

Starting a Local Degrowth Collective Circle

How to Guide

Introduction

The following is a How-to Guide for creating and sustaining a Degrowth Collective in your city. It will review the basics from having regular meetings, getting active in your community, and learning while doing. It will also outline the basic roles that need to be filled, as well as some strategies for establishing and growing a powerful membership.

The Goals are - BUILD COMMUNITY BY LEARNING + BUILD POWER BY ACTING

Let's get started!

First Steps

First thing you have to do is make sure there is not already a Degrowth Collective in your city. Do some research and try to find any degrowth related groups that might already exist. If nothing exists yet, then the first mission is to get the word out that a new degrowth collective is starting.

Spread the word using the following 3 tactics:

1. **Flyers and Poster:** Print and put up around your city in high traffic areas simple flyers and posters that invite people to join the new Degrowth Collective. Include a large QR code that directs people to an online signup sheet where you can collect their contact information (name, mobile phone number and email).
2. **Social Media:** Create and launch new pages and accounts over social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit...etc) that promote the new Degrowth Collective in your city. Use social media as a funnel to redirect people that are interested in getting involved to fill out the online signup sheet.
3. **Existing Groups:** Contact the existing groups in your city that are doing similar work, and ask them to share your online signup sheet with their members to see if anyone is interested in joining the new Degrowth Collective.

Once anyone fills out the signup sheet saying they are interested in getting involved with the new Degrowth Collective, try and reach out to them within the next 24 hours, with a personal invitation to join the next monthly meeting and the signal group chat. A direct text message or phone call works best for this.

A couple of days before the upcoming monthly meeting, make sure to send reminder text messages to all members (especially new members) inviting them to join.

Monthly Meetings

This section contains best practice for successful meetings.

Date and Time

The collective should host monthly or bi-monthly meetings on a recurring day. It is ideal that the weeknight chosen remains the same throughout the year in order to make it easy for the membership to always know when upcoming meetings will take place.

Example; Every 1st Tuesday of the Month.

Location

A local bar or coffee shop that is centrally located is the best location. Make sure to choose a space that is not very loud or busy on the day you choose, as well as speak with management in advance in order to ensure that a space for 5-10 people sitting in a circle is possible.

Meeting Outline

1. 30 mins - New Member Orientation Use the first 30 minutes of every meeting to orient new members about the Degrowth Collective, what campaigns or actions the Collective is involved with, as well as what to expect at a monthly meeting. It is crucial that the contact information of new members is collected at this point (name, email, phone number) as well that all new members are invited to join the Collective Signal Chat.
2. 5 mins - New Member Introduction At this point, the meeting actually starts for regular members. Take the first 5 minutes to introduce new members to the rest of the group at the start of the meeting, introducing their names as well as field of work and why they are interested in joining.
3. 30 mins - Actions and Decisions Review all actionable items from past meetings to see if the actions have been completed or not. Add new action items as needed. This is also the point to take any collective decision as needed or to elect new coordinators.
4. 5 mins - Next Month Topic of Discussion Take 5 minutes to decide next month's Topic of Discussion. Designate one or more people to present on the topic next month and be ready to facilitate. This is a good opportunity to build engagement amongst new members by asking them to take on this role after they have been involved for a couple of meetings.
5. 30 mins - Topic of Discussion Take the rest of the meeting to discuss the current month's Topic of Discussion. Begin the discussion by having the designated people present on the topic to the group. Facilitate the discussion by ensuring that everyone has a chance to speak. Some good facilitation techniques include, taking speaking turns by raising hands or passing an object around, or going in a circle and each

person speaking in-turn.

Try to deal with all action items and decision making before the conversation starts, because once the Topic of Discussion begins it is intended to continue for the rest of the night.

Decision Making

In most cases no formal decision making is needed, and the general agreement of the group should be referred to. When there is an important or contentious decision that needs to be taken, the consent of the present members is required. For more info about [consent decision making click here](#). To be considered a voting member, someone needs to have attended at least 1 or more meetings.

Outside of monthly meetings, the group of coordinators make decisions for the Collective, and similarly, in most cases no formal decision making is needed and the general agreement of the group should be referred to. When there is an important or contentious decision that needs to be taken, the consent of the coordinators is required.

Topic of Discussion

The purpose of the Topics of Discussion is to BUILD COMMUNITY BY LEARNING. The exchange of ideas and experiences is encouraged, while having open conversation on hard topics and fostering trusting relationships. Meeting people where they are at in terms of knowledge and experience, avoiding use of jargon, and allowing people to grow, make mistakes and learn is important.

Choose Topics of Discussions and select people to introduce the topics in advance so that members know what each monthly conversation will be about. Here are some examples:

"What is degrowth, what do we want to grow, what do we want to degrow?" "What is climate science telling us?" "What would an ideal society look like in 50 years?" "What is decoupling, and why it won't work" "How to ensure justice and a better life through degrowth?" "What does a prosperous transition look like for workers in oil and gas?" "What does indigenous solidarity look like?" "Do social movements have the power to change things and how?" "What is the role of the labour movement in degrowth?"

...Ask members what they want to talk about!

Coalition Building

The purpose of Coalition Building is to BUILD POWER BY ACTING alongside local environmental, indigenous and labour groups in order to support their campaign by adding the voice and membership of the Degrowth Collective. This could include showing up as a Collective to actions, rallies, marches, protests and town halls, or by supporting petitions, fundraising and campaigns.

Use these moments of solidarity to build engagement among the Degrowth Collective membership by encouraging participation in actions and campaigns in between the monthly meetings.

Collective Roles

Each Collective elects 4 coordinator roles. If the roles are vacant, filling them with a new member becomes the first item on the agenda at the next monthly meeting. New members are encouraged to shadow current coordinators in order to learn the ropes and be able to take on the role in the future.

When possible, roles should be rotated every 6 months to 1 year, in order to ensure the Collective is creating engagement opportunities amongst all its members. The goal of having coordinator roles is to [avoid informal hierarchies](#) by instead building systems of democratic accountability that are agreed upon by everyone and shared over time.

Meeting Coordinator

The Meeting Coordinator is responsible for organizing the monthly meetings, making sure there's a meeting facilitator and presenter ready and that the tasks are rotated. They keep notes, and hold members accountable for the actions they say they will take. They are also responsible for finding the meeting venue, and maintaining contact with the venue management.

New Member Coordinator

The New Member Coordinator is responsible for orienting new members into the Collective. They organize the 30 minute new member portion of the monthly meetings, integrating and maintaining contact with new members as they fill out the online signup sheet and developing strategies to increase membership over time.

Coalition Coordinator

The Coalition Coordinator is responsible for making contact with local environmental, Indigenous and labour groups and staying up to date with ongoing events and actions in the city. They encourage the Collective membership to support local action and campaigns that build collective power towards a shared vision of the future.

Communications Coordinator

The Communication Coordinator is responsible for maintaining and updating the various online communication platforms. This includes the Collective Signal chat, as well as any other social media platforms.

Delegate X2

In addition to the above roles, each collective will elect 2 delegates to represent the local collective into the General Circle of Degrowth Collective. The 2 delegates can also have other Coordinator roles.

Communications

Signal

Each Collective hosts a Collective Signal group for members to stay in communication in-between meetings. This is the primary tool of communication for Collective members. New members are encouraged to join the Signal group in order to stay connected with the Collective.

Social Media

Each Collective is encouraged to use social media as a way for new members to get involved, promote the monthly meeting, as well as promoting other supporting actions and campaigns.

Membership Organizing

The key to both BUILD POWER and BUILD COMMUNITY is to ensure that the Collective membership is active and organized. The best way to do that is through what is called a "ladder of engagement".

Imaging a ladder with the following 6 steps:

1. Interested in Degrowth
2. Comes to one Degrowth Collective Monthly Meeting
3. Comes regularly to Degrowth Collective Monthly Meetings
4. Leads a Topic of Discussion
5. Participates in a Coalition Action
6. Elected as a Collective Coordinator and/or Delegate

The goal of the Collective is to move as many members as possible up the ladder from Step 1, all the way up to Step 4-5-6.

The goal of a very organized Collective is to keep track of how many people are on each step every month, so that over time you can know if the Collective is growing and more and more people are taking leadership roles.