

Symposium: Young people, democracy and climate action

24-26 September 2024

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, France

Tuesday 24 September 2024, 14:15-15:30

Thematic working group

Where are we? Mapping ways of engaging with the climate crisis and climate justice

'Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis'

Sarah PICKARD

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/pickard-sarah-127807.kjsp>

sarah.pickard@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

@sarahpickard2



'Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis'

Take part via Padlet!



(photo: Sarah Pickard, XR 'The Big One', London, April 2023)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Outline



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

1) Methodology

2) GLOBAL CLIMATE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE YOUTH ACTIVISM TODAY

3) EXCLUSION AND INJUSTICE IN YOUTH CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

4) GLOBAL CLIMATE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE YOUTH ACTIVISM RESEARCH TODAY: WHAT IS MISSING/NEEDED?

5) Conclusions

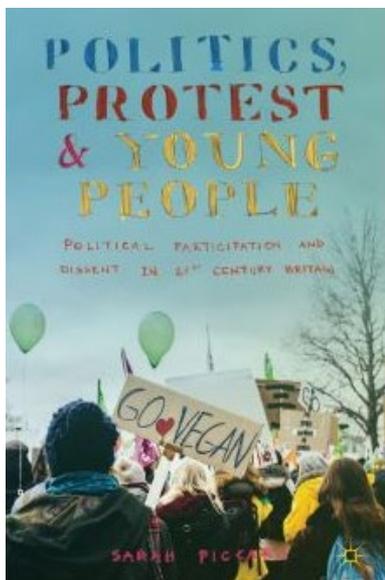


1) METHODOLOGY

(photo: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, Nov 2021) Sarah PICKARD, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

My research Do-It-Ourselves (DIO) politics



(Sarah Pickard, *Politics, Protest and Young People. Political Participation and Dissent in 21st Century Britain*, Routledge, 2019, 501p.)

a) Doing politics outside traditional, collective structures,

e.g., not within political parties and trade unions

b) Doing politics that is personalised:

lifestyle, everyday politics, identity politics

c) Doing politics collectively:

fluid, horizontal, leaderless, networks, internal democracy, self organisation, bottom up, grassroots

d) Doing politics in solidarity:

family, friends, peers, school/college/university, association, community; locally, nationally, globally

e) Doing politics together:

Outside political parties but trying to influence leaders and policies

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Young climate and environmental activists research project
with Dena Arya
+ Ben Bowman
(deductive and inductive)



(photo: Sarah Pickard, The Big One, London, April 2023)

Since March 2019, interviews with young environmental activists involved in Fridays For Future (FFF), Extinction Rebellion (XR), Global Justice Now!, Scientist Rebellion, etc.

Locations:

Edinburgh, Glasgow, (Manchester), Nottingham, London, Sheffield, Paris (cities with large protests)

Interviews:

100+ semi-structured individual interviews before and after protest actions, 15 minutes to 2 hours

Contacts:

Contacted via websites & social media, or approached protesters before and after actions (placards, signs, posters) + ethical consent

Interviewees:

Aged between 12 and 34, mostly students, mostly girls and young women, some ethnic diversity

... and yet ...

**2) GLOBAL CLIMATE
AND CLIMATE JUSTICE
YOUTH ACTIVISM
TODAY:
WHAT'S HAPPENING?**

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Significance of climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, Nov 2021)

Young people increasingly engaging in climate and climate justice activism since late 2018

a) Significant because sustained (but changing and fluid)

b) Significant because big numbers (but changing)

c) Significant because global
Global South + Global North,
Majority + Minority worlds

d) Significant because well known

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Significance of climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

e) Significant because narratives employed use apocalyptic forecasts

f) Significant because climate change issue is urgent and huge

g) Significant because big range of emotions involved – impacts activism

h) Significant because wide repertoire of contention (offline and online + links between them)

i) Significant because protests building on previous generations of activism

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Significance of climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Dena Arya, Nottingham, Sep 2019)

j) Significant because “*Skolstrejk för klimatet*” school climate strikes – Fridays For Future (FFF) – started by 15-year-old girl, i.e., a young person

k) Significant because wide age range of young activists from school pupils (without right to vote) to young adults (living through series of crises)

l) Significant because not focused on ‘youth-centered’ issue (e.g., educational matters)

m) Significant because young environmental activists are provoking political, public and media re/actions to climate change

n) Significant because young environmental activists are challenging mis/representations of young people and their political participation

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Significance of climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, Oct 2019)

o) Significant because effects on physical and mental health of young people

p) Significant because young people's environmental activism has been evolving

q) Significant because young environmental activists are widening issues under discussion

r) Significant because young environmental activists are not all the same (stereotype) heterogeneous

s) Significant because intergenerational exchanges (good and bad)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Significance of climate and climate justice youth activism

t) Significant because young people will be affected the most by climate change

u) Significant because climate crisis is most important issue for young people

v) Significant because climate crisis comes on top of multiple crises

w) Significant because ...

w) Significant because **EVOLVING ...**



(photo: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, COP26, Nov 2021)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Evolutions in climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, COP26, Nov 2021)

a) Evolving as initial young activists become older

b) Evolving as new young activists become involved

c) Evolving as new networks, groups emerge

d) Evolving as activists acquire more knowledge about activism

e) Evolving as activists become more frustrated, angry, active

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Evolutions in climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, Oct 2019)

f) Evolving as repertoires of contention (actions) become more/less disruptive

g) Evolving as economic and political powerholders do not react enough

h) Evolving as opinions on disruptive non-violent direct action change

i) Evolving as protest legislation more restrictive/repressive

j) Evolving as awareness of exclusion and injustices grow ...

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Weaknesses climate and climate justice youth activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, Nov 2021)

a) Adult gatekeepers ...

b) Mainstream media reactions ...

c) Public opinion on disruption and young people (marginalisation) ...

d) Anti-protest legislation and repression

e) Exclusivity/ Inclusivity and diversity - ethnic minorities do not always feel welcome in majority white spaces ...

3) EXCLUSION AND INJUSTICE IN YOUTH CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

COP26 Youth-led protests focused on:

Intersectional Social justice for:

- **The Global South(s)**
- **Global Majority Communities**
- **Vulnerable communities**

As well as political ideas like:

- **Decolonisation**
- **Degrowth**
- **Socialism as an alternative**
- **Anti-capitalism**
- **Intersectionality**



(photos: Sarah Pickard, COP 26, Glasgow, Nov 2021)

Sarah PICKARD, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

Intersectional and Intergenerational Solidarity

In our ethnographic research with young climate and environmental activists in the UK, we have observed them being aware, showing concern and building alliances with:

- Indigenous community members,
- members of the Global South,
- members of the Majority World
- minority groups,
- trade unions,
- politicians,
- radical left-wing adult allies
- family members ...



(photos: Sarah Pickard, The Big One, London, April 2023)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

“Climate activists of colour are erased,”

“I [had] activists who messaged me to tell me that the same thing happened to them before but they didn’t have the courage to say anything.”

Vanessa Nakate, 2020



Vanessa Nakate after march at COP26 (photo: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, COP26, Nov 2021)



Vanessa Nakate, Luisa Neubauer, Greta Thunberg, Isabelle Axelsson and Loukina Tille, Davos, January 2020. Photograph: Markus Schreiber/AP

Vanessa Nakate cropped out in Associated Press photo

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/29/vanessa-nakate-interview-climate-activism-cropped-photo-davos>

African women youth climate activists are marginalised in mainstream climate activism (Barnes, 2021)

Wretched are the Earth - proportionality

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Exclusion and injustice in youth climate and environmental activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, XR, Nov 2019)

a) This exclusion means young people tend to engage more in non-institutional and alternative political activities (DIO politics)

b) Often young people do not have the political and economic capital to influence electoral and formal political spaces

c) Young people's experiences of marginalisation are heterogeneous and depend on the multiple social locations that mutually constitute their personal and political lives

d) Racially minoritised people are disproportionately more likely to face police brutality if they are involved in direction action (e.g. arrest tactics – XR, Just Stop Oil ...)

e) XR, Just Stop Oil, etc arrest strategy is highly exclusionary (Berglund and Schmidt, 2020, Arya and Pickard, 2024)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Who is missing?



(photos: Sarah Pickard, Glasgow, COP26, Nov 2021)

a) Racially minoritised people
(Eseonu, 2021)

b)

c)

d)

Q: “Who is missing here today?”

Racialised minorised people

"I definitely would like to see more **black people**. But at the same time, I feel horrible saying it, I would like to see more **black people** because it's, it's on an individual basis as well, like, it's about what people feel is important to them."

(Ester, 24, London, The Big One, April 2023)

"I think very meaningful people are missing. I think that. It's probably very geographically specific. I think it's very **racially specific** and very socioeconomically specific and we're missing. Representation from the global South and yeah, many other groups."

(Alex, 23, London, The Big One, April 2023)

I think their reputation was as a very white to middle class organisation, which is someone who is young and black. I felt quite disenchanted from. I also didn't massively agree with a lot of their practises. I think glueing itself to achieve in an area where working class people live isn't helping anybody

(Cynthia, 22, London, The Big One, April 2023)

Q: “Who is missing here today?”

Racialised minorised people

"I think it's a shame that I haven't seen more people of colour in this crowd. That's one thing I've noticed because the climate movement has often been identified as very white movement. It's the majority of people are white people, and that's especially true for groups like Just Stop Oil obviously. We use arrest tactics and and the police and judicial systems in this country are entirely rigged against people of colour and it's something we really need to fight together. So I would love to see more people colour just come and support this."

(Anna, 21, JSO, London, The Big One, April 2023)

"The BLM movement. No, obviously, this is coming from a white person's side, but I do feel like there should maybe be more of a push for black voices within the kind of climate change protest kind of community and ethos." [...] "it is still about intersectionality. So, it does, you know. The climate crisis does affect people of colour and women and disabled people and lower-class people differently, and, and I think sometimes that is not necessarily acknowledged, and maybe people of colour or other people don't feel like they are exactly represented or how it affects them. So I think maybe that's what's missing."

(Kerry, 26, London, The Big One, April 2023)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

a) Racially minoritised young people

b) Diverse communities

c)

d)

Q: Who is missing here today?

Diverse communities

“And as always, as with many climate protests that I've been involved with before, it's very clear that this process **is not representative of the communities that we're actually based in**. This is clearly **not a diverse** subsection of London who are coming out today.”

(Alex, 23, London, The Big One, April 2023)

“I guess **not** particularly **diverse**. At least. So, what does that mean? Well, like, obviously, **diversity** is not just a visual thing, but like, primarily sort of, kind of white middle class types are here. I would say, yeah.”

(Basil, 25, London, The Big One, April 2023)

“I have not seen as many sort of Black Lives Matter or sort of black groups. And I think someone did mention that this is happening at the same time as Eid, so you're not going to get as many like Muslim activists or Muslim people out on the streets.”

(Cynthia, 22, London, The Big One, April 2023)

“We're all painted out, as you know, middle class, white privileged hippies”

(Anna, 21, JSO, London, The Big One, April 2023).

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

a) Racially minoritised young people

b) Diverse communities

c) People with political power

d)



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

Q: Who is missing here today?

People with political power

“The politicians. They should be here listening and talking to us. Like, why are they hiding in their ***** chambers? Do you know what I mean? Like, get out here and talk to us [...] But, like, they should be, like, coming to the talks and, like, sitting down in the citizens assemblies, you know. We are all citizens.”

(Maggie, 24, London, The Big One, April 2023)

“I think the people in power are missing. They need to see, and need to understand, that the climate crisis is not just a cause that a few young people and Hippies are interested in.”

(Anna, 21, London, The Big One, April 2023)

“I wish there could be like important coverage. I think that would be quite like a good start, like good media coverage. And that is going to motivate people. I mean, it's motivating me.”

(Alice, 23, London, The Big One, April 2023)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

a) Racially minoritised young people

b) Diverse communities

c) People with political power

d) Young people

Q: Who is missing here today?

Racially minoritised youth

“I feel represented as a young person, but I don't feel represented as a **woman of colour** because there is also the ideal young White rich children being pushed to the front as the ones who care about the climate the most, and whilst they are definitely included in the demographic there is also you know poor White people or **poor Black or Asian** or whichever **ethnicity**, there is also **disabled people**

so I feel represented as a young person because that's what the government and the news want to stop at – ‘oh young people care!’ Young people are protesting for the environment, but where I am at least seeing grassroots of people, especially on social media it's a really **diverse scene of people who are protesting.**”

(Rosemary, 23, London, 2020)

Q: Who is missing here today?

Diversity

“The **lack of diversity** in XR, it made me think that they were doing something wrong. I know that it typically attracts the middle-classes [...] As a young person, I was focused on engaging more young people and it didn't seem a target of XR which is why I joined youth strike – I think young people are often more open to change.”
(Emily, Youth Strike for Climate, January 2021)

“Last week I was at the COP26 meeting, and they spend the whole time basically at the front saying we need to get **more Black and Brown and young people involved** [...] **I am the only Brown young person sitting in the crowd going well... I'm here. I'm here. Why don't you acknowledge me?**”
(Aayush, COP26, Glasgow, November 2021)

Q: Who is missing here today?

Young people

"There are a lot of older people about yeah, **I wish there were more young people** [...] but as you can see there are many parents with their children trying to share some of those ideas."

(Malik, 23, The Big One, London, April 2023)

"There's a surprisingly large number of older people who are really active in Just Stop Oil. While some of my best friends in this group are in their 60s-70s and 80s. It's, it's a strange mix when you know you're working alongside people who are four times your age. But yeah, **I think we definitely need to get more young people involved. Well, but again, because we use arrestable tactics, there's still this block in young people's minds. 'Ohh, I have a future. I can't get arrested if I want to,' you know, keep this future career plan, but yeah.**"

(Anna, 20, Just Stop Oil, The Big One, London, April 2023)



4) GLOBAL CLIMATE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE YOUTH ACTIVISM RESEARCH TODAY: WHAT IS MISSING/NEEDED?



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

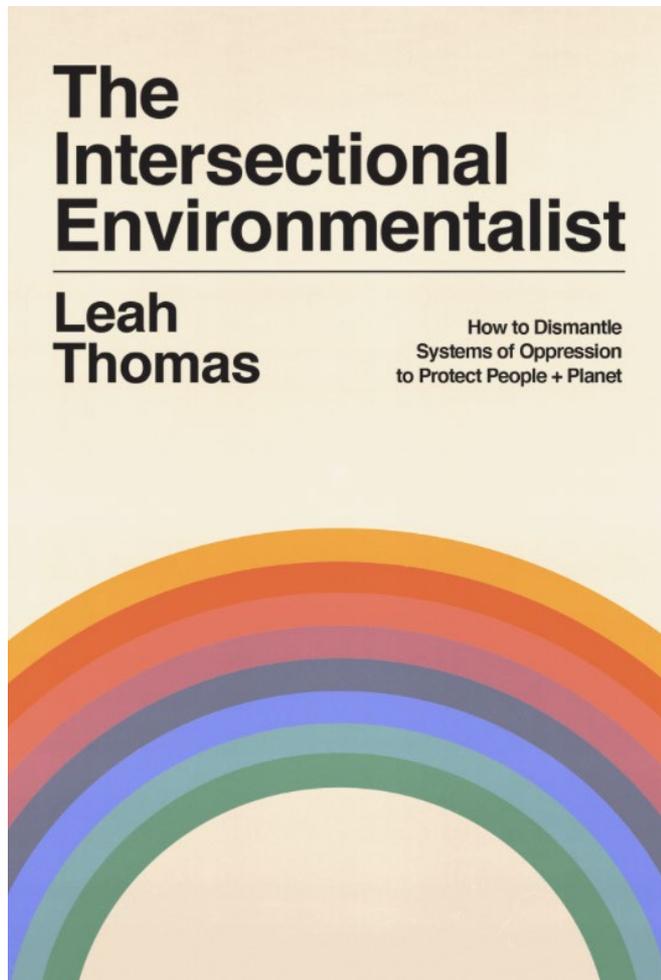
Intersectional climate justice

a) Racially minoritised youth are the majority in the fight for climate justice

b) Diverse youth communities are doing the work of building intersectional climate justice spaces

c) Young people are engaging in diverse ways with political powerholders

d) Young people are doing the work of intergenerational solidarity building for climate justice



Climate Justice is Intersectional

Globally, youth are driving the shifting narrative in climate action, which is centred on intersectional climate justice (Foran, 2020; Thomas, 2022).

Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Gaps in research

a) Intergenerational dynamics (good and bad interactions) not just intergenerational loveliness

b) Intersectional influences on activism (individual and collective)

c) The Global South and Majority world

d) Longitudinal studies, biographies

e) Qualitative work ... young people's voices!

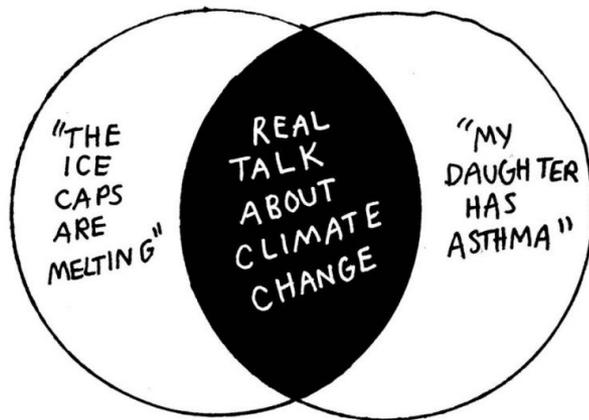


(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

Climate Justice is Intersectional

Climate Justice has two aims:

- To identify the needs of individuals and groups most marginalized in face of climate change impacts so that we can respond to these needs
- To dismantle the power systems that perpetuate marginalization, exploitation and oppression towards these groups.



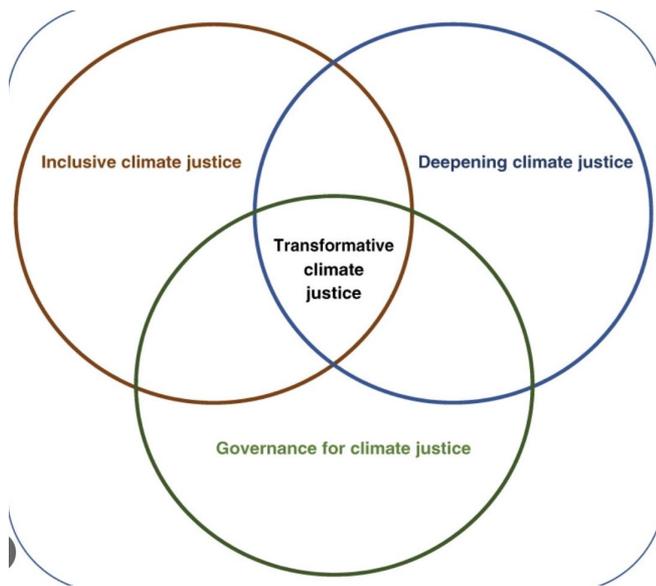
“In this sense, climate justice is prefigurative; it envisions not only a world in which climate change no longer exacerbates social inequity, but one in which societal responses to its impacts themselves offer an opportunity to build a more equitable and sustainable world”

(Mikulewicz et al., 2023, p.3)

What next?

“An intersectional lens provides a more complete and honest picture of the multiple factors that shape people’s everyday lives. It can be difficult and sometimes messy, but whether you’re a scientist or an activist, thinking about various forms of oppression in a simultaneous, integrated manner will likely help you arrive at a better and more equitable answer to the problem at hand.”

(Jackson, 2022)



5) CONCLUSIONS



(photo: Sarah Pickard, COP 26, Glasgow, Nov 2022)

- Research needs to engage beyond the 'high profile' youth climate and environmental activist (Neas et al., 2022; Walker, 2020).
- Need for broader understanding of what activities count as 'climate and environmental activism' (Pickard, 2019; Sloam and Henn, 2018, Hart and Henn, 2014)
- Age sits across multiple axis of social inequalities for young people such as race, geography, ethnicity, ableism, gender, and class - this is intersectional (Bessant, 2021; Pickard, 2019; Collins, 2020; Hall and Pottinger, 2022; Collins, 2015; 2020)
- Intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry has been overlooked in research with young people on their political participation (Slaughter and Brown, 2022; Hall and Pottinger, 2021; Bowman, 2020)
- Limited longitudinal research on young people's subjective experiences of political participation and the structural inequalities that shape such experiences (Roth and Saunders, 2022; Silagadze et al., 2022; Grasso and Giugni, 2022)
- So certain young people are missing from movements and research for multiple reasons, but researchers are missing the right places

REFERENCES

- Arya, Dena. and Lydia, A. Hiraide. (2024). **Intersectional Approaches to Young People's Environmental Activism.** In: Ben Bowman, and Sadiya Akram. *Routledge Handbook of Young People and Environmental Activism.* London: Routledge.
- Arya Dena & Henn Matt. (2021). **"COVID-ized Ethnography: Challenges and Opportunities for Young Environmental Activists and Researchers."** *Societies*, 11(2): 58.
- Arya Dena & Henn Matt. (2021). **"The Impact of Economic Inequality and Educational Background in Shaping How Non-Activist 'Standby' Youth in London Experience Environmental Politics."** *Educational Review.*
- Arya, Dena, Benjamin Bowman, & Sarah Pickard. (2020). **"Young climate strikers are neither immature nor ill-informed."** *LSE Politics and Policy blog.* London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Arya Dena & Sarah Pickard (2024). **Young people's climate and environmental activism in Britain 2018-2023: Cooperation, confrontation and fragmentation.** In *Fragmented Powers: Confrontation and Cooperation in the English-speaking World*, edited by Emmmanuelle Avril. Bingley: Emerald.
- Bessant, Judith & Sarah Pickard. (2024). **The disruptive power of recognition: young people's environmental activism and 'Struggles over Misrecognition.'** In *Handbook on Youth Activism*, edited by Jerusha Connor. Edward Elgar, 31-45.
- Bowman, Benjamin & Sarah Pickard. (2021). **"Peace, protest and precarity: Making conceptual sense of young people's non-violent dissent in a period of intersecting crises."** *Journal of Applied Youth Studies (JAYS)*, 4: 493-510.
- Bowman, Benjamin, Pooja Kishinani, Sarah Pickard, & Marion Smith. (2022). **"Radical kindness and the transformation of democracy by young people."** *Youth Political Participation.* Youth Knowledge Book. Brussels: Council of Europe (COE).
- Pickard, Sarah. (2021). **"'You are stealing our future in front of our very eyes.' Young environmental activists and the representation of the environmental emergency."** *Eréa*, 8(1).
- Pickard, Sarah. (2022). **"Young environmental activists and Do-It-Ourselves (DIO) politics: collective engagement, generational agency, efficacy, belonging and hope."** *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(10).
- Pickard, Sarah, Benjamin Bowman, & Dena Arya. (2020). **"We Are Radical In Our Kindness": The Political Socialisation, Motivations, Demands and Protest Actions of Young Environmental Activists in Britain,"** *Youth and Globalization*, 2(2): 251-280.
- Pickard, Sarah, Benjamin Bowman, & Dena Arya. (2020). **"Youth and Environmental Activism."** *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*, edited by Maria Grasso & Marco Giugni, Routledge, 521-537.
- Pickard, Sarah. (2023). **Young People and Climate Protest.** *Political Insight*, 14(3).
- Sloam, James, Sarah Pickard & Matt Henn (eds.). (2022). **Young People and Environmental Activism: The Transformation of Democratic Politics.** *Journal of Youth Studies*, 25 (6): 683-691.

Symposium: Young people, democracy and climate action

24-26 September 2024

European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, France

Tuesday 24 September 2024, 14:15-15:30

Thematic working group

Where are we? Mapping ways of engaging with the climate crisis and climate justice

'Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis'

Sarah PICKARD

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle

<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/pickard-sarah-127807.kjsp>

sarah.pickard@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr

@sarahpickard2



Global dimension of engaging with the climate crisis.

Exclusion and injustice in youth climate and environmental activism



(photo: Sarah Pickard, London, April 2023)

a) Resurgence of popularity of youth climate activism across Global Majority and Minority Communities (Arya & Pickard, 2025)

b) Predominantly progressive, left-wing and in part youth-led (O'Brien et al., 2018)

c) Not all young people engage from a left-wing position or have same level of access to environmental political action

d) No universal conceptualisation of who young people are (MacDonald and King, 2020; Bessant, 2020, Pickard, 2019)

e) Young people's access to their social needs are restricted by political + economic power structures (Bessant, 2021)