

Climate before capitalism

Saving the Climate, not Capitalism - For a Social and Ecological System Change

By Bernd Riexinger and Lorenz Gösta Beutin

As never before in Germany, concerns about the global climate are on top of the agenda. Nationwide, tens of thousands of students are on strike for a turnaround in climate policy. They demand action instead of promises. The federal government is missing its own inadequate climate targets: The "Climate Protection Plan 2050" is not enough for the Paris climate protection targets. The energy sector, industries, automobile companies, the building industry and the agriculture sector would have to change their course radically in order to even come close to these too weak climate targets. The phase-out of coal is hereby only a small beginning for the necessary departure of oil, coal and gas in the entire economy. THE LEFT* is equally committed to the social interests of employees and to radical ecological restructuring.

The climate crisis exacerbates existing injustices: In Germany, private households and small companies are paying the biggest share for energy system transformation and the phase-out of coal, instead of big industries and the export industry. In the global South, the climate crisis is threatening the livelihoods of millions of people who have contributed least to global warming. The climate crisis is a catalyst for war, flight, migration and distribution conflicts. 100 corporations are responsible for 71 percent of global CO2 emissions. More than half of global emissions are caused by 25 companies and government agencies. "Green capitalism" with market-friendly CO2 emissions trading is an illusion. In capitalism, all interests are subordinated to economic growth and saving on wages, energy and raw materials. Even concrete individual improvements can only be achieved with clear political guidelines and regulation and usually must be fought for.

Climate protection is a core topic of THE LEFT party. The difference to the other parties: LEFT climate policies are tackling the powerful corporations that want to continue earning at any price from turbo capitalism and fossil fuels. LEFT climate policies place the interests of humans, climatic justice and social justice in the center.

The task of THE LEFT is to build up and support social pressure for concrete socio-ecological change. We support the climate movement and call on all members and supporters to take part in it and to actively help build it up and strengthen it.

Projects for left-wing climate policy:

1. Speed up the energy transition, collectivize energy companies, combat energy poverty:

- Coal phase-out until 2030, now starting with the shutdown of the 20 dirtiest lignite-fired power plants. The structural change must not take place on the back of the employees, they receive security and real perspectives.
- The large energy companies are collectivized, for cooperatives, citizen energy and municipal utilities. THE LEFT introduces social electricity tariffs that relieve low-income households and encourage them to save energy.

2. Change of course for a socio-ecological mobility of the future:

- Rail reform: from a profit-oriented AG to a citizen railway for everyone, cheap, punctual, well developed. Rail tickets will be affordable for everyone and significantly cheaper than air travel.
- Air traffic will be taxed much more heavily and will be socially fair through quota regulations or social staggering.
- Expansion of a comprehensive and free local public transport system. City centers will be free of unnecessary individual car traffic, cyclists and pedestrians will be prioritized. In addition to local transport, there are intelligent car-sharing projects for the common good rather than for profit, and inexpensive shared taxis.

3. Housing affordable for all and ecological: We promote affordable municipal housing construction in cooperatives and public housing associations, because social and ecological housing can best be implemented in a public interest-oriented manner.

4. Strengthening regional cycles, good food for all: THE LEFT promotes ecological and sustainable agriculture. The protests against the agricultural industry and mass animal husbandry are growing. Good nutrition is also a social issue. All people receive access to healthy food, and ecologically produced food will no longer be a question of account balance. Regional production, processing and marketing of food make long transport routes superfluous.

5. Social-ecological innovation in industry and trade, good and meaningful work for all, democracy in the economy: Trade policies that promotes climate-damaging exports must be ended. The industry must reduce emissions in a binding manner and develop resource-saving, durable products that are more strongly embedded in a regional circular-flow economy.

From 2030, cars with internal combustion engines will no longer be permitted. We want to strengthen democracy in the economy and the rights of employees. The forthcoming restructuring of the automotive industry in the next 10 to 15 years will be socially just. Fair transitions means: social security and income guarantees, radical reductions in working hours with wage compensation, the right to further training, investment in collectively agreed, better paid and socially meaningful work, for example in mechanical engineering, railway (freight) production, health and social professions, in local authorities and in environmental technology. The knowledge of workers is indispensable for the development of innovation.

6. Millionaire tax for social climate protection and fair transitions: The billions needed to invest in affordable and ecological housing, for the energy and mobility shift and for the necessary restructuring of industry and infrastructure are contrasted by the growing wealth of multimillionaires. A sign of the failure of neoliberal policies in recent decades! We need a wealth tax! This is the only way to finance future investments in climate protection, sustainable jobs and "fair transitions". That is the touchstone of a credible climate policy!

* the German Left Party, DIE LINKE, is translated as THE LEFT in this article.

The original article can be found on <https://www.die-linke.de/start/detail/klima-vor-kapitalismus/?view=mail>.

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