

## Introduction

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# Introduction

*Anita Engels*

The broader background from which this ad-hoc session was able to draw basic ideas is the ongoing intellectual work of a larger group of authors working on science in the non-West, the spread of scientific knowledge and the prevalent eurocentric accounts of this as a diffusion process from center to periphery. Motivated by the fact that India was the guest country of this DGS Congress, *Anita Engels* and *Dhrw Raina* organised a small selection of contributions on science in the context of postcolonial India. Science is often conceptualized as one or even *the* core institution of modernity. As part of a hegemonic project, science appears to be intricately linked to questions of politics and identity. The narratives on how science as an institution emerged in a non-Western setting, and what cultural shifts evolved from this encounter in both directions involves critical interactions of the philosophy, the history and the sociology of science. The ad-hoc session attempted to meet this challenge by two very different, though complementary perspectives.

The first contribution by *Dhrw Raina*, a philosopher of science from the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, introduced a both conceptual and genealogic account of past and current narratives of science and Indian modernity. *Raina* distinguished three broad frames in which narratives formed: orientalism, nationalism and post-colonialism, but also pointed at continuities across these frames. The second contribution by *Benjamin Zachariah*, a historian of science of the University of Sheffield, presented elements of an intellectual history of the Indian chemist P. C. Ray. Ray stands for a scientist, a teacher of science and an intellectual in a colonial, later postcolonial Indian context in which science becomes an important source of both political legitimation and identity formation. *Dietmar Rothermund* finally, a historian and Prof. Emeritus of the South Asia Institute at Ruprecht-Karls-University in Heidelberg, positioned his comments on the two contributions in the context of some general remarks on the study of the social context of the sciences and suggests that collectives of thought, or collectives of scholars (as employed by Ludwig Fleck and David Hull) can be used as a concept to deal with some of the questions raised in this session.