



Learning
Experience Brief

Every Tree Tells a Story

Architects of Imagination:

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Funded by
the European Union

Sources of inspiration

- 🌳 Gaddefors, J. and Anderson, A.R., 2017. Entrepreneursheep and context: when entrepreneurship is greater than entrepreneurs. *International journal of entrepreneurial behavior & research*, 23(2), pp.267-278.
- 🌳 Kuckertz, A., 2019. Let's take the entrepreneurial ecosystem metaphor seriously!. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 11, p.e00124.
- 🌳 Dodd, S., Lage-Arias, S., Berglund, K., Jack, S., Hytti, U. and Verduijn, K., 2022. Transforming enterprise education: Sustainable pedagogies of hope and social justice. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 34(7-8), pp.686-700.
- 🌳 Dodd, S, Wilson, J and Bonner, J (2022) [How do People Value Trees?](#) Policy Innovation Insight, University of Strathclyde.

Theoretical background: Key concepts and foundations

- 🌳 Bourdieu's theory of capital.
- 🌳 Nature-adjacent theories and policies.
- 🌳 Participative engagement methodologies.

Rooted innovations:

Prototyping our transformative experience

- 🌳 Why This Matters: The Crucial Need to Prototype this Experience

The TrEE ETTAS LE provides a complete lesson introducing Every Tree Tells a Story as an inspiring example of transformational enterprise engagement and education. It offers a simple class technique for deepening engagement with nature, and considering the value of the treescape. It provides a vehicle for applying an established theoretical framing - Bourdieu's Forms of Capital - to non-human resources within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and for generating novel nature-based theorizing.


Radical inclusivity and epistemic equity necessitate transformed theoretical and practical modes of engagement with the ecosystem. Firstly, to achieve the aims of social justice, we need hopeful, participative, communitarian and embedded methodologies at ecosystem margins. Decolonizing the elite epistemologies of the West, within the West itself, is also essential



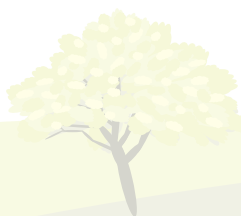
for social justice. ETTAS exemplifies such approaches, by seeking locally excluded wisdoms, but is also simple enough to use in a class setting. Secondly, embedded and engaged collaborative methods of research and engagement also offer much scope for institutional, civic, community, social and nature-based entrepreneurship. Thirdly, ETTAS enacts eco-justice, by framing the (entrepreneurial) ecosystem as inclusive of its flora and fauna, its geographies, man-made and natural. In so doing, it challenges anthropocentric understandings of (entrepreneurial ecosystems).

In policy terms, fourth, it seeks to move to a community and tree centred approach to urban woodland and forestry, building and deepening citizen connections with nature through its processes. ETTAS believes this collaborative institutional entrepreneurship also offers a strong example of transformative processes in action. Fifth and finally, ETTAS theorizing of tree-sources extends our understanding of value – such an essential element of entrepreneurship – in transformative ways.


Whispers of Time

 *Every Tree Tells a Story* (ETTAS) is a collective organic project, founded in Glasgow in 2021, and led by the University of Strathclyde, and Glasgow City Council. ETTAS uses postcarding workshops, walks, and vox pops to gather tree stories as data to shape local forestry policy. ETTAS was first used as an inspiration for TrEE during the writing of the project's proposal, where its inclusion in TrEE was committed to. ETTAS is also presented as an example of transformative enterprise education towards ecojustice, social justice and hope within the TrEE Team's theoretical conceptualisation of Transformative Enterprise Education (Dodd et al, 2023).

As projected within the TrEE proposal document, ETTAS participated in and contributed to the Green Shoots workshop in Glasgow, hosting a tree trail walk and talk, a post carding haiku activity, and presenting an overview of the ETTAS project, and its implications for entrepreneurship theory (June 2023). In November 2023, the UoS TrEE partners created an ETTAS Learning Experience teaching pack, complete with activity, background and theoretical material, examples, and readings. This was edited and polished into an enhanced form in December 2023. In October 2024, the ETTAS LE was piloted in a class of 55 final (4th) year students, on an "Issues and Trends in Entrepreneurship" module. In November 2024, the ETTAS LE was piloted in a class session on "Transformative Entrepreneurship" in the first year introduction to entrepreneurship module. Slight refinements were made to the ETTAS LE as a result of these, with the final version complete by February 2025. This EEB of the ETTAS intervention, in formal pedagogical format, was then written up, drawing on all of the above activities and pilots.



Commitment

 ETTAS as a movement, and this EEB with its associated activities, are founded on commitment to the three ethically progressive and conceptually critical pillars of the TrEE project – ecojustice, social justice, and hope.

Ecojustice

ETTAS advances ecojustice through stimulating, articulating, and enacting deeply embedded analysis of the treescape's multi-faceted values. ETTAS serves eco-justice by building new nature-adjacent policy models recognising and stewarding tree-sources' value, and enhancing participant-citizen connections with nature. ETTAS' theorizing extends framings of (entrepreneurial) ecosystems as also comprising and comprised by the more-than-human natural world.

Social Justice

ETTAS is committed to the promotion of social justice by creating democratic and radically inclusive participative methodologies that engage with the excluded wisdoms of the urban margins. ETTAS translates stories of the edge into formal actionable policy, creating processes and communities for innovative engagement with those excluded by age, class, and geography.

Hope

ETTAS is committed to the co-creation of joyous hope, as a radical response to the incapacitation of despair. Findings show an almost entirely positive and uplifting arboreal affect bringing post-carders joy as they reconnect with their own natural histories. The postcarding events, pop-ups, performances and post cards likewise are very moving, positive and sometimes almost euphoric events, bringing the hopeful calm and fun of the forest back into depleted urban lives. Findings also show that ETTAS postcarding reconnects urban citizens with nature's seasons and temporality, focused on hopeful annual cycles of rebirth and growth.

Design and implementation

Audience

ETTAS' post-carding activities have been successfully used in highly diverse educational and engagement settings, and with audiences varying in size from single digits to 200. Educational audiences include classes of 30 primary schoolers, 200 first year undergraduates, 55 final year undergraduates, @25 student association garden party attendees, 12 senior scholars. The LE and activity is highly flexible, and has been shown to adapt well to participant groups of all ages, sizes and settings.



Objectives: What we aim to achieve

The general objective of this LE is to explore and communicate new understandings of the value and meaning of trees within entrepreneurial, ecological, and social contexts.

Specific objectives:

- To facilitate the development of a critical, nature-adjacent understanding of value, resources, and the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- To build learner competences in examining the role of non-human actors, such as trees and natural landscapes, within entrepreneurial ecosystems, and their influence on value creation and innovation.
- To introduce insights exploring how time, rhythms, and cycles in natural environments impact human well-being, policymaking, and sustainable urban planning.
- To manifest that personal and collective narratives (about trees) contribute to local knowledge, cultural heritage, and a deeper sense of place.
- To strengthen learners' connection with (urban) nature.
- To decolonize traditional notions of value by recognizing trees not only as economic resources but as living entities that shape social, cultural, and ecological systems.
- To promote an understanding of inclusive citizen social science and local epistemic decolonization.
- To foster positive emotional experiences through joyful and hopeful learning practices, enhancing essential life skills.
- To connect personal reflections with broader ecojustice and social justice issues, evaluating urban arboreal sustainability and epistemic equity.

Nurturing minds: Contents of the educational experience


- Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and the More-than-Human.
- Nature-Adjacent Temporality, Wellbeing, and Policy.
- Value: From Resources to Tree-Sources.
- Storytelling, Memory, and Place-Based Knowledge.
- Decolonizing Entrepreneurial Mindsets.
- Ecojustice and Epistemic Equity.



Guiding principles: Foundations for methodological choices

- Collaborative learning. Story-telling (in word and image).
- Eco-pedagogies.
- Participative engagement methodologies.

Learning journey

 The Learning Journey described here illustrates in-class / workshop scheduling. Timings will vary, depending on the audience size, and their age – with younger children for example perhaps needing a little more time for reflection and story writing or drawing. External time-tabling pressures will as ever play a role, but a rough indication is presented below for a workshop / class of 60 - 120 minutes (including all optional elements). Following individual completion of postcards, story-sharing groups can be any size from 2-6, with groups of 4-5 having proved particularly effective for this activity.

5-15 minute optional in-class pre-activity:

- You might want to involve the class in creating their own post cards from waste cardboard, or rolls of brown paper.

3-5 minutes introduction to the activity

- We have used very simple introductions: participants find this an intuitive task. An in-class introduction might run “You will each be given a postcard. On this, you are invited to share your favourite, most resonant, most personally meaningful tree story. We simply ask: “Every Tree Tells a Story – What’s Yours?” Take X minutes to sit and think for a bit, and choose your own favourite tree story. We’ll then take another x minutes for you to complete your own postcard”.
- Most time here is taken with handing out postcards and verifying the simplicity of the task. Remind learners that stories can be image, prose or poetry.

7-15 minutes individual post card reflection completion

- It might be a good idea to play some instrumental music during the postcard reflection phase.



10-15 minutes sharing and discussion in groups of 4-6 students

- We try to join all groups for brief periods to support, as they seek patterns within their stories. Try to spot any such themes which might be emerging through the group work, noting links with class content themes of Bourdieu's forms of capital (economic, social, symbolic and cultural).
- This element can be extended into a 20-30 minute tree talking walk, to add some outdoor learning amongst trees.

15-30 minutes full-class feedback – are there any emergent themes?

- Creating and using postcards to gather tree stories (in word and /or image form) creates a database of insights into the values ascribed to trees. The wider class dataset of postcards can also be themed by the class. Again, this element can be extended into a 20-30 minute tree talking walk, to add some outdoor learning.

10-15 minutes of content presentation

- Now that learners have experienced ETTAS post-carding for themselves, context and conceptualisation can be provided by presenting the wider ETTAS story.
- The supporting slide deck contains overview material Introducing the ETTAS movement / project, presenting its portfolio of postcards, and- explaining two theoretical interpretations of this dataset.
- Discussion question: how well do the class postcard stories resonate with the wider ETTAS postcard dataset and its theoretical analysis?

5-10 minutes conclusion

- Review of learnings.
- Homework brief – online forum post reflecting on overall learnings from the ETTAS experience, and its implications for entrepreneurship in theory and practice.

Essential resources: Materials, people, and beyond

- 🌳 The only preparation needed for this activity is a little gentle introduction, and a set of postcards inviting tree stories. Learners only need a postcard and a pen to complete this activity. For Learners creating their own postcards, suitable materials will be needed – using waste materials is especially resonant with the ETTAS and TrEE ethos. The ETTAS story is re-told in its own words in the TrEE LE, in a slide deck which is very much open for use and sharing.



Assessment

- ✿ Reflection: Assess the depth of students' *reflections* in online forum, and class discussions, focusing on their ability to critically analyze their own assumptions about value, resources and ecosystems.
- ✿ Assess the students' ability to *synthesize*, evaluating how they connect their reflections to broader ecojustice and social justice issues, assessing their understanding of urban arboreal sustainability and epistemic equity.

Opportunities and challenges of the experience

- ✿ The tight timing at the shorter end of the lesson schedule can be a challenge for some learners, and the extended schedule is intended to address this issue.
- ✿ Although almost all ETTAS postcard stories are positive and uplifting, some speak of environmental distress and grief, and others – particularly those of undergraduates – emphasize childhood tree mishaps. An awareness of the possibility of some distressing emotions emerging, rare though this is, should be borne in mind.
- ✿ The format and concept is simple and adaptable in many contexts, and has never yet failed to resonate with its diverse audiences. It is a joyful and engaging experience, and the postcards themselves often very moving and inspiring indeed. In some universities, it has been the sustainability associations or offices which have enacted the experience, focusing on the connectedness to nature aspect of the process.

