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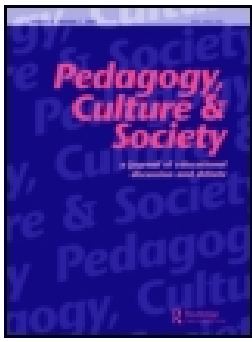
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Learning with place as a catalyst for action

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ABSTRACT

In response to dominant discourses of quality and an over-reliance on humancentric practice, the *Learning with Place* framework emerges as an innovative way to rethink practices, structures, and policies within education and beyond. 'Learning with Place' views the local Place as agentic, recognising Place as inclusive of local First Nations knowledges and stories, histories and the more-than-human (for example, landforms, waterways, animals, insects, flora, and fauna). Through 'Learning with Place', deep relationships with the local Place are generated and these relationships become the catalyst for actions and decision-making regarding caring for/with local Place. This article offers an example of 'Learning with Place' in action through an early childhood teacher education program and shares ways in which the framework can be utilised in multiple contexts and disciplines.

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'Learning with place'; relationships; coming alongside; First Nations worldviews; place-noticing

Learning with place framework

*Learning with Place*¹ (Hamm and Iorio 2020; Iorio and Hamm 2021; Hamm 2021) is an innovative framework which sees the local Place as agentic. Place, in this sense, is inclusive of local First Nations knowledges and stories, histories and the more-than-human (for example, landforms, waterways, animals, insects, flora, and fauna). Through 'Learning with Place', deep relationships with the local Place are generated and these relationships become the catalyst for actions and decision-making regarding caring for/with local Place.

'Learning with Place' emerges in response to over-reliance on the dominant discourse of quality (Moss 2019) and humancentric understandings of the world. This discourse is buried in Western ideals and colonial logic that privileges measuring using testing regimes, decontextualising knowledges and experiences, regulating children's everyday learning, and controlling teachers' professional expertise. This is all under the guise of a conceptualisation of a universal childhood and creating contexts for the impossible practice of objectivity (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 2007). These practices are plentiful in early childhood teacher education programs that promote observation techniques as evidence of learning that distance the teacher from the child. They include lists of

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developmental milestones that are assumed to be applicable in any setting, and the implementation of intervention techniques that have the main aim of ‘fixing’ the child according to pre-established norms, with no recognition of the child’s lived experiences and the funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992) that they bring to all educational experiences. Central to this normative practice is the image of the child as deficit and the belief that, ‘the children’s capacity to contribute to their own education is limited if not non-existent’ (Iorio and Yelland 2021, 3). ‘Learning with Place’ challenges this image and builds from the foundational belief of the child as a capable citizen of the now (Rinaldi 2006) who contributes to their local and global communities. This image of capability further situates how children, in relation to families, community, and local Place create the conditions to collaborate, and to think with histories, stories, issues, wonderings, and questions critically and in complex ways.

In Australia, as well as other colonised countries, we recognise that all learning takes place on unceded, stolen Land and contend that this needs to be acknowledged as the foundation of all learning in our educational contexts. As children, teachers and communities learn with Place, grappling with messy, uncomfortable histories creates the conditions for complex thinking and actions. This means that Places are understood beyond the superficial narratives of ‘nice’ places to play outside, to generate deep, authentic relationships with Place. These relationships must include respectfully foregrounding First Nations’ ways of knowing and being as central. This does not mean that First Nations knowledges are ‘acquired’, but rather it means that First Nations voices are central to ‘Learning with Place’, even when histories and stories of Places include colonial violence and dispossession. When children, families and communities are understood as capable, engaging with these uncomfortable histories generates actions that are provoked by truth-telling, thoughtful reflection, and acknowledgement of all of Australia’s history. Creating the conditions to learn with local Places are activated by three important ideas: First Nations worldviews, coming alongside and Place-noticing.

First Nations worldviews

First Nations worldviews (Martin 2016; McMahon 2018; Coff 2021) are central to First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing. Martin (2016) explains that relationality is at the heart of how First Nations peoples engage with the world and recognises that it is impossible for one person to be knowledgeable in all things. . . any learner needs to also learn how they and relevant others are related to their Country and all things within and near it (Martin 2008). This pertains to plants, skies, waterways, land, climate, and animals (Martin 2016, 3). McMahon (2018) and Coff (2021), both Yorta Yorta women (Aboriginal traditional custodians from central Victoria, Australia), assert that First Nations worldviews include reciprocal relationality with Country, Ancestors and Community.

Coming alongside

Coming alongside is a concept shared by Martin (2016), a Noonuccal woman from Minjerripah (North Stradbroke Island – southeast Queensland). Martin explains that coming alongside is a way for non-First Nations people to respectfully engage with First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing. In coming alongside, non-First Nations people

are required to engage critically with their own accountabilities to engage authentically in 'respectful ways' (Sax 2018), rather than attempting to acquire and hold First Nations knowledges. Coming along side requires non-First nations people to make choices, generate thoughtful intentions that engage with complexity as they engage with First Nations histories, cultures, stories, and Lands. Thoughtful intentions require sitting uncomfortably with knowledges and histories that are part of the ongoing colonial legacies and the shared histories of Australia. Coming alongside requires authentic and genuine relationships, waiting to be invited, being able to sit and listen, slowness and understanding that First Nations worldviews are not always available to be shared with non-First Nations people.

Place-noticing

Place-noticing (Hamm 2021; Hamm and Iorio 2020; Hamm, Sax, and Brown 2019) is underpinned by the concepts, 'coming alongside' (Martin 2016) and 'Place as a pedagogical contact zone' (Common Worlds Research Collective 2020; Hamm and Boucher 2018), Place as pedagogical contact zone, is understood as 'Places are always in a state of entanglement of human and more-than-human others. The term contact zone (Haraway 2008) gestures towards the ways in which entanglements occur and how we can learn with and from place' (Hamm and Boucher 2018). Place-noticing requires understanding that taken-for-granted approaches to being in the 'outdoors' or playing in 'nature' do not often engage with the true histories of stolen Land and ongoing colonial legacies. Place-noticing also draws on the concept of 'place-thought' (Watts 2013), which is defined as Place being 'alive and thinking' (21). Place is active and agentic (not passive), not reliant on human intervention or saviour approaches (Taylor 2017). Place-noticing is speculative and generates connections with multispecies communities in unpredictable ways.

The 'Learning with Place' framework brings together First Nations Worldviews, coming alongside (Martin 2016), and place-noticing (Hamm 2021) as a conceptual framework that can inform teaching, learning, research, and leadership. Leaders that activate this framework can make decisions and create policies and procedures that work towards reconciliation. Research constructed using 'Learning with Place' engages with methodologies that centre place and support the generation of innovative data and analysis. Learning and teaching situated within 'Learning with Place' create alternative ways to think with children, families, and local places that enact ethical teaching and learning that contribute to the community. The following example focuses on an early childhood teacher education in Victoria, Australia that utilises the 'Learning with Place' framework as the conceptual foundation.

Coming alongside: situating ourselves

The authors of this paper are all non-First Nations people, with heritages from the USA and the UK. The authors share a commitment to respectfully foregrounding First Nations worldviews in teaching, writing and research, and activating their ethical and political response-abilities (Haraway 2016). The authors work as a collective and are all involved in a range of research projects that inform the ideas in this paper.

An example: 'learning with place' and early childhood teacher education

In early childhood teacher education, 'Learning with Place' is a conceptual framework underpinning the pedagogical and technical components of becoming an early childhood teacher. Essential to this conceptualisation is to first understand concepts like the image of the child as capable (Rinaldi 2006 coming alongside (Martin 2016), and Place-noticing (Hamm, Sax, and Brown 2019; Hamm 2020, 2021) as well as the practice of foregrounding First Nations worldviews. These concepts can be foundational across subjects within teacher education, and indeed enable learners to see the connections between the subject areas. With this conceptual commitment, pedagogical choices can be made to ensure the concepts remain foregrounded but also are positioned to generate deeper understanding and practice. Finally, technical dimensions (delivery, schedule) are articulated with clear connections to the conceptual and pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning. The Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching at The University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education provides a strong example of how 'Learning with Place' is enacted as a conceptual framework, while also underpinning the pedagogical and technical components of the program.

Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching (GDECT)

The Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching (GDECT) emerged in response to the need for and increased number of early childhood teachers in Victoria and across Australia. It occurs in the context of the national early years curriculum framework 'Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework' (EYLF) (Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009 which challenges teachers to move beyond their existing teaching practices to work in alternative ways that enable a vision of the child and family as capable and contributing (Iorio and Yelland 2021). Yet, early childhood centres and programs across Australia continue to hold and practice a narrow view of the ways in which early childhood experiences can be imagined and implemented. This constricting view reflects the notion that children and families are somehow in deficit of certain pre-defined developmental traits and promotes a view of child development as linear and without connection to specific contexts. It follows from this linear notion that children who do not exhibit these behaviours need to acquire them via the deployment of intervention packages and skill-based training that is focused on attributes not located in authentic contexts. This misalignment between the EYLF and practice, calls for an 'alternative narrative, one that moves away from the conception of children as incapable, dependent or needy, to a recognition that children are capable' (Iorio and Yelland 2021, 3). Further, the overreliance on a stage theory of child development, combined with a dependence on human capital theory informing provision and curriculum-making, create a narrow, linear depiction of a young child's experiences, which is then reflected across the early childhood community.

Moss (2019) reminds us that these dominant narratives of early childhood are 'just stories' - stories that have been shared over and over again. Stories that have become truisms and accepted in early childhood teaching and learning contexts. They also often silence and marginalise alternative narratives that can co-exist and extend what is possible for the education of young children. The GDECT emerges as an alternative

narrative, a different vision for early childhood teacher education that embraces ‘Learning with Place’ and empowers teachers to disrupt the limitations of universalising dominant narratives and create practices that occur in connection *with* local Place.

Conceptual connections

Conceptually, the GDECT begins with ‘Learning with Place’, and this is reflected in the overall Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILO). CILOs articulate what graduates from the course should understand and have the capacity to apply in practice. For example, the first course outcome indicates how emerging teachers will ‘Foreground Indigenous Worldviews to promote learner engagement with complexity that is inclusive and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, organisations, and standpoints in early childhood education’ (University of Melbourne 2020). This course outcome utilises ‘Learning with Place’ through the practice of ‘coming alongside’ (Martin 2016) by beginning first with local First Nations ways of being and doing as a means to engage with early childhood knowledges.

In another course outcome, the commitment to the image of the child, family, and community as capable and contributing is clearly stated, ‘Translate early childhood content knowledge and pedagogies to design curriculum and assessments strategies that enable creative and productive learning ecologies that articulate and enact the image of the child, family, and teacher as capable and learning in relationship’ (University of Melbourne 2020). Making the choice to engage with this image of children, families, and communities is what Moss (2019) notes as a ‘political choice’ as this is a choice that is made from the multiple image possibilities and is open to debate, furthering recognising that teaching is always a political practice. Further, this course outcome indicates how teaching and learning are always in a relationship and how knowledge is co-constructed and in relation.

A further course outcome reiterates the understanding that teaching and learning is a ‘political and ethical act that respects diversity, humanity, advocacy, and equity’ (University of Melbourne 2020), disrupting notions of universality and impartiality within education and placing humanity at the forefront of teaching and learning. Reflective of ‘Learning with Place’, the course outcomes make visible the political, ethical, and historical perspectives underpinning the complexity of Place and the ongoing impact of colonialism throughout education and beyond.

Together, course outcomes create a conceptual underpinning that runs throughout all the subjects. Each course outcome is then connected to the subjects, establishing a commitment to the conceptual ideas within ‘Learning with Place’. The course outcomes are a touchstone of conceptual agreements to which lecturers, students, and administrators can return when making decisions about content, pedagogy, and structures critical to the implementation of the course.

Pedagogical connections

Pedagogically, the GDECT reflects ‘Learning with Place’ in the overarching practice of learning in relation *with* and *from* Place and multispecies communities, rather than *about*. This is especially evident as every subject engages with a ‘pedagogy of relationships and listening’

reflective of a co-construction between teachers, children, communities, and Place (Moss 2019, 72). Originating from the practices in the Educational Project in Reggio Emilia, Italy, a 'pedagogy of relationships' fosters co-participation in meaning-making and knowledge building while the 'pedagogy of listening' is situated in 'listening to thought – the ideas and theories, questions and answers of children and adults. It means treating thought seriously and with respect: it means struggling to make meaning from what is said, without preconceived ideas of what is correct or appropriate' (Rinaldi 2006, 15). Within 'Learning with Place' and the GDECT, we expand on this to include Place as part of listening.

A strong example of practicing a pedagogy of relationship is within the subject STEM Learning Ecologies, that foreground the practice of learning in relation to Place. STEM Learning Ecologies provide opportunities to engage authentically with 'Learning with Place', specifically with First Nations worldviews. 'Learning with Place' works to generate alternative narratives in relation to traditional science knowledges that have carried much of the colonial project through their onto/epistemological structures and systems. Science is a colonial construct, steeped in Eurocentric views of how the world operates, how the world is known to be true and how to behave in response to this knowing. This large epitome of knowledge has classified and divided the world into a hierarchy of scientific knowledges, disciplines, and accepted truths; east-west/north-south/Indigenous-non-Indigenous as some examples. Such taken-for-granted hierarchies (and binaries) position imaginaries of the world where humanness has been separated and severed from nature, somehow elevated away from the animalist origins of our species. A narrative that likewise separates people into categories of race and where some benefit in greater ways than another. Despite calls from Indigenous scientists, academics and philosophers within and beyond 'so-called-Australia' to decolonise the scientific disciplines and include First Nations scientific knowledges alongside western scientific knowledge, there persists a deep lack in understanding how educators can do this.

In the STEM Learning Ecologies subject, First Nations worldviews are foregrounded through learning provocations as students are asked to walk slowly and attentively with Place. This slow repeated walking with Places that are local to the students' lifeworlds becomes the site where students attend to/with the world and are 'called into connection' (Rose 2017) with Place and multispecies communities. A Pedagogy of Listening with Country is generated through acknowledging everyday moments with Country and documented using multimodal and creative documentation processes (Edwards, Carolyn, and Forman 2011). One of these modalities is video documentation, students are asked to make visible their pedagogies of relationships as a short 5-minute video. In the video, students (mostly non-First Nations people) make visible their connections to their local Place and acknowledge how they are in relation to and with the world. They document their noticings (including absences), paying attention to what they see, feel, smell, touch, and/or taste.

Engaging with this body of student work is always captivating. Lizzo (psudonym) lives, studies and raises a family on Gunditjmara Country (the western district of Victoria, Australia). As a settler educator, she followed Country (waterways, oceans, and sand dunes) firstly by herself, and then with her young child. In a video, made for assessment, Lizzo makes visible her becoming-with Country through 'Learning with Place' encounters. In this, mother and child employ a slow pedagogy of listening (Rinaldi 2006) with the conceptual frameworks of 'Learning with Place'; slow pedagogy (Rowntree and Gambino

2017), deep listening with capable children and Country. Together they scratch at the surface of Place to think with First Nations worldviews as sustainable pedagogies of connection, not relying on tokenistic gestures about First Nations scientific knowledges. Rather, storying their connections with Country intensifies authentic and respectful pedagogical openings that invite 'Learning with Place'; knowing that knowledge is built slowly over time *with* Country in layers that require many 're-turnings' (Barad 2017).

As I set out on my very own solo place-thought walk at Levy's Point in Warrnambool, my intention is to keep the perspectives, territories and cosmologies of the Peek Whurrong people, the Traditional Owners of this land, in the forefront of my mind, and to attune to the presence and agency of the non-human and more-than-human entities who are always already present in this place. I am also determined to adopt a decolonising mindset by viewing my interactions and encounters with this place through a postcolonial lens. I walk with the solemn knowledge that I, as a non-Aboriginal early childhood educator, am living on unceded Aboriginal land, and, as a result, am inextricably entangled and implicated in the 'colonial history of this place' (Hamm 2018, 88). As I walk through the sand dunes and along the beach, I use my noticing, observations, encounters and interactions with the more-than-human around me to generate potential early years STEM learning experiences, inquiries and pedagogies. I think about how I can work within this learning ecology - this 'pedagogical contact zone' (Hamm and Boucher 2018) to create STEM learning opportunities that foreground Peek Whurrong territories and worldviews (Lizzo 2020).

In another place-walk Lizzo re-turns to the sand dunes with her son and listens to the ways Place calls her child into connection, moving from her initial solo pedagogical intentions of being with Country, to sharing this with her son as they both become slowly present with the sand dunes. Beetles are found and marvelled at, ants make holes and theories are generated and questions are posed, no definitive concrete answers given, instead a thinking *with* Place unfolds.

Child: oh, little ant hole

Mum: oh

The child grabs a stick to make visible connections with what he is observing

'What have you discovered' asks Mum A little ant hole (using the stick to motion where the little ant hole is)

'See . . . see' (he shows and gestures to Lizzo)

'There we go, little ants running into their holes, woah [chuckles] he's going in' He's going in that one, not that one (pointing with stick at two different ant holes)

'How come ants live underground?' he ponders

'Mmm, what do you reckon?' asks Mum

'There's nothing to eat under there' 'So then why do they live there, I wonder [pauses] what would be good about living underground, what'll be good for them under there?' asks Mum.

'I dunno, they just wanna be protected?'

'Good one, protected from what' asks Mum

'Don't know, things that are on top of the world'

'Good point, protection and maybe it's also good temperature for them' shares Mum.

Lizzo reflects on the encounter

In order to provide meaningful and authentic opportunities for STEM thinking in the early years, we must allow children the time they need to fully engage with and explore STEM learning ecologies and lifeworlds. Importantly, we as educators need to intentionally slow ourselves down and give children time to explore these lifeworlds at their own pace. This notion of 'slow pedagogy' (Rowntree and Gambino 2017, 71) creates space and opportunity for rich learning experiences, unexpected encounters, and memorable 'wow' moments to occur. I was also reminded of Ann Pelo's writings on the importance of 'cultivating an ecological identity' with young children as part of their STEM learning. As we slowly continued our walk, I marvelled at the way my son's natural curiosity and inquiry was leading him to develop a more intimate connection with this place. (Lizzo, 2020).

Learning in this way calls for innovative pedagogies that are located beyond the formal boundaries of education. Life and our relations to the world happen beyond the classroom and in this sense 'Learning with Place' grounds teaching and learning deeply where children and teachers together shape and contribute to the world. This learning is always relational and locational, but it is also translational to other places acting as a springboard to making this learning visible in different Places with different communities. This is an important way students learn in STEM Learning Ecologies, making their calls of connection and the pedagogies visible, their theories are tested and documented through multimodal and aesthetic articulations and approaches to doing STEM are nurtured. Articulations that are rhizomatic, nonlinear and happen within various forms of time.

Relations with the world around us also call for innovative partnerships that engage in pedagogical practices situated in 'Learning with Place'. For example, through a relationship with non-First Nations environmental educator and biologist Pete Crowcroft, STEM Learning Ecologies has access to an expert in the local ecological knowledges. Pete, often known as Possum Pete, contributes insights on biodiversity and its connection to early childhood connection. Pete's stories are part of the content, making visible how local knowledges are an essential part of 'Learning with Place'. Children spend time listening *with* Possum Pete as he describes his own listening *with*,

We learned with Place at Fisherman's Beach. We may never know what it was called by the Wadawurrung people for thousands of years, but we know that a lookout close by was known as Darang-wa 'a place to watch the clouds'. That spot is also known as **Rocky** Point, which is next to Point **Danger** and Point **Impossible**. These dramatic place names are maritime map markers, to serve as warning to sea captains to steer clear of this dangerous coastline. They hark back to our colonial history, so dependent on the arrival of sailing ships which are in turn at the mercy of the wind and storms. More so, it is so indicative of the wholehearted difference in the perspective held by the early European settlers and Wadawurrung First People. Darang-wa, a place to watch the clouds, and from that, using skill and experience, to interpret the weather for the day and the coming days. Or, Point Danger, a place to avoid, because it is you(human) *versus* Country.

At Fishos, I pick up a piece of Country. Geologically, it is an iron-rich clay sedimentary rock, you wouldn't necessarily think anything of it, unless *you know*. It isn't soft but when I rub it against a wet rock of a harder sandstone, it creates a perfect and rich-red ochre paint.

There are over 100 kids here today exploring and being with Place, learning as they experience sensorily what Fishos, Wadawurrung Country, Ochre Country, has on offer. I find a shark egg amongst the washed-up seaweed which piques the interest of some students. We

start walking together dissecting out from the tangle various seaweeds, shells, and exoskeletons of crabs. 'Its a dead crab!' One student exclaims, 'no it's not, but it's not alive either'. I love their puzzled looks - 'is it asleep?' 'no, that would still be alive'.

I tend to explain it something like this, we have a skeleton on the inside - our bones - but Crab has a skeleton on the outside. Imagine if you had a hard outside shell, and your body was growing - what is going to happen? When Crab's soft body grows, it feels squished, so usually around the time of the full moon - did you see the full moon last night? - it squeezes out from its shell and leaves it on the beach for us to find - see, there's no one home (on good specimens, you can lift the carapace to show it is empty). That is exactly how Crab grows bigger. It comes out soft, so right now maybe they are alive out there and still completely soft, but a little bit bigger, waiting a few days to grow a new shell, marine biologists call an exoskeleton.

In another story, Possum Pete shares walking with local Place in relation with biodiversity, noting how sitting *with* offers different ways to listen *with*,

In small groups we approach the intertidal zone and look into the first Rockpool we come across. All standing around and checking it out, I see Dog Whelk attached to the rock, this is an interesting type of sea snail because it is carnivorous and uses its drill-like tongue - called a radula - to drill through shells of mussels and other snails, which then gives it an opening to suck their guts out. If you ever find a shell with a perfectly drilled circle in it, that is what has happened to it.

While talking with the children about this, more things start to appear in Rockpool, a beautiful and photogenic biscuit star was just poking out under a ledge, we wouldn't have spotted it if we weren't taking our time and looking closely. Not rushing, enjoying our time with Rockpool. Everyone gets to hold and touch and feel this cool 'echino-derm' with their 'rough-skin'.

As we talk about Biscuit Star, I see some telltale movements of the sand at the bottom of Rockpool. I've seen this sort of thing before and immediately knew what was there. I may have let out an 'oooooh' of excitement. So I bury my hand in the sand and pull out a really big Sand Crab. This is the one that nips your toes when you're swimming, it's got these incredible fake eyes on the back of its carapace to make itself look big and scary and scare away fish. At the front, it has two very small and non-threatening real eyes, but it also has those extremely powerful and sharp pincers. this one I had to be a bit careful of, it would have cut through my skin quite easily. I picked it up gently and once it relaxed, I was able to place it in the palm of my hand. The kids were absolutely in raptures, one thing after the next revealing themselves in this one very small but filled with life, Rockpool.

Today Rockpool became more than just some rocks, water and seaweed, it became a home for numerous animals each with their own interesting story and life that they lead.

Sometimes it just takes a little bit of time sitting around with Rockpool to find the amazing biodiversity that calls this special environment home.

Technical connections

The technical structures and policies – the timetables, lecturer: student ratios, lecture/workshop the mechanics of delivery – are often the features that dominate the curriculum experience for our students. By beginning with 'Learning with Place' as a conceptual and pedagogical framework, we attempt to disrupt the usual reliance on using the technical as

the provocation for program creation. We intentionally foreground the conceptual and pedagogical elements of the course in order to create policies and structures that reflect these commitments. 'Learning with Place' is conceptually underpinned by relational understandings and calls for alternative ways of thinking and doing. In response to 'Learning with Place', we created the Collective, a central element of the GDECT.

The Collective is reflective of the salon – a gathering that brings together people for debate and dialogue, building a community and where learning is in relation. The salons in 17th and 18th Century France, functioned as a place where women could gather for conversation in a male-dominated society (Craveri 2005). In America, salons emerged in the 1920s in New York and Chicago, with Dorothy Parker and other journalists and playwrights meeting at the Algonquin Hotel's 'round table' and Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes in Harlem (Hart 1992) At the same time, Gertrude Stein led salons in Paris. In recent times, philosopher and professor Maxine Greene used salons to bring together educators, scholars, and artists for conversations about education, aesthetic education, and social imagination with the intent of sharing and debating ideas and questions towards multiple possibilities of education (Greene n.d.) Since the salon has often offered a place for relationality in teaching and learning, sparking creative ideas while building community, drawing inspiration from the salon in the creation of the Collective is relevant as this structure needed to support relational practices and support a sense of community and connectiveness.

The Collective is a structure that brings together 5 students with one Collective Mentor for the duration of the course. This small group meets every 3 weeks for conversations together, discussing ideas that bring the subjects, related experiences, and questions closer, and sometimes offering provocations presented by the Collective Mentor. During the placement subject, the Collective Mentor works with the Collective members and the placement site mentor teachers in a collaborative process that supports students through their placement experiences and supports the relationships necessary for a positive placement experience. The Collective at its very heart, engages relationships at multiple levels – between students, between university staff and students, between mentor teachers and students – and also creates the space for students to grapple with the complexities of 'Learning with Place'. So, the technical structure of the Collective supports the conceptual and pedagogical undertakings and fosters the necessary relationships for pedagogical practices.

The following example makes visible how the technical structure of the collective connects with the conceptual and the pedagogical. Professor Kylie Smith offers Place-noticing (Hamm, Sax, and Brown 2019; Hamm 2021) collective encounters in her own experiences as a Collective mentor,

The Collective is a space for dialogue, to raise questions and to critically reflect on pedagogy but importantly the Collective provides moments, entanglements and (dis)ruptures for encounters with professional-personal-place identities for students and for me as a mentor. Queries, questions, concerns and wonderings about what it means to foreground First Nations ways of knowing often centres our dialogue. Sharing of planned activities during placement is an entry point of discussion for some of the students - Acknowledgement of Country during group time, introduction of First Nations picture books. The need to show 'evidence' that students are 'implementing' First Nations ways of knowing created slippages from pedagogies that are relational and place based to competency-based discourses. This

raises questions about how I might consider or pose a provocation that shifts these discourses for the students and myself. I start by asking myself What does *Place-noticing* mean for me in relation with the lands that I live/work/learn with?

The next morning as I walk on the track by the sea on the unceded land of the Wadawurrung people, I engage with Place-noticing. Place-noticing for me is not an activity where I search for objects or materials, it is about a relational encounter with land, water, air, wind, rocks, cliffs, birds, reptiles, and insects. Place-noticing in this moment is about sounds, smells, and feelings as well as reflections on and acknowledgement of white settler coloniser histories and presents and my relation to and with Place. As I watch and listen to waves roll into the shoreline pushing and tugging at sand and rocks, I start to notice the colonisation of Place. Pine trees lining the foreshore, paths carved in the land and concrete poured for convenience of the settler. Tractors shifting the build-up of sand moved over time with wind, water, waves and rain so that cars driving on Place to launch boats don't get bogged and damaged. I notice the way tree trunks, branches and shrubs bend and twist with wind in motion shaping, changing spaces. Rather, than timing my walk and plotting a route from A to B, I slow down, stop, listen to/with Place hearing the call and singing of different birds and insects. I reflect on what was missing or what I cannot see because of the clearing and carving of land for continued settler housing and tourism – wallaby, kangaroo, echidna. I notice continued colonisation and my relationship with this.

I use this encounter as the provocation for the next collective meeting. I ask students what might happen if you shift your gaze from activities to yourself through Place noticing to consider your professional-personal-place identities? I pose as a collective how we might think about Place noticing as a relational pedagogical practice with ourselves, children, families and co-educators. This opens up dialogue that raises many questions and tensions about what it means for new graduating teachers and the politics of their teaching. What type of teachers do they want to be? How do they work against the grain of institutional neoliberal colonial settler education discourses? How do they sit in uncomfortable spaces with Place to learn more about ongoing colonisation and their connections relationships to this?

Through her narration, Smith shares an example of the technical structure of the Collective that is fully underpinned by the conceptual – 'Learning with Place' – and the pedagogical – relationality. Through the Collective, both lecturer and student engage in the complexity of 'Learning with Place'. Smith shares her own moments of being called into connection with her local Place while also creating a space for her students to be called into connection through multiple experiences. What is most critical with the implementation of a structure like the Collective, is how a framework like 'Learning with Place' offers the philosophical foundation for making technical decisions. The Collective structure practices relationality and provides a means for learning *with*, listening *with*, acting *with*.

Learning with place as a provocation

Through the implementation of 'Learning with Place' in early childhood teacher education, we have come to understand the power of committing to an alternative story – a story that disrupts longstanding and limiting stories of quality, contextlessness, and the view of children, families, and communities as deficit. This alternative story engages complex discourses reflective of local and global communities as 'Learning with Place' foregrounds First Nations Worldviews, practicing coming alongside (Martin 2016, and enacting place-noticing (Hamm, Sax, and Brown 2019; Hamm 2021; Hamm and Marie Iorio

2020). 'Learning with Place' generates pedagogies of relationships and listening, with pedagogical intentions (Land et al. 2020) that create the required space and time to engage in relational ways and offer 'regenerative power for persistence' and expansion (Parnell, Cullen, and Domingues 2022, 68). Pedagogical intentions include carefully crafted, specific practices that invite learners to see themselves in the learning but also to see into another-ness and related-ness, into other ways of conceptualising the phenomenon of reality. These practices of relationships and listening bring the political, ethical, social, environmental, into view and notice how entanglements are part of the reality of understanding and are an important part of learning. Further, these relations and pedagogical intentions are not divorced from where the learning is occurring. 'Learning with Place' activates encounters and relations with the more-than-humanness of being human and makes visible how learning is always in relation *with* local Place.

While this paper offers one example of how 'Learning with Place' can be implemented, there are multiple possibilities for 'Learning with Place' to inform other fields and disciplines. For example, 'Learning with Place' could situate research practices including framing research questions, methodologies, and analysis. Grounding urban and regional planning in 'Learning with Place' could offer innovative ways to consider decision-making, creation, and renovation of communities. In considering health, parenting, child-rearing, and aged care, 'Learning with Place' could ground local knowledges informing policies and practices that reflect the needs of communities and populations in multiple contexts. Beginning with 'Learning with Place' challenges quick fixes and superficial solutions by creating a space for multiple disciplines to come together and create complex solutions that are rooted in local Place knowledges. This is the alternative narrative that is needed to generate different stories that connect and empower children, families, and communities to contribute to the common good.

Note

1. © The University of Melbourne, 2022. This copyright applies to all references to 'Learning with Place' in the manuscript.

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