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Transforming the energy paradigm: rights of nature and ecosocial transitions

Transformando el paradigma energético: derechos de la naturaleza y transiciones ecosociales

Transformando o paradigma energético: direitos da natureza e transições ecosociais

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Article received on February 19, 2025, final version accepted on July 15, 2025, published on December 5, 2025.

ABSTRACT The 21st century confronts an unprecedented polycrisis, a product of a civilizational system rooted in economic growth and nature's exploitation. This convergence of simultaneous crises manifests through climate change, environmental devastation, and escalating social and economic inequalities, exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed the fragility of health and economic systems. In light of governments' inability to coordinate global responses, the need for new perspectives that challenge the dominant civilizational model becomes evident. Decarbonization, understood as the shift toward renewable energies, proves insufficient in its current implementation, as it reproduces extractivist logic and deepens inequalities by focusing on the Global South. Instead of fostering structural change, economic power remains concentrated, perpetuating a "green colonialism" that subordinates peripheral countries. Just energy transition and ecological justice are proposals that demand an equitable redistribution of benefits and costs, amplifying the voices of local communities and respecting the Rights of Nature. Energy democratization and degrowth emerge as alternatives to overcome the fetish of economic growth, proposing an economy that prioritizes sustainability, equity, and environmental regeneration. This vision questions wealth accumulation at nature's

expense and suggests a harmonious relationship with the planet, where human well-being is intrinsically linked to ecological balance and the rights of nature.

Keywords: polycrisis; ecosocial transitions; energy transitions; rights of nature; energy democratization.

RESUMO

O século XXI enfrenta uma policrise sem precedentes, resultante de um sistema civilizatório baseado no crescimento econômico e na exploração da natureza. Esse acúmulo de diversas crises simultâneas se manifesta nas mudanças climáticas, na devastação ambiental e nas crescentes desigualdades sociais e econômicas, exacerbadas pela recente pandemia de COVID-19, que revelou a fragilidade dos sistemas de saúde e da economia. Diante da incapacidade dos governos em coordenar respostas globais, torna-se evidente a necessidade de novas perspectivas que questionem o modelo civilizatório dominante. A descarbonização, entendida como a transição para energias renováveis, mostra-se insuficiente em sua implementação atual, pois reproduz a lógica extrativista e aprofunda as desigualdades ao se concentrar no Sul Global. Em vez de uma mudança estrutural, mantém-se o poder econômico, perpetuando um colonialismo verde que subordina os países periféricos. A transição energética justa e a justiça ecológica são propostas que demandam uma redistribuição equitativa de benefícios e custos, dando voz às comunidades locais e respeitando os Direitos da Natureza. A democratização da energia e o decrescimento emergem como alternativas para superar o fetiche do crescimento econômico, propondo uma economia que priorize a sustentabilidade, a equidade e a regeneração ambiental. Essa visão questiona a acumulação de riqueza às custas da natureza e sugere uma relação harmoniosa com o planeta, onde o bem-estar humano esteja intrinsecamente ligado ao equilíbrio ecológico e aos Direitos da Natureza.

Palavras-chave: policrise; transições ecosociais; transições energéticas; direitos da natureza; democratização da energia.

RESUMEN

El siglo XXI enfrenta una policrisis sin precedentes, resultado de un sistema civilizatorio basado en el crecimiento económico y la explotación de la naturaleza. Este cúmulo de distintas crisis simultáneas se manifiesta en el cambio climático, la devastación ambiental y crecientes desigualdades sociales y económicas, exacerbadas por la reciente pandemia de COVID-19, que reveló la fragilidad de los sistemas de salud y economía. Ante la incapacidad de los gobiernos para coordinar respuestas globales, se hace evidente la necesidad de nuevas perspectivas que cuestionen el modelo civilizatorio dominante. La descarbonización, entendida como transición a energías renovables, es insuficiente en su implementación actual, pues reproduce la lógica extractivista y profundiza desigualdades al concentrarse en el Sur global. En lugar de un cambio estructural, se mantiene el poder económico, perpetuando un colonialismo verde que subordina a los países periféricos. La transición energética justa y la justicia ecológica son propuestas que demandan una redistribución equitativa de beneficios y costos, dando voz a comunidades locales y respetando los Derechos de la Naturaleza. La democratización de la energía y el decrecimiento emergen como alternativas para superar el fetiche del crecimiento económico, proponiendo una economía que priorice la sostenibilidad, la equidad y la regeneración ambiental. Esta visión cuestiona la acumulación de riqueza a expensas de la naturaleza y sugiere una relación armónica con el planeta, donde el bienestar humano esté intrínsecamente ligado al equilibrio ecológico y los derechos de la naturaleza.

Palabras clave: policrisis; transiciones ecosociales; transiciones energéticas; derechos de la naturaleza; democratización de la energía.

“What a sad era when it is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice.”

Albert Einstein

1. Introduction: civilizational polycrisis and the need for new perspectives

Humanity faces an unprecedented civilizational crossroads. The 21st century has plunged us into a polycrisis. These are multiple, deeply interconnected crises that affect all aspects of life on the planet. This collapse is not a coincidence, but the result of a civilizational system that has reached its limits. Progress, as an expression of the dominant civilization, has imposed permanent economic growth, driven by the massive consumption of natural resources and the constant exploitation of human labor. But this hegemonic model is now showing its limits, its profound failures.

The climate crisis and environmental devastation are only the most visible manifestations of ecological collapse, but they are not the only ones. These crises are interconnected with deep economic and social inequalities, recently exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has revealed the fragility of health systems and the precariousness of globalized economies. Governments, trapped in neoliberal logic, have shown a worrying inability to coordinate global responses to threats that transcend borders. Far from structural solutions, we have seen

fragmented responses that perpetuate inequalities and deepen the crisis. And more of the same will only make things worse.

This context presents us with the urgent need to rethink the very foundations of our societies. It is not just a matter of addressing an environmental or economic crisis, but of questioning the foundations of the civilizational model that has guided the world in recent centuries. Ecological collapse has highlighted the interdependence between ecosystems and human economies. The disruption of natural cycles, the loss of biodiversity, and extreme weather events are clear signs that we have broken the balance with Nature. This scenario requires us to radically reconfigure our relationship with Pacha Mama, placing sustainability, equity, and respect for planetary boundaries at the center.

2. The limits and fallacies of decarbonization

In this context, the term “decarbonization” has gained prominence in debates about ecological

collapse, often seen simply as climate change, and the energy transition (Dietz, 2023). The proposal is clear: abandon fossil fuels and replace them with renewable energy sources. However, this so-called “decarbonization consensus” hides deep contradictions (Bringel & Svampa, 2023). The technological solutions presented to us, such as the electrification of transportation or solar energy, are rooted in the logic of global capitalism (Ávila, 2023). They are offered to us as remedies for the climate crisis without questioning consumption patterns, the logic of production tied to permanent economic growth, and the very power structures that perpetuate the exploitation of nature and social inequality.

The transition to a low-carbon economy is necessary, but the way it is being implemented raises ethical and social challenges. Green technologies, such as electric vehicles or photovoltaic systems, depend on the intensive extraction of minerals such as lithium, copper, cobalt, and other rare earths, whose extraction is concentrated in the Global South, reproducing historical colonial patterns (Dietz, 2023). Rather than transforming the extractivist logic that has dominated capitalism, decarbonization simply shifts the exploitation of fossil fuels to a new frontier of natural resources. This endeavor, which has so far failed to reduce fossil fuel consumption, has been called green colonialism, as it perpetuates the subordination of the same peripheral regions of the capitalist system to sustain the energy consumption of the global North (Bringel *et al.*, 2023).

The “decarbonization consensus” seen in this light, then, is nothing more than a trap. It reduces the energy transition to a technical issue, ignoring the

profound social, political, and economic implications at stake. The proposed solutions do not address the fundamental problems of environmental justice, social justice, or the power dynamics that perpetuate the exploitation of nature. Instead of promoting real structural transformation, the technocratic approach keeps the pillars of the global economic system intact while attempting to readjust the energy matrix.

In countries such as Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina, demand for lithium, which is essential for electric vehicle batteries, has sparked a new extractive boom (Svampa, 2024). Although it promises economic benefits, it does not compensate for the destruction of fragile ecosystems or the dispossession of indigenous communities. These extractive projects are generally imposed without the consent of the affected communities, violating not only human rights but also the Rights of Nature (Ávila, 2023). This new extractivism, far from being a solution, perpetuates the inequalities and ecological destruction that have characterized the system based on the extraction of nature.

Against this backdrop, ecological justice emerges as a critical framework for understanding the power dynamics behind the energy transition (Svampa, 2022). Environmental justice not only implies an equitable distribution of the benefits and costs of natural resource exploitation, but also requires the active participation of communities in decisions that affect their territories. The transition cannot simply be a technocratic process; it must be a just transition that addresses structural inequalities and respects the rights of the most vulnerable communities.

Instead of continuing to rely on technological solutions that perpetuate these dynamics, we need new perspectives that place social justice, equity, and respect for the Rights of Nature at the center. Proposals such as degrowth, climate justice, and the Rights of Nature itself offer alternative frameworks for rethinking our relationship with the planet, questioning the logic of perpetual growth and proposing a fair redistribution of resources, respecting the planet's ecological limits. In short, we need a different economy for a different civilization (Acosta & Cajas-Guijarro, 2018; 2021).

3. The rights of nature as a starting point for civilizational transformation

For centuries, we have lived under a mistaken conception: that human beings are the absolute owners of the Earth, relegating Nature to the role of a mere object of exploitation. This anthropocentric view is one of the fundamental causes of the global ecological crisis that today threatens the very existence of life on the planet. The logic of domination and plunder that has guided capitalist evolution, even more so in its globalizing phase, has pushed the planet to the brink of collapse, highlighting the urgent need to rethink our relationships with ecosystems and with the other living beings that inhabit the Earth. Nature, far from being an infinite source of resources, is a subject with its own rights that has been historically silenced in order to exploit it with impunity.

The recognition of the Rights of Nature, enshrined for the first time in a constitution in Ecuador in 2008, is not a symbolic act or a temporary concession. It represents a radical paradigm shift that challenges the extractivist and colonial vision that has dominated our societies. This legal framework constitutes a frontal attack on predatory capitalism, which exploits natural resources without limits, and establishes that Nature has intrinsic rights: to exist, to regenerate, and to maintain its life cycles. This constitutional mandate demands much more than mere declarations: it demands an active commitment to restore and maintain ecological integrity. Human well-being cannot be achieved if it is not intrinsically linked to the well-being of Nature.

The recognition of the Rights of Nature at the global level, as established in the 2010 Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, issued at a major summit of peoples in Cochapamba, Bolivia, reflects a collective effort that extends worldwide (Fukurai & Krooth, 2021; Martínez & Acosta, 2017; Rzedzian, 2023). The movement resulting from these and other steps taken since 2008, driven by indigenous peoples, farmers, and environmental activists, challenges the extractivist logic that continues to destroy territories and ecosystems. These are not mere adjustments or reforms: the Rights of Nature are an ethical and urgent imperative for us to reconnect with the essence of a finite planet. There is no place for profit maximization at the expense of life. If we want to survive as a species, we must abandon the logic of infinite accumulation and adopt a regenerative economy that puts life at the center, not profit.

The transformative ethics that emerge from the Rights of Nature are not limited to environmental protection. They are a frontal attack on a system that is sustained by the unlimited exploitation of Nature and human beings. Infinite accumulation and unbridled consumption are incompatible with life on a planet with finite resources. Only by recognizing the biophysical limits of the Earth and our interdependence with Nature can we build a new relationship based on mutual respect and care. It is time to replace the extractivist logic with a logic of regeneration and balance, one that understands that energy cannot continue to be managed as a commodity or a simple input under the logic of the market, but as an indispensable right for life.

4. The importance of energy in the life of societies and nature itself

Energy has been a fundamental pillar in the evolution of human beings and their history. From the moment humanity learned to master fire to the Industrial Revolution, which unleashed the massive use of fossil fuels, the ability to access new sources of energy has radically transformed the structure of societies. However, this energy expansion has not been neutral or benign. It has come at an enormous cost to ecosystems and to communities that have been marginalized in the process of exploiting energy resources.

The energy model that has prevailed since the 19th century, based on the burning of fossil fuels, has been responsible for much of the eco-

logical damage we face today. Climate change, the destruction of biodiversity, and the pollution of ecosystems are direct consequences of a logic that prioritizes economic growth over planetary well-being. In turn, this energy model has generated profound inequalities, both globally and locally. While the global North receives the lion's share of the economic benefits from the exploitation of fossil fuels, communities in the global South have borne the environmental and social costs of this extraction (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015).

Energy, and this is key, should not be seen as a mere commodity in the hands of the markets. Energy is a fundamental human right (Del Guayo Castiella, 2020). Around the world, millions of people lack access to "modern" energy, which affects their ability to meet basic needs such as education, health, work, and political participation. This situation, known as energy poverty, is a clear manifestation of global inequalities and is closely linked to climate injustice. The countries and communities that have contributed least to climate change are the most affected by its devastating impacts, while those that have accumulated wealth through the exploitation of fossil fuels continue to be the main beneficiaries of the global energy system (Hoffmann, 2020).

The transition to more equitable and sustainable energy systems is essential to guarantee social and ecological justice (Ávila, 2023). This new model must reject the logic of energy commodification and treat energy as a common good, accessible to all people and respectful of the planet's life cycles. Energy policies must be designed not only to im-

prove efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, but also to ensure that all people, regardless of their geographical location or economic status, have access to clean and affordable energy (Ávila, 2023). Energy, like water or clean air, must be seen as an inalienable right of humanity and nature.

This ethical and energy justice approach cannot be limited to a mere technological transition. The electrification of transport and the expansion of renewable energies are necessary steps, but they are insufficient. True transformation must go beyond technology, requiring a change in the consumption and production patterns that have driven the climate crisis. Especially in industrialized countries, where energy consumption levels are unsustainable, we must rethink the concept of progress and well-being (Álvarez – Cantalapiedra, 2018; Brand, 2023). It is not a question of growing indefinitely, but of building an economy of Good Living, where quality of life is not measured in terms of material accumulation, but in terms of equity, sustainability, and harmony with Nature (Kauffman & Martin, 2021).

Buen Vivir represents a qualitative step forward by overcoming the traditional concept of “development” and its many synonyms, as well as dismantling the religion of “progress” and introducing a different vision that is much richer in content and more complex. Buen Vivir is an opportunity to collectively build new ways of life, as well as to recover and enhance pre-existing dignified ways of life (Acosta, 2014). It is not a recipe book set out in a few constitutional articles. There are no recipes or manuals. Buen Vivir, in essence, is a way of life that comes from the community matrix of peoples

who lived or still live in harmony with nature. These indigenous peoples are not pre-modern, nor are they backward. Their values, experiences, and practices synthesize a living civilization capable of confronting an ever-colonial modernity. With their proposals, they imagine a different future, one that already nourishes global debates. Buen Vivir, then, seeks to bring together the main values, some experiences, and above all certain practices existing in the Andes and the Amazon, as well as in other parts of the planet.

The energy transition, therefore, is not only a technical challenge, but also an ethical and political one. It is an opportunity to redefine our priorities as a society and move toward a more just and balanced future, both for humans and for nature. If we want a world where life flourishes, we must profoundly transform our energy system, embracing the principles of justice, equity, and respect for the rights of nature.

5. Towards a just energy transition: structural challenges and ethical solutions

The energy transition is not simply a technical or economic issue; it is, above all, a challenge of social and ecological justice. The climate crisis and the urgent need to decarbonize our economies have highlighted the urgency of transforming the energy sources that power the world. However, the way in which this change is implemented may perpetuate, and even exacerbate, the historical and structural

inequalities that have characterized the fossil fuel-based energy system (Dietz, 2023).

In this sense, talking about a true energy transition necessarily implies adopting the framework of energy justice, a concept that cannot be reduced to mere technological adjustments (Brannstrom, 2022). Energy justice is not an end in itself, but a critical tool for ensuring that the benefits and costs of this transition are distributed equitably. This raises the questions: Who has access to energy? Who benefits from technological changes, and who bears the environmental and social costs of energy production?

Energy justice encompasses three essential dimensions: distributive, procedural, and recognition (Jenkins, *et al.*, 2016). The distributive dimension refers to the equitable distribution of the benefits and costs associated with energy. It includes access to clean energy sources and the minimization of environmental impacts. The procedural dimension focuses on effective participation in decision-making. It is not enough for benefits to be distributed equitably; it is also essential that affected communities have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes regarding energy production and consumption (Ávila, 2023; Martínez & Acosta, 2017). Finally, the recognition dimension requires respect and appreciation for the diverse cultural identities, worldviews, and ways of life that may be affected by energy policies (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015).

One of the major structural challenges in this transition is the concentration of power in the hands of large corporations and central governments (Bringel & Svampa, 2023; Svampa, 2024). The

same industries that have controlled the fossil fuel market are now seeking to expand their influence in the renewable energy sector. This raises serious concerns about the risk that the energy transition will reproduce the same dynamics of power concentration and exclusion that characterized the old energy system. Ethical solutions to this transition must be rooted in a radical redistribution of power and resources. This does not mean simply changing the energy matrix, but empowering local communities to be protagonists of their own energy future. Energy cooperatives and community energy projects are a concrete example of how communities can regain control over energy production and consumption, creating more equitable, sustainable, and democratic systems (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015).

Furthermore, we cannot conceive of a just energy transition without addressing the deep historical inequalities that underlie the global energy system. Energy policies must be geared toward correcting historical injustices, such as energy poverty, which affects millions of people in the Global South, and the lack of access to clean and affordable energy sources. The energy transition, in an international context, rather than being controlled by large transnational corporations, must be accompanied by cooperation that guarantees the transfer of technologies and the necessary financing so that all countries can access renewable energies without falling into new forms of dependence and indebtedness (Kauffman & Martin, 2021).

6. Democratization of energy: from commodity to right

At the heart of a just energy transition lies the democratization of energy (Bertinat, 2016). Currently, energy is viewed and treated as just another commodity, controlled by market logic. This mercantilist approach means that those with greater purchasing power have greater access to energy, while the most vulnerable are systematically excluded from its benefits. This dynamic perpetuates a cycle of inequality, where the richest not only enjoy greater access to energy and better-quality energy, but also contribute more to climate change, while the poorest suffer the most severe consequences.

Energy, then, should be understood not as a commodity, but as a fundamental human right (Del Guayo Castiella, 2020). Access to energy is not a luxury, it is an indispensable condition for a dignified life and participation in political, social, and economic life. Without access to energy, people cannot meet their basic needs, such as education, health, or employment. Therefore, energy injustice is one of the clearest manifestations of the structural inequalities facing our societies. Energy must be a common good, a right for all, regardless of economic capacity or geographical location.

Projects such as energy cooperatives and community energy systems are an example of how we can begin to decommodify energy and, above all, how to give power back to communities. Instead of relying on large corporations—both private and state-owned—that control the energy market, communities can take control of their own energy supply,

generating their own energy from renewable and self-managed sources. These types of projects not only promote energy justice, but also reduce costs and encourage greater democratic participation in the management of energy resources (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015).

The democratization of energy implies a profound transformation in the way decisions about energy production and consumption are made (Bertinat, 2016). Energy policies can no longer be dictated exclusively by central governments or large corporations. Local communities, marginalized groups, and indigenous populations, which have historically been the most affected by large-scale energy projects, must have a real voice in decisions that affect their territories and their future. This effort must include consumers at the neighborhood and rural levels, not just large economic groups. Free, prior, and informed consultation, recognized in international law, must be an essential component of any energy project carried out in their territories (Kauffman & Martin, 2021).

A just energy transition is not just a technical or economic issue; it is a political and ethical struggle that aims to dismantle the power structures that have perpetuated inequalities and the destruction of nature (Ávila, 2023). Democratizing energy means transforming the energy system into one that serves people and nature, rather than being controlled by market interests. Only then can we move toward an economy based on Good Living, where energy is managed as a common good and not as a commodity that perpetuates injustice and exploitation.

7. *Reflections for a sustainable and fair energy future*

The urgency of a radical change in our energy system is unquestionable. The climate crisis has put the world in an extreme situation, exacerbated by energy poverty and the deep inequalities that structure the current system of energy production and access. Let us insist: we are not only facing a technical problem, but also an ethical and political crisis. It is not enough to change technologies; we must rethink and transform the economic and political structures that have sustained an exclusionary energy model that is devastating to nature and deeply unfair to millions of people. A sustainable and fair energy future must be based on principles of equity, democracy, and respect for the planet's ecological limits.

One of the fundamental pillars for building a truly sustainable energy future is the rethinking of the hegemonic economic model. The myth of perpetual growth has been the ideological basis of global capitalism, but this logic is unsustainable. Current decarbonization strategies, especially in their corporate aspects, do not address this fundamental contradiction. They propose a change in the energy matrix without questioning the obsession with unlimited economic growth, which keeps capitalist accumulation expanding.

The task involves overcoming the uni-verse, as a uniform vision of reality and its perspectives, in order to (re)construct the pluri-verse (Kothari *et al.*, 2019), where many worlds have space to live with dignity. These options are underway around

the world, although these processes are not always visible as they are emerging from the margins of Modernity or even from its hidden matrix: in short, we need to continue encouraging the Pluriverse in terms of concrete practices and motivating horizons.

Other societies demand other economies; that is the crux of the matter. And building other economies begins with killing the fetish of economic growth, for let us remember ad nauseam that a finite world does not allow for infinite growth. This observation is increasingly accepted. In the global North, movements promoting degrowth are gaining ground, while in the global South, resistance to extractivism is growing (Acosta & Brand, 2018).

What should motivate attention in the South is not to try to repeat socially and ecologically unsustainable ways of life, on the one hand, while dismantling those extractivist structures that suffocate life. Understanding this reality, countries that are currently impoverished and structurally excluded must seek dignified and sustainable options for life that do not represent a rehash—often caricatured—of the “imperial way of life” (Brand & Wissenq, 2021).

The deconstruction of the prevailing economy requires the construction of a new paradigm of production. That is, a paradigm of eco-technological-cultural productivity, or negentropic production, guided by the principles of ecological rationality (Leff, 2019). And that also demands profound changes in consumption structures.

This transition cannot allow for the existence of opulent lifestyles at the expense of the stagnation of others and the destruction of nature. Nor is

it a question of greening the prevailing economic management, naively hoping that the problems will be solved; this is not only foolish, but also carries with it an irresponsible expectation of continuing to maintain the cancer that is eating away at life on the planet: the commodification of Nature and of Humanity itself!

It is clear in this context of overcoming “economic sciences” and, above all, overcoming capitalist civilization, that we must accept that humanity and nature metabolically form a single unit. Thus, human rights, in broad terms, like the rights of nature, should be elements of a single great system of existential rights (Leff, 2021); not pigeonholed into epistemes specific to modernity, nor simply into compendiums, constitutions, laws, and norms, however innovative they may seem. The law is always a field of dispute and almost always lags behind social processes. However, despite these limitations, we must also move forward in this field toward a harmonious and balanced reunion with Nature, as the great task of our time.

With the sustainability of life itself in mind, it is essential to emancipate Nature from commercial ties. This tells us that economic objectives must be subject to the laws governing natural systems, without losing sight of respect for human dignity and ensuring quality of life for all people.

In this context, degrowth is not just an alternative, it is a necessity. It involves a planned and equitable reduction in production and consumption, which will alleviate pressure on ecosystems and improve the quality of life for all people, especially those who have been marginalized by the

global economic system (Acosta & Brand, 2018). Degrowth does not mean impoverishment or giving up well-being, but rather rethinking what we understand by well-being. It means a fair redistribution of resources, where excessive consumption in rich countries is reduced to free up ecological space and ensure that regions in the global South can meet their needs in a sustainable manner. This, however, does not imply that countries in the global South should follow the path of consumerism and productivism of countries in the global North.

Likewise, building a fair energy future cannot be limited to solving the immediate problems of our generations. It must take into account the dimensions of intergenerational and intragenerational justice. Intergenerational justice refers to our responsibility towards future generations. The decisions we make today will directly affect the ability of future generations to meet their basic needs. In the energy sector, this means avoiding the overexploitation of natural resources and ensuring that future generations can inherit a habitable planet (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015).

On the other hand, intragenerational justice refers to the inequalities that persist among current generations. Energy inequalities are one of the most visible manifestations of these injustices. Millions of people in the Global South lack access to clean and affordable energy, while countries in the Global North continue to benefit from disproportionate access to energy resources (Ávila, 2023). A just energy future must correct these inequalities and ensure that all people, regardless of their geographical origin or socioeconomic status, have access

to the benefits of the energy transition. This energy future must be based on a radical redistribution of energy resources and global solidarity that ensures that those who have been historically exploited and marginalized do not continue to pay the price for a development model that excludes them. Here, the reparative and restorative concept of ecological debt, historical debt of colonial origin, and even patriarchal debt emerges strongly (Lang *et al.*, 2023).

Decarbonizing the energy system is inevitable if we want to avoid total climate collapse, but it must be accompanied by social justice (Svampa, 2022). Technological solutions, such as the electrification of transport or the expansion of renewable energies, will not be enough on their own. If the structural inequalities that perpetuate energy poverty and unequal access to resources are not addressed, the energy transition could become a new form of oppression. The energy transition should not be seen as an opportunity for economic elites to continue accumulating wealth, but as a chance to rebuild the economic system from the ground up, on new foundations that prioritize equity, democratic participation, and respect for human rights and the rights of nature.

Decarbonization with social justice means that the most vulnerable communities should not continue to pay the price for the energy transition. We cannot allow the negative impacts of energy production—whether fossil or renewable—to continue to be shifted to the poorest regions, as has historically been the case. Communities in the Global South have been victims of continuous plundering of their territories, and now, with the rush for minerals for

green technologies, they risk being sacrificed once again in the name of false sustainability.

The energy transition must ensure that the costs of this transformation are distributed equitably. This implies not only the financial costs, but also the environmental and social costs of energy production and consumption (Bertinat, 2016). Energy policies must be geared toward protecting the communities most affected by the climate crisis and the energy transition. Only with a decarbonization approach that includes social justice can we build an energy future that is not only ecologically sustainable but also socially just. A future in which energy is a right, not a privilege; where people and nature are at the center, not capital.

In this context, eco-social transitions involve rebuilding the metabolism between society and nature on a territorial scale, recognizing the interdependence between human care and care for the Earth. They are not limited to replacing fossil fuels with renewables, but rather to reweaving the material and cultural foundations of the reproduction of life: restoring the commons, democratizing energy planning, making the care economy visible and positioning it, and relocalizing production under criteria of sufficiency and community resilience. This requires participatory governance processes in which women, indigenous peoples, peasants, and popular sectors become political subjects of the transition, articulating ancestral knowledge and appropriate technologies for a post-extractivist horizon. A true eco-social transition, therefore, combines the decommodification of energy, gender justice, and historical reparation with strategies of

selective degrowth in the global North and dignified flourishing in the South, seeking a dynamic balance that guarantees energy sovereignty, equity, and ecosystem regeneration.

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