

# Making Decisions Online

by Simon Ball

SIMON BALL is a filmmaker from London. He co-founded Blake House Filmmakers Co-operative with Ieva Padagaite in 2016 as an alternative to the conventional film industry, looking to create secure, fairly paid jobs while working on inspiring projects at the same time.

At the peak of the Occupy movement in 2011, a group of activists in New Zealand experienced direct democracy for the first time. Sitting in circles at a General Assembly, making decisions collectively was a mind-blowing experience for the founders of Loomio. Along with feeling empowered, they discovered that making decisions face-to-face, always in person, was also incredibly frustrating.

From this experience came the idea for an application to help move the personal, face-to-face meetings of the Occupy movement to an online platform – accessible to everyone. The platform should be open source, and co-operatively and collaboratively made, just like the decision-making process.

As soon as the first Loomio prototype was built, groups as diverse as city governments, small businesses and community groups all over the world have started using the platform and from the expansion of their user base, Loomio evolved from being a tool designed for activists to being a tool for any group that wants to make a decision online without resorting to a hierarchy.

Some of the most notable users of Loomio include Podemos in Spain, which has grown from nothing to being one of the biggest political parties in Spain. A huge factor in their growth has been the fact that their movement has grown from the bottom up, with local meetings encouraged to implement direct democracy in the party. Feeling a need to extend the discussion of public meetings of ‘circles’, activists utilise Loomio to extend discussions from in-person meetings and reach a consensus decision that is visible to all members. There are now over a thousand public Loomio groups for the Podemos movement.

Any group starting a Loomio group can use the platform in the way that best suits their needs and dynamics. Some of the most populous public Loomio groups include a group seeking to organise a buyout of Twitter by its users, facilitating an international discussion that wouldn’t be possible without the platform. Community groups and businesses can also utilise the platform, such as DIY Space for London who extensively uses Loomio to encourage conversation between members.

The Welsh Assembly first started using Loomio in 2014 to help shape alcohol and substance abuse policy, using the platform to engage with service providers and the general public to hear new views and opinions, and improve the effectiveness of their engagement processes. The Ministry for Social Development in New Zealand uses the tool to help reduce the number of meetings and give their team a place to explore substantive issues at the same time. Conferences, too, have started to use Loomio to collect real time discussion and ideas of presentations, as well as allowing delegates who couldn’t be in attendance to participate in votes and ideas discussion.

Right now the internet is a messy, misinformed place, filled to the brim with widely shared fake news. Loomio is antithesis to this side of the internet – an organic, multipurpose tool that helps make the world a more co-operative place and helps facilitate groups working to that end.

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## Resources

**The loomio co-operative handbook**  
[loomio.coop](http://loomio.coop)

**Resolving conflict on loomio**  
[Joshua Vial](#)

**More efficient in-person meetings with loomio**  
[blog.loomio.org](http://blog.loomio.org)



## Support Organisations

**Enspiral network**  
[enspiral.com](http://enspiral.com)

