

## **Reframing Islandness: thinking with the archipelago**

Association of American Geographers Meeting  
New York City, February 24-28, 2012

Sponsor: Political Geography Specialty Group

Organizers: Joseph Palis – North Carolina State University & Elaine Stratford – University of Tasmania

Following a successful inaugural round of three sessions and twelve papers on Reframing Islandness at AAG 2011, **we are seeking papers responding to the challenge of thinking with the archipelago.** Nominally a group of islands, more properly a sea studded with islands, and originally ‘the chief sea’ – the Aegean, the archipelago does much work, but has been subject to limited theorizing in comparison with islands. For centuries, island worlds were positioned as geographical entities mostly isolated and unmappable – ‘other spaces’ that need to be occupied, conquered and colonized. Yet, archipelagos were connected by nautical trade routes long before European interventions. Indeed, for Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2007, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Literatures*), geography is an appropriate starting point to explore land/sea relationships that favoured complex patterns of migration and settlement and that exemplify the idea that islands are the open subjects of ‘transoceanic imaginaries’. So, too, is geography an appropriate starting point to explore mainland/island and island/island relations, and the archipelago may be a useful material and theoretical tool in such labours.

In the first place, thinking with archipelagos may reveal multiple emancipatory narratives of archipelagic exceptions to colonizing grammars of empire that rendered islands remote, isolated and backward, and thus radically recenter positive, mobile, nomadic geopolitical orderings between and among island(er)s. What are we to make of ‘repeating islands’ which, following Antonio Benítez-Rojo, provide alternative histories derived from homegrown storytelling, tidal dialectics and the conceptual reformulation of the island imaginary? In the second place, thinking with archipelagos may also reveal that “if maps, movement and mobility are clearly among the most obvious means for charting modernity, their contemporary restriction and blockage simultaneously also suggest another, darker and more disquieting account” (Iain Chambers, 2008, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 3). In short, thinking with archipelagos may also illuminate the ways in which various colonial and neocolonial tendencies prevail in mainland/island and island/island relations.

This panel seeks paper presentations discussing, challenging and (re)imagining archipelagic worlds by reference to new field data, discursive practices, and critical ethnographies and cartographies.

Emerging, peripheral and work-in-progress research that offers fresh analyses and conceptualizations on islands and archipelagic imaginaries are particularly welcome.

Topics include but not limited to:

- Archipelagic imaginaries
- Inter-island connectivities
- New mapping and/or counter cartographies
- Emerging and emergent identities
- Migration and diasporic mobilities
- Alter/native historiographies
- Critical narratives of exile and ex-isle
- Tidalectics

Abstracts of 250 words and a list of up to six key words should reach [Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au](mailto:Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au) or Joseph Santos Palis [joseph\\_palis@ncsu.edu](mailto:joseph_palis@ncsu.edu) by no later than 30 September 2011. Please include full contact details in your email correspondence.