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978-1-107-03758-8 - Nanotechnology and Development: What's in it for Emerging Countries?

Edited by Shyama V. Ramani

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Nanotechnology and Development

What's in it for Emerging Countries?

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This book is dedicated to
All the contributors of this volume,
My parents (Kalyani and M.S. Venkataramani),
My mother-in-law (Odette), and
To my cheer-leading team: Raji, Raja, Divya, and Vivek.

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Acknowledgments

The idea of this book started in 2006 when we won a grant from the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France) for a project entitled “The Dynamics of Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies: Perspectives from Economics and Sociology.” Professor Dominique Vinck was the general coordinator and led a team of sociologists while I led a few economists along with a scientometrician, Roger Coronini, on this multidisciplinary work-adventure.

The project was entirely Eurocentric at first. But, Dominique had two students Eduardo Robles Belmont, and Nédson Campos, writing their doctoral thesis on nanotechnology in Mexico and Brazil respectively. I began to wonder about what was going on in Asia by talking to them.

At about this time, Professor Jorge Niosi invited me to Montreal to meet his team working on the catching up of emerging countries in biotechnology. There I met Susan Reid, an expert on nanotechnology. This is when I started dreaming about a book on nanotechnology! Between us, we had expertise on nanotechnology, Latin America, and the catch-up trajectories of late comer countries – all in one team.

But, what about China and India? I do not remember how it happened but I met Can Huang in Maastricht and he just did magic and found others who we needed. With Can and Yilin Wu, we learnt about China. Nupur Chowdhury helped us to gain an insight into India. Ad Notten too joined us and we began to understand Korea as well.

I felt something was missing, until I met Christopher Newfield from California and as Chris explained to me the shortcomings of the US system of innovation – I knew he was the missing piece. Science and technology policies of developing countries are largely emulative of the US policy and this is especially so in nanotechnology. However, such emulation is not accompanied by an understanding of the mistakes made by the US and how to avoid them.

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Chris introduced us to Daryl Boudreaux and Eduardo brought in Rebeca de Gortari Rabiela. And, our very international team was thus complete, and we could begin discussing the contents of the book.

But by this time our contract with the Agence Nationale de la Recherche had nearly run out. I just had enough funds to invite everybody for lunch in the restaurant next to my office in Paris if they could come on their own. And what was wonderful is that nearly all came! And if they could not come – we continued our discussion via teleconferencing. We met off and on over the following four years to discuss the contents of the book in different parts of the world. We laughed, enjoyed each other's company, and became friends.

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Shyama V. Ramani