

## Sustainable deaths

*Maritime transport is responsible for 14% of polluting gases. There is already talk of miracle proposals to make this sector sustainable.*

Gustavo Duch

**A**mong the answers artificial intelligence (AI) gave me when I asked it about transporting live animals on ships from one continent to another, the first one was to be expected: efficiency and low costs that allow "producers to access foreign markets and expand their trade opportunities, which is considered beneficial for global economic growth". For example, more than 20,000 calves can be transported on a single ship. The second was also predictable, as this intelligence seems driven by quite precise neoliberal arguments: "Animal welfare standards must be set to ensure that animals are treated with care and respect throughout the process. This includes providing them with sufficient space, water, adequate food and veterinary care

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Image of a cargo ship sailing at sea. / Pxhere

during the journey". But the third congratulated me on the creative capacity of these algorithms: "In addition, in some cases, animals can have access to outdoor areas on the ship, which provides a more enriching experience during the trip. Come on, like a cruise.

It was to play, to try out and get to know these totalitarian technologies to which we will have to get used to (or not), because what I wanted to get to in my research is the consideration of some examples of how maritime

transport remains one of the main elements in the current global and capitalist economy, far from our sight, with little control and a great deal of secrecy.

In the food sector, the image of a merchant ship converted into a stable moored in the port of Cadiz, coming from Colombia and bound for Egypt, is as shocking as it is illustrative, in that it makes us meditate on what it means ecosocially to devote a territory and its goods to the breeding of animals that will later be exported to third countries. But we should be aware that, on the peninsula, this image is regularly repeated to dispose of a large part of the state's animal production, which is mainly destined for Saudi Arabia, along with other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In fact, in Europe, only three ports are dedicated to the export of live animals, whose traffic is led by the port of Cartagena, with annual shipments exceeding 500,000 head of cattle, followed by the port of Tarragona, with some 240,000 head per year.

The AI tells me that maritime transport is also key to the trafficking of fuels and minerals. Still, I ignore it and prefer to focus on the report [Los puertos de la muerte, cómplices de las exportaciones de armas españolas para la guerra](#), where the Centre Delàs unveils another large group of maritime operations between Spain and Saudi Arabia.

"Weapons have to be taken from the factory to the trench. From the production line to the battlefield" and for this purpose, they explain, several ships owned by the Saud dynasty stop in Spain after loading containers of weapons and explosives of all kinds in the United States "to complete the supply of a very active army whose main military activity is in the war in Yemen". The figures are chilling: "Since 2016, the Spanish ports of Bilbao, Santander, Motril,

*There are initiatives to ensure that maritime transport can sail using green hydrogen, which is a risk for food sovereignty and a new aggression for rural ecosystems.*

Sagunto and Cadiz have loaded around 35,000 tonnes in weaponry, which may well amount to more than a million munitions and explosives manufactured in Spain destined for the Saudi Arabian army." An arms trade that, according to the IA, "raises ethical and human rights concerns but which in

economic terms offers the potential to generate considerable revenues for arms exporting countries. For Spain, arms exports can contribute to economic growth and job creation in the defence and military technology sector.

All this coming and going of materials also generates pollution. Specifically, according to a 2021 report by the European Commission, the naval transport industry produces 14% of all polluting gases, and one does not need to be either artificial or intelligent to intuit that there is already talk of miraculous proposals to make this sector

*"If an arms company runs on green energy, will the deaths be sustainable?"*

sustainable. Indeed, among them are initiatives to ensure that this heavy machinery, which is difficult to electrify, can sail thanks to green hydrogen, which, as we saw in the report

[Green hydrogen, is a risk for food sovereignty, will be a new aggression for rural ecosystems.](#)

Sensing how the energy transition only wants to make what is unsustainable and unacceptable sustainable, the shepherd in [Los Cuentos del Progreso](#) was not wrong when he predicted, "If an arms company runs on green energy, will the deaths be sustainable?"

More than intelligence, we need wisdom.

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