

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: BEYOND THE NATIONAL INTEREST?

A SYMPOSIUM


CONVENED BY IEN ANG AND
YUDHISHTHIR RAJ ISAR

"Cultural diplomacy" looms large in public discourse and practice today. The term itself was invented to refer to the exercise by governments of "soft power" strategies that seek to persuade and influence in other countries through the presentation of a nation's culture, values, ideas, language, cultural products, etc. Current usage is much broader, however, as the term has become a blanket replacement for previously used notions such as foreign cultural relations, international cultural exchange or international cultural cooperation. Cultural diplomacy is also subsumed under another international relations/political science neologism, the notion of "public diplomacy". As a metaphor for a more citizen-oriented form of diplomacy than the standard one, public diplomacy foregrounds communication and engagement with non-governmental actors and sees "culture" as a key ingredient in dialogue, listening, mutual learning and understanding. Internationally, ever increasing governmental budgets are devoted to "cultural diplomacy" in its multiple meanings and as such it has become a bandwagon that many cultural sector actors appear keen to ride as well. In Australia, cultural and public diplomacy was explicitly mentioned in the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper as a key element in the government's efforts to enhance Australian national interests in the region through people-to-people links. It is not clear where the Abbott government will take this agenda, although it has confirmed the importance of promoting deep and broad engagement with Asia for Australia's national interest.

While the contours and uses within the public diplomacy paradigm differ from region to region and, within regions, from country to country, a number of issues cut across these differences and need to be systematically explored. Are the traditional forms of international cultural exchange such as arts residencies, performance tours, travelling exhibitions and the like fit for purpose in today's rapidly changing cultural environment marked by mobilities, digitalisation and cultural democracy? To what extent is cultural diplomacy a pawn of nation branding? Or a cover for the export of cultural goods and services? How real is the civil society dimension foregrounded in governmental rhetoric? To what degree is actually existing cultural diplomacy marked by meaningful collaboration between state and non-state actors, particularly independent artists and cultural workers? What innovative practices can be discerned? Is mutuality and intercultural dialogue being achieved successfully through cultural diplomacy? What insights can be shared with policy-makers to help make cultural diplomacy a win-win proposition, not just in the national interest, but in the global common interest?

This symposium brings together a varied group of academics and cultural professionals to discuss these issues in the context of the Asia Pacific region. The symposium format will encourage lively discussion and exchange, avoiding the usual mode of monologic papers.

Registration is free, but places are limited.



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

DATE
17–18 October 2013

VENUE
Female Orphan School
Parramatta Campus
University of Western Sydney

RSVP
10 October, 2013
Christy Nguy
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PROGRAM

DAY 1, 17 October, 9.30am to 5.30pm

9.30–10.00am Welcome and Introduction

10.00–10.45am Keynote Address

Speaker:
A/Professor Robert Albro (American University, Washington DC)
The Representational Futures of Cultural Diplomacy

10.45–11.15am Coffee break

11.15–1pm Soft Power, Nation Branding and Public Diplomacy: East Asia

Speakers:
Professor Koichi Iwabuchi (Monash University) – Japan
HyungSeok Kang (King's College, London) – South Korea
Professor Wanning Sun (University of Technology, Sydney) – China

1–2pm Lunch

2–3.15pm New Modalities of Cultural Diplomacy

Speakers:
Professor David Rowe (Institute for Culture and Society, UWS) – Sport
Professor Ian Lang (Independent) – New Media

3.15–3.45pm Tea break

3.45–5.30pm Cultural Diplomacy and Regionalism

Speakers:
Professor David Lowe (Deakin University) – India/China
A/Professor Tim Winter (Institute for Culture and Society/Deakin University) – SE Asia
Professor Yudhishtir Raj Isar (Institute for Culture and Society/American University of Paris) - Europe

5.30pm Reception

7pm Dinner

DAY 2, 18 October 9.30am–3pm

9.30–11.15am Cultural Diplomacy as Intercultural Dialogue

Speakers:
Des Power (Asia Pacific Screen Awards)
Bettina Roesler (Institute for Culture and Society)
Jane Camens (Asia Pacific Writers Association)

11.15–11.45am Coffee break

11.45am–1pm Australian Efforts

Speakers:
Professor David Carter (University of Queensland)
Professor Julianne Schultz (Griffith Review)

1–2pm Lunch

2–3pm Closing Roundtable

Speakers:
Robert Albro, Ian Lang, Koichi Iwabuchi