

Title: ‘Development’ Appropriation in Myanmar: Partnership, Contestation

Chairs: Tomas Cole (Stockholm University) and Kristina Simion (Australian National University)

Various forms of development assistance to Myanmar accelerated after political transition in 2011. Within the confines of foreign funded programs and projects actors have sought to aid the country’s lack of land rights, peace, rule of law, environmental conservation, women’s rights, and so on.

This panel critically explores how internationally funded development and conservation projects and initiatives that carry a specific model are appropriated by local actors in Myanmar, sometimes to shore up the legitimacy and authority of certain groups on the local scale, other times “reputationally laundered” from signs of foreign involvement due to nationalist sentiments and endemic xenophobia.

The development models the panel seeks to address could include, but are not limited to:

Peace
Land
Law
Environment
Gender
Conservation

The panel approaches the idea of development in Myanmar from an interdisciplinary and critical political-anthropological perspective that question the donors and the construction of ‘global’ models and then examine the end users of such models. Raising these questions in a fragile political environment can reveal uncanny links of state-/military partnerships with NGOs, development agencies, activist groups and venture capitalists and reiterative cycles of contestation and opportunity.