

Communicating Urgencies, Acting on Realities: What is Clean? Whose Future?

Renato Redentor Constantino

NGO Forum on the ADB

June 4, 2008

What is Clean?

- ◎ A bed of flowers?
- ◎ A leaf?
- ◎ Butterflies?
- ◎ Soap?
- ◎ New improved soap?
- ◎ New, really improved soap?

What is happiness?

- ⊙ A swimming pool or a lake?
- ⊙ A trek across rice fields?
- ⊙ A good book?
- ⊙ A picnic with family or friends?
- ⊙ A hot cup of tea on a slow day?
- ⊙ Onions, ducks, bread.

Precise truths

- ◎ In the midst of crisis today, we more and more refer to specific truths.
- ◎ So how come today we fudge almost by instinct how we define energy and the future -- the very things that should concern us all today?

Intellectual honesty for a change

- ⊙ Does anyone know of any single piece of coal today that is clean?
- ⊙ When you use the term 'clean coal' are you referring to the coal itself or the technology that supposedly cleans it?
- ⊙ We talk of climate change today alongside the most advanced coal technologies that have no answer to CO₂.
- ⊙ Are you PRIMARILY concerned with 'cleaning' coal or making it more efficient?
- ⊙ Will the ADB finally drop the imprecise, dishonest term 'clean coal'? And can we see such changes in its 'new' Energy Strategy paper?

Contesting Fantasies

- ◎ Since the first ACEF, people have increasingly talked about climate change and urgency, urgency, urgency.
- ◎ Alongside this, we talk about cheap coal, coal as the most affordable energy source. Something's fundamentally wrong.

Confronting illusions

- ⊙ Did ADB jump recently on the climate bandwagon?
- ⊙ 1995 Energy Policy of the ADB already highlights need to frontally address mounting externality costs. It's been 13 years, and counting...
- ⊙ Privatization as conditionality. What about Feed-in? What about exhausting efficiencies? What about real IRP?

Communicating policies

- ◎ It depends on whether an institution values its own policies.
- ◎ The scandalous, tragic Phulbari coal project... Is blood not enough? Is grief not enough? When will the ADB listen to voices from the ground?
- ◎ Tata Mundra Ultra Mega vs. Spiderman

Are there really only 3 options?

1. Stop using coal
2. Improve efficiency
3. Deploy carbon capture (CCS)
 - ⊙ But what about dramatically reducing dependence on coal?
 - ⊙ What about the magic wand of CCS?
 - ⊙ What about really clean, sustainable alternatives?
 - ⊙ What about the reckless, blind pursuit of growth?

What does one communicate about ADB and transport?

- ◎ Seventy six percent of transport assistance has gone to freeways, highways, roads?
- ◎ What has gone to feeder roads? Public transport? Bicycle lanes? Pedestrian development?
- ◎ Is it again someone else's problem?
- ◎ Ok then, let's talk about ADB's carbon footprint.

Communicating a cleaner future is about...

- ◎ Candor
- ◎ Consistency
- ◎ The future is all about what we actually do today, with people and environment at the front and center.
- ◎ This means more than just genuinely clean energy. It is about greater public control of common resources.
- ◎ Replace hypocrisy with solutions. Start dramatic rhetorical emission reductions...

- END -

Feedback welcome at

red@forum-adb.org