


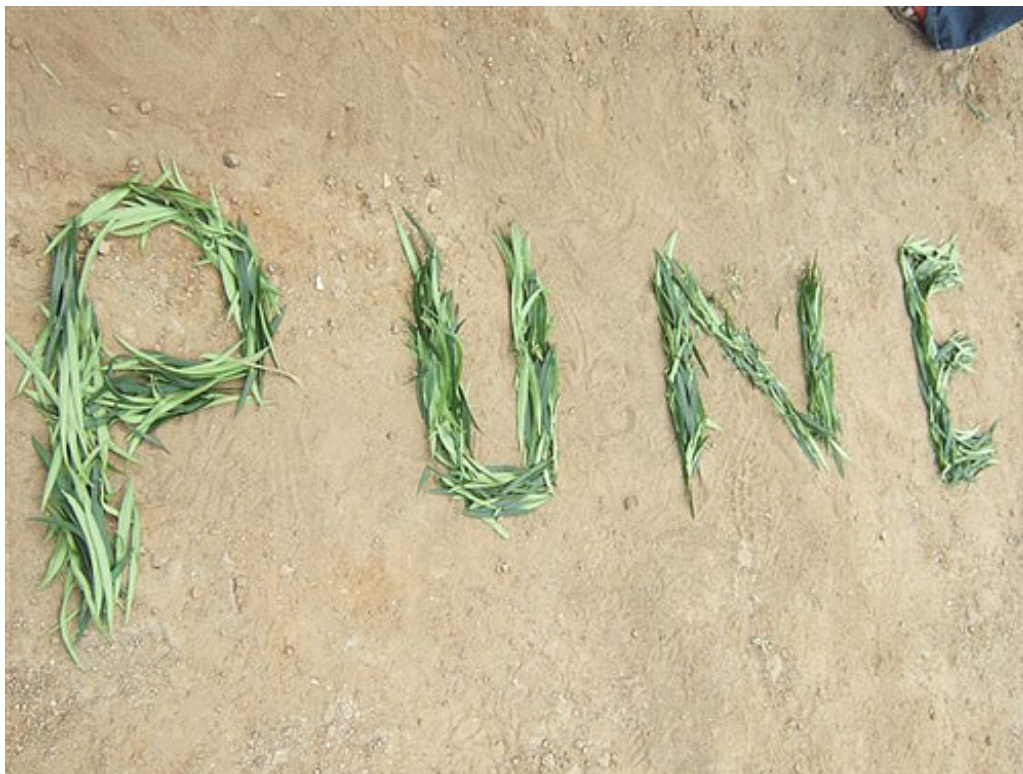
# Greening India: An ambiguous transition

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2012/08/30/greening-india-an-ambiguous-transition/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2012/08/30/greening-india-an-ambiguous-transition/)

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Eight LSE students are currently in India undertaking community, environment and corporate social responsibility based internships with various Tata companies as part of the Tata [International Social Entrepreneurship Scheme](#) (ISES). The students' projects include carbon mapping, water harvesting, HIV/Aids awareness building and impact assessment of education and healthcare initiatives. Programme manager and LSE Careers Consultant Maddie Smith recently visited the interns in India and was impressed both with the projects students were working on and the level of support interns were receiving.

In addition to submitting a final report and presentation to senior members of their respective Tata businesses, LSE interns were invited, along with Cambridge students, to submit a short summary of their reflections on their experiences in India in an [online essay competition](#). LSE's Elina Vaananen, who is studying for a BSc in Environmental Policy at the Department of Geography and Environment, was the winner. Her essay, 'Greening India: An ambiguous transition', is reproduced here.



*I see 'Green Pune, Clean Pune' written on the wall of a public school off the Mumbai Expressway and right next to it a blazing barrel of tyres being burnt. Rarely has the 'green' rhetoric felt more ironically juxtaposed with practice.*

*The imperative for strong environmental action is nowhere as adamant as in India, a country of 1.2 billion people, of which an estimated 70 per cent depend on ecosystem services for their livelihoods. A rapidly growing population is increasing the pressure on scarce natural resources while air and water pollution remain rampant. Water shortages and power cuts are everyday issues even for urban Indians, something I have also come to experience. Climate projections for India forecast increasing droughts, floods, sea level rise, more frequent extreme weather events, disrupted monsoons. Reading the local newspaper over breakfast illustrates how these impacts are already a frightening*

reality.

*All of these accounts seem to promise gloom and doom for the future of the Indian environment. Yet I would argue that India, famed for its display of ambiguities, delivers a mixed picture even in the environmental realm. A World Bank study finds that between 1995 and 2010, India has made the fastest improvement to its environmental quality of all the countries in the world. Government policy is driving development of clean technology and the private sector has followed suit. Whether it is small-scale energy production from rice husks in Bihar or low-cost water purification devices by Tata Chemicals, it is impossible to ignore the proliferation of innovations with the capacity to steer India towards a more sustainable future. Nevertheless, it is evident that technological fixes do not suffice—developing strong environmental regulation is vital.*

*To return to the public school in Pune, I was shocked by a recent conversation with an eight-year-old student and by his informed, concerned questions and comments on my internship project on climate change adaptation. It seems that within those school walls, a generation of environmentally aware individuals are being educated to drive the shift for a greener and cleaner India. I feel grateful to have been able to catch a glimpse of this transition in motion.*

Click [here](#) to read other essays submitted by LSE students participating in the Tata ISES internship programme.

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