Engineered Conflicts: The Environment and the Infrastructure of Expertise in India

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The talk summarizes my forthcoming book, Engineered Conflicts, which addresses the politics of expertise in environmental governance. Although set in contemporary India, it has resonances for the rest of the so called developing world -- including the BRICS, the MINTS, and other such configurations. It begins with an exploration of conflicts over two natural resources: forestry; and water (canal irrigation, dams, flood management). It moves on to examine the governance of environmental risks – on topics ranging from the controversies over environmental risks and public health since the Bhopal Gas Disaster, to debates surrounding emerging technologies, such as GMOs, Nanotechnology, and Nuclear Power. In discussing these domains, the book examines the role played by scientific and policy experts in environmental governance, and their relationship with lay citizens. The talk, mirroring the book, concludes with a discussion of what it terms ‘missing expertise’ and the infrastructures of expertise and management needed to tackle ‘wicked’ environment – development problems. The underlying analysis draws upon the emerging literature on infrastructure studies, and from relevant literatures in political economy, development studies, and science and technology policy studies.

I ABOUT THE SPEAKER I

S. Ravi Rajan, currently on sabbatical at ARI, is an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at University of California at Santa Cruz; Visiting Senior Fellow at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), and a Visiting Professor at TERI University. Rajan is author of Modernizing Nature (2006), and Engineered Conflicts (forthcoming); editor of six books and special issues of journals, and several peer reviewed papers in environmental history, environmental policy and governance, environmental justice and human rights, risk and disasters, and social entrepreneurship. From 2006 – 2012, Rajan served as Provost of College Eight at UC Santa Cruz, where he built a pioneering ‘green’ curriculum aimed at nurturing environmental entrepreneurs. Highlights of Rajan’s academic service include being a founding member of the editorial board of the journals, Environment and History and Environmental Justice, and Program Chair for the American Society for Environmental History Annual Meeting. Rajan’s public service includes the Presidency of the Board of Directors of Pesticide Action Network, North America (PANNA); board service for the International Media Project; and Charter Membership of The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE), Silicon Valley, among others. He co-founded the Bhopal Group for Information and Action in 1985, and served on the core group of the Indian environmental organization, Kalpavriksh, during the 1980s.

I DATE I  Wednesday, 9 April 2014
I TIME I  3.00pm to 4.30pm
I VENUE I  Malay Studies Seminar Room, AS7 #04-13, Kent Ridge Campus, NUS

Please email sassec@nus.edu.sg to register