



CREATING A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE IN LIMERICK 2024

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



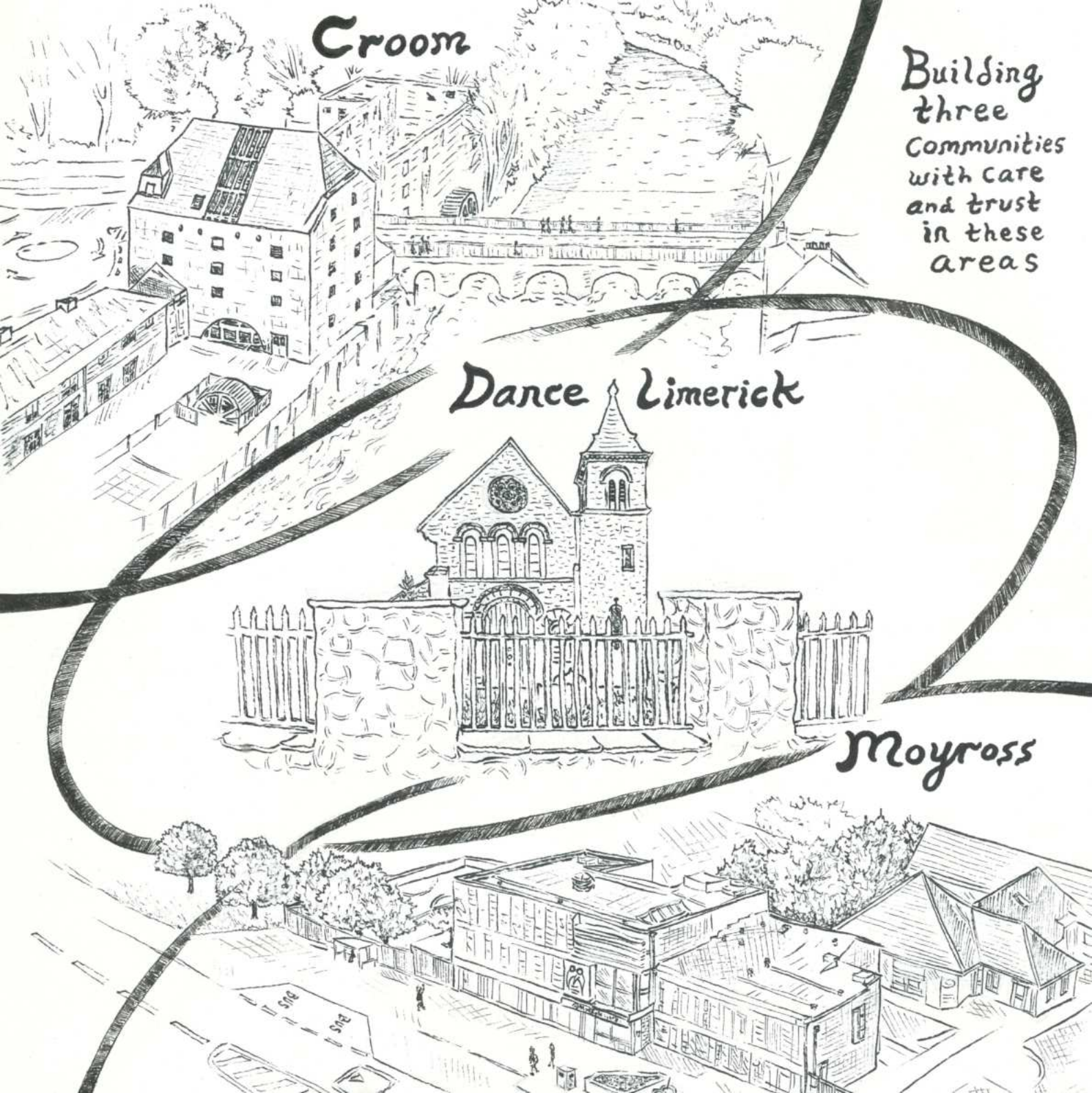
Image credit Maurice Gunning

Croom

Building
three
Communities
with care
and trust
in these
areas

Dance Limerick

Moyross



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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 Dance Limerick invited three key communities to join the artist and research team for workshops, week long residencies and day trip exchange events with the aim to:

CREATE

- New ways of thinking about climate action using dance, visual art & audio descriptions.
- 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

Working with communities in Croom, Moyross & Limerick City Centre

project team

Led by Dance Limerick's DL Bridge Artist Katy Hewison, the creatives made up of dance, audio and 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. The aim was to break down barriers to accessing climate change literature by transforming it into new formats of hearing, seeing and moving.



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. Image credit Maurice Gunning

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

Katy Hewison is a dance artist working full time at Dance Limerick as DL Bridge Artist/Climate Project Lead. Katy co-create with communities to investigate learning experiences through dance and imagination.

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 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

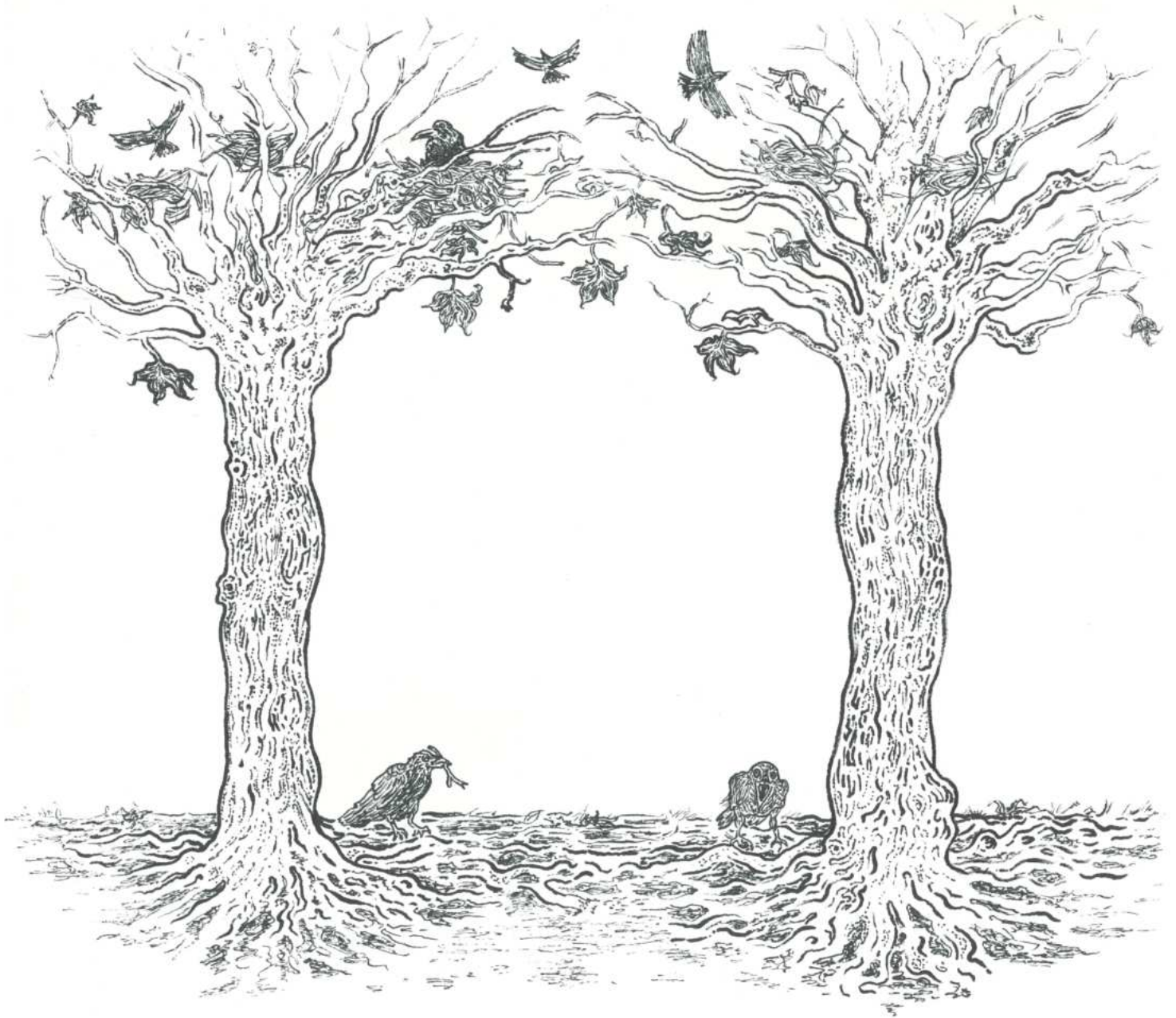
Let your imagination connect with natural landscapes

*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



Image credit Maurice Gunning



Image credit Maurice Gunning

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



Image credit Vlada Afanasievska

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



Image credit Vlada Afanasievska

*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



Image credit 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’.

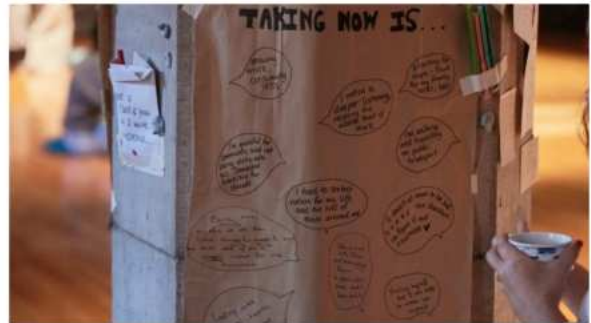




Image Maurice Gunning (both pages)

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

&
rhubarb
tart

Cherry
blossoms

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 do? **Small changes have real impact.**

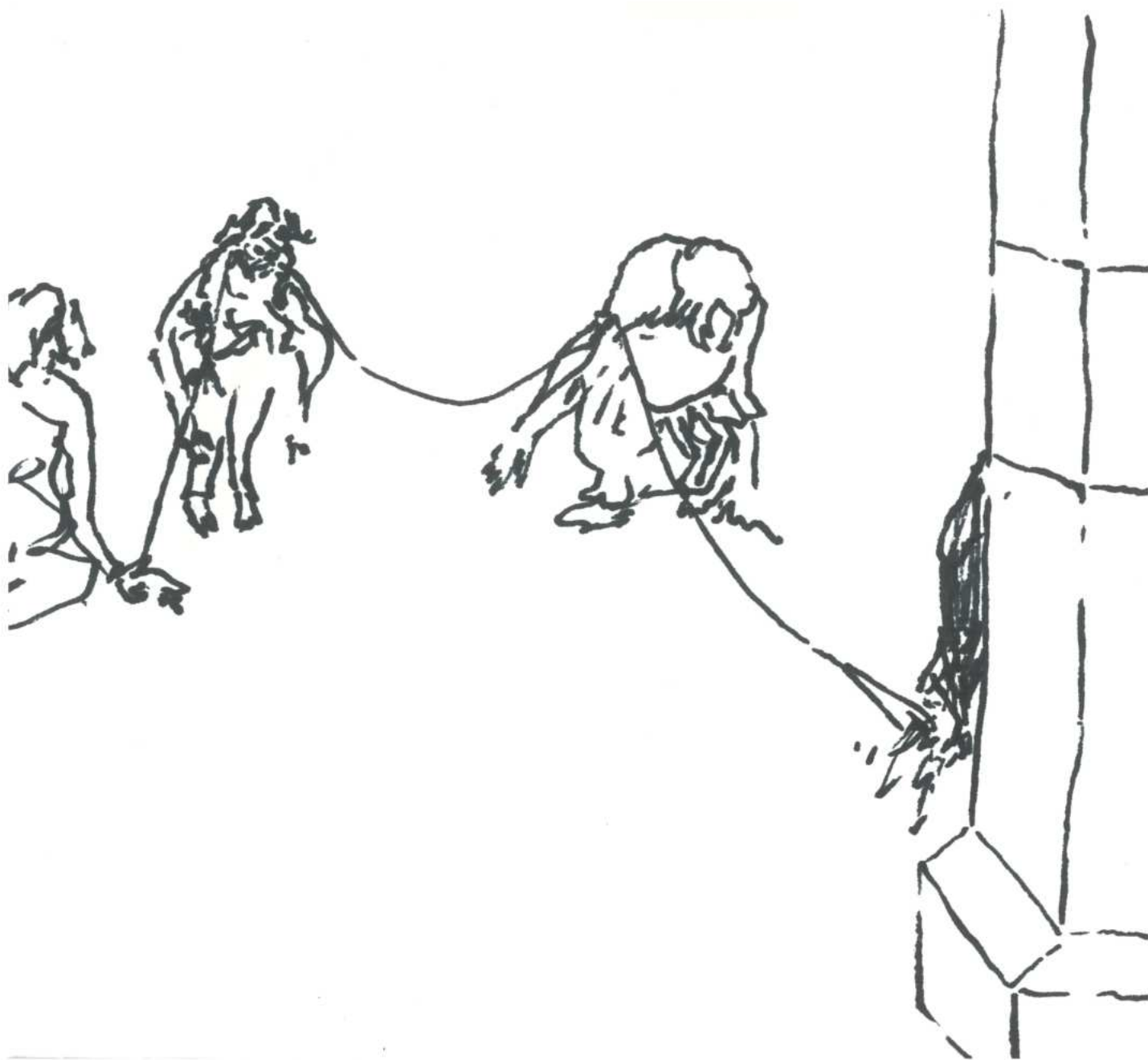
This was an embodied truth in the 'web' exercise. Each person represented part of an ecosystem while holding onto a piece of the string. The individual roles started to dissolve due to the connection the string made between people. The group quickly noticed how little it takes to create change across the entire web. The system self-regulates and self-organises, each person can have an equal impact.

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.



Participants in Croom exploring a creative task linking to systems thinking at Croom Family Resource Centre. Image credit 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.



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 onto 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.

"The project helped people share local knowledge of place and environment through conversations between families, friends, and community spaces. When older and younger generations talk informally, it allows for deeper understanding through stories and shared memories. It reminds us that we all have a role and responsibility at any age, in passing on what we know to those around us." - Ciara Moynihan and Katy Hewison in conversation



Image credit Maurice Gunning (both pages)

being connected

Behavioural change is easier with others.

Climate change may feel isolating and overwhelming. It might be challenging to realise what actions you can take.

Changing behaviour may feel 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 gardening course.

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, though 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 new food together!



Image credit 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?

In collaboration with Ciara Moynihan, we looked at what *Systems Thinking* means and how it could support the project.

Systems Thinking is an approach to problem-solving.

It looks at patterns of behaviour overtime to observe how a system works. It uses the lens of looking at complex issues as interconnected systems.

“We noticed that in this project, when we explore with the systems thinking research there are three experiences which emerge:

1. *connection to the body*
2. *relationship with others*
3. *our ecosystem, we are all part of the culture and place.*

Can we bring awareness to our patterns of behaviour to give space to supporting change?” - Ciara Moynihan and Katy Hewison in conversation



Image credit Maurice Gunning

citizens engagement



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

Collaborator Gülfem Cevheribucak invited the artist team to read the 'Climate Action Citizen Engagement Methods' (SSH Centre, 2023).

We realised that the work we are doing in communities, which follow a clear workshop structure and way of working with dance, visual art and audio describing displays potential for dance as a engagement method for communities to create climate action similar to those stated in the research paper.

The artist team were discovering that the process of listening, moving and drawing, witnessing and understanding within the projects workshops were supporting individuals in the three targeted communities to find key actions that they can take, to build climate resilience. The sensory ways of exploring research together in workshops ensured that everyone is included.



*Drawing by Mike O'Brien of a child at
Watch House Cross Library*

“When you bring people together in a room there is often inequity in the discussion around who is going to be most affected by climate decisions.

Climate issues are social issues - Who is going to be affected by flooding? Who will be affected by rising temperatures? We are already seeing a lot of climate migration happening.

Group discussions can be challenging. Though I have noticed that when you bring people in a room to dance together, it settles people into a different state of mind and being.

Dance has the power to see and feel things differently.

Imagine the different kinds of conversations that could emerge when dance is an embodied element at key Climate Events across the world?

What different kinds of conversations would happen between different leaders and heads of state?”

- Ciara Moynihan on Citizen Engagement Methods

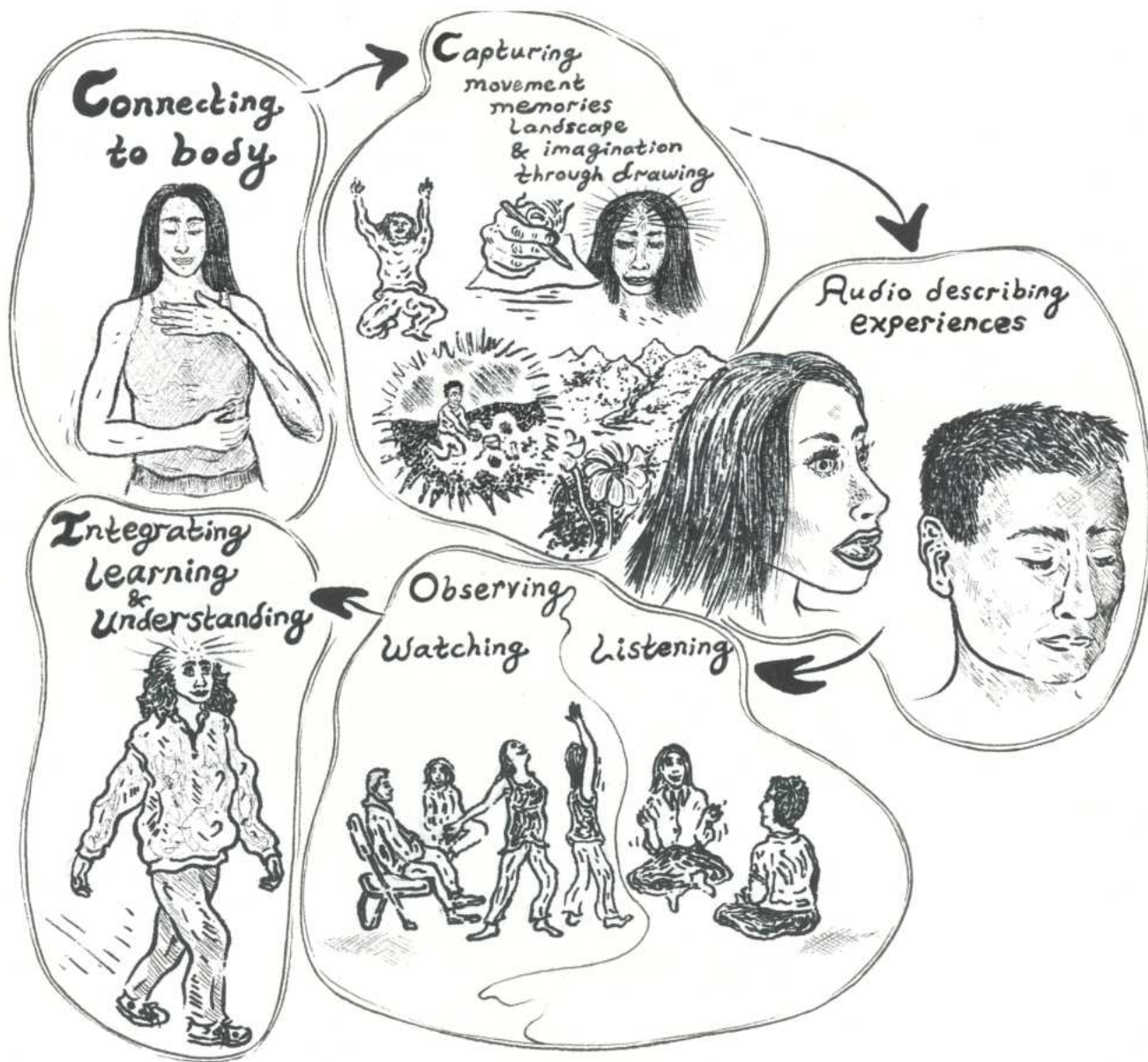




Image credit Maurice Gunning

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, 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.

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

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.

accessing information

Easy Reads

Visual easy reads were introduced to the communities through printed materials containing project information such as workshop dates. Stopgap Dance Company, pioneers in access work, also provided the Dance Limerick Project Team training in easy reads (as well as visual stories and creative access). The project team then 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.





Image credit Maurice Gunning

accessing information

Sensory Journey

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.



accessing information



Audio Describing

Audio describing in the project 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 these themes. By swapping roles, people improved their ability to visually capture movement, listen to the story, and imagine the movement through hearing. Audio describing supports individuals with visual impairments to experience the projects learning, in collaboration with the community.

artist reflections



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

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.

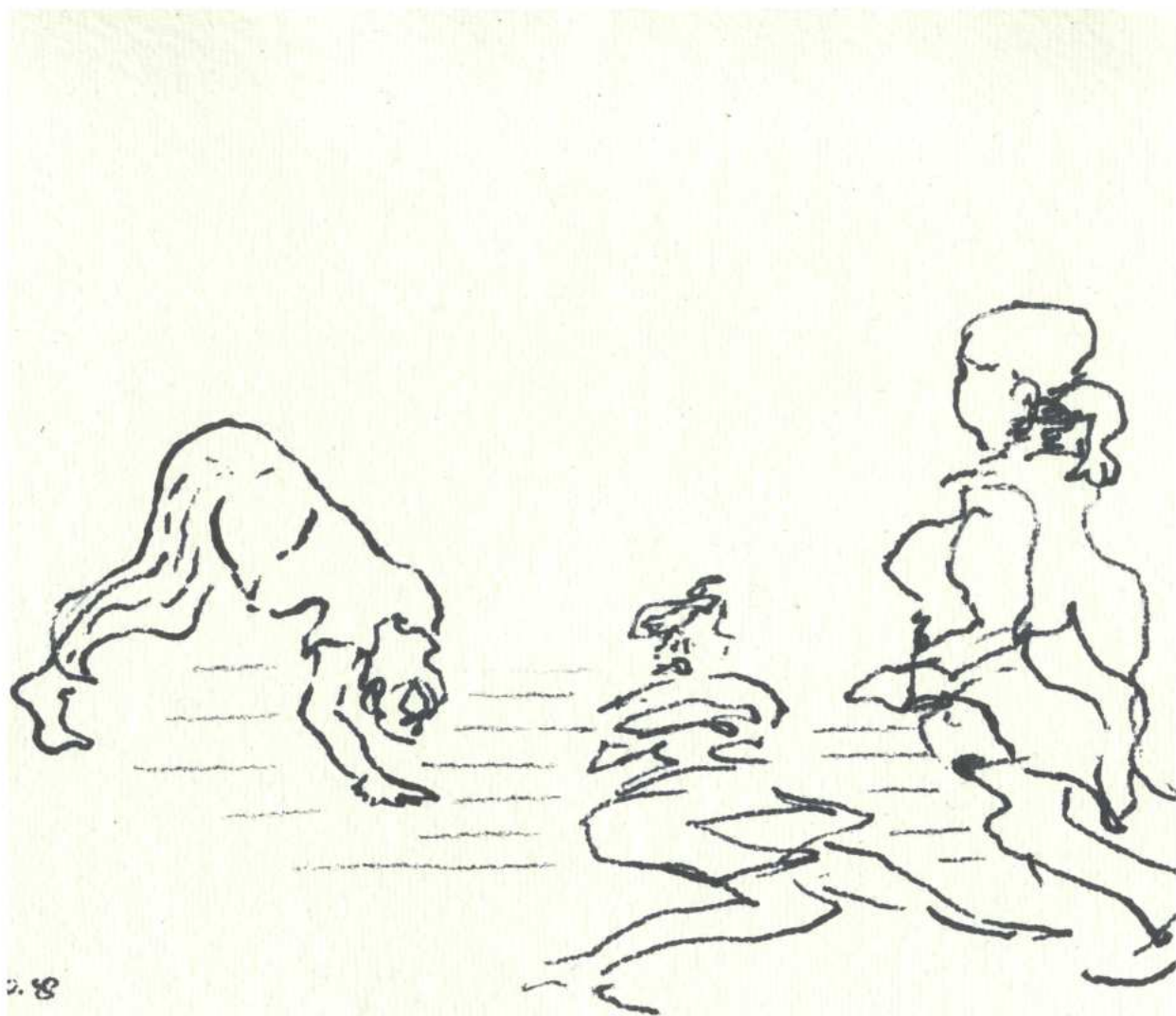
- Roberta Ceginskaite

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.

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 and dancing is exhilarating!’



Image credit Maurice Gunning

evaluation



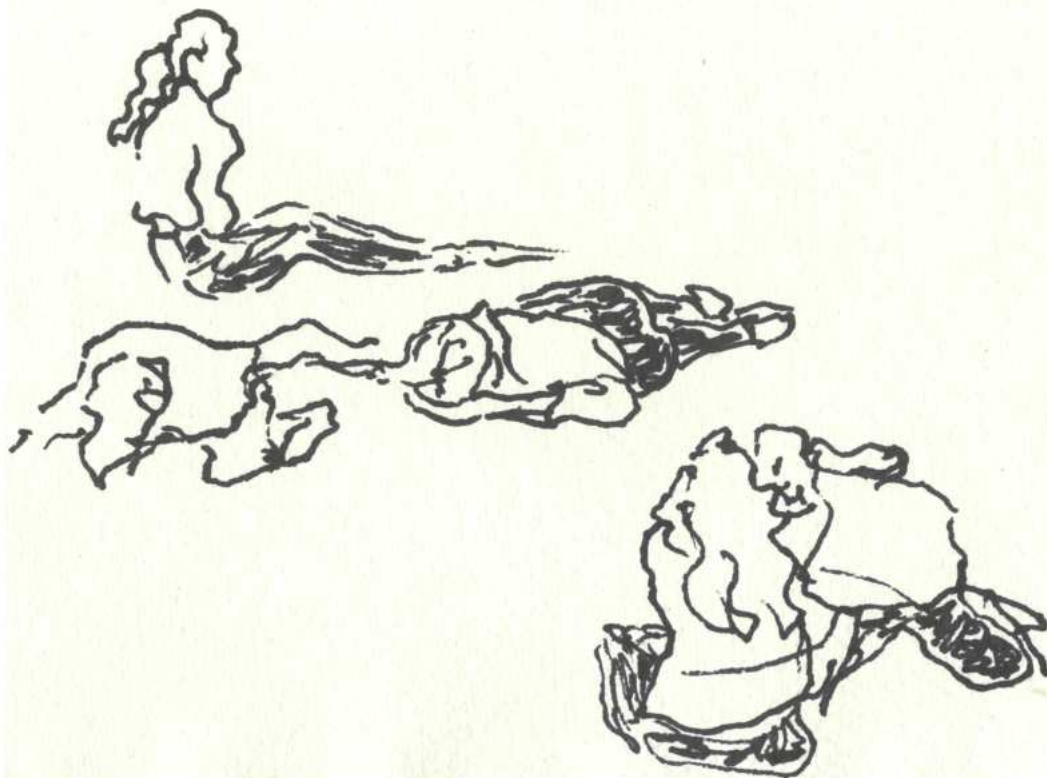
Drawing by Mike O'Brien

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



Image credit Maurice Gunning

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.



Image credit Vlada Afanasievska

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 Maigue (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.

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.



Image credit Vlada Afanasievska (both pages)



graphic recordings

During the project's final sharings, Graphic Artist Esther Blodau attended each event to visually graphic record happenings in the accessible format of illustration.

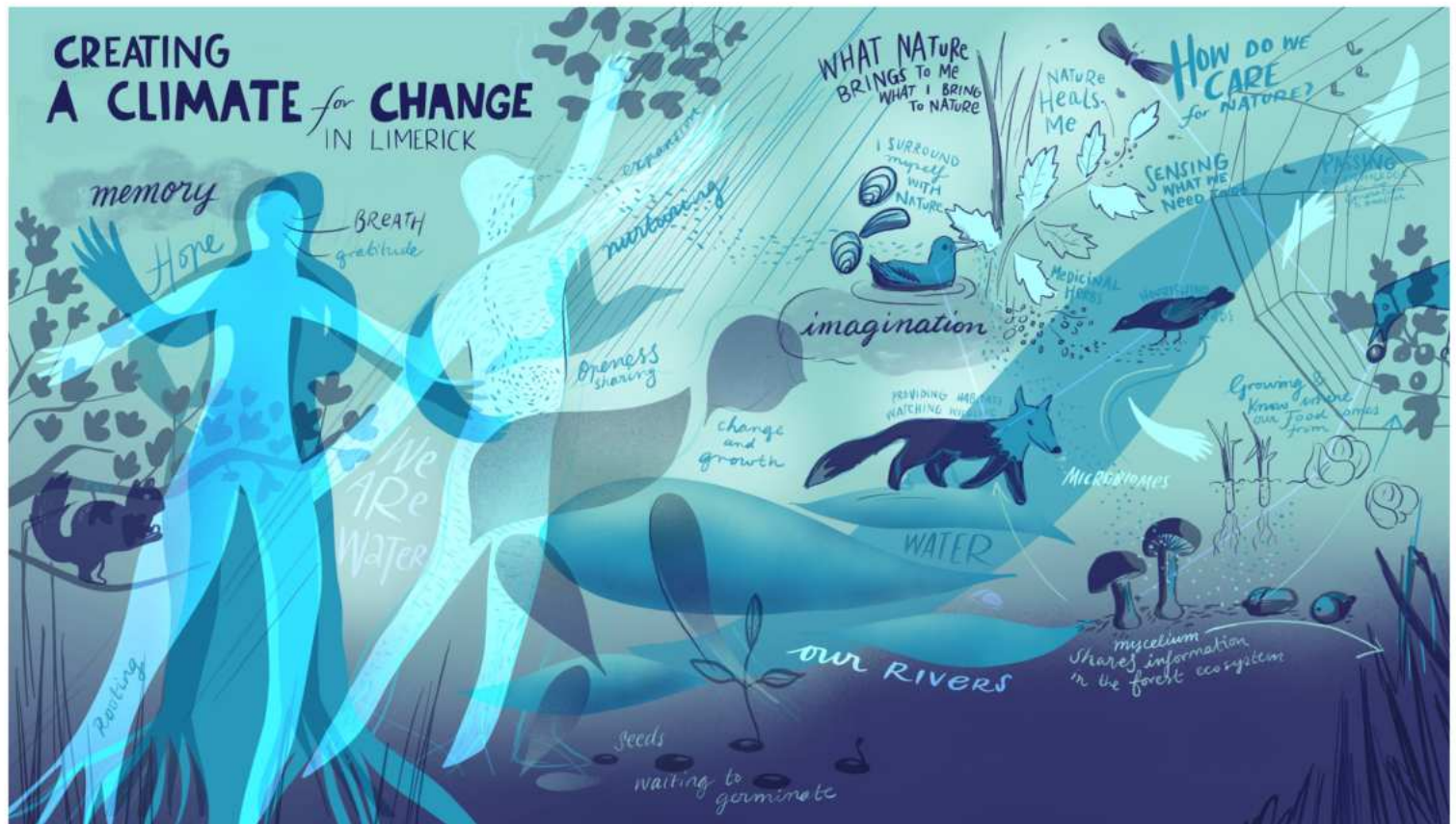
Graphic recording is the skill of listening and translating spoken word into a drawing created in real-time. Esther used a tablet to draw the events, and this was presented on a screen in the room at the same time.

Using visuals while presenting information helps people to create 'bookmarks' in their brains. Research shows that people remember 80% of what they see, 10% of what they hear, and 20% of what they read. Graphic recordings help people to retain more information.

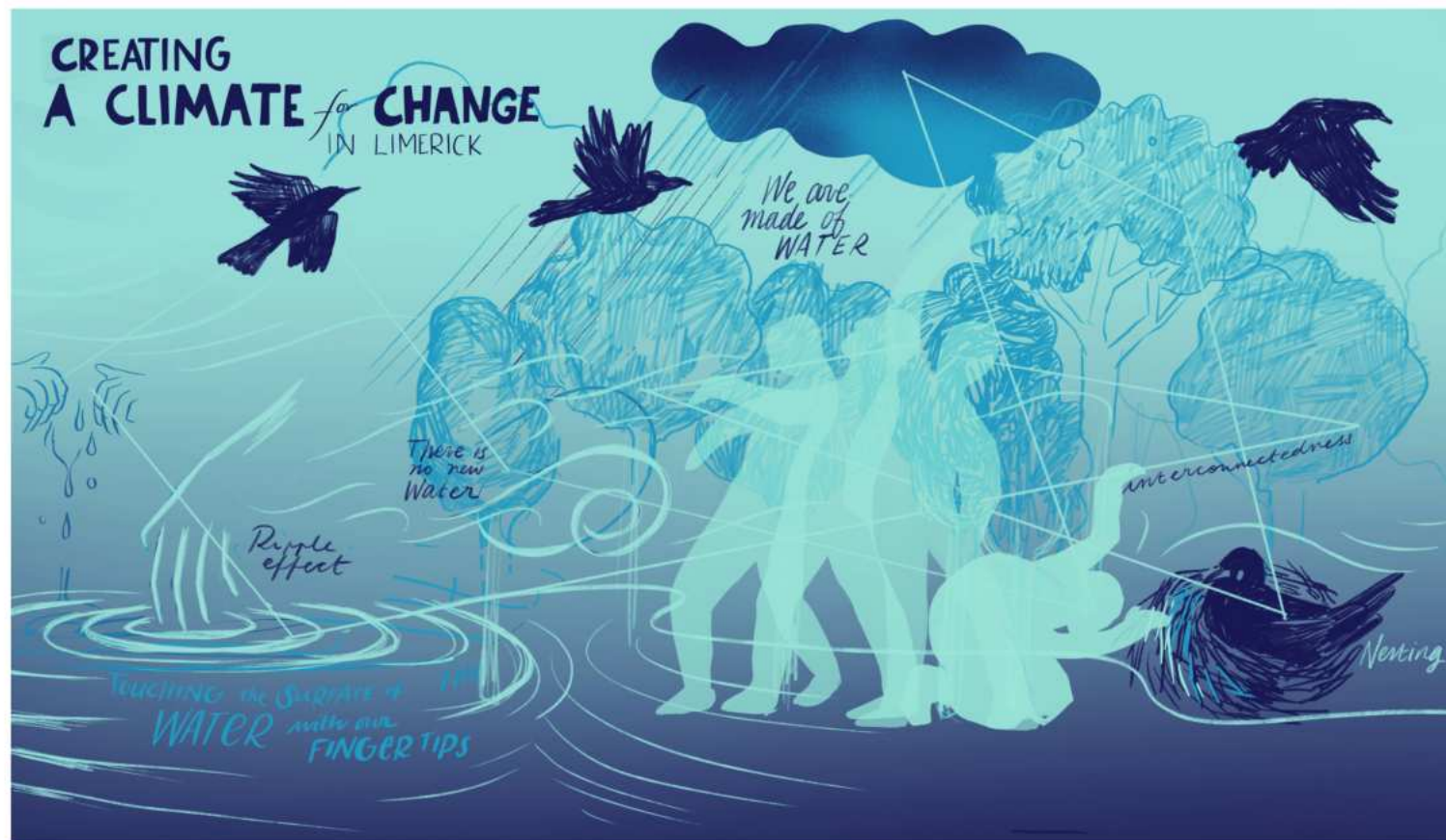


Representation of end of project events on Thursday 21 November 2024 at Dance Limerick
by Esther Blodau

graphic recordings



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



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

Project Credits

Project Lead **Katy Hewison**

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Dance Limerick Director **Mary Wycherley**

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

Mentorship and evaluation support **Clare Watson**

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Access Support Team **Molly Kelly, Arianna Guasso, Alice Gavigan, Heidi Veldheer (ISL Interpreter), Niamh Skerritt (ISL Interpreter)**

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**

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

Booklet printed by Docucentre, Limerick city.





Image credit 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.

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We would also like to sincerely thank the team, artists and extended personnel who worked on the project with such care and enthusiasm including the team at Limerick City Gallery of Art.

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DANCE LIMERICK

www.dancelimerick.ie

Creative
Climate Action



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Clár Éire Iddánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



the arts
council
s choimhle
ealaíon

funding
dance

Croom
Family Resource Centre



LIMERICK
SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
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LGA
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Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae **Luimnigh**
Limerick City
& County Council