

SEAASWP roundtable session

### **Geography's postcolonial engagements in the Asia-Pacific Region**

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*Moderator: Philip Hirsch*

This 90 minute panel session will reflect on collaborative geographies of the Southeast Asia, Australasia and Southwest Pacific (SEAASWP) region. It seeks to debate and help define the preferred nature, scope, objectives and modus operandi of networks among geographers.

The panel seeks to involve both geographers interested in development and those who do not identify themselves as development geographers but have interests in collaborative work in Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. This raises the question of the place of development as a defining theme of such collaboration.

*Third World Geography* is dead and buried, but the same cannot be said of *Development Geography*. Beyond the development/post-development tension, development geography creates ambivalence amongst many of us who are interested in processes and transitions for which "development" serves as a useful shorthand, yet who are also uncomfortable with the "them and us" demarcation that the sub-discipline implies in collaborative interactions.

The Southeast Asia, Australasia and Southwest Pacific regional network (SEAASWP) has attempted a move beyond what Iain Hay has recently referred to as "educational and cultural colonization".<sup>1</sup> Other networks within which geographers are at the core similarly seek a more fully collaborative sort of engagement. Does this require a move away from development (and post-development) as the defining thematic area of common interest? Or is there scope within the geography of our wider region for an engagement that preserves a common interest in studies and debates around development and post-development? If not, what are the alternative defining themes and motifs for postcolonial engagements?

The panel will take on a roundtable format, with 45 minutes of introductory statements followed by 45 minutes of moderated discussion. A related discussion is to be held at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the Institute of Australian Geographers in Hobart, Tasmania 30 June-3 July 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Hay, 2008, Postcolonial Practices for a Global Virtual Group: The Case of the International Network for Learning and Teaching Geography in Higher Education (INLT), *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32, 1, 15-32. p 16