

XRDC Constitution

Note: This document is heavily based upon the XRUK constitution, found [here](#).

Foundational Principles

XR's organizational system is founded on the principle of distributed authority where decision-making power is **decentralized and distributed to individuals in roles with clear mandates**. When a member has a mandate in a role it means that person has the authority to make a decision/do something; at the same time it sets an expectation which others can have of that role-holder.

Thus, the system must balance a **tension between two competing goals**: decentralization and collaboration. On the one hand, decentralization and autonomy allow for quick decision making and organizational dexterity. On the other hand, it is important for decisions to incorporate the wisdom of those who have done this before. It's also important that autonomy doesn't result in too much compartmentalization, since cohesive action is important for the group's success. There is no one right way to achieve balance - everyone must keep these two goals in mind as they operate in the system.

XRDC will aim to use consensus driven decision-making when possible. This is the healthiest way for the group to make decisions, as it ensures all perspectives are heard and respected and minimizes decisions within the group. Consensus is less about seeking unanimity and more about surfacing and addressing concerns and objections. A clear understanding of what consensus is and how it works is essential for it to be used effectively. However, in situations where intractable problems arise and consensus cannot be reached, modified consensus can be used.

We aim to maximize transparency by asking each individual member to be as clear as possible about the work they are doing and how they understand their mandate. Working groups should also aim to be as transparent as possible on a larger scale. This will make it much easier to collaborate at scale. We will strive to be as transparent as possible, up to the point where the cost of record-keeping exceeds the benefits of making information available.

All actions undertaken within this system are governed by the XRUS demands and principles. They are repeated here for clarity:

DEMANDS:

1. The government must tell the truth about the climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.
2. The government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.

3. A new democratic body that is free from the corrupting influence of money must be created to oversee the transition.
4. The transition to net-zero must be a just transition that benefits the most vulnerable people first and eliminates structural inequality.

PRINCIPLES:

1. **We have a shared vision of change:** Creating a world that is fit for generations to come.
2. **We set our mission on what is necessary:** Mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change - using ideas such as "Momentum-driven organising" to achieve this.
3. **We need a regenerative culture:** Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable.
4. **We openly challenge ourselves and our toxic system:** Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.
5. **We value reflecting and learning:** Following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action. Learning from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences.
6. **We welcome everyone and every part of everyone:** Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.
7. **We actively mitigate for power:** Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.
8. **We avoid blaming and shaming:** We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.
9. **We are a non-violent network:** Using non-violent strategy and tactics as the most effective way to bring about change.
10. **We are based on autonomy and decentralisation:** We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power. Anyone who follows these core principles and values can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion.

This constitution is a living document. It is always a work-in-progress and we are always open to suggested improvements. Amendment suggestions can be submitted to the DC Anchor Circle at any time. The authority to amend the XRDC constitution rests with the DC Anchor Circle. The Integrative Decision-Making Process (Section II.3 Below) must be used for modifying the constitution. Amendments can also be approved by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote among working group members. Amendments must be approved or denied within 2 weeks of submission.

I. Group Structure Guidelines

The current organizational chart for XRDC can be viewed [here](#).

A. Working Groups

Working groups are the primary place where the everyday work of XRDC gets done. They are autonomous and self-governing. Each working group will have 1-2 coordinators. If there are two coordinators, they are free to divide up the work of bottomlining the group and representing the group's wishes to the anchor circle as they see fit.

The working group coordinators should be viewed less as leaders of their group and more as project managers or bottomliners. Their job is to coordinate the work across volunteers and make sure that the work is being done efficiently, not to boss people around and micromanage work.

As of this writing (August 2019), there are 6 working groups. Each working group can have a maximum of two coordinators, both of whom are welcome to attend anchor circle meetings if they are willing and interested. This setup is subject to change as the group outgrows the current working group structure. When it becomes clear that the structure cannot effectively hold all of our volunteers and represent their wishes, the anchor circle will re-evaluate the organizational and representational structure of the group.

B. DC Anchor Circle

Working group coordinators will meet regularly to form the DC Anchor Circle. This group will make decisions that affect the entire chapter. It will also allow the working groups to remain aware of what is taking place in other working groups.

Working group coordinators are responsible for representing the views and ideas of the members within their working groups. They are not individually empowered decision-makers, but rather spokespeople for their working group members. When possible, major decisions should not be made without consulting within working groups. In this way, the anchor circle ensures that the views of the entire group are incorporated.

The Purpose of the Anchor Circle is always the same as the purpose of the organisation as a whole.

The work of the Anchor Circle is then to break down the work that needs to be done into smaller chunks that can be completed by working groups/subgroups/roles, whilst maintaining an overview of the work as a whole so that holistic decisions can be made about strategy and use of resources.

Therefore, the mandate of the Anchor Circle is:

- Defining the purpose & strategy for XRDC, within the principles of XR US, and defining the processes by which these are decided
- Dividing up group responsibilities and assigning them to working groups

- Deciding on the use of resources between roles/working groups/circles in the Anchor Circle

The Anchor Circle also owns the following domains, unless otherwise delegated, so that no-one else may change or impact these domains without approval from the Anchor Circle:

- XRDC Purpose
- XRDC Strategy
- XRDC Resources (including financial investments of over \$200)

Any of these domains can be delegated by the Anchor Circle to other circles. The Anchor Circle can also reclaim these domains at any time.

C. Individual Engagement

There are two ways for people to actively engage with Extinction Rebellion DC in an:

- 1) Join a working group, which entails contributing to the work of XRDC in an ongoing way
- 2) Join an affinity group, which entails primarily getting involved with XRDC through participation in actions

These two forms of engagement are described in detail below:

1. Participating in a Working Group

To be considered a member of an Extinction Rebellion DC working group, a person must make a commitment to uphold the demands and principles of XRUS, attend at least 4 meetings in every 2 month period, and do work for the chapter on an ongoing basis. The ability to participate in decision-making and have your voice heard is earned by putting time and energy into advancing the interests of the group. Coordinators reserve the right to ask people to step back from meetings or decisions if their commitment to the group has not been sufficient.

XRDC members are encouraged to self-motivate and take action without needing prior approval. However, **members must seek feedback from relevant stakeholders** on all but the most trivial of decisions. This ensures that simple mistakes and conflicting decisions are minimized. Working groups are free to set up their own rules about what constitutes sufficient feedback.

Mandates assigned to working groups can be subdivided into individual roles so that individuals can fulfill the working group's purpose without the entire working group needing to be involved.

Whereas mandates are clearly delineated and recorded, the assignment of individual tasks is less structured so that the work can flow more freely. Some roles, such as working group coordinators, need to be constantly filled, but others can be divided and moved among members.

Roles can be filled in two ways:

- a) Someone volunteers to take on a role
- b) If there are more volunteers than work to be done, and the volunteers cannot resolve the issue among themselves, an election within the working group will be held. Whoever wins the most votes within the working group will take on the role

If someone wishes to leave a role, they should try to give as much advance notice as possible to facilitate a smooth transition. People also have the opportunity to take on a role for a limited, predefined term. Coordinators should commit to a minimum term of 2 months.

Any working group member can call for an election/re-election for a role within the circle of which they are a member at any time. Calls for re-election should not be taken lightly. Members should first attempt to resolve issues according to the XRDC conflict resilience process.

If an election is called for, it must be seconded by 75% or more of the circle in which the work is taking place. If the motion achieves this 75% minimum, an open election shall be held in which any member of that XR working group can run. The winner of the majority of the votes within the circle will take on the new role (nominees cannot vote). In the event of a tie, the prior role holder will cast the tie-breaking vote.

New appointees to the anchor circle will begin with a 3-week period to test for a mutual fit. This is to ensure that a healthy working relationship exists between the anchor circle and the new appointee and that the new appointee is willing and able to put in the work required by anchor circle membership. After the three week period, the anchor circle and the new appointee must agree to continue the appointment.

If the anchor circle does not approve a new appointee, the relevant working group should hold another election for a different appointee. However, if the

working group reaches consensus that the rejected appointee is the best choice, that appointee will remain on the anchor circle

2. Participating in an Affinity Group

Affinity groups are self-organized groups of 5-20 people who share a common interest and who come together to take action. Whereas the purpose of working groups is to do work for the XRDC chapter in an ongoing way, the purpose of affinity groups is to organize people en masse to participate in actions. Affinity groups form the core logistical units of our mass mobilizations.

Affinity groups are autonomous. They are encouraged to plan meetings, events, and actions on their own volition, so long as they are adhering to the principles and values of XR.

Each affinity group should have at least two point people, who form the main communications link between the XRDC working group structure and the affinity group members. The point person role is ongoing for the duration of the affinity group's existence. Affinity groups can decide for themselves how to choose or rotate point people, as well as how they want to divide up affinity group work such as scheduling meetings, planning events, etc.

People are free to move between affinity groups or participate in multiple affinity group events or meetings between actions. But in the lead up to a mass action, it is important that each person select a single affinity group to take action with, otherwise the benefits of affinity groups are lost.

The affinity group structure will be the primary way for most action participants to have input during the planning phase of a mass action and have input on key decisions during a mass action. Affinity groups will be organized into a spokescouncil - each affinity group will select one spokesperson who will represent the views of their affinity group to the wider XR organism. If more than 20 affinity groups are taking part in an action, a nested spokescouncil will be created to ensure that conversations can flow in a healthy way.

The spokescouncil will follow the decision-making guidelines laid out below. It has the authority to approve or deny major action decisions, such as deployment time, overall strategy, or messaging approach. However, the work of hashing out the minutiae of proposals should take place within the working groups.

The affinity groups are an attempt to create a fractalized structure that is capable of handling exponential growth. To this end, geographically focused affinity groups are encouraged to self-organize into working groups if they have sufficient

peoplepower. Work should be divided horizontally to the greatest extent possible to maximize our capacity.

Furthermore, affinity groups that exceed the threshold of 20 members can be considered “community groups”. A community group is essentially a cluster of affinity groups - it has the same purpose, mandate, and autonomy as a normal affinity group. Prior to an action, a community group should subdivide into affinity groups of no more than 20 members to maximize safety, security, and efficiency.

II. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Different issues require different ways of making decisions; the following ways of making decisions are to be used for the following situations:

1. **For decisions regarding ongoing work covered by a working group mandate**, the person doing the work is empowered to make decisions about how the work should get done. However, they must seek advice and feedback from relevant stakeholders for all but the most trivial decisions. One tried and tested method of a role-holder getting input into a decision is to use the [Advice Process](#).
2. **For decisions that affect an entire working group or the entire XRDC structure**, groups should strive to use the consensus process. For major decisions that affect the core structure or identity of the group, quorum must be achieved. Quorum is defined as 4 of the 6 working groups having a coordinator represented at the meeting (as of August 2019, subject to change as the group grows). The consensus process shall proceed in the following way:
 - a. Check for informal consensus using thumbs up or a straw poll.
 - b. If an informal consensus is not reached, a formal process will be used, which includes a presentation of a proposal, clarifying questions, concerns, amendments.
 - c. Once all participants have had a chance to speak, they have three options for moving forward: agreement, standing aside, or blocking the proposal. If there is no block, consensus is achieved and implementation is then discussed. It must be understood that a block is rare. It should only be used if one believes that there is a good and real reason that the action to be taken will be destructive and harmful to XR.
3. **If consensus cannot be reached, a supermajority vote can be used as a fallback.** A supermajority shall be defined as 75% or $\frac{3}{4}$ approval of the proposal by the members present. This method should only be used after the group has failed to reach consensus on an issue in at least two separate meetings. This method can also be used if consensus cannot be reached on decisions that are extremely time-sensitive or related to an emergency situation.

The supermajority fallback should be viewed as an extreme option, only taken if absolutely necessary. Even if two meetings happen where consensus cannot be reached, using the supermajority option is not mandatory.

The motion to move to a supermajority vote must also be approved by 75% of the group.

IV. POLICIES

A system in which authority lies solely within distributed roles could easily result in chaos and fragmentation. If there is nothing to create alignment when needed, the result could be vast inconsistencies in purpose and messaging, and a lack of collaboration and coordinated effort. A Policy is a specific expectation which either grants or restricts authority outside of the mandates of roles and groups.

For example, if someone is giving the XR “Headed for Extinction and What to do About It” talk in a community, there needs to be restrictions on how much the talk can be changed, if at all, while still presenting it as an XR-administered talk. This restriction could be accomplished by this policy: 'XR talks may only be given as XR talks if they follow the format as defined by x role'

A policy that is created within a working group applies to all people/work/roles within that working group and any subgroups within it, but not outside of that circle. For it to apply outside of the circle that created it, it would need to be agreed upon in the broader circle/s.

All current policies should be displayed publicly in relevant working group or group-wide documentation.

V. CONFLICT RESILIENCE PROCESS

XRDC has adopted the UK [conflict resilience process](#). We encourage all group members of XRDC to attempt to resolve conflicts between themselves before invoking the conflict resilience process. Oftentimes, being open and vulnerable, expressing your frustrations, and actively seeking reconciliation can be extremely successful can resolve the conflict in a non-escalatory and meaningful way.

If an individual doesn't feel comfortable addressing a concern 1-on-1 with the person or people to which the concern pertains, they can request for a member of the Regenerative Culture working group to sit in on or facilitate the meeting.

In the rare instance where someone needs to be removed from a working group, that authority rests with the internal coordinator, who must seek cooperation a designated mediator from the regenerative culture working group. With the exception of egregious, zero-tolerance offenses such as sexual/physical abuse, someone should only be asked to leave after repeated attempts to rectify issues. These instances should be well-documented by both the internal coordinator and the regenerative culture working group representative member.

When applied to the Regenerative Culture working group itself, the expulsion process should involve a Regenerative Culture advocate from another working group.

If the problems persist despite attempts to address them constructively, the internal coordinator can make a formal request to the regenerative culture working group to have the person removed. They must present evidence of having tried to address the behavior, and evidence suggesting that the behavior has remained unchanged.