



C19 Peoples Coalition: Opening the Discussion on structure

(31 March 2020)

This document reflects the evolution for the C19 Peoples Coalition from the first meeting was called until the 31 March. Since then the Coalition has continued to develop at a pace.

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INTRODUCTION

This document aims to simulate discussion around the structure of the emerging C19 People’s Coalition. It presents emerging questions and documents the evolution of the Coalition.

The discussion should draw on the “10 quick thoughts on feminist organising in the face of COVID-19” document tabled at the Gender WG (see APPENNDIX 1) and the principles to form non hierarchal communication and structure based on Extinction Rebellion’s experiences locally shared by Rehad (see APPENDIX 2)

EMERGING QUESTIONS



Open questions at the moment:

- ? Are the signatories of the POA members of the coalition? If so are those organisations aware that the coalition has been operating in their name?
- ? How the task team is constitute and mandated? Do the WG conveners participate in the task team? *It would make sense.....*
- ? Did the working groups finalise their mandates? Do the composition of the working groups include all the constituencies as mentioned below?
- ? How does the coalition ensure that the technology divide do not further entrench exclusionary processes of organising?
- ? The information flow and communication between the various groups and the task team?
- ? Considerations can be made whether some form of loose organisational structure can be agreed for the operational purposes (minutes; calendar of meetings and related preparations; a live archive of interventions and actions for documentation purposes; an overview of coalition's engagements/collaborations with external political structures and bodies should be provided to the broader coalition partners/members)?
- ? Arts is a form of expression, and can be very useful to convey messages. Should be an element integrated in every working group and/or coordianted by a WG, or fall under Media?

HOW THE COALITION EVOLVED:





Continue to **engage with the State**

Push for a more systematic and explicit collaboration

Utilize the capacity of existing community initiatives, neighbourhood collectives and their tested/practiced ways of organising and mobilising.

Remain open for collaboration



Further, exercise pressure considering the urgency of the situation. There is a point when “quite diplomacy” reaches its limits and **stronger pressure** needs to take place, considering a broad and great majority lacks the channels to voice concerns and urgent needs.



Strengthen our capacity to **organise and mobilise** in order to provide immediate assistance and support to the variety of pro-active interventions that are taking place already. Those are centred and driven by those sectors in society that so far have not been explicitly part of the considerations/messaging by the State

Task TEAM
(mandate)

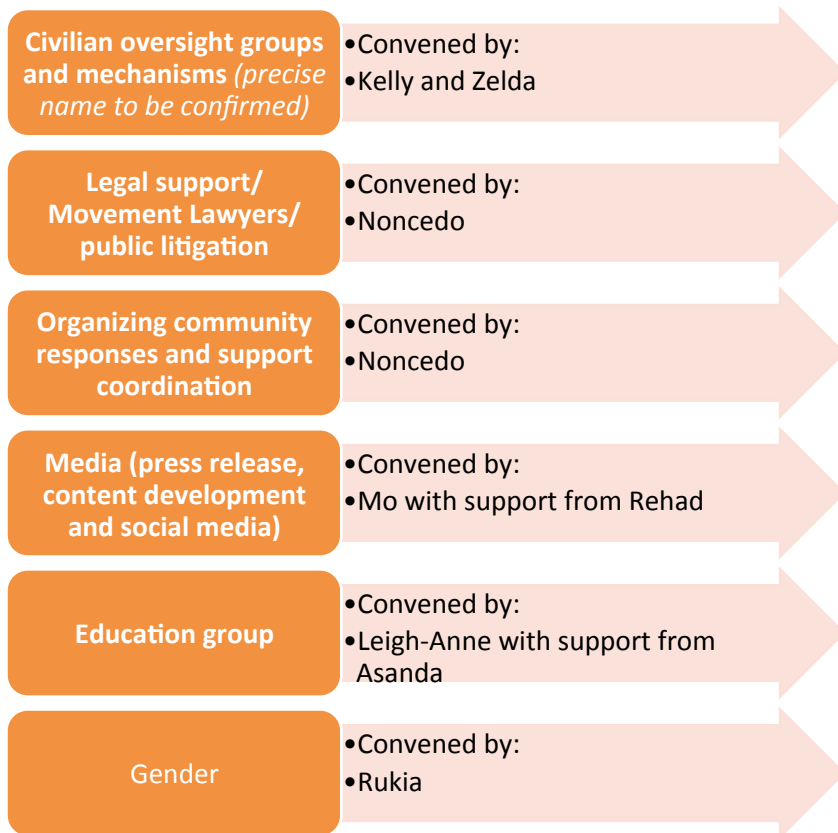
INITAIL PRINCIPLES

TO SUPPORT THE MANDATE OF THE TASK TEAM AN LOOSE STRUCTURE WAS AGREED BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- * A body that is able to operate as coalition and it reaches beyond the formalised NGOs. Identity that works with, speaks to and reach the networks that have been active around the current crisis.
- * A platform that offers coordination and operations support in the interim comprising various initiatives in every urban and high density areas.
- * A coalition that is **open and flexible**, with capacity to increase the reach; encourage collaboration with community initiatives; neighbourhood initiatives, street organisations in terms of providing mutual aid.
- * Include organisations on the ground and **grassroots organisations**; encourage collaboration with **community self-organising movements**
- * In order to respond to immediate and urgent coordination needs **working groups** were set up to provide a platform **for collaboration, solidarity and support** around those needs (oversight and monitoring; community responses; media and public messaging and information; legal support and possibly others)

- * Groups remain **flexible**; encourage **organic processes for organizational development** at community level across sectors; cover areas more broadly
- * The working groups **strengthen grass root mobilization** around the promises made and not yet and establish the linkages to escalate those
- * The current CS initiatives and coordination have been primarily Cape Town based. There is an urgent need to get the level of coordination **extended to other metros and urban areas**, more importantly those with high population density

WORKING GROUPS



Convener:

responsibility of coordinate the first meeting.

The working groups tasked to:

- establish mandate;
- how the mandate will be implemented;

We currently have 10 Working Groups:

- 1 Media WG
- 2 Education WG
- 3 Community WG
- 4 Legal WG
- 5 Repression WG

- 6 Gender WG
- 7 Gauteng WG
- 8 KZN WG
- 9 Economic WG
- 10 Labour WG

CONSTITUENCIES FOR THE WORKING GROUPS AS AGREED IN THE FIRST MEETING



- ✓ Community – civics, social movements, street committees, the elderly, the unemployed, rural, children, etc.
- ✓ Labour/workplace - largely trade unions, precarious labour, informal sector
- ✓ Youth and students
- ✓ Women
- ✓ LGBTI
- ✓ Religious and faith based organisations (including traditional spiritual leaders)
- ✓ Service/support organisations & NGOs - climate justice, media and communications, Legal advice and human rights organisations
- ✓ Education sector (universities, colleges, ECD centres, schools, community learning centres, etc.)
- ✓ Public health activist organisations and health workers (including **traditional healers**)

APPENDIX 1: 10 quick thoughts on feminist organising in the face of COVID-19

1. **Who has the power?** – this is what challenging inequality and oppression boils down to - ask yourself this question over and over again; whose voice, experience and leadership is being heard, whose is being excluded? Think deeply about context – challenge yourself to think about how each issue effects different people differently; think about the multiple oppressions many face (intersectionality).

2. **Nothing for us without us** –back to basics simple, do not make decisions on behalf of others – even if your idea is GREAT – you will be surprised how it may not make any sense in another’s context. Not only do you not know what is possible, you cannot ensure it is sustainable. Facilitate input, make your suggestions briefly (if you must) and then step back to listen. Do not speak on behalf of others, create space for them to speak for themselves. What does decision-making look like now you are thinking about power?
3. **Did you eat your privilege porridge this morning?** Male privilege, white privilege, class privilege, cis-gendered privilege; acknowledge and check it. There is no magic wand, you are going to have to do the work. Remember privilege is thinking something is not a problem because it does not impact you personally; and also you are only ‘entitled to your opinion’ if it is not rooted in someone else’s oppression.
4. **Suspend judgement** – if you are judging someone else’s action but have not considered what their choices may be and have not reached out to support them, stop immediately. Bring diversity into shared purpose, it does not have to be something you would chose personally, as long as you support others’ in their choices.
5. **The personal is political.** Actively support womxnⁿ in our multiple roles – be flexible, take on the admin load, send data/airtime, challenge misogyny (hatred of women) and violence.
6. **Amplify and celebrate** the voices, experiences, leadership and solutions of womxn. Model supporting those who have the least power; find hope and JOY in collective power.
7. **CONSENT CONSENT CONSENT** – when you have power, it is easy to coerce and call it consent. Get consent to share photos, details of people’s experiences and contacts. Apply this concept to how you make decisions and think about the safety of others. Even when you have consent, think about what story we are telling, is it challenging racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic stereotypes or confirming them? What reality do we want to portray? Who will be made unsafe by sharing this information? Even within social justice organisations there will be tensions – practice an intersectional lens, remember it is about power and it is structural.
8. **Solidarity not charity** – understand that our freedoms are connected; use each moment to build connection and community that will last longer than the latest crisis. Be honest, historically honest about why and how you have what you have, and why others’ do not.
9. **Share leadership and embrace conflict**– acknowledge the power differences and the different contributions we can all make; take the time to build trust and work from that base. Acknowledge conflict will arise, aim to preserve relationships as you negotiate conflict. Share your knowledge and resources generously!
10. **See the bigger picture** – assess each action based on its ability to shift inequality in the longer term. We may choose in this moment to ‘help’ but the best actions will shift resources and power so that that ‘help’ is no longer needed. Create the commons now.

Credit: None of these ideas are new or mine but are based on generations of organising by womxn, and some men across a range of contexts. Since I cannot credit all these critical sources (and you can google them if you have data), I am crediting how I got to know and feel them - the feminist organisers whose love and intellect I thrive on, a large glass of wine with respect to the farm workers in struggle in the Western Cape and special mentions to Maggie Mapondera, Thoko Madonko, Koni Benson, Winnet Shamuyarira and Shereen Essof who modelled feminist organising within 45minutes. All mistakes and misattributions are mine. Anna Davies-van Es, Cape Town, South Africa 28 March 2020.

For more thoughtful analysis and feminist popular education methods see:
www.justassociates.org and <https://werise-toolkit.org>

¹ Shayisfuba has adopted this term instead of 'women' to denote the specific inclusion of and orientation towards the issues of trans, queer and black women.

APPENDIX 2: non hierarchal communication and structure based on Extinction Rebellion's experiences locally

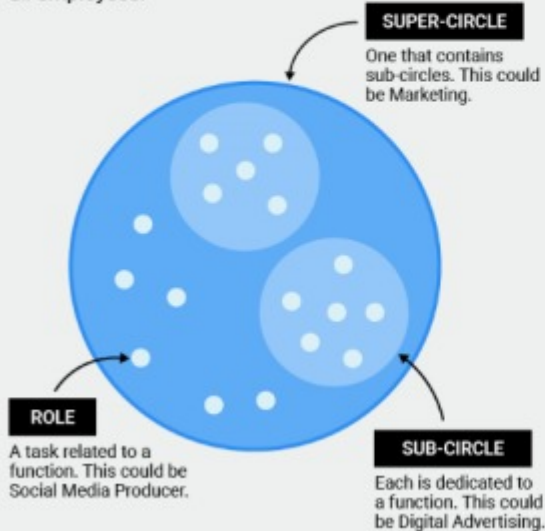
Using Sociocracy and Holacracy in combination with a set of principles to form non hierarchal communication and structure based on Extinction Rebellion's experiences locally

Extinction Rebellion would like to share our experience working in a non-hierarchal system to facilitate resilient cooperative movement communications and rapid self-organisation based on the principles that the collective wisdom of the organisation is imperative to reference, all voices are equally valuable and safe spaces must be created for marginalised voices to be heard.

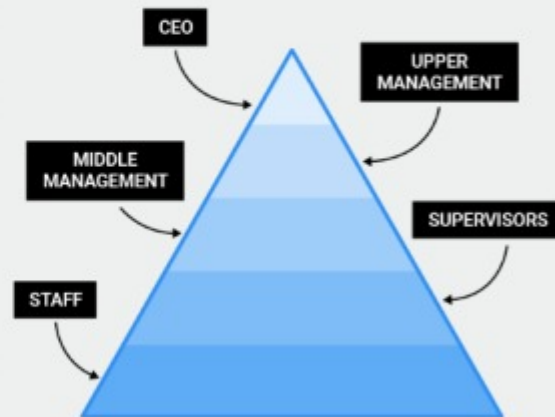
We have been utilising a combination of sociocracy and holacracy, holacracy is well represented in the following diagram:

HOLACRACY VS. HIERARCHY

Holacracy takes powers traditionally reserved for executives and managers and spreads them across all employees.



In a **traditional hierarchy**, layers of management establish how products are approved and monitored.



The premise of holacracy is organisation from the bottom up and allows for teams or circles to act with specific mandates as determined by each team or circle independently within the greater organisation but yet ensuring there is a flow of information throughout the movement as a whole. The organisation is designed to be fractal and has the capacity to grow organically. There are multiple parts of this system, which can be used as individual parts, and when used together create a whole, integrated system that is greater than the sum of the parts.

To ensure coherence, coordination and consistency within the organisation agreement with a core set of principles ensures that the entire organisation operates with a singular focus and vision and that all members of the organisation agree to behave and interact in an agreed fashion and to hold each other and themselves accountable according to these predefined set of principles and values.

Within each circle or team, individuals also volunteer for specific mandates as agreed by the team and are then empowered to act to fulfil that mandate. The system is founded on the principle of **distributed authority** where **decisions are decentralised to individuals in roles with clear mandates for those decisions**. When someone has a **mandate** in a role it means that **they have the authority to make a decision/do something**; and at the same time it sets an expectation which others can have of that role-holder. This system is designed to allow us to move with speed. **Only use group decision-making when it's necessary and not by default!** It's perhaps the most expensive (in terms of time, and if not done well can also expend motivation too) way of making decisions and can slow things down a lot. While it's

important at times to tap into the collective intelligence of a team and/or get buy-in for decisions, it's not always the best way to be making decisions, and there are other ways to achieve those things.

The system is founded on transparency. The clearer you can be about:

- the work you are doing
- your mandate
- the mandates of other roles and all teams;

then the easier it will be to collaborate at scale.

This system is designed to manage the polarity between two different ways of operating, as needed in different situations:

- being able to act quickly and be responsive to fast-changing situations when needed
- And integrating wisdom of multiple perspectives and harnessing collective intelligence when needed.

Information Sharing: the organisation's structure and other parts of this system means that information is shared in team meetings at appropriate levels of scale, plus can travel between different levels of scale as needed.

Each team has its own **mandate** which needs to have at least one, or any combination of the following:

- **purpose-** the reason the team exists/what it is working towards, as a smaller part of the purpose of the whole organism
- **accountabilities** which define the ongoing work that needs to be done by a team, what that team is accountable for, and expectations others can have of a team
- **domain-** which conveys ownership. So for example, if a team owns the domain of the website, it means no other person or team can change the website without owning team's permission. Could also apply to things like a Social Media account, contact list, bank account, script for a talk.
-

The teams are in a structure where larger teams have sub-teams within them, and sub-teams can have their own sub-teams and so on, like Russian dolls. A sub-team is a **whole**, autonomous team in its own right, while also being a **part** of a larger team (this is the same structure as found in natural systems and is called a holarchy).

Each team should have one or two named coordinators (internal & external) with mandates as described :

- The external coordinator is a member of both the broader team and sub-team and serves as the messenger sharing information from the team to the broader organisation and vice versa .
- The internal coordinator is responsible for onboarding new members to the team and for managing the relationships and mood of the circle (the people's person!).

- This means that information and tensions can flow in both ways, both into and out of all teams and be addressed at the appropriate level of scale.

Creating Internal Roles: it is recommended that teams define their own internal roles inside their teams with clear mandates *for all ongoing work within a team*. This increases clarity and reduces potential confusion about who is doing what. When a team defines roles with mandates, the authority for what is included in the mandates is then devolved from the team level into a role. This means that whatever is in those mandates no longer gets decided at a team level, instead it gets decided by the role-holder. Or teams may choose to not define any roles. This is the least preferable option since it reduces clarity about who will do what and has the potential for more confusion.

Decision Making

Four Options for Decision-making

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

1. **decisions to define mandates for roles within a team or for a sub-team** use the process below in [#4 below](#), because multiple perspectives need to be integrated when distributing authority within a team into roles
2. **when a role has a mandate**, the role holder makes the decision about any issues covered by the mandate because the mandate conveys authority to take actions and make decisions. A role-holder may choose to get no input at all/or lots of input/or anywhere in between.
3. **For any other decisions-** the person facilitating the meeting decides which decision-making process to use for each point. Here's some of the most common options:
 - simply seek agreement from team members
 - if agreement can't be reached, take a vote (either simple majority or require a specific majority like 2/3)
4. For any of the above options, **if a decision gets stuck and can't be made any other way** and there is either:
 - a reason the decision needs to be made in the current meeting
 - or if an item is being processed in its third meeting without a decision having been able to be made;

then the decision can be made by simple majority vote. If the vote is tied, then the casting vote is made by the External Coordinator. If the External Coordinator isn't present then the casting vote passes to the Internal Coordinator. If neither coordinators are present then one person is chosen at random to give the casting vote.

Guiding set of principles and values

The following are 9 of the 10 principles currently utilised by Extinction Rebellion that have been slightly adapted and are offered as a proposal for a guiding set of principles and values for the CoVid19 People's Coalition. Please note this is merely a proposal and a framework for discussion and is in no means intended to be proscriptive, rather we offer these with the intent that these may be useful to initiate discussion and formulate more specific principles and values as agreed upon by the CoVid 19 People's Coalition.

PRINCIPLE ONE

We have a shared vision of change - creating a world that is fit for future generations.

PRINCIPLE TWO

We set our mission on what is necessary. **In the context of the CoVid10 people's coalition this would be defined by our mission statement.**

PRINCIPLE THREE

"We need a Regenerative Culture. Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable."

A regenerative human culture is healthy, resilient and adaptable; it cares for the planet and it cares for life in the awareness that this is the most effective way to create a thriving future for all of humanity. More than being a network of "activists", we seek to find ways of being and doing that support positive change. This can include ceremony and prayer (in ways that are neither dogmatic nor expected) as formats to find inspiration from things bigger than ourselves. We need to reconnect with our love for ourselves, our country and our people alongside wider neighbours; people and the natural world.

Regenerative culture includes a healthy focus on mutually supporting categories of:

- self care – how we take care of our own needs and personal recovery from this toxic system
- action care – how we take care of each other whilst we participate in actions to support CoVid19
- interpersonal care – how we take care of the relationships we have, being mindful of how we affect each other, taking charge of our side of relationships
- community care – how we take care of our development as a network and community, strengthening our connections and adherence to these principles and values
- People and Planet care – how we look after our wider communities and the earth that sustains us all

It's about relationships. Our relationships with ourselves and personal histories, our relationships with what we struggle against, our relationships with other individuals day to day, and our relationships as a group – these are completely interdependent. Self care is also about taking care of the animal parts of the self that respond instinctively to stressful situations with fight or flight or faint.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

We openly challenge ourselves and this toxic system - leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.

We are willing to sacrifice our own time, even our own comfort and perhaps our safety. Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change. We have a duty to disobey this system which destroys life on earth and is deeply unjust.

We also realise and know that we are not perfect and being to some extent influenced by the toxic and pathological dynamics that are to be found in all our cultures and the systems we live within. We see this as a reason to critically evaluate all those dynamics and contribute to healing those aspects of ourselves as well as the situations we find ourselves in.

This means that we need to be aware of the things that 'trigger' us, also that we need to strive to be open to learning, reflection and self introspection about other perspectives than those we are already used to or familiar with.

PRINCIPLE FIVE

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.

While our predicament is urgent, it is also important that we don't rush so much that we sabotage our own activities. It is important to gather the required information and consult with each other, collating the collective wisdom of all of our voices wherever possible. Within groups, when an individual has a mandate it is not necessary for that person to ask for permission to take action on things that fall within that mandate, but we also strive to consult whenever something is uncertain and strive to clean-up any mistakes that may result from such actions taken.

We don't know how things will change so we are willing to experiment and learn from what we do. Through ongoing questioning, reflection and learning about what has worked elsewhere we will improve what we do and not get stuck in repetitive behaviour. This is an active and ongoing process, requiring time and input for individuals and groups to think about what has gone well and why, what would be better to be done differently.

PRINCIPLE SIX

We welcome everyone and every part of everyone working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.

The world is currently defined by multiple hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. For those lower down these hierarchies, much of the world isn't a safe space. To create safer spaces we need to work actively to continuously build understandings of how these hierarchies operate, so that we can challenge them and build inclusion through making our spaces more accessible. Therefore, for our movement to be safe for everyone, it needs to be safe for the most marginalised.

This principle includes a commitment to making safer spaces to support inclusivity. It is our goal that every individual is welcomed regardless of ethnicity, race, class, gender, gender identity, gender presentation, sexuality, age, income, ability, education, appearance, immigration status, belief or non-belief and activist experience. Every individual in the movement is responsible for creating and maintaining safer, compassionate and welcoming spaces. New people to the movement need to be explicitly welcomed. A simple starting point is adherence to these core principles.

Physical violence or the incitement of violence towards others is not accepted. Discriminatory behaviour, language or behaviour that exhibits racial domination, sexism, anti-Semitism, islamophobia, homophobia, ableism, class discrimination, prejudice around age and all other forms of oppression

including abusive language towards others, either during an action or elsewhere, is not accepted whether physically or online.

We also recognise that we are complex beings and exhibit many different parts of ourselves at different times and in different circumstances. For example, sometimes we might be caring, at other times judgemental, and at other times carelessly reactive. Some of those parts are parts of us that we're happy to bring, and some of those parts are parts that we're struggling with, or perhaps not even aware they existed until they revealed themselves. With this knowledge, we approach each other from a place of compassion, and encourage each other to increase our own self-awareness.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN

We actively mitigate for power. Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.

We aim to develop a 'field of collective leadership' and actively mitigate to deconstruct power silos. This is a radical mindshift for many of us who are programmed into working within hierarchical structures.

We self-organise and decentralise wherever possible, working around a version of holacracy or 'sociocracy' which is designed to collate our collective wisdom and enable all of our voices to be heard, whilst empowering us to act as sovereign autonomous individuals for the purposes of both speed and creativity.

In keeping with Principle Four, we actively seek to challenge any power silos that may arise and mitigate collectively to ensure that these are deconstructed.

The ground on which this network stands is on the relationships between its participants. We will work every day to build trust, respect and reciprocity among all of us. We assume all members to have good intentions and will react against disrespect. We use conflict resolution techniques to deal with conflict in a healthy way that will bring growth to our movement. We ground our work in dialogue, healing, collective transformation and justice.

Whilst we aim to live in a world where these hierarchies no longer exist, we cannot simply pretend that they don't within our own network. For this reason we aim to centre voices that are normally the most marginalised, by allowing space for them to speak and encouraging those who normally wouldn't to take leadership / coordination positions. This isn't about deciding 'who is the most oppressed', it's about consciously making space for the people who have to fight the most to be heard, recognised and respected.

In practical terms this means:

- We weight coordinating roles towards marginalised groups.
- Accessibility is important both for meetings and actions.
- We recognise that oppressive behaviours are socially embedded within us, and privileged people are asked to commit to questioning their privilege and to be open to being challenged.
- We refresh those who hold positions of responsibility so that power doesn't get entrenched.
- Our strategy is focussed on doing the work it takes to forge genuine alliances with the grass roots movements of the people who are most marginalised.

- We also recognise that sometimes people make mistakes, misjudgements and missteps, and we seek to avoid humiliating exposure when it is clear that an issue needs to be raised and dealt with.

PRINCIPLE EIGHT

We avoid blaming and shaming.

We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.

Whilst a specific campaign may seek to highlight the damaging role played by an institution, we avoid including individuals serving that institution as we acknowledge we are all guilty even though not equally responsible. Remembering that we live in toxic system that has damaged every human is important, but we can point out behaviour that is unhelpful, exploitative or abusive, and state that we won't tolerate such behaviour. We give our power and love away by blaming and shaming individuals. This is also true in our interpersonal and group dynamics as well as our relationship to ourselves and it is important to be compassionate with ourselves, Extinction Rebellion acknowledges that we are all hypocrites, not one of us is perfect as we are doing our best whilst stuck in a toxic system working to create a regenerative culture.

We embrace change that creates unity in diversity; we need to set right the relationships between us, avoiding the interpersonal traps that come from games we may inadvertently play and bringing awareness to the structures that would divide us. We accept that emotion sometimes needs to be expressed, that a period of venting can be necessary. We ask each other for good grace in how we share emotion and to return to a baseline of love, respect and conviviality. We need to be compassionate when mistakes are made. Mistakes are opportunities to learn. We look for ways to connect and understand. Listening deeply to each other is a powerful tool. We especially need to listen to those of us that come from groups whose voices tend to be silenced.

PRINCIPLE NINE

We are a non-violent network

Even though we may be concerned about the current militaristic lockdown we choose to never respond with violent means as a form of response. We agree to practice non violence if we are required to make any show of resistance to the regime's handling of the CoVid 19 crisis.

PRINCIPLE TEN

We are based on autonomy and decentralisation.

We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power. Anyone who follows our core principles and values can take action in the [name of the CoVid19 people's coalition](#).

We recognise that we can't look to government to solve all of our problems.

Decentralisation is key to our success, not only as movement, but also in light of the challenges we are facing. We understand that we must self-organise to meet our own needs.

Any person or group can organise autonomously around the issues that feel most pressing for them, and take action in the name and spirit of the Coalition – so long as the action fits within the Coalition's

principles and values. In this way, power is decentralised, meaning that there is no need to ask for permission from a central group or authority. We also promote the ideas of “holacracy” over consensus:

- ° That it may be agreed in a group for one or two people to do a specific task for the group. Those people are then fully empowered to do the task.
- ° They are best to seek advice and feedback but they don’t need anyone’s permission to complete the task.
- ° They are fully responsible for outcomes and should reflect on them and how to improve in future. If anything goes wrong they should help to “clean up”.

At the same time, as a network, the Coalition self-organises to provide for the needs of the people participating within it, working to provide training in strategic action for change, educating ourselves and each other around issues of power, privilege and how to decolonise, creating better accessibility, caring for our emotional needs in relation to working together, and making time for connection and resilient practices such as self care.