

Several groups of people blocked trains packed full of delegates travelling towards ExCeL by locking on to them and climbing onto the roof. These actions carried on throughout the day causing severe disruption.

A bus full of delegates was disrupted coming from their hotel to DSEi.

The fountains at Trafalgar Square were turned red and hung a banner stating "Arms Dealers in Town – Stop DSEi".

Colebrand Ltd (exhibitor) had their offices decorated with paintballs.

Babcock Defence systems (another exhibitor) had their doors d-locked and stickers and posters were distributed.

March 2004

Spearhead Exhibitions Limited, Surrey - Red paint poured over front of offices, locks superglued, and posters stuck up.

Caterpillar Plant, Birmingham - A dozen activists occupied and shut down the plant for the day.

May 2004

Reed Exhibitions (owner and new home to Spearhead), Surrey - Activists supported by a loud samba presence picketed offices.

EDO MDM Technology Limited, Brighton - Activists block EDO with a metal cage made out of builders fencing and five people climbed on the roof with an estimated cost of £17000 to the company.

June 2004

Caterpillar offices, Solihull - A mock military checkpoint set up to welcome people to the offices.

July 2004

Farnborough Airshow, Hampshire - A double decker bus full of delegates was stopped by protesters locking on underneath the vehicle causing long tailbacks.

August 2004

EDO MDM Technology Limited, Brighton - A protest camp was set up which included an overnight roof occupation costing the company £20,000 and "peaceful and friendly" visits to two directors homes.

September 2004

Reed Exhibitions, Surrey - Black paint thrown over the front of the office.

EDO MDM Technology Limited, Brighton - Large quantities of manure dumped outside to show that EDO are bullshit.

See www.dsei.org for more information including addresses for DSEi exhibitors worldwide.



Affinity Groups: A Guide

Edited from Ploughshares and Anarchism in Action, and re-written in parts by DISARM DSEi.

What is an affinity group?

An affinity group is a small group of about three to twenty people who work together autonomously on direct action or other projects. You can form an affinity group with anyone: friends, people from your community, workplace, or organisation, or people you meet at an event. Affinity groups challenge top-down decision-making and organising, and empower those involved to take creative direct action.

Affinity groups by nature are decentralised and non-hierarchical. They are small so that discussions, participation and support can flow more easily. Larger groups tend to be dominated by just a few people and those left out of the discussion often do not have a chance to have their needs met or to contribute equally.

As part of an affinity group on an action, you can move with your group, finding alternative routes and avoiding being trapped by cops without being isolated.

Roles within an affinity group

There are many roles that one could possibly fill.

Medical - An affinity group may want to have someone with first aid / streetmedic knowledge, who can deal with medical or health issues.

Legal observer - It may be important to have people taking notes on police conduct, e.g. circumstances of arrests, detention of crowds, or other police violence. Legal observers may face a dilemma of whether to stay out of the way to observe, or try to help.

Media - You may want to consider how your group will relate to the media. You might choose one person to speak to the media, either on their own behalf or as speaker for your group.

Arrest - People have different attitudes to risks of arrest, and arrests will have different consequences for different people. You may want to discuss these and plan your actions and look out for each other to minimise the risks, as well as considering how you can support anyone who is arrested.

The roles within an affinity group can depend on the type of action you are taking. Sometimes the above roles may be inappropriate and individual roles can be defined by the nature of the action. It is important to plan exactly what each person intends to do as part of the action and talk through possible scenarios.

What is a Cluster and a Spokescouncil?

Clusters and spokescouncils can be useful particularly on mass actions.

A cluster is a grouping of affinity groups that comes together to work on a certain task or part of a larger action. A cluster might be responsible for blockading an area, organising one day of a multi-day action, or putting together and

performing a mass street theatre performance. Clusters could be organised around where affinity groups are from, an issue or identity or style of action.

A spokescouncil is a larger organising structure sometimes used by affinity groups to co-ordinate a mass action. Each affinity group (or cluster) chooses a delegate to go to a spokescouncil meeting and decide on important issues for the action, having consulted the other members of their group. For instance, affinity groups need to decide on a strategy for dealing with cops, possible tactical issues, meeting places, and many other logistics. A spokescouncil does not take away an individual affinity group's autonomy within an action; affinity groups make their own decisions about what they want to do on the streets.

How to start an affinity group

An affinity group could be a relationship that lasts for years among a group of friends and activists, or it could be a week-long relationship based around a single action. Either way, it is important to join an affinity group that is suited to you and your interests. If you are forming an affinity group, find friends or fellow activists who have similar issue interests, and would be willing to use similar tactics.

If you are looking to join an affinity group at a mass action, find out which affinity groups are open to new members and which ones are closed. For many people, affinity groups are based on trusting relationships based around years of friendship and work, so they might not want people they don't know in their affinity group. You might need to take the initiative and ask people you meet to form a new affinity group. Consider what you want to do and with whom you'd be able to get on.

What can an affinity group do?

Anything! They can take part in mass or smaller scale actions. An affinity group could drop a banner, blockade a road, provide back-up for other affinity groups, do street theatre, block traffic riding bikes, confront the police, destroy selected property, change the message on a billboard, play music or sing etc. There can be affinity groups that take on certain tasks in an action. For instance, there could be a roving group made up of street medics or an affinity group who brings food and water to people on the streets.

What makes affinity groups so effective for actions is that they can remain creative and independent and can plan out their own action without an organisation or person dictating to them what can and can't be done. They can respond immediately to opportunities and problems as they happen.

There is an endless amount of possibilities of what affinity groups can do. Be creative and remember: direct action gets the goods!



Arms Trade Affinity Group Actions

These are examples of some of the affinity group actions that happened against DSEi and the arms trade between April 2003 and September 2004. It is not a full list, but we have put it together to show what has been happening and hopefully to inspire people to take action against the arms trade.

We have included campaigns that are not directly linked to DISARM DSEi as good examples of successful anti-arms trade campaigns. In particular we have included SmashEdo and Caterkiller. EDO MDM Technology Limited are based in Brighton and make mechanisms for various warplanes including F16s and tornados. Caterpillar's main factory is in Birmingham. They make bulldozers that are routinely used for the demolition of Palestinian homes. It was a Caterpillar bulldozer that ran over and killed ISM activist Rachel Corrie.

April 2003

Spearhead Exhibitions Limited (DSEi organisers), Surrey - Red paint splattered inside office through letterbox and on glass outside. Glues locked and posters superglued to front of building.

August 2003

Smiths Aerospace, Wolverhampton - 6 activists climbed on roof whilst others carried out a weapons inspection.

Cambridge Consultants, Cambridge - Letter handed in to ask company to reconsider their decision to exhibit at DSEi.

Spearhead Exhibitions Limited, Surrey - Office occupation and die in by Oxford activists and friends.

Fluent Inc, Sheffield - Offices blocked and barricaded by people locked on inside. A banner reading "Fluent Deal in Death" dropped from front canopy.

September 2003 (before DSEi)

ExCeL Centre, London - Opening preparations for DSEi blocked for six hours by forty protesters using tripods and lock-ons at both entrances.

ExCeL Centre, London - Activists in boats try to stop warships from entering ExCeL dock.

BAE Factory, Surrey - Factory occupied by activists from Anarchist Federation and Class War. A "Destroy the Arms Trade" banner was displayed from the roof.

Caterpillar factory, Birmingham - Roof top protest and occupation.

BAE Offices, London - Offices occupied by Rhythms or Resistance who provided samba whilst two people locked on.

September 2003 (During DSEi)

There were many blockades and street protests during DSEi which caused huge amounts of disruption to delegates. These are some of the highlights.

London Catholic Workers poured red paint over the entrance of ExCeL and held banners stating "Government Sponsored Terror" and "Blood on Your Hands".

A group of protesters gained entry to DSEi, climbed onto a tank, displayed a banner and caused disruption.