

Movie Making as Praxis: Raising Critical Consciousness in the Anthropocene

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Abstract: Today's youth are growing up in the Anthropocene, the geological epoch defined by unrestrained human activity and the resulting climatic changes. Adapting to climate change often addresses the outcomes of ecological destruction without critically analyzing the causes. Additionally, by limiting these causes to environmental degradation and resource exploitation, without including an investigation of the political economy that enables them, analyses remain woefully facile. The superficial subjective understanding of one's place in historical reality, which, for today's youth, is embedded within the Anthropocene, can be overcome through praxis.

This session seeks to highlight a visual methods-based praxis at informal sites of transformative learning in two different settings in Nepal: Kapan and Godamchaur. In both settings, the one of the several dominant narratives operating upon youth is the pressure to join the ranks of the urban workforce, and abandon small-scale crop and animal husbandry. Using a process of simple movie making and analysis as a method of thematic coding, investigation, and decoding, youth participants in these two contexts crafted narratives based on generative themes that presented alternative livelihood trajectories. These narrative investigations of reality were anti-mimetic; first the participants crafted and told stories, which in turn presented them with opportunities to take action. Themes were coded as stories, and by virtue of coding and analysis, participants were able to visualize new potential futures toward which they could direct their lives, and a historical reality into which they could intervene. By reviewing fieldwork undertaken in Nepal, this session will show that small-scale, affordable, and technologically straightforward movie making and analysis have considerable scope as praxis. The outcomes of this praxis can promote a wide range of grassroots movements, including agricultural, through the articulation of counter-hegemonic narratives. This process can be amplified further through the efforts of dedicated critical educators, and participatory action-researchers, who are able to recognize the pedagogical distinction between value-based directionality and knowledge imposition.