

Dwell and move, change ensues



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Abstract

Creativity is “adapting from” that lies at the heart of resilience as opposed to “adapting to” that captures an ineluctable co-existence. In *Schöpfungslieder* (1844), Heinrich Heine writes “Disease was the most basic ground of my creative urge and stress; creating, I could convalesce, creating, I again grew sound.” Creativity is a way of resilience in the face of the banality and imperfection of the world, as expressed by Tarkovsky (1984). The absent desideratum, otherwise understood as lack and deficiency, is perceived negatively, and yet the negative, the absence, affords an ontological space for exploring the given and conceiving of the alternative. On a larger scale, this underlies development and change, in either the paradigm of post-development or the tradition of international aid and NGOs. From lack and deficiency therefore arise a call for creativity, the transition from “being” to “non-being” set in motion and a consciousness of the alternative becomes possible.

The poster presentation discusses the case of the University of Central Asia (UCA) located in the town of Naryn, Kyrgyzstan. UCA is a development university dedicated to improving the quality of life in the mountain communities of Central Asia. Established by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), the university presents an instance of social innovation to facilitate and accelerate resilience, capacity building, civil society and economic development in the region through VET, higher education and research programmes. In 2022, UCA's School of Arts and Sciences held the Nomadic Image 2022, the 7th Transdisciplinary Conference of Imaging

at the Intersections of Art, Culture, and Science. The conference was intended as a creative and generative platform to bring together local and global perspectives on identity and representation at the cross-roads between East and West, and hypermodernity and tradition in Naryn—a small town located on the periphery of a peripheral country, Kyrgyzstan, in a peripheral region. The conference was inspired by the Playful Eye project in 2020 held in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, an experiential method for encountering the “Other” through contemplative, somatic, and embodied practices informed by the concept of play. Play is breaking loose from the rigidity of the given and therefore underlies creativity.

In the same vein, UCA has envisioned and committed to the Naryn Urban Resilience Project (NURP). With the potential for growth, Naryn however faces significant limiting factors to supporting further investment. Impacted by natural hazards exacerbated by climate change as well as by social and demographic shifts, further investment in Naryn is likely to deliver sub-optimal returns if not aligned with frameworks and tools to enhance the resilience of Naryn over the coming years. The poster presents UCA not as a conventional education provider, but rather as a network of cultural and intellectual stakeholders with a mission to promote economic development, social transformation, and resilience. In a context where resources are limited and conflicts rife, this is only possible through generating and adopting new conversations, perspectives, and connections rooted in the local cultural, natural and epistemic milieux and enriched by the global experiences and discourses.