

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eah69MQOjgc&feature=youtu.be>

Notes by Laureen Golden of the webinar on the 6/7/17

With Erin Young and John Schinnerer

“Humans and our organizations are inextricably linked with local, regional, and global ecological systems. Sociocracy is whole systems design for how we organize ourselves and make decisions. Permaculture is whole systems design for re-integrating humans with the ecologies we depend on for our existence - for example water, food, fuel, shelter. Together they provide powerful design approaches that support resilient, adaptable, connected systems.

What do these design systems have in common? In what ways do they complement each other? What can permaculture offer sociocracy that may enrich and evolve human self-governance? How can sociocracy support thriving permaculture organizations?

Join us in this webinar to learn more about potentials and possibilities. Our presenters are practitioners and teachers of both permaculture and sociocracy, bringing perspectives from their own experience and from two different continents.”

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INTRODUCTION (Ted Rau)

What is Sociocracy?

In Sociocracy, there is a basic concept :“No one ignored.” How can we create an organization in which nobody can be ignored? All processes we use are supporting the principles of no one ignored. How can we do that? Three values it focuses on: transparency, effectiveness and equivalence in service of the organization’s aim.”

Three Values that Guide How We Work Together:

- Organizational structures: Organize in small groups called circles, who make decisions about how they work together. Circles are nested. Decision making power to most specific circle; sense of whole (general circle), but doesn’t make decisions for all, but helps info flow; clarity about who does what; transparent, info is shared as quickly as possible; effective: those closest to work make the decision -- effective and efficient; double linking
- Consent Decision-making: No objection; not trying to make everyone happy, trying to make a decision in which no one disagrees; Transparency: know what we are deciding and what people are thinking; effective: don’t argue over details, focus on relevant objections; equivalence: you will be heard
- Continuous Learning: (similar to P) whatever you do, make a plant, carry out, measure, repeat; Transparency: use data wherever we can; share openly; open and honest in meeting eval so groups don’t run into same issues; Feedback supports Effectiveness: strive to get better all the time; Equivalence: open and transparent; have way of addressing power dynamic; data to support your perspective free of assumptions;

Permaculture organizations around world are adopting Sociocracy practices; they want to become more intentional about building connections. Erin and John have a foot in each world.

About Presenters:

Erin Young.: Based in Queensland, east coast of Australia.; Involved in Sociocracy since 2012; learned with John Schinnerer. Came to Sociocracy very much as a practice of “Permaculture for people.”

John Schinnerer.: Learned through finding Permaculture and similar things that I'm a generalist in a specialist culture. Did Master's degree in Whole system design at Antioch University in Seattle; focus shifted more towards human systems underlying what we do with ecological systems and even how we understand, or fail to understand them. Stumbled on Sociocracy in late, waited for it to be translated to English; 2007 John Buck's book, began studying with John and Jerry and TSCG.

Presentation:

What is synergy between essential principles and practices of each?

(Erin Young)

- Both implement whole system design practices
- Design approaches with methodologies thinking about how we do things and designing how we do things. Both are methodologies based on Living Systems.
- (Images - See feedback loops, above and below. Life cycle of butterfly, larva, hatches, then flies. S allows us to crystallize ideas in proposal, emerges and flies out, cycle continues, we review and keep going.)
- (Image of eye) Both work with whole and component parts. Parts know their role in relationship to whole, all with autonomy; if malfunction, other parts step in and take weight, if possible. In Sociocratic systems for humans, each knows place/role with our own autonomy. The whole is greater than sum of parts (true in both Permaculture and Sociocracy)
- Nested circles of Sociocracy are similar in how Permaculture moves from pattern to detail. Sociocracy is based on circle structure, circle being a deep pattern we see often in nature and used often in Permaculture. In Sociocracy, the circle holds topic-specific details within self-organizing groups, similar to how garden beds hold the structure of the polyculture growing within.
- There are feedback loops in both Sociocracy and Permaculture. Living Systems rely on info being communicated between elements, and moved around, flowing. (Image of water cycle) Feedback is used to create balance and equilibrium. In Permaculture, see that through crop yield. Its feedback that processes used are working positively for system; can go into finer details - leaf colour, what type of nutrition needed; insects, what other plants needed. In Sociocracy, see feedback particularly in consent decision-making, where we're using rounds, feedback given by each circle member. Any info given is now held by group because we are part of one whole. Details come out to contribute to whole.

What is Whole Systems Design?

(John Schinnerer)

- We consider Sociocracy and Permaculture both implementations of “Whole Systems Design”.
- What is Whole Systems Design? Most general statement is “It’s about how we do what we do” rather than the specific thing we do.
 - Holism: Idea that when you have a whole something, the “parts” are interdependent. Parts don’t make sense without reference to what they are a part of without reference to what they are a part of. (Image of pieces of Rubik’s cube) Holism is notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
 - Systems: A group or set of elements (“parts”) that somehow work together/interrelate to form a more complex whole. (Example of Rubik’s cube or topsoil ~ fungal, root hairs, etc...group of interdependent life forms that make a whole that is much greater than sum because they can support more complex life. Using soil a lot as I don’t think we think enough about health and complexity of soil.
 - Design: Involves two things:
 - **“Creation of the not-yet existing.”** “Production” is making more copies of what already exists.
 - **Other-expressive.** Artists are primarily self-expressive; designers are primarily “other-expressive”; they help or support what clients are trying to put into world;
Ex: “traffic problems” how do we “solve” them? Think its a lack of trans
- Whole Systems Design is putting all these together: a holistic view, a systems approach, and design process to do what you are trying to do.
- Examples:
 - Traffic problems, how do we solve them?
 - Typically ask what are the causes and assume it’s a lack transportation infrastructure. So if that’s the problem, then we think we just need more. Build more roads, add more lanes, ramps, etc.
 - Can observe that this doesn’t work...by time its built, its usually almost at capacity;
 - A whole system design approach seeks to expand the picture. It says, if this isn’t working (feedback) so maybe we have the wrong problem. Perhaps what is causing problem isn’t lack of transportation infrastructure so instead we might look at how we use land. Explore how LAND USE DESIGN impacts traffic. When all our daily needs are placed a vehicles journey away from us, it creates that traffic. In most cases, we cannot build our way out of that, we need to change the patterns of land use.
 - Humanure vs Sewerage: Broken system vs Intact system.
 - (Erin Y.)
 - “Broken” is energy intensive, expends resources, stresses the whole system (output stressing ocean, is not prepared for that).

- “Intact” incorporates embodied energy, regenerates, provides energy to the system.
- The same applies to systems of humans working together in Sociocratic systems. Not “power over” linear, “hierarchy of domination” vs “hierarchy of actualization”; feedback, what we have to enrich the system; (what is possible in connected system).

What can P design offer S?

(JS)

In General...

Whole systems design approach to bringing ecological systems back into awareness as we make human organizational decisions.

- Relinking of human organizations to ecological contexts
- Including “voices” of eco-systems in human decisions.

(EY)

Embodying the Principles

- Weaving Permaculture ethics into heart of a group of our people systems ~ any group, not just Permaculture group. Ground group in ethics of care of Earth, care of people and fair share of resources. Woven not only into vision, but down into aims, values and policies.
- Embodying the principles: utilized as a tool for design, evaluation and strategy within Sociocracy circles. Principles used as a lens for picture forming rounds and for measurement criteria. The principles have holism built into them: What can we observe, yield, integrate rather than separate? Reviewing policy, mission: Have we valued diversity? Produced no waste? Embody collective wisdom of principle to guide evaluation of where we are.

Sectors Analysis

- Permaculture design requires assessment of current energy flows; mapping; Pieces of larger context mapped for the current context of an organization: Where are the energies moving around organization? Who has expertise we can use? What feedback loops can help us clarify where system is at? Fluid; update ongoing; of the larger context, what comes at us; wind moves, we don’t control, need to learn to work with it.

Zones

- Grouping of similar activity (Zones tied to idea of “domain” in Sociocracy. In each circle, group has specific aim and domain/territory it influences).
- Designating an area of similar activity or use; equates to domain (scope of work) and to timescale of decision-making. Circles in Sociocracy that are broader scope, looking out further into distance rather than on what needs to be produced today. How might we design ourselves to where we want to be in 5 years?

Scale of Permanence:

(JS)

- Keyline Design; Design Guidance: What systems can we influence a lot, or a little? How much time and/or energy does it take to change a given system? Ties back to sectors, what we may not have much influence over or a lot. How much time on horizontal? How much energy on vertical?
- Quality of soil easily affected in short area of time ~ we've destroyed it fast, but can regenerate it fast. Sociocracy is looking at same scale with different elements and asking same questions: Choose WHO we work with and HOW we work together; more time/energy, less control: nonprofits: funders out of control; low-hanging fruit, who will support us/align with us?

Site Assessment~Observation

- Understand the system before engaging with it.
- First 3 steps: Observe! Observe! Observe! Understand before engaging!
- Sociocracy is about **people systems**. We can observe and react, or observe, observe, observe and understand what is really the fundamental want/desire. How do we DESIGN WITH what is already happening? Valuable to come with beginner's mind ~ open to possibilities; children see things and say what is happening; emperor has no clothes; What is the system doing now before we intervene?

Succession/Design Guidance

- Image, tree; Permaculture focuses on how nature changes over time, becoming more diverse and resilient. How can we accelerate and help that happen quicker?
- Natural systems take x time to create layer of soil, we can cut it in ½;
- Sociocracy is about how are we designing so roles are filled adequately as we move forward (succession planning) so organization doesn't get ready for founder/expert leaving.
- Important in human organization to pay attention to succession. **It should run itself and not be dependent on a specific person.**

Monoculture vs Polyculture

(EY)

- Embracing diversity in human input and design of work.
 - Multiple elements per function. Different people trained to perform one role.
 - Multiple functions per element: one person, many roles;
 - Distributed leadership. Embodied understanding of role, and how it is done so others can step in; will bring their own energy, but role will continue.
 - Distributed leadership, sovereign beings, no censoring what is coming out of child; inherent leadership involved in being able to speak observation clearly [NVC]; embracing input from many people - polyculture; realtime creativity and feedback loops; good enough for now and safe enough to try;

Why is S a good fit for P design?

(EY)

For Permies wondering, "Why should I think about Sociocracy?"

Clarity of Common Unity (community)

- Sociocracy helps humans achieve visions together; declare common unity of whole and part contributing to whole;
- Provides dynamic invisible structures/patterns;
- Shared agreements co-created and agile to needs of group at any one time.
Permaculture: classic education space, gardens displaying, kitchen, office, ed space - each autonomous; each makes decisions about their domains, aware of energies moving around system; Sociocracy provides framework how to work most effectively, clarity of vision and mission driving and how component parts help pull it all together.

Whole System INTEGRITY

- Dynamic predictability = elements in living systems reliably do what they do.
 - Sociocracy provides equivalence through the system; (ie, bees inherently know how to make honey' like circles hold semi-autonomy over domain of work).
 - Clear yet agile boundaries and discipline;
 - Defines accountability and responsibility, bring integrity to elements and their functions.

Natural systems reliably do what they do. Roles are clear: head cook, chef, know what we expect and they know what is expected; can feedback if something won't work well for role; gardeners know about food; accountability: know what is being expected.

Effective Organizing

(JS)

Propagating Permaculture

- In J's opinion, efficient organizing is not happening very much ~ bits and pieces, some exciting things happening but in the broader picture, surprising that people valuing interconnection of systems etc having trouble doing it with people systems. From Sociocracy key pieces
 - more Power-With, less power over; more collaboration & cooperation,
 - Self-organizing human systems that are diverse, robust, and resilient;
 - Cultural change through accelerated succession ... succession is common to both people and ecological systems; ecol - we can accelerate the growth by physical interventions; human systems: what is now, and what we want it to be, and start specifically doing things to accelerate succession.

Permaculture tends to draw high proportion of "pioneer species" or rugged individualists (Pioneer species can be dry, harsh, prickly and don't grow close to each other). How can we accelerate succession in human permaculture systems to beyond pioneer species to more collaborative, connected communities? (EY) Pioneer species critical to bring new ways of doing things; but often need what is so dear to them, the aspects are taken care of; fear concern that it won't be done with the right care, vision to meet all of the elements. Sociocracy offers larger structure map to see the roles/pieces are being addressed; sense of security that they are moving in succession; allow it to evolve to the next more specific complex iteration, more effective. (JS) pictures of bees and flowers don't override, absence of concept of competition. Paying more attention to succession.

Q&A

"What questions do you use to 'hear the voices of ecosystems'?"

- J: Ways of going back to be indigenous to the places you live. Knowing land and seeing ourselves as PART OF IT, NOT IN CHARGE, HAVE ROLE AND PLACE

"Avoiding energy getting stuck"

E: Time frame, help us, have them set, what is review time around that? We are going to come back, get feedback; allow us to work in slow and small solutions, iterate, pioneering systems has served its course can put in new proposal for next step; terms around roles; how is person performing role? Is it appropriate? What else might need to

be added; always able to evolve

J: emphasize preparedness and willingness to do succession; Even when people involved have every conscious intention, succession is STILL difficult; more challenging than people think;

“Idea of trust between circles and sub circles. Does this happen naturally?”

- J: If people trust the process and suspend judgment, almost always builds trust; those that cannot, often select out; There has to be a firm commitment to follow the process. Trusting the process will then help build trust between the people.

E: parallel to soil; healthy soil culture/life; organizations need healthy cultures to express self, understand others, needs, how people wish to be responded to; “holding culture” builds trust; knowing processes and sticking to them, not rigid fundamentalism, but trusting integrity; helping us to meet needs; Having an organizational culture of connection and understand is very important to create and supports trust.

“Edges from P cross over to S?”

- J: not in slides bc didn't jump out;

E: circle edges - double links are edges, connecting info, bridging worlds; edge of term of role; end of something and beginning of something; if role went on wo review time, no edge to play with

J: formal overlap with larger world and S org - top circle; P should stop using edge and start using ECOTONE, not line but place where things mingle; top circle has overlap with larger world with external experts; ecotones where people in org overlap with those outside org -- areas of potential richness, learn from the people we serve;

“Ex of bad succession processes. Burden for other processes.”

- J: covers lots of cases. Relates to trust; micromanage : what do they really need?

E: Common Unity; whole with larger aim. Is person clear of common unity; is there enough alignment; is each member able to fully show up; worker bee doesn't choose an easy/hard day, related to weather conditions. S org, we are fully showing up in role. If not, not a fully functioning part. Discernment with transparency, but transparency is critical. Withholding not aligned with either P or S.

Accountability: people in far away subcircle complete task related to bigger picture?

- J: THAT circle's job to make sure, or next level up. Org making chairs. Chair leg circle not getting work done, if that circle doesn't catch it, will affect output of chairs, others will raise it. There is an assumption people care. If they don't, might be in wrong org or wrong part of org; if group isn't raising hand/addressing it, it will be affecting, through feedback of double links, as well as operational feedback; feedback loops built in. SELF-CORRECTING

E: aims of all circles are measurable. Feedback, circle relies on it. Circle with broader scope, holding circle, nested into, responsible for electing leader -- accountability to circle. Elected to uphold aim. Ecological level, eye not aware, heart doesn't pump, system self-destructs. One part doesn't function, system is weakened, can still function but threshold levels; that is resilience of system. Can hold weakness but to what extent -
- system decides.

Is there another name for top circle, more ecological less hierarchical

- J: "hierarchical" often run into this; nucleus and central nervous system, as hierarchy as top circle. Hierarchy in S an orga of work not power over; go back to root of hierarchy: the basic definition before it got twisted: "the order and task of heavenly beings"; different types of heavenly beings; different jobs. Top circle responsible mainly for mega vision

"What's needed to produce more yield in a Sociocratic organizations?"

- J: rich soil metaphor: everyone knows and appreciates each other expertise and skills; built into what they are, not abstract thinking that we have; human org, can complain about co-worker or focus on their value. If you read Gerard Endenburg wanted more HARMONY in workplace. Knew it would increase productivity, reduce turnover; S org, good soil built by transparency and feedback, people not doing jobs in dark, systems in place that consciously/unconsciously build trust; feedback loops, soil P, transactions between parts, AMAZING! Trying to create something sim to that with structures of S

E: P principles are interrelated; integrate rather than segregate; all dynamically related to one another; principles as lens of looking at issue, and how can yield be encouraged/supported, which P principles may need more attention given to them

J: Why would there be more yield in system? More comm diverse, robust system? Why human more prod there -- research has shown autonomy, decision making power really impt. Look up dan pink's talks animated video, what really motivates people: autonomy, mastery, purpose;

<https://www.tutor2u.net/business/reference/motivation-pink-three-elements-of-intrinsic-motivation>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdzHgN7_Hs8

More notes from discussion

Sociocracy Consulting.com; John S and Jerry part of; have events calendar coming up; online trainings; interactive online courses;

Southern Lights Consulting? Erin and ___ both based in P and S

SoFA: "Immersion Classes" one trainer always present

The Permaculture CoLab is a movement with the aim of bringing more connectivity and coherence to the permaculture movement worldwide. Sociocracy is likely to be the governance system for this.

E: Two languages I like to speak, whole system embodied in whole of life, know deeply, enable us to move and play with them.

How to go from the rugged individualists culture to a more cooperating, collaborative culture: Sharing Circles: Council, feedback loop, ensure understanding what is happening; each person has agency to speak for self, be witnessed, not censored emotionally; powerful for pioneer culture w/ group to understand what each member is experiencing feeling; Pioneering culture have hardiness, thorniness, needs it to break through ground. What is required to bring in more collaboration. Not everyone in group is tough, thorny, others are observers, quiet, won't share until space is opened. Ojai foundation in CA (book - The Way of Council): Social Technology to diversity of ecology of group

J: So many specific methodologies, including, improvising theater, playback theater, spontaneous storytelling, sharing circles, offer so much to build collaborative culture, best comedy comes from whole; when you are competing to have funniest line, doesn't work as well as when everyone fills each other; the more there is a GROUP MIND the better the form becomes. Much more embodied and less heady than what we often do; anything that gets us more into our bodies can be helpful

E: INTEGRATION rather than SEPARATION of what we do; multiple approaches; integrating diversity of people having diversity of EXPRESSION; helps us to move on from pioneering reality, rather than growing apart, bring them together; succession is the FILLING IN OF THE

SPACES BETWEEN PIONEERS;

Henny: filling in, bringing more people in -- WOW! An aha moment

J: a group of 4 founders, didn't want to run it, wanted it to self-organize. Had main circles doing work of org; but 4 founders would still meet and make circle decision, not keep it to founders decisions. Got immediate pushback and realized they didn't want that; struggled to be founder in S org...still have founder idea and energy but bring it into circle you are in. Take founder-ness to where you are in org;

E: P is a paradigm shift; a lightbulb moment, can become evangelist; same thing with S; I have the agency to give my perspective and be heard, founders know they will be moderated as well. I turn up as a "support species", I hear your vision, for that to actualize, need to spread the load; S offers framework so founders can see on map how their vision is being help. "Eldership" wisdom of vision being held in action. Volunteers build off that

Tony: people come in from current culture; reactions sculpted from experience; imp to have system to help promote effective behavior (NVC) inside of structures.

Q: In difficult meetings: what does one do?

J: Start by addressing pain in the room. Even individually at first, "Are you happy with how our meetings are going?" what is first thing people want to change? Are they willing to experiment?

P and S are 2 languages that are very compatible and complementary weaving themselves nicely.