

Rebel Assemblies - East of England

East of England experience, during the pandemic, 2020.

What is a Rebel Assembly?

We want to create a safe space for rebels to have conversations around the difficult topics in XR, to engage with our contradictions and support each other through them. We also want to ensure that Rebels in the East of England have direct contact to the Regional structures and to each other.

Why a Rebel Assembly?

We use the term '**Rebel Assembly**' rather than Peoples Assembly because they are designed for Rebels, rather than a wider participation. They are not open to the public. They provide a space within which Rebels can consider issues relevant to them, and not be distracted or diluted by arguments with opponents, doubters or zoom-bombers.

The Rebel Assemblies Group

Our Working Group

We set up a small group, by putting the call out generally AND pro-actively contacting each Rebel in the region who had been on a Peoples Assembly training or been in touch with XRUK Peoples Assembly Working Group to show interest. This group meet fortnightly for an hour to coordinate and develop the programme. The Coordinator sat in the regional Anchor Circle, and others attended weekly meetings for all LG coordinators in the region, to help maintain connectivity.

Mandate

(As found in our Working Group Mandate)

1. To provide decision-takers in EoE Regional Circles with input from Rebels within the region.
2. To provide Rebels with easier access to the issues and personnel in EoE Regional circles
3. To enable Rebels across the region to build greater connection with each other.
4. To support Rebels in engaging more with issues facing XR, and to encourage shared thinking.

Holding the Space

The Basic Structure

1. **Welcomes** - zoom host or facilitator welcomes each person and checks their sound/video are working properly
2. **Check-ins** - small breakout groups for 5 minutes in which Rebels are encouraged to introduce who they are, and how they are feeling
3. **Introduction to the Assembly** - the three pillars of Peoples Assemblies: Inclusivity, Active Listening & Trust in the Process.
4. **Introduction to the theme/question** - how this assembly arose, what the question is, what will happen with any notes
5. **'Testimony'** - if appropriate. Brief statements by one or two Rebels pertinent to the question
6. **Breakout Groups** - 35 minute consideration of the question in groups of about six; asked to keep notes on a shared google doc
7. **Feedback Session** - hearing highlights or key points from each group
8. **Checkouts** - very brief, sometimes single word, sentence, or statement by each Rebel.

Facilitation

We had a handful of experienced facilitators, and some of those contacted at formation of the working Group did not join the group, but have shared the workload of actually facilitating.

We usually have one person as Zoom host, arranging breakout rooms, etc; one person compiling notes; and two sharing the facilitation role. The team for an Assembly typically checks into the zoom call 15 minutes early, and stays on 15 minutes after for immediate de-briefing.

Planning the Session

We draft a Plan for each meeting which includes an outline of timings and a script for facilitators.

“ **7.15pm** Team assemble on zoom
7.30pm Arrivals & welcome
Check-ins - small breakout groups 4 people 5 mins
7.40pm Introduction to Assembly
7.45pm Introduction to question
7.55pm Breakout groups
8.30pm Integration session
8.50pm Check-outs
9.00pm Team de-brief

Make a Script for your Assembly, making clear when things need to happen and who is speaking when. [Here](#) is a template to help.

Getting it Out There

Frequency

We hold an Assembly each month, for 1.5 hours on a Thursday evening.

Publicising

We created a Facebook event, co-hosted by EoE and various Local group Facebook pages; announced it on Mattermost EoE Town Square, and included it in an email sent to all Rebels in the region on AN list (several groups use Mailchimp, so we depended on them including it in their own emails).

Logistics

Somebody schedules a meeting on one of our regional, county or local zoom accounts (and remembers to log in and open the call in time) No room bookings, no refreshments, no leaflets and posters, no locking up and returning keys.

Registration

As well as a precaution against zoom bombers, registration allows us to get emails of those attending, and also ask which group they attend. Used Facebook event-registration once.

We have now shifted to an Action Network event registration (which automatically sends email with zoom invite, and can be programmed to do more!)

The Question

This is the crucial bit – the biggest part of the Working Group’s work is choosing a topic and refining the question.

The question needs to be:

- **Open** - to encourage creative thinking rather than polarised debate.
- **Relevant** - to participants, or why would they bother?
- **Provocative** - to catch attention in crowded world, and to emphasise it is about thinking together, not trying to convince others of established positions.

Here are our question/s we've put to Assemblies so far:

- Ideas for Targets, Actions and Messages for the next phase of Rebellion. 51 attended
- Where do you see the potential for regenerative cultures in your life?" 16 attended

- Reflections on the September Rebellion: Roses, Thorns , Buds . 24 attended
- XR's theory of change is based on mobilising significantly greater numbers, AND on taking disruptive nonviolent direct action. These two directions can pull against each other. In what ways do we reconcile this tension? 28 attending
- Are you still with us? Are you feeling energised? What are your energy blocks and what would energise you more? 31 attending The Art of Powerful Questions, Vogt, Brown, Isaacs

Integration with processes outside the Assemblies

1. We trust that those Working Groups/Circles that would most benefit from a particular assembly's output will ensure they have somebody attend the Assembly.
2. We file all notes on the XR Cloud for access by Rebels, including numbers attending and groups represented.
3. We have thought of airing an issue in the week prior to an Assembly and starting discussion beforehand on a Mmost Channel, and/or follow-up thoughts likewise, but haven't actually got around to this yet.

This page was written by @Cliff from the East of England Rebel Assemblies Working Group. Please contact me on Mattermost if you have any questions.
