Pre-Action Activities - To Weave Community Building into Actions

When we have a group of people there are two directions in which we can build community. We can build our community for ourselves, so before an action this looks like building trust with those you are taking action with and strengthening the skills of your group. And we can build community with those around us, this looks like engaging with others in the area you are taking action and building connections with others that care about the issue you are taking action on.

Strengthening Action Community

This is something XR does very well! We have been doing it for years and are experts.

Here are some examples of how we do this:

- **Pre-Action Trainings**
  - Prepare for Action
  - Know Your Rights
- **Creative Workshops**
  - Banner Making
  - Drumming Workshop
- **Social Events**
  - Group Dinners
  - Pub Trips

Building Local Relationships

Building relationships in the places we are taking action not only develops our local networks and support structures but also allows us to start conversations about what matters to people. Through curiosity and forming connections at the speed of trust we can discover what people care about and create actions on those shared points of caring.

Talks

Holding talks and events locally creates a hook to bring people in. They don't have to be XR specific, you can bring in guest speakers from other organisations to platform them in your local area, or find topics that matter to people locally and craft events with speakers on those.

Example Posers for Talks

Picnics

Picnics are great for building community simply by the process of gathering people together in a low cost, accessible way and sharing food. You can treat it as a pot luck, get people talking about the food they brought. Picnics are great at breaking down hierarchies, the activist and the politician meet on the same level when sharing food in a park. Having space for people to talk and share can also pull out opportunities on issues and actions that people may want to work on!

An Example

In the East of England we had a region wide picnic in Ely. Inviting groups from all corners of our region to a central point for food, workshops and simple connection.

We created a space which enabled people to introduce themselves, share food, ideas and simply being. Groups from across the region came together for the explicit purpose of just being together in a social space without agenda. Bringing in creativity through block printing and drumming activities. From this event a group of rebels from across the region have started to plan an action around water issues.

XR Cambridge Picnic

Stalls

Having a visible presence is a great way to engage with the local community. Stalls are all about finding something that will create a question in someone's head, so that they can come up and ask. Survey boards are great, or print blocking, or even selling jams or chutneys to raise some funds.

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Walks

When focusing on issues around nature, physically bringing people into nature can not only highlight the reasons to fight but also build connection between people and groups who care in potentially different ways about the issue. Another space we can create that is equalising and

removes hierarchies. Events can be planned for the start and finish, with spaces to learn, connect and share.

An Example

King’s Lynn Local Group have had a great success with their Walk for Nature. People from a wide variety of groups attended including XR, Wildlife Trust, a local hedgehog hospital, and 5 different Borough Councillors! The event really broke down hierarchies, connections were made between different groups and with local councillors.
At the end, everyone gathered for a picnic where folks chatted amongst themselves and listened to speakers representing the groups that supported the walk.



Putting them Togehter!

Also, these two framings of internal and external community building do not have to be separate. We can and do create events that meet both.

For example: XR Norwich put on a day of talks and workshops for the whole community before big London actions. Holding a space to connect and upskill activists and the local community, building connections that would last locally and introducing people into the space of rebellion.

This would often include a banner drop to kick it off, with a Paint the Streets initiative blending community building and action to get the benefits of them both and see them fuel each other.

Action on Shared Points of Caring

In the ideal situation we, as individuals and as rebels, are embedded in our local communities and so the ideas and issues behind the actions we take are co-created by the wider community.

As a network, rebels have skills and experience in NVDA, Action Design, support roles such as Action Wellbeing, De-escalation and Stewards. We can offer this wealth of knowledge to the local issues that really matter to people in a way that embeds protest, as the valuable part of democracy that it is, deep into the spaces and places we exist in.

In this way action and community stop being separate parts of the work. It is through our work in the community that we take action and through our action that we become valued members of the community.
