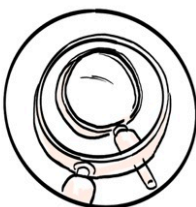


# POLITICIZATION

is a learning process  
where people shift

what they know  
(cognition)



how they know it  
(epistemologies)

what they do  
(participation)



and who they are  
(identities)

Study by RadLab, a team of youth climate organizers based in Toronto



This paper by Joe Cunnow, Amil Davis & Lila Asher

Context: the youth climate movement



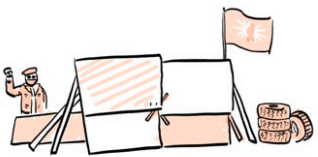


We worked with climate activists for years, and wanted to understand what happened when young people came in without clearly defined politics and became radical activists.



But as we tried to answer that question, we realized we had to explain what it *means* to become politicized.

what counts?



Blockades?



Civil Disobedience?



Reading Marx?



Patchouli?



Decolonial Politics?



Tattoos?



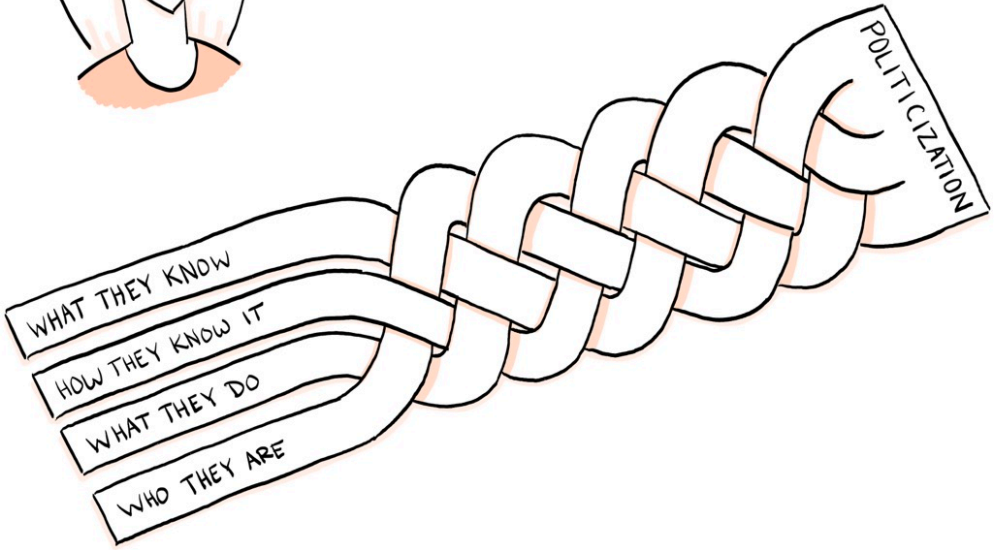
Monkeywrenching?



Piercings?



Through our work, we found that the learning that occurred was bigger than one thing, and for the people who became politicized it almost always included these four areas:



These four areas of change were happening all at the same time, and each one strengthened the others. We found that it didn't make sense to think about them separately.

We *didn't* see these combinations

We should overthrow patriarchy & capitalism by writing a well-reasoned report based on current science.



Let's have a sit-in, but not one of those "activist" ones.

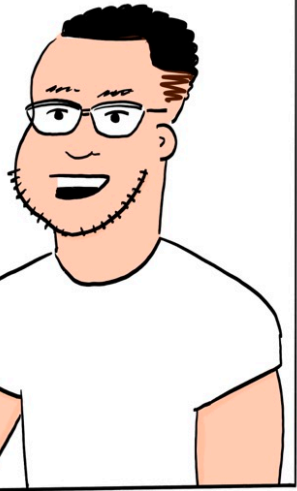


Climate change will devastate our communities and we shouldn't do anything drastic.



For activists, this framework can help us to remember that politicization isn't just about being exposed to new ideas

CLIMATE CHANGE IS BAD!



But that to politicize our peers, we have to think about opportunities:



to work together in new ways



climate science shows that our economy will be damaged in the coming decades



to expand our ways of knowing so we consider other worldviews and experiences

communities that were from are being affected right now.

climate change is a result of colonialism



I don't think I'd call myself an activist, I try to be reasonable.



and to support people's identity development

More of us need to be activists if we're going to survive the crisis



And we can't just try to do one, or the whole process won't hold.



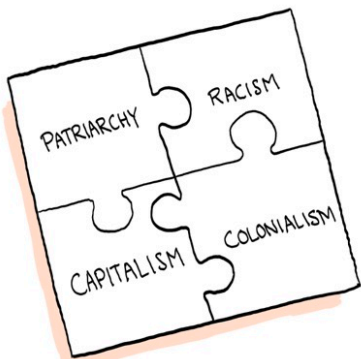
Our work has to be about *collective* action that centres a different kind of environmentalism...

So that new members become climate justice advocates...



(we make sure there's a leadership ladder, a path into further & deeper engagement)

who think about environmentalism within the broader context of colonialism, racism, capitalism, and patriarchy...



so that we can work together to build a more inclusive, and more strategic, climate movement.



For social movements more broadly, thinking about politicization as a process of developing ideas, practices, worldviews, and identities helps organizers to think about how we can support new members coming into the movement.

We don't only need to teach the political frames —



— we also need to create opportunities for collaboration where everything else can gel.



Thinking about politicization as a learning process that is fundamentally about community helps us to prioritize working together on collective action, not teaching school-style.

When we work together, people get politicized,



and this learning process helps us grow and helps us *win*.

This comic is part of  
**Learning to Engage: Movements and  
Sociocultural Theories of Learning.**

for more, visit:  
[andrewkohan.com/learningtoengage](http://andrewkohan.com/learningtoengage)

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To find out more about the research presented in this comic, go check out:

Curnow, J., Davis, A., & Asher, L. (2019). Politicization in process: Developing political concepts, practices, epistemologies, and identities through activist engagement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(3), 716-752.

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