

Paving the Way: Modern Lives Along Tajikistan's Pamir Highway Amidst Affect, China Trade and Geopolitics

Speaker: **Dr Till Mostowlansky**
Asia Research Institute, NUS

Chair: **Professor James D Sidaway**
Department of Geography, NUS

Date/Time: Friday, 11 November 2016, 3.30pm – 5.00pm

Place: Earth Lab, AS2-02-03, NUS

Abstract

In this talk I will look at sociality in the borderland of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Afghanistan through the prism of a road – the Pamir Highway.

Built in the 1930s as a Stalinist prestige object meant to integrate the borderland at the fringes of the Union into the larger Soviet framework, the Pamir Highway has since had many lives. The talk will tell the story of the Pamir Highway through the histories of the two stretches that make up the contemporary road.

I will first focus on the social formations which have sustained themselves on the “Soviet” stretch and the people who have established an “affective” relationship with its tarmac. Then I will talk about the more recent “Chinese” stretch which has been constructed in the course of China’s economic globalization and fundamentally altered the highway’s role in people’s lives.

About the Speaker

Till Mostowlansky is an anthropologist and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, NUS. Till pursues two overarching research interests: first, he is intrigued by the study of routes, roads and pathways, and the anthropology of infrastructure more generally.

This research interest, which he has followed since the early days of his PhD fieldwork, frames his forthcoming monograph *Azan on the Moon: Entangling Modernity along Tajikistan's Pamir Highway* (University of Pittsburgh Press). Second, and emerging from his take on the Pamir Highway as a Soviet gift, Till researches various forms of giving, charity and development.

In this regard, since 2012 he has worked on the transformative force of Shia Muslim networks which dissect the borderlands of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Tajikistan and mediate connectivity to places across Asia.

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