

## BOOK REVIEW

**Title** : **We the people: Consenting to a Deeper Democracy**  
**Author** : **John Buck and Sharon Villines**  
**Publisher** : **Sociocracy.info Press | Page Count: 278 | Language: English**  
**ISBN-10:0979282705 ISBN 13:978-0979282706**  
**Reviewer** : **Dr. Anand Saxena<sup>1</sup>**

In a recent Huffington post, Doug Kirkpatrick, US Partner at NuFocus Strategic Group has listed sociocracy as [one of] The Four ‘Cracies’ of the Future of Work ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/f\\_b\\_8983406.html?section=india](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/f_b_8983406.html?section=india)). Incidentally the other three ‘cracies’, viz., Organizational Democracy, Holacracy and Teleocracy together with sociocracy imply the emerging ethos of organizing world, economies, organizations and workplaces based on equality, consent, open innovation and collaborative endeavours.

We the People, by John Buck and Sharon Villines, is the first comprehensive presentation of the history and theoretical foundations of sociocracy. It discusses the history of sociocracy since the mid-nineteenth century, the principles and methods, how and why they produce better organizations, and “how to” chapters. In addition to sample bylaws and practical guides for circle meetings, it includes pivotal articles by: Lester Frank Ward, “Sociocracy;” Kees Boeke, “Democracy as It Might Be;” Gerard Endenburg, “Rational for a New Social Structure.” It also includes an extensive Glossary and Bibliography.

It would be appropriate to briefly explain the concept of sociocracy implying deeper democracy. Etymologically, the word sociocracy is derived from the Latin and Greek words socius (companion) and kratein (to govern). It implies the rule by the "socios," people who have a social relationship with each other. As such it is distinguishable from democracy: rule by the "demos," the general mass of people Their origination in different disciplines notwithstanding- sociocracy from sociology and democracy from political science- sociocracy implies deeper, egalitarian, participative democracy. It represents the ideal of what has been referred to as “dignity economy.”

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The book is divided into three parts. Part One spells out the rationale for deeper democracy known as dynamic governance and sociocracy. This part entitled ‘Why Organize Sociocratically?’ comprises three chapters, two on the rationale and one on history of sociocratic governance. Part Two is entitled ‘The Science of Sociocratic Governance.’ It comprises five chapters that elaborate its essential elements, viz., leading, doing and measuring. This part makes a case for rewiring organizational power and elaborates dynamic steering & structure besides creating pathways for dynamic leadership and inclusive decision-making. Part Three is devoted to a discussion of know-how of sociocracy and is appropriately entitled ‘How it Works.’

The book contains additional resources including articles such as “Sociocracy” by Lester Ward who may be regarded as the father of sociocracy; “ Sociocracy: Democracy as It Might Be” by Kees Boeke, Ward’s student who popularised the concept; and, Rationale for a New Social Structure by Gerard Endenburg for extensive use of the concept in business/ organizational theory. Endenburg articulated four principles of building such self-directing, self-organizing and self-regulating enterprises- business as well as non-business. These principles are: (1) Consent governs policy decision-making. (2) Organize in circles in the respective domains of performance responsibility. Circles operate organically. For example, a person riding a bicycle from point A to point B is a dynamic system. The leg muscles push the pedals and the hands steer, the doing. The senses, the measuring component, such as the eyes and inner ear give feedback to the brain, the leading component. The brain assesses the feedback and issues new guidance to the muscles. If we remove any one of the three components, we no longer have a system that can be steered dynamically. (3) Double-linking. Circles are interlocked through individuals acting as links. They function as full members in the decision-making of both their own circles and the next higher circle. A circle's operational leader is by definition a member of the next higher circle and represents the larger organization in the decision-making of the circle they lead. Each circle also elects a representative to represent the circles' interests in the next higher circle. These links form a feedback loop between circles. (4) Elections by Consent. Individuals are elected to roles and responsibilities in open discussions. Note the plural noun used here i.e. ‘discussions’- several rounds might take place until consent is reached. The circle may also decide to choose someone who is not a current member of the circle. In 1981, Endenburg began to publish his theories and to apply his method in other businesses and gained popularity in other European countries, Latin America, Australia, and the United States and Canada. These ideas are

consistent with the reinforce the organisational practices of employee empowerment, quality circles, self-organising teams, agile product development, collaborative innovation, Likert's System-4 and System-5 management. There is evidencethat sociocratically/ dynamically businesses and organizations are easier to guide and seem to have an unusual capacity for initiative, self-regeneration, and repair.

The students, managers, entrepreneurs and business leaders are likely to find an interesting and insightful read in this book.