



XR-CH STRATEGY PROPOSAL



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THIS DOCUMENT ALSO EXISTS

- **EN FRANÇAIS**
- **IN ITALIANO**
- **AUF DEUTSCH**

WE LIVE IN THE MOST MOMENTOUS OF TIMES

“Based on sober scientific analysis, we are deeply within a climate emergency state but people are not aware of it.”

- Pr. Hans Joachim Schellnhuber

“Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act.”

- Albert Einstein

“It’s time to participate in non-violent political movements wherever possible.”

- Christiana Figueres

Former Executive Secretary of the
United Nations Framework Convention on
Climate Change

WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

In 2019, an open rebellion was declared in Switzerland, against an irresponsible government leading us and most living things towards extinction.

By 2020, disobedient actions were growing **bigger and bolder**, but the pandemic stopped many of them in their tracks.

It is now 2021. We are running out of time to create the **massive cultural and political change we need**.

At this most momentous of times, we need a clear plan to rally around, and more efficient structures and practices, so that in 2021, the rebellion will happen.

This is not a drill. We have to give it our all.

To give XR Switzerland the drive it needs in 2021, the [Birthing Strategy working group](#) produced this document. It is a vision based on:

- a careful study of the many **original strategic choices** of the rebellion and their theoretical and practical justifications, as well as subsequent criticisms (see [reading list](#))
- an overview of trends in the **Swiss movement** via a survey and personal interviews; contacts with activists from other movements. Find results and a commentary [here](#)
- a digestion of all that by the working group members, bringing in **various perspectives** of the rebellion, what has worked and what not

This document is paired with an evolving [FAQ](#).

Note: This is **a proposal for a national strategy, not a prescription**. All rebels are free to pursue the rebellion's [demands](#) in their own ways, following its 10 [principles & values](#).

WE SET OUR MISSION ON WHAT IS NECESSARY

Mobilising a critical mass of tens of thousands of people* to achieve system change – using ideas such as “Momentum-driven organising”**.

* Sometimes presented as 3.5% of the population, see why [here](#)

** For a definition, see [slide 12](#) or more at this [link](#)

THE TIMELINE OF THE 2021 SWISS REBELLION

PHASE ① MASS MOBILISATION

PHASE ② SPARK

PHASE ③ WHIRLWIND

3.5%
OPTIMISTIC
SCENARIO

Number of people
in rebellion



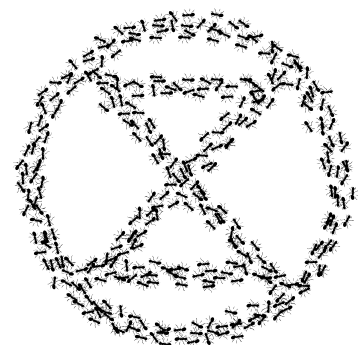
OPEN 'ULTIMATUM'

The Federal Council must tell the truth about the climate and ecological emergencies, and its failure to address them.

END OF THE ULTIMATUM

REBEL FOR LIFE

Thousands take the street to shut down the biggest city



PHASE ① MASS MOBILISATION

JUNE: OPEN 'ULTIMATUM' IS ISSUED

A petition is circulated through the country, asking the Federal Council to tell the truth and act as if the truth is real. If they won't, the rebellion announces its readiness to peacefully break the law in October, and create major disruption in the biggest city of the country.

By signing the letter, people do not commit to disobeying themselves, but officially endorse non-violent civil disobedience as a tool proportionate to the emergency we are in. As signatures accumulate, legitimacy increases, and so does the self-confidence and determination of new rebels.

JUNE – OCTOBER: MASS MOBILISATION.

The main focus of the movement becomes to get thousands of rebels ready to disobey by October. This means a **huge outreach effort**, with talks, trainings, and actions geared to that purpose.

The Mass Mobilisation working group is currently working hard on a [mobilisation strategy](#). They are putting together recommendations, resources and tools to help local groups mobilise people in their own city and area. To keep updated on their work, you can already sign up to their [Mattermost](#), [Telegram](#) or [Instagram](#) channels.



PHASE ② THE SPARK

- **END OF SEPTEMBER: ULTIMATUM DEADLINE**

If the government has still not [told the truth](#) about the climate and ecological emergency, the rebellion states its intentions in a way that captures media attention

- **7-10 DAYS** of talks & light actions, to build anticipation and mobilise & train latecomers

- **OCTOBER 3RD: REBELLION FOR LIFE** Thousands take the streets, disrupting the biggest city and refusing to move as long as the 3 demands are not met. Rebels have been trained and prepared and are ready for [mass arrest](#).

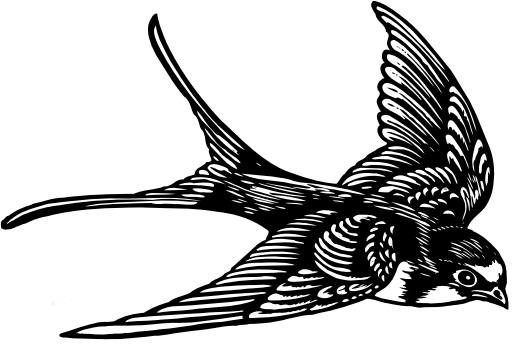
Based on the experience of the UK in April 2019, if executed well, this phase can be expected to achieve:

- *A large shift in consciousness in the Swiss public, as protests centre the climate and ecological emergencies **in new and emotionally intense ways***
- *Some **concessions** by the Federal Council*
- *A massive **influx of new rebels** into the movement*

However, it is only the next phase that has a chance of delivering true system change.

The whirlwind phase.

NB: For why and how we should go forward with this plan despite the pandemic, see [slide 14](#) and [FAQ](#).



PHASE ③ THE WHIRLWIND

This phase is the one associated with the most uncertainty – and the most potential gains. While we can control the spark, we can't control whether the fire catches.

The game is to trigger a self-reinforcing shift in public opinion, that drives thousands more to join us in civil disobedience, until we reach a **social tipping point** beyond which the government has no choice but to act on our 3 demands.

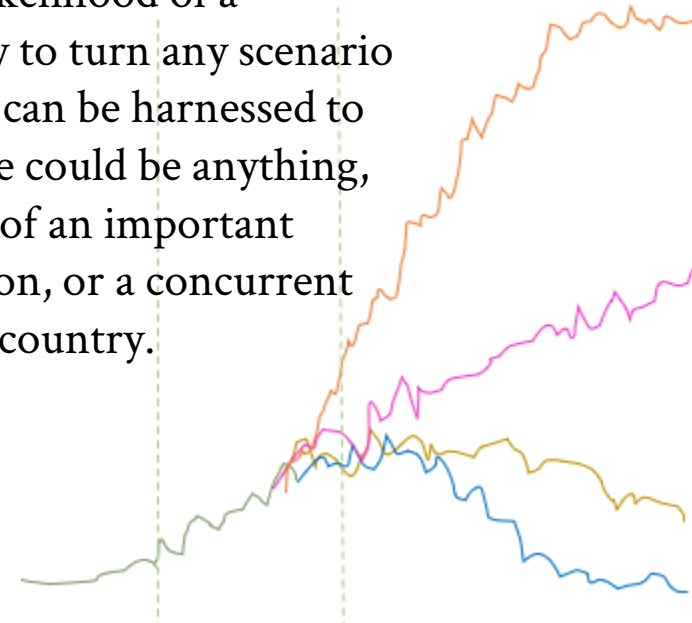
What are the odds of it happening? Slim. What are the odds of any other strategy delivering the change we need in the time we have? Slimmer.

So we simply have to give it a chance - as if life depended on it. And we might as well enjoy it.

Success here will be a combination of luck, skill and preparation.

[Preparation for a whirlwind](#) means a) creating conditions that increase the likelihood of a whirlwind, and b) being ready to turn any scenario to our advantage. Events that can be harnessed to kindle the nascent popular fire could be anything, from the unexpected support of an important figure, to outrageous repression, or a concurrent climatic disaster affecting the country.

More about whirlwinds [here](#).



IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS - THE ACTION PLAN

The plan just laid out is a proposal by the Birthing Strategy working group. The associated detailed Action Plan needs to be worked out with the help of more rebels. **If you want to make this vision come true, here is what you can do.**

- **Check out the [Action Plan](#)** (regularly updated). This will tell you where we are at, and where help is needed (e.g. preparing the Ultimatum, mobilisation video, etc.)
- If you can give a lot of time, consider proposing your skills to a **national working group** in priority. They are severely short-handed, and work done there serves the whole movement at once (→ see slides 30-31)

- **Reconnect with your affinity group** (→ see slides 23-28) or rebellious friends, and plan out your outreach to grow the rebellion. Let everyone know we have the biggest plans for October and we need them!

- **Join local working groups** to help organise talks and trainings, help affinity groups plan their outreach and actions, and grow the pool of local resources and skills in coordination with national working groups

Our main goal now is mass mobilisation. Check out [the strategy](#) laid out by the MassMob pool. If you need guidance, you can write to them at massmobilizationch@riseup.net





WHY MASS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE IS NECESSARY

The extinction rebellion's strategy is based on [momentum-driven organising](#): in a game of social dominos, we aim to be the initial push that sets society in motion, driving it to a **social tipping point** beyond which deep political change is inevitable.

The system relies on people working for it. The pillars of power will collapse when people refuse to participate any longer, and withdraw their support from murderous projects.

This means that **most of our actions are, directly or indirectly, addressed to the public**, daring our fellow citizens to disobey in their turn.

Actions happening away from the public space, by closed groups of activists, or covertly, tend to reinforce a feeling that 'others' are 'taking care of it'.

By contrast, openly disrupting public spaces directly impacts people's everyday lives. It makes it about them, and gives us the opportunity to talk directly to them with empathy. They may not like what we do. But it forces them to take sides, and our job is to **maximize the chances that they join the side that fights against extinction.**

And the good news is: we know how to do it.

The next slides detail some critical ingredients, learnt from the history and experience of the many movements that preceded us.

THE PILLARS OF OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

WE TELL THE TRUTH AND ACT AS IF THE TRUTH IS REAL

- The government has broken the social contract. **Therefore it is our right and duty to rebel**
- We proclaim our honesty and absolute determination by acting proudly, **openly and above ground, accepting personal consequences** (*XR Principle n°4*)
- We do not focus on what is possible or not **We focus on what is necessary**
- We embrace the feelings that fuel us, our grief, **our infinite love and our rightful rage** (*XR Principle n°3*)

WE ARE BEYOND POLITICS

- We align behind a minimal set of demands, to **allow maximal participation** (*XR Principle n°1 & 2*)

- We reach out of our social bubbles and **meet people where they are, without judgement** (*XR Principle n°6*)
- We polarize society along different lines than those of traditional politics, **forcing people to take sides** (and spurring them to join ours!)

WE ARE NON-VIOLENT (*XR Ppl. n°9*) WE DON'T BLAME OR SHAME (*XR Ppl. n°8*)

- Treating our opponents with respect **increases the likelihood of their defecting**
- By causing disruption in a peaceful way, **we present the government with a dilemma**. Letting us carry on will encourage others to join. Repressing us will undermine their own legitimacy, and drive more people onto the street

MASS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE ...EVEN IN TIMES OF *COVID-19* ?

"Climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st Century"

- World Health Organisation

Is now the right moment for mass protests...? No. The right moment was 40 years ago. The next best time, though, is now. Yes, despite the pandemic.

We cannot afford to make plans for 'when things get better', because things might not.

As years go by and climate and ecological disasters worsen, we will have to deal with crisis upon crisis, [interacting](#) with each other in often devastating ways.

Pandemics themselves have long been an expected (and warned against) [consequence](#) of climate change and ecological destruction.

In 2020, despite the virus, **tens of millions of people around the world had no choice but to take to the streets**, fighting for their lives against

racist oppression or dictatorship. The climate and ecological emergency, too, is an existential threat.

This threat, though, still feels remote to the people of Switzerland. Inspiring the right feeling of urgency in the population will depend heavily on awe-inspiring, real-life protests. Our task will be to make it safe enough for as many people as possible to decide to join the protests.

The pandemic cannot mean a pause for the rebellion. What it means instead is more work. A *lot* of extra work. On communication, mobilisation, and most importantly action design. But many creative ideas are already around, and experiments taking place.

Are you ready to help make this work...?



NON-VIOLENT

**extinction
rebellion**

THE REBELLION'S PLACE IN AN ECOSYSTEM OF MOVEMENTS

Fundamentally, the extinction rebellion is not an identity but an activity: **it is the convergence of a wide variety of people and movements in acts of mass civil disobedience**, in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse.

So far, the most disruptive and massive forms of disobedience used by the extinction rebellion have been **the shutting down of capital cities around the world** for prolonged periods of time. This is still the [main focus](#) of the rebellion.

Opening the space for such revolutionary moments is the goal of people who take organising roles within the rebellion.

During rebellion waves, people and movements set their differences aside, find common ground on which to stand together in mutual love and respect, and disobey side-by-side behind a simple set of unified demands.

Outside of these moments of coming together, each is free to pursue their own goals – sometimes in opposition to one another – using their own methods, under their own banner.



“A revolution only picks up steam once two or more groups that have nothing to do with one another decide to join together for their mutual benefit.”

-Srđa Popović, leader of the Otpor! movement

WHAT DOES AN OPEN REBELLION SOUND LIKE?

The way we talk about the rebellion shapes the way it is perceived, by rebels and non-rebels.

If it sounds to the public like an exclusive club, it will never be the mass rebellion we need it to be.

‘members of XR’ or ‘people rebelling for life’?

For many of us, joining the rebellion brings a sense of **pride and belonging**. For others, it can be important to rebel without losing their identities nor giving up on their specific fights.

When we rebel together, we all align on three vital demands, 10 principles and values, and some ways of working together. The rest of the time,

disagreements are normal – and important, as a sign we truly are a large coalition of people.

It is possible to pull at the same rope during the rebellion waves, and fight the rest of the year. For instance think of [the alliance](#) between Farmers for XR and Animal Rebellion.

A simple way to convey this openness better could be to try and **talk about ‘the rebellion’ or ‘the extinction rebellion’ rather than ‘XR’** as much as possible in public, as a more accurate and open term.

See further proposed [communication guidelines](#).

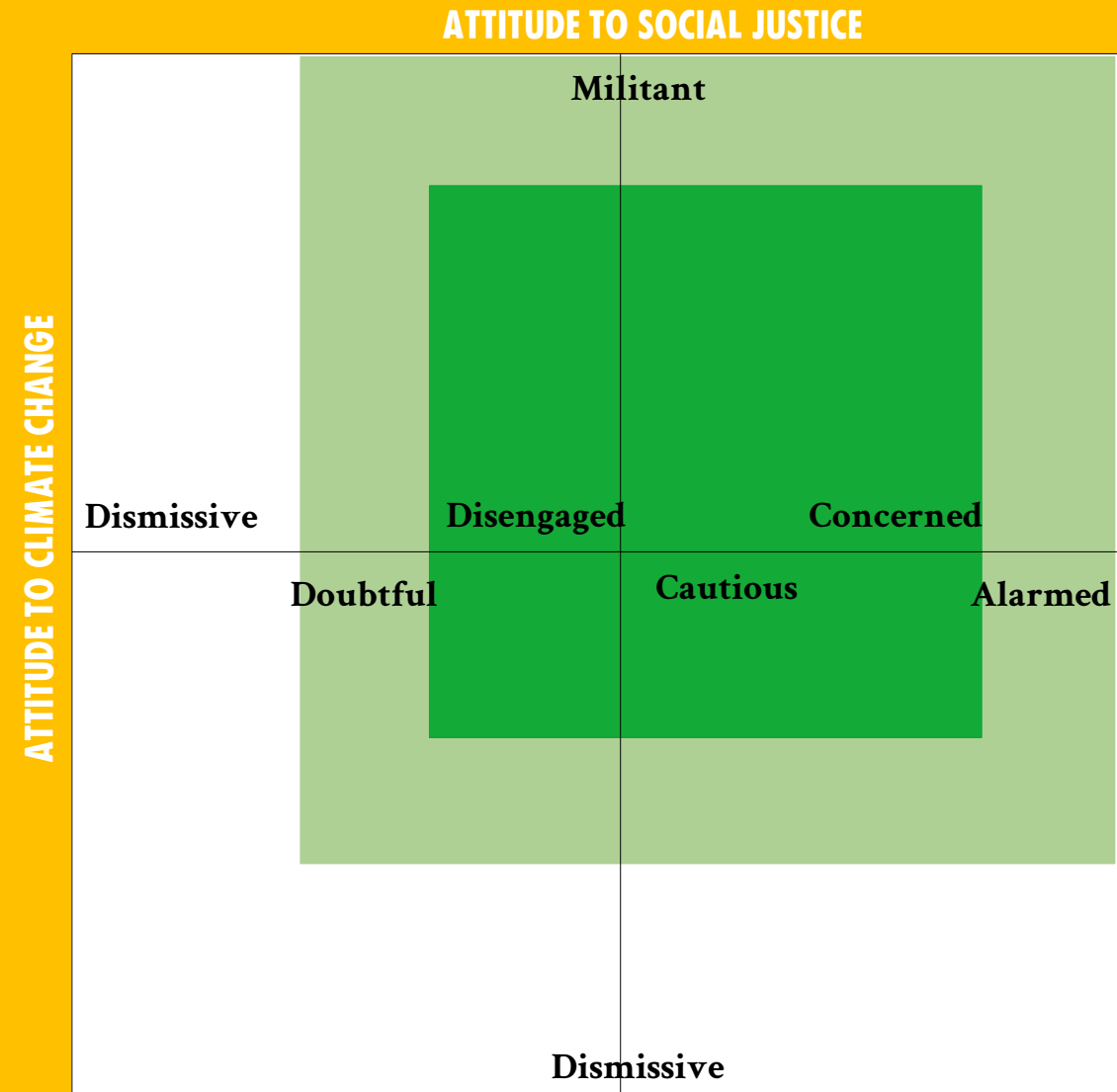
WHO IS THE REBELLION'S TARGET AUDIENCE?

Extinction Rebellion Principle n°6: We welcome everyone and every part of everyone who is willing to do the same.

The rebellion aims at getting thousands of ordinary people to take the streets. Its goals, messages and methods are compatible with a wide range of people (light area). The task is to empower them to come together, in order to protect whatever matters most to them against the universal threat of extinction.

To be efficient, most mobilising efforts should target the dark area: ordinary people with moderate levels of engagement. This is because i) we don't have time to waste on the hardest to convince, and on the other hand ii) people already very alarmed or militant need little extra persuasion to join in rebellion when the time comes!

TARGET AUDIENCE OF THE REBELLION: ORDINARY PEOPLE





TELL
THE
TRUTH

CITIZEN

TELLING THE TRUTH – IS THERE ONLY ONE?

The Heading For Extinction talk moved tens of thousands around the world to break the law.

How? By presenting the physical and biological science of the climate and ecological emergencies in vivid terms, and **letting people work out the implications for their own lives and loves.**

We are fucked

The main truth we want to get out to the world is that **climate breakdown and ecological collapse are universal threats.**

We also recognize that we are not all equal in facing these threats, nor do we all bear the same moral responsibility. Recognizing this is the key to **global justice and a future for all.**

Yet, it is often when they realize they are **protecting what is dearest to them personally** that people become ready to make sacrifices, and rebel.

Collectively, we must therefore make space for every form of grief, rage and worry. We connect in empathy, **without establishing a hierarchy of suffering.**

We come as we are and meet people where they are. The reasons to join the rebellion are as numerous and diverse as the population of Switzerland. We speak from our own experiences, and together, we embody a multi-faceted truth, made of a myriad of lived realities.

TELLING THE TRUTH – WE LIVE IN A TOXIC SYSTEM

Extinction Rebellion Principle n°8: We avoid blaming & shaming. We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.

Some sectors and practices are incredibly harmful to people and planet. Part of telling the truth can be to highlight that. But **how do we actually make them change?**

“What collapses a regime is when insiders turn against it”

Many groups have already taken up the important mission of shining a spotlight on harmful sectors, damaging their perception among the public (e.g. Breakfree, CCJ, Greenpeace, Public Eye...)

The extinction rebellion has a complementary approach: attempting to spark dissent *within* these sectors.

An XR action targeting the private sector should not make employees/customers feel blamed or shamed. To be able to question their own activities honestly, people need to be made to feel **valued, encouraged and empowered – not unsafe and miserable.**

Ultimately, our goal is that the very people these sectors depend on start dissenting and disobeying.

Whenever possible, the most impactful actions are organised by the very people who depend on that sector (e.g. [scientists](#) targeting their institutions, [fashion lovers](#) targeting the fashion industry...)

More thoughts on private-sector actions [here](#).



DESIGNING ACTIONS THAT MEET THEIR GOALS

- THE GOAL IS TO WIN A GAME OF NUMBERS -

The ultimate act of non-violent civil disobedience is the rebellion itself, where tens of thousands of people take the street to disrupt a capital city over an open-ended period of time. By refusing to comply any longer with a government that is failing us and endangering our futures, and by causing disruption, rebels make their demands impossible to ignore. This is the moment when history happens, as it has so many times before.

The rebellion is the goal.

Everything before that is just the means to get to that end.

Action is at the core of everything we do. It is how we transform reality around us. We must never be satisfied with simply broadcasting a message to the wind, and expecting people to pick up our calls.

To recruit and to broaden support for the rebellion, we need to get out into the physical world, and we need to create **personal, direct, tangible human interactions**.

For that we have talks, trainings, leafletting, door knocking, phone calls, direct personal messages, public speeches, creative protests, disruptive actions. **Your imagination is the limit.**

DESIGNING ACTIONS THAT MEET THEIR GOALS

- BUILDING UP THE REBELLION -

The rebellion means to **disrupt – physically and emotionally – to shift public consciousness.**

The strategy of XR actions is not to aim for incremental political goals, but to **get the public emotionally involved**, in one way or another, and bring it closer to a social tipping point.

➤ **LOW PROFILE ACTIONS** are **what truly builds the rebellion.** Their goals are to:

- **TRAIN** new rebels
- **REACH OUT** to the local public
- **INSPIRE** others to rebel, and organise themselves to come to the big rebellion
- **EXPERIMENT** with new tactics for the big rebellion

➤ **HIGH PROFILE ACTIONS*** are used to fuel society-wide debates, polarize on strategic topics, and shift the [Overton window](#). They have high potential returns – but also high risks for the entire movement. They should be designed responsibly as **part of a careful national narrative-building and prioritisation.** To make the most of them, they call for good national coordination.

To mobilise thousands for the October rebellion, it is recommended that local groups focus first on low-profile actions that maximize **recruitment and training of rebels** with minimal resources (but see notes*).

Resources: [NVDA handbook](#)
[Mass-mobilisation strategy](#)

*More strategic [thoughts](#) on high-profile actions

DESIGNING ACTIONS THAT MEET THEIR GOALS

- THE PLACE WHERE ACTIONS ORIGINATE -

To be sustainable, our actions are part of a [regenerative action cycle](#).

Action burn out is a thing

For some people, taking part in actions is a way of dealing with climate anxiety.

But having wrong expectations about what an action can achieve leads to exhaustion and a feeling of powerlessness.

Being very clear about an action's goals, on a personal level and on a collective level, allows rebels to celebrate their successes and improve their techniques.

The paradox

When hope dies, action begins. Then we win hope back.

Social tipping points work in such a way that before they suddenly happen, progress is mostly invisible.

To be able to keep pushing when nothing seems to move, keep shouting when no-one seems to hear, we must let go of an outcome-oriented motivation structure. Or disappointment will slowly exhaust us.

Instead, we must engage in rebellious activity as an end in itself, because it is the right thing to do. Because we think it is immoral and outrageous not to do so.

Because it is our sacred right and our indispensable duty to rebel.

Extinction Rebellion Principle n°3

We need a regenerative culture.

Creating a culture which is healthy,
resilient and adaptable.

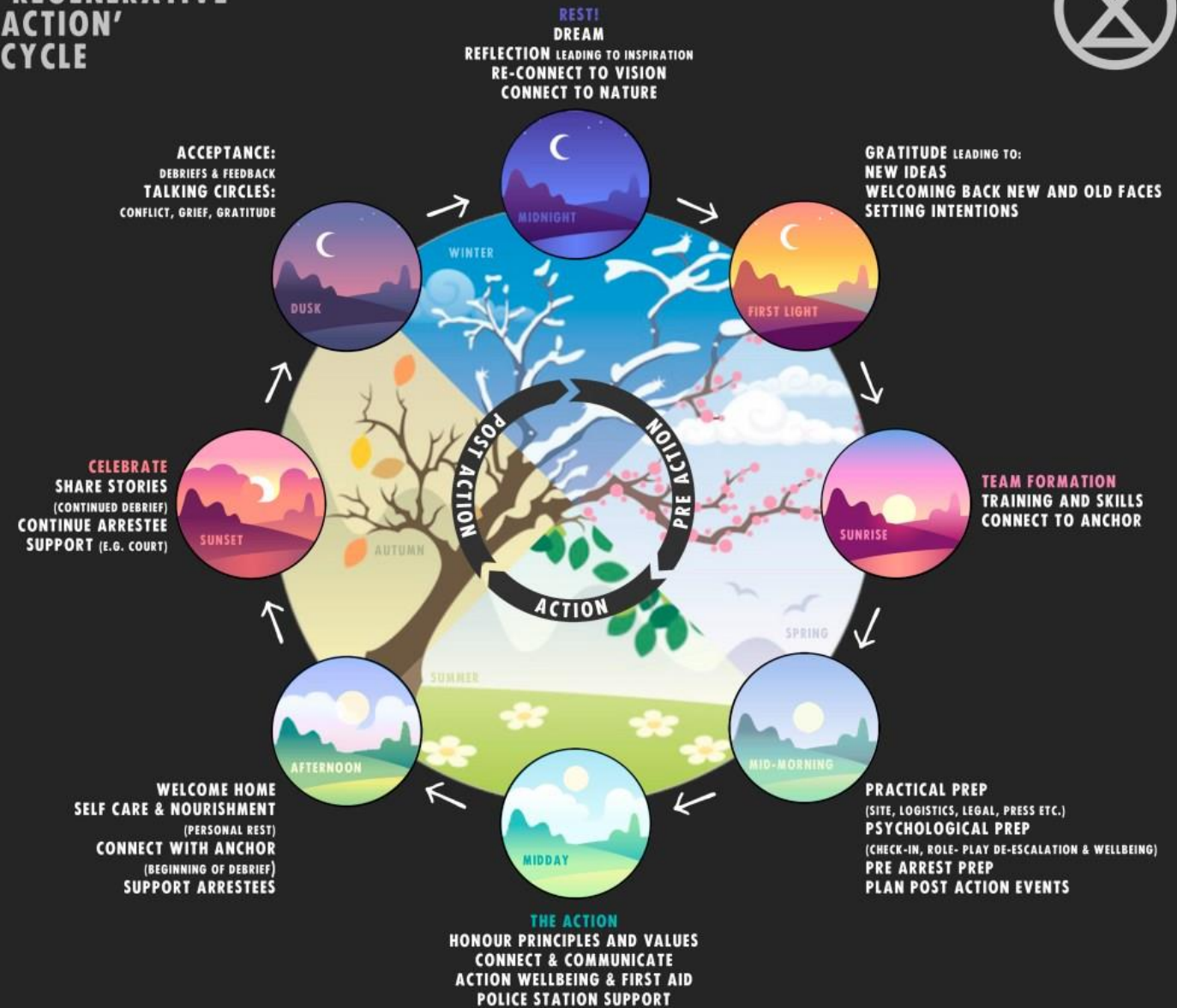
Extinction Rebellion Principle n°5

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.

THE 'REGENERATIVE ACTION' CYCLE



THIS DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATES HOW ACTIONS CAN BE PLANNED
AND EXECUTED IN A PEACEFUL AND REGENERATIVE WAY.
INSPIRED BY THE 8 SHIELDS MODEL, IT REFLECTS CYCLES THAT OCCUR IN NATURE.
THIS CYCLE CAN TAKE DAYS, WEEKS OR EVEN MONTHS.

IN THE SPIRIT OF CONTINUED LEARNING AND GROWTH:
VERSION 1.1 CREATED SEPTEMBER 2019



EMPOWERING AFFINITY GROUPS



The lifeblood of all the actions mentioned above, disobedient or not, are affinity groups (see XR UK's [handbook for affinity groups](#))

They are made up of 8-12 people and are **autonomous to do the actions they want to in the name of XR as long as they adhere to the Principles and Values.**

Working groups, both national and local, should work to empower affinity groups by providing them with the support, skill sets and advice they may need.

Affinity groups organise or join actions according to their chosen level of risk, although risk does not necessarily correlate with how transformative an action is.

Ex 1. Relationships are at the heart of human actions. Simply knocking on doors in one's neighbourhood is a radical act in our era of disconnectedness, that requires real courage.

Ex 2. An affinity group can pull off a high profile action, because of the power of acting in broad daylight and standing by one's acts (e.g. a [handful of rebels](#) can cover a building in paint, before gluing themselves onto it to wait for the police)

(We are all responsible for the effect our actions have on the rest of the rebellion, so it is advised that affinity groups ask for feedback and warn local coordinators before undertaking high profile actions)

Find more on that in the [Mass Mob Strategy](#).



STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SUPPORT STRUCTURE

THE REBELLION IS RECRUITING!

Organising a full-on rebellion is an enormous task – it is also a vital one. **Under such circumstances, it is our moral duty to be efficient.**

For the last 2 years, scores of rebels poured energy and creativity into the rebellion. But a lot of it was dissipated through a structure that often lacked **coordination, efficiency and gratitude**, leading to burn-out and time wasted.

Let us face this truth too: we are as yet not many. It is now vital **we pool resources together and strengthen the national support structure of the rebellion.**

Local groups should be free to focus on community organising, affinity group empowerment, and actions. To enable that, they should be able to lean on reliable national working groups, mandated to provide all rebels with the support and resources needed.



***A note on decentralization:** national working groups are there to **serve** the rebellion and hold it together. They don't take autonomy away from any local group, affinity group or individual, but strengthen this autonomy by providing them with resources and support to achieve our shared purpose.*

STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL SUPPORT STRUCTURE THE REBELLION IS RECRUITING!

We all need to be able to rely on one another at every level. Rebels on the ground should be able to rely on the solid support of national working groups. Rebels involved in working groups should be able to trust each other and the seriousness of the organisation.

Closeness or anonymity in roles that hold any sort of power endanger trust and accountability. And without either, social movements die.

This means that national working groups need:

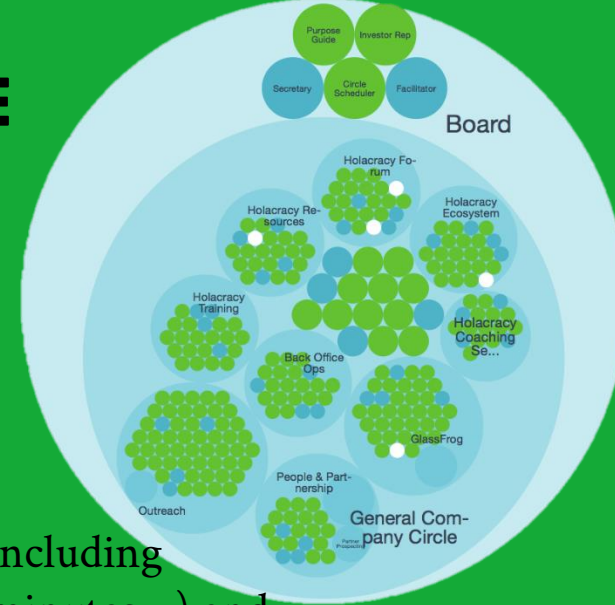
- Committed, identifiable members, putting both skill and time in service of the rebellion

- clear mandates
- clear structures and processes, including transparency (on members, of minutes...) and efficient national coordination
- healthy, regenerative ways of working that value people's contribution and prevent burn-outs within working groups.

**WE HAVE A REBELLION TO PUT TOGETHER, FOLKS.
THE GOOD NEWS IS: WE KNOW HOW.**

SO LET'S GO.

[Find out more here.](#)



BEFORE WE LET YOU GO...

It's very dark. We're very fucked.

So there's no way around this conclusion...

WE NEED TO HAVE FUN!

As Emma Goldman would have said: *if we cannot dance, it is not our rebellion.*

Bring in your love, humour, craziness, lust for life, child –
all the beautiful things you are rebelling for.

You only live once. So embrace the YOLO, do what is right, and rebel for life with panache!





SEE YOU IN THE STREETS

ACT NOW

With Love and Rage,
XR-CH Birthing Strategy
Working Group

rotscherfoto.ch

[Donate here!](#)