□□ Processes of Community Building We Do Well! □□

Community Building is something each of us already does, in our teams, our Local Groups and beyond. You should be able to recognise yourself and those you know in the processes laid out here.

Key Processes of Community Building

The following 13 Processes of Community Building were identified in the research stage of the 2025 Strategy Process. Each can be clearly seen across a variety of spaces in XR and all of them come together to create our collective community.

1. Trust Building & Mending
2. Clear Communication
3. Connection Building
4. Creating Permeable Boundaries
5. Shared Purpose
6. Creating Safe Spaces
7. Inclusive Decision Making
8. Creative Expression
9. Sharing Ideas and Skills
10. Building Common Culture
11. Wellbeing and Rest
12. Negotiating Effectiveness
13. Celebration and Acknowledgement

We will look at these processes each in turn, exploring where we do them for ourselves within XR, where we do them to bridge and build community externally, and what we can do to strengthen that which we already do.

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1. Trust Building & Mending

We build trust between each other, within our structure, between XR and our allies, and we build an external sense of trust in the movement. Communities are built at the speed of trust!

This Can Look Like:

- Upholding our Principles & Values and creating Group Agreements **and sticking to them** .
- Our consistent style of facilitation, creating space for everyone to be heard.
- Trust in stewards when in stressful action situations.
- Taking the time to develop friendships with those you are taking action with.
- Debriefs, feedback loops, and acting on that feedback.

And Externally:

- Relationship building with other groups, forging connections and taking action together.
- Community Assemblies demonstrate ways of being that trust everyone with decision making power.

When we are in community with people there are always going to be mistakes made and moments where trust is broken. How we come together after these missteps is so important, suggestions below:

- Active listening spaces
- Short feedback loops
- Avoiding blaming and shaming
- Concrete action to avoid repeating mistakes

> **Questions**
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> - What do you and your groups currently do to build trust?
> - How do you approach each other when trust is broken?

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2. Clear Communication

Figuring out how to communicate clearly is challenging, especially in large, diverse groups, especially in spaces where participation and membership fluctuates.

Too many methods of communication creates confusion and with too few people don't know what is going on.

XR uses a variety of structures and processes to communicate internally and externally. When these work well the work of activism is easier. However, when these miss the mark trust erodes and confusion/misinformation spreads.

It's a balance! We need enough clear communication channels but not too many as to overwhelm people!

This Can Look Like:

- Group Agreements for the use of Group Chats so that important information isn't lost in the noise.
- Reliable information carriers through the movement such as Regional Coordinators in the Hive or Gardeners.
- Meeting Facilitation when done well enables clear and effective communication between groups.
- Being open to altering communication processes and styles to meet a diversity of needs.

And Externally:

- A very clear visual identity and message.
- Outreach stands and leaflets creating opportunities for conversations.

Remember listening is also a part of clear communication.

> **Questions**
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> - How does your group communicate in person and digitally? Does this change on actions?
> - How does your group address misunderstandings? Do these happen often?
> - As a group, how do you communicate with the wider world?

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3. Connection Building

Connection to people, an organisation, or an idea comes before trust. This happens person to person and at a human scale.

Connection is also how people maintain trust between each other and this works best through face to face time spent together and shared experience. Connection can also be the practical links between circles and out to the wider world.

It all starts with **curiosity**!

This Can Look Like:

- Welcoming and integrating new group members.
- Spending social time together such as sharing meals, going for walks or celebrating birthdays.

- Finding new contexts to meet people in. Stepping out of "work friend" and "XR friend" labels and blurring those lines.
- Taking collective action on what the group cares about.

And Externally:

- Solidarity with other groups' protests.
- Building relationships with other groups through intentional cooperation and co-creation.
- Identifying the Community Connectors in your local area - Who do you ask if you need help locally?
- Your friends and other relationships! All our personal connections exist on the edge of our XR communities.

A good starting place is to hold a Gift Circle.

> **Questions**
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> - How do you build friendship networks outside of activism?
> - What does being connected to a broader community outside of your group look like?

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4. Creating Permeable Boundaries

The boundary of any group or community should be permeable, that is it should be easy to join, leave, and return. This creates a welcoming space for new people, acknowledges the complexities in our lives, and allows the sharing of skills, experiences and talents. Also, the boundaries that create the group identity should be clear, that is if there are reasons for denying access or behaviours the group will not accept that needs to be well communicated. We welcome everyone, and every part of everyone, but not every behaviour.

Considering group boundaries, and how people experience them, is key to creating an accessible and welcoming space. Some people may have more barriers to participation than others and if a group is homogeneous then someone entering who does not fit that description will face challenges the group cannot see.

This Can Look Like:

- Welcoming your friends and connections into XR spaces and deliberately building connections beyond our friendship networks.
- Having varying settings where someone can engage with the group, that may be Drumming, Banner Making, Action Planning, Community Meals, Workshops, Actions.

- Intentional Access and Inclusion work opens our spaces to more potential members.
- Intro to XR talks, our integrators, and trainings create a springboard for new people to get stuck in.
- The Volunteer Role Board creates pathways to enter XRUK spaces.

And Externally:

- Our group members typically are not *just* in XR, they are in a host of other organisations also, blurring those lines and varying commitments through the year.
- Through solidarity actions we blur the boundaries between groups and show up with more collective strength as a larger community of place and purpose.

By opening our arms wide and building connection and trust with our local communities and other communities of Identity, Interest, Practice, Place and Action we start to create that cultural momentum!

> **Questions**
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> - How do you welcome people into the group? How do you welcome people back if they leave?
> - Who is the group visible to? How do people find you physically or digitally?

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5. Shared Purpose

Our communities are typically Communities of Action, it is our shared sense of purpose that ties us together. This shared purpose is held between our Demands, Principles & Values and Strategy, and the details shift with campaigns, localities and time. Purpose can also be smaller and more goal focused and co-created by a group.

In XRUK circles this shared purpose is consensually distributed by mandates through the organism using our Self Organising System. This allows rebels working in seemingly distant parts of the movement to know that they are all pushing in the same direction.

We can see the same distribution of roles towards a common goal in our Local Groups, although this is usually more fluid as local campaigns ebb and flow.

This Can Look Like:

- Sharing our Demands and P&Vs through intro talks and welcoming others to share our purpose.

- Our decentralised network which allows groups to work towards common goals in ways that matter to them.
- Big Rebellions where we show our collective power, showing each other we are not acting alone but in tandem with thousands.
- Taking time to come together to vision the future we want to co-create.

And Externally:

- Local Campaigns such as river or road campaigns where XR doesn't always lead but brings valuable skills.
- Our messaging being clear allows us to share our mission and goals with the wider world.

By finding where purpose overlaps we can find fertile ground to build community and co-create actions with other groups.

> **Questions**
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> - What are the specific aims and goals of your group?
> - What moments have felt most purposeful to your group?
> - How are the group goals decided? What opportunities are there to make that process more inclusive?

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6. Creating Safe Spaces

Different people have different ideas of what a Safe Space looks like. The process of negotiating, adapting, and creating such spaces generates understanding of each other and community care.

We aim to create spaces where it is safe to share our ideas, to be authentic, and also to disagree with each other. We also interact in various different spaces: In meetings, socially, online, in action etc. In each of these contexts safety can mean different things.

This Can Look Like:

- Creating and updating Group Agreements so everyone is working from the same understanding.
- Acting on issues quickly and carefully as they arise.
- Meeting access needs, held collectively, with everyone taking responsibility.
- Actively listening to each other’s experiences with an aim to break down barriers to inclusion in ways that matter to individuals.

And Externally:

- When we take space at actions we create vibrant and welcoming spaces for people to explore and exist in.

- When those of us less marginalised use our relative proximity to power to stand between our siblings and the disproportionate violence of the state.

Noting also that safety doesn't mean free from discomfort. We look to challenge but to do so with kindness, compassion and understanding.

> **Questions**
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> - Who is most at home in your spaces and who might struggle?
> - What do group members need from each other to feel safe in a meeting / action / social environment or digital space?
> - If a space becomes unsafe for someone how does the group change it?

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7. Inclusive Decision Making

Communities and individuals within them make decisions all the time, about what they care about and how they act. These can be made in hundreds of different ways.

For a community to be inclusive, decision making processes need to be too. Being part of a community with strong inclusive decision making practices supports individuals to make more communal and less individualised decisions in general.

How our decision making processes adapt and change to the needs of the community participating in them is important.

This Can Look Like:

- By using consent and consensus appropriately we create pathways forward that everyone feel are safe to try without getting caught in arguing for what may feel best for each person.
- Listening to quieter voices and being aware of unintentional hierarchies in the space.
- Through careful facilitation and the IDM process we are able to make challenging decisions in a way that hears everyone's voice and finds a safe enough way forward.
- Finding ways to make group decisions transparent and clearly communicated especially to those who weren't in the room when they were made.

And Externally:

- Holding People's Assemblies in local areas can share the experience of collective decision making.
- Building active listening into Assembly spaces brings everyone's voice into the mix.

Decision making in the everyday life of a community can be seen as co-creating democracy for each other all the time.

> **Questions**
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> - How does your group make simple / challenging decisions?
> - How does your group include new people in decision making?
> - What is an example of a decision your group made well? What made it a good process?

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8. Creative Expression

The ability to be creative is important for any community. Creativity is integral to expressing culture, generating ideas, interest and engagement, as well as self expression and imagining the future.

Creativity is not just about artistic expression but creativity in expression of views and ways of thinking. Creativity can be found in how we plan, how we choose targets, and how inventive we are with our tactics.

Part of creative expression is self expression too. Holding a variety of ways to express creativity can make a community more inclusive and allow space for sharing and experimenting with ideas.

This Can Look Like:

- Red Rebels and Rhythms are creative activities with a low barrier to entry.
- Action design and diversity of tactics are nothing if not inventive!
- Creative activities in preparation for action such as banner making, flag printing or creating extravagant costumes.
- Using creativity to make our spaces fun, playful and a place people want to stay in.

And Externally:

- Print Blocking as Outreach and Engagement.
- Paint the Streets and Subvertising.
- The strong artistic identity of XR in every action we take.

It is only through our creativity that we will survive.

> **Questions**

> - How does your group express itself creatively?
> - What forms of creativity are present already in your group?
> - How could your group encourage creative thinking?

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9. Sharing Ideas and Skills

When someone joins a community they bring their skills and ideas with them whether they choose to share them or not. People do not arrive as blank slates to be moulded into rebels.

Sharing skills and ideas is a form of power sharing in communities. The ability to do so with respect and trust that they will not be misused is important in mitigating power. The more our skills, tasks and knowledge is shared between people the stronger and more resilient our communities become.

An essential part of skill and idea sharing is having a safe space to share and learn.

This Can Look Like:

- Our many workshops including: Action Planning, Media Training, Block Printing, Red Rebels, NVDA, De-escalation, Stewarding & Wellbeing.
- Creating spaces at actions, events and gatherings for people to upskill themselves in ways that interest them.
- Our culture of DIY scrappiness allows us to experiment with new things, giving each other permission to do things imperfectly.

And Externally:

- Community Assemblies as places to share ideas.
- Platforms like the Rebellion Academy and Rebel Toolkit are bountiful resources which are not gatekept by the movement.
- Other communities have valuable skills and experiences we can also learn from, don't be afraid to ask!

To build power in our communities sharing skills is vital, if only one person knows how something is done that is a clear vulnerability to address.

> **Questions**
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> - Are there people in the group who easily share their skills and knowledge?
> - Do members of your group have unexpected skills?
> - Who in the wider community can you ask for help from?

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10. Building Common Culture

Our culture is the stories we tell, the visual and musical language we share, the behaviours we endorse and exclude, the actions we take, and the visions of the future we share. Belonging is hard to quantify but it is an experience born of participating in and co-creating shared culture. A key part of this are the stories we tell!

These stories can be a shared mythology or memory as well as expectations for behaviour and imagining about the future. The visual, verbal, musical languages a community uses are as important as the stories themselves.

Who has the ability to tell the stories and build them says a lot about the community. As does how people are able to express their individual identity as part of the whole community.

This Can Look Like:

- Our meeting style builds our culture and is so different to what we find elsewhere.
- Defining the boundaries of our communities and being explicit in the behaviors we accept into our spaces.
- Our Principles & Values underpin all the activities we do together.
- Constantly telling our stories of Rebellion! Sharing our experiences of finding the movement, telling stories of actions and campaigns, building that shared memory.

And Externally:

- Our strong visual (and musical) language adds to our story and speaks to a clear culture within our spaces.
- Our messaging is the story we tell to the communities that interact with us either on social media, in news coverage or in our other communities.
- We share our culture every time we claim space and can be seen through conversation, music, art, action and ambition.

Everyone in our community is involved in creating our common culture and generating a sense of belonging.

> **Questions**
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> - Are there ways of doing things that are unique to this group?
> - How long did it take you to feel a sense of belonging with this group?
> - What is the "Most XR" thing you have ever seen and what made it so?

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11. Wellbeing and Rest

In extreme weather events such as heatwaves it is the quality of connections that a person has, not their access to services that ensures survival[1]. Joining and being a valued member of a community is not limited to moments of crisis, and communities can in fact build alternatives to crises.

For a community of climate activists the role that communities play in enabling wellbeing and rest for its members has to be taken very seriously. Burnout is a major issue in activism and the activities activism demands of individuals can be very extractive. Being intentional as a community to value wellbeing and rest of members is key.

This Can Look Like:

- Simply checking in with each other.
- The importance with which we hold Action Wellbeing which sets us apart from other groups.
- Socialising as a group (not *just* taking action together) builds on those relationships and creates the trust to lean on each other in our down time and not just in high intensity moments.
- Taking the time to nest Actions within a more regenerative cycle of rest, planning, debrief and learning.
- The trust we build in our communities allows us to take a step back and knowing things will continue to be held.
- Finding ways to take intentional breaks from the work of activism whilst also holding on to the supportive community aspects of the group.

And Externally:

- Action Support and Wellbeing are always visible when we are on the street, demonstrating how we prioritise our physical and psychological safety on actions.
- We model our community care, person-to-person, when we step out of the individualistic mindset and lean on each other in times of need.

So much of activism can be framed around sacrifice and heroism, but is this what we want? We can also frame it around joy and rest and giving each other the permission to do things differently, sustainably and regeneratively.

> **Questions**
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> - How does this group look out for the wellbeing of its members?
> - Rest can take many forms for different people; what is the best way for you to rest in different circumstances?
> - How does the group make room for grief and all the emotions that come with caring about the climate and ecological emergency?

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12. Negotiating Effectiveness

Communities create measures of success for themselves: long and short term goals against which their efforts are measured - **success in stories not just numbers**.

An action might be considered effective if there is a marked change in activities of the target, or because loads of people turned up, or because it got a lot of press attention, which measure do we choose as the most effective? And who gets to choose which successes are shouted about?

All these measures of effectiveness are negotiated all the time without even realising it.

This Can Look Like:

- Well-facilitated meetings to create the space for negotiating effectiveness.
- Hearing and gathering various potential measures of success.
- Being clear on the purpose of an action to be able to pull out the most relevant success measures.
- Being intentional with the metrics of success we use, making space for the qualitative.
- Choosing a success case that your group can actually influence.
- Avoiding All-or-nothing thinking by using frameworks such as the Good-Better-Best Model.

And Externally:

- Telling our own stories of success through our media channels.
- Our past press coverage really showed the effectiveness of the movement in starting and changing the conversation on Climate.
- The declaration of Climate Emergencies and the changing of laws show the effectiveness of Climate Activism and Communities of Action.

As communities we get to define what success and effectiveness mean to us. It will look different across the movement but with us all taking positive steps in our shared purpose we will continue to create change toward our collective vision.

> **Questions**
>
> - Who decides whether an activity is effective or not?
> - What is the most effective action your group has taken part in or organised?
> - How does your group share its successes, and learn from its failures?

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13. Celebration and Acknowledgement

Celebrating and acknowledging the work of members of a group, not just the wins, is an easy way to build community in every circle or group. And beyond this, celebrating the existence of group members regardless of the work they offer.

In doing so people learn from each other and understand each other's strengths, not just the issues they face. This is important as it is often the failures that stick in the mind and define a group. A smooth running experience or process is one that can go unnoticed and therefore it is most important to recognise it: it does so due to the work of others!

This works similarly when connecting with other people and groups outside of XR, appreciating their work or seeking understanding of it is a great way to build connection and community with others.

This Can Look Like:

- Sharing the successes of your group both within your group and with the wider community.
- Acknowledging the work done and not just the wins.
- Post Action Socials! Groups may go out for a drink or meal, or be welcomed back from larger actions by those who couldn't go.
- Remembering and celebrating birthdays in the group.
- Many of our actions themselves have celebration built into them!

And Externally:

- Acknowledging and celebrating the wins of groups we are in community and solidarity with.
- Highlighting any positive steps forward in our media feeds and reminding each other that progress is rarely perfect but it is worth celebrating.

Each and every one of us on this journey is worth celebrating.

> **Questions**
>
> - Who does the work of keeping your community together?
> - How do you celebrate each other in your group?
> - Is there someone you want to thank for the work that they do?

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[1]: "Fatal Isolation: The Devastating Paris Heat Wave of 2003" by Richard C. Keller.
