Terms and Definitions in the Self-Organising System

This table shows the definitions of the main SOS terms used in the XR UK Constitution.

SOS term	How we define it
Circle	A circle is a team that has been created with a **mandate**. It operates within the terms of the Constitution, which means that it makes its own decisions about how to achieve its purpose.
Role	A position within a **circle** to which the circle delegates some of its power — via a **mandate**. A member of the circle is appointed to a role for a fixed term.
Mandate	The authority given to a **role** or **circle**, to set out what they are working to achieve, and what others can expect them to do in order to achieve it. The concept of a mandate is central to how we distribute power across the movement. We define the power in terms of, first, a description of what they are working to achieve — the **purpose** — and what others can expect them to do in order to achieve it — a set of **accountabilities**. Some mandates also control one or more **domains**.
Purpose	The purpose of any **mandate** is the end state, or outcome, that the role or team is working towards.
Accountability	The accountabilities of a **mandate** are what the holder (a **circle** or **role**) is accountable for. They are the activities that the rest of the movement can expect you to do — the responsibility that comes with your autonomy. (Typically you will have to do a lot of other tasks, besides your accountabilities, to achieve the purpose of your role, but these are at your discretion.) Others can only hold you to account for your accountabilities.
Domain	A domain is a kind of resource which is controlled exclusively by the mandate-holder. For example, the design of the XR UK website is the domain of the UK Media and Messaging circle. It's important for their mandate that others do not interfere with this.

SOS term	How we define it
Sub-circle, Broader circle	Circles can delegate a specific task to a set of team members forming a sub-circle. Thus the structure of XR UK comprises one broadest circle, within which there are nested circles and sub-circles — each with a mandate that contributes to the whole. This simple extension of the Circle term reflects how the teams appear visually at organism.extinctionrebellion.uk and shows how teams are nested within each other, each having a part of the broader circle's authority delegated to them.
Internal Coordinator	A core role within each circle, whose purpose is that the team is healthy and achieving its mandate.
External Coordinator	A core role within each circle, whose purpose is that the team is represented in the broader circle, and aware of that circle's work and priorities.
Group Admin	A core role within each circle, whose purpose is that the team's governance records — including roles and appointments to roles, policies, any subcircles — are kept up to date on the Hub.

How circles, roles and mandates work together

As you can see from the definitions above, the concepts of **mandate**, **circle** and **role** are closely related to each other. They are also central to how we mitigate power, and how we are based on autonomy and decentralistion.

Mandates give authority to make decisions within a defined scope, and are distributed among circles and the roles within them to spread power and share responsibility.

To avoid clashes, it's important that mandates do not overlap or undermine each other. So mandates are created and amended in circle meetings, using collective decision-making.

If role holders are not fulfilling their mandate, there are several ways of resolving such issues. The decision-making and resolution processes are set out in the Constitution.

Circles must include three Core Roles: **Internal Coordinator**, **External Coordinator**, and **Group Admin**. Together they help to support the team, coordinate with other teams, and keep team records accessible. These roles are up for election at least every six months.

Beyond these three Core Roles, each circle is free to create any other role to meet its mandate. Circles are all different, but may have the same or similar roles for doing similar work within their circle (all teams need a role that checks team communication channels, for example).
