

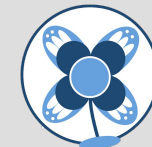
# Sociocracy in non-profits

Jerry Koch-Gonzalez  
jerry@sociocracyforall.org



# Today

- Key concepts of sociocracy
- Application to non-profits
  - Organizational structure
  - Decision making
  - Feedback
- Examples



# Overview

## Gandhi: Social change



# Key concepts

decisions by those who work together



in service of the aim



aim in service of the mission

# Our mission



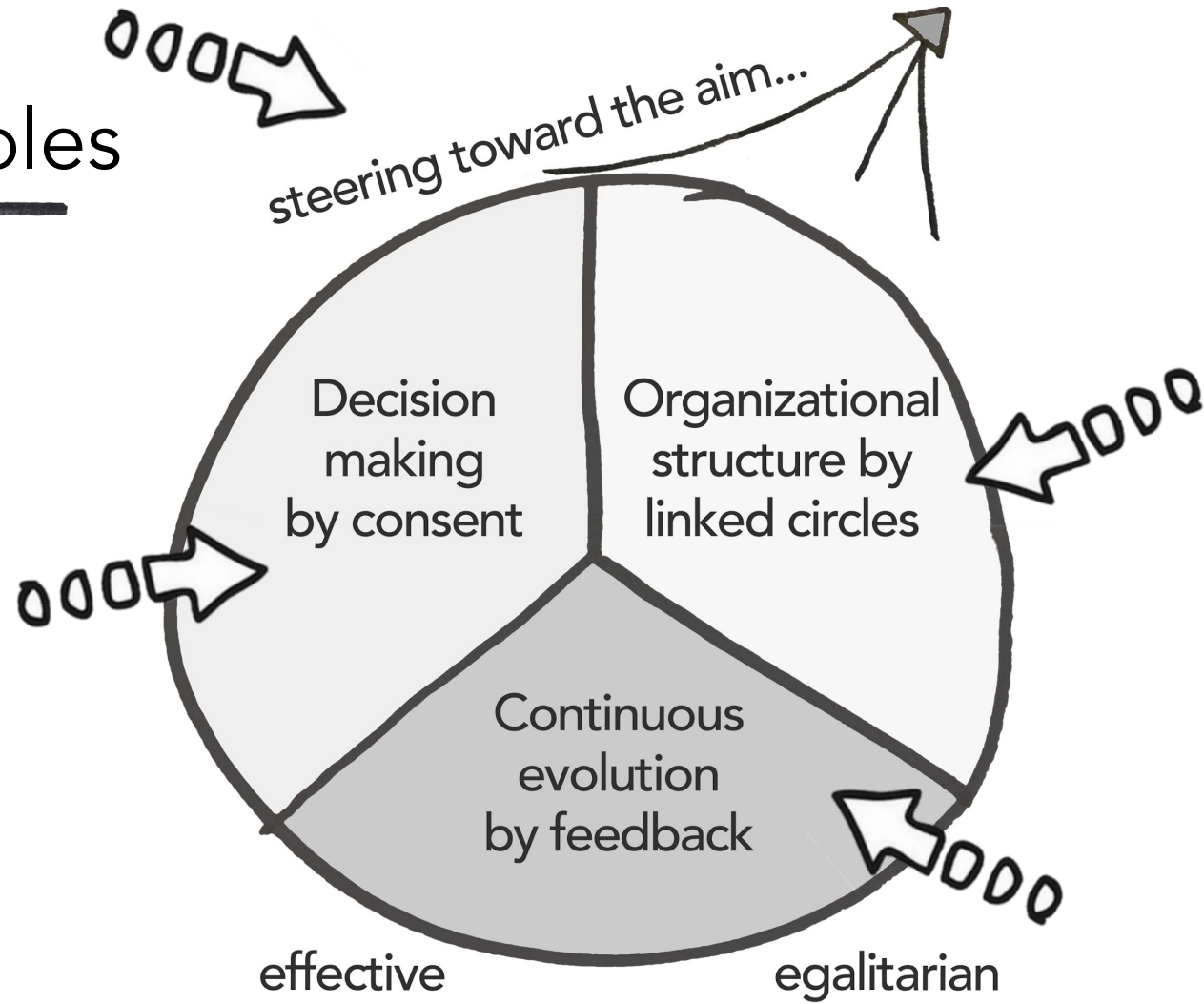
Sociocracy For All



Making resources for learning and implementing sociocracy accessible to everyone

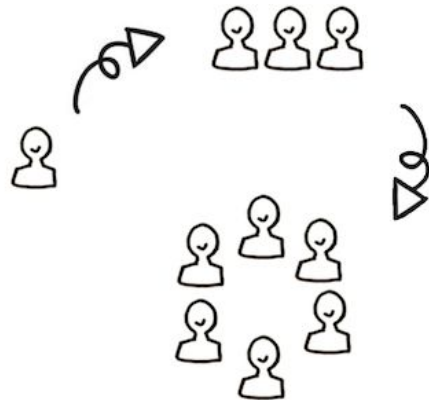


# Tools & principles

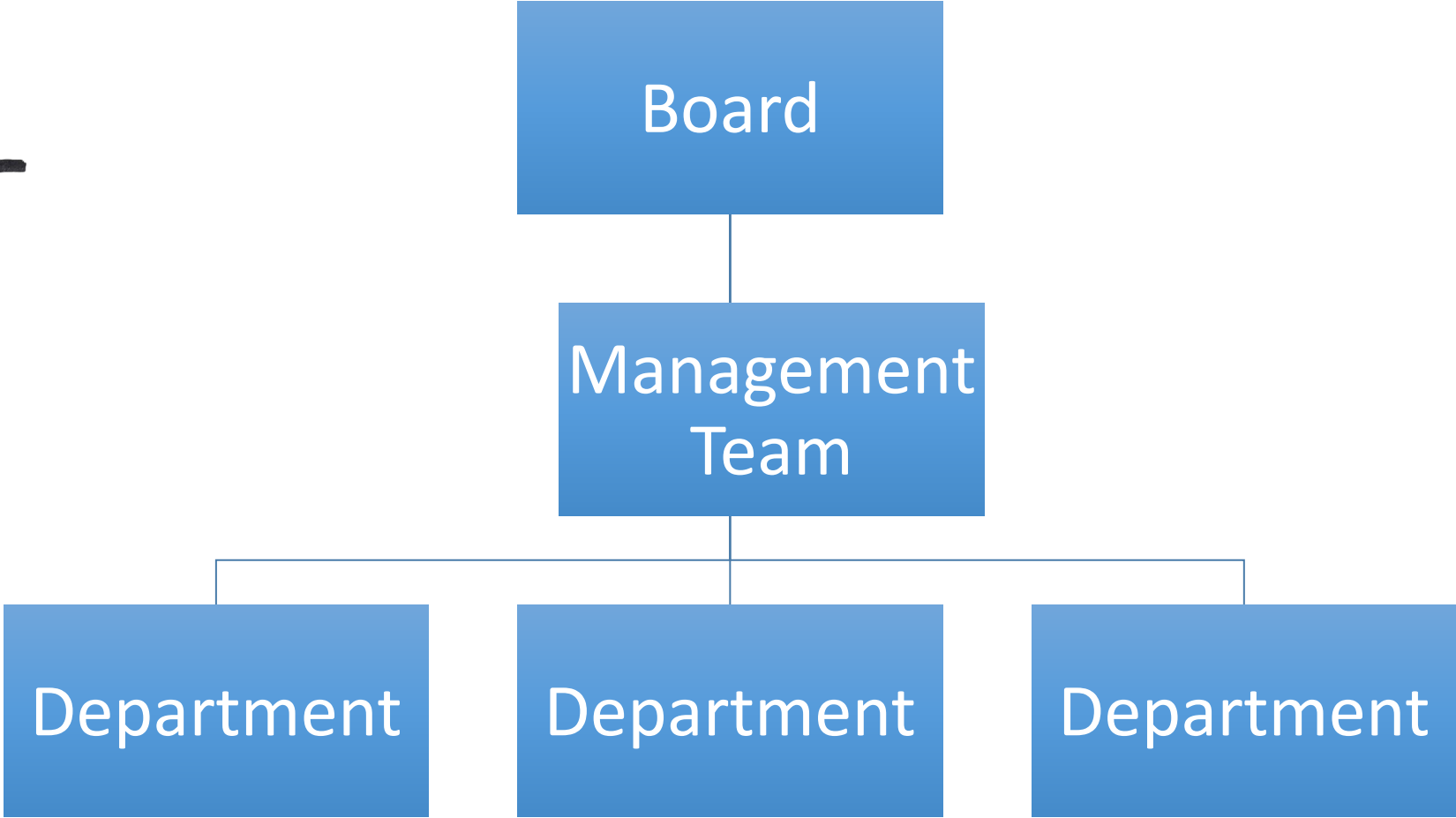


1

# Application to non-profits: organizational structure



# Circle structure

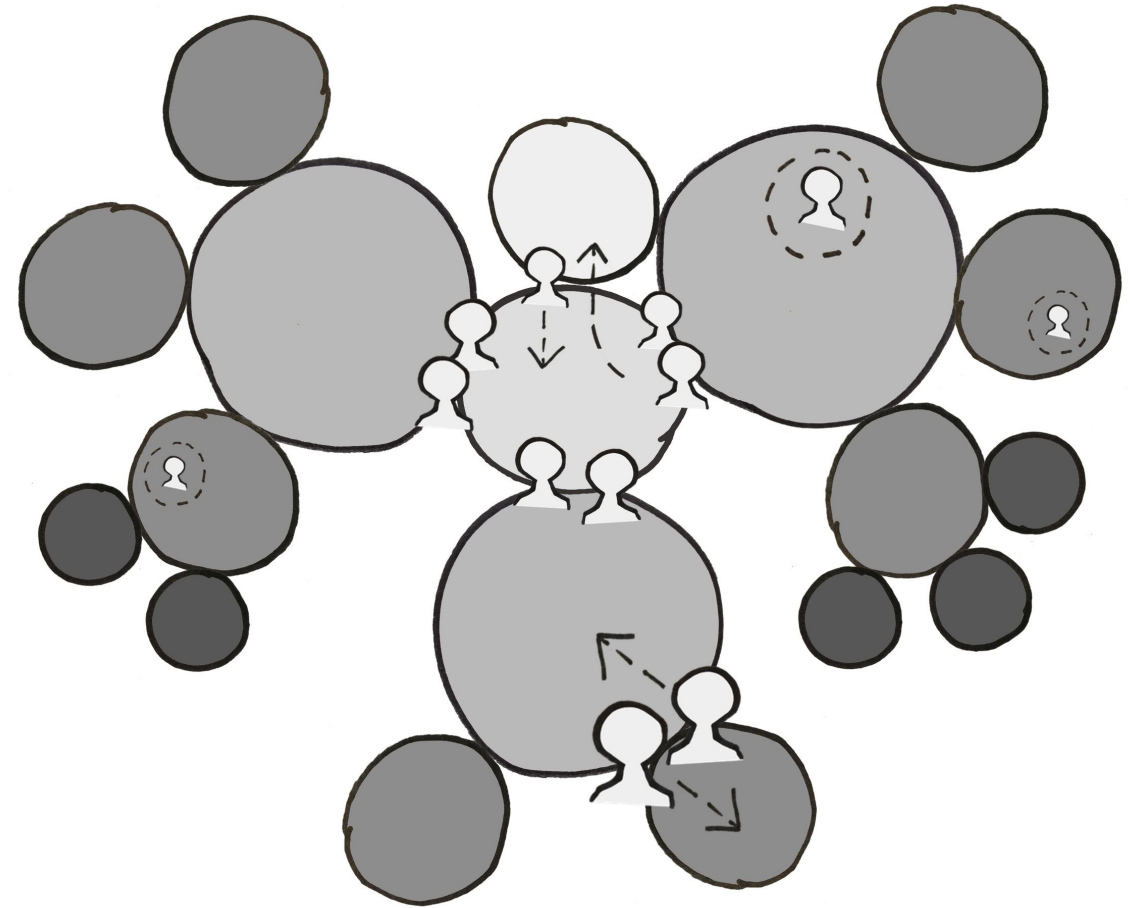




# Circle structure

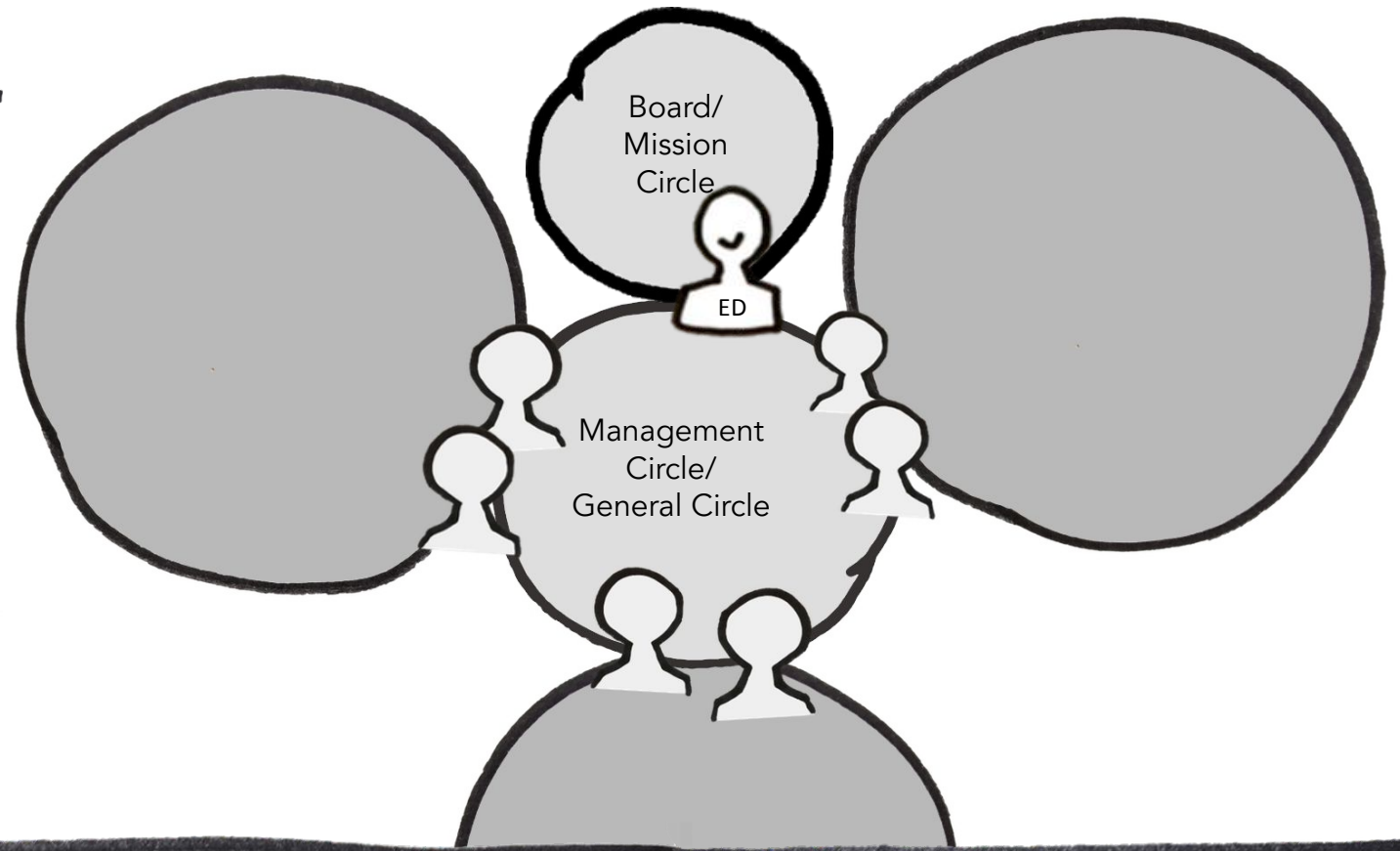
## What is different?

- principle of subsidiarity - redistribution of authority from the top to the periphery
- circles are "double-linked"
- leaders and delegates are selected by consent
- more >>



# Composition & role of the management team

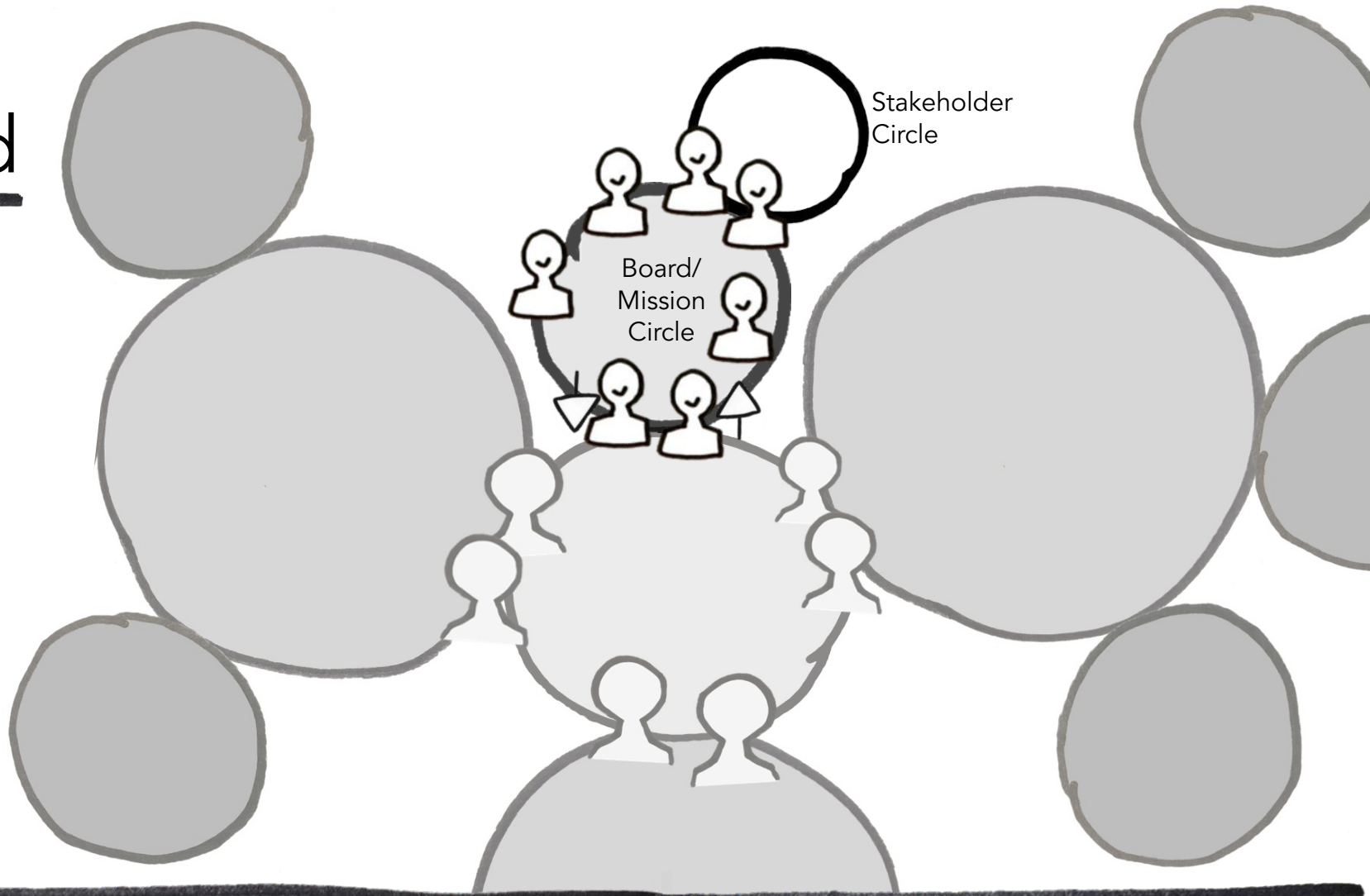
---



# Composition & role of the board

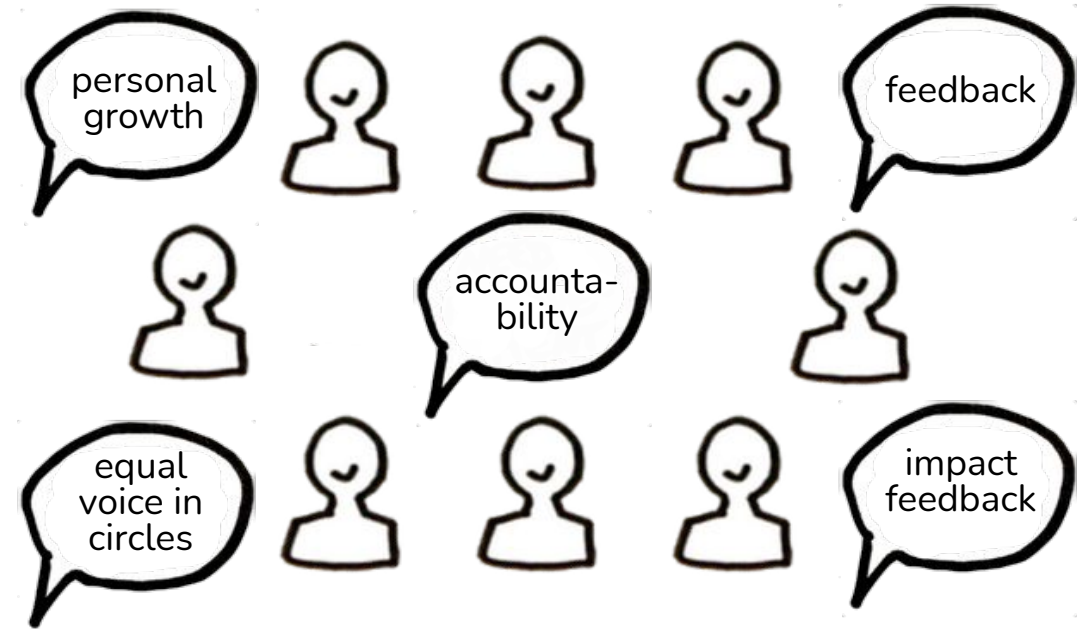
## What's different?

- Staff on board:  
ED and delegate
- Stakeholder  
representatives



# Role of volunteers

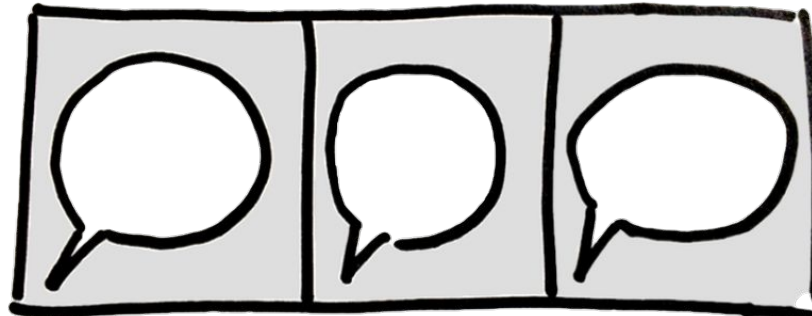
- Treated as staff
- Participation in circles
- (Voice on Board from Volunteers Stakeholder Circle?)



2

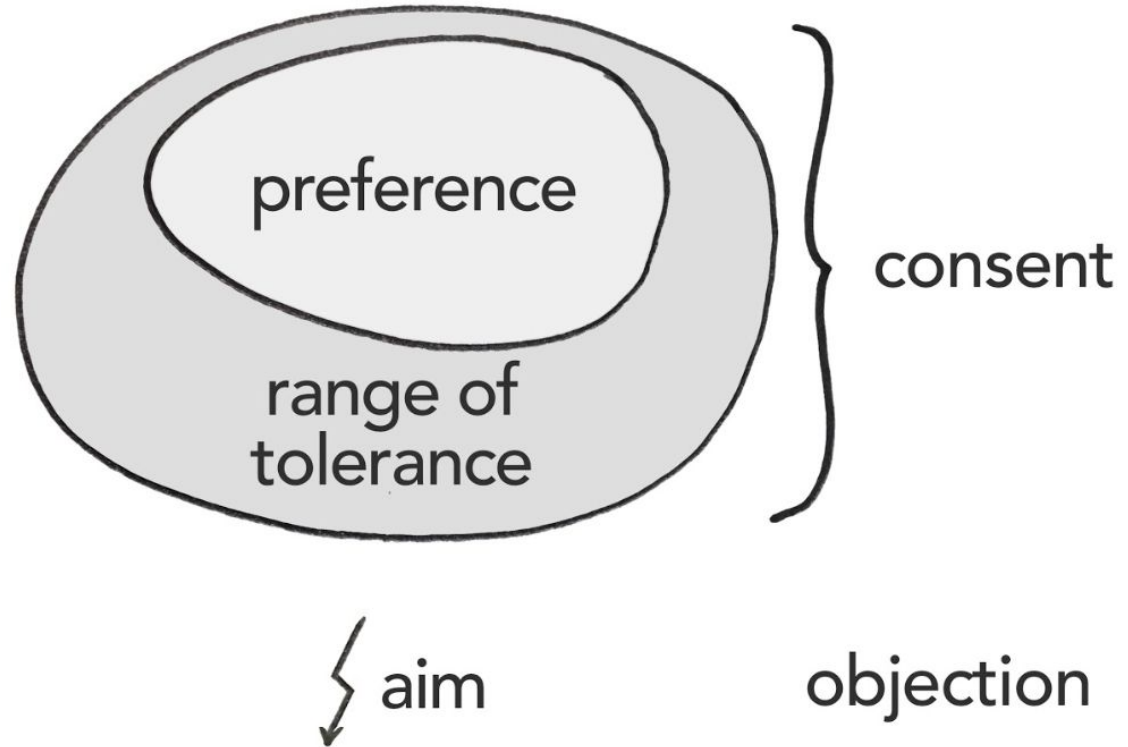
Application to non-profits:  
decision making

---



# Consent

- ✗ Majority vote
- ✗ Autocracy
- ✗ Consensus
- ✓ Consent



(A circle can consent to a different method of decision making.)

# Rounds

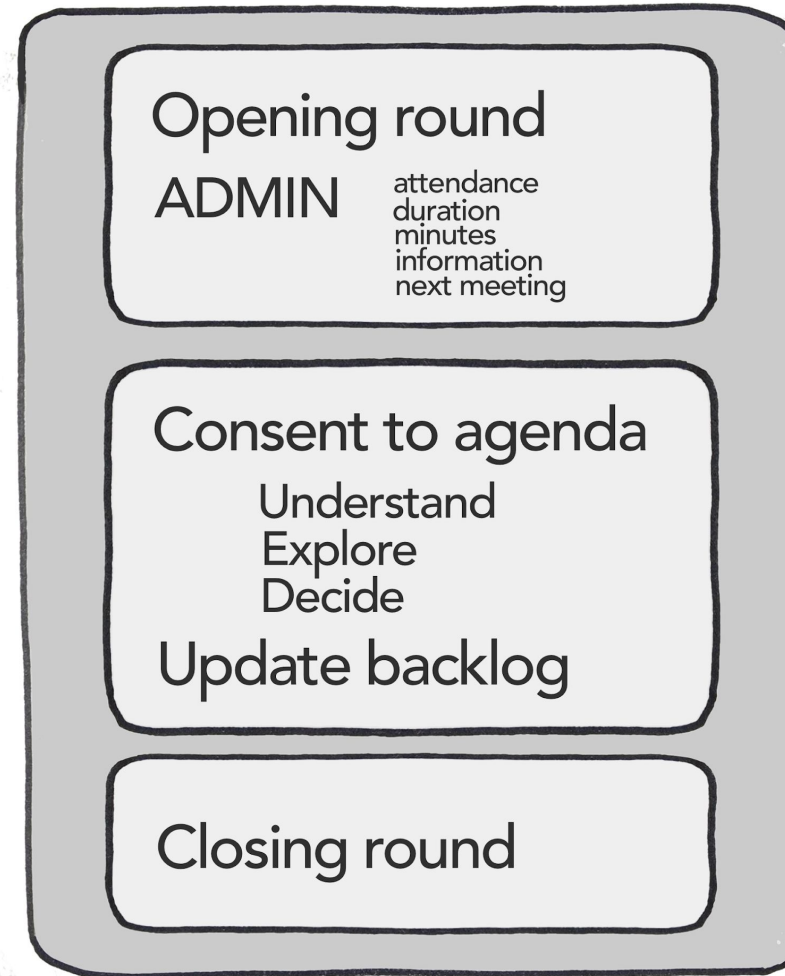
Everyone speaks one by one





# Meeting format

- ✓ reliable
- ✓ clear
- ✓ shared accountability

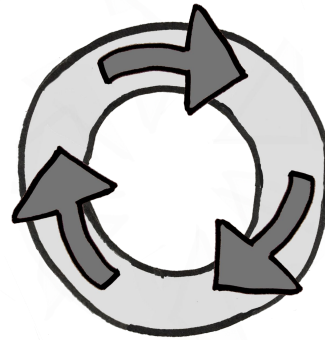




3

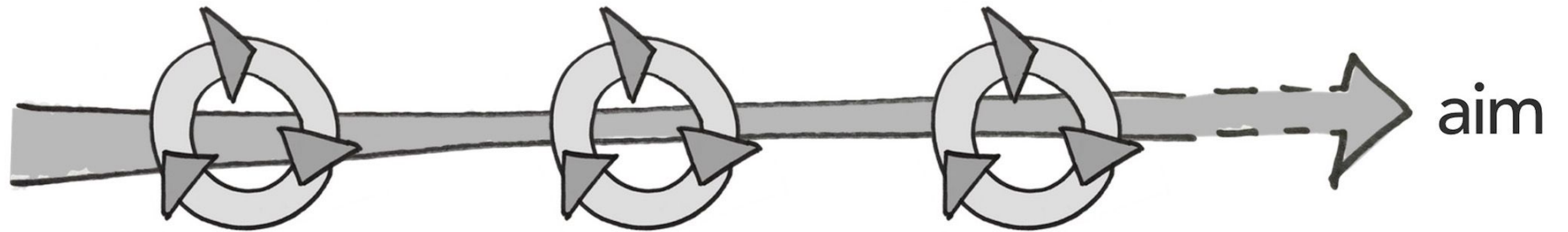
Feedback

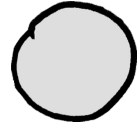
---



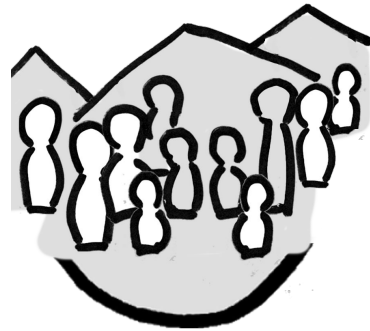
# Feedback

- Evaluating meetings
- Policy and role terms
- Selection process
- Circle feedback
- Role improvement feedback
- Workflow processes





Examples



# Examples

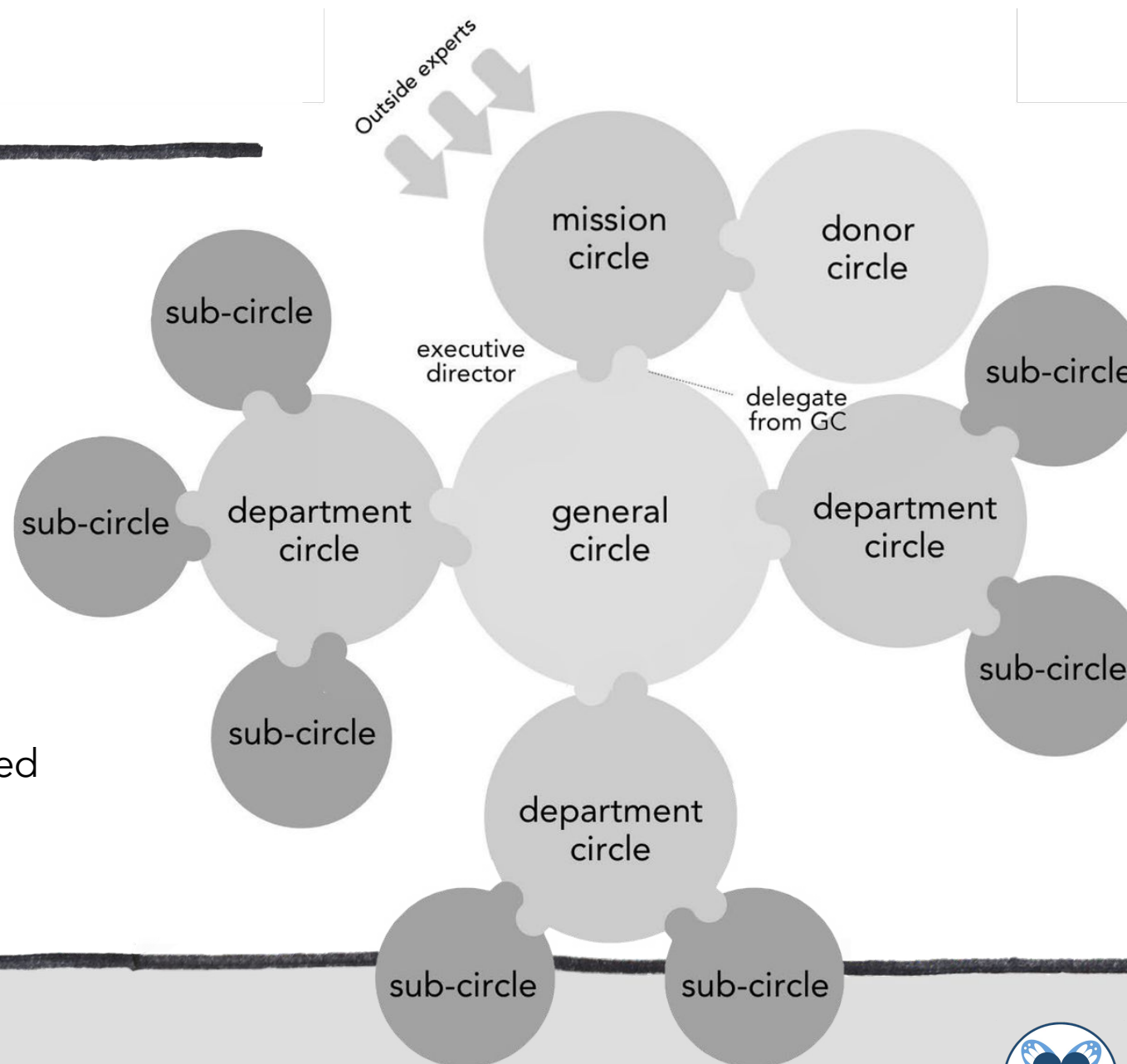
---

Independent schools  
Units of colleges  
Permaculture associations  
Social change/service organizations

More on our website [sociocracyforall.org](http://sociocracyforall.org)

**Makers Mill** Global Awareness Local Action Community Center  
**PULSE** Partnership for Undergraduate Life Science Education  
**SoFA** Sociocracy For All

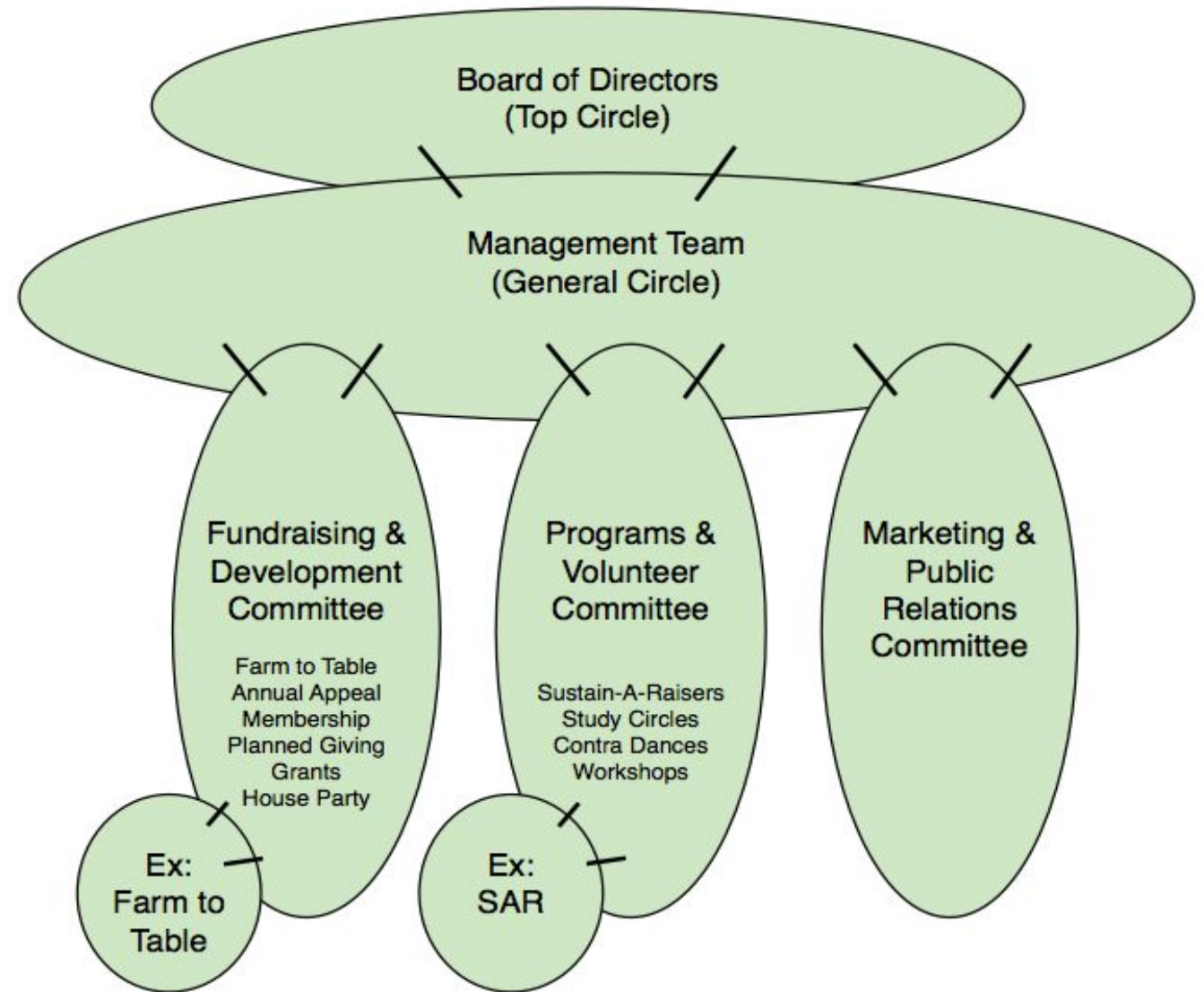
# Generic



Circles are double-linked

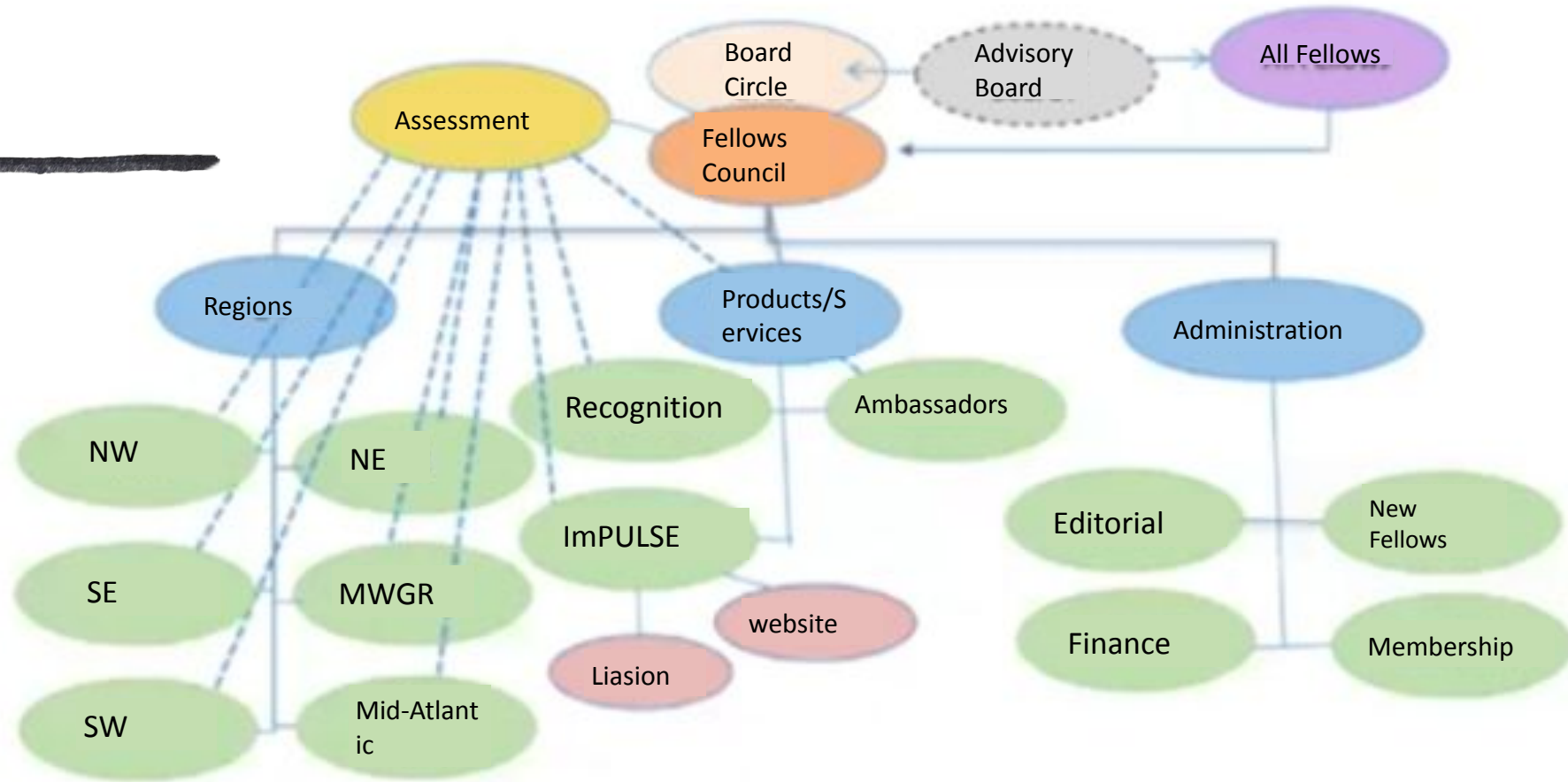
# Examples: Makers Mill

*A Makerspace & Vocation Hub where people come together to cultivate and share a wide variety of crafts, skills, technologies, and arts for personal, professional, and community goals.*



# Examples: PULSE

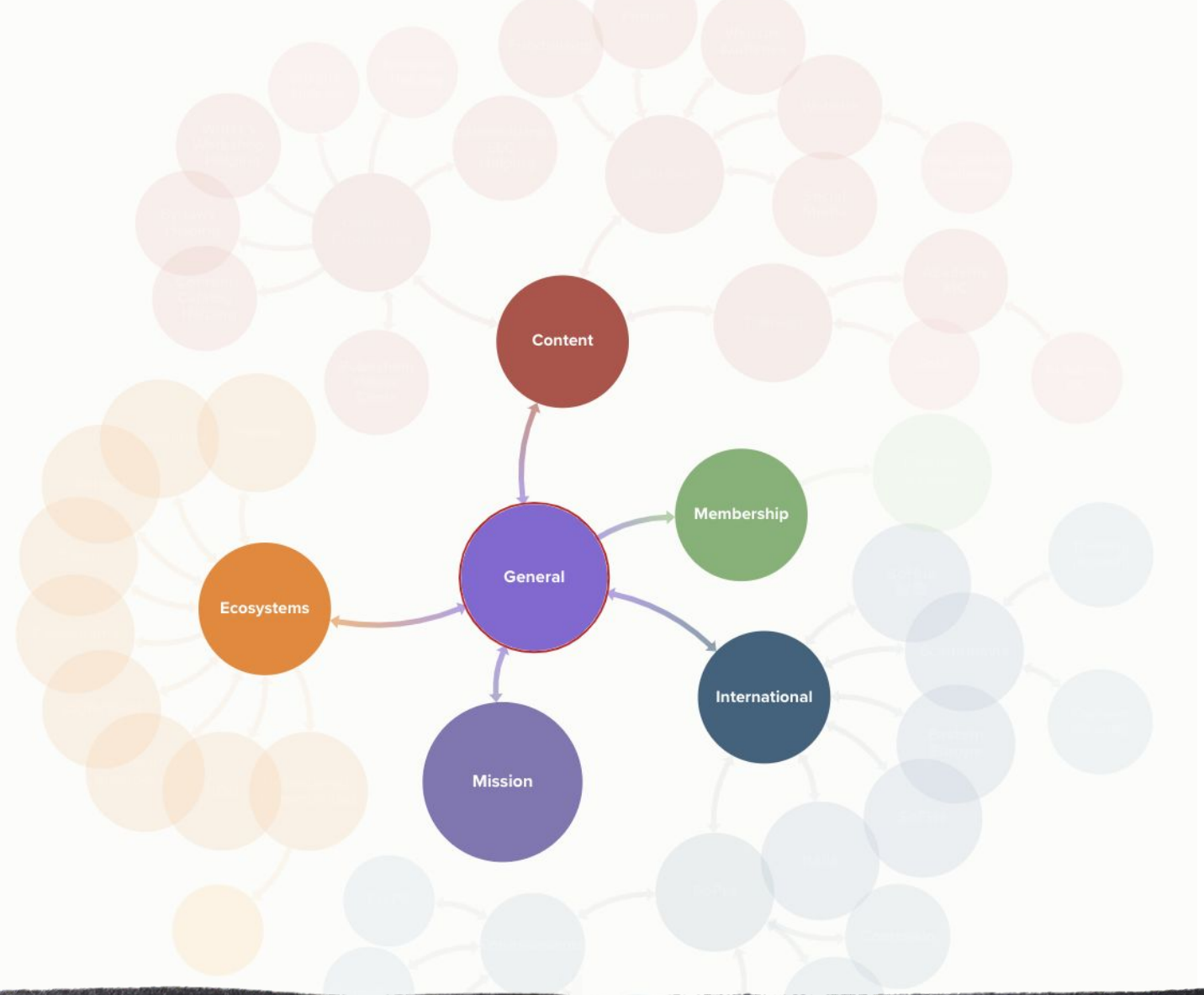
*PULSE helps life sciences departments at all institutions of higher education align with national education reform initiatives so they can develop inclusive, student-centered, evidence-based teaching and learning in order to cultivate the development of scientists who reflect the diversity of American society.*





# Examples: Sociocracy For All

*Changing the way groups make decisions!  
Making learning and implementing sociocracy accessible to everyone.*





# Legal Documentation

---

1. Articles of Incorporation (mostly defined by the IRS)
2. Bylaws
3. Policies & Procedures
  - No rules about what to put in each document.
  - If you are not explicit about governance, then tradition or basic government provided templates apply.
  - Each jurisdiction has its variations



# Sample ByLaws Small NGO US

1. Organization
2. Purpose
3. Sociocratic Governance
  - 3.x Definition: Sociocratic governance shall be defined as a method of governance that delegates policy making to all levels of the Corporation and establishes equivalence among its members within their domain of responsibility.
4. Governance Principles
  - 4.x Circles, consent, continuous evolution
5. Members
  - 5.x The basis of membership and the rights and responsibilities of membership shall be defined in the Policies and Procedures.
6. Board of Directors
  - 6.x Qualifications An understanding of, and agreement with, the mission, aims and governance principles of the Corporation as stated in these bylaws and the Policies & Procedures.
7. Meetings
  - 7.x Voting. Decisions of the Board are made following the principle of consent and the methods described in the Policies & Procedures.
8. Officers
9. etc

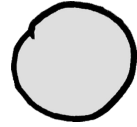
# Sample Policies on Governance NGO USA

## Table of Contents

- A. Membership
- B. Governing Principles
- C. Circle structure
- D. General framework of all circles
- E. Visitors attending circle meetings
- F. Circle member roles
- G. Decision-making
- H. The basis for objections
- I. Managing Objections from Absent Members
- J. Appealing a Circle Decision
- K. Producing Minutes
- L. Evaluating, amending, and reaffirming the governance agreement and practices

## Appendix

- [1. Facilitation sheet](#)
- 2. Organizational Structure
- 3. Table of Circle Aims & Domains

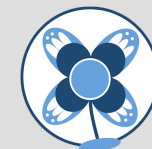


Closing



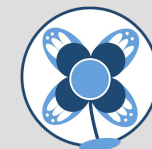
# Board questions

- “Is the Mission Circle the same people as the board?”
  - Usually yes. If distinction is needed, use Committee of the Whole/Consent Agenda.
- “We have a working board. How does that fit?”
  - Board needs to consider how it manages both the long-term view of a Mission Circle and the day-to-day view of a Coordinating/General Circle



# Board questions

- “Our board needs to use voting for decisions.”
  - Consider consent decision-making to be super-majority voting.
  - If the Board does not reach consent...



# Board questions

- “What does the board decide, what does the General Circle and the circles decide?” (Can fiduciary responsibility be passed on?)
  - The Board has the traditional oversight responsibilities of a Board, but delegates decision-making and/or preparation of decision-making.

# Challenges

---

- Sharing power (both directions)
- Cultural change
  - easier for new and small orgs
  - harder for larger, established orgs unless they really feel the pain
- Personal implications
  - transparency, vulnerability, the end of conflict avoidance
  - Requires communication skills (NVC, etc)
- Work around external environment
  - legal issues
  - norms of industry





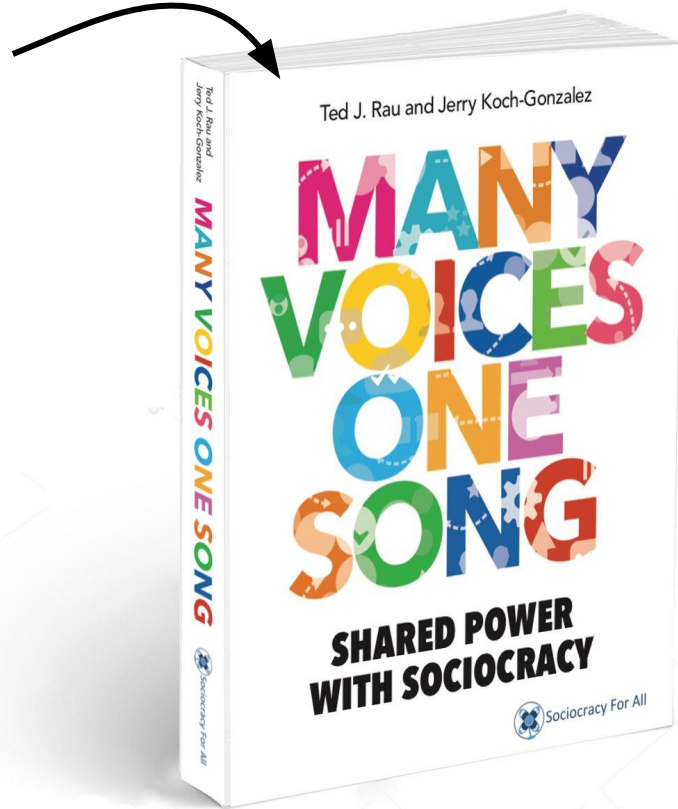
# How to get started

- ✓ Rounds
- ✓ Evaluations of decisions
- ✓ Delegation with authority
- ✓ Study group/shared experiences/training/change teams, etc.
- ✓ Contact SoFA for support in learning & implementing

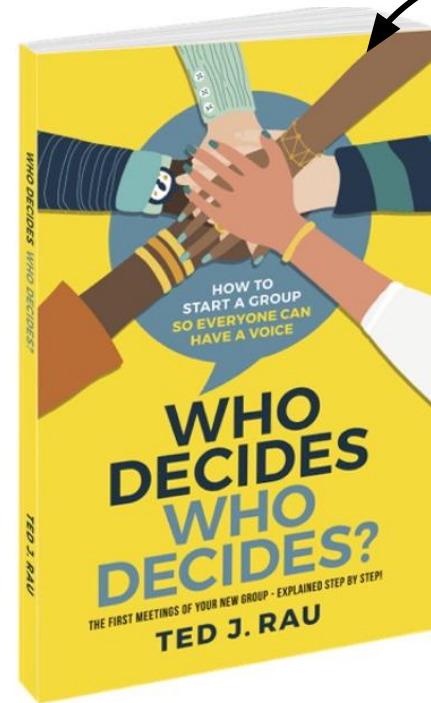


# Books

manual



how to start new projects/  
organizations

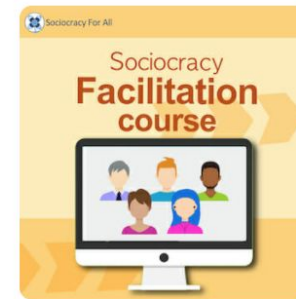


# Training & coaching



[sociocracyforall.org/coaching](https://sociocracyforall.org/coaching)

Open live classes	Video-led courses	Custom for your team
A teal poster for a "sociocracy beginner workshop" featuring a white arrow pointing right and a group of four diverse people at the bottom.	A teal poster for a "sociocracy basics course" featuring a computer monitor with the course title and five diverse people icons above it.	A teal poster for a "sociocracy beginner team workshop" featuring a group of six diverse people icons.



[sociocracyforall.org/training](https://sociocracyforall.org/training)

# How to continue

- ✓ Organizational membership:  
making sure your implementation is sustainable long term
  - discount on training (for new members or as refreshers/deepening) and consulting
  - coaching as needed
  - communities of practice for peer support

More info [sociocracyforall.org/sectors](https://sociocracyforall.org/sectors)



# Coming up

THU  
**10**

June 10 @ 15:30 - 16:30 UTC

## **How can sociocracy be used in volunteer/staff teams?**

**Jupiter - SoFA Zoom Room**

As sociocracy is finding more and more interest in nonprofits, a tricky tension needs to be explored more deeply: how do power relationships change if some people are in paid positions while others are volunteering? How can nonprofits give volunteers a voice while still honoring the effectiveness of the staff team?



Q & A