The First International Sustainability Mindset Festival

Organized by LEAP and the PRME Working Group on the Sustainability Mindset

PRME Principles for Responsible Management Education
WORKING GROUP
SUSTAINABILITY MINDSET

The first International Sustainability Mindset Festival took place during the week of October 26-30, 2026. Spanning 21 hours across time zones, from Hawaii to Australia, 36 sessions featured presenters from 20 countries sharing their pedagogical innovations to develop a mindset for sustainability.

The Festival was organized by LEAP and the PRME Working Group on the Sustainability Mindset.

It was held online and was free for anyone, no registration required.



Off to a GREAT start!

The first day of the International Sustainability Mindset Festival was a blast of enthusiasm and fabulous stories! **Prof. Bee Ching Gan** from ***Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia***, opened the Festival with her innovative Social Entrepreneurship pedagogy. **Madeleine Van Der Steege**, ***Webster Leiden Campus / Webster University*** was next, sharing how her pedagogic innovation facilitated students in ***The Netherlands*** get organized in project teams, making a real impact in their countries of origin: fixing a school in Nigeria, cleaning up a river in Nepal, repurposing a restaurant in Greece and much more.

Next came ***Steering Committee's*** member **Estatira Shirkhodaee**'s session, with the most creative approach to teaching SDGs beyond technical knowledge. It's about engaging the students, their hearts, their passions, what makes them the best activists! **Clare Nickson Havens**, ***University of Cambridge, Sydney NSW***, showed us why and how angel investors go to great risk to support social entrepreneurs. The keyword is passion, falling in love with an idea and the enthusiasm of the innovator - this beats any ROI speculations.

She was followed by Prof. **Elena Salcedo Allende** from ***Esade Business School, Spain***, and **Klara Jamison Gromark, *Spain,*** describing a program they designed that is a personal journey of discovery and action: combining online meetings and a retreat in a fabulous location in the mountains, participants connect with themselves and one another, envision the world they desire, create action plans in a mindset- transformational experience. **Ausrine Silenskyte** from ***Vaasa University, Finland***, presented to us her international study of SMEs engaging in social sustainability. Her question was: Why are they doing it? Is it regulation? Branding? The surprise: it's strategic! Small and medium enterprises are extremely careful on how to stay resilient, develop a great employer identity, respond to the expectations of their stakeholders, and be able to enter international markets.



Andrea E. Niosi, *Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Canada* studied how Civil Rights movements added people to their causes and applied it to her course on sustainability persuasion. Students research injustices close to them, in their communities, and design strategies to persuade new allies, because that is what shifts the power balance. She generously provided links and handful of resources ready to adopt or adapt.

Johanna Wagner, *ESSEC Business School, France*, connected from ***India*** today, to introduce her latest creation: a deck of pedagogical playful cards to spark conversations and reflections about sustainability habits (habits to drop, and habits to start) SustyGrab is the name of the cards, and she is guiding educators around the world in how to connect fun, learning and shaping a new generation of more responsible citizens.

Gregory F. Tague, retired professor from ***St. Francis College, New York***, provoked our thinking talking about ecosystem engineers: how animals, insects, plants and minerals are silently engineering the ecosystem of our planet, and then - how we, the *human* engineers, are destroyers of the ecosystem we need! Overpopulation, consumption and development are three capitalistic strategies that are creating our collapse.



Eunice Mareth Querol-Areola started the day from ***Manila, Philippines***, sharing the most progressive educational initiative we have ever seen. Based on Laudato Si, from PreK to 3rd year college students have a self-paced learning experience, centered on how we can choose to be to solve planetary problems. The name of the pedagogy is SEAL: S -Stewardship, learning the role each one plays to care for each other and the planet; E -Engage with others, collaborate to become global champions; A - Active lifelong learners; L - Lovers of truth: from convenient compliance to courageous values-driven actions.

The next session was facilitated by **Isabel Rimanoczy, *Chair of the PRME Working Group on the Sustainability Mindset*,** from ***USA***. She shared about the Sustainability Mindset Indicator, the award-winning tool to assess the impact we are making. She explained how it is being used by educators in Africa, Europe, the Americas and Asia as a pedagogical resource, as a student-development tool and as a research instrument. Then, **Catherine O'Brien, *Cape Breton University, Canada*** and her daughter shared about the course on Sustainability Happiness they co-developed.

From Ghana, **Alexander Nuer** presented the ripple effects he is making at ***Cape Coast University, in the school of Agribusiness***, where he focuses on developing a sustainability mindset. Hundreds of graduates are bringing intentionally that new mindset to their doctoral careers, enterprises, podcasts, youth mentoring and start-ups.

Homeira Ekhtari, *Conestoga College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning, Canada* facilitated an interactive session using Menti to gather and compare perspectives and perceptions of the audience , while ***Steering Committee member*** **Mary Grace Neville*, USA,*** led a session about learning to pause, connect with our creativity and give ourselves permission to be fully present.

Prof. Krista Hiser from ***Hawaii***, introduced the new Sustainability Accreditation program with clearly defined key sustainability competencies, and **Griselda Lassaga, Universidad de Belgrano, Argentina,** brought to a close the second Festival day with a well-attended session focused on a new network to connect Hispanic women to work on sustainability and education (REDMES).



The day started with **Nisha Ninan, *Univ de Navarra, Spain***, and **Reena Dayal** from ***UK*** who took us diving into the paradoxical tensions that come with sustainability in a polarized world! When do we fight, flight, freeze, or see multiple choices? What is fear protecting us from? What do our head, our heart, our gut and our nervous system say?

From ***Lithuania,*** **Aušra Sermontė** gave us a wonderful break from the intellectual demands of an academic conference: she invited us into a space of stories, exploration of uncertainty and life's unexpected troubles, and how we can open our eyes to the abundance that is all around us. It was an intimate, profound and magical time!

From there, **Karen Thompson, *Bournemouth University, UK***, reminded us that the past cannot be changed, and the future doesn't exist- yet in between is the present, the hinge where we can act. We can bring past through the lessons learned, and future through our imagination, as we live in the now. She also shared a template for decision making.

Ayako Huang, *Maharishi International University, USA*, followed with an amazing presentation of the innovative way she found to combine AI with reflection to develop the being dimensions - self awareness, purpose and mindfulness. She invites her students to engage in making a difference in

the local community. She asked us to name the feelings when thinking "AI" and gave examples of the impact her students are making in their workplaces through her assignments.
Another magical day, learning about so many innovative pedagogical approaches from around the world.



A day full of emotions!

Thursday at the International Sustainability Mindset Festival was an invitation to holistic pedagogies!

Aline Bento Avelar, ***Spain,*** shared how she offers students experiential learning, working on projects that immerse them into the complexity of organizational life. Next came the **PRME Working Group Arts for Impact**, with **Ekaterina Ivanova**, **Divya Singhal**, **Saloni Sinha** and **Charlie Yang**. They shared stories of how the book The Power of Art-based pedagogies was created, and details about the many endorsers that saw in this book a pedagogical breakthrough. Art as a way to develop a new mindset!?

Technical challenges didn't stop **Karen Cripps*, Oxford Brookes University, UK,*** who rapidly created a video about her presentation on how she uses storytelling to engage students in career choices and SDGs.

From Indonesia, QUM team **Wulan Wulandini**, **Agustina Untari** and **Achmad Ferzal** shared the pioneering initiative of a certificate in Sustainability Mindset for K12 educators. After 20 years researching the impact of Indonesia's Nature Schools, they think that focusing on the mindset can make a lasting behavioral impact in students. Sustainability as a curriculum topic is no longer sufficient. We need the mindset as the intentional Learning Goal, they said.

From ***UK***, **Orla Kelleher, *University of Derby*,** created a profound and reflective session for all participants, addressing the question of How did we get here? A marine biologist by training, after advising government, she realized that what we needed to change was focusing on values first, on the inner dimensions of thinking and being. That is when she went into higher ed.

Then we traveled to ***Alabama, USA***, to an industrial and poverty stricken region. **Anne Ledvina** shared how a few years ago she was at a professional crossroads, and decided to combine her social sensitivity with her passion for gardening. She contacted the principal of a K12 school in her city and got permission to start a garden on the school premises. She started to grow food and

attracted the attention of children in a poor nutritional region. Two years later, they planted fruit trees, restored the polluted land, created a herb and vegetable garden, and obtained support from the organization *Lift Up Alabama*. Her program is expanding as she is incorporating artistic activities (song, dance, movies), dialogues, explorations into nature, and designing games that introduce the Sustainability Mindset Principles to her young audience. She highlighted all the **SDGs** her garden was addressing!



The final day of the International Sustainability Mindset Festival!

The day started early in the US East coast, but late in the night for **Dr. Karthyeni Sridaran, *University of Melbourne, Australia***. She started honoring 60 000 years of elders in the land she lives on, and their wisdom as custodians of the earth. Her session focused on spiritual intelligence, which she calls "the field of tacit knowledge". **Judita Peterlin** from ***Slovenia, School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana***, followed with a quote from Confucious that guided her pedagogical innovations: *He who knows all the answers has not been asked all the questions*. Over the years she explored different ways to develop a mindset for sustainability with students and in her leadership development sessions. She uses short thought-provoking stories from literature, humor and trips to art galleries with surprising results.

The day ended with **Morgane M.C. Fritz*, Professor at Excelia Business School, France.*** She loves her discipline of ethics and sustainable supply chains but was frustrated with how uninterested her students were. That led her to experiment with more engaging ways to make the contents relevant all while connecting with the feelings of her students. Instead of lecturing cases, she asked students to find a current, real ethical problem in the news, and write a play - and act it! The reflections of the students are a testimony to the transformation of their mindset.

Congratulations to all presenters from the 36 sessions, from 20 countries! You are making an impact in accelerating transformation, shaping a better world and contributing to the development of the mindset that makes achievement of the SDGs possible!

Isabel Rimanoczy, Ed.D., in the name of the Steering Committee

PRME Working Group on the Sustainability Mindset

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