



Affinity Group Formation During a Social Event

Getting to know each other during the social event is the first step. While you're cooking, watching a movie or chilling in a park. Have at least an hour planned before the Affinity Group making so that people have the chance to talk and get to know each other.



1. Explain to everyone what Affinity Groups are and what they are there for:

What are Affinity Groups?

Affinity Groups (AGs) are the basic organising structure for any action. They consist of 4-12 Rebels that will do the action together. It doesn't matter whether or not they are all arrestable or non-arrestable, both are needed within the AG. However, the AG's should separate into mostly arrestable and non-arrestable. The 'mostly-arrestable' AG shouldn't really have more than 2 non-arrestable members. This is not only for the organisation of the action but also to provide an important support network for each other. Preferably, affinity groups are familiar with each other and can therefore rely on each other during the action - within each AG it's recommended to find a "buddy", and the two of you will look out for one another and know what to do in case of emergency or arrest of the other. If this is not the case in your AG beforehand, it will definitely happen during the action, since nothing brings people together like blocking a road.

What do AGs do?

There are several roles AG can take on within a large scale action (to be explained in more detail below). Most importantly, AG do the action together and take care of each other. Affinity Groups are autonomous groups within the action, which keeps the element of unpredictability alive. If the Action & Logistics Team needs an AG to block a

specific part of the blockade they can ask the AG to do so. The AG can then decide whether or not they want to take on the task or not.

For example, during the April Rebellion Week in London, the pink 'TELL THE TRUTH' boat was about to be taken away by the police from Oxford Circle. An Affinity Group therefore, really quickly and without asking anyone's permission decided to glue themselves to the boat and to the ground so that the police couldn't take the boat away for several more hours.

During RWB, you can decide to join the blockade at any point. Once the police announces that they will start arresting people, the members of the AG that don't want to be arrested will get up and leave the blockade, or remain until they feel too unsafe to do so. They are then also immediately arrestee support and media people for the rest of their AG that wants to be arrestable.

Affinity Groups can also decide on being outside the blockade and join the Wellbeing team or the Media team.

How are Affinity Groups Organised?

Affinity groups are organised in a non-hierarchical and autonomous way, sometimes taking lead on last minute decisions within XR's national campaign. Everyone has an equal voice in the decision making process. Everyone has a different viewpoint and it is important to cover all bases. It is important to note that every AG is autonomous and can make their own decisions within the action, as long as it adheres to the principles and values of XR.



2. Spectrum Lines

This exercise takes a deeper look at the diversity of the term non-violent. Because there is not one definition of violence or non-violence. It is a feeling or opinion that differs from individual to individual. The exercise and discussions will highlight this.

Tell people to observe where people stand on these spectrum lines since it can be a good basis on which to form affinity groups as they should be made up of people with similar thresholds.

This exercise could provoke lengthy discussion; make sure to actively manage this, in terms of encouraging more equal participation, and keep focused on the time constraints.

Remember to highlight that the question is not 'is the action (violent or not) *justified*?' but rather, 'do you (or 'society') consider it *violent*?'

- Choose one side of the room that will symbolise "actions that are violent" and the other side "actions that are not violent". Everything in between is the spectrum in which people can place themselves according to how violent or non-violent they believe the scenario to be.
- Run each spectrum line twice: once for where people place themselves based on how violent they consider the action to be, and once for how violent they think 'society' will view the actions as being.
- Encourage brief comments from people standing in different places on the line, particularly when there is a significant divergence in opinion.

Scenarios:

- Kicking down a door and storming the stage at a conference.
- Spray painting the wall of a bank or company.
- Shutting down the metro by stopping the doors from closing for as long as possible.
- Smashing/Destroying military planes that are about to be sold to an oppressive regime that is killing citizens.
- Seriously telling someone that you hate them.

Take 2 minutes to debrief – observe diversity of opinion within group, point out that this is even more diverse in wider public.

3. Forming of the Affinity Groups

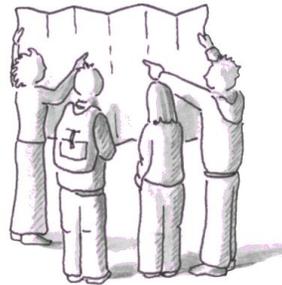
AGs consist of 4-12 people, so depending on how big your group is and how they prefer it, they need to form groups. Because it is better for facilitating meetings if the members of the AG live relatively close to each other, you can ask them to envision the city they all live in on the floor and then stand on the North, West, South or East side (Obviously only the people living within the same city). If there is one person that

came from another city, you can ask them to either join an AG at this event anyway or create one in their hometown.

Everyone can then still decide, also depending on the Spectrum Lines, with whom they would like to be in a group with.

Stress here, that **no one is forced to stay in this Affinity Group!** If they want to leave or if someone else wants to join the Affinity Group, they can let the Representative of the AG know (who will be sociocratically elected later) and they will let the Action & Logistics Coordinators know.

Now the Affinity Group(s) should **think of a name**. It helps if you throw some possibilities in the room like: flipflop, blackbird, lion, etc.



4. Knot Game

The knot game is fun to break the ice between the new AG members but is not mandatory if there is not enough space for it or people don't feel like taking part in it.

Before starting, stress that if anyone feels uncomfortable, physically or emotionally, with any of the activities/exercises, then they should feel very welcome to step back – there's no pressure to join in! Also during the game, there should be a **safeword** for people who start feeling uncomfortable (like: aubergine).

- Get people to stand in a circle (max. 15 people per circle, otherwise split up into smaller circles). Get them to close their eyes, and reach their hands into the circle to grab one hand in each hand, while keeping their arms crossed. Check everyone is holding a hand.
- Get them to 'untie' themselves so they're standing in a loop/circle. Tell people to move slowly to avoid twisting people's arms.
- Repeat exercise, but this time in silence (this mimics the situation when you can't talk on an action, e.g. when police are present)

Take 1 minute to **debrief** – How did each turn compare? Why do you think this is important?

There are always varying answers, but generally the common thread in the feedback is that what seems initially impossible can be overcome.

A big part of the effectiveness of all these actions are teamwork - which is important in an AG. Highlight the importance of non-verbal communication - 'being on the same wavelength'.



5. Roles in Affinity Groups

Run through different roles in AGs again (**Representative**, **Wellbeing Person**, **Media Person** and **Facilitator** (optional)). Then the AG's will sociocratically elect these people (this can still be changed later, if the representative passes these changes on to the A&L coordinators).

AG Representative: will take on the role of being the first point of contact for action planning, and will get information from A&L that they will pass on to their AG. There can be a backup representative but this can be decided later or spontaneously - if this is the case then the rep should pass on those contact details to the A&L contact person. They will join the Mattermost channel 'Affinity Group Reps' to get updates for AGs during RWB and pass them on to the group. They also let the AG Coordinators know about any change in their Affinity Group, like people leaving or joining their AG.

AG Facilitator: This role can also be done by the representative if necessary. They will collect the numbers/contact details of everyone in their Affinity group to create a Whatsapp/Signal/Telegram group in which the group can stay connected. Depending on what the AG wants, the facilitator schedules meetups for the Affinity Group to meet.

Wellbeing Person: To provide support for the group the wellbeing person should preferably be non-arrestable so that they can provide arrestee support for the group.

It should be noted however, that there is no assurance that they won't be arrested during the action. In some actions, all present will be arrested.

Although each member should bring their own water, food, etc – there should be an AG member who is explicitly looking out for the wellbeing of their group. They can provide water and food (e.g. grapes or cookies) and/or blankets, tissues etc.

They can also take care of the phones and any valuables the members of their AG might bring to the action.

They make sure to provide practical and emotional arrestee support ensuring that the arrestee support from Regenerative Culture knows that members of your AG were arrested.

Other roles include regularly checking in on the mood of each AG member, and make sure that provisions have been made for medical needs of members *before the action* in case of arrest etc.

Optional Roles

Media Coordinator: Ideally each AG would have someone specifically taking responsibility for media coverage on the day. This may include live streaming, live tweeting, and generally promoting the action through any online platforms. This role should also be taken on by someone with a low risk of arrest, as photos and videos taken on the day will be accessed by the police if an arrest is made, and can be used to incriminate fellow activists.

Interviews during Actions:

It would be good for everyone in your AG to have a statement general statement of why they are in the action incase the media asks you during the action. However, when you are asked to give a longer interview you should redirect the journalists to the media spokespeople. This is to have a unanimous messaging of XRNL to make sure our principles, values and demands are properly communicated by spokespeople who were trained on this. Everyone can become a media spokesperson before and during the blockade by contacting the media and communications team.

6. At the End

- It's best if the Facilitator collects the numbers of the members of their AG at this point and stress that they should make the group chats as soon as possible.
- Fill in this AG Registration Form ([Dutch](#) and [English](#)) with the Representative and the Wellbeing Person.
- If there are any people in your event that have decided not to join any of the Affinity Groups they can fill in the [Personal Registration Form \(Dutch Version\)](#) so that we can organise an AG creation event near to them.

[Dutch AG Handout](#) is here and the [English AG Handout](#) is there.