

DECARBONISATION: A SOCIAL IMPERATIVE

Posted on 16/10/2023 by Naider

The smoke from the bombs momentarily clouds the horizon. As these lines are being written, the savagery perpetrated by Hamas on hundreds of Israeli citizens echoes and we hold our breath for [the holocaust that looms over Gaza](#) in the form of final revenge after years of siege and occupation. It is hard to bear this **spiral of irrational madness** for those of us who understand society as an equitable system of social cooperation between equal citizens and who are guided by **Reason as an instrument of collective bargaining**.

It may seem somewhat obscene to speak at this precise moment of ethical commitment and social mandate for anything other than the restoration of peace and respect for life, let alone to call for a decarbonised and resilient society against climate change. It seems, to say the least, extemporaneous. But we must continue. Reason, the ethics of reason, has certainly lived through better times, but in Europe there are more of us (or at least there are many) who work for the values of intergenerational and international solidarity, for fraternity and social equality, for the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, for rational ethics and secularism, **for a cooperative and equitable economic model and for ecological responsibility and the right to the environment**. And we have to continue. We want to contribute from Naider, even tangentially, to the transformation of the world towards a more democratic, wiser and freer place. This is our struggle or rather this is our path, so we have to overcome the conjuncture of war to bring to the frontispiece of our magazine the light that stands out in our society and that guides the construction of an ecologically responsible society.

Indeed, the decarbonisation of our economy and our *modus vivendi* is not only a matter of planetary survival and a formula for resilience against climate change, it also has a clear background linked to the international trade in fossil fuels and the commodification of energy that influences (and very much so) the power struggles in the Middle East. Today more than ever it is worth remembering this aspect as an additional ethical motivation for those who still need arguments.

The economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen used to say that the best indicator of a country's development was the degree of freedom of its citizens. This theorist of economic justice was right (tell that to the poor in Gaza or the rich Israelis on the other side of the ghetto).

"The decarbonisation of our economy and our modus vivendi is not only a matter of planetary survival and a formula for resilience against climate change, it also has a clear background linked to international trade in fossil fuels and the commodification of energy."

His approach focused on the importance of equity in society, and his work has influenced the understanding of economics and development from a broader perspective than the mere accumulation of material wealth. He reflected and advocated, in that sense, **understanding the purpose of a company as an instrument to help create a decent society**. A decent society that for Sen, as early as the 1980s, included environmental commitment and respect for nature in business practice.

The relationship between decarbonisation (today's metaphor for a decent society) and the economy is complex. Concerns are often raised that the transition to a low-carbon economy may have economically and financially unaffordable costs. But **decarbonisation, in essence, presents economic opportunities**. Investment in clean technologies fosters innovation, improves financial

ratings and opens doors in demanding markets that pay for expensive products. As my partner [Jokin Etxebarria](#) explains, the transition to a low-carbon economy is a source of sustainable growth in the long term, but also in the short term. **The argument of inaction for the sake of competitiveness creaks.** Indeed, at the macro level, inaction in the face of climate change also has a high cost. Extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and economic instability related to climate change are also real and no longer invisible costs.

“The transition to a low-carbon economy is a source of sustainable growth in the long term, but also in the short term. The argument of inaction for the sake of competitiveness is crunching.”

But **decarbonisation** is not only a technical and business challenge, **it is also a social and political act.** It requires the collaboration of governments, businesses and citizens. Equity and social justice are essential, as the most vulnerable communities are the most affected by climate change and often the least prepared to cope with its impacts. Public policies thus play a key role in decarbonisation (again understood as building a decent society). The implementation of regulations (the legal imperative) to encourage emissions reductions is necessary, but above all it is necessary to activate a long-term political commitment to overcome resistance to change and to address vested interests without hesitation in decision-making. **The social mandate is emerging today with greater magnitude and clamour,** signalling to political actors the direction society wishes to take.

Our cities, without going any further, also have much to say in this collective commitment to combat climate change and be resilient to its effects. Cities account for a significant share of carbon emissions from transport, construction and energy demand.

They therefore have the capacity to lead the way towards decarbonisation through policies and actions at the local level. This includes investment in efficient public transport systems, promotion of sustainable mobility, adoption of green building codes, urban densification, sufficiency and promotion of renewable energy in urban infrastructure.

As we can see, there are countless areas of work in which to point out social duties. But our commitment, our purpose as a business project, is to provide effective solutions and viable transformation tools to add value to our society. And that is what we essentially try to do with our daily work. Thus, with the trust of numerous public (public agencies, city councils) and private (companies, foundations) stakeholders, we have been developing or implementing over the years a number of transformation tools aimed at the decarbonisation of our companies and also of our cities. Our catalogue is renewed as new opportunities arise and this year we have three instruments that we are working with successfully and that we consider particularly valuable for their effectiveness, relevance and replicability.

“Our purpose as a business project is to provide effective solutions and viable transformation tools to add value to our society.”

Firstly, for about a year now, we have had the [CICLO by naidier tool](#), for the promotion of circularity

and **decarbonisation in multisectoral industrial SMEs**. A positioning and maturity tool that articulates a transition itinerary towards the circular economy in an SME. Highly recommended for any company that wants to make simple but decisive progress on the sustainability journey.

Secondly, we talk about [LEZs \(Low Emission Zones\)](#). The LEZ is a management tool of European applicability that delimits certain areas of our cities and metropolitan areas as protected atmospheric environments. In practice, it means the establishment of significant restrictions on the use of private vehicles, especially those with combustion engines. In recent months, the LEZs have suffered relentless media harassment by some social groups with diverse interests (neighbourhood, commercial, private vehicle advocates, etc.) and even by some liberal parties on the right and sectors of the more conservative left, adducing a host of arguments that can be dismantled one by one against what is nothing more than a technology for the transformation of our cities.

The imperative here, regardless of its greater or lesser social support, is of a legal nature. In Spain, all municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants should have already established their LEZs. However, it seems that changing the city model is not proving easy and many municipalities, due to an inability to accelerate the pace, a lack of knowledge of the opportunities generated by this technology or political expediency, have opted to leave this process for the discount time. With our work we try to help its implementation in the most favourable way **for each city, ensuring, in addition to the environmental benefit, a clear positive socio-economic impact** with the recovery of dynamics of centrality already forgotten in many urban centres.

Finally, we dare to launch a tool for the establishment of a [Sustainable Urban Food System](#). The idea is to transform (or rather replace) a city's food production and consumption model with one that ensures **sustainability and sufficiency criteria while advancing food sovereignty** as a regeneration strategy.

All these tools represent a contribution to addressing the challenge of decarbonisation. The path towards a sustainable future has long been in the hands of collective action and demands the implementation of effective solutions in the search for greater levels of well-being and progress in that decent society to which we aspire and which we see so far away when war assaults us in streaming.

“The path to a sustainable future has long been in the hands of collective action and demands the implementation of effective solutions in the search for greater well-being and progress.”

Editorial in our [autumn issue](#), with this and more key transitional issues.

