SCRIPT FOR ONLINE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

We have put some pointers in here if you are doing the Assembly by Zoom.

Before you attempt to facilitate a People's Assembly, please make sure you have at least attended one! But remember: it's not rocket science. Give it a go! You'll be great!

This script is just a starting point. As you do more, you'll figure out your own way of saying what's here. Don't feel that this is the only way in which a People's Assembly can be facilitated, although this method is based on many years of experience in PA's by people from all over the World.

Other stuff to note:

- *The two facilitators should be of different genders if at all possible.*
- *Remember that all voices are valued equally. Trust the process, and allow all people to speak, even if you are not sure you're going to like what you hear!*
- *We welcome all people, but not all behaviours: if someone says something that makes you feel uncomfortable (i.e. they may have been racist or sexist), then **name the feelings triggered by that behaviour**… for example, "I feel very uncomfortable with what you just said then". Do not judge the person: saying "you are a racist" or "you are a sexist" or whatever in this situation is more likely to lead to an escalation, and is likely to put the person into a defensive mode that will make further conversation more difficult.*

There's loads more hints and tips and background on PAs in the People's Assembly -Manual, which you can find here: https://extinctionrebellion.uk/peoples-assemblies/

For an online PA, it can be good to have 3 facilitators: 2 Assembly Facilitators, one of whom might also be the Assembly Note-taker. It is also helpful to have a Technical Facilitator, someone who manages the breakout rooms and muting people, but it isn't necessary and it isn't difficult.

BEFORE THE MEETING, SET ZOOM UP

Under MY MEETINGS, click on the meeting you are facilitating. On the left you will see SETTINGS

Under SETTINGS make sure the following are on:

Participants video

Start meetings with participant video on. Participants can change this during the meeting.

Mute participants upon entry

Automatically mute all participants when they join the meeting. The host controls whether participants can unmute themselves.

Chat

Allow meeting participants to send a message visible to all participants

Auto saving chats

Automatically save all in-meeting chats so that hosts do not need to manually save the text of the chat after the meeting starts.

Co-host

Allow the host to add co-hosts. Co-hosts have the same in-meeting controls as the host.

Nonverbal feedback

Participants in a meeting can provide nonverbal feedback and express opinions by clicking on icons in the Participants panel.

Breakout room

Allow host to split meeting participants into separate, smaller rooms

Screen Sharing

To reduce risk of strangers showing inappropriate material in your Zoom Room only permit hosts and co-hosts to share their screens; and do not permit use of virtual backgrounds … as this too is another way trolls can project material into the room.

Laptops are best for online Zooms, but it can be done on smartphones too. Facilitators need to be on Laptops.

Ask people who have used Zoom before to sign in 5 minutes before the start time, and those who have not used Zoom before to sign in 10 minutes early and work out how to use the buttons on the screen.

Facilitator 1: Childrens Fire

(Welcome everyone and invite them to take a seat)

We will start this assembly with the lighting of a flame and a two minute silence. The flame, also known as the Children's Fire, represents all life on earth and the next seven generations. It serves to remind us that every decision we make is not just ours to carry, but will be felt for seven generations to come. I invite you all to take two minutes of silence to allow yourself to contemplate not only the next seven generations of human life, but of all interconnected life on earth that we must act in awareness of.

[Light candle or candles and commence 2 mins silence]

Thank you.

Assemblies have three 'phases' - Input (includes introduction), Deliberation (discussion) and Integration (Feedback).

In the Input phase we will explain the process and structure of the assembly, Introduce the hand signals and frame what the assembly will be discussing and what will happen to the outcomes from this assembly.

[if you are having more input here than just presenting the topic for discussion, such as speakers, video etc you will explain that here]

During the Deliberation (discussion) phase you will sit in small groups for [insert chosen length of deliberation phase] minutes and discuss the question/topic of this assembly.

At the end of the Deliberation phase you will come back into the full assembly and feedback what was generated in your small discussion group.

Facilitator 2: Hand Signals

[Here you will demonstrate the hand signals used in assembly to allow people to use them during the introduction and input phase of the assembly]

We use hand signals to facilitate a discussion where all voices get heard, no one dominates and we don't speak over each other. I will go through the ones you will need to take part today, and they will be repeated later in the process so don't worry if you can't remember them!

USE HAND SIGNALS

- Hand up to make a point (facilitator will stack. Can choose to stack out of order. Focus on making sure that all voices are heard to ensure RADICAL INCLUSIVITY)
- Wavy hands for agreement (to help note taker and make sure you're not interrupting...remember it's all about ACTIVE LISTENING)
- Clarification
- Direct point (not for responding, just for extra added info!)
- Technical point
- Round up (after 2 minutes, to make sure that those who are more comfortable speaking don't go on and on...remember: RADICAL INCLUSIVITY)
- Speak up

Introduce the concept of Assembly

Facilitator 1: What is a People's Assembly?

A way for a group of people to discuss issues or make decisions collectively, where all voices are heard and valued equally and no one person or group are able to dominate the process.

People's assemblies are 'self selected' meaning that anyone can choose to take part. They are not to be confused with Citizens Assemblies which are randomly selected from the population by the process of Sortition, to make sure it is representative in terms of key characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, education level and geography. Citizens' Assembly members would learn about critical thinking before they hear balanced information from experts and stakeholders. They would then spend

time deliberating in small facilitated groups, similar to the break-out groups we're going to use in this People's Assembly

[A Little History and Context -

Participatory democracy Peoples assemblies have a long revolutionary history originating in the Global south. In fact peoples assemblies were at the heart of several revolutions in Latin america, as well as several revolutionary movements in Africa. In 2011 over the course of what became known as the Arab Spring, participatory democracy assemblies sparked revolutionary movements across North Africa, from Tunisia to Egypt, famously in Tahrir square where the dictator Mubarak was deposed. To this day PD people assembles are used in revolutionary movements in Africa including the Y'en a Marre in Senegal who contributed to a change in power in 2014 through Participatory democracy and hip hop. In 2011 the Arab Spring movement that ended in Tahrir square, spread to Syntagma square in Greece with the anti austerity movement and then famously to the Indignado or 15m movement in Spain. At its height the 15 m movement had 80 assemblies being held in Madrid each week alone. Soon after the 15m movement the Occupy movement began in Zuccotti park in New York. This also had PD people's assemblies at the heart of the movement. At its height the global occupy movement had 2000 camps across the world in one weekend. It is no surprise that the extinction rebellion movement also has at its heart pd people's assemblies.]

INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT:

Before we start a People's Assembly, we like to read out this inclusivity statement:

"We value all voices equally in the assembly, as the aim is to hear the wisdom of the crowd gathered here and not to have the assembly dominated by individual voices or groups. We recognise that confident speakers are not always right and that those who are not confident speakers will also have useful ideas or opinions to put into the discussion. This is why we value all voices equally and we ask you to do the same. We do not tolerate any calling out, abuse or shaming and should conflicts arise in this way, there is a conflict resolution process in place to resolve this. We welcome all people but not all behaviours."

We want to hear your voice no matter what. If you like what XR are doing, or don't like it, whatever age you are, wherever you are from and whatever you do.

The whole process will take about an hour and a half*, and we'd love you to stay for the whole of that, but feel free to go or come as you like or need.

[*If you have the time, it's good to do a TESTIFY at this point. It'll add about 15-30 minutes to the overall length of the PA, but gets people talking about why they are at the PA before the main section of the assembly…]

TESTIFY (if there's time)

Before we get into the section of the People's Assembly where you will all be able to talk through our specific issue in a facilitated way, we first like to give anyone who would like an opportunity to talk about what has brought them here today.

QUESTION: What has brought you here today?

Offer the microphone to anyone who wants to speak. Ask for a woman to speak on the microphone first (to ensure that we don't have a succession of men, men and more men)

Allow as much dead air as is necessary for people to build up the courage to come and talk!

FACILITATOR 2 should sit on the floor fairly close in front of the speaker, timing and doing the 'round up' signal as necessary. If you're too far away, a nervous speaker won't see you!

After 15-30 minutes, move into the remainder of the PA...

Facilitator 2: The Three Pillars

A people's assembly is different from a normal conversation or discussion because it is based on dialogue whose history is rooted in traditional ways of sharing and making decisions. It differs from debate where one person is 'right' and the other is 'wrong' and from the typical discussion or conversation where people have a tendency to dominate with questions and interjections. The assembly allows each participant to be held with respect and full attention - and no judgement - whilst sharing from the heart and for each participant to get a turn.

It's ok not to actively share too. Witnessing the sharing of others' feelings and experiences is as important as expressing one's own.

In an assembly, the focus is on personal feelings and experiences - beyond thoughts and opinions. It is a sharing that takes place at heart level as much as possible. Each speaker is encouraged to say 'I' - rather than 'we' or 'they' whilst sharing with others.

This can be encapsulated within the three pillars, which are:

THREE PILLARS:

Radical Inclusivity: No voices dominate / all are heard / all valued equally. No fear of judgement or ridicule. For those who often speak up in situations like this, think WAIT...Why Am I Talking - try to say only what is needed.

[Radical Inclusivity also means being aware of potential barriers to engagement and working with those affected to enable participation. Think about disabled access, sign language, whisper interpretation for those for whom English isn't their first language and other possible means by which those barriers can be removed. Ask at the start of an assembly if there are any barriers to engagement that people need to identify and then request that the group work together to find ways to remove them.]

Active listening: It is easy to start mapping out in your mind what your response may be while someone is still talking. Active listening is focusing on hearing someone all the way through before developing your responses. Assemblies are not an arena for intellectual jousting or point scoring but a place that recognises that no one person or group holds all the answers and that through the wisdom of the crowds we achieve powerful intelligence about the core issues being discussed.

Trust: We need to trust the process/facilitators/other participants. This is not a perfect system! It is only effective if we all trust the intentions of the people in the room – if we work in humility and accept that our ideas may not be the best ideas – and we work towards the best decision for everyone.

Input Phase

Facilitator 1: What is the aim of THIS people's assembly?

BACKGROUND

[Frame your assembly here -

Why has it been convened? What are the aims of this assembly? Where will the results of this assembly go and what legitimacy do they hold?

- Is it a decision making assembly? Is there a yes or no answer that needs to be generated?
- Is it to generate ideas or feedback? Where will these go and are they recommendations that will be acted upon or are they feeding into a wider discussion?]

QUESTION(S)

[State your question or topic for discussion clearly here, and if possible write it up in the exact wording you use somewhere that will remain visible to all participants throughout the assembly.

- *Always ask for any clarifications at this point, and be open to working to reword the question/topic if needed You can ask for a 'temperature check' here to make sure the assembly agrees with the proposed wording*

A good question is worded in accessible language, not too long, and is broad enough to allow for free discussion but not so broad that a structured conversation around it is difficult. Likewise a very specific question won't generate a very diverse response -

Example- You would like to generate ideas for actions at an assembly of a Local XR Group

- *'Should we do an action at the Council buildings? - Very narrow, really requires a yes or no, unlikely to generate a lot of great ideas.*
- *'Generate ideas around local targets and actions that we can take locally' - Broader, still focussed on local targets, gives scope for creativity.*
- *'What can we do to support the Rebellion? - Too broad, could encompass all manner of different approaches and likely to lead to the conversation jumping from topic to topic.]*

Deliberation Phase

Facilitator 2: How does a People's Assembly work?

BREAKOUT ROOMS

We use BREAKOUT GROUPS which Zoom will allow us to set up online - it's simple.

Technical Facilitator: while the other facilitator is explaining how to do the break-out groups, the Technical facilitator, who must be the person who logged in as the host, or who the host has

transferred hosting to, looks at the control panel at the bottom of the screen for the button BREAKOUT ROOMS. If you haven't got it, you are not logged on as the host.1

CREATE ROOMS

Divide the number of participants in total by the number of people you want in the group, and ZOOM will automatically assign people to group rooms. Once you have done this, look at the lists to check that all rooms have the right number of people.

OPTIONS

You can communicate with all the groups by using the BROADCAST button to send messages about timing to the groups.

Get a few friends and give it a test run before you do your People's Assembly

You will discuss the question in a group (8-10), then feedback to the entire assembly.

Need a facilitator and a note taker

- Facilitator: ensures all voices are heard (radical inclusivity). 2 mins per statement (max)
- Note taker: makes notes on what is said.

USE HAND SIGNALS *[recap hand signals here]*

- Hand up to make a point (facilitator will stack. Can choose to stack out of order. Focus on making sure that all voices are heard to ensure RADICAL INCLUSIVITY)
- Flappy hands for agreement (to help note taker and make sure you're not interrupting...remember it's all about ACTIVE LISTENING)
- Clarification
- Direct point (not for responding, just for extra added info!
- Technical point
- Round up (after 2 minutes, to make sure that those who are more comfortable speaking don't go on and on...remember: RADICAL INCLUSIVITY)
- Speak up

10 minutes before the end, directed to go through notes.

Note taker identifies the points that got the most support or acceptance

[how do you want the feedback to happen? Larger assemblies=fewer points fed back verbally.

Assembly note taker to make note of the most popular points or just ask for note takers to give written points to the assembly Facilitator/Notetaker?]

Common structure-

- **'We want 3 points delivered in writing**
- **10 words delivered verbally from note taker to whole assembly'**
- Ask for clarifications on process
- Technical Facilitator under MANAGE PARTICIPANTS unmutes everyone (in preparation for break out rooms, so baby zoomers don't need to spend time looking for the unmute button).
- RESTATE QUESTIONS
- GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! (send into break-out groups)

[25 mins discussion]

- Use BREAKOUT ROOMS > BROADCAST to give timings and other instructions to the groups
- *After 25 minutes, warn groups that they need to round up: they have 10 minutes for…*
    - Their note takers to read through the notes they have taken
    - To choose the three points which had the most support, and write them (LEGIBLY!) on a piece of paper to be given in during the feedback [*or whatever form you have decided the feedback will take*]
    - To write 10 words that the note taker will feed back verbally to the whole assembly [*or whatever form you have decided the feedback will take: if the assembly has around 5 or fewer groups, each group could read their three points to the whole assembly instead of using the "10 words" method*]

[10 mins rounding up]

- When you click CLOSE GROUPS the default is that they will have 1 minute and then be automatically returned to the main group. You can change this in BREAKOUT ROOM settings.

Integration/Output Phase

Facilitator 1: Ending

FEEDBACK (15 mins)

Note-takers to deliver feedback, and hand in written feedback. [*or whatever form you have decided the feedback will take*] If it is important to capture the content in written form, the notetaker can capture this in a google document and then SCREEN SHARE at the end to show the notes.

Remember to get the names of the people giving feedback, and show appreciation.

Thank everyone for participating

Explain what will happen to the results of the assembly. Point anyone that wants more information about XR People's Assemblies to rebellion.earth/assemblies

[at this point you can offer space for 'shout outs' - 'Shout Outs' are an invitation for those gathered to call out brief notifications such as upcoming actions or events. These should be short and arranged with the facilitators beforehand if possible. This should take no more than 10 mins]

Close the assembly and ideally let everyone know when the next assembly will be if appropriate.

Appendix

You may find some of the following topics useful to you:

1. *What is the purpose of a People's Assembly?*
2. *What is the key question being asked?*
3. *How to deal with difficult interactions*

Go to the PA General Script Appendix