

[urban75 forums](http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/index.php) (<http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/index.php>)

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- - [Lessons from Dissensus](http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=80057) (<http://www.urban75.net/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=80057>)

Anna Key

27-06-2004 12:43 PM

## Lessons from Dissensus

I followed the rise and fall of Dissensus, intrigued to see whether 'collective decision making' would work.

Democracy means controlling those who exercise power over a community, be they politicians, state bureaucrats, judges, policemen, bankers or CEOs of multinational corporations. As bulletin boards can also become communities the issue of democracy arises there also.

Dissensus tried to apply principles of democracy to a bulletin board. The chosen technique was 'collective decision making' (CDM). The aim was to transfer power from the top to the bottom in an electronic community.

My interests are:

(a) whether CDM was the best technique to achieve the desired result;

(b) if Urban75 can learn anything from the Dissensus experiment; and

(c) whether the need for increased contributions to the server fund may impact upon the way Urban75 is governed.

On the face of it the Urban75 patronage system is more robust than the Dissensus model. Hendo argued on another thread for Urban75's system: [Hendo's post](#).

As more people contribute money to Urban75's server fund, issues surrounding power and control may arise. For example, I'd want the Urban75 moderators to be scrupulously fair, regardless of how much money a poster has contributed.

Or should those who pay more money receive additional privileges? That is, after all, how a patronage system works: major contributors to the Labour Party receive awards in the New Year's Honours List, while Widow Twankie, with her small annual subscription, remains plain "Widow."

There's no reason why this subject can't be discussed in a civilised manner, comparing Urban75's patronage system to the Dissensus CDM model (and to other models).

There was friction between Urban75 and Dissensus - see [here](#) for an example - so please observe [the faq](#) when posting to this thread.

miss minnie

27-06-2004 01:09 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**

*I'd want the Urban75 moderators to be scrupulously fair, regardless of how much money a poster has contributed.*

i would just like to point out that there is no way that any moderator can know who has or hasn't contributed to the server fund.

urban75's bank account details are not available to moderators or administrators.

Anna Key

27-06-2004 01:16 PM

Thanks Miss Minnie. :p

But Mike's a mod. Is it some sort of blind trust arrangement where even Mike doesn't know who contributed what?

pooka

27-06-2004 01:31 PM

I have to confess the Dissensus saga passed me by, but I'd be interested to see how it went. Are their boards still accessible to follow the plot? In the broadest sense (in that Dissensus is no longer functioning) then clearly it's not a good exemplar, but perhaps there are some lessons in the detail.

I must confess, I'd be surprised if CDM would work on a bulletin board. CDM is invariably very slow, whilst boards can be very fast moving. I suspect it would also be very hard to ensure that decision making really was shared - given that different circumstances (work, family, access etc) mean that there will be disparities in how effectively people can participate in CDM.

As regards Urban75 funding, from what has appeared on the boards, I'd guess that there is a (hopefully large) number of people, each making small donations - which must be the best guard against undue influence; no individual counts for much. I suppose I'd be a bit concerned to learn that substantial donations were being made by associations of any sort (companies, trade unions, clubs whatever) with a specific agenda. Would you agree?

Incidentally, I'm still unclear of what benefits are distributed to posters through patronage. Is [this](#) an example?

Mrs Magpie

27-06-2004 01:41 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**

*Thanks Miss Minnie. :p*

*But Mike's a mod. Is it some sort of blind trust arrangement where even Mike doesn't know who contributed what?*

Unless Mike knows a poster's surname in the real world he won't know who is contributing or not...my bank account is not in the name of Magpie.....

rorymac

27-06-2004 01:42 PM

Aint no lessons that a simpleton wouldn't already have learned by the age of 16 IMO. I'm a lot older than that and keen to learn. This is all about ego ... there is nothing to learn.

I know that it's not known (unless the person wants to make it so) who contributes and who doesn't.

Because I asked the Ed (in my one and only ever convo with him) if he had received my cheque for a grand ..

He replied .. 'Was that you ? .. thanks very much .. and to think I nearly banned you .. tsk..keep up the great posts ..phew what a guy ..would you like to be a mod?'

Different gravy :cool:

Anna Key

27-06-2004 01:47 PM

Just to say sorry if it was wrong to link to two threads in the Dustbin (Hendo's Leviathan post and Mike's orangutan problems). I'd be grateful if those threads could be retained until this thread is done or the links will cease to function.

Thanks. :)

Anna Key

27-06-2004 01:48 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **pooka**

*I suppose I'd be a bit concerned to learn that substantial donations were being made by associations of any sort (companies, trade unions, clubs whatever) with a specific agenda. Would you agree?*

If a blind trust is working would it matter?

Anna Key

27-06-2004 01:51 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Mrs Magpie**

*Unless Mike knows a poster's surname in the real world he won't know who is contributing or not...my bank account is not in the name of Magpie.....*

Yeah but I gave Mike that £100,000 in cash last week, personally like.

Lord AnnaKey MBE VC OBN

Mrs Magpie

27-06-2004 01:55 PM

OBN? OBA, surely?

Anna Key

27-06-2004 01:55 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **pooka**

*I have to confess the Dissensus saga passed me by, but I'd be interested to see how it went. Are their boards still accessible to follow the plot?*

The only thing left seems to be this: <http://mikeslocombesbanned.blogspot.com>

I've inserted a gap between "blogspot." and "com" to avoid a direct link.

Louloubelle

27-06-2004 01:56 PM

I tried to stay well away form any dissensus related stuff

The only lesson I learned from dissensus was 'never talk about dissensus'

:eek:

shit

I mentioned dissensus but I think i got away with it

<unsubscribes from thread>

DrJazzz

27-06-2004 01:58 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **pooka**

*I must confess, I'd be surprised if CDM would work on a bulletin board. CDM is invariably very slow, whilst boards can be very fast moving. I suspect it would also be very hard to ensure that decision making really was shared - given that different circumstances(work, family, access etc) mean that there will be disparities in how effectively people can participate in CDM.*

Nail on the head pooka. CDM was plunged for despite no-one really having the faintest clue whether it could work on the internet or especially for the purposes of moderating (how on earth can you hope to moderate someone who has a power of veto over your actions?). It led to perpetual wrangling described by one as 'yoghurt weaving'. There were attempts to ditch it and install temporary elected authorities to manage the boards; however I think it would be fair to say freethepeeps was determined to make CDM work and viewed any alternative as unacceptably heirarchical. When the end came for dissensus, it was quite merciful.

pooka

27-06-2004 02:01 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**

*If a blind trust is working would it matter?*

A blind trust would have to be administered by *someone*. And doubtless anyone minded to allege undue influence, or just to shit-stir\* generally, would question the independence of that administrator. And so on ....

Why complicate matters? Works well enough as it is, doesn't it?

\* That's not what you're at here, is it Anna? It would be poor thanks for the [patronage](#) your association has received. :confused:

Anna Key

27-06-2004 02:02 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Louloubelle**

*The only lesson I learned from dissensus was 'never talk about dissensus'*

It's good to talk. :)

tim

27-06-2004 02:04 PM

The lesson is not to waste five minutes of your life signing up to a website that is almost inevitably self destruct within a few weeks.

Anna Key

27-06-2004 02:05 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **pooka**

*That's not what you're at here, is it Anna? It would be poor thanks for the [patronage](#) your association has received. :confused:*

Come on Pooka. Play nicely now. Yours are the first 'shit-stiring' posts on this thread. Don't be a hypocrite and BEHAVE. :)

pooka

27-06-2004 02:05 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**

*The only thing left seems to be this: <http://mikeslocombesbanned.blogspot.com>*

*I've inserted a gap between "blogspot." and "com" to avoid a direct link.*

No, I meant the original boards so that we could judge for ourselves. One of the great things about the web is that stuff can be left up as an archive for a few bob a month.

pooka

27-06-2004 02:14 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**  
*Yours are the first 'shit-stiring' posts on this thread.*

:D It's the way you tell them, Anna!

But seriously,

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**  
*(a) whether CDM was the best technique to achieve the desired result;  
(b) if Urban75 can learn anything from the Dissensus experiment; and  
(c) whether the need for increased contributions to the server fund may impact upon the way Urban75 is governed.*

(a) Could only really judge if the evidence were available, suspect not - which Dr Jazzz confirms.

(b) Can't learn because it looks like the record has disappeared

(c) Concievably, but Mrs M and miss minnie have indicated why it's unlikely. Haven't seen any evidence of undue influence to date.

Lock&Light

27-06-2004 02:26 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**  
*Come on Pooka. Play nicely now. Yours are the first 'shit-stiring' posts on this thread.*

I personally find this whole thread to be 'shit-stirring'.

I was a little flattered, however, to have found my name mentioned on ftp's huffy puff.

Anna Key

27-06-2004 02:29 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Lock&Light**  
*I personally find this whole thread to be 'shit-stirring'.*

Why? Do tell. I've already ticked off Pooka. What more d'you want?

Lock&Light

27-06-2004 02:34 PM

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Anna Key**

*Why? Do tell. I've already ticked off Pooka. What more d'you want?*

Either you don't understand my point or else I don't understand your question.

RubyToogood

27-06-2004 02:48 PM

I agree that this thread is an attempt at shit-stirring, and I have already stated that these type of discussions are off-limits until Wednesday, to give Mike a break and a chance to collect himself after he gets back. There will be ample opportunity for anyone to raise issues which they genuinely feel are important - but I am not spending the next few days tied to my keyboard in case it all kicks off again.

I am sorry if this upsets people, but I am therefore closing this thread. As I say it is not a permanent ban on the subject but a temporary one. None of these issues are immediate life or death stuff, so it will do no-one any harm to wait.

I would suggest that people take the opportunity to think calmly and clearly about anything they may want to say after then.

Edited to clarify that this temp ban relates to any thread raising issues to do with admin, moderating/editorial decisions, etc.