

Date

Thursday June 23, 2011

Time

3pm - 4:30pm

Venue

Building EB, level 2,
room 21 (EB.2.21)
Parramatta Campus
([view map](#))

Convenor

Associate Professor
Greg Noble
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Yudhishtir Raj Isar
(American University of Paris)

Cultural Diplomacy: An Overplayed Hand?

The thesis for debate is that the currently fashionable notion of cultural diplomacy is an over-extended concept, like other catchwords that the cultural sector - and its instrumentalisers - have become prolific at creating. It has always accompanied statecraft, but today, non-state actors increasingly invoke cultural diplomacy - or are enjoined by states to do so - and its very meaning is increasingly conflated with the broader notion of international cultural relations. The claims now being made on cultural diplomacy's behalf are both ambiguous and overstated. The ambiguity resides in attempts to elevate its theory and practice above the level of national interest; the overstatement in the idea that today, cultural diplomacy can help to 'manage the international environment', to use the term used by one of its academic stalwarts. I shall argue that both claims are inadequately supported by the empirical record; the first resorts to special pleading and the other to wishful thinking.

Yudhishtir Raj Isar is a cultural analyst, educator, advisor and public speaker. He is currently Professor of Cultural Policy Studies at The American University of Paris and *Maitre de Conférence* at *Sciences-Po*. He is the founding co-editor of the *Cultures and Globalization Series* (SAGE); President of the European arts and culture platform *Culture Action Europe* (2004-2008); Trustee of the Institute of International Visual Arts, London 1994-2010 and Acting Chair, 2009-10; advisor to other cultural organizations in Europe, North America and India; and consultant to the European Commission, the Organization of American States (OAS), the European Cultural Foundation and the United Nations Special Unit for South-South Cooperation. Earlier, at UNESCO, he was Director of Cultural Policies and of the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture; and in 1994-96 he was Executive Secretary of the World Commission on Culture and Development.



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