clarify Domains
- Evaluation Criteria
- Clarify Intended Outcome
- Describe Deliverables
- Logbook
- Logbook Keeper

Enablers Of Collaboration

- Artful Participation
- Adopt The Seven Principles
- Agree On Values
- Governance Facilitator
- Breaking Agreements
- Transparent Salary
- Contracts For Successful Collaboration
- Support Role
- Bylaws

Organizational Structure

- Delegate Circle
- Service Circle
- Double-Linked Hierarchy
- Peach Organization
- Service Organization
- Fractal Organization

Peer Development

- Peer Feedback
- Peer Review
- Development Plan
- Ask For Help

Bringing in S3

- Adapt Patterns To Context
- Pull-System For Org. Change
- Be The Change
- Invite Change
- Open Space For Change
- CI Of Work Process

Building Organizations

- Delegate Influence
- Circle
- Role
- Representative
- Linking
- Double Linking
- Open Domain
- Helping Team
- Open Systems

Organizing Work

- Backlog
- Prioritize Backlogs
- Visualize Work
- Pull-System For Work
- Limit Work In Progress
- Timebox Activities
- Align Flow
- Coordinator

Meeting Practices

- Prepare For Meetings
- Facilitate Meetings
- Evaluate Meetings
- Rounds
- Check In
- Meeting Host
- Governance Backlog

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