

COLÁISTE NÁISIÚNTA EALAÍNE IS DEARTHA  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
A Recognised College of the National University of Ireland  
**Coláiste Aitheanta d'Ollscoil na hÉireann**

Understand Development Education in the context of Arts-based Research and the extent to which this may inform a curriculum interventions and approaches to teaching in your roles as teacher/artist/ researcher

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Understanding Development Education in the context of Arts-based Research and the extent to which this may inform a curriculum intervention and approaches to teaching in your role as teacher/ artist/ researcher

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Professional Master of Education (Art and Design)

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Change Lab and Development Education**

The Change Lab was an explorative space where Professional Master of Education students investigated Development Education. “Development Education is an educational process that supports the learner to critically engage with local and global development issues with a view to acting for a more equal, just and sustainable world” (Hogan, 2018, p.3). The United Nations Sustainable Development goals 5 gender equality and goal 15 were investigated through a series of ecofeminist interventions (United Nations, 2015). “Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that sees environmentalism, and the relationship between women and the earth, as foundational to its analysis and practice” (Zein, Setiawan, 2017, p.1). We merged our artist, researcher and educator identities together and questioned how we can help create a more equal and sustainable world.

## **1.2 Theoretical frameworks Change Lab is situated in**

Communities of practice, narrative inquiry and arts-based research are the three theoretical frameworks we engaged in during the Change Lab. Art based research is the methodological framework the Change Lab is embedded in. “Arts based research is an approach to research that exploits the capacities of expressive form to capture qualities of life that impact what we know and how we live” (Eisner & Barone, 2011, p.5). We photo documented our Change Lab experience and produced an installation called Will you walk with us with will be discussed throughout this text.

## **Chapter 2: Documentation**

### **2.1 Introduction to the Change Lab**

The Change Lab situated in NCAD's Gallery, was a creative space where students on the Professional Master of Education combined their artist, educator, researcher and activist identities to investigate Development Education themes. Place and space were the key concepts investigated under the theme 'Moment in Time'. In groups of three we took influence from each other's artist/ designer practices and perspectives on real world issues. We found common ground through narrative inquiry. Social justice and environmental issues were explored through arts-based research. "Change Lab is a critical, immersive space for exploring how your practice as an artist/designer is inherently pedagogical" (King & Murphy, 2020, p. 1). A community of practice was developed that focused on collaboration and learning from each other.

#### **2.1.1 Our Change Lab group dynamic**

Our group was composed of three women who lived in rural Ireland. In this text, I will refer to my fellow group member as one and two. Each of us developed an artist/ designer practice before entering into the Professional Master of Education. Group member one is a Graphic Designer with an interest in editorial and typographic design. She draws inspiration from her family farm. Group member two is a Fine Art Painter, she focuses on the outdoors being a space for healing and learning. Finally, I am a Visual Artist. I investigate gender and farming by questioning the lack of recognition women receive in the agriculture sector in Ireland.





Figure 1: Murphy, T. (2020) Group image, Will you walk with us? National College of Art and Design. Dublin.

“The Change Lab explores the concept of agency and ownership through fostering collaborative teaching and learning methods” (King & Murphy, 2020, p.1). Within our group, there was no hierarchy of power or roles, each member was equal. Our theme ecofeminism led us to eco-literacy. Which argues taking care of ourselves and our ecosystems is a harmonious cycle (Fitzgerald, 2019). We created a trusting environment, we were empathetic and cared about each other’s wellbeing as well as the lands. The project was encompassing. We were in constant contact with the land and each other. Our individual lands became our studios.

### **2.1.2 Ethical considerations**

Researchers should be aware of the code of practice for ethics when engaging in research projects. The Change Lab is a collaborative process, each group member consented to their work and personal story being shared we created a “joint ownership of work” (NCAD, 2017). In order to reference artist images that inspired us we were aware of copyright issues by citing the creator in the text.

## 2.2 Moment in Time

The overall theme of Change Lab was ‘Moment in Time’. This stemmed from the National Gallery of Ireland’s exhibition ‘Moment in Time: A Legacy of Photographs’ which we viewed as a group in February 2020. During the summer, we took inspiration from the photographs and captured our own. We responded to the visual and textual elements from the spaces we inhabited during the Covid-19 lockdowns. I responded to the photographer and environmentalist, Ansel Adam’s ‘Northern California Coast Redwoods’ 1960 (figure 2). He questioned “the probability of humankind living in harmony and balance with its environment” (The Ansel Adams Gallery, 2016).



Figure 2: LACMA. Northern California Coast Redwoods. [collections.lacma.org](https://collections.lacma.org/node/218821). URL = <https://collections.lacma.org/node/218821>

Through a lens based process, I documented my ‘Moment in Time’. Photographing how time effected the spaces I occupied during lockdown, focusing on my families dairy farm (see figures 3 to 5). “No Touching” is a comment on my grandmother passing away during the first lockdown. The camera allowed me to open up a conversation about tradition by recording my grandmothers legacy. “Webbed Eggs” highlights my grandmother’s and my connection to the land. The farm was in my grandmother’s maiden name until she married. “Gret’s window” questions why farm inheritance is based on gender instead of merit.

Figure 3: ‘No Touching’



Figure 4: ‘Webbed Eggs’

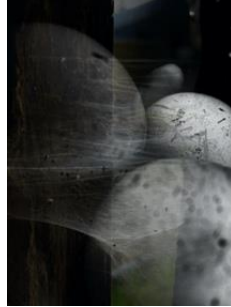


Figure 5: ‘Gret’s Window’



Figure 3 - 5: Kenny, K. (2020) Moment in Time photographs. Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

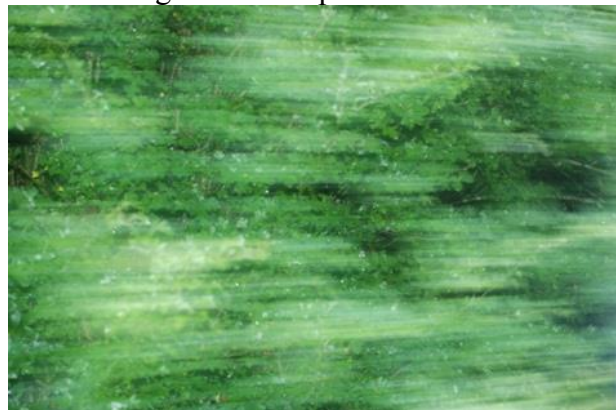
### 2.2.1 Finding common ground through storytelling

Our ‘Moment in Time’ images helped us develop a shared group interest. Through storytelling, we discussed the meaning behind them our creations. “While disconnected from people during lockdown, our connection and awareness of our surroundings and landscape became heightened” (Brennan, Kenny & Toner, 2020, p.2). Group member one, spoke of her connection to the past, how the walks through her landscape were an escape from reality and her appreciation for where she lived grew stronger. Similarly, group member two, referenced Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, focusing on finding temporary shelter in the forest and developing a sustainable mindset over lockdown.

Figure 6: Group member one



Figure 7: Group member two



Brennan, M. and Toner, B. (2020) Moment in Time photographs. Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

### 2.3 Sustainable Development Goal 15, Life on Land and Goal 5, Gender Equality

The first Sustainable Development Goal we connected to was Life on Land (United Nations, 2015). We started by examining another work by Ansel Adams, Forest Floor, 1950 (figure 8). Which led us to question sustainability in past and present land practices. Tradition, birthrights, intergenerational connections, stewardship and inheritance were unpacked.



Figure 8: Sothebys. Ansel Adams 'Forest Floor, Yosemite National Park, California' [www.sothebys.com](http://www.sothebys.com). URL = <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/photographies-pf1520/lot.88.html>

The second Sustainable Development Goal explored was Goal 5, gender equality (United Nations, 2015). This stemmed from the fact that “12% of farmers in Ireland are female” (Quinn-Mulligan, 2018). “Globally, 38.7% of employed women are working in agriculture... but only 13.8% of landholders are women” (UN Women, 2019, p.3). We asked would the land be farmed differently if it was the woman’s birthright to inherit the family farm? This stemmed from the ‘Pandemic is a Portal’ by Arundhati Roy. Roy spoke about Covid-19 being a “turning point in history” (Roy, 2020). This offered us the opportunity to reimagine a more sustainable and equal future. Which led to explore how different the world would look if women were in charge. Would the land be worked differently? Would farming be more sustainable? Would the agricultural sector be equal? These questions formed our

response, influenced our research and motivated us to ask how we can become more sustainable.



Figure 9: Brennan, M., Kenny, K., and Toner, B. (2020) Change Lab Notebook, Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

### 2.3.1 Becoming ecofeminists

In county Louth, Wexford and Kildare, we started our journey of becoming ecofeminists by reconnecting our female bodies with the land. Ecofeminism, the main theme of our project highlights the parallels between the exploitation of women and land abuse (Miles, 2018). We discussed dismantling the patriarchy and how the world would look if women were in charge but we were aware “overturning patriarchy does not mean replacing men's dominance with women's dominance” (Warren & Erkal, 1997, p.113). Promoting a world where it “is not power over others, but power with others, the kind of shared power that has to replace patriarchal power” (Warren & Erkal, 1997, p.114). Ecofeminism is concerned with how nature and women are controlled, dominated and exploited by the patriarchy hierarchy (Warren & Erkal, 1997). We created a collaborative body of work that honoured the lands we inhabited and the women who came before us. The camera documented how we valued our experience of the land.

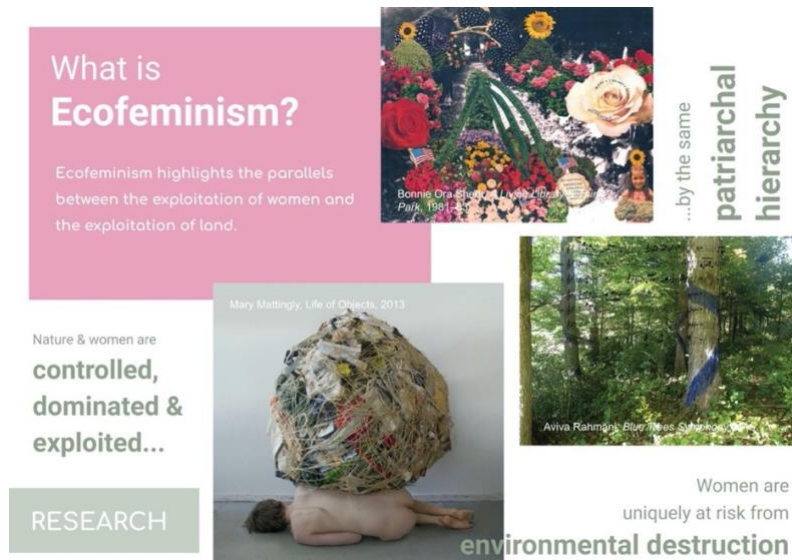


Figure 10: Brennan, M., Kenny, K, and Toner, B. (2020) Change Lab Notebook, Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

### 2.3.2 Drawing inspiration from artist and activists work

Artists work and activist quotes inspired our research. Quotes like Gloria Steinem’s “Don’t think about making women fit the world – think about making the world fit women” (UNFPA, 2009, p.113) encouraged us to question how we viewed the world and the power structures. Gita Sen, described how group member one and I felt about the gender imbalance in farming that we witness first-hand.

I think living the life of a woman drives me. I was aware of gender inequality even as a girl, when a lot was about controlling what girls could be and do. Later, when I could see how the structures of power and inequality work in entire societies and economies – well there, was no going back (UNFPA, 2009, p.10).

Robin Wall Kimmerer wise words resonated with group member two, “to love a place is not enough. We must find ways to heal it” (Kimmer, 2013, p. 558). These independent, strong women who are standing up for gender equality inspired us to join the fight. Afterall, as Dr. Allan Rosenfield said “if you empower women, it changes not only their role in society but society as a whole” (UNFPA, 2009, p.40).

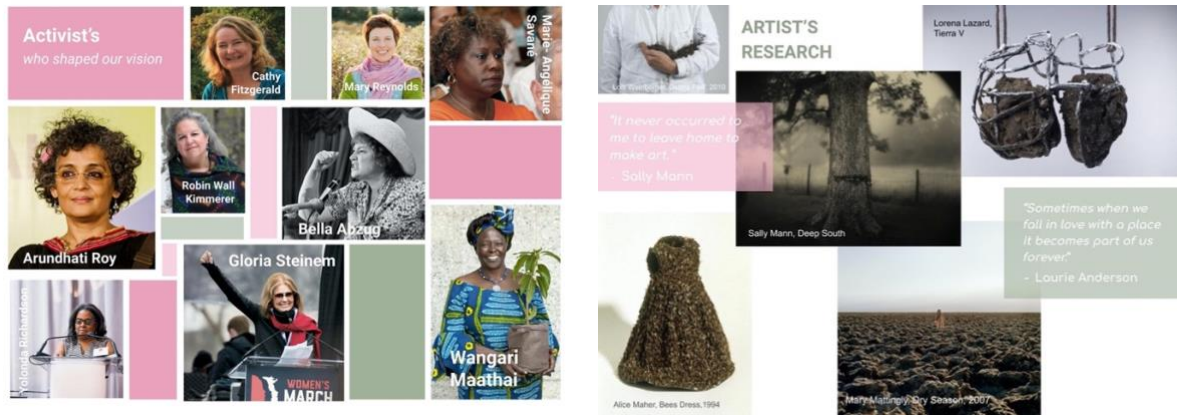


Figure 11 to 12: Brennan, M., Kenny, K., and Toner, B. (2020) Change Lab Notebook, Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

Researching how other artist approached themes similar to ours, showed us the possibilities are endless. Ecofeminist artist, Mary Mattingly encouraged us to use our body as a tool of expression. Arts-based research utilizes “artistic expressions as a main way to understand and analyse experience not only from the point of view of the researcher” (Pentassuglia, 2017, p.4). ‘Pull’ 2013, is a performative piece that comments on mass production (See figure 11). Other artist that influenced us were Alice Maher and Katie Holton.



Figure 13: Artworksforchange.org. (2017) Mary Mattingly – Art Works for Change. URL = <https://www.artworksforchange.org/portfolio/mary-mattingly/>

#### **2.4. See, Appreciate, Change; a series of sustainable interventions**

The artistic process we followed was, See, Appreciate, Change. We recognised the women of the past, celebrated their achievements and how they worked the land. Becoming ecofeminist starts with changing our approach to land practice to a more sustainable approach, appreciating the land as a gift not a possession. “Through various creative and sustainable interventions we re-established ourselves in our landscapes and sought a different dialogue. Using the land as our medium, our resource and ecofeminism, the lens through which we engendered our work” (Brennan, Kenny & Toner, 2020).

In Wexford, I created a relationship with the space, by engaging in a dialogue between my female body and an agricultural landscape. By taking off my shoes, to feel the grass in between my toes, to harvesting soil to paint with and filming how I interact with the open scenery.



Figure 14 - 15: Kenny, K. (2020) Intervention photographs. Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

Group member one, in County Louth focused on alternative and sustainable forms of printing and producing images. She eco-dyed recycled fabrics in the river that runs through her family’s farm, producing chlorophyll and anothotype prints. Using the natural pigments from flowers she extracted and the river water she created vibrant panels of colour. In



Kildare, group member two, created an embroidery drawing on white fabric, and constructed temporary shelters within her local forest.

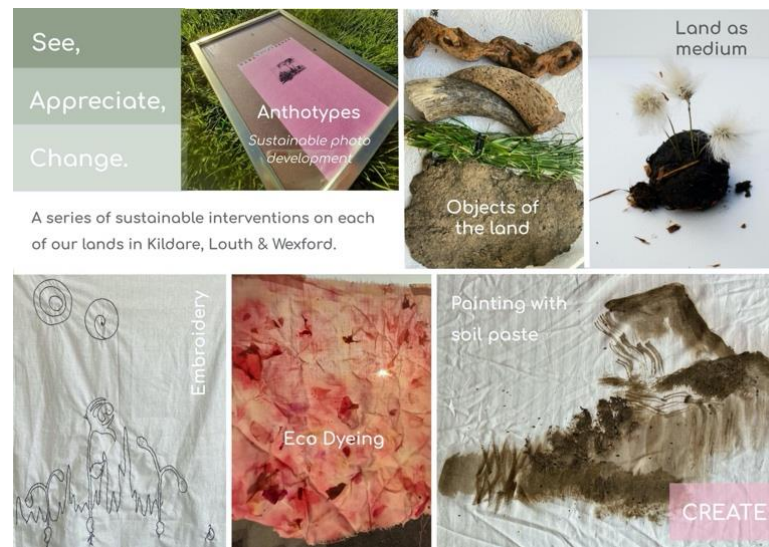


Figure 16: Brennan, M., Kenny, K, and Toner, B. (2020) Change Lab Notebook, Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

### 2.4.1 Will you walk with us?

Will you walk with us?  
An eco-feminist approach to sustainable land practice.  
See. Appreciate. Change.

Our title is an open invitation to join our journey of becoming an ecofeminist and embarking on a more sustainable lifestyle. One framework we followed arts-based research which is embedded in aesthetic experience and considerations. Each member interacted with their land in different ways, but we followed the same aesthetic procedure, placing our bodies in the land. We produced a series of three images that were displayed on NCAD’s Gallery wall. We became hunter gatherers and collected objects from our lands, that were displayed around the images. Group member one collected an old clay pipe, group member two harvested sods of soil. I dug up objects previous generations lost, for example one of my father’s pram wheels. Our installation answered the question, would farms be worked differently if women were in a position of power.

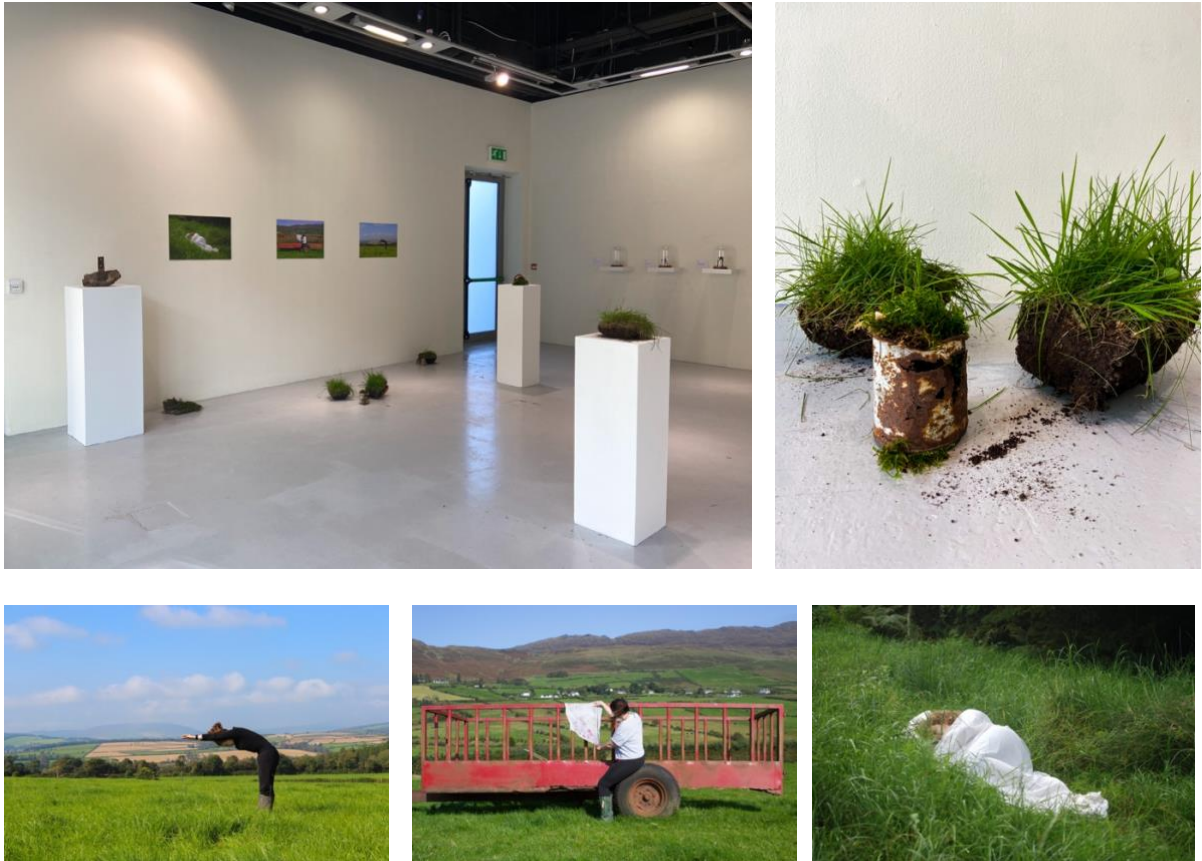


Figure 17 – 21: Brennan, M., Kenny, K, and Toner, B. (2020) Installation photographs. Professional Master of Education, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

#### 2.4.2 Decoupling the gallery

Sarah Glennie (2020) lecture called ‘Decoupling the Gallery’ questioned what can constitute a gallery? A gallery can exist in many different forms. “Through this unpredictable time, we moved away from the traditional gallery setting and into the digital realm. We used social media (Instagram) as an evolving space, a way of co-curating with the audience and creating a platform dedicated to research and discussion” (Brennan, Kenny & Toner, 2020). Our aim was to create a sense of community, create a conversation around sustainability and ecofeminism with a wider audience. Our interventions and teaching resources were shared on the page with descriptions outlining the processes. So far, the Instagram has attracted sixty-eight followers who engage in our posts through likes and shares.

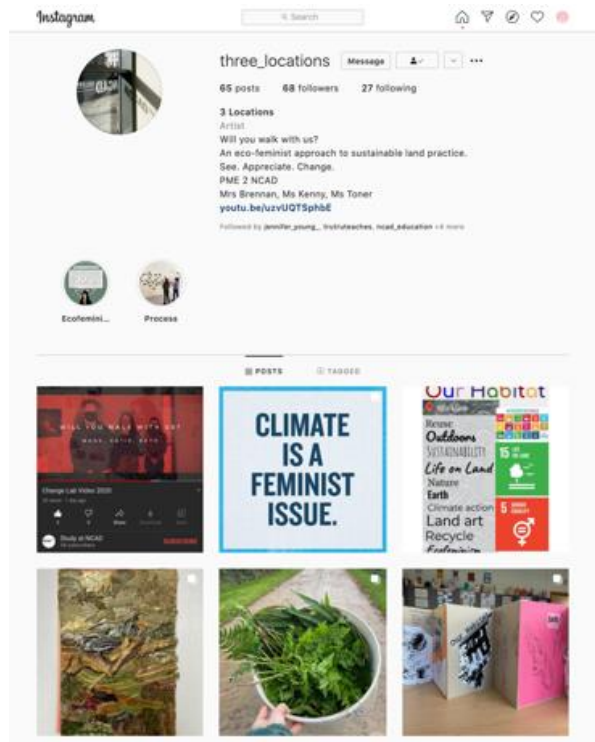


Figure 22: Brennan, M., Kenny, K., and Toner, B. (2021) three\_locations. Instagram. URL = [https://www.instagram.com/three\\_locations/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/three_locations/?hl=en) (accessed: 19 April 2021)

## 2.5 Conclusion

During Change Lab we produced a canon of work that we exhibited in NCAD’s gallery. Development education helped us understand complex world issues. We focused on Goal 5, gender equality and Goal 15 life on land (United Nations, 2015). Our two goals led us to ecofeminism. As a group we embarked on a sustainable journey where we questioned the gender imbalance in land practices. The curriculum framework respond, research, create allowed us to design an ecofeminist pedagogy. Our installation Will you walk with us will influence how we teach in the future. We will invite our students to join in our adventure.

## Chapter 3: Analysis and Reflection

### 3.1 Introduction

Picasso said “I never made a painting as a work of art, it’s all research” (Knowles & Cole, 2007, p. 29). As artist/ designers we identified a theme located in development education, ecofeminism. We then engaged in a variety of research paradigms to identify different ways of viewing the world for the better. The Change Lab is a interpretivist piece of research. “The interpretivist paradigm believes that reality is multi-layered and complex and a single phenomenon can have multiple interpretations” (iNtgrty, 2016). Interpretivism results in qualitative data, explorative experience and variable outcomes, unlike positivism which believes the world is predictable resulting in quantitative data. The arts allow people to understand things that cannot be proven by science. We focused on our experience instead of numbers.

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017, pp. 43 - 44).

Our qualitative outcomes were photographs, interactive experiences with the land, observations, drawing and connecting with a wider audience on Instagram. We did not remove ourselves from the research, we interpreted our experience of connecting the land. As researchers we worked in a collaborative manner, using a range of frameworks that assisted in our analysis of the change lab process. Frameworks like arts-based research and communities of practices, which resulted in sets of ideas that we placed our work in.

## **3.2 Communities of Practice**

Lave and Wenger “proposed that learning involved a process of engagement in a ‘community of practice’” (Smith, 2003, 2009, p.2). They coined the term in 1991, it emerged from a social theory of learning (Eckert, 2006, p.1). “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). There are many types of communities of practices for example schools, home and hobbies. We were “a band of artists seeking new forms of expression” (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). In our change lab groups we formed our own community of practice as we explored a common interest, development education. Our shared domain of interest was art education, land practices and gender equality. Through a collective learning experience, we became ecofeminists. We created a community where we investigated our domain, “members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other” (Smith, 2003, 2009, p.5). We learned from each other, engaged in joint activities and built a trusting relationship. Our practice, developed from each group member being an artist/ designer practitioner. Producing a “shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems— in short a shared practice” (Smith, 2003, 2009, p.5).

### **3.2.1 Mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire**

The three dimensions of communities of practice is mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (see figure 22).

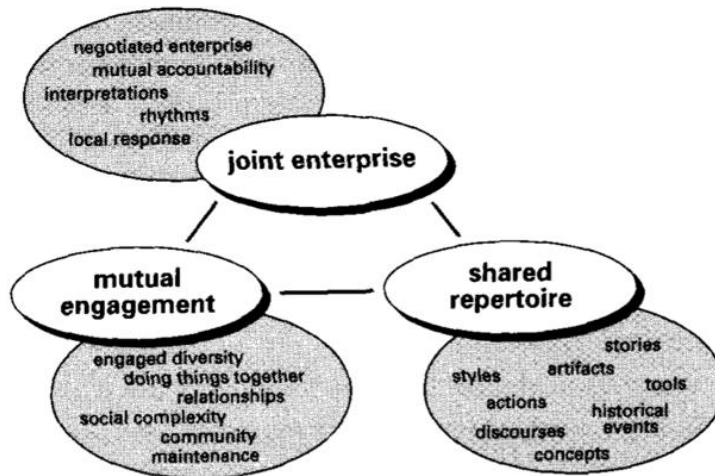


Figure 2.1. Dimensions of practice as the property of a community.

Figure 23: Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. p.73. Cambridge university press

“Membership in a community of practice is therefore a matter of mutual engagement”

(Wenger, 1999, p. 73). Our group dynamic was harmonious. We shared skills.

Mutual engagement involves not only our competence, but also the competence of others. It draws on what we do and what we know, as well as on our ability to connect meaningfully to what we don't do and what we don't know - that is, to the contributions and knowledge of others (Wenger, 1999, p. 76).

In order to create a community there needs to be mutual engagement from all members. Each community negotiates a joint enterprise. Each group member is held accountable. The second dimension is joint enterprise.

An enterprise both engenders and directs social energy. It spurs action as much as it gives it focus. It involves our impulses and emotions as much as it controls them. It invites new ideas as much as it sorts them out. An enterprise is a resource of coordination, of sense-making, of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1999, p. 82).

We were invested on a personal level because the themes we responded to grew from our sense of place. Our reaction was shaped by local responses from tutors, peers and our families. The third dimension of practice is “shared repertoire refers to the “resources for negotiating meaning” (Wenger, 1999, p. 82). Our shared repertoire derived from our three

different art/ design backgrounds and the fact we came together from three different locations.

The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice. (Wenger, 1999, p. 83).

We looked for similarities in our differences which led us to ecofeminism. We produced work that represented a cohesive aesthetic where we documents our bodies in the landscape. We shared an end goal, worked in an open and critical manner creating a collective “sense of joint enterprise and identity” (Smith, 2003, 2009, p.5). We used narrative inquiry as a way of gaining access to each group members individual perspectives. “Learning does not belong to individual persons, but to the various conversations of which they are a part” (Smith, 2003, 2009, p.11).

### **3.3 Narrative inquiry**

“Storytelling is a contemporary research method increasingly used in qualitative interpretive research” (Klages, East, Jackson, & Usher 2019, p.7). Exchanging stories allowed us to identify our shared values. Afterall “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). Starting with anecdotal rambles, we deciphered mutual interests and established a narrative about sustainable land practices and gender equality. “The study of narrative... is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). Our installation Will you walk with us retold our experiences. “Narrative is both phenomenon and method” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). Phenomena in our case refers to the story we told about connection to land and legacy. “Transformative worldview” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4) is a qualitative research approach narrative inquiry is located in. “Voice... aligns narrative with

feminist studies” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.3). We used our voices to question and raise awareness to development education issues.

### **3.3.1 Our feminist approach to narrative inquiry**

Feminists researchers use narrative inquiry as a way of gaining insight into women’s life (Woodiwiss, Smith, & Lockwood, 2017). “As feminists, it is our responsibility to explore how and why some stories are told and not others, and why some stories can be and are heard and others silenced, or at times misrepresented” (Woodiwiss, Smith, & Lockwood, 2017, p.16). We told our stories in order to shed light on the gender imbalance in land practice. “Collaboration occurs from beginning to end in narrative inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.10). Our conversation started with our Moment in Time photographs and moved into how we could become ecofeminists. We each had different values that we communicated to each other. “Narrative inquiry is, however, a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4). We were aware we were in a position of privilege, we got to tell our stories and were sensitive to the women’s untold stories. Storytelling and listening are the main components of narrative research. In order to empower someone’s voice, we have to hear they have to say. Hogan said,

empowering relationships develop over time and it takes time for participants to recognize the value that the relationship holds. Empowering relationships involve feelings of 'connectedness' that are developed in situations of equality, caring and mutual purpose and intention"(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4).

Our work is product of three women’s stories, we “shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.5). Through a series of interventions we reintroduced our bodies to land in response to our conversation about



women's role in sustainable land practices. We celebrated how different our stories were and our individual relationship we had with our own lands.

### **3.4 What is arts-based research?**

Arts-based research (ABR) involves adapting the tenets of the creative arts to social research projects. ABR values aesthetic understanding, evocation, and provocation. These approaches allow us to tap into the unique capabilities of the arts as a way of knowing. Methodologically, these practice-based approaches rely on generative processes in which the artistic practice itself may be the inquiry. These approaches are most commonly used when the aim is to explore, describe, evoke, provoke, or unsettle (Leavy, 2017, p.191).

Arts-based research is situated within the critical paradigm (Leavy, 2017, p.20). Eisner questioned “Are the arts merely ornamental aspects of human production and experience or do they have a more significant role to play in enlarging human understanding?” (Knowles & Cole, 2007, p.3). Eisner and Barone (2011) describe arts-based research as a tool to deepen our understanding of complex world issues, like development education issues. “Research is the child of science; art is something altogether different” (Eisner & Barone, 2011, p.7). Arts-based research is non-scientific and therefore considered as oxymoronic. (Eisner & Barone, 2011). Arts-based research uses different forms of representations that are accessible to all. “The art-based researcher asks these questions and then sets out to design experiments and situations that will further understanding of the phenomena” (Knowles & Cole, 2007, p. 33).

#### **3.4.1 Arts-based research aesthetic judgement and expressive forms**

Arts-based research is “rooted in aesthetic considerations” (Eisner & Barone, 2011, p.1).

Arts based research is the utilization of aesthetic judgment and the application of aesthetic criteria in making judgments about what the character of the intended outcome is to be. In arts based research, the aim is to create an expressive form that will enable an individual to secure an empathic participation in the lives of others and in the situations studied (Eisner & Barone, 2011, pp. 8 – 9).

We worked apart because of Covid-19 restrictions. In order for our work to be in conversation with each other, we designed a shared aesthetic. We created a strong visual signature that combined the Change Lab's theme of space and place. It was a challenging combining three artist/ designer practices together, especially because we each came from diverse backgrounds. Naturally, our aesthetic was rustic and rural as we used the land as our medium. Green fields, blue skies and our female bodies was the shared aesthetic we followed. "Arts based research emphasizes the generation of forms of feeling that have something to do with understanding some person, place, or situation" (Eisner & Barone, 2011, p.7). Different lenses, in different locations captured the same experience, the moment we became ecofeminists.

The camera plays a key role in arts-based research. We researched artist who used the same medium as us. Artists like Sally Mann, showed us how we can capture our experiences. Mann inspired our interventions. She said "the things that are close to you are the things you can photograph the best" (Philips, 2019). As we worked, we thought about another quote of Mann's "it never occurred to me to leave home to make art" (Daniel, 2019). Photographs "act as a form of communication" (Knowles & Cole, 2007, p. 257). Images tell stories, depict both the photographer and the subjects experience, and spark conversations with others. "Photographs can exist as objects and as social documents in social science" (Knowles & Cole, 2007, p. 252). Our notebook also features images we collected from family albums, to show how different generations inhabited our lands. These photographs captured history and change.



Figure 24: Mann, S. Selected Works: Family Pictures. URL = <https://www.sallymann.com/selected-worked>

### 3.4.2 Critique of arts-based research

Arts-based research is criticised for not being scientific research. There is a stigma around arts-based research and a bias for scientific research. But “arts based research will not necessarily be “easier” than other approaches” (Eisner & Barone, 2011, p. 13). Both engage in experimentation to find results yet there is a stigma around how equitable arts-based research is. Researchers outside of the art world consider it to be oxymoronic (Eisner & Barone, 2011). “The arts provide access to forms of experience that are either un-securable or much more difficult to secure through other representational forms” (Eisner, 2006 p.11). It is important to value human understanding, not just focusing on quantitative data. Arts-based research is ambiguous, resulting in qualitative data which can be hard to comprehend when discussing complex issues through conceptual frameworks. Quantitative data like the statistic only “12% of farmers in Ireland are female” (Quinn-Mulligan, 2018) clearly highlight the gender imbalance.

Everyone experiences situations differently, which poses the question how do we evaluate experience? We interpreted our findings, our experience on the land. But our perception of our research will be different from others. They interpret our interpretation. Instead of focusing on how to manage experience arts-based research allows the artist, research or teacher to guide others towards the answer. Participates do not just replicate information, they engage in interventions to find their own outcomes. As art teachers we have to “encourage students to explore the less well explored than simply to replicate tried and true research methods that break no new methodological grounds” (Eisner & Barone, 2011, p.4).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Development education is the Change Lab’s stimulus. Researching sustainable development goals evoked conversations around social justice issues. Our ecofeminist interventions which stemmed from creating a community of practice, narrative inquiry and arts-based research, communicate our appreciation for sustainable land practice and women’s relationship to the land. Arts-based research is concerned with creating empathy for others. “Empathy is a means to understanding, and strong empathic feelings may provide deep insight into what others are experiencing. In that sense, the arts in research promote a form of understanding that is derived or evoked through empathic experience” (Knowles & Cole, 2007, pp. 6 - 7).

## **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

### **4.1 Change Lab reflection**

We reunited our female bodies with our lands in Kildare, Louth and Wexford. Questioning why there is a gender imbalance in land practices in Ireland and the world. We documented our journey of becoming ecofeminists, using a camera to capture the experience. Going forward we will continue to invite others to join in our ecofeminist journey, especially our future students.

#### **4.1.1 Pedagogical outcome of the Change Lab**

“Education is a powerful force for change, enabling us to critically reflect on the way things are, to identify social injustices and unsustainable practices and to act for a better world” (King & Murphy, 2020). We used development education as a way of reimagining the curriculum and as a “an educational process that supports the learner to critically engage with local and global development issues with a view to acting for a more equal, just and sustainable world” (Hogan, 2018, p.3). Arts-based research is a methodological approach to teaching and learning about social justice issues. We created a community of practice, where we created a body of work that responded to two Sustainable Development Goals gender equality and life on land (United Nations, 2015). As a collective of art teachers we also designed a ecofeminist pedagogy. Development education will influence our teaching practice in the future. We will continue to create sustainable interventions and question the patriarchy and become social justice warriors alongside our future students.

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