



A Carolina Asia Center Seminar

The Asian Development Bank and Greater Mekong Subregion Development:
Poverty Reduction or Development as Usual?

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Abstract:

The Asian Development Bank has been at the center of development projects for the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), particularly through funding of infrastructure that contributes to a more deeply interconnected regional economy. These projects are seen as keys to poverty alleviation in the Southeast Asian transitional economies, but such assessments ignore crucial debates about poverty conceptualization and measurement, and they also ignore the complexities of poverty reduction. This presentation notes how critical perspectives developed in welfare economics, along with perspectives on the complex heterogeneity of global economic space developed in economic geography, make it difficult to employ a meaningful and non-redundant concept of income poverty—a point central to assessment of poverty alleviation strategies. These problems also shed light on social struggles in Thailand, with salience for GMS development.

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Jim Glassman is Associate Professor of Geography at the University of British Columbia. He specializes in political economy of development in Southeast Asia, with special emphasis on urbanization and industrialization in Thailand. His current research is on the development of the Greater Mekong Subregion.



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