

Dear Peter

The purpose of this letter is to present a series of observed issues and proposed solutions. We hope that communicating with you will lead to a fruitful discussion about how to advocate the core tenets of The Venus Project and The Zeitgeist Movement, not only through education and communication, but through embracement and implementation. Involving the community in all areas related to the movement, without anyone being subservient and left behind, seems to be the obvious way we should operate.

Today communities exist, because people share common values and goals. We believe that different perspectives should be encouraged, valued and a general principle established, that any angle is up for discussion, as long as the quest for knowledge is the common goal and appropriate arguments are presented.

Various parts of this letter are linked to working documents, including examples of operating protocols, blueprints and proposals that are being actively developed within the movement. Many hours-of thought and discussion have gone into the making of this presentation and we write this simply because we need your help to put the proposed solutions below into practice.

Since the inception of thezeitgeistmovement.com website, an ever-growing core group of dedicated members have voluntarily assumed an immense workload, taking on a vast number of responsibilities. This level of contribution is commendable, but leaves less time to deal with unique and unforeseen challenges in a comprehensive way. When we are thus limited, certain decisions have to be made quickly, and adhered to, while we move on. Extended analysis and experimentation are often luxuries we cannot afford as individuals or small groups. We have many diverse priorities, and some issues are inevitably handled inadequately because we simply do not have the resources to deal with them. However, there are many active members within this movement who *do* have the time, experience and willingness to constructively address our community's emerging social and technical complexities.

The Zeitgeist Movement community, as a whole, has the knowledge, human resources, technical-capabilities and will, to cooperatively overcome current and future challenges. On this note, we list some issues and then present solutions which we expect will significantly lower the workload for both the administrative team and yourself.

1. Problems

1.1 The main website inhibits-members from reaching the areas where they-can advance in learning and action.

1.2 While there is a protocol wiki page for moderation (**Footnote 1.2 A**), it has never been completed.

1.3 The recent commotion surrounding some of the moderators, coupled with members of the moderation team being pulled away to projects, seems to have left the current moderation team understaffed and undiversified across the movement. Instances of frustration and loss of temper have been witnessed. Lacking time and resources, authority is likely to be used as a shortcut in the process of decision making. Such power, however small, inevitably leads to instances of corrupt behavior in the name of "moving forward".(**Footnote 1.3 A**)

1.4 Some global decisions (eg suppression of software use, banning policy) have negatively affected the productivity and development of some-projects throughout the community. (**Footnote 1.4 A**) Increasingly, decisions regarding thezeitgeistmovement.com are having an impact on the greater movement, reaching beyond the domain of the server and into the community at large. Despite the notion that the website is not the movement, the strong connection is self-evident. The problem is intensified by the fact that only a few individuals currently exert global control over the movement, and decide who can remain a member and who

cannot. **(Footnote 1.4 B)** The distinction between the community and your privately owned server is not clear in relation to these privileges. **(Footnote 1.4 C)**

1.5 People without field-specific competence are in positions to decide which projects get pursued and which tools are used. In addition, nothing resembling a peer-review process exists within the current practice of decision making. **(Footnote: 1.5 A)**

The express exclusion of certain community tools and discussion mediums is counterproductive, prohibitive and ultimately unsustainable. It also leads directly to the perception of a dictatorship by many active members.

As a result of these issues and more, we are witnessing an increasing number of users, contributors and moderators suddenly deciding to throw in the towel and walk away from the movement. (eg BranManFloMore, Champ) **(Footnote: 1.5 B)**

2. Solutions

The solutions posed here are *suggestions* that can be tried and evaluated. If they do not help improving the functionality of the community, then new approaches will be devised and tested benefiting from the previous failures. The scientific process must incessantly be applied to all problems. It is a continuous effort, not a final frontier.

2.1 The Zeitgeist Movement website may not encompass the entirety of the movement, but it certainly is seen that way by the many, many members who contribute to the growth of the overall movement by specifically giving their time, energy and passion to this site. The movement website is much more progressive and community-based than anything that preceded it. As such, it is self-evident that relevant solutions to most issues need to come directly from the community itself, which has given much more than is generally known (*e.g.*, wiki, pootle, wave, numerous project threads, multimedia, etc.).

An up-to-date list of currently undergoing projects should be clearly visible on the main website, along with information on how they work and how to get involved with them. This way, new members will instantly see what is being worked on across the movement, learn how they can contribute, and gain a clear picture of our current state of overall progress. It can technically be implemented right now if the website source code is more accessible than it is today. **(Footnote: 2.1 A)**

2.2 A clear & concise protocol for moderation needs to be properly developed, with significant community input, and tuned to guide the moderation to a more teacher-oriented approach, including a section denoting moderator responsibilities to the community. Members of the moderation team should be asked to read and agree with it.

Several months ago, there was a concerted push by several members & moderators to intentionally monitor the "Questions for Radio Show" threads and surf around the forum answering newer members' questions. The result was that the majority of forum noise had quieted considerably in less than 1.5 months. **(Footnote: 2.2 A)**

2.3 Patience & understanding are needed. If patience is lost, the moderator needs to step back and take the time to get their patience back, instead of over-reacting. If a moderator is unable to handle a cumbersome member, for whatever reason, then the moderator should be required to ask for assistance from another moderator, or pass on the task of handling that particular issue to another moderator entirely. An increase in the number of teacher-minded moderators may help alleviate the tendency towards overstressed moderators. Patience and empathy need to be two of the primary requisites for moderator candidates.

Teamspeak 3, Mumble and IRC are already designed with relatively easy-to-use moderator controls for muting problematic users who need a little time to cool off. It already exists in other mediums within the movement. Some moderators might not want to use it where it's already available, but their personal preferences and emotional reactions should not guide their actions. (**Footnote: 2.3 A**)

Muting prevents posting, while still allowing users to read. As a result, most banning by moderators/admins is rendered obsolete. Moderation/leadership requires empathy and a large dose of patience to perform the functions adequately. Banning, as a moderation option, should only be applied to issues of site security (hack attempts, serious physical threats, etc.), with the use of the new *Mute* function handling the rest.

If no sensitive information is posted in the public medium (e.g. forum) that can be used to harm the posters, then no harm can *come from* a muted user to the community, while some good can *go to* the offending user by means of '*teaching by example*'. Users are still able to educate themselves using our materials, and there is no reason why we should deny them this option.

2.4 While a centralized platform for broadcasting and sharing information has its value, limiting ourselves to one solution is recognized as nonconstructive and restrictive. A holistic approach would provide a common and universally accessible place for major announcements and discussions, while also fully supporting the use and development of different tools, like Zynergy (**Footnote 2.4 A**), ZMSocial, Mumble (**Footnote 2.4 B**), Gobby, Wave, Etherpad, etc., that have the potential to surpass the currently used ones. It would also let members, teams and projects explore different solutions that best fit their evolving needs.

It is unlikely that any single solution will always work (or even be accessible) for everyone. Having a choice of mediums maximizes the ability to contribute and minimizes the risk of complete communication breaks. With all the richness (abundance) in options provided by a variety of instruments there is no need for us to take the weaknesses and shortcomings of a monolithic construct. (**Footnote 2.4 C**)

The emergent nature of our community demands continual improvement of the tools we use. An open, non-authoritative stance that welcomes development is self-evident in its benefits for promoting the movement forward.

2.5 Decisions are best arrived at through investigations, analysis and input-of interdisciplinary teams that possess the necessary expertise to address all aspects of a specific issue. In other words, decisions that affect the movement should be worked towards openly in a way that maximizes the amount of substantiated input while minimizing personal and emotional bias.

The current practice of individuals and small groups imposing their decisions on the community as a whole, claiming to represent a consensus without ever having gone through a transparent process of decision making, deprives us both of optimized solutions and active support of our members. In order for us to make any significant progress, we *all* need to work together towards necessary solutions, instead of being told what is, or what is not, permissible.

The majority of communication pathways across the entire movement are privately owned, inhibiting community participation in the development of the communication infrastructure. Is there an intention to move towards a cooperatively "owned" model of the communication infrastructure?

As for now, only with your approval are we able to implement the solutions proposed here, including the main website and the current moderation team. We hope that this letter will open productive discussions and let the whole community actively become involved in the development of all areas of the movement within a flat social structure.

More materials detailing problems perceived and solutions to ideas were produced, but not included so as not to overburden this letter. If you need further information, we would be happy to provide it.

Best regards

(in alphabetic order)

Absalom - *Web developer / Programming Team Member*

Anne - *Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Decison-making Counsellor, RBE Educator For Youth (about 100 pupils per week)*

Antilect - *Neuroscientist / Philosopher / IRC Operator / Translator / www.antilect.com*

Apollo - *Forum Moderator / The Venus Project website Administrator / Designer / Creativity Coordinator (Media)*

Aragon - *Web developer / Administrator for South African Chapter*

Bookia - *Programmer / Molecular Biologist*

Calyptratus - *Swedish Chapter Spokesman / TZM Wave Coordinator / TZM RepRap team coordinator / Translator / IRC Operator / Technical inventor*

Capiscuas - *Spain Chapter Admin / Progammer Team / Translator / Open Source Software Developer*

Coppertop - *Polish Translator, Programmer*

Cyclo - *IRC Operator*

DNS - *IRC Admin / Programming Team Member / Translator / Forum Moderator*

FusionHalo - *Forum Moderator / Wikiproject Team / Student of Social Engineering*

Gaby de Wilde - *Web developer / Wiki / Translator*

Gman - *Forum Moderator / Pootle Proofreading Project Admin / Linguistic Team Coordinator*

Hellfire77 - *Spanish Forum Moderator / Translator / Electronic Engineer*

Julius - *Hungarian Chapter Admin / Translator / Forum Moderator*

Kalken - *IRC Operator / Programming Team Member*

Kebap - *German Translator / Programming Team Member*

Kimsan - *IRC Operator, Swedish Forum Moderator*

Krymz - *Philosopher, "jack-of-all-trade"*

Lukas - *Physicist / Programming Team Member / Global Administrator*

Lundburgerr - *TZM RepRap Project Coordinator*

Niko - *Molecular Biologist / Translator / Proofreader*

Nocaic - *Software Developer*

Paxton - *German Forum Moderator / Translator*

Pest| - *Swedish Mumble Server Operator / Server Donor*

Pqzeus - *German Translations Language Manager*

Stewie - *German ZM Newspaper / Translator*

Sunchax - *Z-Event Organizer / Philosopher*

Uncle Fester - *South African Chapter / Translator / Z-day Organizer South Africa etc.*

Vinces - *Software Developer / Programming Team Member*

Viper - *Translation Team Member*

Vixi - *Spanish Forum Moderator / Transcriber / Translator*

William - *Ohio Chapter Admin / Mechanical Engineer / Programmer (aka Billll, banned Member)*

WurmD - *Computer Science Engineer / Transcriber / Translator / Programming Team Member*

ZaD MoFo - *Musician / Composer / Electronic Designer*

Zuke - *Software Developer / Programming Team Member*

References:

[1.2 A] Wiki: Help Moderator: <http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/wiki?title=Help:Moderator>

[1.3 A] Behaviour:

- Synopsis of behavioural issues http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/joomla?option=com_kunena&Itemid=99999&func=view&catid=51&id=209252&limit=10&limitstart=20#215557
- logs and analysis (suggested to illustrate emotions)
 - Language Statistics <http://www.paxton.de/tzm/languagestatistics.txt>
- Why Powerful People - Many of Whom Take a Moral High Ground - Don't Practice What They Preach <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/12/091229105906.htm>

[1.4 A] Examples: Translation Project, Linguistic Team, Programming Team

[1.4 B] Quotes:

- Peter Joseph: *"We must ban in all sectors related to The Movement until new solutions arise."*
- Peter Joseph: *"In the event you feel there is a user that needs to be suspended in your area, you would send an e-mail/IM to a specific address (this will be released soon) and report the issue."*
- Peter Joseph: *"This person is to be banned from mumble, in accord with our universal banning rules."*
- DarkDancer: *"i fulfill moderator duties, therefore am trusted to judge on a users good or bad intentions"*
- DarkDancer: *"i am trusted to know the direction and goal of this movement to make such a decision"*
- DarkDancer: *"as understood now i am granted trust to speak on behalf of chapter administration"*
- DarkDancer: *"no there is no rule, it becomes a rule when a moderator asks it to be moved"*
- DarkDancer: *"the rules are perfectly in line with the goals"*

[1.4 C] Quotes:

- Peter Joseph: *"The site is not the movement".*
- Peter Joseph: *"This is one site and operates as one unit."*

[1.5 A] Factual top-down structure of the community: <http://pppp.ovh.org/z/diagram1.png>

[1.5 B] Examples of people leaving the team or even the movement:

- BranManFloMore: http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/joomla?option=com_kunena&Itemid=99999&func=view&catid=60&id=217723&limit=10&limitstart=30#217908
- Champ: http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/joomla?option=com_kunena&Itemid=99999&func=view&catid=28&id=23503&limit=10&limitstart=260#223453

[2.1 A] Forum topic: How we can make things easy to find? why not?

http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/joomla?option=com_kunena&Itemid=99999&func=view&catid=9&id=219618#219618

- TZM Forum 2.0: Management efficiency <http://www.paxton.de/tzm/tzmforum2.txt>

[2.2 A] A Thread about filtering questions for PJ'S Radio show: <http://tinyurl.com/ydxu67o>

[2.3 A] The *Mute* technology for the forums, already implemented on a-test server, is summarized in this wiki page and accompanying video:

- <http://thezeitgeistmovement.com/wiki?title=Muting>
- <http://users.isr.ist.utl.pt/~wurmd/Zeitgeist/Exemplifying%20the%20Mute%20functionality%20Xvid%20with%20audio.avi>

[2.4 A] **Zynergy blueprint:**

- blueprint of new forum engine
- blueprint describing auto-moderation features
- IRC bot counting words
- (mute and bury)
- <http://www.thezeitgeistmovement.com/wiki?title=Zynergy>

[2.4 B] **Mumble Protocol (In working progress)**

- Blueprints for Decision making practice: <http://www.paxton.de/tzm/mumbleprotocol2010jan05.html>

[2.4 C] Community Projects currently designed around non-hierarchical systems approaches:

- Translation Project
- Linguistic Team
- Radio Address Transcription Team
- From Earth To Venus
- Some IRC Channels like #venusproject, #linux, #music or #zeitgeistmovement.de (all users have operator status there)
- Freenode IRC (only Bots have operator status / autoop)
- (Wiki)