

Citius, Altius, Fortius: A History of How the World Became Efficient

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Venue: Bangalore

Dr. Deepak Malghan, a faculty at the Centre for Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, delivered a talk on 'A History of How the World Became Efficient', at CSTEP, on 3 July 2017. An ecological economist and a chemical engineer, Dr. Malghan traced the historical narrative of efficiency, as a relentless revolution, and its metamorphosis to the present day, capturing the story of the 'deviation from the norm' that is inherent in the political economy of society and development across the world.

The trajectory of 'efficiency' began with the Victorian Era with a thrust on productivity. During the progressive era, its definition shifted from 'balance' to 'progress' as the central metaphor, entering the domain of budgets and academia, highlighting the contributions of philosophers like Bentham, Darwin and Dewey to name a few. In the Indian context, the wave of efficiency and planning was said to have come in the 1930s, a rather bleak period in the history of India, during the Gandhian age of the Swadeshi Movement, the Great Depression and interestingly through the Bolshevik movement.

Dr. Malghan, in conclusion, aptly attributed mono-culturing and the systemic risk present in the technological paradigm to the innate 'value free' nature of the efficiency metric, its qualitative residual, and the infamous trade-off of equality vs efficiency.