

***From River Management to Solar Rollout: Environmental Policies and Their Actors in Contemporary India***

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My project at the Rachel Carson Centre will consist in finalizing several publication projects, currently at various stages of completion. Some relate to research conducted during my PhD, others to research that I have been conducting as a postdoctoral fellow on solar rollout in Rajasthan. In both cases, I focus on a specific group of actors to understand their role in the planning, implementation, and day-to-day lives of environmental policies.

The objective of my PhD thesis was to analyze in a socio-historical perspective the role of engineers in the management of the Ganges River and the controversies which arise within the profession on this issue. It is based on extensive fieldwork: more than 140 interviews, in-depth analysis of the grey literature, consultation of archives, and observations in government offices and during events organized by activists. While the hegemony of the engineering profession over water management is increasingly criticized at the international level, it is hardly challenged in India. To explain this specificity, my thesis analyses the internal dynamics of the different institutions involved in the management of the Ganges and sheds light on their power structures. It also shows how, at different times in independent India, voices have risen from within the engineering profession to denounce the river management policies of the government. My thesis thus brings new knowledge on the history and sociology of Indian engineers, a professional group, that, despite its importance in the Indian society, has been understudied. It also contributes to further our understanding of environmental politics and policies in India, by underlining the continuities and evolutions of water resource management since Independence.

My postdoctoral research focuses on private players who sell, install, and operate solar energy projects. The modularity of solar, which can be deployed at different scales and in a diversity of sites, opens the door to important shifts in the governance of our energy systems. From a limited number of actors involved in regulation, policymaking, and production, we are moving toward a much more complex field where a wide diversity of public and private actors can now become energy producers. This can lead to a reshaping of power relations. These actors indeed have, at different scales and in different projects, different capacities to influence policymaking, regulations, and standards, to shape flows of information, knowledge, and legitimacy, and thus to impact the nature and the form of the transition to renewable energies. Though research on solar rollout has looked at policymakers and consumers, solar entrepreneurs are still understudied. My research aims at a better understanding of their role, their imaginaries, and their practices, and the evolutions of the market for solar: Is the market concentrated in the hands of a few actors? If so, how? For this research, I have conducted fieldwork in India (Rajasthan) and in France (Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes).