

## Structure

Sociometry is often used in decision-making to get a clear picture of the current situation of the individuals within the community. It can support the decision-making process and is thus seen as part of the structure layer. Instead of giving a vote that consists of "Yes" or "No", people signalize their position through a position in the room. This shows the nuances much better.

In this card, we present several ways to use this tool to investigate the group's wishes and personal inclinations.



### Aims and Objectives

To visualize the positioning of the people in the group.  
To overcome the dichotomy of "approval" and "disapproval" and to give people a chance to show their stand.



### Time

From 5 to 45 minutes.



### Materials Preparation

Enough space in the room for people to actually move and choose a position.

Sometimes, three symbols for marking

- "100% YES"
- "Undecided" and
- "100% NO"

make sense.



### Target audience

Any group that needs to make common decisions or wants to become more aware of the positions of their members.



### Number of Participants

Minimum 5 to maximum 300.



## Duration

## Activity

5'

**INTRODUCTION - FRAMING THE EXERCISE**

AS LONG AS NEEDED'

**ASK QUESTIONS AND ASK PEOPLE TO POSITION THEMSELVES IN SPACE TO SHOW THEIR ANSWERS.**

5'

**DEBRIEFING**

# INTRODUCTION

## FRAMING- 5 MINUTES

Sociometry is an easy and important tool not only for communal decision making. It goes beyond voting as it allows to take positions between the clear approval and disapproval and makes it visible where the group stands and furthermore hearable, what the reasons for the different positions could be.

The possibility to move in the room encourages flexibility in changing positions.

# SOCIOMETRY

## ALTERNATIVE 1 - DEALING WITH DECISION-MAKING PROPOSALS

- We define two positions in the room – one stands for a 100% YES and may be marked with a colorful cushion (or with a chair or a wall), another one on the opposite side for a 100% NO to the question, marked with another cushion (or chair or piece of paper, or simply the opposite wall). To make it a little easier to find a position, we identify a third point, in the middle between these two points which stands for a position of not being decided for either one of the sides.
- Formulate a proposal
- Ask the participants to position themselves in the room according to their degree of approval to the question. They are asked to go to the position 100% yes if they are convinced that this is the right position and to choose their position between the extremes if they tend into a direction but are not totally convinced about it.
- Give people time to find their position in space.
- Then ask voices from the different places on the sociometric scale to explain why they positioned themselves that way. It is recommended to hear voices from both extremes and from the middle, to deeply listen to the voices, to understand what prevents people from being able to consent to a proposal.
- Often, the comments from the different places lead to a new question or proposal that helps to dive deeper into the crucial points of the issue. After hearing the arguments, there could be new questions that include the newly heard arguments, for example, "How would your position change, if we would... (proposal to integrate the argument)." "How much does the fact that .... influence your position?"

## ALTERNATIVE 2- VISUALIZE OTHER QUANTIFIABLE ANSWERS.

Instead of 100% YES or NO, other scales can be used to visualize anything that can be quantified. It can be it distances or sums of money that people are able to invest, or just "stronger - weaker", depending on what is discussed.

**Examples:** How far away from **xy** would you be willing to move?

What would be the amount of money you could contribute to this project?

In these cases, it makes sense to put post-its with numbers on different points of the scale for people to get an idea of the scale.

## ALTERNATIVE 3 - EVERYBODY WHO...

Used in this way, sociometry is a tool to help to get to know people. The group stands in a circle and people ask questions starting with "Everybody who ...." "Everybody who likes to play the guitar steps in the middle." This is an easy way of getting to know some facts about the group.

It changes the atmosphere if questions with somewhat challenging content are asked: "Everybody who wants to fall in love during this camp ...". or "Everybody who was already in prison .... "

Used with caution, this kind of question can create interesting conversations, trust, and connection.

## ALTERNATIVE 4 - VISUALISE RANK ISSUES WITH SOCIOMETRY

Forming a line according to a factor of importance for the group, like age, time spent in the group, years of experience with a certain topic, etc. shows a certain ranking in the group.

It is important to appreciate the experience, workload, expertise, that is shown by this image.



# SOCIOMETRY

## Alternatives with two-dimensional scales

### ALTERNATIVE 5 - ENTHUSIASM, TIME AND MONEY

A more complicated version can sometimes help to evaluate if a group is ready to tackle a task that is planned. Use sociometry to map enthusiasm on one scale and the resources on the other.

Instruction for this: *(The cardinal directions are just examples, replace them with something suitable for the space you use.)*

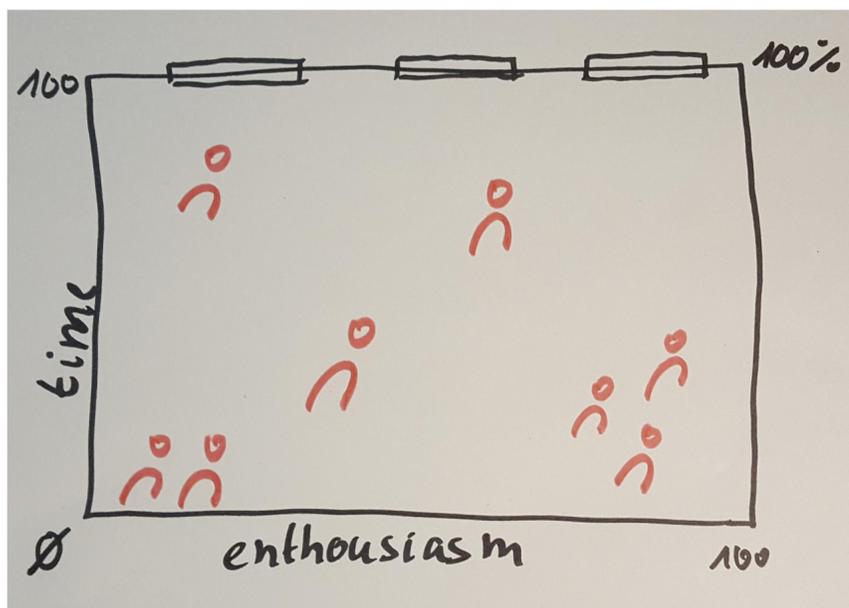
The western wall shows **the scale for the time** (and/or the money, depending on the issue discussed) that you can invest on a certain topic.

The southern wall shows **the scale for the enthusiasm** you have for it.

The corner between the western and the southern wall is the position for the people who have no enthusiasm for the topic and no time.

The further North you go, the more time/money you can invest, the further East you go, the more enthusiasm you have for it. Find your position for the time and enthusiasm you have.

Projects can only be realized if there are enough time and enough enthusiasm for them.



### ALTERNATIVE 6 - THE ROOM IS A MAP

Imagine this room is a map of your region, your country, Europe, the World, depending on the scope of the group. In the middle is the place we are now. (Give two more reference points, e.g. neighboring cities, so that people can get an idea about the map.)

Place yourself at the place where you are born, where you live now, where you work, where you want to realize your project ..... (whatever is appropriate).

### ALTERNATIVE 7 - SHOWING GROUP DYNAMICS

Sociometry can also be used to show relationships between subgroups or within groups. It's quite easy and not so challenging if sub-groups are asked to stand together in a way that shows with which other groups they have more contact and with which groups less.

The much more difficult task is to ask a group to create - in silence - a picture that visualizes relationships within a group and the closeness and distance between group members.

It is clear that the complexity of human relationships can never be truly shown in a two-dimensional picture. Giving a group this task, and reflecting the dynamics that develop when the group tries to create this picture can be a good entrance door for speaking about conflicts, tensions and frictions in a group. But it can easily lead to vulnerable or explosive situations that need a lot of expertise in facilitation to deal with.

### ORIGIN OF THE METHOD AND RELATION TO CLIPS

Sociometry has been developed by Jacob Levi Moreno, a social psychologist, in the '30s of the last century. Since then, it has been adapted and integrated by many different schools.

In CLIPS, it is often used to show the positioning of the individuals in decision-making processes and thus to come to an impression of the position of the community. Used this way, it is a tool for the "Structure"-Layer of CLIPS.

In its many variations, it can as well be used as a community-building tool by showing aspects of a group that have not been visible before.

It also supports individuals to express their opinion using body language rather than rational arguments, making them feel more seen and heard. Sociometry can also help to bring clarity on the group's intention, testing the alignment to the present goals and ideals.

