



Creating Climate Entrepreneurs – a Tale of Contextual Learning

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Abstract

As the effects of climate change become visible the need for climate change innovation is obvious and urgent. It is therefore alarming that Europe is simultaneously undergoing a steady decline in its ability to innovate and its citizens are no longer eager entrepreneurs. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology has founded a Climate Knowledge and Innovation Community (Climate-KIC) whose role is to catalyse Europe's transition to a climate resilient and low carbon economy. A key element to achieving this aim will be to reinvigorate the innovative and entrepreneurial instincts of Europeans to create businesses that combat climate change.

Here, we describe the 6-week Contextual Learning Journey that we have developed to accelerate the education of climate change innovators. Delivering climate innovation that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable at a magnitude and on a timescale that prevents societal catastrophe sets our approach.

- The challenge is *multidisciplinary*; our students are formed into multidisciplinary teams.
- The challenge is *context dependent*; geography, politics and socio-economic factors are heterogeneous and successful climate innovation recognises this.
- The challenge is *systemic*; the material prosperity of our society is based on complex and interdependent value and supply chains and successful innovation encompasses this.
- Our mission is to create a *strong climate change innovation community* as defined by the three key challenges.

The Contextual Learning Journey (Paris to London to Zurich) ran in trial form in 2010. Although there were short didactic presentations on climate change and elements of entrepreneurship the majority of the course focussed on the students learning by doing. They did this through coached experimentation, site visit studies and the creation (in multidisciplinary teams) of climate innovation business ideas. Our survey of the students indicate that the course has indeed been transformative for them, created a strong community and led to two business ideas being spun out with external funding.