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Being the Change, Changing the World

Contribution to GTI Forum [The Climate Movement: What's Next?](#)

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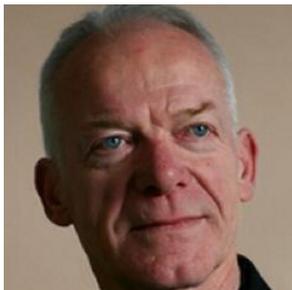
What is the Climate Movement's State of Play?

We are in a fight, and the only way to win is to act on the changes we want to see in the world, not just to block bad things from happening. In 1990, when I started working with the European city network Climate Alliance, we were already talking about the “fight against climate change.” Meanwhile, Exxon had already known about the dynamics of a changing climate, but that did not stop them from denying the problem and making it worse. The answer remains popular counterpower.

After thirty years of fighting climate change, I am convinced that the movement to bring down greenhouse gas emissions must be seen as part of a larger picture. We need to act now to realize the long range change we want—people doing urban gardening, promoting renewable energy in citizens' cooperatives, organizing “walking buses” to get children to school, working to get plastic out of our lives, and doing countless other things through social movements and citizen associations. People become active because of their ideas of a good life, such as decent work, affordable housing, clean air, a functioning infrastructure, good schools, and financial security. They commit themselves for many reasons, and if they contribute also to solving a global problem like climate change, all the better. They are the “positive transition story” we need. There is no other one.

And what certainly will not work is the threat that “the window for survival is closing fast.” Since the first Conference of Parties in 1995 in Berlin, I have seen it closing so many times that even if this time it should be true, it is not going to motivate anybody to act.

About the Author



Karl-Ludwig Schibel has been an activist and writer on climate change, climate justice, and local climate policies for three decades. He holds an MA in sociology from Columbia University and a PhD from Frankfurt University, where he taught social ecology. He served on the board of the city network Climate Alliance from 1990 to 2015, and continues to coordinate Climate Alliance in Italy. He organizes the annual Fair of Practical Utopias in Città di Castello, which showcases ecological solutions for the economy and society.

About the Publication

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