UK Communities Circle: People's Assemblies

In late 2020 and early 2021, the UK Communities team hosted a monthly People's Assembly on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. This book holds summaries from each. Bringing together the questions asked, key points from the feedback and any actions which will be taken in response. If you are interested in helping us run these sessions or want more information please drop us an email at xrcommunities@gmail.com

- How can strategy best serve me and the wider movement?
- How do we recruit, welcome and keep more new rebels?
- Action and Disruption

How can strategy best serve me and the wider movement?

Date: 16th December 2020

Context

The movement is currently going through the process of building our next strategy to bring us into the new year. The strategy process itself can be followed in this book. This assembly aims to get rebels talking about strategy and inform those sitting on the UKSA as to the reality of opinions across the movement.

Input

The input for this session just went through a few definitions of **strategy** and **tactics** to orient the assembly on what specifically we are talking about. We also touched on where we currently are in term of the Strategy Process.

Strategy Definitions

- **Strategy** - Our long term goals and how we aim to achieve them, a big picture framework to help us design our campaigns and actions.
- **Tactics** - Methods used to achieve strategic goals. Types of actions eg. Dialogues, hunger strikes, debt strikes, blocking roads, poster campaigns.
- **Intermediate / Overarching Strategic Goal** - The overarching strategic goal is the aim of the strategy, our success criteria, what we plan to achieve. Intermediate strategic goals are the steps we take to get there.
- **Vision** - An expression of our overall purpose and ambition, what the world will be like when we win, an expression that unifies the movement and inspires others by its moral appeal.

Principles of Strategy

These are personal and vary between groups and organisations, what are your principles? The following are some of the principles used in the past to form XR strategy.

- **Visionary** - Needs to go the distance & inspire.
- **Measurable** - We need to be able to measure our successes .
- **Dynamic** - Needs to be adaptable to changing circumstances.
- **Unifying** - Needs to bring rebels together doing different things for common purpose.
- **Inclusive** - Needs to be informed by and include the diversity of our rebels.
- **Regenerative** - Needs to have space for our vulnerability and humanity.
- **Reflective** - Needs to inform itself and evolve.

Where we Are

There are currently two things you may have come across around strategy.

- **The Actions Strategy Update**, which is a document produced by the Actions circle to help fill the gap between now and when the 2021 Strategy emerges, at which point it will be amended if necessary to complement the 2021 Strategy.
- **UKSA (Strategy Assembly)** which is the group of representatives from across the movement who are coming together to review, discuss and produce our next movement wide strategy. More information on the UKSA and their progress can be found on the Toolkit.

These are both strategies being worked on, they don't necessarily contradict each other, rather one is more focused on a single aspect of XR. This gives us an interesting example of how Movement wide strategy can work for us.

An action strategy can lay out a path for doing actions which furthers the movement wide strategy. Similarly a nation or region could produce a strategy for how they plan to use their resources to further the movement wide strategic goals.

Question

- **How might the strategy best serve me and the wider movement?**
  - What do you need from a strategy in terms of content and format?
  - What would a strategy have to look like for you to be able to use it in your group?

Feedback

There was overwhelmingly aligned feedback from the breakout groups. Many important points came up and were repeated by several groups. Below is a summary of the recurring themes.

Main Points

These themes came up repeatedly by the vast majority of the Breakout Groups.

- **Clear Strategic Goals** - We need clear and achieveable goals, activities which link clearly to an outcome and how our actions further the whole.
- **Sharing of Ideas between Local Groups** - We need a central place to share our successes, plans and information to use against our local institutions. How to we capture the amazing work we do?
- **Unified Local Coordination** - A rea desire for LG to coordinate actions and work together on short term goals.
- **Connection to daily reality** - Connecting the CEE to peole's everyday struggles (Covid, housing crisis, economic / financial situation, food poverty, flooding etc) People are in a survival mindset.
- **Clear Timeline** - We need time to prepare for coordinated actions, whether there is an action plan or just a shared target on one day for LGs to get creative around.
- **Movement of Movements** - We want to coordinate with local branches of other organisations, connect to existing direct action networks, get talking on high streets to as many people as we can and build a local MoM.
- **Local Connections** - Connecting to Local issues, targetting local issues which speak to the wider problems. Brining Climate Emergency Centres to engage locally and help educate / support / reskill the community.

Some Other Points on the Content of Strategy

- **Positive Goals** - Desire to have a focus on things we are **for**, some positive campaigns and pushing of a positive vision.
- **Priorities** - We can't go in every direction at once, we need some priorities, where our energy can have the most impact, target those who cause the greatest harm to our wellbeing.
- **Diverity and Inclusion** - We **have** to get a range of people with us if we are going to influence the governemnt, we need to be more inclusive of people of colour and the working class.
- **Covid Recovery** - linking Covid and the recovery to the CEE with a focus on the governement as they have the power to influence funding and reskill people. We need the government to support people through this crisis.
- **Media Focus** - need to get the CEE in the media every day, the BBC is failing us. We need educational programming on the crisis.
- **International Links** - Highlight the impacts of our actions on international conditions, link what is happening here to the global stage. How can the UK use our privilege?

Some Points on the Delivery of a Strategy

- **Ease of Use** - we want a concise, easy to understand strategy with clear visuals and direction on how we can apply it. Guidence on how to frame and build an action to further the strategic goals.
- **Simplicity** - Simple pathways of how an action furthers the strategy, short and simple. We do X, which will cause Y which helps us achieve Z. How do our goals link together?

- **Clarity of Thinking** - Delivered in such a way that is simply connects to the theory. We want to understand how our actions are contributing to the greater whole, so we can write our messaging and outreach to reflect this.
- **Many Formats** - Several accessible formats to engage with (BSL, Kids version, Live Zoom Q&As, Video, Written)

Other things mentioned

- **Systemic Issues** - Help with the clarity of the systemic issues we are facing (e.g. the housing crisis does not equal too few houses)
- **Communications Overwhelm** - there are too many communications platforms, hard to know what is important or urgent.
- **Ready-made Actions** - It would be helpful for the smaller LGs to recieve almost fully formed action plans in the knowledge that many small LGs will be doing it together.

Actions

Communities heard the feedback here and will at minimum take the following actions:

- Ensure that these ideas are heard by the UK Strategy Assembly as they piece together the next strategy for XRUK.
  - **Update 11/1/21:** The Harvest document and this summary were shared with the UKSA and we can see some of the points we made pop up in their criteria document.

- Ensure that the feedback around Action Plans and further guidence on linking action plans to strategic goals is heard by Actions Circle.

- We will do a big push on use of the Toolkit in the new year, and support Local Groups in using it to share their information, action plans and outreach materials with each other.
  - If anyone is interested in helping us do this well please email us at **xrcommunities@gmail.com**.

- Communities will work with the UKSA once they have a strategy written to ensure it is delivered in as many ways as possible, including Q&A sessions and spaces for rebels to come together to discuss it.
  - **Update 21/1/21:** Communities have offered the UKSA to help deliver the strategy to the movement in accessible and interactive formats. The offerings can be found Here. Communities hope to work further with the Strategy Format Team to follow through on this.

Useful Links

Some of the links below answer specific questions that came up during the assembly. Hopefully they will be of use!

- The UK Strategy Process

- Info on Citizens Assemblies and the Citizens' Assembly Working Group

- The Rebel Toolkit!

- Buddying New Rebels

- XR BSL Team - **xr.bsl@protonmail.com**

- The UK Strategy Process

- Info on Citizens Assemblies and the Citizens' Assembly Working Group

How do we recruit, welcome and keep more new rebels?

Date: 20th January 2021

Context

Covid has been hard on us for so many reasons and many groups have found it harder to recruit and retain new rebels as people turn their attention to immediate problems. However January is traditionally the time when people make plans to take action on the things that matter to them. XR's vision of change involves mass participation; how can we bring people into our movement - and keep them?

Input

Around 70 people attended the assembly. Everything below is feedback from the assembly; we've tried to capture the main ideas in order of the number of times they were mentioned.

Toolkit team note:

We have linked some of the sections which exist in the Toolkit which could inspire you. If you have extra ideas do get in touch with the Toolkit Team via Mattermost. The links are in green.

Link to the Google form for feedback and learning

1. Our own experience

Why did we join?

- Unsuprisingly we come largely out of **fear for the future** *(key words: kids, planet, tipping points)* Emergency on Planet earth book

- We see **XR** as our **best chance** of doing something about this *(key words: commitment, passion, energy, creativity, best solution)* Arts section
- We believe we will meet **like-minded people** in XR
- ...and we think we might have some **fun** too! *(key words: creativity, mischief)*

Why did we stay?

- We felt **appreciated** *(key words: welcome, support, positive feedback)* Healthy Teams
- We felt part of a **community** *(key words: like-minded, first action)*
- We thought XR had **great qualities** *(key words: efficiency, organisation, training, structure)*
- Our **worry** about the future was **lessened** ? (reading between the lines - deduced from only one person mentioning at this stage when several did as a reason for joining).

When did we feel part of XR?

- When we got to know **people** *(key words: family, like-minded, welcome, support)*
- When we **worked together** on something *(key words: unity of purpose)*
- When we got to **know XR** better *(key words: open to ideas, creative, proactive)*
- When we **gained a role** in our team

2. Ideas on growing the movement

How do we bring more people into XR?

- **Engage with local issues:** *(key words: out-of-touch, tree planting, child friendly activities, door knocking)* Trust the People workshops; Mobilising the Community
- **Connect with other groups** with similar aims/struggles *(key words: BLM, encourage to fulfill green commitments)*
- **CEE centres/local hubs:** External website: *climateemergencycentre.co.uk*
- **Bring a friend** meetings
- **Digital events:** e.g London Online event

How do we help new rebels feel part of XR?

- **Joint activities!** This was mentioned more than 4x as much as the next most popular option. There were a wealth of creative ideas, including:
  - digital messages group Remote Rebels
  - tree planting planting wildflowers
  - samba bands
  - cultural events online
  - HfE talk online: HfE Toolkit page
  - meditation mobs
  - art/tree trails
  - empathy circles
  - door knocking Doorknocking
  - bringing projects to fruition
  - story telling sessions e.g. arrest stories
  - direct public engagement - postcards through doors
  - surveys
  - reading group (could be XR reading)
  - Discobediance
  - door knob hangers
  - actions!
  - agenda-free meetings *(key words: space to listen to one another; talk about things other than XR)*
  - reflecting on what brings us together *(key words: locally, globally)*
- **Meeting rebels' personal needs**
  - disability access needs - meeting breaks (15mins after every 45mins of meeting)
  - disability access needs - speaker visible
  - clear advance schedule
  - gender pronouns *(labels in attendee name)*
  - online meetings *(supplement in person meetings - different people can join)*
- **Learning (about XR)** *(key words: online learning, Rebellion Academy, interactive training, tech tool training)*
- **De-Jargon!** *(key words: use plain English)* Explaining XR
- **Onboard several new rebels at once** *(key words: hard to be new)*
- Strengthen **Integration roles**

How do we help 'sleeping' rebels re-engage?

- **Rebel ringing** *(friendly chat, maybe follow-up email)* Rebel Ringing
- **Roles**
  - small starter tasks
  - offering several different options of how to join in

- - offering different roles from previously
  - roles that feel relevant/play to strengths
- **Buddies** *(offering to team people up)*
- Being **non-political** *(key words: leavers due Burning Pink?, 4th demand not helpful right now)*
- Embodying **non-violence** always *(key words: twitter rows - violent language)* NVDA
- **Team support** *(key words: team a bit lost, sharing of knowledge/ideas/resources, help from XR UK-wide teams)*
- Reaching out via **Facebook**
- **Empathy and welcome** *(with all of above - remembering not to be cliquey)*

Action and Disruption

Date: 17th March 2021

Context

What kind of disruption should XR be doing, and what is appropriate and proportionate to meet our demands? Disruption in all its forms has been the heart of XR's actions, intentions and largely the movement's huge impact on raising the alarm about the climate and ecological emergency! Over its short lifetime XR has evolved into a vibrant, diverse and expansive movement with huge resources to adapt, reflect and (un)learn, as we have responded to the ever-changing crises faced around the world, as well as at home in the UK. As XRUK prepares to emerge from the pandemic we have a huge opportunity to build back, bolder and brighter than before.

Input

Toolkit team note:

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Link to the Harvest document