
Open sociocratic elections

Instructions for the sociocratic election
of a class representative

by Lisa Praeg

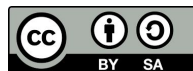


Open sociocratic elections Instructions for the sociocratic election of a class representative

Lisa Praeg

Translation and distribution by Sociocracy For All.
Contact: info@sociocracyforall.org

Feel free to share widely, with attribution to
Lisa Praeg and Sociocracy For All. 2019



1st edition published by H. Gögl and J. Kittinger,
Tage der Utopie e.V.
Contact: www.tagederutopie.org
Translation and distribution by Sociocracy For All.
Contact: info@sociocracyforall.org





A sociocratic election is not a vote — it requires more attention and consideration than just filling out a ballot.

For all those involved, determining sociocratically who could be class representatives means to think, to weigh and to argument/discuss deliberate over several stages, until the suitable person is found.

If all students are ready to engage in the procedures and steps associated with this process, they will be rewarded with several important insights. For example, how significant political decisions are made. Or the disadvantages of choosing volunteers just because they push themselves to the front. Or, how satisfying it is to openly work together and to agree on the basis of clever objections, finding the best solution for everyone. And above all, how strong the backing and support can be for a person who was elected in a sociocratic way.





FAQ

What does sociocratic mean?

It can best be translated as »governing together«. The term sociocracy was first used in 1851 by the French philosopher Auguste Comte and was further developed by the Dutch reform teacher Kees Bøeke in the middle of the 20th century. The basic principles of sociocracy, as it is understood today, were developed in the 1970s by the Dutch engineer and entrepreneur Gerard Endenburg.

What distinguishes a sociocratic from a democratic election?

Sociocratic decisions are not made by majority vote, but by the "no objection principle" (also "consent principle"). This means that all participants are heard equally and included in the decisions. In contrast to democratic ones, nobody can be overruled in sociocratic elections.

How can one describe a sociocratic election?

Essentially, it is an open nomination; decisions are only valid if no one has an objection in the context of a previously agreed-upon goal. The goal is to find a person who is the most suitable to the agreed-upon role description.

What is the advantage of sociocratic election decisions?

All voices are heard.. The mutual feedback and the sense of responsibility of each individual involved play a central role. Sociocratic elections are therefore characterized by a high degree of acceptance and sustainability.

When does a sociocratic election make sense?

Experience shows that it is particularly suitable for small and medium-sized groups, where the trust between the chosen persons and the respective group plays an important role or where it is important to find the most capable person for a particular role.

How does a sociocratic election work?

Using the example of a class representative election, you will find detailed instructions in this document.

What you should know *before* the election is ...

... which office (or role) we are electing into

The sociocratic election is not just about giving a vote to a person. Above all, it is important for those involved to think in advance about the tasks and responsibilities that the assigned role entails. In other words, only if there is an agreement on the qualities that are important to fulfill the role of a class representative we can form an opinion on who is best suited to it.

The quality of the role description therefore plays a significant part in the quality of the decision taken.

... what the "no objection principle" is

Central to the sociocratic election is the "no-objection principle." It states that a decision is valid only when no one has a reasonable objection against a proposed solution or election.

The corresponding question is not: "Do you agree?" or "*Are you in favor of this solution or election proposal?*" Instead, the question is "*do you have an objection to it?*", i.e. is there any harm if this person fills the role? If no one has an objection in the sense of the previously formulated goal, consent has been reached. That means that everyone will have shared ownership of the decision.

... how to deal with objections.

For a sociocratic election to succeed, students should not only be encouraged to voice their objections confidently, but they should also be prepared to give reasons for their opinion..

If there is a reasonable objection this indicates that not all concerns have been considered and therefore the solution or election proposal is not yet complete.

In the case of an objection, it is particularly important to listen to the reasons given. The lessons learned help to improve the original proposal.

... that everyone wins.

Students have the opportunity to participate in the design of everyday school life through their class representatives. Typically and outside of sociocracy, candidates are elected by majority vote.

The downside of voting is that the minority is not fully behind the decision because it may feel that they have lost the election. In the sociocratic election, everyone gets the chance to co-determine and bring their personal objections. Power and responsibility are distributed equally to all. With the positive side effect: in the end there are only winners.



9 steps to the election result -

Instructions with helpful tips and important information

Step 1

Defining the roles and tasks.

Students discuss which roles or tasks the candidate or team should have, and what strengths and competencies they feel are needed to perform the classroom role.

The answers are recorded in a way that's visible to everyone.

Tips

- ❑ Use a talking stick to prevent chaotic discussions. Only those who hold it in their hands have a turn to speak.
- ❑ Prepare the list of qualities and tasks in small groups and then present them in a collected form.





Step 2

Decide the role description by consent.

The students are asked individually whether they have an objection to this role description, or whether they give their "consent".

Possible answers are

- I have no objection, I give my consent.
- I have an objection and do not give my consent.

Tip

Alternatively to the verbal formulation of the answer, hand signals can also be given.

- A hand on the heart: no objection, consent
 - Two hands forward: objection and no consent
- Students who have an objection are asked to give reasons.

The role description will be changed or amended until everyone agrees to give their consent. Give the definition of role description enough time. Often, objections can be integrated by trying out the description or amendment in question for a while and then measuring their impact.

If an objection persists even after a round of listening and ideas, the decision may be postponed to another date or delegated to the class teacher.

Step 3

Fill in the nomination sheet - open and honest

Before this step, the group recalls the role description.
The role description is presented visibly to everyone.
It represents the jointly formulated goal and thus provides an important orientation for the next steps.

A student or teacher facilitates the election.
On a nomination sheet, all students record their own names and the name of a candidate, candidate or team.
The teacher makes a nomination as well.

Basically, all students of the class are eligible.
Students can also nominate themselves!!

Nomination sheet



I, Max
nominate
Gabi



Step 4

The first round of discussion - hear reasons

The nomination forms are collected.
All students are asked individually *why* they have chosen their candidate, candidate or team.

The names of the nominees are written side by side on the board. Below that, we collect the reasons that were given.

Since this is not about keeping a tally for counting votes, multiple answers are not noted.
Only arguments in favor of the nominees are listed.
Arguments against them are not collected at this point of the process.

Tip

Arrange the nomination forms in the order the students sit in a circle. Now you can ask them one by one to give reasons for their nomination.



Step 5

The second opinion - because opinions can change

After all the students have heard the reasoning of all the others, they are again asked individually whether their nomination has changed due to the reasons heard. If so, they are asked to give reasons for their decision again.

Maybe in this round new names will be added to those already on the board. Do not cancel names of students if they are no longer nominated. Just add new names and arguments.

Do not miss this round, even if it seems like everyone wants to stick to their opinions.

Point out that it is legitimate to change opinions when there are good arguments in favor.



Step 6

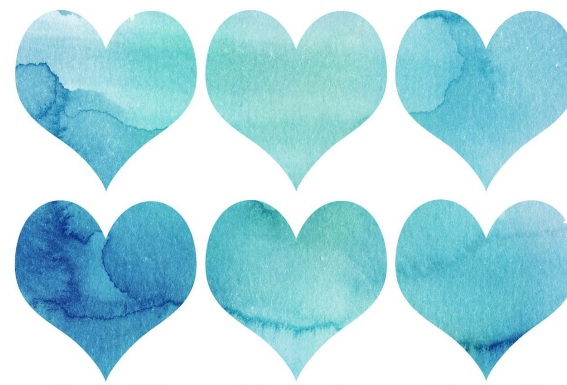
Formulating the nomination - a challenge

After two rounds of opinion and based on the names and arguments on the board, it is usually possible to formulate a proposal.

This task can either be taken by the electoral leadership or it can be delegated to someone in the class who wants to face this challenge.

At this stage, it is particularly important to reiterate that those who most closely match the role description are those most suited for the role.

Once the nomination is formulated, it is read out loud and written down for all to see.



Step 7

Decide on a selection proposal - incorporate objections

All students, including the teacher, are asked in turn if they object to this proposal.

A hand on the heart: no objection, consent
Two hands forward: objection and no consent

Do not be tempted to interpret this as a vote of the majority, but hear all the objections!

Should there be reasoned objections then the proposal is amended or supplemented until no one has an objection. The new proposal will be written down again for all to see and agreed.

The proposed students are the last to be asked for their consent. This achieves the highest degree of support from the others. When everyone gives their consent, they share responsibility for the decision. If no objection is raised, the decision is made.

The decision is written down visibly for all, and once again the consent is asked.

Tip

- ❑ You can change the order during this round.



Step 8

Finish the election - Take a deep breath and celebrate

Presumably, this is a moment breathe and celebrate. Although a sociocratic election brings a satisfactory result for everyone, it can also be exhausting.

Tips

- ❑ Express the relief and joy of a final joint activity.
- ❑ For example, by an aerial jump - take a photo!.
- ❑ Or have the new class representative team sign on the poster of the role description.
- ❑ Also applause for the class, the election management and the elected is quite justified!



Step 9

Reflect on the election - insights for next time

Since this type of choice was probably a new experience for most, it will be exciting to hear how the students experienced the election process

Tip

- ❑ Record the most important insights, moments of surprise or even mistakes, to have the information for next time.



To consider after the election

The more often, the better

Experience has shown that not everyone is willing to express their objections confidently in the first sociocratic election. However, the more often you do this kind of decision-making, the more the students internalize the culture of openness, and the more courageous they become.

Choose other roles

Of course, there are more ways to use sociocratic elections. It's best to ask your students which roles in the class they still want to nominate with the open election.

Organize project days and project weeks

It is also worth making decisions for project days or project weeks by consent. There are roles in this context that can be well identified in a sociocratic open election form.



Classroom meetings deciding by consent

Here, too, the basic rules of finding consent apply: define the goal, answer clarifying questions, hold two rounds of opinions, define suggestions and check for consent. If you do not have any experience with a class council, we recommend that you visit www.klassenrat.de (German) or www.sociocracyforall.org/school (English).

Learning more

Not all the basic principles of the sociocratic circle method are discussed in this booklet. For those who want to learn more about this method of decision-making, we recommend the following list of books and information platforms:

Literature

- ❑ Strauch, Barbara; Reijmer, Annewiek: Soziokratie – Kreisstrukturen als Organisationsprinzip zur Stärkung der Mitverantwortung des Einzelnen. München, Vahlen, 2018 | ISBN 978-3-800-65417-8 (German)
- ❑ Rau, Ted J.; Koch-Gonzalez, Jerry: Many Voices One Song – Shared Power with Sociocracy. Sociocracy For All, 2018 | ISBN 978-1-949-18300-9. (English; Spanish and Portuguese coming). Ebook available www.manyvoicesonesong.com
- ❑ Buck, John; Villines, Sharon: We the People – Consenting to a Deeper Democracy. SOCIOCRACY.INFO Press, 2017 | ISBN 978-0-979-28273-7

Movie

- ❑ School Circles - Every Voice Matters. 2018, 86 minutes, Charlie Shread and Marianne Osório, available at www.wonderingschool.org

Training and material

- ❑ Sociocracy For All: Online training opportunities, many explanatory videos and materials to download. www.sociocracyforall.org/school
- ❑ Sociocracy Center Austria: Continuing education opportunities in German-speaking countries, network »Sociocracy in schools« www.soziokratiezentrum.at

Networking

Online Community for Sociocracy: "Sociocracy in Schools". www.soziokratie.eu
Facebook group: [Sociocracy in Schools - Community of practice](#)

