

Self-governance

by Margaret of Massachusetts - August, 2020

Topic: An open forum on bottom-up self-governance
What does bottom-up self-governance look like to you?

I would like to share some thoughts before opening the forum, beginning with definitions.

Definitions:

“Bottom-up”:

A bottom-up approach is the piecing together of systems to give rise to more complex systems. It is a progressing upward from the “lowest” levels. It is controlled or directed from the “lower” levels.

I see “bottom-up” beginning with the individual; then family; then community, village, township, city, region, state, nation, countries, the world, then even the universe. As within, so without.

I also see all as **inter-connected**. The individual is the universe, and the universe is the individual. As within, so without. Ultimately, All is One.

As stated by Lao Tzu in the “Tao Te Ching”,
*“The world’s pulse is our pulse
The world’s rhythms are our rhythms.
To treat our planet with care, moderation and love
Is to be in synchrony with ourselves
And to live in the Great Integrity (The Tao).”*

*“To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.”*

- William Blake

Ubuntu is a Southern African (Nguni Bantu) term meaning "humanity", often translated as "I am because we are," or "humanity towards others." In a more philosophical sense, it means "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity".

As stated by Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher, social reformer, and social architect, *“A healthy social life is found when, in the mirror of each soul, the whole community finds its reflection, and when, in the whole community, the virtue of each one is living.”*

“All are perfect in their essential being and all work at bringing that perfect essence to expression.” - Cadmus Lifesharing Association

“Everyone is perfect in their essential being. And everyone is handicapped in bringing that perfect essence to expression. We recognize and further each other’s initiatives, and recognize and compensate for each other’s disabilities.” - John regarding the Cadmus Lifesharing Association motto

Indeed, we are living in an era, not based on “me”, but on “we”; a time in history in which we are Forming a Resonant Field With Others, Discovering the Patterns of a Co-Creative Society, Pioneering Synergistic Governance, and Catalyzing a Social Evolution toward manifesting The World We Know In Our Hearts Is Possible.

“Governance”

“Governance” is the act, manner, or process of governing or overseeing the control and direction of something (such as an individual, organization, or a country).

The need for governance often exists anytime a group of people come together to accomplish an end. Most definitions of governance rest on three dimensions: authority, decision-making, and accountability.

A definition of governance that reflects these dimensions could be:

Governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voices heard, and how account is rendered.

<https://iog.ca/what-is-governance/>

“Self governance”

Is self-rule; the ability of an individual or group to exercise all necessary functions of regulation without intervention from an external authority.

It may refer to personal conduct or to any form of organization or institution, such as family units, social groups, affinity groups, professional or industry bodies, religions, and political entities of various degree.

On an individual level

Self-governance is:

The exercising of control, management, or rule of oneself; control and management of one's own affairs.

Self-control; Self-management; Self-regulation; self-discipline.

The state of being free from the control or power of another; not controlled by outside forces.

Examples or synonyms: "Freedom"; "free will"; "free choice"; "at liberty"; "self-determining"; "voluntary; not under compulsion or restraint"; "independence", "autonomy", "sovereign"; "internal authority".

On a group or collective level

Self-governance is under the control and direction of the inhabitants rather than by an outside authority.

Examples: "a free enterprise"; "a sovereign state"; "a free country"; "a free port"; "an autonomous judiciary", "a governance of, by, and for the people!", a jural assembly!

Interestingly, antonyms for self-governance are dependence, subjection, unfreedom, heteronomy (the state or condition of being ruled, governed, or under the sway of another).

In the context of nation-states, self-governance is called national sovereignty, which is an important concept in international law. In the context of administrative division, a self-governing territory is called an autonomous region.

Self-governance is also associated with political contexts in which a population or demographic becomes independent from any government which they perceive does not adequately represent them, such as colonial rule, absolute government, or absolute monarchy.

It is therefore a fundamental tenet of many democracies, republics, and nationalist governments.

Background

By way of background:

In ancient Greek philosophy, Plato posits the concept of self-mastery as the ability to be one's own master. He outlines that unless individuals or groups govern their own pleasures and desires, they will be enslaved and will not be free.

This concept is understood by scholars as a fundamental moral freedom but also as a necessary condition of political freedom, and by extension, the freedom and autonomy of the political structure.

John Locke shared a similar view that genuine liberty requires cognitive self-discipline and self-government, and that man's capacity for this is the source of all freedom. In this sense, freedom is not a possession but an action. Locke proposed that rationality is the key to liberty and true agency, and that political governance is enabled by the governing of one's own judgment.

His political philosophy was a prominent influence on Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher and one of the central Enlightenment thinkers who also believed that reason is the source of morality, that perpetual peace could be secured through universal democracy and international cooperation, and that perhaps this could be the culminating stage of world history.

This was later taken up in part by the Founding Fathers of the United States.

Thomas Jefferson addressed the foundation of Self-Governance as follows:

"Man [is] a rational animal, endowed by nature with rights, and with an innate sense of justice; and... he [can] be restrained from wrong and protected in right, by moderate powers, confided to persons of his own choice, and held to their duties by dependence on his own will."

"Man is capable of living in society, governing itself by laws self-imposed, and securing to its members the enjoyment of life, liberty, property, and peace." --Thomas Jefferson: Declaration and Protest of Virginia, 1825.

As stated in the Declaration of Independence, as originally written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776: *"To secure [our inherent and inalienable] rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."*

Mohandas Gandhi's term "swaraj", a concept for Indian independence from foreign domination, is a branch of this self-rule ideology.

Henry David Thoreau, an essayist, philosopher, naturalist, abolitionist, activist, and tax resister, was a major proponent of self-rule in lieu of immoral governments, defying the unjust state in his essay "Civil Disobedience".

"Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward."

"There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly."

"The authority of government, (even such as I am willing to submit to — for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well) — is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe stated: "What is the best government? That which teaches us to govern ourselves."

(The nature of self-governance, that freedom relies upon self-regulation, was further explored by many contemporary academics, (such as Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, William E. Connolly, and others)).

The Means of Self-governance

The means of self-governance usually comprise some or all of the following:

- A means of facilitating the intended purpose and functions of an individual or group.
- A code of conduct, protocols, values, and standards that outlines acceptable behavior of an individual or a group to foster respectful, caring, and harmonious relations and productive meetings, and honorable conduct.

- Integrity training.
- A means of registering and resolving grievances.
- A means of disciplinary procedure within a group.
- A means of addressing parties, factions, tendencies or other sub-groups that seek to secede from the group.
- A means of ensuring external authority does not become involved unless actively consented to and certain criteria are satisfied.

Examples of self-governance:

Inner authority (as affirmations):

I take loving care of my body, mind, and spirit.

Through “presence”, I allow for and trust an “evolutionary impulse”/”divine guidance” to prompt, guide, and inspire me into “awakened doing” (vs. egoic efforting).

I am responsible for all my experiences and relationships. As such, I create life-empowering conditions, relations, and ways of life that contribute to my health and well-being, with grace, elegance, and ease.

I am clear about my life’s purpose, vision, and mission. Resource: [Introduction to Purpose, Vision, Mission \(PVM\)](#)

Invocation, by RL (Adapted):

“Today. Right here, right now,

- * I choose to acknowledge and take responsibility for my faith and belief in myself;
- * I choose to place my internal authority above all other external authorities and to follow my own ‘still, small voice of truth’;
- * I choose to imagine and create the person I desire to be;
- * I choose to be courageous and competent enough to do what I desire to do;
- * I choose to undertake actions which are congruent with and express the person I desire/choose to be.”

I am sovereign.

“I am free because I say I am. My freedom is not dependent on any government benefit or piece of legislation. My rights are inherent in the fact that I was born a sovereign being. They are non-negotiable. Government can list them and protect them, but my rights are not theirs to give away.” - Rich Freeman Paul

Our inner authority is primary in sculpting/creating our reality; consciousness is prime.

"If we are truly living in a participatory universe, then the profoundest implication is the mind's capacity to sculpture physical reality. Expressed within a different metaphor, the inner aspect of information continually reprograms the outer information matrix. As a consequence: "I give meaning to the reality I create." This dramatically shifts the unquenchable human yearning for knowledge from any outer authority to an inner authority. I find myself at the center of my universe, fully accountable. Perhaps this secret was known from the beginning of the mind's awakening, permeating ancient Hindu cosmology, Buddhist teachings, shamanic traditions, and now emerging within an information-theoretic and participatory scientific paradigm."

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-03633-1_15

Know Thyself

In knowing oneself, we contribute towards personal and community effectiveness. Some resources in knowing ourselves follow:

The Enneagram <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com>

Myers Briggs <https://www.myersbriggs.org> www.16personalities.com

Kingdomality <https://kingdomality.com> and <https://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/individual/modules/M7-Handout-Kingdomality-Types.pdf>

The Zodiac <https://www.astrology-zodiac-signs.com/>

[Principles of Self-Sufficiency](#)

[Self Evaluative Vocational Exercise](#)

Self-governance with others (as affirmations):

I take loving care of my family.

I am present to, honor, and serve my friends and greater community.

I co-create with others the world we know in our hearts is possible.

I listen to and honor each voice and the inspired co-creative process.

I practice compassionate communication to foster mutual understanding and harmonious relations.

Resources:

Non-Violent Communication (NVC)

[NVC - Overview](#)

<https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/>

<https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/4partprocess.htm>

<https://www.cnvc.org/>

In the event of grievances or offenses, I engage in a grievance resolution and restorative justice process.

Resources:

[Restorative Justice Overview](#)

<http://restorativejustice.org/>

[Proposed Grievance Resolution Process](#)

Governance ideals (as affirmations):

May governance be *of, by, and for* the people.

May there be a clear purpose of governance.

May the purpose be the leader, not a person.

May governance be the shield (protection only), not the crown (undue authority).

May governance appeal to our common sense of goodness and justice.

May governance be active consent-based self-governance, as intended by our founders, beginning with ourselves, families, communities, townships, counties, states, then nations.

May the purpose of governance include securing and protecting our unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

May the mission of governance include ensuring justice based on the principle “Do No Harm”.

May governance be inclusive and collaborative in which ALL are considered as equal and ALL voices are heard.

May there be an agreed-upon Organizational Structure, Protocols on how to Operate, and a Decision-making Process.

May there be agreed-upon Roles so that meetings are facilitated to be productive, on purpose, and inclusive.

May leaders be “servant leaders” or stewards.

“A leader is best

When people barely know he exists

Of a good leader, who talks little,

When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,

They will say, “We did this ourselves.”

— Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

May there be clear protocols and guidelines that foster respectful, caring, and harmonious relations and productive meetings.

May all voices be respectful of one another.

May we take responsibility for our perspectives and interpretations. Resource: [The Gap](#)

May there be healthy ways to address any discord or grievances, such as compassionate, nonviolent communication (NVC).

Resources:

<https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/learn-nonviolent-communication/>
<https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/4partprocess.htm>
[Compassionate/Nonviolent Communication \(NVC\) - Overview and Resources](#)
[Proposed Grievance Resolution Process](#)

May all be fully transparent.

May governance facilitate decisions together “in the round” based on unanimous knowledgeable *active* (vs. tacit) consent.

May discussions and decisions be aligned with an agreed upon purpose or aim.

May objections be considered opportunities to deepen the conversation and account for unintended consequences.

May decisions be based on what we all agree would be good.

May there be a method of and specified time frame for evaluation of decisions.

May governance allow for, encourage, and empower our common sense of goodness and justice and the co-creative inspired and voluntary impulse for full expression, creativity, and the fulfillment of our transcendent purpose in serving our greater communities for the highest and greatest good of all.

Discussion

Questions to ask ourselves:

- What form, method, and/or model of self-governance for ourselves and our communities is preferable/ideal?
- Do we agree with some of the ideals summarized above? Are there more?

Some options of governance models include:

- Wisdom Council Process

Some resources:

<http://www.wisdomcouncils.com/approach/council-process.htm>
<https://waysofcouncil.net/what-is-council/>
<https://www.wisedemocracy.org/3-wisdom-council-process.html>
<https://participedia.net/method/5367>
<https://www.dynamicfacilitation.com/DF/DF/DF/wisdom-council.html>

- Consensus Building

Resources:

<https://www.cbi.org/>

- Dynamic Governance, otherwise known as Sociocracy; consent-based self-governance
Resources:

[Dynamic Governance Overview](#)

<https://www.sociocracy.info>

<https://www.sociocracy.info/what-is-sociocracy/>

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org>

[https://www.sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy-for-a-country /](https://www.sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy-for-a-country/)

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy-meets-listening-at-scale/>

https://sociocracy30.org/_res/practical-guide/S3-practical-guide.pdf

- Parliamentary Procedure https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_procedure

- Robert's Rules of Order https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert%27s_Rules_of_Order.

At <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=21157398>, there is- an interesting discussion comparing consensus building and Robert's Rules of Order: It begins: "I'll be brutal here: Robert's Rules of Order are a severely outdated method that creates divisiveness and polarization through majoritarian voting -- the same types of problems we see in politics today. It made sense as a big improvement in the 1800's -- it doesn't in 2019. Key quote: 'Its arcane rituals of parliamentary procedure and majority rule usually produce a victorious majority and a very dissatisfied minority that expects to raise its concerns, again, at the next possible meeting.' Anyone considering Robert's Rules should read this first: "Breaking Robert's Rules: The New Way to Run Your Meeting, Build Consensus, and Get Results" [1] by Lawrence Susskind -- an MIT and Harvard professor."

How does Sociocracy/Dynamic Governance compare with other forms of governance?

Some resources:

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/decision-making-methods-comparison/>

<https://socialcompare.com/en/comparison/decision-making-tools>

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/comparing-roberts-rules-and-sociocracy/> - an excellent article comparing Sociocracy to Robert's Rules.

<https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=21157398> - provides an interesting discussion comparing consensus building and Robert's Rules of Order.

<https://communitydevelopment.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/What-is-Dynamic-Governance.pdf?fwd=no> (which makes mention of Roberts' Rules of Order)

http://www.livepeaceintobeing.org/SIA_101_w_Speaker_Notes_13Mar13.pdf - a thorough presentation of Sociocracy. Slide 4 addresses:

- Democracy based on majority rule is not working.
- Parliamentary procedure can be manipulated by a majority who want to influence a decision unfairly.
- Rule of the many by the few is not working and the few are becoming more vocal and angry about it, like perhaps "Occupy Wall Street."
- People are not feeling enfranchised and display apathy on voting day.
- Today's workers do not have a high level of commitment to their organizations.
- People are not empowered in hierarchies.
- Policy and communication flows mainly downward.
- When inclusiveness is a goal how can the needs of the individual be ignored?
- **Sociocracy allows all perspectives to be included in policy decisions at all levels.** - An interesting and compelling conclusion.

A lot of great information!

What are we choosing? For ourselves, community/ies, governance body?!

What of operating as a council, inclusively collaborating together, going "in the round" regarding important matters, making decisions together based on active consent/no paramount objections - elements of active consent-based self-governance; dynamic governance.

Bottom-up encourages and empowers freedom of choice, beginning with the individual, up to the community, township/city, county, state, nation, and world levels. We all have the right and prerogative to choose what suits us and our communities.

Thoughts are welcome and encouraged.

In the meantime, the following link provides proposed Purpose, Vision, and Mission Statements of Self-Governance

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HMYrHmQ4fAIFhJDTKJRgeiFKqgf7KjYmzvXZrNFHJ4/edit#>

The following link provides Proposed ByLaws for Jural Assemblies

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KQcldK1qEVErVw9fKVRT4nLkq9Kh02I3_Pw7awvEu90/edit

The following link addresses Jural Assembly Roles

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SXiKUytUR98620kkPZL60iXszOW2ibO3NStUXhSzzpA/edit>