

**THE INDIAN SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2014-2015**

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## **1. Events Organized**

### **a. Workshop- “Social Science for Conservation Biologists : An Introduction”**

As a part of the Student Conference on Conservation Science 2014– Bangalore (SCCS- Bangalore), INSEE organized a one day training programme on 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. The purpose of the workshop was to enable and equip the next generation of conservation biologists / ecologists to engage better with the social sciences and the social mission of conservation. INSEE organized this workshop in response to a request from the SCCS to organize a session on the ‘importance of social sciences for conservation research.’

The workshop was conceptualized and organized by the INSEE President, Sharachchandra Lele, and involved four more resource persons; Seema Purushothaman (Azim Premji University), E. Somanathan (Indian Statistical Institute) and Sudha Wasan (Dept of Sociology, Delhi University). The participation was limited to 25 participants. The topics covered were:

1. Conservation as a social activity and the role of the Social Sciences in conservation: An overview (S. Lele)
2. Conservation, sustainability and environmental justice: The values and ethics underpinning environmentalism (S. Lele)
3. Economic perspectives on conservation: How economics has engaged with the question of conservation (S Purushothaman)
4. Institutions and biodiversity conservation: Relationship between agricultural development and conservation, and application of collective action theory to the management of Common-Pool Resources (E Somanathan)
5. Political Ecology: Deconstructing ‘conservation’ and ‘degradation’, the role of colonial and post -colonial power structures, capitalism and nature (S Vasan)

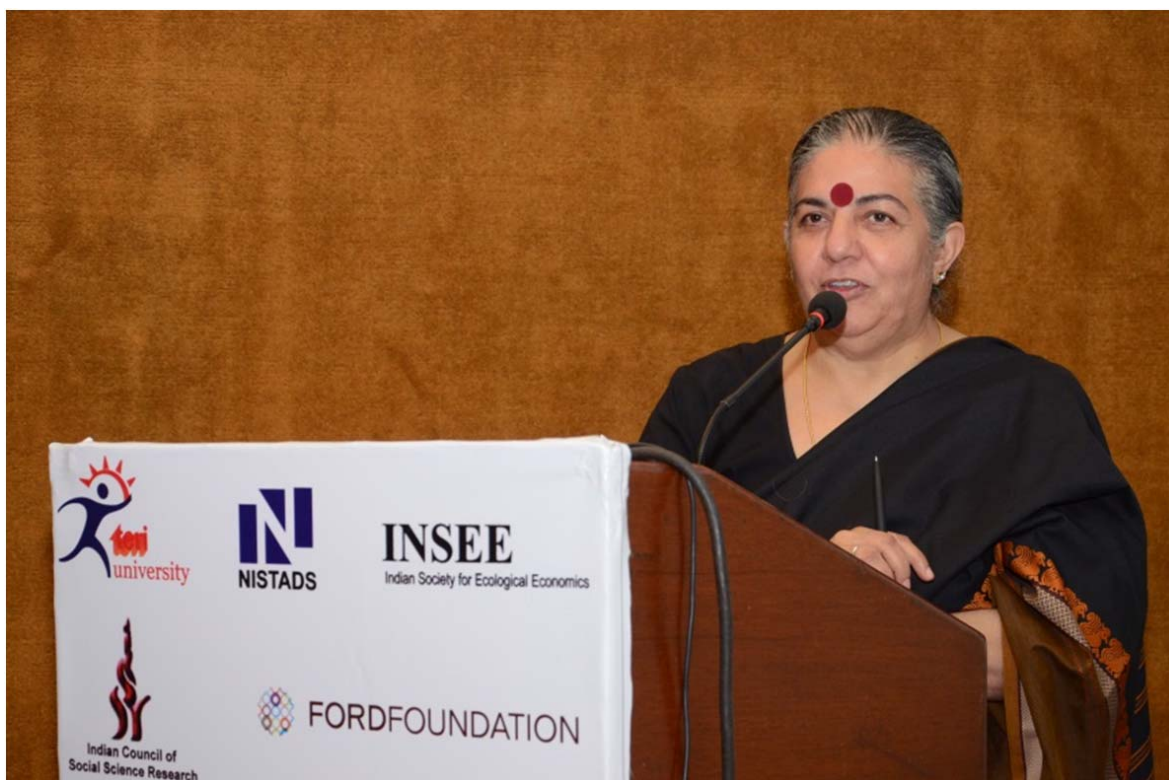
The participants were given background material to read before the workshop. All the reading material and presentations made by the five key thematic speakers have been uploaded on the INSEE website.

The participants found the workshop key papers, and the debates on thematic issues, and inter-disciplinary research question and methodologies very useful. The SCCS has asked INSEE to make this workshop a permanent feature of the SCCS Conference every year.

**b. Symposium on “Growth, green growth or de-growth? New critical directions for India’s sustainability”**

In collaboration with the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (CSIR-NISTADS) and TERI University New Delhi, INSEE organized a Symposium on “Growth, green growth or degrowth? New critical directions for India’s sustainability”, 12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> September 2014, at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. It was conceptualized and organized by Rajeswari S. Raina (CSIR-NISTADS) and Julien Francois-Gerber (TERI University). The Symposium was sponsored by Ford Foundation (New Delhi), and the Northern Regional Centre of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR-NRC), with INSEE and NISTADS sponsoring Ph.D. student participants. The three student participants sponsored were selected from among ten applicants who had responded to a web-based call for INSEE sponsorship to participate in the Conference.

The purpose of this symposium was to encourage fresh and critical insights into the paradoxes of economic growth in India. It focused on the pertinence of alternative conceptions of growth in the Indian context, whether they are envisioned as green growth, ecological democracy, village economy, or degrowth.



The inaugural session heard R. K. Pachauri (TERI) and Mrinalini Natesa (NISTADS), emphasising the need for more dialogues of this sort about sustainable development, technology and knowledge, and policy changes that are necessary for a balance between economic growth and ecological-social wellbeing in India. A message from Sharachchandra Lele (President, INSEE) asked that we think about the kind of environmentalism we need, and where we want to go as a society. The keynote address by Vandana Shiva emphasised the need for “sustainable degrowth” in India (“degrowth” = civilizational shift away from GDP growth addiction). The inaugural lecture by Jayati Ghosh showed that the growth of “modern India” crucially depends on the opportunities for “backward India” to grow and survive. The two lectures were thought-provoking and complementary.

Session 1 focused on the question “Does the Indian economy need to grow further? Is GDP a meaningful parameter?” This session was the most traditionally “economic”, with four economists, R. Nagaraj, Sukumar Muralidharan, Pranab Sen, and Amar Nayak, one radical historian, Ajay Dandekar, and was chaired by Arun Moira (former advisor to the Planning Commission). All the economists believed in the benefits of GDP growth if complemented with other indicators or if externalities were measured well.



In contrast to this, virtually all the speakers of Sessions 2 probing “what should be understood as green growth?” asked “How can we go beyond modern green technologies to achieve sustainability?”. The session had eminent ecological economists Kanchan Chopra, a historian Rohan DeSouza, and engineers and activists, Suneel Pandey, Mansoor Khan, and Gopal Krishna and was Chaired by Anantha Duraiappah (Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development) “Should we start now dealing with reality?” asked one panellist, “or should we wait until reality deals with us?” Kanchan Chopra argued that green growth required fundamental institutional change and goes hand in hand with “selective degrowth”. Session 3 focused on “what are the alternatives to the growth model? Couldn’t prosperity without growth become a rallying slogan for myriads of grassroots alternatives already available in the country? Chaired by Ramaswamy Iyer (eminent ecological justice scholar and former Secretary Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India), this session brought the voices of alternatives being practiced in the field Ashish Kothari and Sagar Dhara, political scientists, ecological historians and ecological economists, Aditya Nigam, Sudha Vasana, and Nandan Nawn. They “argued for a downscaling of production and consumption that increases human wellbeing and nurtures ecological systems. The sessions 2 and 3, brought home the message that degrowth is not an “option”; it is something we will face in a few decades. And this is not only in India but worldwide – with the peak of most key resources like oil, coal, uranium or phosphorus for fertilizers. The last session 4, was a media panel, chaired by the eminent journalist George Verghese, and had several leading environmental lawyers and ecological/biological science journalists like Latha Jishnu, T. V. Padma, Sharmila Sinha, Vipul Mudgal, Shalini Bhutani, and Archita Bhatta, speaking about how the growth-vs.-environment issues are covered and presented in the media.

The symposium attracted a large audience (114 persons signed in the first day and 64 the next day) and the discussions were intense. INSEE has received many positive comments from the audience and several others for organizing this symposium. An edited volume, based partly on the Symposium will be published by Orient Blackswan, and more dialogues will follow.

A jury, headed by Kanchan Chopra, and including Nandan Nawn, Rajeswari Raina and Julien Francois-Gerber, selected two best articles published in the popular media (news papers or magazines) by Ph.D./Masters students on any theme/part of the Symposium. The jury

recommended that the NISTADS-INSEE award—an amount of Rs. 5000 and a certificate of award—be granted to two students: Brototi Roy and Shobhna Jha of TERI University. The Director, NISTADS has made the monetary award (in March 2015). The certificate will be given to the winners at the 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference in Bangalore, January 2016.

## **2. Publications during 2014-15**

The work of editing the proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conferences continued during this year.

## **3. Membership related**

The EC took several steps to reach out to and streamline member-related communication and enrollment.

### **a. Member Interests and Needs Surveys**

The INSEE-EC had decided (in its meeting in July 2014) to ask INSEE Members what they see as the key activities that INSEE should take up. What are the priorities that INSEE members want to see addressed? And how should INSEE engage with these activities? Two EC members, Rajeswari Raina and K. J. Joy were entrusted with the priorities survey. In February 2015, a brief survey form was mailed to all INSEE members. By the end of March 2015, 12.2 percent of INSEE members (49 members) responded.

The two highest priority activities that emerged were “**research workshops on specialized topics**” and “**Training Programme for pre-PhD/ PhD/ young scholars**”, while the latter activity got the highest score in terms of members willing to contribute their time for it. Several other activities were also flagged, and members have volunteered for many of them.

A detailed note on the priorities survey was circulated to all INSEE members, and has been uploaded on the INSEE website.

### **b. Online membership profile on INSEE Website**

The President, along with EC Members Kalyan Das and Saudamini Das, worked with the website manager to enable members to add information to their member profiles regarding their disciplinary, geographical and sectoral areas of interest, and to make the member list

easily searchable by all members. This process was completed in Sept 2014, and members were requested to update their profiles. We note that around 100 members have done so.

**c. Improving communication with members**

A major effort was made to improve the Society's communication with its members. Starting from a situation where almost 25% of the member email IDs in our google group had become dysfunctional, we reached out to the 'out-of-touch' members through various means (phone calls, letters, colleagues) and the number of such IDs has been brought down to under 5%.

Another step in improving communication was the decision of the EC to circulate summaries of its meeting minutes to all the members of the Society. This step was greatly appreciated by many members as a way of increasing communication and transparency.

**d. Interface with ISEE member enrollment**

As per the statutes of the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE), of which INSEE is a regional affiliate, persons enrolling in ISEE and indicating INSEE as their regional society would automatically become annual members of INSEE. However, this was not happening in practice. The President worked with ISEE to both clarify the policy in this matter and then to streamline the process. As a result, 11 annual members were enrolled via ISEE in this year.

**e. Membership status**

As on March 31, 2015, INSEE had 421 Life members and 7 Corporate members, 10 Ordinary members, and 7 Student members. The total membership thus stood at 445.