



TISHMAN CENTER · NOVEMBER 28, 2018

# Forget About COP24. We Need You To Win Over Climate Change.

On Saturday morning, January 13, 2018, the following [emergency alert](#) [was sent to residents of Hawaii:](#)

BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT  
INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK  
IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A  
DRILL. This was a false alert, which  
was sent by mistake, but it took 38  
minutes until another message was  
sent with an update that the initial  
alert message was an error. In the  
meantime people on the island were  
in panic, assuming these are the last  
minutes of their life. "I was running

through all the scenarios in my head, but there was nowhere to go, nowhere to pull over to,” Mike Staskow, a retired military captain told [the New York Times](#). “Matt LoPresti, a state representative, told CNN that he and his family headed for a bathroom. “I was sitting in the bathtub with my children, saying our prayers,” he said.” The latest climate reports, from [the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report](#) to the [4th National Climate Assessment](#) that were published last Friday sent us a similar emergency alert about the dire effects of climate change. Unlike the Hawaiian alert, this one is real, but just like the people who received the alert in Hawaii, most of us feel there’s nothing much we can do about it. Some of us choose to deny, others prefer to ignore and forget about it, and many, I guess, want to leave it to those in power, hoping they will know what to do and how to respond to this threat. Finally, there are those who feel that we can still make a difference, but we need to figure out how to do it because whatever we do right now is just not good enough. I find the last group to be the most interesting and challenging. They want people to address climate change as a serious and urgent matter, but at the same time they don’t want to be categorized as doom-and-gloom party poopers that

no one likes or listens to. They also try to convey a simple message about a very complex issue. Finally, they want to challenge the current Paris dogma without giving ammunition to Trump or other climate skeptics/deniers who want to [block or slow change](#). Let me explain first what the Paris dogma is because I believe it is essential for us to be honest about what works and what doesn't. In his 2015 speech at the [Aspen Institute's Action Forum](#) (which later evolved into the excellent book "[Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World](#)"), Anand Giridharadas said the following:

*"Sometimes we succumb to the seductive Davos dogma that the business approach is the only thing that can change the world, in the face of so much historical evidence to the contrary. And so when the winners of our age answer the problem of inequality and injustice, all too often they answer it within the logic and frameworks of business and markets."*

Now let's consider the climate equivalent: On December 3rd delegations from all over the world will convene in Katowice, Poland for the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, or in

short [COP24](#). Their goal will be to reach an agreement on the roadmap for implementing the Paris Agreement. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) explains it in [140 characters](#):

*The central goal of the [#ParisAgreement](#) is to hold the global average temperature rise as close as possible to 1.5°C. At [#COP24](#) in [#Katowice](#), governments are set to finalize its implementation guidelines.*

Here's the problem: This is not only a very difficult task given the need to reach a consensus among 190 countries, but even if this consensus will be reached the commitments made under the Paris Agreement are not sufficient to meet the target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. Don't take my word for it - both the [U.N.](#) and the latest [IPCC report](#) agree that this is the case. In other words, whatever the outcome of the COP24 is, it is just not going to be good enough. So why do we keep moving forward with a strategy that is likely to fail? 1) At the moment we don't have a better strategy. 2) There isn't enough pressure on policymakers to come up with a better strategy. 3) The current strategy reflects the logic and mindset of most people in power, who may be reluctant to consider a new strategy they may

feel less comfortable with. 4) There's still a hope we have time to fix what needs to be fixed about the implementation of the current strategy. 5) All of the above. If we dig a little further and look beneath the iceberg, we can start asking questions about whether the U.N. addresses climate change as a technical problem (problem definition is clear and so is the solution that is applied by an expert) rather than an adaptive challenge (problem and solution require learning; cannot be solved by experts). As Prof. Karen O'Brien of the University of Oslo explains this distinction can be critical:

*"Approaching the 1.5 °C target as an adaptive challenge is quite different. Adaptive challenges are referred to as 'adaptive' because they require a new way of viewing both problems and solutions. They usually have technical aspects, but they also recognize the importance of mindsets, especially the beliefs, values, and worldviews that influence how problems and solutions are perceived, approached and addressed."*

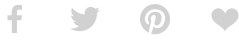
The problem with the Paris dogma is not only that it may falsely identify climate change as a technical problem, but also that it doesn't seem to be very suitable to a world

that becomes volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous ([VUCA](#)), where the [‘new normal’ is constantly redefined](#). “The greatest danger in turbulent times,” [Peter Drucker](#) wrote, “is not the turbulence, but to act with yesterday's logic.” Yet, this is exactly what we’re doing when it comes to climate change. I may be wrong but I believe the chances the COP24 delegates will explore new climate strategies are similar to the chances the [World Economic Forum](#) will adopt [Doughnut Economics](#) as the future of capitalism. In other words: Is it very unlikely to happen. So what do we do about it? First, we need to stay optimistic and not mistake urgency for desperation – we can still make a difference. As [Ezio Manzini](#) puts it: "Faced with a world drifting rapidly towards catastrophe, it seems to me that we need this sense of a designer's realism and optimism more than ever. We must see the problems, and we must think that in spite of everything, it is possible to solve these problems. We must find solutions" Second, it's time to start listening to young people who are not afraid [to ask critical questions](#), are not bounded by political and economic constraints, and are also willing to [take bold action](#). It is no coincidence so many of those who offer inspiring ways to challenge the status quo in the fight over climate

change are young people and even kids. We should start paying more attention to those who are not afraid to tell us that the Emperor isn't wearing anything at all. There's a good chance they are right. This is why I've started a new campaign, 1.5 for Victory that will invite students (and faculty!) worldwide for a joint exploration of ways to make 1.5°C limit possible. We don't claim to have all the answers, but we do know that it is time to challenge the status quo and start transforming the vicious cycle of horrifying reports and growing signs of the impacts of climate change into a virtuous cycle of new mindset(s), civic engagement and bold action. We believe in learning, experimentation and exploration of new ways to be both radical and practical, as one without the other is useless when it comes to climate change. Perhaps, first and foremost we remember that we need not just to win over climate change, but to win fast enough as "winning slowly is the same as losing". On December 3rd, the first day of COP24 we'll have our first meeting at The New School and invite the New School community\* for an evening of pizza, tattoos, tea & biscuits and the opportunity to shape the most important fight we have: Climate Change. Are you in? \*If you're not part of the New School community, but want to bring 1.5 for Victory

campaign to your university,  
community or organization please  
[email me.](#)

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