

Leadership: Who's In Charge?

Cohousing Doesn't Have Top Down Decision Making

In our everyday life there are a number of different types of decision making systems and ways to make order out of chaos. In a work setting, often there is a boss who is in charge and makes the final decisions, with or without input from the workers, and with or without compassion, patience or transparency. In a family, often there is a single person who makes decisions, or in a two parent family the two parents may discuss (or argue) until they agree on a certain course of action.

Consensus Decision Making

In some settings, a group of people discuss a situation (such as, "Which restaurant shall we meet at?") until they all agree. Often the larger the group the more difficult it is for everyone to feel they have had a voice. It may take a long time for people to come to an agreement. Sometimes meetings can be contentious or boring, all of which could lead to people avoiding meetings.

Sociocracy

Our cohousing community is neither an organization with one leader who makes decisions, nor does everyone agree on every decision that needs to be made.

Our cohousing community uses a system of decision making also called a governance style, a tool called sociocracy. A simple description of this system is that there are circles ("committees") called "domains" and each domain has a defined role, which includes responsibilities and decision making. Each domain reports back to the General Circle. Everyone in our community belongs to the General Circle and each person may belong to several smaller circles which report to the General Circle.

As an example, our entire community does not discuss whether we will plant carrots or beets or both in our community garden. Our entire community votes on a budget for our community garden, and the Garden Circle, made up of people interested in that activity, meet to plan the garden. They are given the power and responsibility of decision making and purchasing in their circle. They report back to the General Circle and there is feedback on how effective their roles are.

Learning About Sociocracy

Our community will offer periodic trainings and workshops, and will coach the group in how to implement sociocracy. You can learn sociocracy by taking a class or workshop, and if you wish to take a leadership role in the community you will want to do this. Or you may simply join a Circle and attend the General Circle and learn as you go - others will be providing help and guidance in the process.

Four minute introduction YouTube video: "Sociocracy: The Operating System of the New Economy:"

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy-the-operating-system-of-the-new-economy/>

Sixteen minute TED talk by John Buck, "Sociocracy: Thinking Smarter Together"

https://www.ted.com/talks/john_buck_sociocracy_thinking_smarter_together

Fifty minute talk by Ted J. Rau, "Sociocracy For All"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYfm3Nn6IbY&t=383s>

You can find information at www.sociocracyforall.org Sociocracy For All, (SoFA), founded in 2016 by Jerry Koch-Gonzalez and Ted J. Rau, provides practical training and user-friendly resources to support the movement for more humane, self-governing organizations.

The book, "Many Voices One Song," by Ted J. Rau and Jerry Koch-Gonzalez is another good resource.