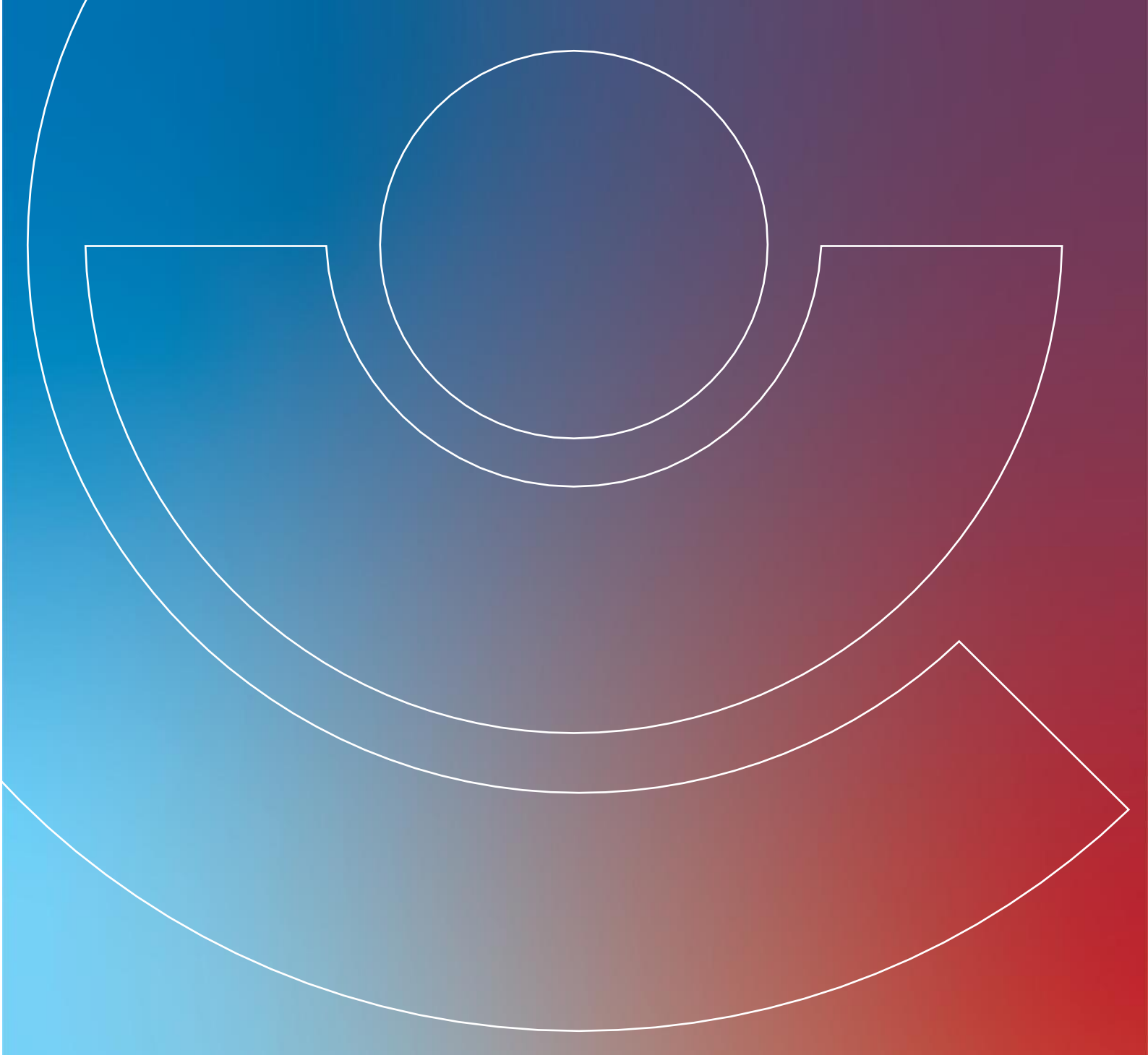




CLIMATE CHANGE AND STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP: FROM ACADEMIA TO POLICY

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Belgrade, May 2023

THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE

The University of Belgrade, with immense pride, has been chosen as the host and organizer of the May 2023 conference, to be held under the auspices of Circle U. During the conference, representatives from across the European scientific community converged on one of the paramount challenges of our time: climate change. The conference provided a platform for discussions but also encompassed a range of accompanying events that delved into the multifaceted aspects of this global issue from various angles.

Moreover, through Student Entrepreneurship we advocate for an active and inclusive ecosystem that empowers students to transform their ideas into tangible actions. By providing them with the necessary resources, mentorship, and collaborative platforms, we create an environment where student-driven initiatives can flourish. Through these endeavors, we aim to unlock a wealth of innovative approaches that address the challenges of climate change head-on, driving meaningful change across multiple sectors.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is not merely a passing buzzword from the past few decades, but rather a profound and enduring phenomenon that has shaped the destiny of our planet since time immemorial. Its implications extend far beyond abstract apocalyptic scenarios and empty platitudes. This complex issue has left an indelible mark on Earth, influencing the fate of entire species and posing an existential threat to humanity itself.

With a deep understanding of the urgency and magnitude of this crisis, the Circle U. Alliance has embraced climate change as one of the central pillars of its mission. We are wholeheartedly committed to collaborative efforts aimed at exploring new perspectives and pioneering innovative approaches to actively engage the academic and scientific community in finding viable solutions. Our collective future on Earth is undeniably at stake, and we firmly believe that through interdisciplinary cooperation and knowledge-sharing, we can navigate the challenges posed by climate change and safeguard a sustainable and thriving planet for generations to come.

By actively seeking out fresh insights and testing novel methodologies, the Circle U. Alliance aims to transcend the traditional boundaries of research and academia, fostering a spirit of cross-disciplinary collaboration and innovation. Our goal is to harness the collective expertise and intellectual capital of our member institutions to drive transformative change in addressing the complex web of challenges posed by climate change. Through an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach, we aspire to uncover effective strategies and practical solutions that go beyond rhetoric and theoretical frameworks.

It is crucial to recognize that the consequences of climate change are not limited to rising temperatures and extreme weather events. They encompass a wide array of interconnected issues, including biodiversity loss, food and water security, social inequities, and geopolitical tensions. By embracing the complex and multidimensional nature of the climate crisis, the Circle U. Alliance seeks to drive systemic change and promote holistic solutions that address the root causes of the problem.

In essence, our mission is not only to raise awareness about the pressing challenges posed by climate change but also to actively shape a collective response that leverages the collective wisdom and expertise of the academic and scientific communities. By fostering a culture of collaboration,

innovation, and shared responsibility, we aim to pave the way towards a sustainable future where humanity can thrive in harmony with the natural world. The time for action is now, and through our joint efforts, we can forge a path towards a resilient and thriving planet for current and future generations.

STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Do we possess sufficient knowledge about climate change? Can we consistently predict such events? Are we adequately prepared to confront and manage its consequences? Furthermore, can we exert control over this intricate phenomenon? If we seek affirmative responses to these pressing questions, then it becomes imperative to position climate change at the core of academic research and discourse, transcending disciplinary boundaries and engaging the future leaders of academia, scientific research, and industry application—our students.

But why should we wait for the future? We aspire to cultivate an environment where students' ideas are nurtured and valued in the present, where they are provided with robust support, opportunities for testing, and eventual recognition. We firmly believe that student entrepreneurship holds tremendous potential for driving creative and innovative solutions within the expansive domain of climate change, seamlessly bridging the gap between academia, industry, and policy.

The quest for knowledge and understanding of climate change requires an integrated approach that harnesses the collective intelligence of our academic institutions. By placing climate change at the heart of academic research and discussion, we can foster an interdisciplinary landscape that transcends traditional boundaries, allowing for the exchange of diverse perspectives and the cultivation of holistic solutions. Our students, as the torchbearers of tomorrow, possess an immense capacity for ingenuity and fresh insights that can shape the future trajectory of our planet.

Student entrepreneurship not only fuels creativity and innovation but also serves as a powerful catalyst for driving impactful solutions from academia to industry and policy spheres. By embracing the spirit of entrepreneurship, students are encouraged to develop practical and scalable ideas that can be translated into real-world applications. The academic environment acts as a fertile ground for ideation, nurturing the seeds of innovation and empowering students to become agents of positive change.

In essence, the integration of climate change within academic research, supported by student entrepreneurship, holds immense promise. It propels us towards a future where our collective understanding of climate change is enhanced, predictions become more accurate, and robust strategies are devised to mitigate and adapt to its effects. By cultivating an ecosystem that values student ideas, fosters collaboration, and facilitates knowledge transfer, we can harness the power of the academic community to drive tangible solutions, benefiting society, industry, and policymaking alike. The time to act is now, and by empowering our students, we unlock their potential to shape a sustainable future for generations to come.

GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

The former Yugoslavia boasted a rich heritage of creating green spaces, encompassing expansive parks and thoughtfully designed living areas in numerous cities. However, the advent of rapid urbanization under new circumstances has posed significant sustainability challenges for urban environments, consequently impacting the quality of life. The introduction of climate change further exacerbates the situation, rendering contemporary concrete jungles increasingly inhospitable.

In order to address these pressing concerns, it becomes crucial to prioritize well-planned and strategically designed natural and semi-natural green spaces that are intricately connected with various water-based features. Such an approach not only supports thriving ecosystems but also offers a multitude of benefits. These benefits encompass improved air quality, enhanced biodiversity, increased resilience against floods, and the creation of a new generation of recreational open spaces.

By integrating nature into urban landscapes through careful planning and design, we can mitigate the adverse effects of urbanization and climate change. Natural green areas serve as vital havens, providing refuge and restoration in the face of the concrete-dominated urban environment. These interconnected green spaces, coupled with water-based features such as rivers, lakes, and ponds, create a harmonious ecosystem that supports biodiversity, filters air pollutants, and mitigates the risk of flooding.

The introduction of well-designed green spaces into urban areas fosters a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, positively impacting the physical and mental well-being of city dwellers. Access to nature and greenery enhances the quality of life, promoting relaxation, physical activity, and social interaction. Moreover, these green spaces act as a buffer against the heat island effect, mitigating the rising temperatures associated with climate change and fostering a more comfortable and sustainable urban environment.

In conclusion, recognizing the importance of green spaces in urban planning and design is vital for addressing the challenges posed by rapid urbanization and climate change. By incorporating well-planned natural and semi-natural green areas, along with water-based features, we can create resilient and sustainable cities that prioritize human well-being, enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, and provide spaces for recreation and relaxation. Embracing this approach not only restores the former Yugoslavian tradition of green spaces but also ensures a more livable and environmentally conscious future for urban areas worldwide.

KEY CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS

1. The phrase "Think global act local" should be updated to "Think global act in networks" to acknowledge the interconnectedness of environmental challenges and the need for collaborative efforts across borders. This emphasizes the importance of forming networks and partnerships to tackle global environmental issues effectively. By recognizing the power of collective action and knowledge sharing, this rephrasing encourages individuals and organizations to work together on a global scale while implementing localized actions.
2. The conventional perception of innovation tends to be limited, but we should broaden our understanding to include innovation for the betterment of society, considering it as a fundamental and insightful concept. By embracing social entrepreneurship, we can extend the boundaries of innovation and connect with students who resonate with this approach, fostering a more holistic and impactful perspective on driving positive change.
3. Merely relying on innovation and individual initiatives is insufficient; a strategic approach and coordinated efforts are essential. We must foster synergy by planning diverse ecosystems tailored to specific solutions. Universities play a pivotal role by examining the broader context rather than focusing solely on narrow technical remedies, thereby contributing to comprehensive and integrated approaches.
4. Collaboration between the private and public sector is imperative. Instead of perceiving the private sector as solely problematic or solution-oriented, we should explore avenues for working together. Private startups, while driven by profit and margins, do show interest in sustainable solutions. It is crucial to modify certain aspect of capitalism to incorporate the

sustainability dimension into the bottom line, thereby fostering a shift towards a more environmentally conscious approach.