Art, Business, and Society: Using an Innovative Pedagogical Tool to Enhance the Sustainability Mindset of Business Students in a Global Context

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“Why is the most intelligent species destroying our planet?”
Evolutionary Psychological Insights

Five psychological biases:

1. Self-interest
2. Shortsightedness
3. Value relative over absolute status
4. Social imitation
5. Sensing: tend to ignore problems that we can’t see or feel
Learning the Art of Seeing Clearly from Artists

The National Parks portfolio was also intended to *raise awareness of landscape preservation* a cause Adams actively supported from the 1930s onward. For this influential artist, photography was a medium of communication and expression (Salvesen, 2013, p. 158).
© Chris Jordan
When I Am Among the Trees

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.”
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.” By Mary Oliver
The Purposes of the Project

- To design a contemplative art-based project (i.e., e-Portfolio of digital photography) that help business students to become more visually attentive and environmentally conscious through
  - developing observational skills
  - thinking critically about environmental and human sustainability through contemplative photography

- To explore how business students make sense of the sustainability mindset through creating contemplative visual images and deep reflections on them
Cultivating the Sustainability Mindset through Deepening Personal Empowerment

- Conceptualized as the integrated way of knowing (knowledge), doing (competency), and being (values) that results from a broad and deep understanding of the interdependency of all sentient beings in the ecological system for the greater good of the whole (Kassel, Rimanoczy, & Mitchell, 2018)

- “Students need to be given the opportunity to take ownership of their learning, by defining what they would like to see in a better world, what values would make that better world, and what new behaviors would be needed to support that change” (Rimanoczy, 2016, p. 36).
The Basic Structure of the e-Portfolio

Creating an e-Portfolio of Digital Contemplative Photographs

- Prologue
  - describe the overall theme of an e-portfolio with brief introductions of photographs.

- 30 Photographs
  - provide 30 digital photographs with some accompanying information (i.e., title, date, and place).

- Epilogue
  - reflect on the process of conceptualizing the theme, taking photos, and choosing photos to make a coherent e-portfolio with thematic integrity.
  - contemplate the meanings of the 30 photographs from the perspective of the three keywords (i.e., nature, art and sustainability)
# The Summary Course Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title of Courses</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Level (Degree)</th>
<th>Disciplinary Backgrounds</th>
<th>Length/Duration of Courses</th>
<th>Keywords/Themes for e-Portfolios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Creativity &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Undergraduate (Bachelor)</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>16 weeks</td>
<td>Nature, Art, Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Responsible Management: Developing a Sustainability Mindset</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Undergraduate (Bachelor)</td>
<td>Business/International Relations</td>
<td>16 contact hours (lectures/seminars), 16 hours (self-study), 10 weeks of a special self-study task for exchange students who miss the course</td>
<td>Nature, Art, Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Value-Based Economy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Undergraduate/Graduate (Bachelor/Master)</td>
<td>Business/Industrial Engineering</td>
<td>Block seminar: 1.5 days in May, 2018; 1.5 days in June, 2018; 4 weeks for making the e-portfolio</td>
<td>Two self-selected sustainable develop goals (SDGs), vulnerability of mankind and nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service Learning in Non-Profit Organizations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Graduate (Master)</td>
<td>Business/Informatics/Chemical Biology, Mechanical Engineering/Electrical and Information Engineering, etc.</td>
<td>14 weeks</td>
<td>Sustainability, vulnerability of mankind and nature, inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

XXI April International Academic Conference on Economic and Social Development, HSE, Moscow, Russia
Analysis of the e-Portfolios

- Contemplative photography is a practical tool for cultivating the art of seeing clearly, more frequently, and slowly by being “present with something in an open space” (Karr & Wood, 2011, p. 3)

- Reflections on three key words
  - Nature, art, and sustainability (for American and Russian students)
  - SDGs, the vulnerability of mankind and nature, sustainability and inclusion (for German students)

- Interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009)
“Each photo has a connection to nature; you may just have to dig a little deeper to see it.” (Noah, USA)

“I believe that nature is the best creator/artist we could imagine. This is why my photographs draw attention to simple things that surrounds us, such as the sun, the sky, buildings, trees, and flowers – this is to help people, including me, to understand that these are important for our well-being.” (Arina, Russia)

“A consciousness for the planet Earth shall emerge. We are only "guests" here, and behave like we're the kings. Rather, a symbiosis should develop with nature as well as with the people who inhabit it. There should be no exploitation of human beings or nature.” (Tim, Germany)
On Art

“A photographer does not make the beautiful scenery, but she is able to capture the beauty of it and the emotion it evokes. Art is all about conveying something which is not always clear to the viewer. Taking photos of nature is always about feeling in the moment when it is right. Taking these pictures made me also realize that art really is everywhere.” (Alexis, USA)

“It’s all about contemplating the place and time you are in, no rush, taking a look around and exchanging smiles with people you are surrounded by...And seeing beauty in everything, even though it seems at first that there’s nothing to enjoy.” (Elizaveta, Russia)

Megan, Running in the meadow, 2016
On Sustainability

“While sustainability is most commonly associated with environmental resources, I view sustainability as just maintaining some sort of balance in life.” (Briyya, USA)

“Sustainability is not just about adopting the latest energy-efficient technologies or turning to renewable sources of power. Sustainability is the responsibility of every individual every day. It is about changing our behavior and mindset to reduce our consumption, thereby helping to control emissions and pollution levels.” (Daniil, Russia)

“The self-determined, enlightened human being has the possibility of being himself, but also of being able to shape social processes. A sustainable culture relies on active participation of each individual. The path to a more sustainable way of life begins in the inner being of the individual.” (Julia, Germany)
“We live in a society in which the human ego [...] uses a protective mechanism which prevents to appear vulnerable and fragile outwardly under all circumstances. (...) Vulnerability is lived, if at all, within one's own four walls. The wall is built higher and higher, stone by stone, with the aim of becoming untouchable and to avoid further pain. This has the consequence, however, that we are no longer receptive to our outside world.” (Julia, Germany)
On Social Sustainability: Inclusion

“They (the children) jumped happily between the beer benches and the marquees all evening. One family comes from Syria, the other from Afghanistan. Culture and religion of these two countries of origin are very different. (...) However, the families are good friends. This is mainly due to their children. They made friends very quickly, which also brought the parents into contact. (...) Children live inclusion as a matter of course. Aspects such as culture, origin or language play no role for them. Anyone can participate.” (Pauline, Germany)

Pauline, Refugee Families with Children, 2018
“After completing this assignment, I have a newfound appreciation for the places I call “home.” (Aaron, USA)

“So, after completing this task I can definitely say that nature, sustainability and art are inseparably connected and people are the only responsible ones who’s goal is to protect and preserve all the gained treasure, knowledge, heritage and breakthrough to the future generations. Sustainability is what we do right here, right now for the rest of our lives.” (Olga, Russia)
Reflections by Students

“The project has certainly contributed to the fact that I have been thinking about the seminar even longer. I did not manage the photo project simply at a weekend, since I have not found any motives for it, so I carried it with me for weeks. As a reflection task it was therefore successful. It has also brought me further insights.” (Joshua, Germany)

“During the writing and the production/selection of the pictures, it became clear to me that I also have to rethink my attitude towards one or the other topic critically, like e.g. the car, i.e. despite the dreams of one's own sports car think about how environmentally sound such a thing is and what I actually do get out of it.” (David, Germany)

Lukina, *Contradictory Moscow*, 2018
Reflections by Instructors

- Preliminary and exploratory pedagogical case study
- Implications for using more visual qualitative research in the field of sustainability management
  - Students showed highly different levels of commitment: following instructions, using old photographs or some Internet images
  - Reflection skills vary depending on level of engagement, which makes it relatively easy to give grades on e-portfolios
- In spite of the differences among the countries, the e-portfolio has proved itself to be applicable and powerful in all contexts
- Works with the size of the class (up to 45 students) and enough time to prepare e-portfolio (at least 4 weeks)
- One of the most memorable learning activities that our business students have enjoyed doing!
Any Questions or Comments?

Antonova, Fondation Louis Vuitton Paris, 2018