



The power of women

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We have just weighed anchor from a big seaport in a cargo liner, a vessel called "World". Passengers on board are distributed in classes. Almost 250 of the 1.000 total passengers don't have access to electricity and about 40% of all the travelers rely only on solid biomass for cooking and heating. Which is the purpose of travelling in this cargo liner? And what about energy? How essential is energy in our journey? I am travelling in First class where half of the passengers are women.

Next to me, 18 year old girl looks fixedly to the book I am reading: Energy Autonomy from Hermann Scheer. Her shyness didn't stop her from introducing herself: Hi, my name is Wang Xiu Ying and I am from China. Sorry for interfere in your reading, but I was just curious about it. I have just read in your book that for 200 years industrial civilization has relied on the combustion of abundant and cheap carbon fuels...but continued reliance has had perilous consequences. My father works in a coal mining company, well, in fact most part of my family does as my three brothers work there too. We have always seen coal as the black gold and thanks to that, my family has been able to provide me with higher education. Do you know what? This journey is the start of my new life as I am about to start my university degree in medicine. I will be the first member in my family having the chance to go to university and I am so excited! I was surprised for the self-confidence and the energy of the words of my new travel mate, and I remember we started an interesting conversation. Congratulations for your new challenge Wang Xiu Ying! You will be a great Doctor-I replied. I am sorry if reading those words have hurt you, but energy is a complex issue and things are never black or white. Energy is a strategic sector, as we cannot do without it. However, nowadays, even if it is the lack of access to electricity, the inability to afford energy bills or the multiple administrative, political, economic or educational barriers, the reality is that our world lives in energy poverty. I am reading this book as I work in the field of energy education. I studied to become an expert on renewable energies but then, I realized that energy was a wider and a more complex business than I expected. I could verify



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that technologies existed and that the problem was that they were ineffective as users were not convinced to use them. This is why I started to focus my career in educating in energy at different levels. Coal is strategic in China as it is in many other countries, but its use should not compromise future generations and health and environmental problems derived from coal burning should be taken into account too. We continued the conversation hours and hours. Wang Xiu Ying was really interested in energy use in China and I was absorbed on her story about her battle to make her dream come true and overcome multiple barriers just from being a woman. I understood then that, after all, we were not so distant as we were both beating obstacles to get a better future, to reach a better world. We, these two women, are in the same cargo liner, and together we have the power to lead it where we decide. The question then is... where are we heading to?