

Sociocracy 3.0 - A Practical Guide

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Part I.

Introduction

1. Sociocracy 3.0 - A Practical Guide For Evolving Agile and Resilient Organizations

1.1. Effective Collaboration At Any Scale

- **principles-based:** A coherent way for growing organizational integrity and developing a sociocratic and agile mindset
- **flexible:** adaptable patterns, independent and mutually reinforcing, to help you with all aspects of collaboration
- **free:** licensed under a Creative Commons Free Culture License

2. What's in it for me?

Sociocracy 3.0 - **a.k.a. “S3”** - brings you an extensive collection of guidelines and practices (patterns) that have proven helpful for organizations for **improving performance, alignment, fulfillment and wellbeing**.

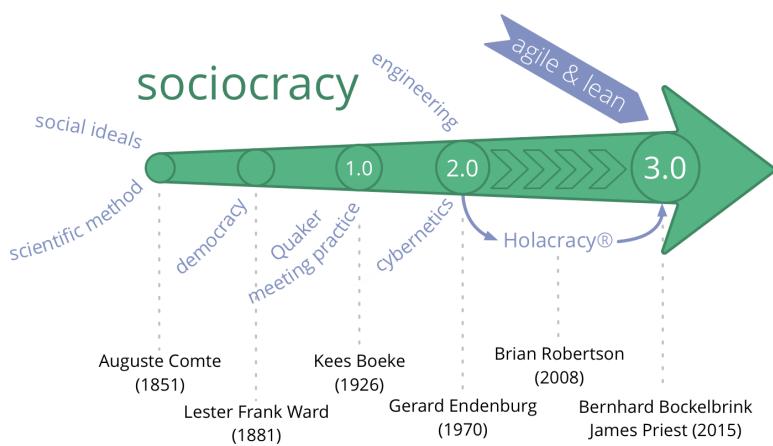
S3 helps you discover how to best reach your objectives and navigate complexity, one step at a time, **without the need for radical reorganization or a big change initiative**:

- 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.

3. Contents

- a brief overview of some basic concepts behind S3
- a description of all the patterns in S3
- an appendix with a changelog, acknowledgments, info about authors and license, a glossary and an index

4. Influences and History



5. Basic Concepts

Before diving into the content, consider taking time to learn about some basic concepts behind S3:

- what is a pattern?
- the seven principles
- drivers, value and waste
- domains, delegation and accountability
- governance, self-organization, and semi-autonomy

For any terms you don't understand check out the glossary at the end.

6. Patterns

co-creation and evolution

peer development

enablers of co-creation

building organizations

bringing in S3

defining agreements

focused interactions

meeting practices

organizing work

organizational structure

*A **pattern** is a template for successfully navigating a specific con-*

text.

- S3 patterns are discovered through observing many organizations as they solve problems and respond to opportunities
- S3 patterns can be evolved and adapted to suit differing contexts
- the patterns are grouped by topic into ten categories

7. All Patterns are based on The Seven Principles



8. The Seven Principles

Effectiveness: *Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your objectives.*

Consent: *Do things in the absence of reasons not to.*

Empiricism: *Test all assumptions through experiments, continuous revision and falsification.*

Continuous Improvement: *Change incrementally to accommodate steady empirical learning.*

Equivalence: *Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them.*

Transparency: *Make all information accessible to everyone in an organization, unless there is a reason for confidentiality.*

Accountability: *Respond when something is needed, do what you agreed to and take ownership for the course of the organization.*

9. Drivers

A **driver** is a person's or a group's motive for responding to a specific situation.

Drivers:

- can be used to derive goals, objectives, aims, mission, vision, purpose
- can change over time

9.1. Drivers: Value and Waste

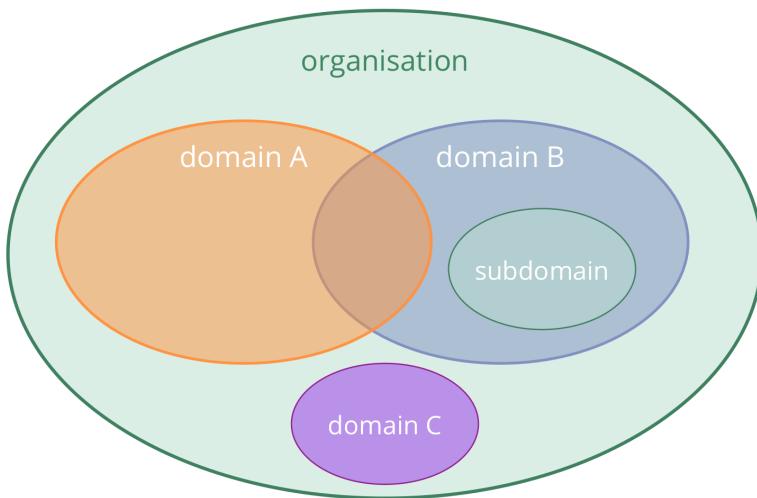
Value is the importance, worth or usefulness of something in relation to a driver.

Waste is anything not necessary for - or standing in the way of - effective response of a driver.

By adopting the concept of value and waste, many practices and ideas from **lean production** and **lean software development** can be utilized by organizations pulling in S3 patterns:

- value stream mapping
- various strategies for eliminating waste
- the Kanban Method

10. Domains



*A **domain** is a distinct area of influence, activity and decision making within an organization.*

All domains are within the overall domain of an organization and may overlap and/or be fully contained within other domains.

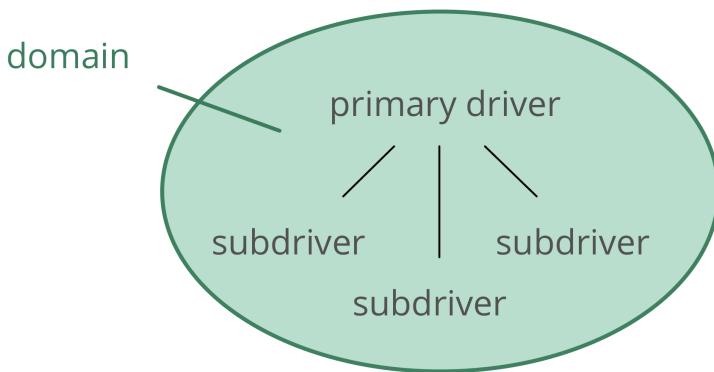
Domains are delegated to people (e.g. to a unit, department, team or individuals), who take accountability for the domain, within its defined constraints on influence and autonomy.

11. Delegating Domains

Those delegating a domain (the *delegators*) still retain overall accountability for that domain, and often define:

- **key responsibilities** (essential work and decision making being delegated)
- **constraints to autonomy and influence** for those the domain is delegated to, usually related to the organization itself (e.g. budget, resources, level of delegation, reporting)

12. Drivers and Domains

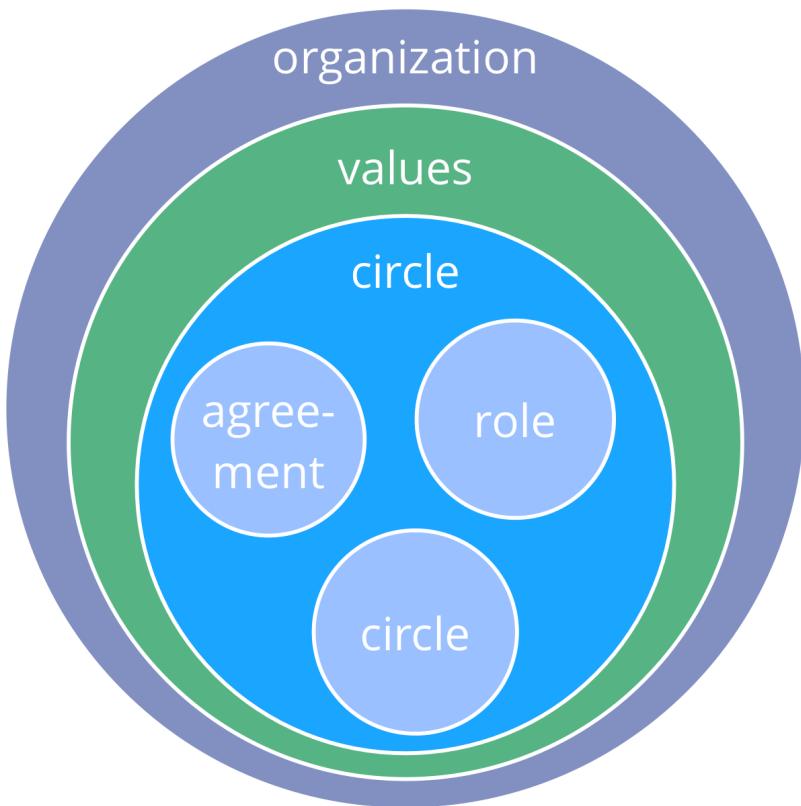


A domain can be defined in relation to an organizational driver - known as the domain's **primary driver** - by the set of sub-drivers the organization may benefit from addressing when responding to that driver:

- **key responsibilities:** following directly from the domain's primary driver
- **constraints:** relating to the organization's wider context

13. Domains and Accountability

- accountability applies to all agreements, including the organization itself, circles, and roles
- everyone's primary accountability is for effective collaboration in response to organizational drivers
- individuals and groups are accountable for their work, ongoing learning and development, with the organization providing necessary support
- everyone in an organization is accountable for aligning action with organizational values



14. Governance, Semi-Autonomy and Self-Organization

Governance: Continuously deciding what to do to achieve objectives, and setting constraints on how and when things will be done.

Self-Governance: People governing themselves within the constraints of a domain.

Self-Organization: People coordinating work within constraints defined through governance.

Operations (Doing the Work): People doing what needs to be done, guided by coordination and governance.

Semi-Autonomy: People with autonomy to create value, limited by the constraints of their domain.

15. Governance vs. Operations

Tracking, reviewing and evolving decisions made to achieve objectives enables an organization to continuously learn and improve.

Does it require or benefit from an individual or group decision?

- yes: governance
 - not covered by a previous agreement
 - needs to be agreed, decided or amended
- no: operations
 - covered by previous agreement (those accountable are free to act)
 - needs to be done

Part II.

The Patterns

1. Co-Creation And Evolution

1.1. Pattern 1.1: Respond to Organizational Drivers

Clarify what's happening and what's needed in relation to the organization, and respond as required.

Responses to drivers:

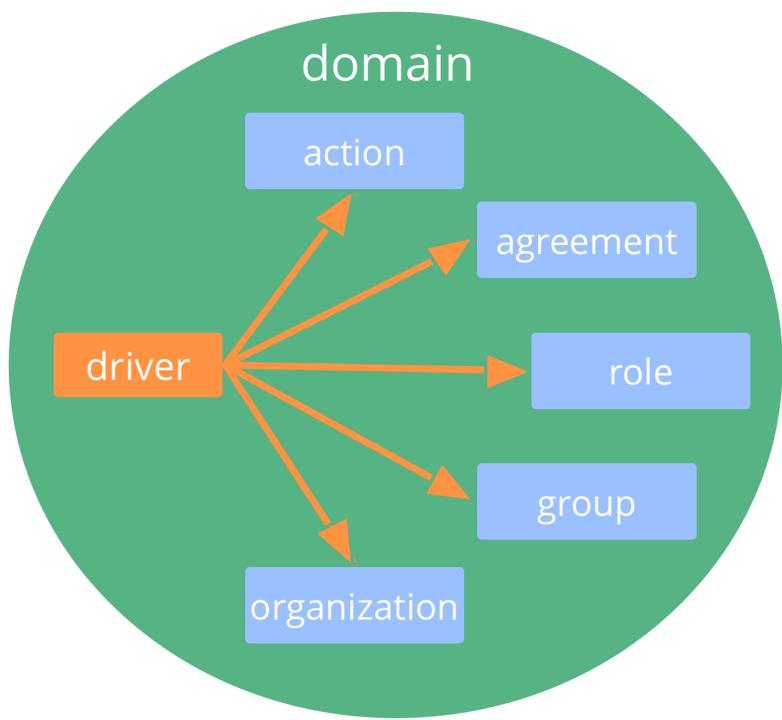
- action
- decision (including creating a role, circle, helping team or open domain)

1.1.1. Qualify Organizational Drivers

Some drivers are (directly or indirectly) related to an organization's primary driver, these are considered **organizational drivers**. Other drivers do not fall within the organization's domain.

A simple way to qualify organizational drivers is by checking:

Would responding to this driver improve - or avoid impeding - flow of value to an existing organizational driver? a.k.a. can it help or harm us?



1.1.2. Review of Drivers



The response to a driver is usually an experiment that is evolved over time, based on learning.

- Is the description of the situation still correct?
- Do we still associate the same needs with the situation?

- Is the driver still within our domain?
- Is the driver still relevant?

1.2. Pattern 1.2: Navigate Via Tension

Identify and account for organizational drivers.

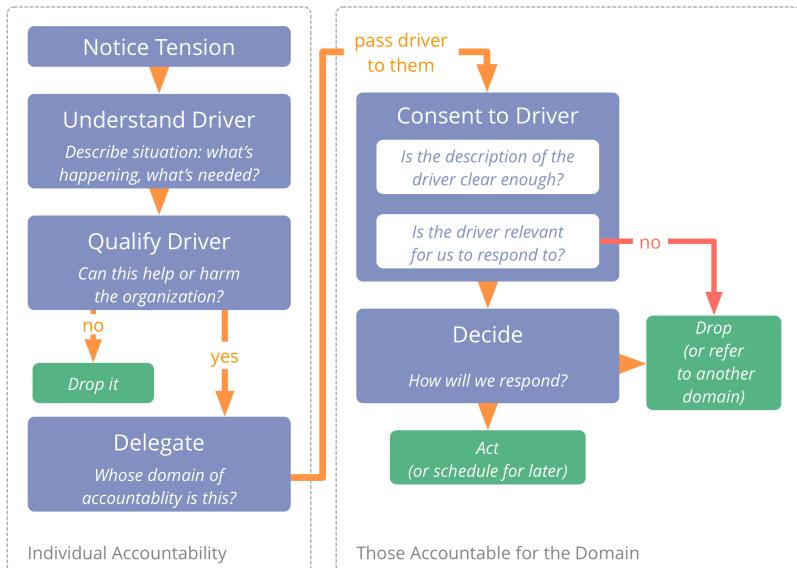
All members bring awareness to what might help or harm the organization, and aim to account for drivers in an effective way.

A **tension** is a personal experience: a symptom of dissonance between an individual's perception of a situation, and their expectations (or preferences).

Challenges and opportunities for an organization are revealed as people become aware of tension they experience in relation to them.

To **discover drivers**, look behind tension and describe what's happening and what's needed. Sometimes an inquiry reveals misconceptions and the tension goes away.

Awareness of **organizational drivers** can be passed to an appropriate domain to be addressed.



2. Pattern 1.3: Describe Organizational Drivers

Describe organizational drivers to understand, communicate and remember them.

A simple way to describe a driver is with a **brief statement** explaining:

- What's happening...:
 - the **current situation**
 - the **effect** of this situation on the organization
- ...and **what's needed**:
 - the **need** of the organization in relation to this situation
 - the **impact** of attending to that need

3. Describe Organizational Drivers (2)

Depending on their perspective, a person or group may decide to describe a driver as a problem to solve or an opportunity to leverage.

A **driver statement** captures just enough information to communicate the need for an action or a decision. More information about the scope and details of the driver may be recorded besides the initial driver statement.

3.1. Example driver statement:

“The kitchen is a mess: there are no clean cups, the sink is full of dishes and it’s not possible to quickly grab a coffee and get right back to work. We need the kitchen in a usable state so we can stay focussed on our work.”

3.2. 1. Current Situation

“The kitchen is a mess: there are no clean cups, the sink is full of dishes...”

Describe the current situation:

- Briefly capture the essentials of what is happening.
- Be objective: Describe observations and avoid evaluation.

3.3. 2. Effect

“...it’s not possible to quickly grab a coffee and get right back to work.”

Explain the effect of this situation on the organization:

- Clarify **why** the situation needs attention: how does it affect the organization?
- Be explicit about effects being current or anticipated.
- Explain challenges, losses, opportunities or gains.

3.4. 3. Need

“We need the kitchen in a usable state...”

Explain the need of the organization in relation to this situation:

- A **need of an organization** is anything a group (or individual) needs to effectively account for a domain.
- When there’s disagreement about the need(s), it’s helpful to zoom out from specific solutions.
- Be specific on whose need it is (“we need”, “they need”, “I need”).
- Avoid describing specific solutions disguised as needs.

3.5. 4. Impact

“...so we can stay focussed on our work”.

Describe the impact of attending to that need:

- Explain intended outcome, potential benefits or opportunities.
- The impact may be obvious or implicit, especially when the effects of the current situation are already described.

3.6. Pattern 1.4: Consent Decision Making

A (facilitated) group process for decision making.

- invite objections, and integrate the wisdom they reveal, to evolve proposals or existing agreements
- withholding objections can harm the objectives of a group or organization
- unresolved objections prevent proposals from becoming agreements
- proposals only need to be *good enough for now and safe enough to try* until the next review

3.6.1. Implicit Contract of Consent

- In the absence of objections against an agreement, I intend to follow through on the agreement to the best of my ability.
- I agree to share objections as I become aware of them.



3.7. Pattern 1.5: Objection

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

Objections contain information that reveals:

- a certain or likely consequence of harm (not considered safe enough to try)
- ways to improve proposals, decisions, existing agreements or actions

3.7.1. Qualify Objections

It's the accountability of individuals to raise potential objections.

Those accountable for the action or (proposed) agreement in question, are responsible for *considering arguments and addressing qualified objections*.

Withholding objections can harm the ability of individuals, groups or the whole organization to respond to organizational drivers.

Being able to raise *potential* objections at any time means decisions only need *to be good enough for now and safe enough to try*.

How would doing this impede - or miss an opportunity to improve - flow of value to any organizational driver?

Objections stop:

- current and planned action
- people from executing on decisions

- existing agreements from continuing without being reconsidered
- proposals from becoming agreements

3.7.2. Understanding Objections

Some Helpful Questions:

- How does the argument relate to this specific proposal or agreement?
- Does the argument reveal how a (proposed or current) **action or agreement**:
 - harms response to any organizational driver?
 - can be improved right now?
 - prevents or diminishes someone's contribution towards responding to a driver?
 - is in conflict with the organization's values?
 - is considered not 'safe enough' to try?

3.7.3. Concerns

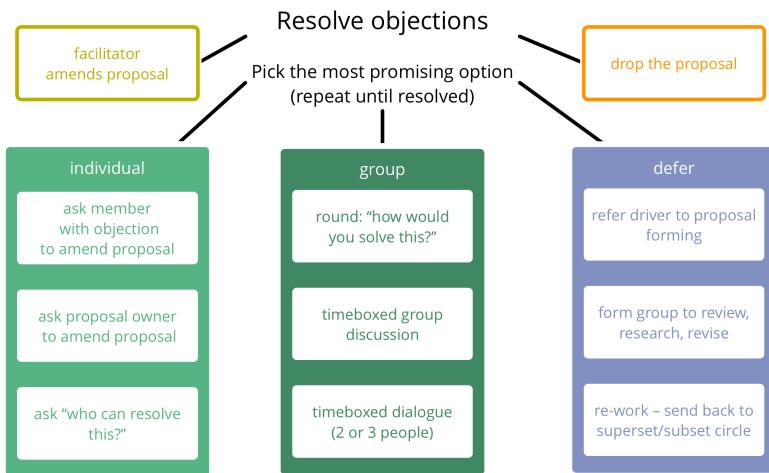
A **concern** is an *opinion* that doing something (even if already considered *good enough for now and safe enough to try*) **might** impede – or miss an opportunity to improve – flow of value to an organizational driver.

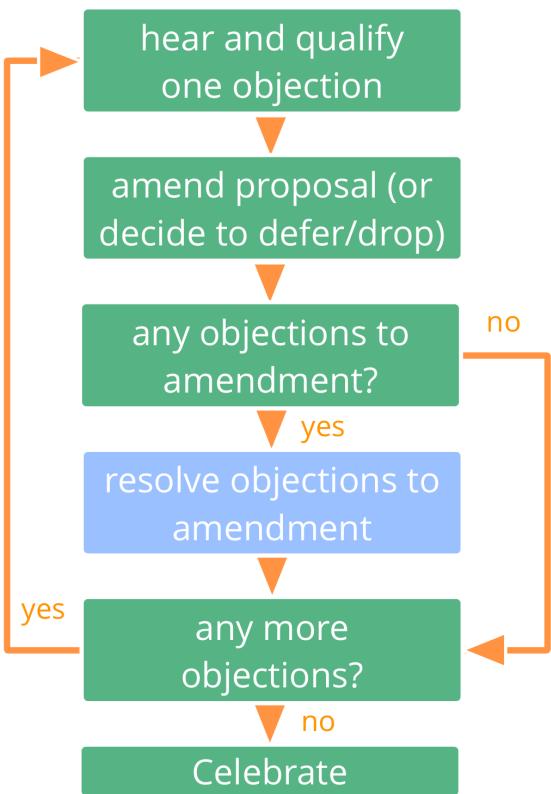
In consent decision making, concerns:

- can inform ways to further evolve agreements (including evaluation criteria and frequency of evaluation)
- are heard if there is time or they are considered important
- are recorded in the logbook

If people believe a proposal may not be ‘safe enough to try’, they can raise concerns as objections to check with others about likelihood of harm.

3.8. Pattern 1.6: Resolve Objections



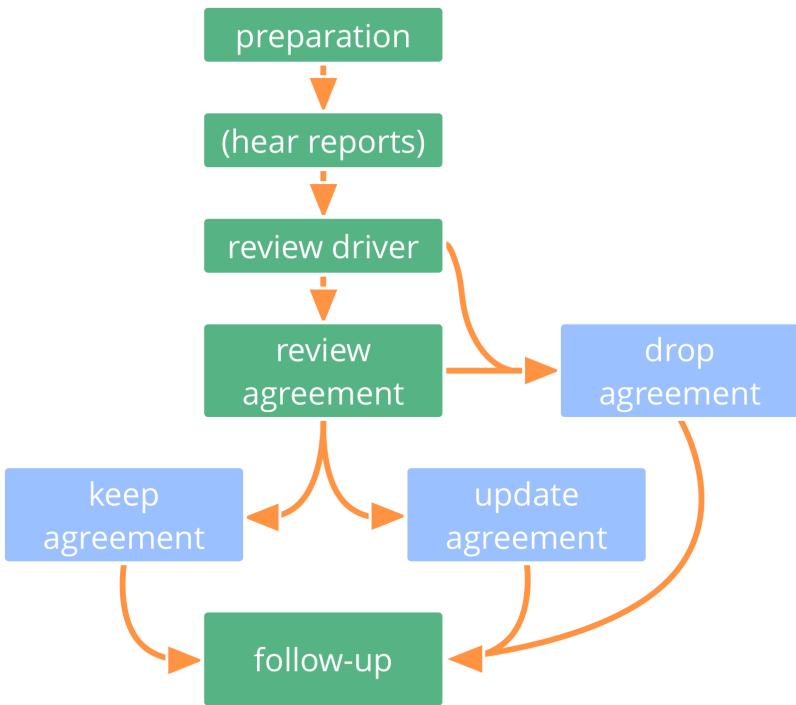


3.8.1. A way for resolving objections

3.9. Pattern 1.7: Evaluate Agreements

Regular review of agreements is an essential practice for a learning organization; continuously evolving the body of agreements, and eliminating waste:

- adapt to changing context
 - *How has this agreement helped us?*
 - *How can this agreement be improved?*
 - *Is there any reason why not to continue with this agreement?*
- preparation
 - schedule review
 - ensure necessary information is available
- follow-up
 - agree on next review date
 - documentation /notification
 - tracking tasks and decisions
 - effects on related agreements
- evaluating agreements can be as simple as checking that it is still relevant, and there is no objection to keeping the agreement as it is



- agreements are often reviewed in *Governance Meetings*
- sometimes it's effective to schedule a dedicated session for reviewing an agreement
- adjust review frequency as necessary
- review earlier if required
- elements of this process can also be used by individuals to evaluate decisions they make

3.10. Pattern 1.8: Those Affected Decide

Involve everyone who will be affected by a decision, to maintain equivalence and accountability, and increase the amount of information available on the subject.

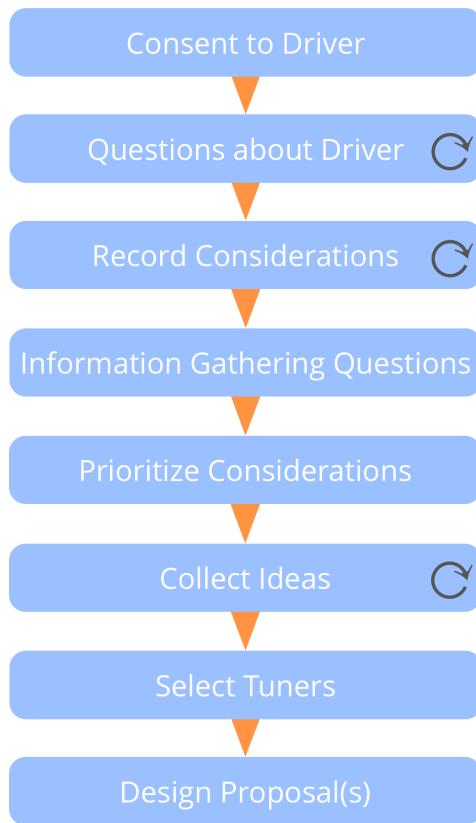
For larger groups:

- facilitate a process in several stages and create smaller groups who select delegates
- set out a virtual, asynchronous, time-boxed and staged process

Consider including those affected also in review and evolution of decisions.

3.11. Pattern 1.9: Proposal Forming

A (facilitated) group process for co-creating a response to a driver.



- draws on the collective intelligence and diversity of perspective within a group
- involves people in co-creating agreements
- fosters accountability and sense of ownership

Proposal forming may also be used by an individual.

3.11.1. Proposal Forming Steps

- **Consent to driver:** *Is this driver relevant for us to respond to? Is the driver statement an accurate description of what is happening and what is needed?*
- **Deepen shared understanding of driver:** invite essential questions to understand more detail about the driver.
- **Collect considerations** phrased as questions relating to possible solutions. Questions either reveal constraints (information gathering questions) or possibilities (generative questions).
- **Answer** any information gathering questions if possible.
- **Prioritize** considerations.
- **Gather ideas** as possible ingredients for a proposal.
- **Design a proposal** for addressing the driver considering the creative ideas and information gathered so far. This is usually done by a smaller group (tuners).

3.11.2. Selecting Tuners

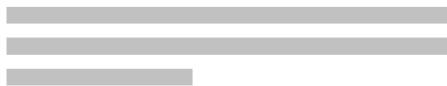
- who should be there?

Title of Proposal

Evaluation Date and/or
Frequency

Who is accountable?

Driver



Proposal Text



Evaluation Process and Criteria



- who wants to be there?
- who else may have a valuable contribution to make?
- consider expertise, outside view, and inspiration
- any objections to this group?

3.12. Pattern 1.10: Role Selection

A group process for selecting people for roles.

- People avoid expressing interest before the selection
- Nominations are made on the strength of the reason, not according to the majority
- You can nominate yourself or pass
- When checking for objections, ask the person nominated last

Objections to a nominee may be resolved in many ways, including amending the role's domain description or by nominating someone else.

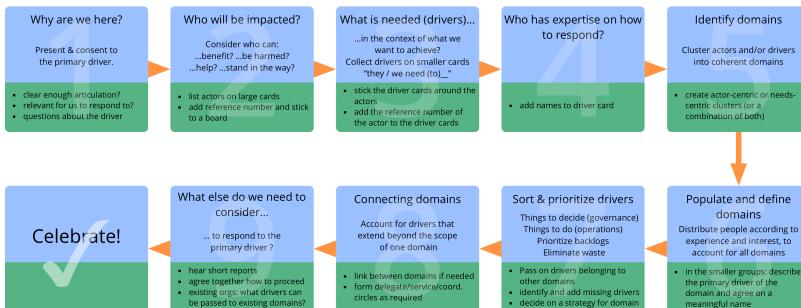
Note: This pattern can also be used for selection between a variety of options in other circumstances.

3.13. Pattern 1.11: Driver Mapping

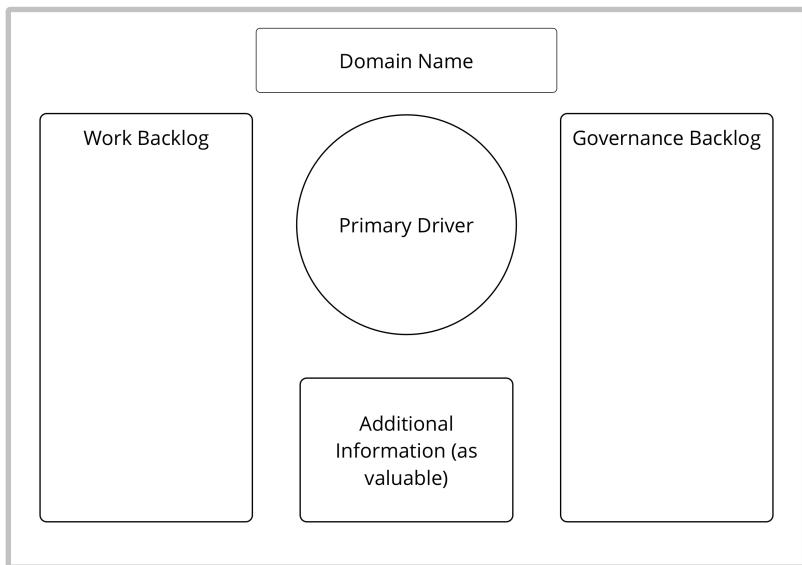
A workshop format to identify an effective response to a complex situation: organize start-ups, kick-off projects, tackle major impediments or opportunities, align organizational structure to the flow of value.



Small or large groups identify and prioritize drivers, progressing quickly from concept to action in self-organizing teams.



3.13.1. Driver Mapping: Template for Domains



4. Peer Development

4.1. Pattern 2.1: Ask For Help

A simple protocol for learning, skill sharing, and building connections, with respect for people's autonomy.

Ask someone, “*would you be willing to help me with ...?*” The person asked answers with a simple “*yes*” or “*no*”.

- if the request is declined, the person asking accepts the answer without negotiation or inquiry
- if the request is unclear, inquire for more information
- if you accept a request for help, support your peer in the best way you can

4.2. Pattern 2.2: Peer Feedback

Invite a peer to give you some constructive feedback on:

- performance in a role
- general feedback about your participation and collaboration
- any specific aspect you may be interested in

Considerations:

- ask peers to take some time to prepare
- invite both **appreciations** and **actionable improvement suggestions**
- inquire to better understand the feedback, and avoid to discuss or judge it
- decide for yourself what you will do with the feedback

4.3. Pattern 2.3: Peer Review

People support each other to learn and grow in the roles and groups they serve.

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

Ensure to invite people with complementing perspectives to contribute to the review, and a facilitator.

Improvement suggestions apply to personal development, collaboration, updates to domain description (including driver statement) and strategy.

4.3.1. Continuous improvement of people's ability to effectively fulfill roles or collaborate together in groups.

4.4. Pattern 2.4: Development Plan

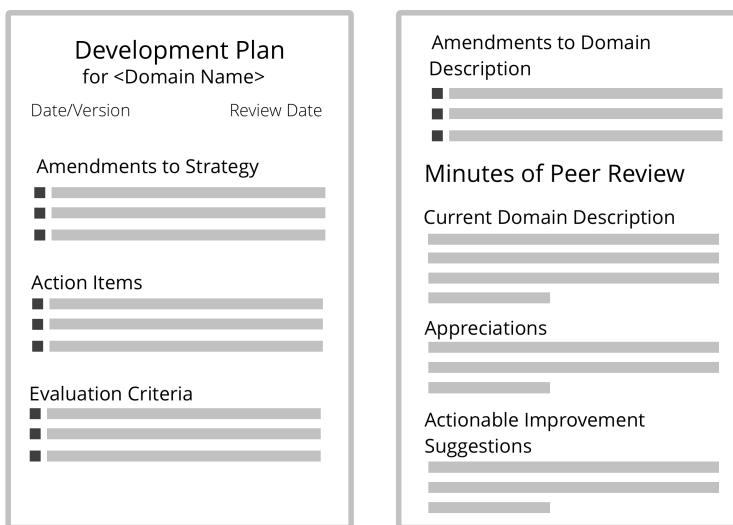
A plan for how to develop more effective ways of accounting for a domain, agreed between delegator and delegatee.



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

Development may happen in the form of refining description of driver and domain, amendments to strategy, 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 domain description and driver statement) requires consent from both the delegatee and the delegator.



5. Enablers Of Co-Creation

5.1. Pattern 3.1: Artful Participation

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

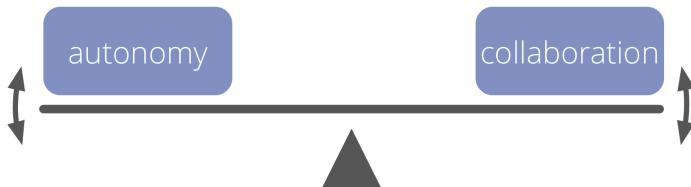
An **individual commitment** to developing helpful interactions and effective collaboration:

- actively **consider and follow-up on all agreements** made, in the best way possible, given the circumstances
- **develop awareness and understanding** of individual and collective needs

- **grow the necessary skills** to do so
- **support others** in doing the same
- bring impediments to the attention of others if necessary

Participating artfully may include interrupting, objecting or breaking agreements.

5.1.1. Benefits Of Artful Participation



- enables co-creation and evolution of agreements
- helps to grow stronger teams
- builds self-accountability, integrity and trust
- generates a culture of mutual support and close collaboration
- even more powerful when embraced by many

5.1.2. Artful Participation: Self-Assessment

- How will I support myself and others in participating more artfully?

- Where are my interactions with others unhelpful or ineffective?
- Which agreements do I find hard to keep or contribute to? What can I do to address this?
- What skills could I develop, that would support me to participate more artfully?
- What would artful participation mean in relation to:
 - my daily activities?
 - collaboration and interaction with others?
 - the organization? . . . our customers or clients?
 - the wider environment?

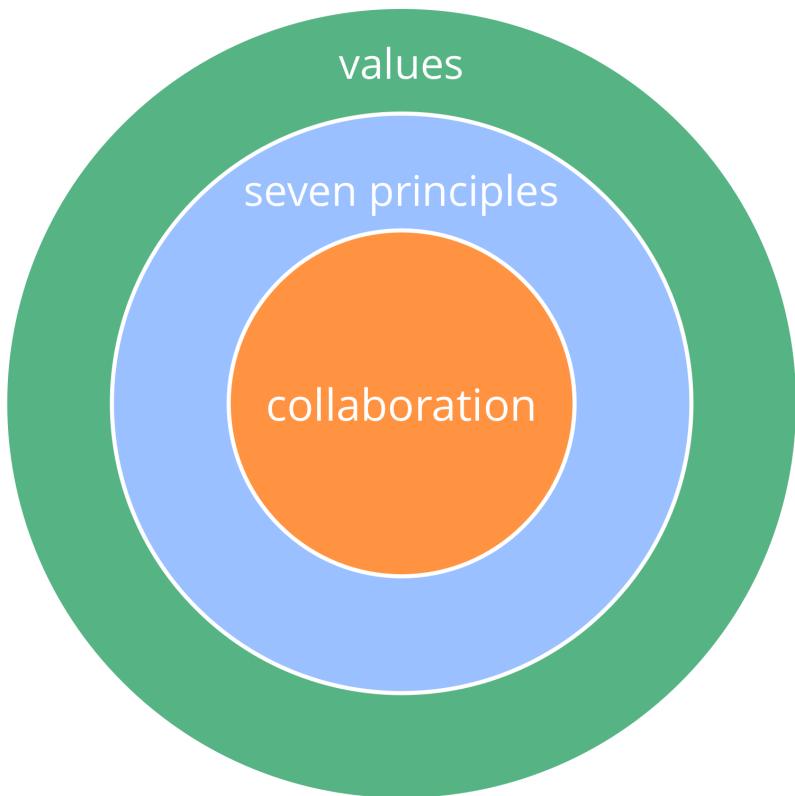
5.2. Pattern 3.2: Adopt The Seven Principles

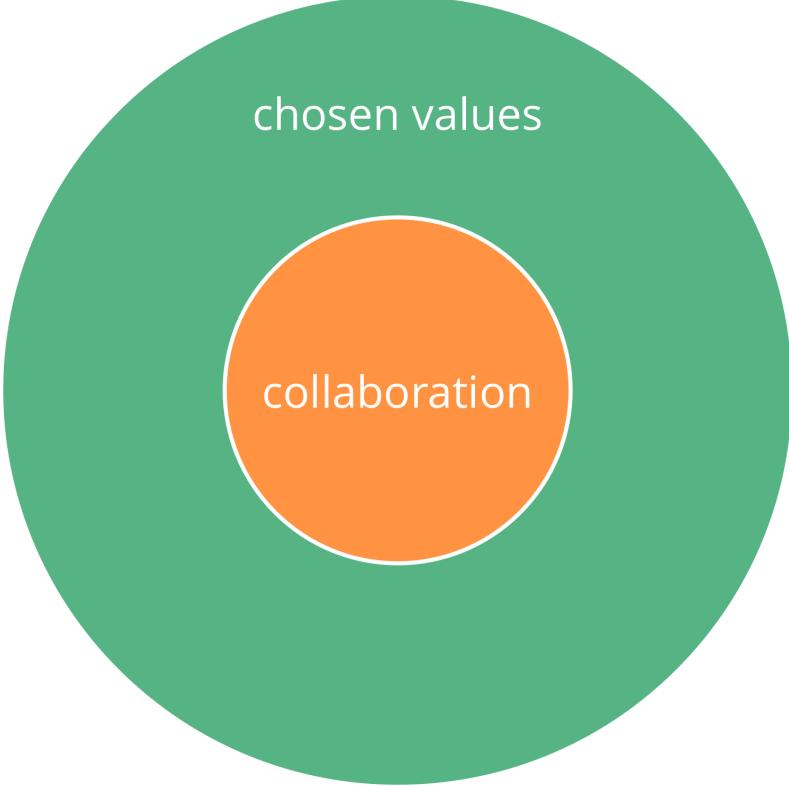
- align collaboration with the Seven Principles
- adopting the Seven Principles reduces the number of explicit agreements required, and guides adaptation of S3 patterns to suit the organization's context
- an organization's actual values need to embrace Sociocracy 3.0 principles

5.3. Pattern 3.3: Agree On Values

Intentionally shape the culture in your organization.







chosen values

collaboration

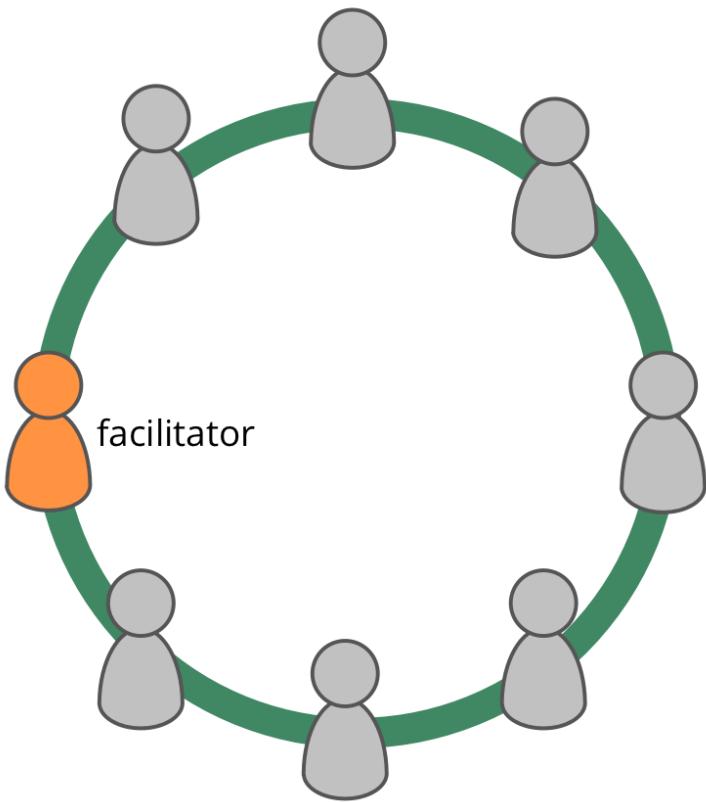
*A **value** is a principle that guides behavior. Values define scope for action and ethical constraints.*

- each member brings their own values to an organization based on personal experiences and beliefs
- a group or organization may **choose to collectively adopt values** to guide their collaboration
- values offer guidance to determine appropriate action, even in the absence of explicit agreements
- defining values is a **strategy** that supports effectiveness of an organization:
 - reduces potential for **misunderstanding**
 - **aligns** decision making and action
 - **attracts new members, partners and customers** who are aligned with the organization
- values are an agreement and thus subject to **regular review**

5.4. Pattern 3.4: Governance Facilitator (Role)

A governance facilitator:

- is accountable for ensuring governance meetings are facilitated, stay on track and are evaluated
- is (usually) selected by a group from among its members
- familiarizes themselves with the governance backlog



- often invites others to facilitate some agenda items

When using S3 for governance, the facilitator familiarizes themselves with the following patterns:

- rounds
- proposal forming
- consent decision making
- role selection
- evaluate meetings
- resolve objections
- peer reviews

5.5. Pattern 3.5: Breaking Agreements

- is sometimes **necessary**...
- ...but may come at a **cost** to the community
- be accountable!
 - **clean up** disturbances
 - **follow up** ASAP with those affected or accountable
 - **initiate changes** instead of repeatedly breaking the same agreement

5.6. Pattern 3.6: Contracting And Accountability

When entering into formal or informal agreements with others:

- ensure all parties understand what's expected of them and intend to keep to the agreement
- verify the agreement is beneficial to all parties, and that expectations are realistic

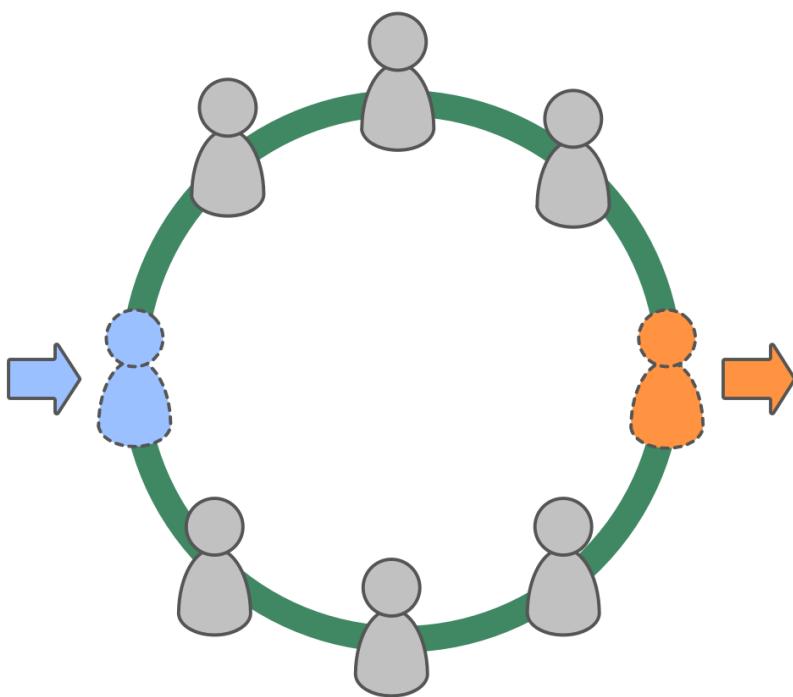
Be accountable for breaking agreements.

To preserve organizational culture, maintain self-accountability and help new members of an organization or circle have a smooth start:

- define expectations for new members (both cultural fit and the skills required)
- align contract with both organizational culture and legal requirements
- consider a probationary period
- have clear procedures for breaches of contract

5.7. Pattern 3.7: Transparent Salary

- transparent salaries need to be fair
- fairness has several orthogonal dimensions
- perception of fairness is specific to organizational context
- consider members and relevant stakeholders (e.g. investors)



- create a salary formula:
 - fixed: subsistence guarantee
 - variable: fair distribution of gains and costs
- consider remuneration for changing roles
- create strategy for transitioning towards new contracts and compensation agreements

5.7.1. Two Ways of Opening Salaries



5.8. Pattern 3.8: Support Role

Apply the role pattern to external contractors.

- clarify and describe driver for the role
- create domain description
- implement a selection process
- limit term of the contract
- build in regular peer reviews

Support roles may be operational only, and external contractors consent to account for their role.

5.9. Pattern 3.9: Bylaws

Secure S3 principles and patterns in your bylaws as needed to protect **legal integrity** and **organizational culture**

Consider:

- consent and equivalence in decision making
- selection process for leadership roles
- organizational structure, values and principles
- influence of owners or shareholders
- sharing gains and costs

6. Building Organizations

6.1. Pattern 4.1: Delegate Influence

Decentralize power to influence within defined constraints. Enable people to decide and act for themselves in response to organizational drivers.

The delegator supports people in delivering value by:

- defining domains of accountability and autonomy clearly
- ensuring ongoing learning and development
- providing support as needed

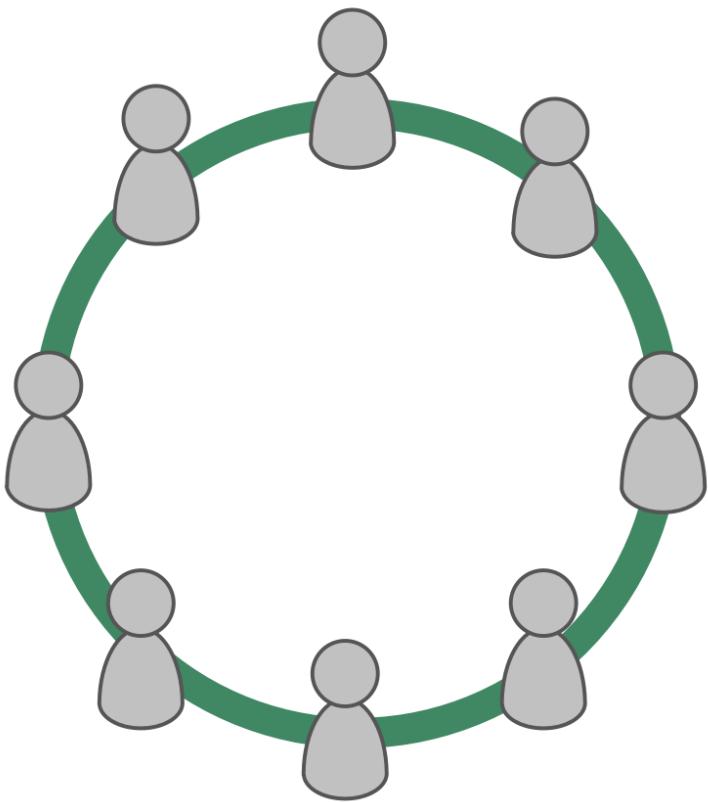
Adjust constraints incrementally, considering capabilities, reliability and outcome.

Decentralize as much as possible, retain as much influence as necessary.

6.2. Pattern 4.2: Circle

A circle is an equivalent, self-governing, and semi-autonomous group of people collaborating to account for a domain.

A circle:



- may be permanent or temporary
- may be self-organizing
- is accountable for its own development and its body of agreements
- **semi-autonomous**
 - a circle acts within the constraints of their domain
 - each circle can create value autonomously
- **self-governing:**
 - a circle continuously decides what to do to account for their domain, and sets constraints on how and when things will be done.

6.3. Pattern 4.3: Role

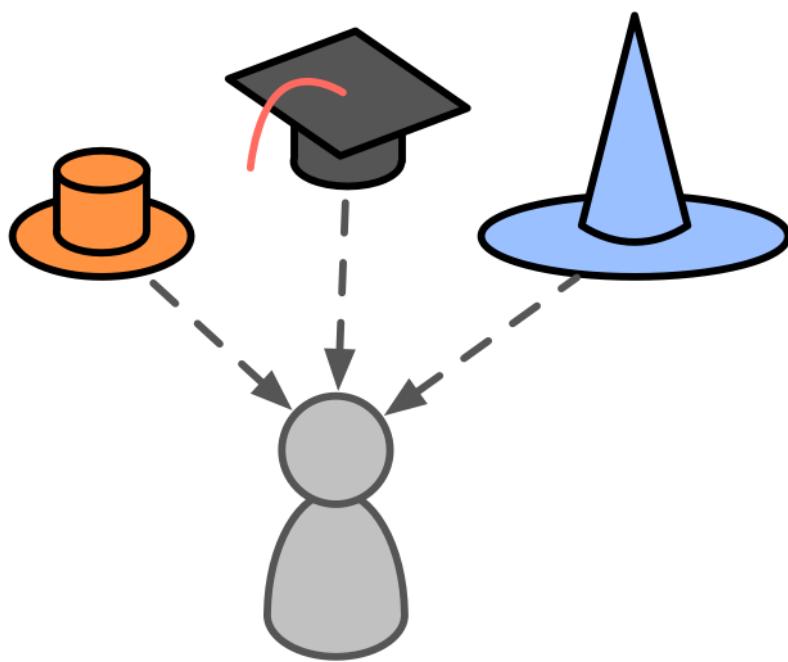
Delegate accountability for a domain to individuals.

A role is an area of accountability defined by a domain and assigned to an individual (the **role keeper**), who has autonomy to decide and act within the constraints of the role's domain.

The role keeper leads in creating a strategy for how to account for their domain, and evolves their strategy in collaboration with the delegator.

A role is a simple way for a group to delegate recurring tasks or a specific area of work to one of its members.

- people can be in more than one role, and roles can be fulfilled by more than one person

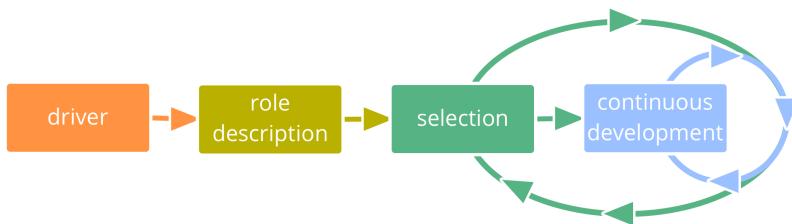


- role keepers are selected by consent and for a limited term
- peers support one another to develop in the roles they fulfill

A role keeper may maintain a logbook and a governance backlog to evolve their approach towards delivering value.

Note: In S3, guidelines, processes or protocols created by individuals in roles are treated as agreements.

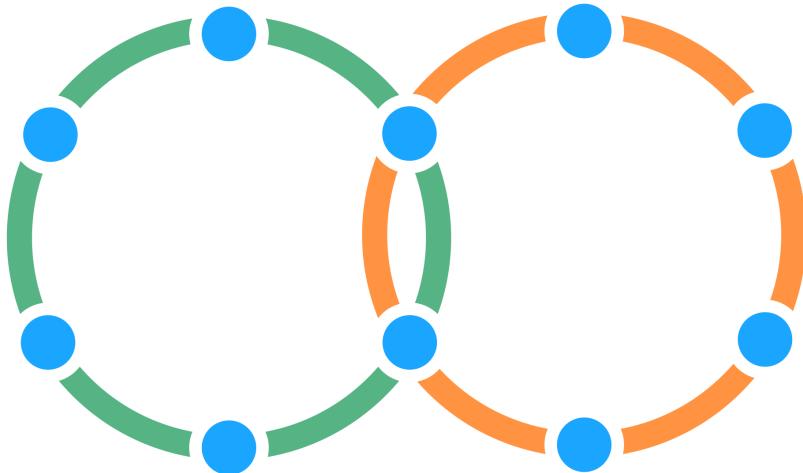
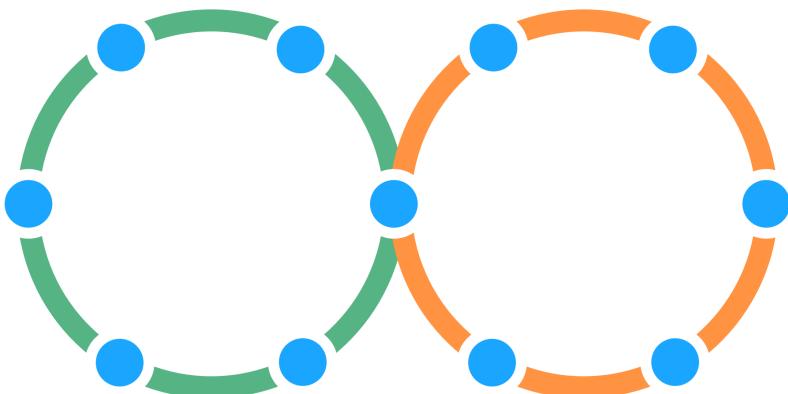
6.3.1. Role: one way to account for a domain



6.4. Pattern 4.4: Linking

Facilitate flow of information and influence between two groups.

A group selects one of its members to represent their interests in the governance decisions of another group.



6.5. Pattern 4.5: Double Linking

Facilitate *two-way* flow of information and influence between two groups.

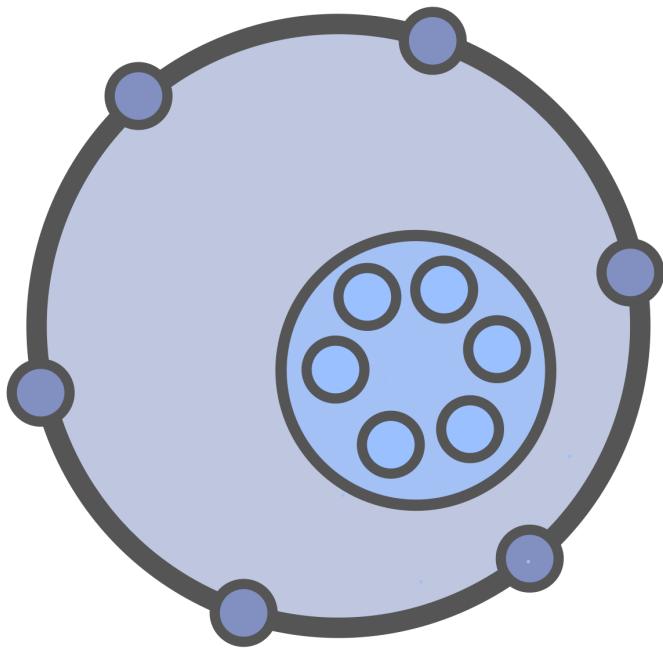
Two interdependent groups each select one of their members to represent their interests in the governance decisions of the other group.

- creates equivalence between two groups
- can be used to draw out valuable information in hierarchical structures

6.6. Pattern 4.6: Representative (role)

Representatives (a.k.a. links):

- stand for the interests one group in another group
- are selected for a limited term
- participate as full members in the **governance decisions** of the circle they are delegated to, and can:
 - raise items for the agenda
 - participate in forming proposals
 - object to agreements and proposals (when there is reason to do so)



6.7. Pattern 4.7: Helping Team

A group of people with the mandate to execute on a specific set of requirements defined by a delegator.

A helping team:

- is a way for a delegator to expand their capacity
- may be self-organizing, or guided by a coordinator chosen by the delegator
- is governed by the delegator
- benefits from a clearly defined domain

Members of the helping team:

- can object to the delegator's decisions that affect them
- can add items to the delegator's governance backlog
- may be invited to select a representative to participate in the governance decisions of the delegator

6.8. Pattern 4.8: Open Domain

A way to intentionally account for a domain by invitation rather than assignment.

The delegator of the open domain clarifies:

- primary driver, key responsibilities and constraints of the open domain
- who is invited to contribute to the open domain



- constraints relating to the delegator's participation in the open domain's governance

The delegator of the open domain is accountable for ensuring regular review of the open domain.

Depending on the constraints set by delegators, contributors may account for work and/or governance of the open domain.

6.9. Pattern 4.9: Open Systems

An organization can benefit from intentionally communicating with and learning from others.

Acknowledging its interdependence, an organization can consciously invite **outside information, influence or skills** to assist with making decisions and to support collective learning.

- **External experts** can offer an outside perspective and bring knowledge, understanding and skills
- **Representatives of affected parties** can inform and influence decision making in ways that benefit overall objectives (see Those Affected Decide)

7. Bringing In S3

7.1. Pattern 5.1: Adapt Patterns To Context

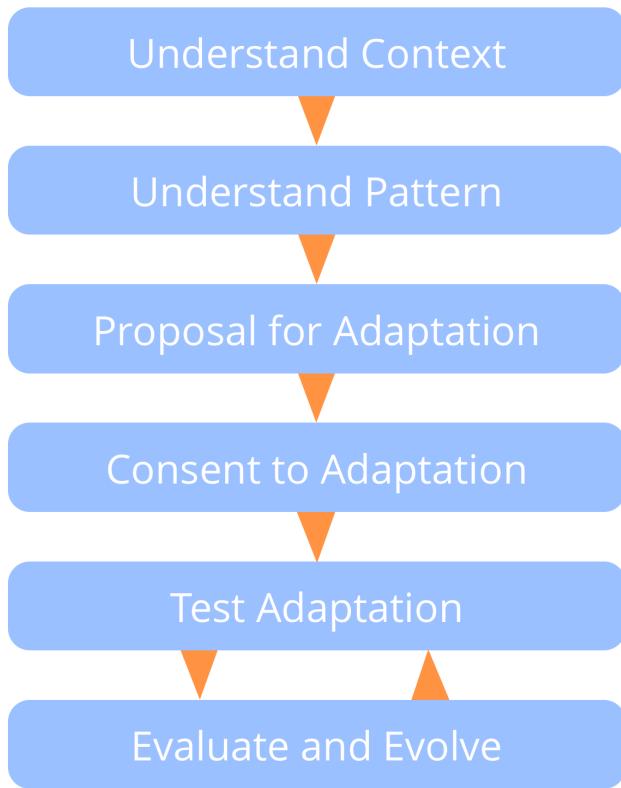
Adapt and evolve S3 patterns to fit your specific context.

- ensure everyone affected by adaptation:
 - understands why it is necessary to adapt the pattern
 - is present or represented when doing so
- use S3 principles as a guide for adaptation
- run experiments with adaptations for long enough to learn about benefits and potential pitfalls
- consider sharing valuable adaptations with the S3 community

7.2. Pattern 5.2: Create a Pull-System For Organizational Change

Create an environment that invites and enables members of the organization to drive change.

Change things when there is value in doing so:



- bring in patterns that solve current and important problems
- don't break what's already working!
- meet everyone where they are...
- ... and let them choose their own pace
- consider making all change voluntary!

7.3. Pattern 5.3: Be The Change

Lead by example.

Behave and act in the ways you would like others to behave and act.

7.4. Pattern 5.4: Invite Change

A way for individuals to initiate and facilitate change.

- be the change you want to see
- use and adapt S3 patterns to address drivers when it's helpful to do so
- tell the story about how and why you are using patterns from S3, including documenting outcomes, successes and failures
- invite others to experiment with you

7.5. Pattern 5.5: Open S3 Adoption

Invite everyone to create and run experiments for evolving the organization.

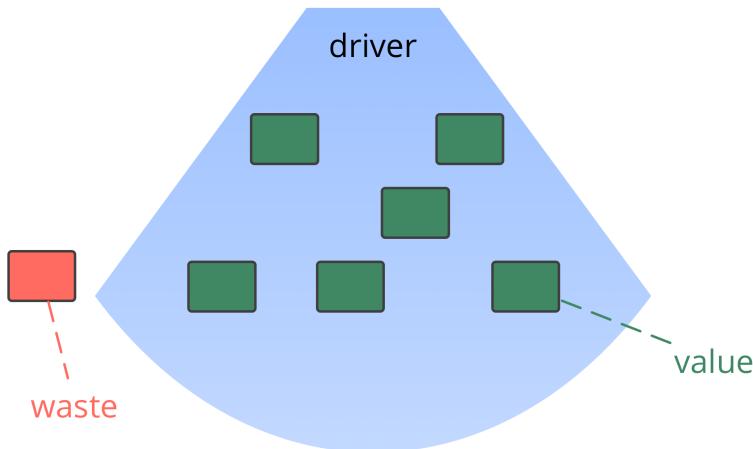
- identify the driver for pulling in S3 patterns
- schedule regular open space events:
 - invite all members to create and run experiments
 - define constraints for experiments: e.g. S3 principles
 - review and learn from experimentation in the next open space
 - repeat

7.6. Pattern 5.6: Continuous Improvement Of Work Process With S3

To reveal drivers and establish a metrics-based pull-system for organizational change.

- introduce the principle of consent and *Navigate Via Tension* to evolve work process in one team
- consider selecting a facilitator and agreeing on values
- trigger continuous improvement (e.g through Kanban)
- team members pull in S3 patterns as required
- expand the scope of the experiment iteratively
- intentionally look out for impediments

7.6.1. Waste And Continuous Improvement

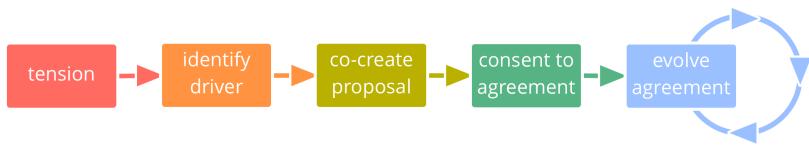


Waste is anything not necessary for - or standing in the way of - effective response to a driver.

- waste exists in various forms and on different levels of abstraction (tasks, processes, organizational structure, mental models...)
- establishing a process for ongoing elimination of waste enables natural evolution of an organization towards greater effectiveness
- adaptation to changing context is built into the process

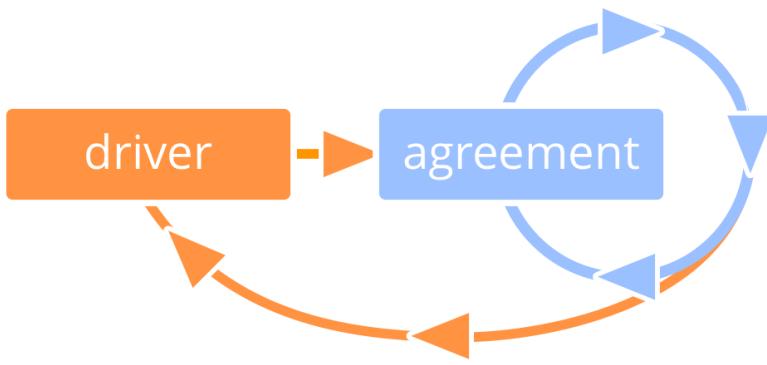
8. Defining Agreements





8.1. Agreement Life-Cycle

8.2. Pattern 6.1: Agreement

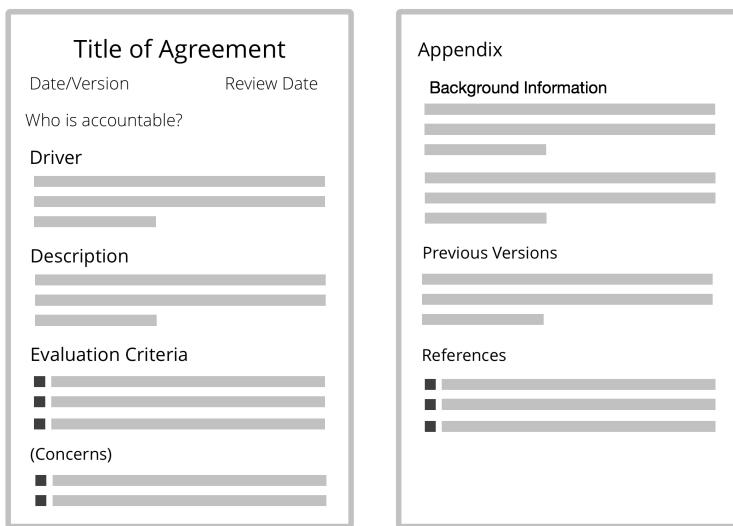


An **agreement** is an agreed upon guideline, process or protocol designed to guide the flow of value.

- agreements are created in response to drivers
- agreements are the **accountability of the people** that make them
- agreements are **regularly reviewed**

Note: In S3, guidelines, processes or protocols created by individuals in roles are treated as agreements.

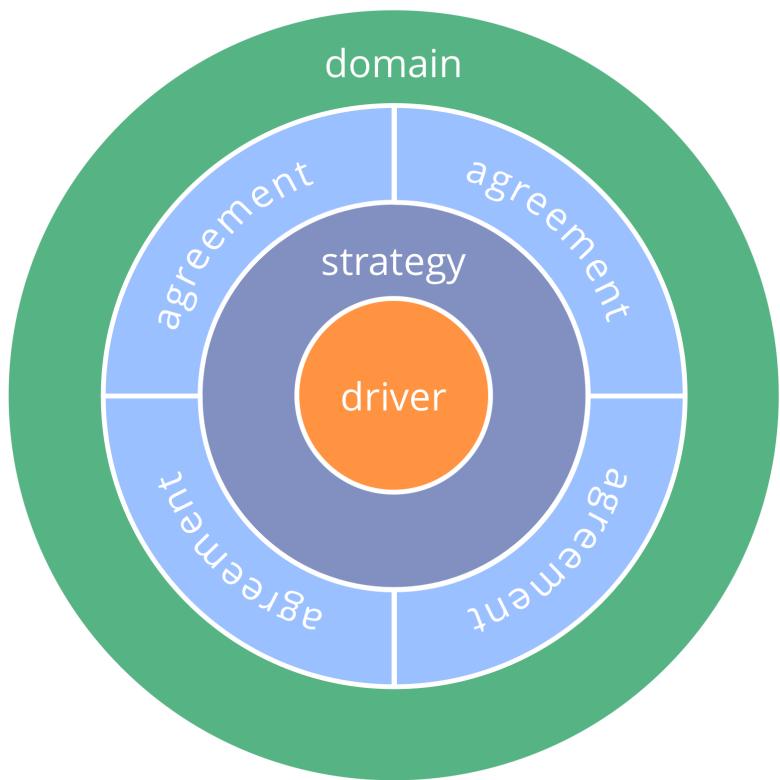
8.2.1. Template for Agreements



8.3. Pattern 6.2: Develop Strategy

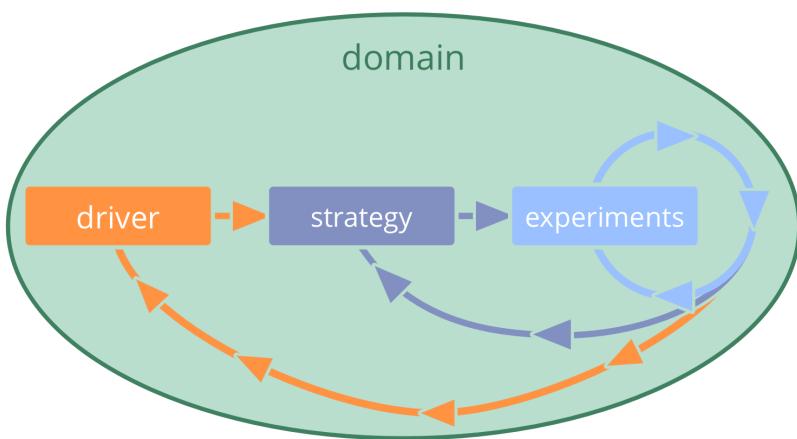
A **strategy** is a high level approach how people will create value to successfully account for a domain.

- an organization, group or role keeper develop their own strategy



- a strategy often includes a description of the intended outcome
- as the delegator shares accountability for the domain, it's valuable they review the strategy, identify potential impediments and suggest improvements
- strategy is a shared agreement between delegator(s) and delegatee(s) that is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary (*pivot or persevere*)

8.3.1. Strategies are implemented and refined through experimentation and learning.



Name of the Domain

Date/Version	Review Date
Primary Driver	Term (for a role)

Key Responsibilities

-
-

Constraints

- preferred/required skills, qualities, experience
- resources, budget
- time, privileges

Evaluation Criteria for Peer Review

-
-
-

8.4. Pattern 6.3: Clarify Domains

A clear understanding of people's area of accountability and autonomy enables greater efficiency, effective collaboration and agility throughout the organization.

A simple way to clarify domains is with a **domain description** that contains:

- primary driver
- key responsibilities
- constraints
- evaluation criteria for peer review
- term (for a role)
- (previous versions)

Domain descriptions can be created for a role, position, circle, team, open domain, department, unit, or the whole organization.

You can either start by clarifying existing domains, or at least clarify new ones.

8.5. Pattern 6.4: Intended Outcome

- a concise description of the expected result of an agreement, action, project or strategy
- specific *Evaluation Criteria* and metrics can be helpful for reviewing the actual outcome

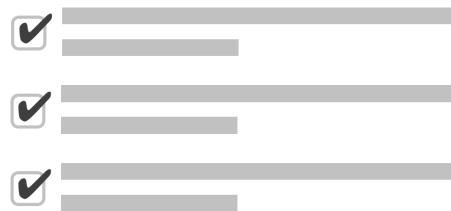
Intended Outcome



Metrics



Evaluation Criteria



8.6. Pattern 6.5: Describe Deliverables

A **deliverable** is something which is provided as a result of an agreement in response to a driver. Deliverables include products, raw materials, services, experiences and transformations.

In the context of an agreement, clearly describing deliverables supports shared understanding:

- include the necessary amount of detail
- reference other documents when helpful or necessary

Explicitly defining deliverables can be useful for improving:

- organizational strategy
- circle strategy
- development plans
- domain descriptions
- any other agreement (e.g. business goals, process policy, customer communication)

8.7. Pattern 6.6: Evaluation Criteria

Well-defined evaluation criteria can help to understand whether or not an agreement has had the desired effect.

- go for **simple and unambiguous** criteria and document them (to avoid discussion when reviewing your agreements)
- define **actionable metrics** to continuously track effects and spot deviations from intended outcomes

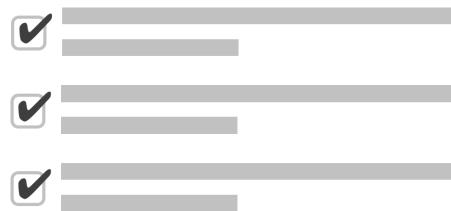
Intended Outcome



Metrics



Evaluation Criteria



8.8. Pattern 6.7: Logbook

A logbook is a (digital) system to store all information relevant for running an organization and its teams. The logbook is accessible to all members of an organization, and information is kept confidential only when there is good reason to do so.

Common platforms for logbooks are Wikis (e.g. Dokuwiki or MediaWiki), Content Management Systems (e.g. Wordpress), G Suite, Evernote or Trello etc.

8.8.1. Logbook Contents

- Organization:
 - primary driver, strategy and organizational values
 - organizational structure (domains and connections)
 - agreements
- Circle:
 - circle description and strategy
 - agreements (including delegatees' domain descriptions, strategies and development plans)
 - backlogs and other information relating to a circle's work and governance
- Personal logbooks
 - domain descriptions, strategies and development plans
 - governance and operational backlogs for roles
 - decisions related to delivering value in a role

8.9. Pattern 6.8: Logbook Keeper (Role)

The logbook keeper is accountable for maintaining a circle's logbook by:

- recording details of agreements, domain descriptions, selections, evaluation dates, minutes of meetings etc.
- organizing relevant information and improving the system when valuable
- keeping records up to date
- ensuring accessibility to everyone in the circle (and in the wider organization as agreed)
- attending to all technical aspects of logbook keeping

9. Focused Interactions

9.1. Pattern 7.1: Governance Meeting

Groups meet at regular intervals to decide what to do to achieve objectives, and to set constraints on how and when things will be done.

A governance meeting is usually:

- facilitated
- prepared in advance
- time-boxed for a duration of 90–120 minutes
- scheduled every 4 weeks

A typical governance meeting includes:

- opening round: attune with each other and to the objectives (or driver) of the group
- administrative matters
 - consent to last minutes, date for next meeting, etc.
 - check for last-minute agenda items and consent to agenda
- agenda items

Opening Round



Administrative Matters

Agenda Items

Meeting Evaluation

Closing

- meeting evaluation: reflect on your interactions, celebrate successes and share suggestions for improvement
- closing

Typical agenda items include:

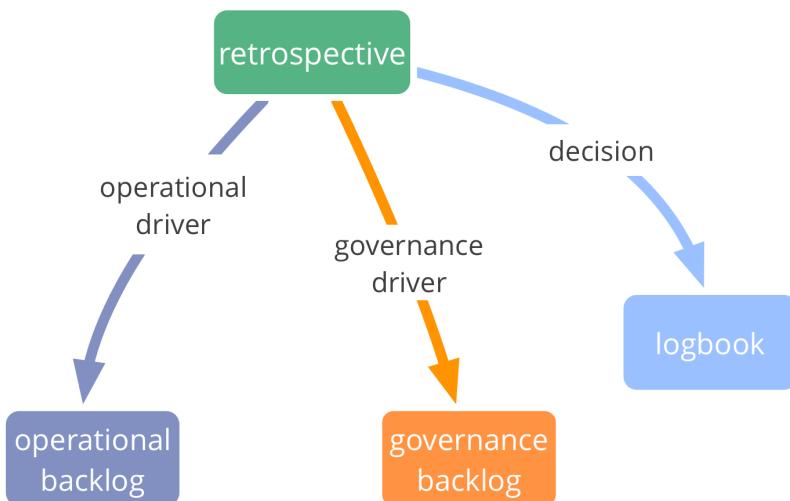
- any short reports
- evaluation of existing agreements due review
- new drivers requiring decisions to be made, including:
 - understanding and agreeing on situations that require attention
 - forming proposals and making agreements
 - creating and defining new roles and groups
 - reviewing existing roles or groups
 - selecting people to roles

9.2. Pattern 7.2: Retrospective

Building in continuous improvement of work process through reflection and learning from past experience.

- output: changes to work process, new tasks, on-the-fly agreements, and drivers requiring an agreement
- facilitated meeting (~1hr)
- regular intervals (1–4 weeks)
- adapt to situation and context

9.2.1. Output of a Retrospective

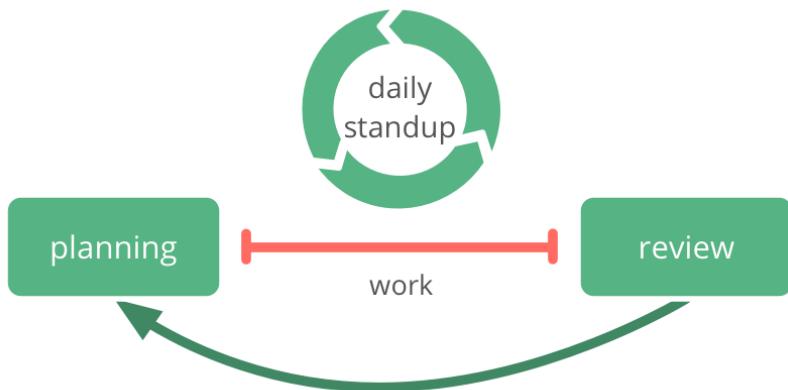


9.2.2. Five Phases of a Retrospective Meeting

1. Set the stage
2. Gather data
3. Generate insights
4. Decide what to do
5. Close the retrospective

Many different activities for each phase can be found at [plans-for-](#)

9.3. Pattern 7.3: Daily Standup



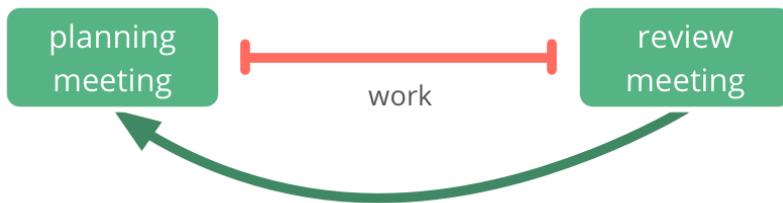
A meeting to coordinate work, facilitate learning, improve productivity and effectiveness.

- time-boxed (usually 15 minutes)
- held daily at the same time
- the group gathers around a visible project management board/tool for:
 - coordination of daily work
 - addressing impediments/blocks

¹<http://www.plans-for-retrospectives.com/>

- adaptation of existing agreements or creation of new agreements on the spot

9.4. Pattern 7.4: Planning And Review Meetings



People meet at regular intervals (1–4 weeks) in time-boxed meetings to plan and review work.

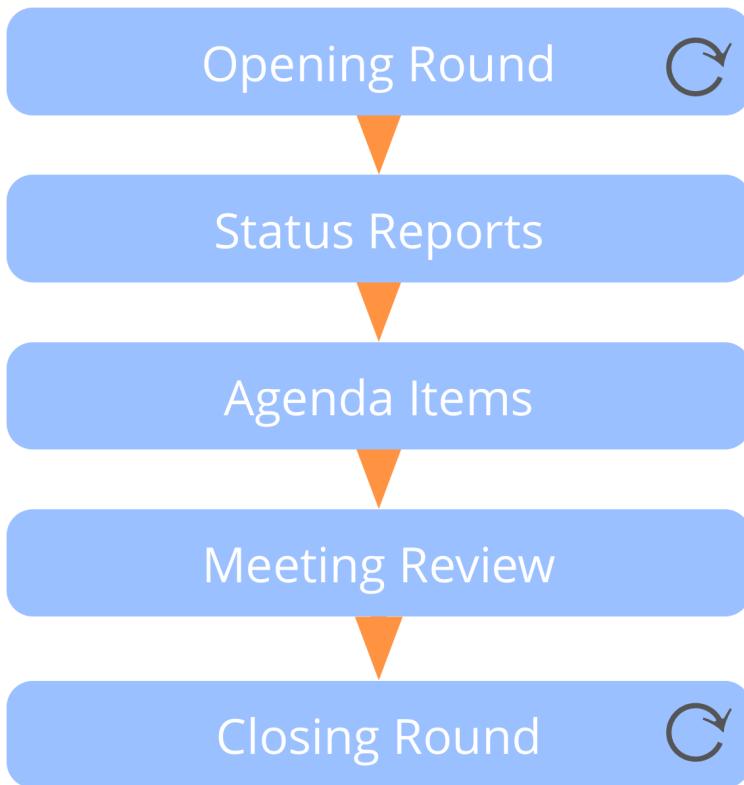
- select and estimate work items for the next iteration in a planning meeting
- review completed work items and decide on re-work and changes for the next iteration in a review meeting

9.5. Pattern 7.5: Coordination Meeting

Meet on a regular basis (usually weekly) for reporting on and coordinating work.

- facilitate the meeting and use rounds instead of discussions where valuable

- if possible, compile the agenda before the meeting
 - include any prerequisites for attendees to prepare
 - further items may come up when hearing status reports



- status reports:

- circle metrics (if any)
 - projects and tasks
- agenda items:
 - sharing of information
 - add or update tasks or projects
 - propose new or updated agreements

10. Meeting Practices

10.1. Pattern 8.1: Rounds

A group facilitation technique to maintain equivalence.

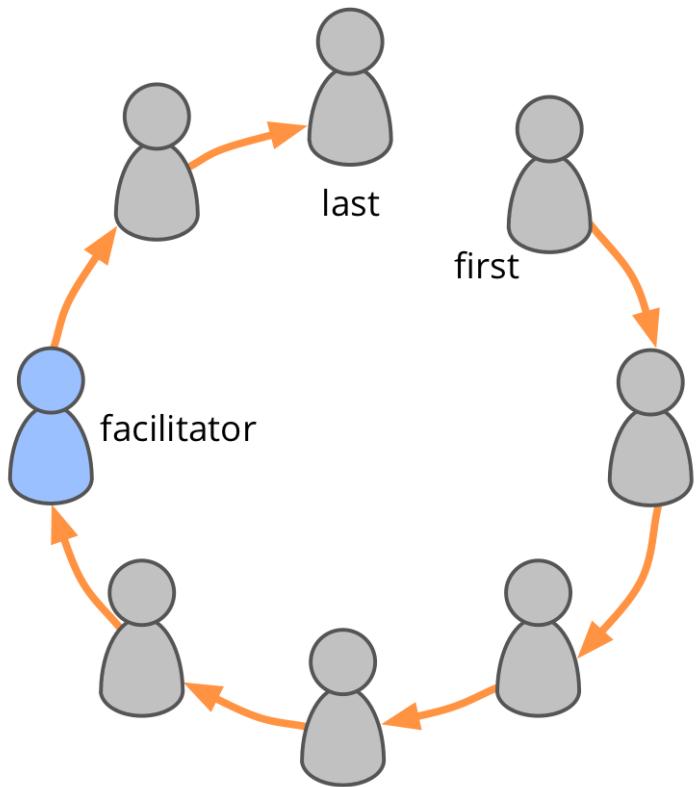
- go around the circle giving everyone the chance to speak
- begin each round with a different person, and change direction (clockwise or ccw) to bring variation to who speaks first and last, and to the order of people's contributions.

Experienced groups might sometimes choose to fast-track certain rounds in S3 group processes.

10.2. Pattern 8.2: Facilitate Meetings

Choose someone to facilitate a meeting. Even an inexperienced facilitator can help to focus a meeting and make a positive difference.

- prepare an agenda of topics
- select a facilitator who:
 - facilitates a suitable activity or format for each topic



- holds the space, keeps the time and navigates the agenda during the meeting
- facilitates an evaluation of the meeting at the end

10.3. Pattern 8.3: Evaluate Meetings

Take time for learning at the end of each meeting or workshop.

Reflect on interactions, celebrate successes and share suggestions for improvement.

- before the closing round
- reserve 5 minutes for 1 hour, and 15 minutes for a full-day workshop
- record learning and review before the next meeting
- short formats:
 - more of/less of/start/stop/keep
 - positive/critical/suggested improvements

10.3.1. Evaluate Meetings: Long Format

Ask everyone in a round to reflect on any or all of the following topics in a brief sharing:

- effectiveness and format
- facilitation and participation
- emotional tone

Opening

Workshop/Meeting

Evaluate Interaction

Closing

- appreciations and achievements (I liked...)
- growing edges and improvement suggestions (I wish...)
- wild ideas and radical suggestions (What if...)

10.4. Pattern 8.4: Meeting Host (Role)

The meeting host is accountable for preparation and follow-up of meetings, workshops or other events.

The role may be assigned temporarily (i.e. for one specific event) or for a duration of time.

10.4.1. Responsibilities Of A Meeting Host

- preparation
 - identify goals and deliverables
 - prepare and distribute agenda and schedule
 - estimate required time
 - identify and invite participants
 - schedule the meeting/workshop
 - book location (and transportation if required)
 - set up the space, provide required materials and information
 - ensure selection of a facilitator and a notetaker to record minutes, if appropriate
- follow-up

- clean up location, return keys etc.
- ensure minutes are distributed

10.5. Pattern 8.5: Governance Backlog

A governance backlog is a visible, prioritized list of items (drivers) that are related to governing a domain and require attention.

- upcoming reports
- decisions to make
- proposals to create and consider
- agreements for review
- selecting people for roles

11. Organizing Work

11.1. Pattern 9.1: Backlog

A **backlog** (*to-do-list*) is a visible list of (often prioritized) uncompleted work items (drivers) that need to be addressed.

Types of backlog include:

- operations backlog
- sprint backlog
- product backlog
- impediments backlog
- **Implementation**
 - **analog backlog**: sticky notes on a wall, or index cards, magnets and whiteboard
 - **digital backlog**: e.g. Google Sheets, Trello, Kanban Flow, Jira

Each item on a (prioritized) backlog contains:

- a **short description** or a driver statement
- a **unique reference number** (or link) for each work item
- (the **order of work items**)

- **dependencies** to other work items or projects
- **due date** (if necessary)
- (optional) a measure for **value**
- (optional) a measure for **investment** (often an estimate of time or complexity)

11.2. Pattern 9.2: Prioritize Backlogs

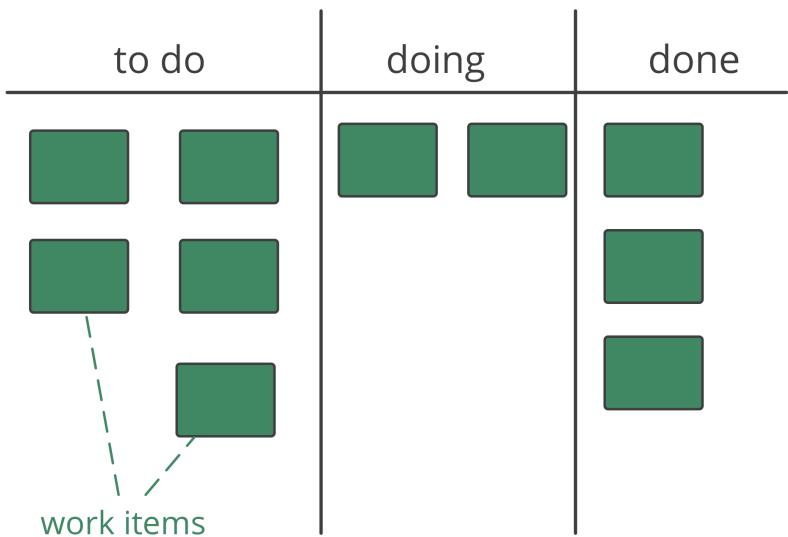
Order all **uncompleted work items** with the most important items first:

- work items are pulled from the top whenever there is new capacity
- no two items can be of equal importance, meaning it is necessary to agree on priorities and make tough choices
- **Benefits**
 - focus on most important items
 - shared understanding of priorities enables more effective collaboration

11.3. Pattern 9.3: Visualize Work

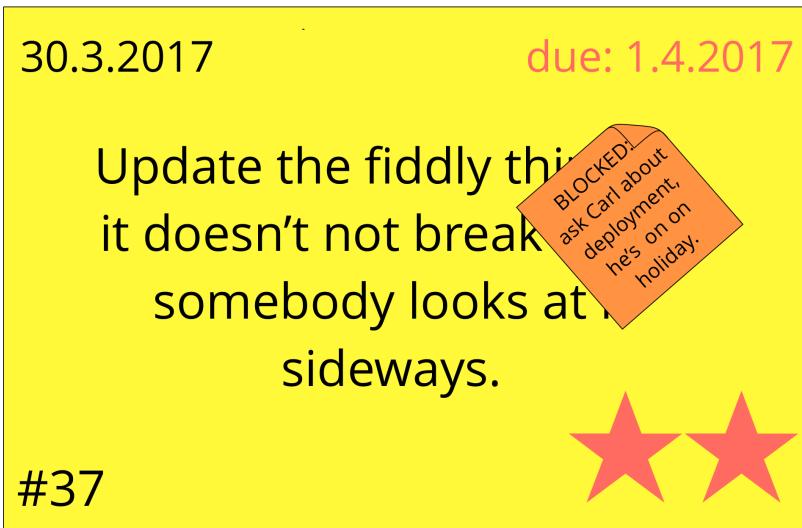
Transparency about the state of all work items currently pending, in progress or completed.

- valuable for self-organization and pull-systems
- system must be accessible to everyone affected



- **analog:** post-its on a wall, or index cards, magnets and white board
- **digital:** Trello, Kanbanery, Leankit, Jira, Google Sheets, etc.

11.3.1. Things to track:



- **types of work items** (e.g. customer request, project tasks, reporting tasks, rework)
- **start date** (and **due date** if necessary)
- **priorities**

- **stages** of work (e.g. “to do”, “in progress”, “review” and “done”)
- impediments/blocks
- who is working on which items
- agreements and expectations guiding workflow (e.g. definition of done, policy, quality standards)
- use colors, symbols, highlights etc.

11.4. Pattern 9.4: Pull-System For Work

- people pull in new items when they have capacity (instead of work being pushed at them)
- prioritize available work items to ensure that important items are worked on first
- prevents overloading the system, especially when work in progress (WIP) per person is limited

11.5. Pattern 9.5: Limit Work in Progress

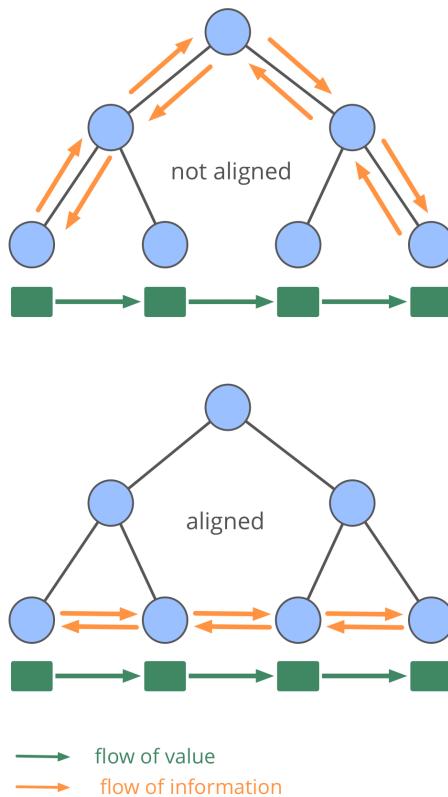
Limit the number of work items in any stage of your work process.

Work in Progress includes:

- number of items in a backlog
- concurrent projects or tasks for groups or individuals
- products in a portfolio

When an action would exceed an agreed upon limit of work items in progress, this needs to be brought up with the group before continuing.

11.6. Pattern 9.6: Align Flow



- in an effective organization, **flow of information and influence supports the continuous flow of value**
- alignment is achieved and maintained through the continuous improvement of agreements

11.6.1. Flow of Value

- flow of value is guided by (explicit and implicit) agreements and assumptions
- work in progress is regarded as waste because it ties up resources
- continuous flow of value reduces the potential for accumulation of waste
 - it also makes for shorter feedback loops and amplifies learning

11.7. Pattern 9.7: Coordinator (Role)

A person in the role of a coordinator is accountable for **coordinating a domain's operations** and is **selected for a limited term**.

- the coordinator may be selected by the group itself, or by the delegator
- several coordinators may collaborate to synchronize work across multiple domains
- instead of selecting a coordinator, a group may choose to self-organize

12. Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is the actual arrangement of domains and their connections. It reflects where power to influence is located, and the channels through which information and influence flow.

An effective organizational structure:

- supports flow of value
- enables collaboration
- addresses dependencies and makes them explicit
- ensures information is available to those who need it
- distributes power to influence as required
- evolves continuously to adapt to changing context

The basic building blocks for organizational structure are inter-dependent, connected domains.

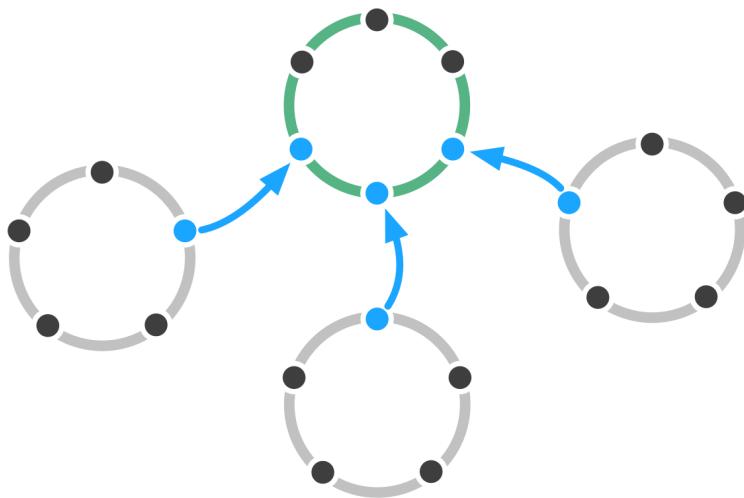
Domains can be linked to form a hierarchy or a **heterarchy** (a.k.a. complex adaptive system, or network, where multiple functional structures can co-exist).

12.1. Structural Patterns

Sociocracy 3.0 describes a variety of patterns to grow organizational structure.

- patterns apply to different layers of abstraction
- different structural patterns serve different drivers
- structural patterns can be adapted and combined as needed
- more patterns are out there and will be discovered

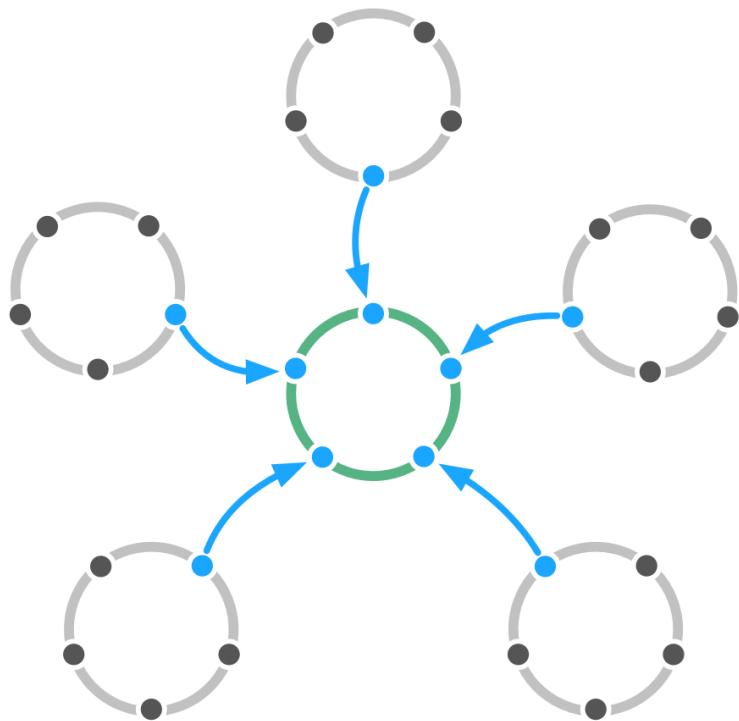
12.2. Pattern 10.1: Service Circle



Outsource services required by two or more domains.

A service circle can be populated by members of the domains it serves, and/or by other people too.

12.3. Pattern 10.2: Delegate Circle



Decide and align on how to address drivers affecting mul-

tiple domains.

Decisions of a delegate circle are acted upon in the various domains it serves.

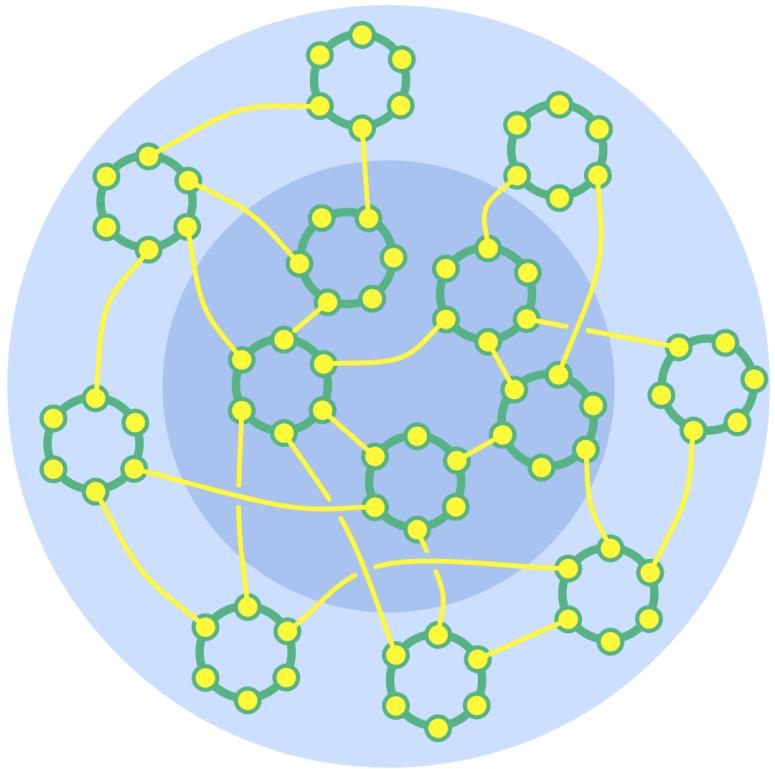
Each circle selects one or more members as representative(s) to a delegate circle.

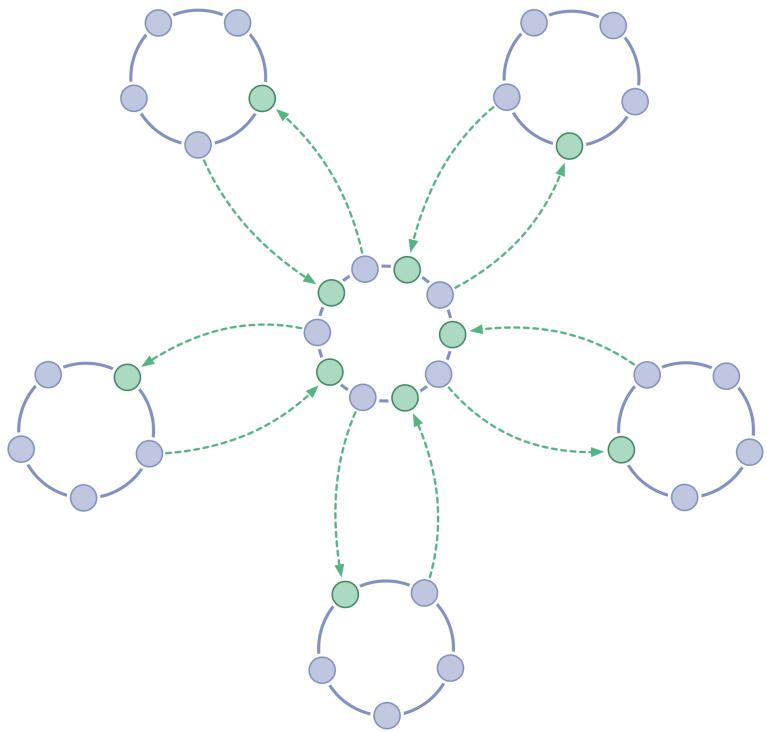
Delegate circles provide a way of steering organizations in alignment to the flow of value, and bring a diversity of perspective to governance decisions.

12.4. Pattern 10.3: Peach Organization

Deliver value in complex and competitive environments through **decentralization** (of resources and influence) and **direct interaction** between those creating value and the customers they serve.

- circles on the periphery deliver value in direct exchange with the outside world (customers, partners, communities, municipalities etc.)
- the center provides internal services to support the organization
- periphery stewards the monetary resources and steers the organization
- link domains as required to flow information and influence and address dependencies





12.5. Pattern 10.4: Double-Linked Hierarchy

Bring equivalence to governance in a typical organizational hierarchy.

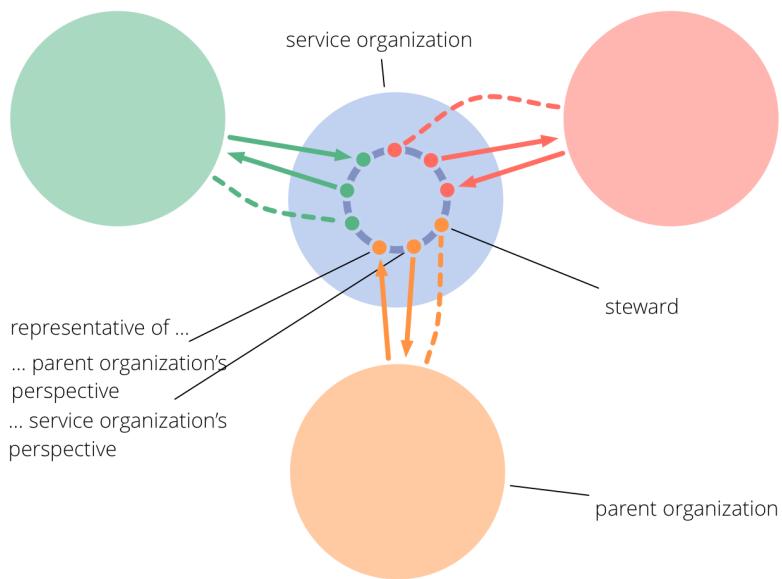
- the organization is built from of self-governing circles
- circles select a member to represent their interests in governance decisions of the next higher circle, and vice versa
- functional hierarchy is still possible if valuable

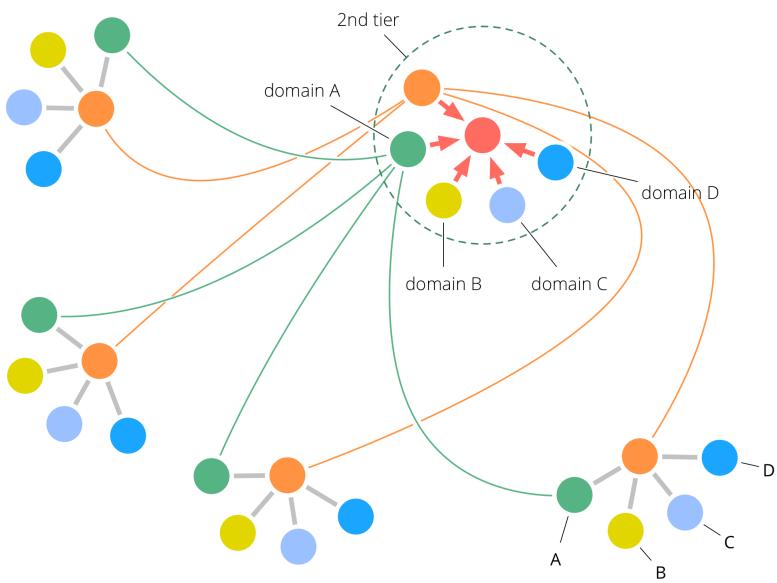
12.6. Pattern 10.5: Service Organization

Multi-stakeholder collaboration and alignment towards a shared driver.

- improves potential for equivalence between various entities
- increases cross-departmental/organizational alignment
- supports multi-agency collaboration between departments/organizations with different primary motives, or that are in conflict
- suitable for one-off projects, or ongoing collaboration

Note: a service organization is often referred to as a **backbone organization**.





12.7. Pattern 10.6: Fractal Organization

A pattern for multiple organizations (or domains) with a common driver to share learning and if valuable, coordinate and align action.

- a way to organize, align and steer from the ground up, while preserving autonomy and agency of the various entities involved
- a structure to facilitate innovation and exchange of learning throughout a large community on an ‘as needed’ basis

Part III.

Appendix

1. Changelog

1.1. Changes 2018–03–21

- renamed pattern *Describe Drivers* to *Describe Organizational Drivers*
- *Describe Organizational Drivers*: explained four aspects of a driver: current situation, effect of the situation on the organization, need of the organization in relation to this situation, and impact of attending to need
- added *need* to glossary

1.2. Changes 2017–11–16

- small corrections
- aligned glossary entries for *Circle* and *Role* to pattern text
- *Development Plan*: clarification of responsibilities
- *Role*: clarified evolution of strategy

1.3. Changes 2017–11–10

- various small clarifications and corrections

- *Circle*: clarified relationship between circle and domain
- *Role*: clarified description
- *Rounds*: updated description
- moved *Open Domain*, *Helping Team* and *Open Systems* to category “Building Organizations”
- added several terms to the glossary

1.4. Changes 2017–10–21

- added Liliana David to authors
- dropped the term “framework” (replaced with “practical guide”)
- updated order of patterns
- added an index of all the patterns
- added a glossary
- added acknowledgments
- various small clarifications and corrections to text and illustrations
- updated templates for agreement and development plan
- Introduction:
 - added “what’s in it for me?”
 - added definitions for governance, self-organization, semi-autonomy, operations to introduction
 - clarified domains and their relationship to drivers

- fleshed out core concepts
 - made all principles actionable
- *Artful Participation*: refined description
 - *Agreement*: clarified that the concept of agreements is applicable to people in roles
 - *Clarify Domains*: refined description
 - *Circle*: updated definition, refined description
 - *Driver*: updated definition
 - *Development Plan*: refined template and description
 - *Develop Strategy*: clarified definition of strategy, refined description
 - *Double-Linked Hierarchy*: new illustration
 - *Evaluate Agreements*: aligned questions to peer review
 - *Governance Backlog*: updated definition
 - *Logbook*: added details about governance to personal logbook
 - *Objections*: clarified qualifying objections
 - *Peer Review*: refined description
 - *Respond to Organizational Driver*: integrated information about qualifying drivers
 - *Role*: clarified role keeper may maintain a governance backlog, introduced the term “role keeper” for a person in a role
 - *Proposal Forming*: added criteria for selecting tuners, added step for prioritizing considerations, small clarifications

- *Resolve Objections*: updated illustration to better reflect the process

Renamed Patterns:

- *Backbone Organization* to *Service Organization*
- *Effectiveness Review* to *Peer Review*
- *Strategy* to *Develop Strategy*
- *Domain Description* to *Clarify Domains*
- *Describing Deliverables* to *Describe Deliverables*

Added Patterns:

- *Delegate Influence*
- *Describe Drivers*
- *Open Domain*

Removed Patterns

- *Coordination Circle*
- *Nested Domains*
- *Qualify Driver*

2. Links



Latest version of this guide: <http://sociocracy30.org/guide/>

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4. Acknowledgments

The content of Sociocracy 3.0 reflects the accumulated experience and wisdom of contributors across generations. These people have shared a common quest to evolve more effective, harmonious and conscious ways of collaborating together.

Particular recognition goes to Gerard Endenburg and others over the years who have committed significant time towards evolving and documenting the Sociocratic Circle Organization Method, which has contributed towards and inspired the evolution of Sociocracy 3.0.

We'd also like to recognize all those who have worked extensively to facilitate the emergence of a more agile and lean mindset, and those who have evolved and shared various practices with the world.

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By no means an exhaustive list, we'd like to offer our appreciation to the following people who directly contributed towards developing Sociocracy 3.0, or whose work influenced what it is today:

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8. Glossary

Account for (v.): to take the responsibility for something that needs to be addressed.

Accountability: Respond when something is needed, do what you agreed to and take ownership for the course of the organization.

Agreement: An agreed upon guideline, process or protocol designed to guide the flow of value.

Alignment: The process of bringing the actions of all parts of an organization in line with the organization's objectives.

Backlog: A visible list of (often prioritized) uncompleted work items (drivers) that need to be addressed.

Chosen Values: A set of principles a group (or an organization) has chosen to collectively adopt to guide their behavior in the context of their collaboration.

Circle: An equivalent, semi-autonomous and self-governing group of people collaborating to account for a domain.

Complexity: An environment where unknowns are unknown, cause and effect can only be understood in retrospect, and actions lead to unpredictable changes. [Snowden and Boone]

Concern: An opinion that doing something might impede – or miss an opportunity to improve – flow of value to an organizational

driver.

Consent: Do things in the absence of reasons not to.

Continuous Improvement: Change incrementally to accommodate steady empirical learning.

Delegatee: An individual or group accepting accountability for a domain delegated to them.

Delegator: An individual or group delegating a domain to other(s) to be accountable for.

Deliverable: Something which is provided as a result of an agreement in response to a driver. Deliverables include products, raw materials, services, experiences and transformations.

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.

Effectiveness: Devote time only to what brings you closer towards achieving your objectives.

Empiricism: Test all assumptions through experiments, continuous revision and falsification.

Equivalence: Involve people in making and evolving decisions that affect them.

Governance: Continuously deciding what to do to achieve objectives, and setting constraints on how and when things will be done.

Governance Backlog: A visible, prioritized list of items (drivers) that are related to governing a domain and require attention.

Key responsibilities: Essential work and decision making required in the context of a domain.

Logbook: A (digital) system to store all information relevant for running an organization and its teams.

Need: A need is a lack of something wanted or deemed necessary.

Objection: A reason why doing something stands in the way of (more) effective response to a driver.

Operations (Doing the Work): People doing what needs to be done, guided by coordination and governance.

Organization: A group of people collaborating towards a shared objective (driver).

Organizational Driver: A driver that is (directly or indirectly) related to an organization's primary driver.

Pattern: A template for successfully navigating a specific context.

Peer Domain: Two peer domains are contained within the same immediate superdomain, and may be overlapping.

Peer Drivers: Two drivers existing as a direct consequence of a response to the same superdriver, are called peer drivers.

Primary Driver: The driver that defines a domain is called the primary driver of that domain.

Principle: A basic idea or rule that explains or controls how something happens or works.

Role: An area of accountability defined by a domain and assigned to an individual.

SCM: (the Sociocratic Circle-Organisation Method) An egalitarian governance method for organizations based on a sociocratic mindset, developed in the Netherlands by Gerard Endenburg.

Self-Governance: People governing themselves within the constraints of a domain.

Self-Organization: People coordinating work within constraints defined through governance.

Semi-Autonomy: People with autonomy to create value, limited by the constraints of their domain.

Sociocracy: A mindset where people affected by decisions can influence them on the basis of reasons to do so.

Strategy: A high level approach how people will create value to successfully account for a domain.

Subdomain: A domain that is fully contained in another domain.

Subdriver: A subdriver arises as a consequence of people responding to another driver (the superdriver) and is necessary to address to respond to the superdriver.

Superdomain: A domain that fully contains another domain.

Superdriver: see subdriver.

Transparency: Make all information accessible to everyone in an organization, unless there is a reason for confidentiality.

Value: The importance, worth or usefulness of something in relation to a driver. Also “a principle of some significance that guides behavior” (mostly used as plural, “values”, or “organizational values”).

Values: A set of principles of some significance that guides behavior. Not to be confused with “value” (singular) in the context of a driver.

Waste: Anything not necessary for - or standing in the way of - effective response of a driver.