Contested Environments Gallery

Assignment

Prepared for: MDP 5001
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Overview

Communicating complex and/or controversial concepts and discourse can be extremely difficult, yet is a fundamental skill for development practitioners. This assignment asks students to take a given starting point, contested environments, and then develop a multi-media narrative that demonstrates the concept, as interpreted by the student. The assignment begins with the concept (introduced through a reading), and then asks for a representative image and written interpretation (artist statement) that clarifies the students linkage between the concept and image. *Images and statements will be compiled for a pop-up gallery at the Humphrey School and students will be available to speak with guests about their submission.

Learning Strategies

• Apply critical thinking skills through selection of an image representative of course concepts.
• Engage concepts of a differentiated world and contested world through selection of a representative image (see preceding) and the development of the “artist statement.”
• Communicate complex ideas through multi-media: imagery, writing, and oral presentation.
Contested Environments
A Pop-Up Gallery
10/19/16
Humphrey
2nd Floor
MDP 5001
Ways of Knowing

10am - 4pm
2-3pm, “Artist” Open House
2nd Floor Hallway
Humphrey School
301 19th Avenue South Minneapolis, Minnesota
Corn has played a vital role in the lives of indigenous people and peasants in America. Corn is not “just” a part of their culture; it is a living gift from the gods. Both corn and indigenous peoples have developed a symbiotic relationship during the last ten thousand years. Diversity (in corn varieties and in ways of living), life and freedom for both corn and people is born from and depends on this relationship.

Indigenous people, peasants and scientific movements in Mexico are trying to protect the biodiversity of corn and their livelihoods. Multinationals like Monsanto are trying to take hold of the Mexican corn market, ignoring the true cost that people will incur to satisfy the profit margin for the company.

This piece represents the indigenous women who have kept the seeds and fed their communities for centuries. The bandana represents the rebellion against multinationals amidst an environment of violence, social inequality and corporate abuse of wealth and power. The girl stands for future generations of the corn people.
"It’s a project that has been notoriously nontransparent,” says Margaret Myers, the director of the China and Latin America program at Inter-American Dialogue, a policy institute in Washington, in a recent interview with the New York Times. She is discussing a Chinese business venture to construct a 278 kilometer canal from the Eastern to the Western side of Nicaragua. The proposed project, which exceeds the size and depth of the Panama Canal, would allow for container ships that are too large for the Panama Canal to pass from the Pacific to the Caribbean.

What is clear is that construction of the canal guarantees both environmental abuses and human rights violations. A map of the proposed plan shows the canal cutting through several of Nicaragua’s Indigenous communities - the Rama and Mayagna - and Cocibolca Lake the largest source of fresh water in Central America. The Federation for Human Rights cited in a recent report "hydrocarbon pollution, salinity and turbidity problems," among the greatest environmental degradations of the canal adding: "No element related to sustainable development has been included in the project."

In this piece I layered photographs of the individuals and communities who are radically and resiliently protesting the canal’s construction beneath a topographical map outlining the proposed project. In doing so, I hope to express (1) the social impact this proposed canal has on the livelihoods of some of Nicaragua’s most vulnerable population and (2) the lack of transparency of the canal’s planning, construction, and evaluation processes.
Title: Development Cost
Source: TROPICAL REINFOREST ANIMAL
http://www.tropical-rainforest-animals.com/air-pollution-effects.html
Adriana Arce

Through my art work I am showing consciousness, something that might have been lost in society. Development, still not a well-defined term, might lead to money, growth and an easy life, but the question is at which price? In my work I show reality of the world nowadays in order to have the audience think about the relation between development and the environment where it takes place. Has the environment where we habit become a place where misusing, degrading and destroying resources is the way to reach a better life? It is true that human societies and biophysical environments are involved in a mutual interaction at different levels where the environment provides certain conditions that both help and obstruct human activities. However, society has gone too far in order to change the condition of those places where facilities were poorly offered.

Most people at these places derived their livelihoods from the field, water and forest surrounding them. Thus, when thinking of sustainability, they would only refer to the rights of communal ownership, cultural strength, rituals, religion and collectively ways of knowing. When their conditions were changed, not only their way of living was affected, but also the environment itself was altered. These costs that are generated and affect third parties are called externalities. As the artwork shows, polluted air and the need to use air filter masks are the costs for big industries. Although externalities are mostly more negative than positive, they are indispensable for economic growth and there is a big concern about them destroying the planet more than creating life for future generations. I feel like we should not just keep wearing suits and cross our arms while our planet is peace by peace being destroyed.
The truth is that most of us care more about our standard of living than we do about the environment and the health of the other species. Indeed, that is the main reason behind many controversial issues that have to be addressed together to seek a solution that benefits all parties.

One of the most critical problems we face today is society-environmental relations conflicts, and the attached image could describe that issue in some way. The picture summarizes the negative effect of industrial development on the environment and on the creatures’ lives as well. Nevertheless, industrial development contributes to the well-being augmentation of mankind. It causes many environmental issues leading to today's environmental destruction. It is now evident that human beings’ industrial activity is mainly to blame for the serious damage done to Nature. Environmental destruction is destroying large parts of the planet, threatening the existence of all species, including our own.

So what is the reality? What will happen to our industrial civilization if the supply of natural resources is constantly diminished relative to demand? The answer is obvious. Our prosperity will be threatened. And the solution is obvious. We must strive to obtain more goods and services from our finite supply of non-renewable resources, and we must protect the natural productivity of our forests, fisheries, agricultural, and other renewable resources.

In fact, I'm not against the industrial development as not all industrial activities are harmful to the environment. Moreover, living in an eco-friendly way does not necessarily mean that we have to accept a lower standard of living. However, I'm against the capitalism industrial model. As capitalism is an inherently destructive system, ultimately the only real way to stop the environmental crisis is to create a new society based on human need rather than profit, and based on respect for nature.
Development is perceived by many as: “following the footsteps of developed countries”

This definition could, sometimes, be helpful to use previous data to anticipate the probability of success of development programs in developing countries by setting “Development Models”

HOWEVER,
- Setting a “Development Model” could fail to comprehend “Contextualization”, especially in political matters.
- Borrowing western models of governance did not foster desired sustainability in the global south because it was not tailored to fit for its context.

This cartoon sarcastically tries to expose this gap of misunderstanding between the west and the east. It is very obvious that the so-called “expert man” in a blue suit does not have a clue about what is happening in the ancient civilization of Egypt. Yet, he insists that his model of leadership shall work for them.
It could also be interpreted that the man in suit does not want to listen to the pharaohs but he just needs to get his style of leadership implemented anyways

-These situations always provoke conflict rather than reconciliation-

The choice of this photo is not meant to comment on the practices of the west in Egypt per se. But it is just used as an example to highlight the importance of “PRA” and Development Contextualization in the global south to achieve the desired results. It is always a crucial step to “Learn & Listen” before we apply!
The conflict known as the Troubles was the culmination of centuries of repeated injustices between two divisive two religious sects: Protestants and Catholics. The Fountain Estate is a Unionist community in the predominantly Nationalist city-side of Derry-Londonderry Northern Ireland (NI). This mural depicts a contested political space for that reason.

Although the immediate conflict between Unionists and Nationalists ended with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the society remains divided.

The issue of community relations is endemic within NI as there are high levels of social segregation and physical segregation between Catholic and Protestant communities as demonstrated in this mural of the Fountain Estate community. The murals throughout Northern Ireland depict the deep connections people in NI have with the past as well as the stark divisions that exist within society which represent an incomplete peace.

Perceptions of preferential treatment provided by the government are still shared by both sides and murals are used as a way to voice community concerns. The images within murals pin an identity onto communities and in some ways this inhibits reconciliation. A politician from the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) said that “sectarianism doesn’t grow like a wildflower in a field. It’s in a window box. It’s in a potting shed. It’s nurtured. It’s fed and passed on, generation to generation” (Art of Conflict, 2012). These divisions remain because they are perpetuated by the power of identity in fostering stereotypes.
The Jungle refugee camp in Calais, France is a space of controversy and contestation. It is populated by over 7,000 migrants, ostensibly as an interim destination between displacement and permanent residence. The values derived from the Jungle differ among stakeholders of the space, most significantly its residents and French officials. For the Jungle’s residents, the “temporary” camp is a home in which migrants have fostered a community. The value derived from the Jungle is not in its accommodations, which are inadequate at best, but in its provision of community through resources such as youth centers, places of worship, and education services. For French officials, the Jungle’s value is in its capacity to contain a limited number of migrants.

This image of the Jungle portrays the tension between these values, reflected in the starkly contrasted dwellings of the image: the shantytown tents assembled by migrants and the metal shipping containers erected by the French government. While the city of tents provides a community for migrants, the boxcar housing was established in an area lacking such provisions. These dwellings further represent the contention over and tension within the purpose and use of this space. Refugee camps are intended as temporary spaces, to be used until better accommodations (i.e. permanent resettlement) can be made; however, the construction of more permanent structures troubles this intention. Those who are stuck in the middle are the refugees, displaced peoples occupying land over which they have no claim, in a country in which they are not citizens.
The West Bank is clearly a contested political space, but Israel’s wall around Palestine has environmental impacts that deepen the consequences of the occupation. The walls restrict Palestinians from accessing agricultural land, water use in Israel is drastically higher than in the West Bank, and trash, sewage, and toxic waste management and dumping are all issues created by the “security barrier” and the imbalance of power it exemplifies. It is very literally drawing hotly contested borders, within which land and resources are being quickly claimed by illegal, suburban housing developments. The wall also presents a contested environment because it is a relatively thin barrier between the status quo and breaking point of an unsustainable situation.

This image of graffiti on the wall near Bethlehem also reminds me of the limitations of my belief in a shared sense of humanity. It would certainly be nice to imagine that “love wins” but so often the walls we build between each other are far stronger than the bonds that we share. While our diversity should be cause us to celebrate and investigate our differences, it instead frequently leads to conflict. The significance of the wall, and this message, are only magnified by their proximity to the birthplace of whom many call the Prince of Peace. What could anyone write on a wall that would bring dignity to those trapped within it?
Looking out beyond the barn, over the heads of grazing horses where there used to be rolling hills, now houses stand, drawing closer to the edge of the field each year. Subdivisions with names like Whispering Pines grew up overnight, it seems, and attracted young families who wanted big, affordable houses in a dreamy place like Emerald Ridge. They may not be aware of the farmers whose livelihoods depend on the land their cookie-cutter houses now occupy, or maybe they tell themselves times are changing and no one can stop it.

I grew up in the town where the barn stands: Afton, Minnesota. The houses in the background are the edge of Woodbury, a St. Paul suburb that epitomizes sprawl. The people in my hometown loathe Woodbury for encroaching upon the wild beauty of the St. Croix River Valley. This is a contested space like many across the country where growing populations are taking over former farmland and wild places to build homes and shopping centers.

The farmers in Afton—the few that are left, anyway—value the land for growing cash crops and the sense of belonging to a specific place. Wealthy residents who own big tracts of mostly-untouched forest like the pristine beauty, a touch of the northwoods in town. And Woodbury residents see the land as a place where they can raise their kids in a safe place with good schools and green lawns. Thus far, the towns have not been able to agree on the best use for the land, so Woodbury builds homes to its borders and Afton watches on from the eaves of its barns.
Do Some Lives Matter Less?
Source: Sergio Grandas Medina, Las 2 Orillas
Patrick Roisen

Water is life. Water is life. Water is life.

The impact of our moral systems and drive for greater profit usually come with a price – but the poor and indigenous people of the land often pay disproportionately more.

In Colombia, the Rancheria River has run dry after three years of intense drought and extended periods of public corruption in the province of La Guajira, which remains among the poorest and most overlooked regions in the country. Once there flowed a great river, but now crops have died off, livestock die of thirst and malnutrition, and the indigenous Wayuu struggle to adjust to this impossibly dry way of life.

Despite the existence of a suitable dam and aqueduct system to equitably deliver water around the region, government officials and private interests have kept the water supply lines closed in order to maximize profits. This in turn has led to dry riverbanks for the most rural places in La Guajira, and where the politically neglected Wayuu call home. In this contested space - politics, markets and the humane distribution of valuable goods frequently collide and overlap. Development efforts in general must continuously challenge the assumptions that reside in why we participate in the global economy, and scrutinize who ultimately benefits from these efforts.
Are You The People Or The Pipeline

Source: Gettyimages.com

Amal Warsame

DAPL is what we would call a contested space where debates and protests have been happening to stop the pipeline from being build on sacred land. Essentially the debate is about who gets to own or have ownership over the land. Although previous treaties exist on ownership, these treaties are not being respected or upheld in this matter. In a contested environment, certain groups sometimes benefit while those that live in the area have to suffer the consequence of this decision. The pipeline will run through land that is scared and may contaminated the water source for the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, and for them, just like the rest of us, water is life!

The pipeline was originally supposed to run near Bismarck but because of the risk it brought in contaminating the water supply, it was rerouted to run near the Native American reservation. With this decision it is clear who will suffer the consequence of this decision. Water is scared but is it scared for everyone or do some people have access to water more than others. This isn’t about livelihoods!

The image displays the protests people have been involved in to save their land and the environment. The photo displays the pain and anguish people are experiencing in trying to fight for their land and their rights. The sign on the left showcases the effect the pipeline will have to the climate, this isn’t just about their land, it is about all of our lands, our environments and our livelihoods.
A Surma man stands in the fields in southern Ethiopia. He wears traditional dress, with traditional paint. At his side, a Kalashnikov rifle.

Surma are in constant competition with neighboring groups, and shifting territorial advances often create conflict. Once settled with traditional stick fighting, these contestations are now often settled with rifles. These confrontations are both mirrored by and shaped by external conflicts of tradition and modernity, of localization and globalization.

The weapon he holds has origins in the end of WWII, forged in the origins of the cold war. Created in 1947 by Alexander Kalashnikov, the weapon’s simplicity and quick production allowed it to become the most widely used firearm in history. It has quickly become a powerful symbol of the Soviet Union, of revolution and rebellion, of the western anti-thesis.

Conflict and contestation is never isolated, and never exists strictly within its own borders or ideologies. A product of a conflict between two different political ideologies set more than 60 years ago stands at the feet of a man facing his own contestations.

The weapon exists as symbol of modernity, which seems to be in direct catalyst of his traditional dress. However, these identities exist both in conflict and in concert. This weapon of modernity is seen ironically. It is used as a tool to protect the culture, tradition, and the livelihood it seeks to overtake.
This photo was taken in La Jolla, California, a wealthy community within the city of San Diego known for its’ beaches, restaurants, and Torrey Pines golf course, making it a prime spot for tourism. It also offers the opportunity for visitors to get an up-close look at wild seals and sea lions. This conflict between nature and politics involving tourism and residents, is what makes La Jolla a contested area. The photo shows a group of tourists, cameras and cellphones in hand, ready to capture close-ups of sea lions with no regard for the danger it poses to both the human and the animal. The animals don’t always react favorably to their space being invaded, as demonstrated by the sea lion barking at the person in yellow. Rather than protecting the environment of the wild sea lions, (who come here on their own accord) the residents of La Jolla have recently begun issuing complaints about them. This summer, local newspapers referred to the situation as a “crisis”, stating that sea lion feces is polluting the water and led to a cancellation of an annual ocean swim. Many people are concerned about the public health effects animal waste could have on the community. They also argue that the sea lions are aggressive and have begun to take over stairways, preventing people from accessing the beach. The question remains though, who has the right to the beach? The people or the wild animals they aim to rid it of?
While the Monroe Doctrine blocked further expansion of Europe imperialism in the Western Hemisphere, the Roosevelt Corollary went one step further. It stated that should any Latin American nation engage in “chronic wrongdoing,” a phrase that included large debts or civil unrest, the United States military would intervene in order to protect its interests. Latin Americans on the other hand, did not look upon the corollary favorably. They resented U.S. involvement as Yankee imperialism, and animosity against their large neighbor to the North grew dramatically.

My artwork takes a critical view of social, political and cultural issues in Latin America, and how some of these issues can be trace to the United States, and its meddling in Southern countries affairs in order to benefit their own interests. This art work, deconstructs the idea of the American dream, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and lullabies that are part of the American culture, when they view their role in Latin America as the “savior of the continent.” Further, this image represent the United States appearance as harmless, but is, in fact, malicious.
Makoko: The Venice of Africa
Source: Olaloye Oyedotun
Tarere Eyimina

This is a photo of a slum located in Lagos Nigeria. It is a community of houses built on water. It is a slum that I personally have always been intrigued by, it is located near the third mainland bridge that connects the mainland and Island of the very populous city of Lagos. It is a very controversial slum, especially because its location is very visible to foreigners who cross the bridge when travelling from the airport on the mainland to the business district and wealthy neighbourhood on the Island.

This slum houses over 80 000 people who live in bamboo made houses. Their source of livelihood is Fishing, as the majority of them are fishermen. However some of them make their source of income through woodwork.

The Nigerian government has threatened to break down the slum severally but is yet to follow through with the threat. They argue that the slum poses a hazard to the environment and defaces the outlook of the city. The delay in relocating them is mostly because these people could become a threat to society if they are not housed properly and given a sustainable source of income. The irony however, is that the majority of this population are not willing to move out of this slum.
This is Nairobi National Park. The land was first designated as a game reserve by colonialists, and then established as a national park (Kenya’s first) in 1946. The history of the park itself is rather contested; Maasai pastoralists were removed from their land when the park was created by Kenya’s British colonial government. This is kind of ironic, because now the animals are escaping from the park and destroying the Maasai’s livestock (and livelihoods along with it). The park is located just four miles south of the center of Nairobi, a city of more than three million people. There have been conflicts between humans and the animals in the park ever since it was established, but these encounters become more frequent as the urban population grows. As developers begin to build homes south of an unfenced stretch of the park, animals that once migrated in that direction now must find somewhere else to go, which has increased conflicts between animals in the park and local Maasai communities who keep livestock. This is a huge problem because when a family’s livestock disappears, their livelihoods suffer, and when wild animals have less land to live on, they suffer too.

Land ownership and use is a highly contested topic, especially in Kenya where there is a long history of colonization and conflict among pastoralist communities. Who does rightfully own land anyway? People who pay for it? The government? Everyone?
As you grow older, Dreams will get bigger.

This mural is found in a local village in the Siem Reap Province of Cambodia. Its proximity to Angkor Wat, a UNESCO World Heritage Centre, sets associated limitations on the land use and development. Particularly, there are restrictions on electricity usage in the village. A possible alternative for villagers to install electricity is through use of solar panels. This does not imply a lack of social media use among young people.

The industrialized world can often be the picture of progress. This mural associates big dreams with bridging the village to the city. The young people of Can big dreams occur within the village?

Designated areas, such as World Heritage Sites, national parks, environmental preserves; often influence the livelihoods of those people within its bounds. There are times when the local people are displaced, while other examples where locals are required to abide by new rules. These protected areas are frequently assigned by those who are remote and not directly affected. Although these electricity limitations may benefit the environment by reducing carbon emissions into the atmosphere, it could be a barrier to the community’s desired goals. Associated controversy is related to the question of who gets to develop or who has the rights to. The developed countries have gone through this process, but will developing countries have the chance to? Associated costs to development, for example global environmental impacts, are becoming more apparent. This in turn could shift the route of development.
Who pays the fisherman?
Source: Jurgen Freund, WWF Denmark [http://www.wwf.dk/?1346](http://www.wwf.dk/?1346)
Isaac Giron

In the archipelago country of the Philippines, fishing is a way of life. For many of the coastal habitants, more fish simply means more resources to support their families. For the longest time, traditional fishermen have used hooks, lines, and nets sometimes catching 3-5 live fish on a good day. With dynamite and cyanide, a fisherman can increase his yields tenfold in the same amount of time. The economic incentive to use cyanide and dynamite fishing techniques is very high, and the international demand for live coral grouper fish doesn’t seem to be diminishing any time soon. Most importantly, a Filipino family is able to have a nice meal for supper.

The dangers of dynamite and cyanide are obvious, and it’s clear that the destruction of these reefs damages the sustainability of fishing resources. If we don’t stop these destructive fishing practices soon, there won’t be any more fish left as we’ve destroyed their homes and pushed them towards unreachable distances.

Imagine now telling these fishermen to stop what they’re doing, that what they are doing is wrong and detrimental to the environment and their children’s future. Now recall the last time you ate fish. Do you know where it came from or how it was captured? It’s easy to paint the Filipino fishermen as the “bad guys” in this scenario, but who demands the fish? Who pays the fisherman?
The Kirov Dam was built in western Kyrgyzstan in the mid ’70’s when Kyrgyzstan was still part of the USSR.

To me, this dam represents a couple different ideas. First, by putting a huge head of Lenin on the dam it tries to instill a feeling of pride to be part of something as big as the USSR. Second, as a dam it represents a move towards easier and cheaper access to electricity and water. Lastly, and this part isn’t shown in the picture because it is under water farther down in the reservoir, but it represents the sacrifices made by the “common people” to attain this so called step forward. Farther down in the reservoir, where there is a common swimming spot, is a whole village worth of house foundations where people had to move out in order to make this dam a reality.

Sadly, the first two ideas are lost in the reality of life in this part of Kyrgyzstan. The USSR collapsed and left Kyrgyzstan. And perhaps there is more power available because of the dam but power outages and water shortages are still a common occurrence for most people living in this area.