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Taking action against climate change: developing a long-term vision to inform urgent and necessary decisions

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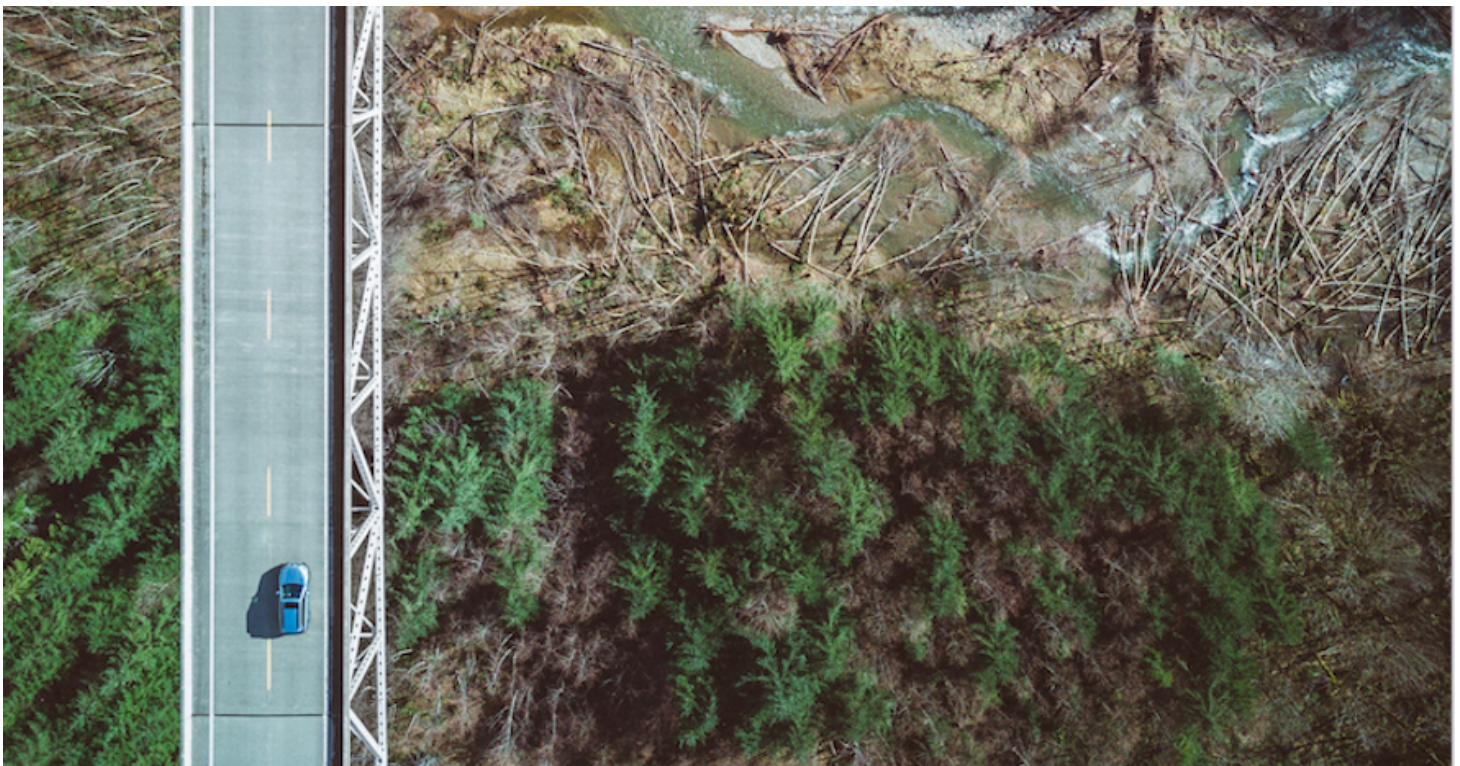
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The climate emergency, which has been unequivocally proven by scientists, is starting to be an important part of public debates and political and economic decisions. To decarbonize the economy, states and businesses alike must have a clear vision of the long-term trajectory of their territory or sector, and of the necessary changes involved, a vision that must be constructed via a dialogue within society. A long-term

outlook serves as a guide for the measures and actions that are required in the short term. The global research network Deep Decarbonization Pathways, coordinated by IDDRI, is publishing a scientific article in Nature Climate Change that proposes a methodology for these actors to adopt.

The objective shared by all those with an awareness of the climate emergency is to limit warming to below 2°C, and even below 1.5°C, [as advocated by the IPCC](#). To achieve this, the Paris Climate Agreement established the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, which requires a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, given that carbon sinks have a limited capacity, and that this capacity could itself be impacted by climate warming, along with the fact that carbon capture and storage technologies remain largely hypothetical as they are currently far from operational on the required scale, there is no choice but to start reducing carbon emissions as quickly as possible, wherever possible, and ultimately to aim to bring an end to emissions altogether.

We must not be paralysed by these facts, even if the objectives entail a total upheaval of the world as we know it today. Decarbonizing the economy is possible, provided that it starts today, at the scale of each and every country and company, in all sectors (building, transport, energy, industrial production, food, distribution, etc.). We should not be discouraged by this perspective because the objectives seem remote, because the decisions made today will have a major influence on our ability to achieve the long-term objective, while preserving the prospects for socio-economic development.

Researchers from around the world, gathered in the Deep Decarbonization Pathways network, have worked under IDDRI's coordination since 2014 to define long-term deep decarbonization trajectories. These researchers, active in around forty countries, are now publishing a [scientific article in Nature Climate Change](#) to share their methodology and to invite policymakers to seize it. Every state and business can use the proposed approach to develop a strategy adapted to every territory—according to its demographic specificities, its resources, challenges and opportunities, its development needs and its socio-economic reality—that will effectively elucidate the decisions to be taken today to realise a decarbonised world by 2050.

The aim is to define several possible scenarios at the appropriate scale (national, industrial sector, etc.) to enable the achievement of the global objective. These scenarios should not only be tools for experts, but they must speak the language of decision-makers and society to inform a broad debate. As a bridge between the short term and the long-term effect, like a relevant link between the national scale and the Paris Agreement's global objective, the necessary transformations must be clearly defined so that society as a whole understands where it is going, and by what means it can get there.

It is through this societal debate that short-term measures that are consistent with long-term strategies can be proposed and decided, based on, for example, climate models. In particular, the Paris Agreement signatory states have committed to submit new “contributions” to international action by the end of 2020. To do so, they must be able to define action plans consisting of profiling tools and the means to instil change, fostering good practices, developing innovations, targeting investments and establishing taxation systems, that will make it possible to consider the long term, not like an unattainable dream or a nightmare, but as a ladder that we must start climbing right now, avoiding any decisions that would hinder the chances of reaching the goal.

Defining possible pathways, sharing and debating them, also makes it possible to assess the impacts of initial decisions and allows fine-tuning if necessary, which is an important condition for success. All parties must be able to participate in the evaluation of the results obtained, keeping in mind a representation of the purpose of the action that everyone undertakes, individually or through their place in a collective.

These long-term deep decarbonisation strategies are instruments that serve the construction of a shared societal project that harmonises environmental protection and social justice.

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CLIMATE

CARBON NEUTRALITY

IPCC

PARIS AGREEMENT