



CREATING A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE IN LIMERICK 2024

A handbook containing key learnings, insights, and practical steps towards promoting creative climate action in your community



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about the project

CREATING A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE IN LIMERICK

If we can access something, understand, and take part, we can contribute to making a change.

In 2024 this project invited three key communities to join the artist and research team within workshops, week-long residencies and day trip exchange events to:

CREATE

New ways of thinking about climate action using dance, visual art & audio. Explore the role dance has in building trust and community development. Artistic methods to support easy-access awareness and understanding of climate action.

CHANGE

The ways we can learn about climate change (Climate Literacy).
The ways we behave daily (Behavioural change).
How we can all support each other as a community to take climate action (Just sustainability transition).

IN LIMERICK

Croom, Moyross & Limerick City Centre

Croom

Building
three
Communities
with care
and trust
in these
areas

Dance Limerick

Moyross

project team

Led by Dance Limerick's DL.BRIDGE Artist Katy Hewison, the creatives made up of dance, audio, visual artists, climate researchers and arts administrators collaborated with community participants and project partners: Moyross Sport and Physical Activity Hub, Moyross Community Hub, Watch House Cross Library, Limerick City Library, and Croom Family Resource Centre to break down barriers to accessing climate change literature by transforming it into new formats of hearing, seeing and moving.



Image credit Maurice Gunning. Artist team (left to right) Alice Gavigan, Claire Keating, Mike O'Brien, Roberta Ceginskaite, Gulfem Cevheribucak, Katy Hewison, Vanessa Grasse, Mary Wycherley, Sophie Hutchinson, Ciara Moynihan, Emer Casey, Esther Blodau, Heidi Veldheer, Daniel Clancy, Niamh Skerritt.

Mary Wycherley is the Director at Dance Limerick and is a dance artist with over 20 years of professional experience.

Katy Hewison is DL.Bridge Artist at Dance Limerick and project lead for the Climate Project. Katy's work co-creates with communities to explore dance and learning experiences.

Leonor Miralles is Communications Co-ordinator at Dance Limerick. She is an arts management professional originally from Spain.

Emer Casey (Project Communications and support) is an arts management professional with many years of experience working on cultural projects.

Roberta Ceginskaite is a dance artist originally from Lithuania and now based in Ireland, with a BA in Contemporary Dance from Fontys School of the Arts.

Vanessa Grasse is a dance/multidisciplinary artist and audio story collaborator from Italy, based in the UK/IT.

Sophie Hutchinson is a contemporary dancer, performer and facilitator based in Clare.

Claire Keating is an interdisciplinary dance artist whose work spans voice and sound art, eco-somatic practices and performance art.

Ciara Moynihan is an experienced regenerative development practitioner and facilitator of community climate action.

Gülfem Cevheribucak is a postgraduate researcher at the University of Limerick, interested in climate governance and sustainability transitions.

Mike O'Brien is a visual/multidisciplinary artist based in Limerick who focuses on fine art drawing.



Image credit Maurice Gunning.

an invitation to dance

“We found by introducing dance and movement first, it allowed communities to connect on a deeper level than perhaps they would by starting with verbal conversations. People have the desire to come together, connect and learn on a deeper level when we move”

- **Katy Hewison**

In the next pages we **invite you** to try some movement explorations which we have developed with communities over the last year.

The explorations aim to help you to:

- connect with yourself - your body and mind
- connect with others through moving together
- connect with your environment, actively in your natural surroundings, or imaginatively through images of nature that arise.

You could try the explorations in many ways: at home by yourself, with family or friends, or with a group of people in a large space indoors or outside.



Indoors at home



Outdoors



Seated or standing



By yourself



In a group

Tracing into
the centre
of the
collar bone



& dropping into
a chasm,
wide and deep

Knees
as...



Spiraling
galaxies



Bright green
moss under
soles of the feet,
spongy & moist

Edge of
the
elbow
bone



protruding
as the
top of a
mountain peak



Finger tips
as nettles
reaching to sting



Beach side dunes
running the length
of the arm

movement explorations

Body as Landscape, Movement Exploration

Find a quiet calm space to explore **by yourself**
your sensory body landscape

Close your eyes

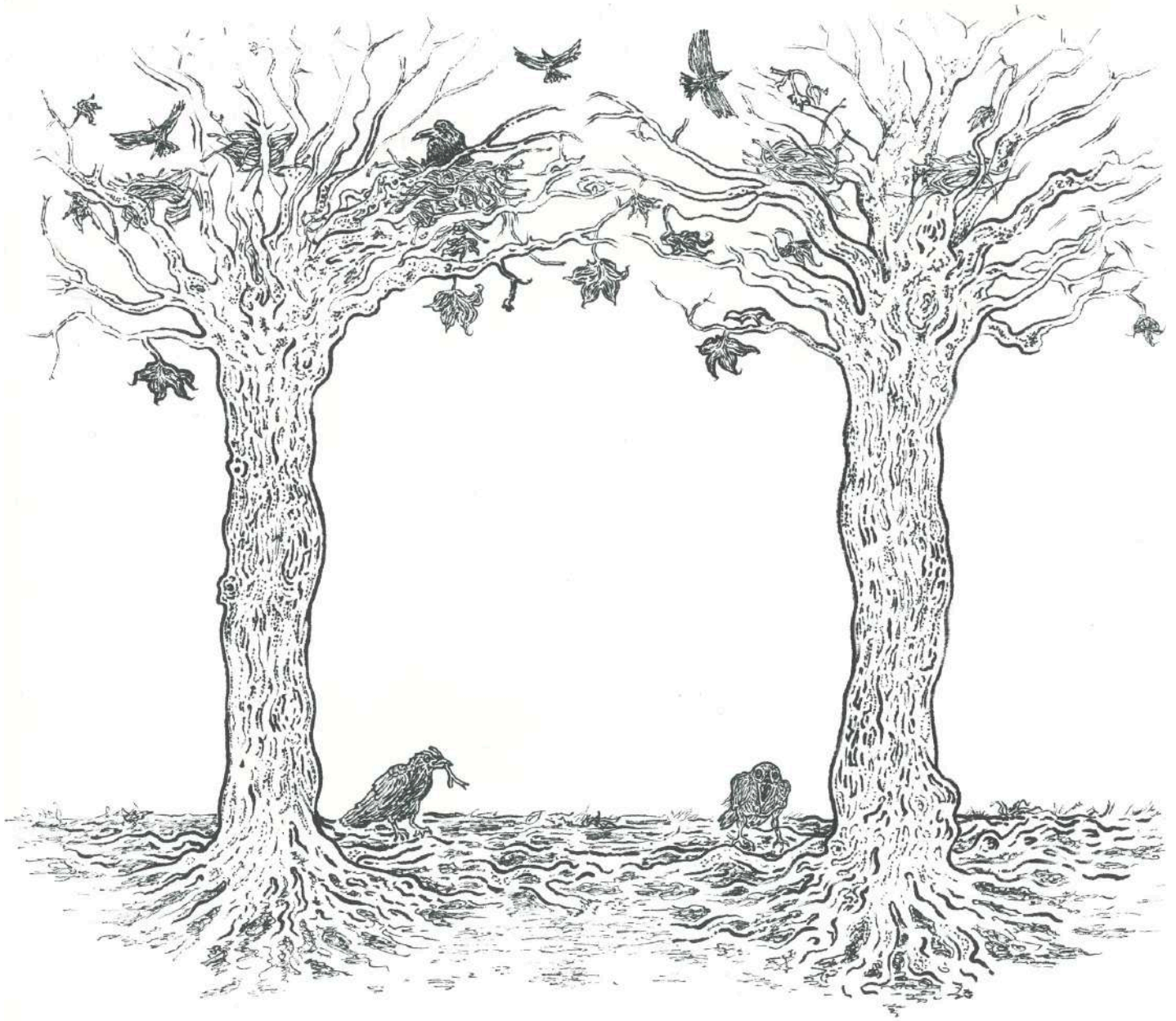
Let your imagination connect with natural landscapes

*As you trace your body with your hands...
allow the images of outdoor landscapes
be felt through your body.*

You can describe your journey out loud if you wish

Take your time

Choose your pace



Drawing by Mike O'Brien.

Nesting, Movement Exploration

Find a large space to move **with a group** of people either indoors or outdoors. Stand or sit in a circle as a group...

Feel your feet rooted into the ground, spine floating up

*Let your fingertips reach down towards the ground,
Hands digging through the space reaching through soil and roots*

Feel your feet becoming roots deepening through the earth beneath you

*Let your branching arms reach and search upwards
Find a moment to rest and soak up the sun light*

Come closer towards the centre of the circle, find each others eyes, find each others arms holding each other, entwined, woven, like a crow's nest

Together as a nest, rest look up to the sky, look down to the ground

*Unravel the nest
Let yourself sway side to side as your arms swing around you
Let your wings grow
Fly through the space*

*Find it again
come back together,
intertwine, holding arms, find one another,
settle into the nest together, rest look up to the sky, look down to the ground*

Let yourself fly away, scattering and swirling through space to find a place to rest and nest



Drawing by Mike O'Brien

A walk for all the senses, Movement Exploration

Find a safe place to go for a walk outside.
Alternatively if you are indoors, imagine a favourite place in your memory.

*Moving through, with nature...
a place of your choice....
Meaningful to you....*

*Notice pathways as you move through
cracks in the pavement
roots within tree trunks*

Rest, lay down, lay back next to a tree - look up

Touching grass, rocks, textures, surfaces.....

*Observing movement around us...
Imagining movement
Being moved*



artists thoughts

I've been looking at dance as a training ground to grow your capacity to mobilise.

Climate issues are social issues.

It is about coming together to learn how to be with ourselves better and each other.

- Roberta Ceginskaite

artists thoughts

The project has shown me that it doesn't all have to be heavy, there can be lightness in these conversations and a micro level change.

Each conversation or dance that we have, there is some level of change happening. The project has taught me that it is little by little, keeping the 10 seconds, keeping the awareness, staying in the process, staying, staying with...

It's always offering new perspectives or new ways of being or walking on the planet and moving on the planet. I feel like it has helped me and reassured me.

– Sophie Hutchinson



artists thoughts

Movement is woven through every part of nature, from the smallest organisms to vast ecosystems, fuelling cycles that sustain life and drive constant growth and renewal.

It reminds us that all life flows, evolves and changes, and is bound by the essential rhythm of movement

- Vanessa Grasse



Photo by Maurice Gunning



artists thoughts

Climate action is about community and relationships. There is power in a story - people hearing themselves, using their voice, making sense of it.

We explore collective memory, of seasons, cycles, and bring awareness to our responsibility to pass on knowledge.

- Ciara Moynihan

artists thoughts

I started this project, thinking we need to look at the way in which we can access and understand climate action. I'm fascinated by people's different ways of learning and understanding and being in the world. Looking through the lens of different perspectives, about the 'way into' understanding, learning and the action that emerges.

Questions from the notebook - Can we understand climate action deep within our body as well as our mind? If connected to our body, might this create a deeper link with climate action emerging in a consistent way within our everyday lives? By experiencing dance, with a community, is this influencing the way we learn and take action?

Accessibility and climate change are things we all have a responsibility for. Change is relevant to us as individuals and as a collective. Dancing is a powerful tool for imagination - the power of imagination brings us back to nature and back to our bodies. I believe our artistic work can support people and support change.

- Katy Hewison



Photos by Vlada Afanasievskia



Photo by Maurice Gunning

artists thoughts

Movement and dancing is a vehicle for connection and a safe container for meaningful conversations and climate action discussions.

It has been a way to find new relationships with our natural environments, new perspectives and levels of care and understanding.

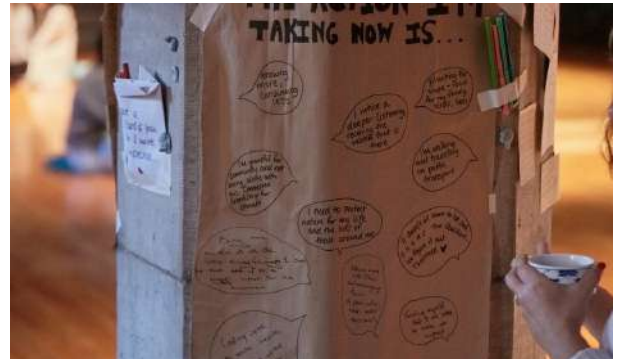
-Vanessa Grasse

conversations & memories

Our conversations with community groups touched on sharing with one another our memories of nature. When dancing outside in the park in Croom, stories and memories emerged from a sense of place. We would look back to move forwards together with trust.

“connecting the dots, the natural human connection, not only seeing but connecting through thoughts, memories, movement and connection to people” - Participant feedback

By building the relationship in the body, before putting strong language in it, removing the accusation almost, or the ‘why aren’t you doing this’ expectation, because when you have that relationship through your body, the care is within you naturally’.





Photos by Maurice Gunning

caring for nature

Story Starters during Creating a Climate for Change Community Workshops

What is your strongest memory of spring?

What is a place where you feel really at home?

Why is this place special to you?

What inspires me in nature is...

How does nature care for me?

How do I show care for nature?

Birds
migrating

Apple
trees

Cherry
blossoms

&
rhubarb
tart

Spider webs
can withstand
any storm &
be rebuilt

Pink rain

Fragility
& at the same time
Strength

Rhubarb growing in my garden ...

Birds mouths
full of
branches

...
Planted by
my grandmother

Daffodils,
spring
flowers

Feeling at
home... the garden, peace & quiet
stars, the light

eco-systems

What small steps can you take? **Small changes have real impact.**

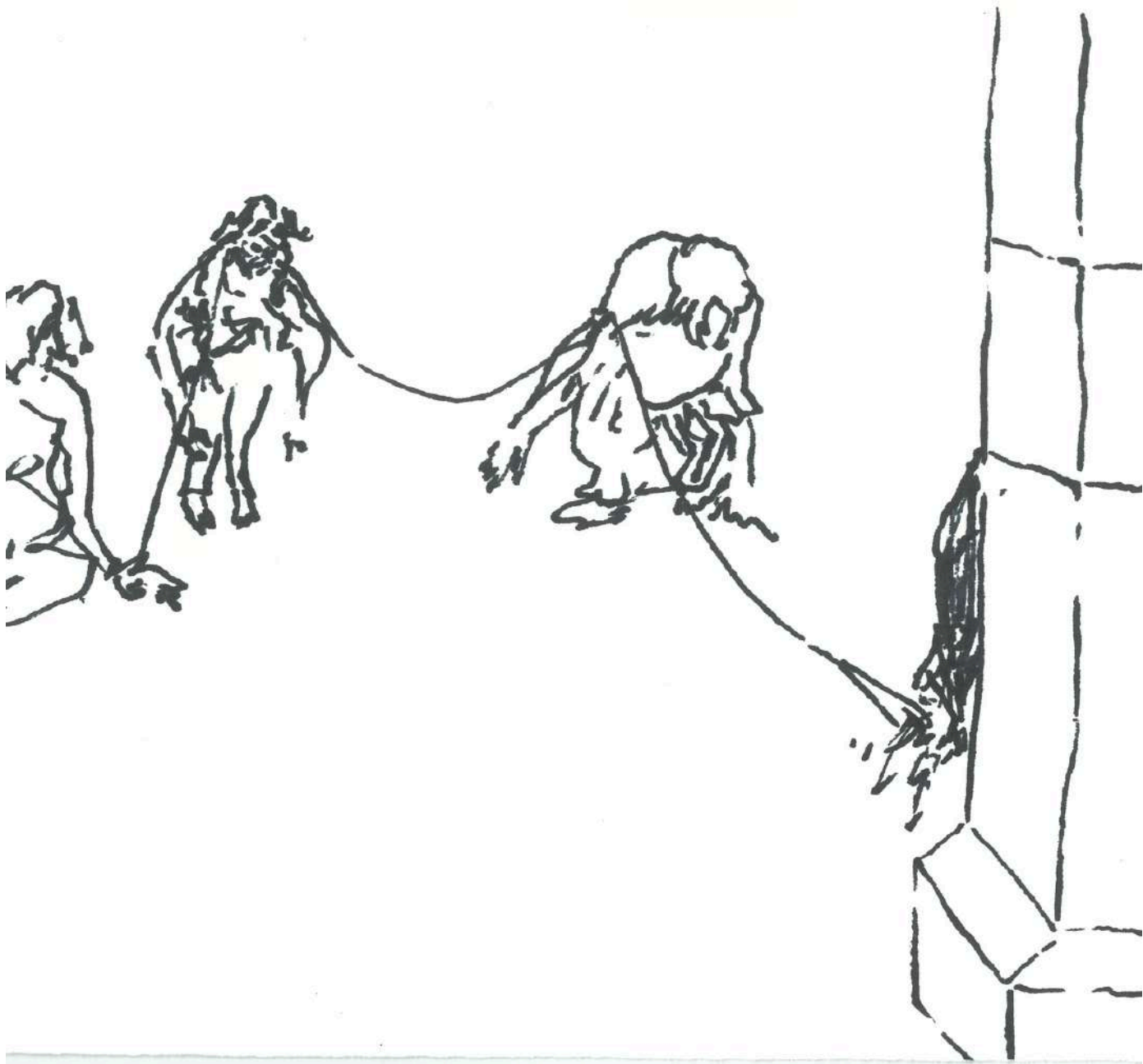
This was an embodied truth in the web exercise, where first of all each person represented part of an ecosystem while holding onto the string. Once these roles had dissolved and people were in connection with the string between them, the group quickly noticed how little it takes to create change across the entire web and how the system self-regulates and that there is a visible self-organising intelligence in the system which each person can have equal impact on.

Can you use a keep-cup or bring a tote bag out with you, check to turn off the lights, refill your water bottle, pass on stories to your grandchild about growing food?

You have a much larger impact than you can ever imagine.



Figure 9: Participants in Croom exploring a creative task linking to systems thinking at Croom Family Resource Centre. Photo by Katy Hewison



Drawing by Mike O'Brien.

rest & integration

The opportunity to process movement and integrate learnings through dancing and through drawing was another creative process explored with communities.

Rest gives new thinking a place to land.

- **Ciara Moynihan in conversation with Sophie Hutchinson**

Mike, visual artist, was able to share his evolving drawing practice, not only capturing participants while moving so they had a visual perspective of an internal dance experience, but also allowing them to develop their own drawing practice and experience how they can capture the essence of a dance in an image and relate this to what images and themes of nature are present within the movement and imagination. Imagination was a key element to look forward to future climate action.



Drawing by Mike O'Brien.



Drawing by Mike O'Brien.

knowledge transfer

Positive climate action stories emerged on themes such as: biodiversity, water catchments, food cycles, seasons and how the climate has changed over time, and what participants would like to pass on to the next generation.

Intergenerational knowledge transfer as key to changing behaviour.



The role of older people in passing on knowledge in areas such as food growing / production and waste reduction / circularity is of utmost importance for the next generation.

Previously, local knowledge of the environment was transferred through family systems and people were less isolated. Now this social cohesion is lacking, so projects like Creating a Climate for Change offer new potential for co-creating and transferring knowledge. Older participants in the Moyross and Croom communities gained a deeper understanding of the value of the knowledge they have to share and responsibility for passing this on.



Photos by Maurice Gunning

being connected

Behavioural change is easier with others.

When people feel isolated in their actions in the face of such an overwhelming global issue as climate change, this often leads to a feeling of futility. Changing behaviour is easier when there is a clear connection between people and place. When we feel connected to a place and to each other, we begin to share a responsibility and accountability for that place.

For example, with the Moyross community two key climate action impact areas that emerged through the sharing circles were Food and Waste. We listened to people's stories of gardening, growing their own vegetables, and enjoying rhubarb and apple pie after 3 generations grown from the same garden. This led to a wider discussion on how to reduce food waste; people sharing their gardening resources and knowledge with each other; new motivation to teach their grandchildren how to grow food from seed; and one woman signed up for a permaculture gardening course as a result.

We also engaged with a small family-owned and run business in Limerick City Centre, The Grove Café, to provide all vegetarian food for the project exchange days.

None of the participants were vegetarian and many would never have tried vegetarian food, but in sharing and enjoying it together, the change was not unsettling or unnerving. It felt natural and participants found a lot of joy in trying something new together!



Photo by Maurice Gunning

research

This project focused on exploring and looking at **how change happens**.

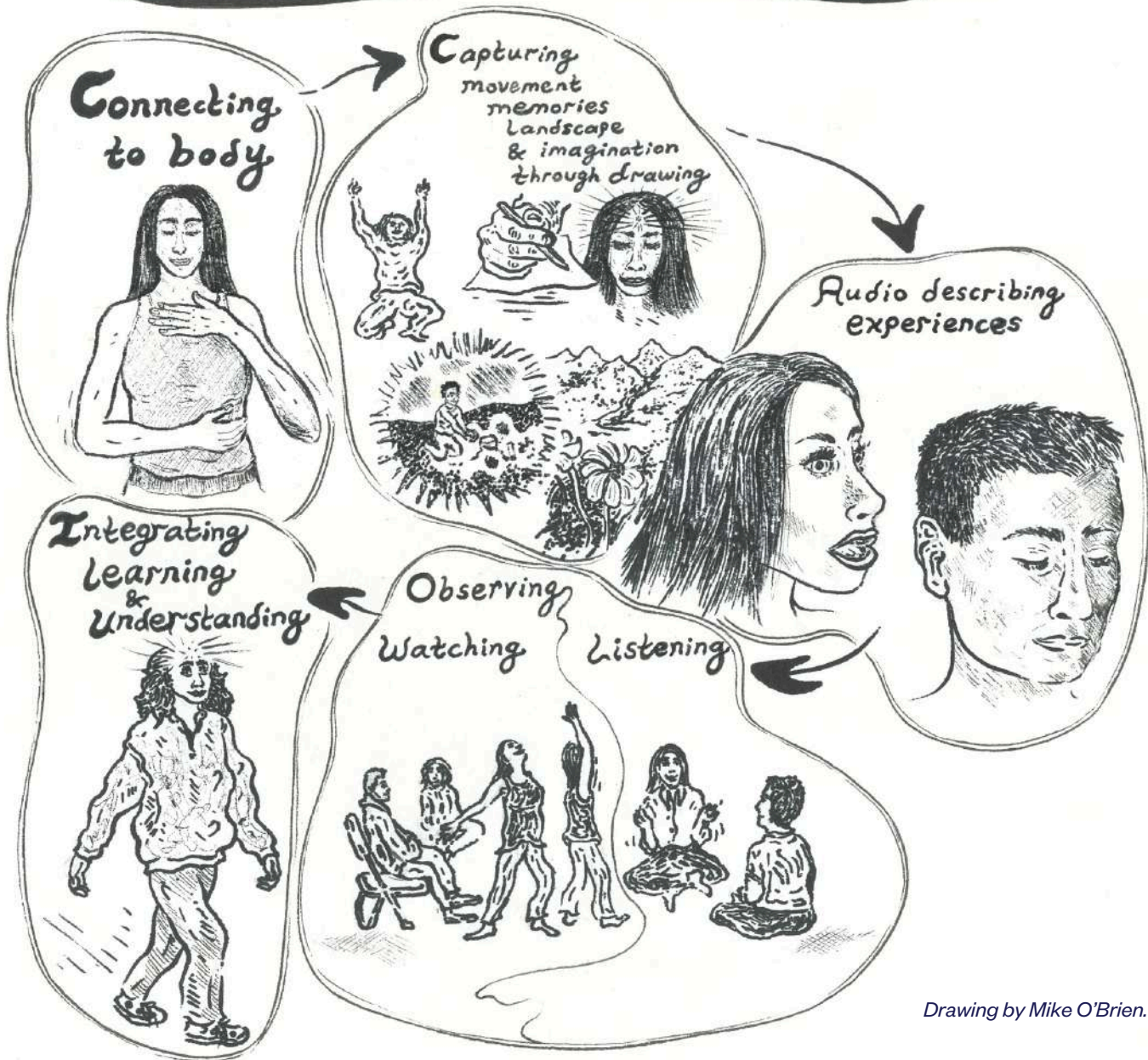
Some questions that guided our work were:

- What conditions are necessary to bring about change?
- How can we create those conditions within a community?

Through systems thinking we knew that to effect change in a system, people need to hold a minimum of three nested wholes in mind e.g. My connection to my body; which is nested in a system of relationships with others in the space; which is nested within the ecosystem we are all part of and culture of the place.

We also knew from behaviour science and somatic practice that our actions are often habitual patterns of behaviour, learned through the culture we are most assimilated to. The conditions required to support behaviour change need to hold space for bringing awareness to those automatic patterns and cultural norms.

Creative process that has been developed



trusting lived experience

Movement and creative practice is one way of opening new neural pathways in the brain, allowing new information to be more readily integrated so that people can make more conscious choices, and education can become action.

The main condition necessary to bring about change, which is rarely found in research, is TRUST. We trusted that other people know from their own lived experience and their own bodies what climate change feels like. They know the seasons are not the way they were even 10 years ago. They know if their house is at risk of flooding or of a tree falling. Trusting that people know their environment more than we think they do, was an essential starting point for opening a conversation based in genuine curiosity and excitement to explore what climate action can be for each individual and within each community.

As we learned what each community cared about we began to bring in research on different climate actions to take; sustainability impact areas; biodiversity; water catchments and the water cycle etc.



Photos by Maurice Gunning

accessing information

Community participants experienced a variety of creative practices and accessible methods to input to the creative process throughout the year. Key findings included:

Audio recording participants stories to keep the essence of the community's voices throughout the process. The recordings were used within the residency weeks to prompt movement and inspiration for the end sharings, in particularly of conversations and the sound of the river Mague in Croom.



Visual easy reads were introduced to the communities. Stopgap Dance Company (pioneers in access work) provided the Dance Limerick Project Team training. The project team shared this learning with participants in the workshops and final sharings, giving them the opportunity to add their own experience of what is important when it comes to accessibility.



Photo by Maurice Gunning



The community also fed into the creative process by engaging in a **sensory exploration** entitled 'Body as a Landscape' along with a **sensory relaxed sharing event** this led to a rich base of interwoven imagery of nature and the body that the artist and research team used as inspiration during the residencies, and that can be seen throughout this booklet.

Audio describing began as a creative research process with small groups. It involved one person dancing/improvising with movement arising from landscapes, nature images, memories or experiences in nature; another person drawing; one person audio describing; and lastly one person with eyes closed only listening. This process developed people's ability to create live descriptions that communicate dance in connection with landscapes, nature and climate. By swapping roles, people improved their ability to visually capture movement, listen to the story, and imagine the movement through hearing.





Photo by Maurice Gunning

citizens engagement



Drawing by Mike O'Brien of participant at Dance Limerick Community Workshop during reflection time..

The discovery of research on Climate Action Citizen Engagement Methods (SSH Centre, 2023), helped the team to realise the potential that dance has as an engagement method for communities.

The workshop structure and methodologies discovered (Ways of working) could act as a structural framework and process for dance as method for connecting communities to create climate actions.

A potential next step that could have be pursued, had the project had more time, would be to bring the work of climate researchers into communities using the accessible methods of translation found. By facilitating this process of listening, moving, drawing and witnessing together a community could learn in a non-confrontational and accessible way about the possible impacts of climate change. This could be followed by aligning on key actions that can be taken at a community level and forming collaborative partnerships that build climate resilience and ensure everyone is included in the sustainability and climate transition.

Looking at Citizen Engagement Methods

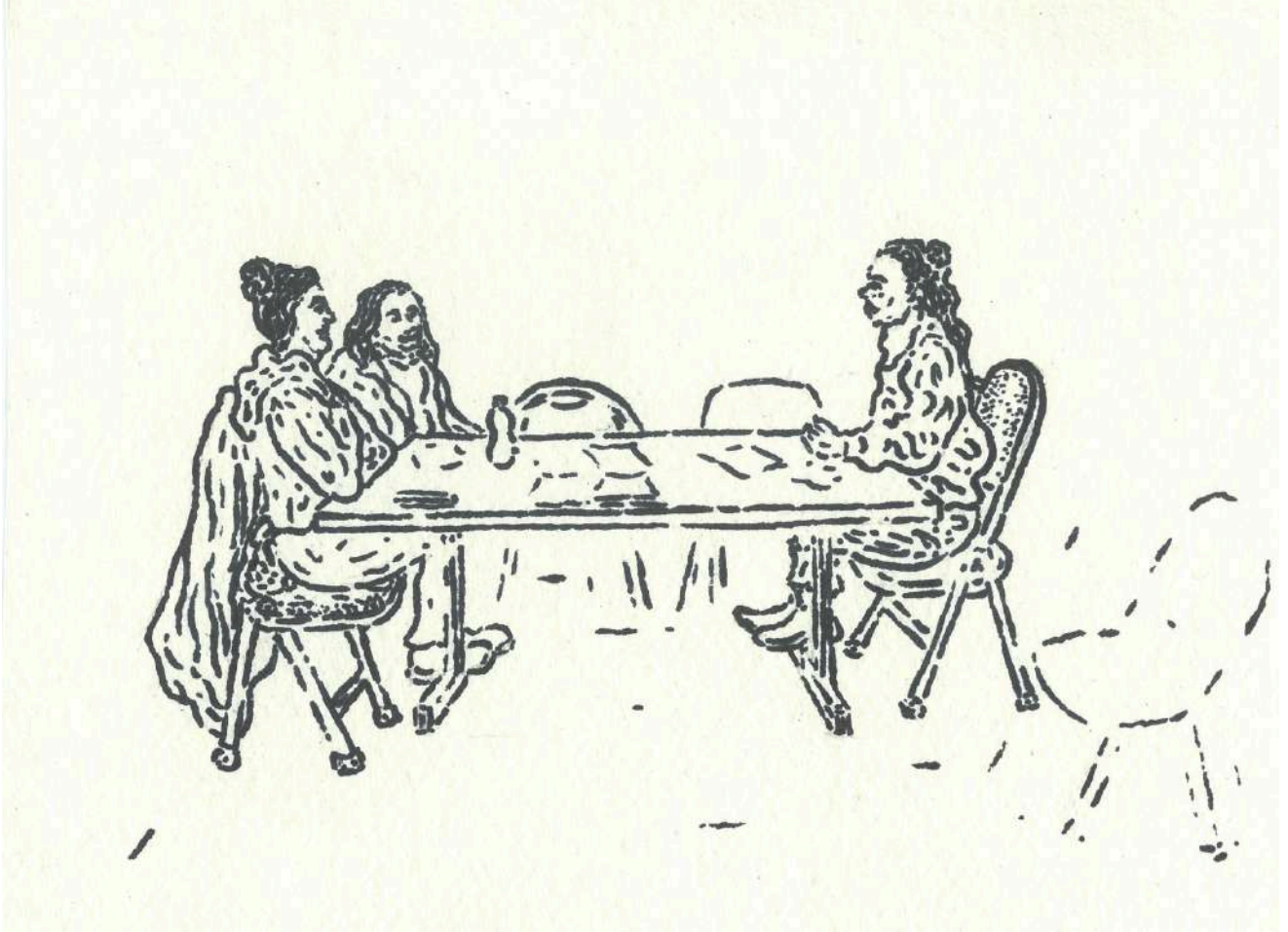
Dance is an essential method that you can use, because when you bring people together in a room, there is a lot of inequity in who is going to be most affected by the decisions made because climate issues are social issues. E.g. Who is going to be affected by flooding, rising temperatures. We are already seeing a lot of climate migration happening.



Drawing by Mike O'Brien of a child at Watch House Cross Library Limerick engaging in climate action discussion through a interactive dance exploration and drawing experience - here she is writing out a visual story of the dance explored and conversation had.

Those issues tend to be really heated but when you bring people in a room together and dance together, it settles people into a different state of mind and being. No longer thinking "I'm from this neighbourhood and I'm for this side, and you are from that neighbourhood and you stay on that side" Dance has the power to break that divide. If we can imagine how decision makers would decide differently if there was a dance or embodiment element to begin things like the European Green Deal or COP 29? What different kinds of conversations would happen then between different leaders and heads of state because of the interconnection between them?

- Ciara Moynihan



Drawing by Mike O'Brien of Katy Hewison and attendees at open information session at Limerick City Library.

artist reflections

The project has shown how important it is to build the confidence in your own responsibility and action and I think dance is one of the tools that can really help in that.

- Roberta Ceginskaite



Photo by Maurice Gunning at Watch House Cross Library

artist reflections

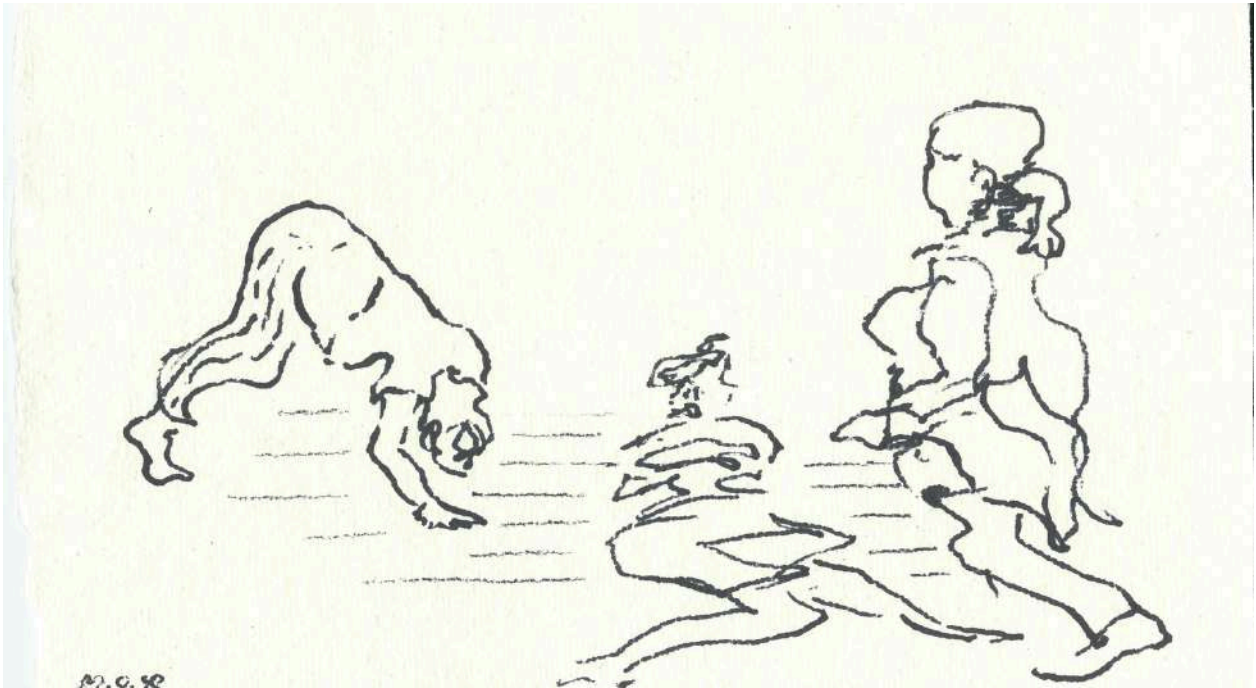
This project has made climate action more accessible, or more real for people... it's like ripples. It's like the pebble drop and then the ripple effect comes out. It was exciting working with different kinds of people. The different kinds of ecologists with the artists and the different people coming together, the cross pollination of ideas and backgrounds which could really influence change and we all benefit.



Photo by Maurice Gunning

Dance and Climate Change? It comes down to an embodied kind of perception and that expansive perception of interrelation that we are nature and acknowledging that beautiful sensitivity I think that comes with dance. That kind of sensing into your body is sensing into nature and sensing into the environment. It is just implicit in it.

-Claire Keating

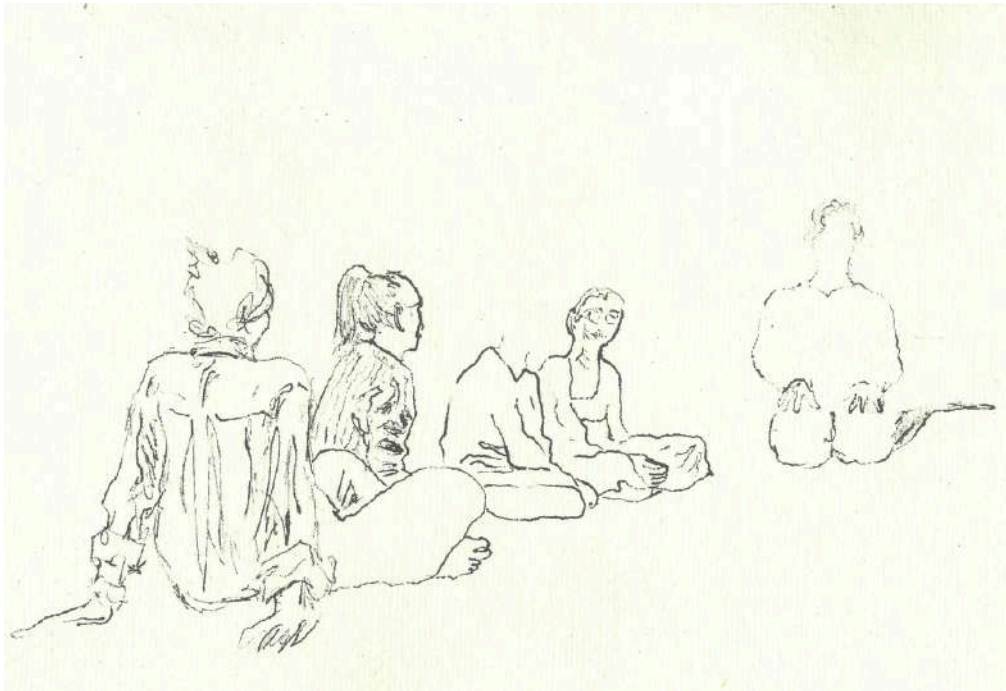


Drawing by Mike O'Brien.

evaluation

This project was evaluated in deep dive Creative Climate Project Research by MaREI Foundation (The SFI Research Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine research and innovation co-ordinated by the Environmental Research Institute (ERI) at University College Cork) in addition to evaluation by Dance Limerick in collaboration with Ciara Moynihan and support from Clare Watson.

A qualitative analysis comparing participants answers to the evaluation questions at the start and end of the project have led to the following key findings...



Drawing by Mike O'Brien of participants at Dance Limerick community workshop.

The project achieved a deep connection to nature through the body, as well as new friendships and growing a community of care for each other and nature.

Participants learned in a fun, positive and new way about climate change – combining dance with storytelling. This had positive effects on their mental and physical wellbeing. One participant noted “Moving/Dancing is exhilarating!”



Photo by Maurice Gunning

evaluation



Drawing by Mike O'Brien

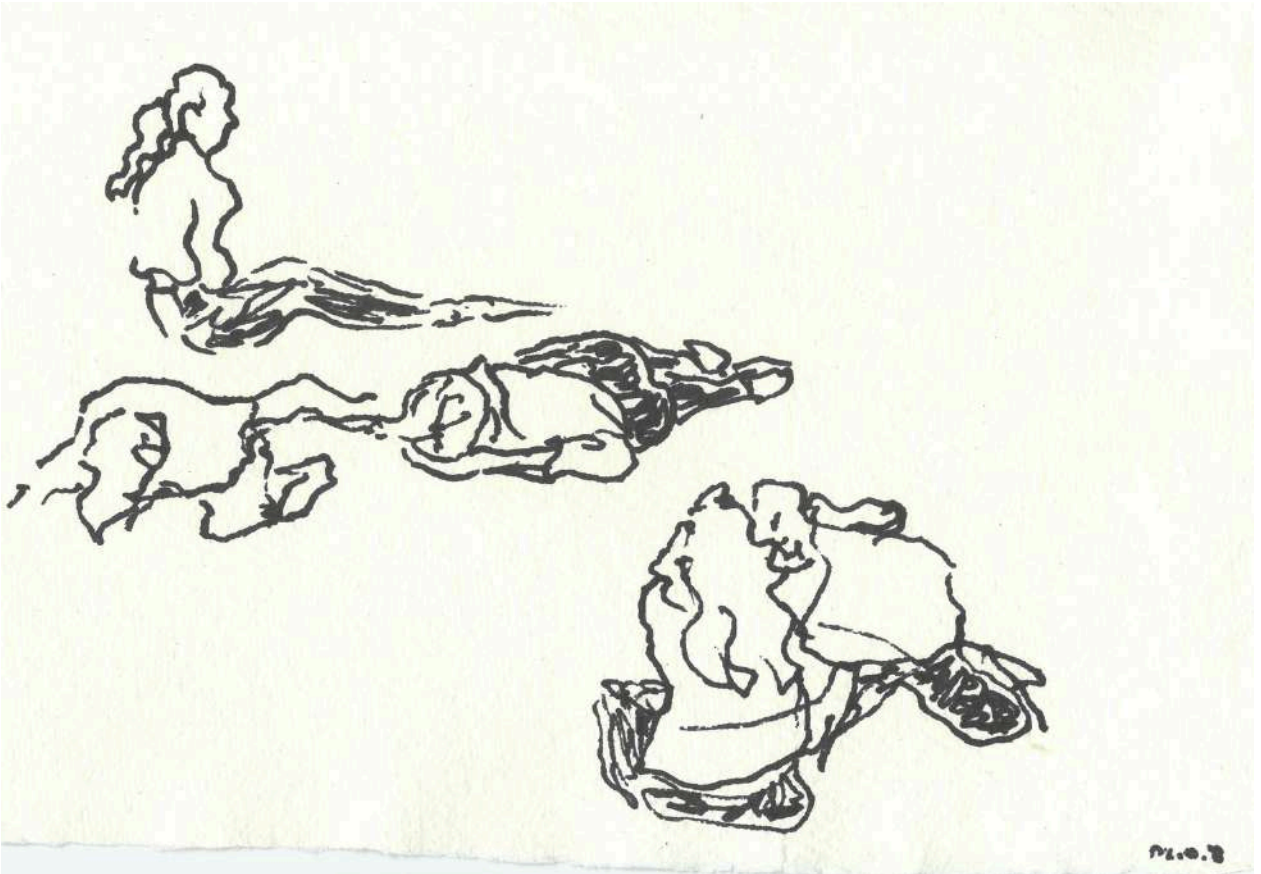
The main challenge that participants faced was in their own confidence and ability to **trust** themselves when moving, speaking in public, and using their imaginations / working creatively.

The connection between dance and climate change quickly became clear to participants, who even after three sessions commented on how the gratitude for moving and being alive helps them connect to nature more. There was a clear **connection between individual, community health and wellbeing and nature.**

By the end of the project, participants had embodied the realisation of and all stated in their interviews: "I am nature", "We are nature", or "Our bodies are nature".

I always felt safe here. The only challenge was in my own mind. It has been a journey through the most wonderful landscapes.

-Participant



Drawing by Mike O'Brien

Listening, looking and moving! What a fantastic way to learn, study and understand about climate change and its effects.

-Participant



Drawing by Mike O'Brien



exchange day blog

30 July 2024 | Blog by Ciara Moynihan

As part of our Creating a Climate for Change project, we celebrated the Summer months (with a rare smattering of sunshine) outdoors in Croom Park on our first community exchange day on 30 July 2024.

Over the course of the past eight months we have been building care, growing community and increasing the capacity of individuals to notice, connect, learn and understand what climate action means for them and their place.

The artist and research team have been working alongside community groups in Moyross, Croom and at Dance Limerick, using the diversity of participants' stories related to nature and climate from these places to devise scores and workshop methods. We are co-creating a body of work that weaves these distinct places and peoples together.

The exchange day was the first time that participants from two groups met each other and shared their experiences. It was a pivotal moment and definite project highlight for all involved.



Drawing by Mike O'Brien of participants in community workshop in Croom Park.

With soft dragonfly green grass underfoot, we dropped in gently to our usual Tai Chi warm-up but this time with a keener awareness and reverence for the rooted presence of large old oaks growing alongside young rowans and silver birch trees in the park.

The movement seemed much slower and softer than when we dance inside, perhaps the trees were inviting us to slow down.





Photos by Vlada Afanasievskia

Having grown in confidence in movement, connection to the body and our ability to sense and relate within the ecosystems we are part of, participants spent the next hour delighting in their new-found connection to place and ability to care for and connect with each other.

We flowed on to learning about water catchments and discussing the relationship between the river Mague (in Croom) and the river Shannon, sharing the scores and movement qualities that have been inspired by water in both communities.

To finish we explored weight bearing, yielding, and moving with the trees as our anchors. This led to conversations on how co-operation, caring for relationships and community building are the true ways that nature continues to evolve and this is also the basis of mobilising people for climate action and systemic transformation.



One of the main threads that the artist and research team has followed throughout this project is a systems-thinking view of the first whole that we are part of being our bodies.

When we have a strong connection to our body, we can sense, respond to and care for the community and place that we are nested within. Then from this ability to care for and relate to, we can choose to take action and create positive change with those around us.

This is how we are creating a climate for change. Change that is embodied and feels alive and real. That is the kind of change we are here for.



Photos by Vlada Afanasievskia

We invite you to participate, as we move into conversations on how we care for nature, understanding our role and committing in some way, no matter how big or small to taking climate action.

Written by Ciara Moynihan.



Photos by Vlada Afanasievska

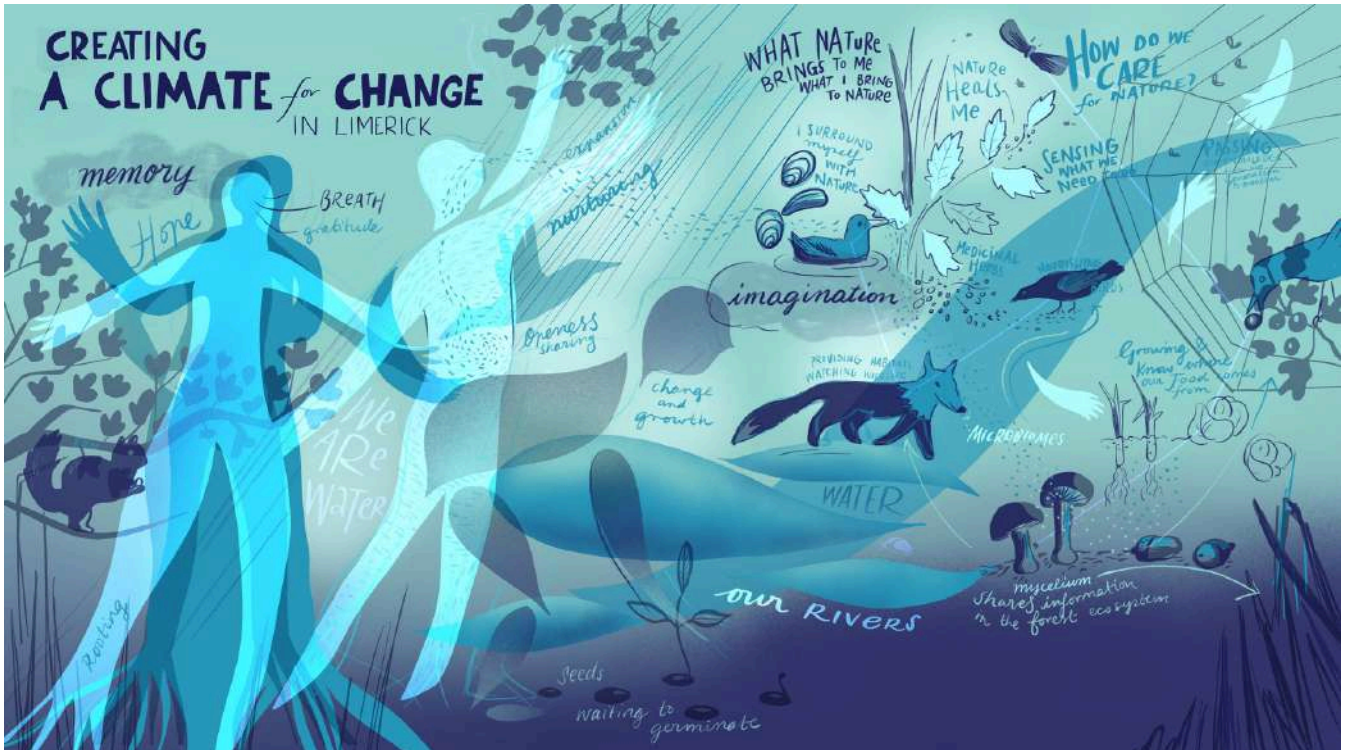


Graphic Recordings by Esther Blodau



Representations of end of project events on Thursday 21 November 2024 at Dance Limerick

Graphic Recordings by Esther Blodau



Representation of end of project event on Friday 22 November 2024 at Limerick City Gallery of Art

Graphic Recordings by Esther Blodau



Representation of end of project event on Saturday 23 November 2024 at Dance Limerick

Project Credits

Project Lead **Katy Hewison**

Project Communications and support **Emer Casey**

Dance Limerick Team **Mary Wycherley, Katy Hewison, Leonor Miralles, Catherine Ireton**

Climate Research Team **Gülfem Cevheribucak, Ciara Moynihan**

Mentorship and evaluation support **Clare Watson**

Creative Artists Team **Roberta Ceginskaite, Vanessa Grasse, Mike O'Brien, Claire Keating, Sophie Hutchinson, Laura O'Loughlin**

Access Support Team **Molly Kelly, Arianna Guasso, Alice Gavigan, Heidi Veldheer, Niamh Skerritt**

Access Training Support **Stopgap Dance Company**

Documentation, Photography and Video **Maurice Gunning, Shane Vaughan, Vlada Afanasievskaya, Conor O'Brien, Scott Robinson**

Graphic Recording Artist **Esther Blodau**

ISL Interpreters **Heidi Veldheer, Niamh Skerritt** (Trainee ISL Interpreter)

Community Partners **Moyross Community Hub / Limerick Sports Partnership, Croom Family Resource Centre, Limerick City Library, Watch House Cross Library, Limerick City Gallery of Art**



Photo by Maurice Gunning

Acknowledgments

Creating a Climate for Change in Limerick took place in communities around Limerick City and County from January – November 2024.

With thanks to participants and leaders from Croom Family Resource Centre, Moyross Community Hub / Limerick Sports Partnership, Dance Limerick and Limerick Youth Theatre.

Thanks to the artist, research team and community participants in Limerick City, Croom and Moyross for supporting Katy Hewison to develop the movement explorations.

We would also like to sincerely thank the team, artists and extended personnel who worked on the project with such care and enthusiasm.

Thank you to Dance Limerick's funders The Arts Council of Ireland and Limerick City and County Council, and thank you Creative Ireland for providing funding for the project.



LCGA Permanent Collection

Photo by Maurice Gunning

DANCE LIMERICK

www.dancelimerick.ie

Creative
Climate Action



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Clár Éire Iddánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



arts
council
ealaíon

funding
dance

Croom
Family Resource Centre



LIMERICK
SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
SPORT IRELAND

LGA
LIMERICK CITY GALLERY OF ART



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City
& County Council