



# **Communities of Practice and Constellations**

for Artist-Teachers in Adult Community Learning

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# Outline



Key Terms



Methodology and Methods



Key Texts



Literature and Results



Summary, Future Work and Questions

# Key Terms

## Adult Community Learning (ACL)

- Community based learning in local authorities and general further education colleges (Department for Education, 2019).

## Artist-Teacher in ACL

- “A professional artist and teacher, who is dedicated to both, and has the competencies needed to work in and through art and adult community learning” (Cairns, 2022).

# Key Terms

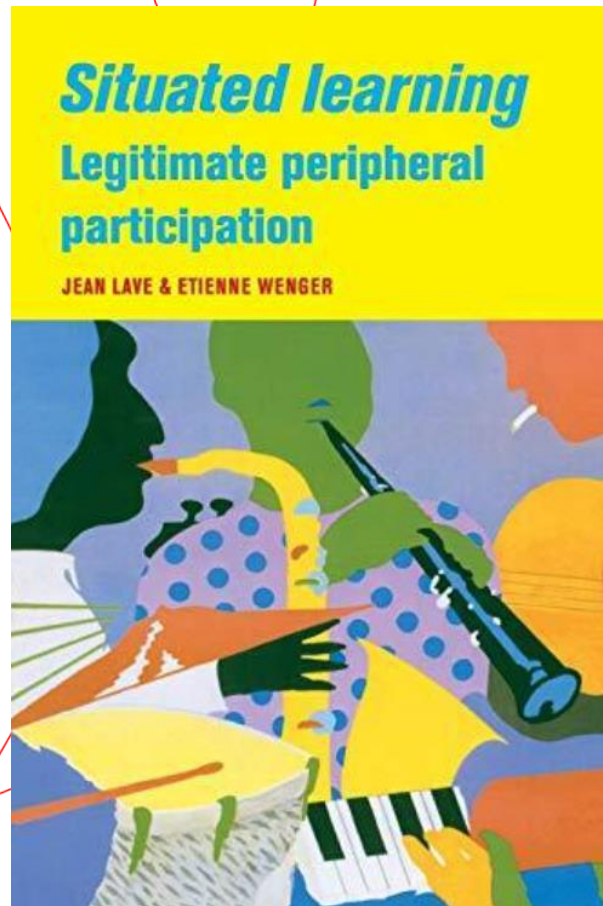
## Communities of Practice (CoP)

- A who share a common interest and a desire to learn from and contribute to the community with their variety of experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

## Constellations

- Interrelated communities of practice that provide a landscape of practice for any given individual, which includes shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections, and encounters (Wenger, 2000:17,118, 126).

# Key Texts

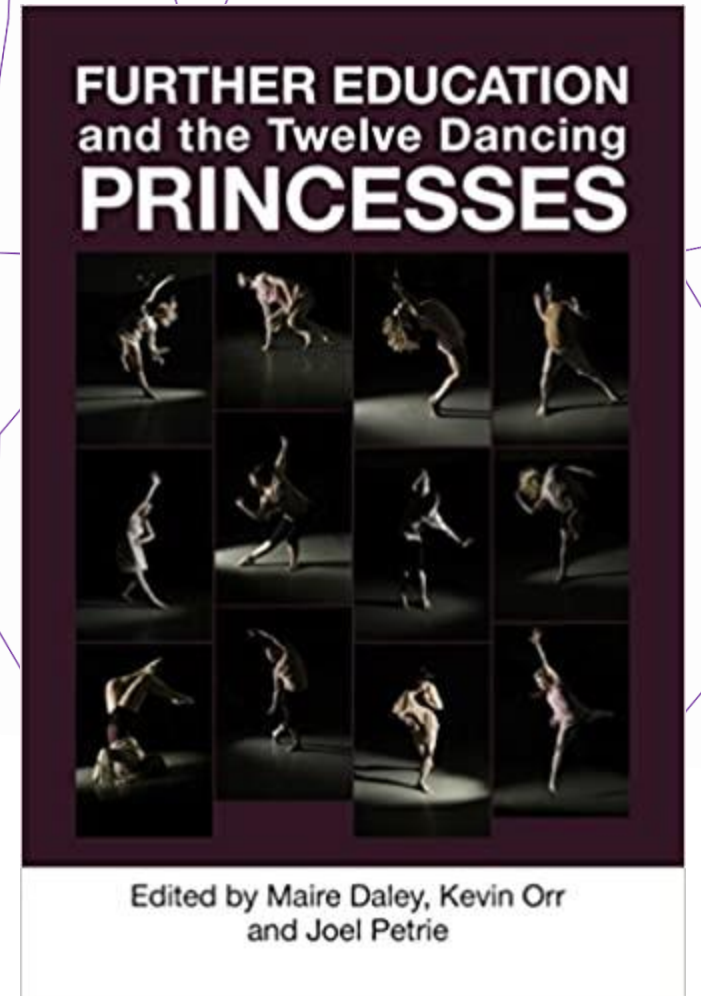


A GUIDE TO MANAGING KNOWLEDGE  
CULTIVATING  
COMMUNITIES  
OF PRACTICE

ETIENNE WENGER  
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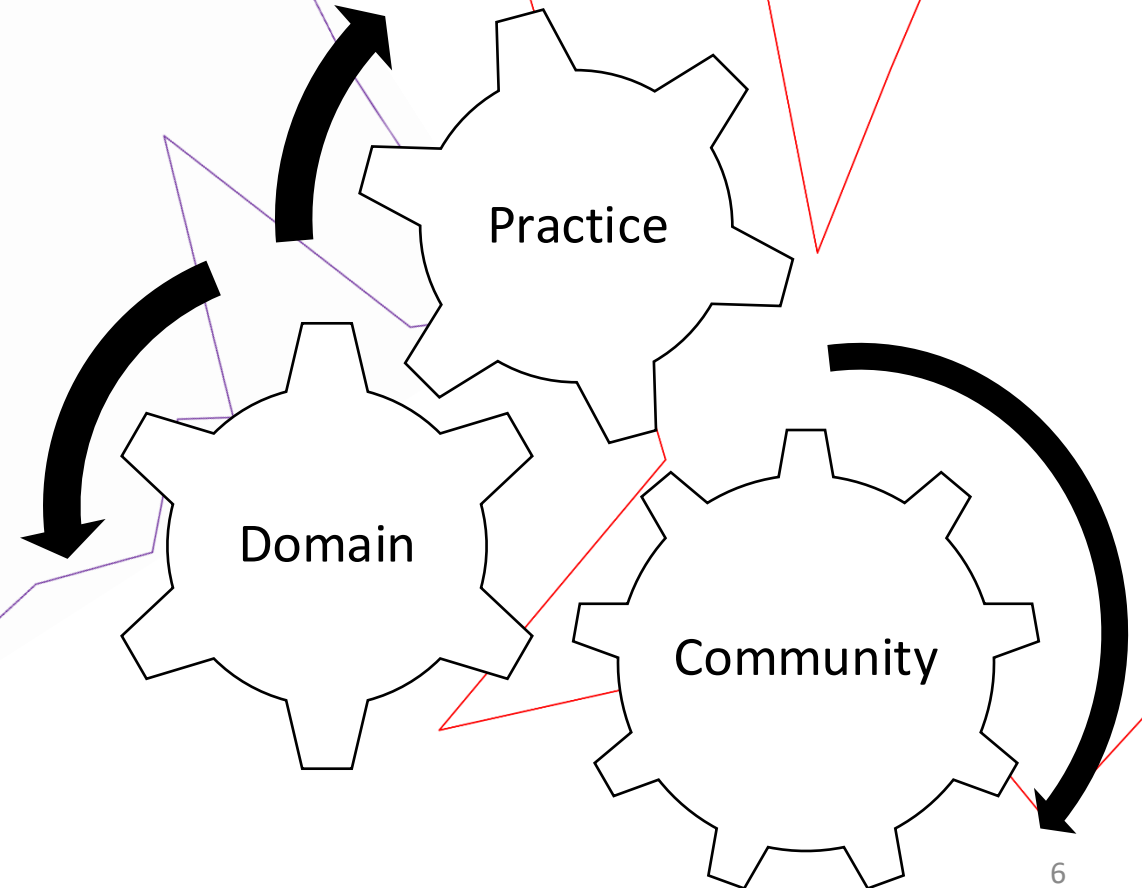
# Literature Review

- In his work Wenger outlines different types of communities of practice. These are often tied to geographical proximity between the members and thrive on casual encounters in staffrooms or similar.
- However, in his later work he talks about intentional communities of practice, these are organized common interest groups. Members are interested in the same thing and seeking out others to connect with in the systematic pursuit of that interests.

**Domain:** what the community of practice encompasses.

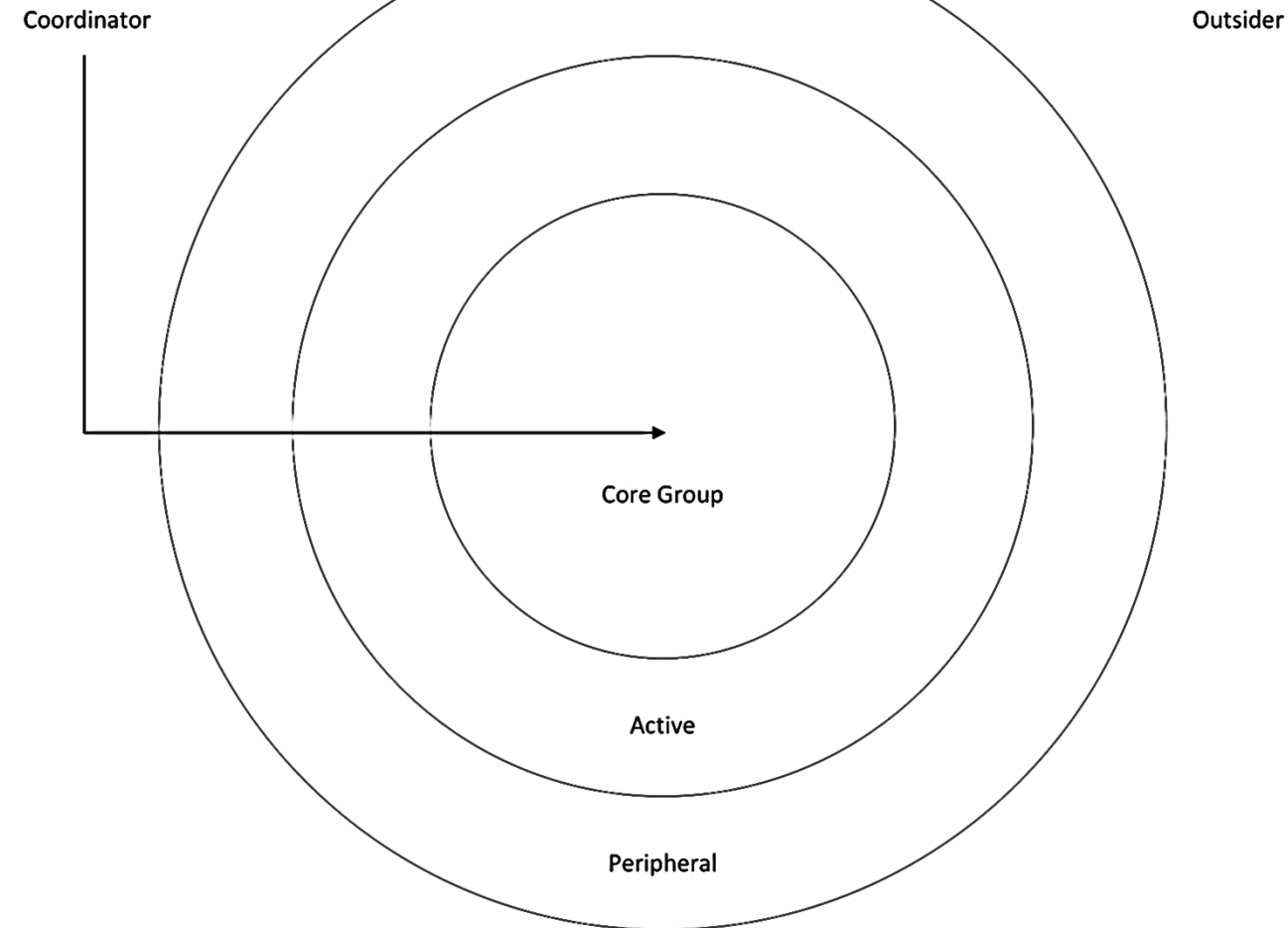
**Community:** how the community of practice operates.

**Practice:** the knowledge and skills of the community of practice.



# Literature Review

- “Most communities of practice do not have a name and do not issue membership cards” (Wenger, 2000:7)
- CoP require “constant attention” (Wenger, 2000:75)
- We are likely to belong to “several [CoP] at any given time” (Wenger, 2000:6)
- Newcomer help to sustain CoPs (Wenger, 2000:99)
- Negative experiences with other practitioners can affect legitimate peripheral participation (Graham and Estrada, 2019:20-21)



# Exclusion

*"...when I was at the florist, um. I wasn't enjoying it so much...I was told this actually a lot. I was told 'why you doing a degree in forestry. You don't need it...Why are you?..'"*

Artist-Teacher I

- You do not share the same interests or get excited about the same things (Wenger et al, 2002:151)
- Part-time working (Daichendt, 2010:133)
- This can affect legitimate peripheral participation (Graham and Estrada, 2019: 20-21)
- Full participation is not achieved, membership may remain peripheral (Hofsess, 2015:3)



# Literature Review

*“The stars we are given. The constellations we make. That is to say, stars exist in the cosmos, but constellations are the imaginary lines we draw between them, the readings we give the sky, the stories we tell.”*

(Solnit, 2008:165)

- CoPs in constellations do not have to be geographically close to each other or of the same kind (Wenger, 2000:127)
- Constellations are temporary (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)
- Constellations can be viewed as interconnected practices (Wenger, 2000:127)

# Artists

*“It is a few days after handing in my final BA project and I am eager to move out of my university accommodation and back to the family home. I jump on a train and think I will come back for my belongings later.*

*Back in the home I grew up in it each day it starts to dawn on my a little more. There will be no more studio, no more crits, no more tutorials. No more chatting about art.*

*I had been so keen to move back home that I had not pre-empted these things.”*

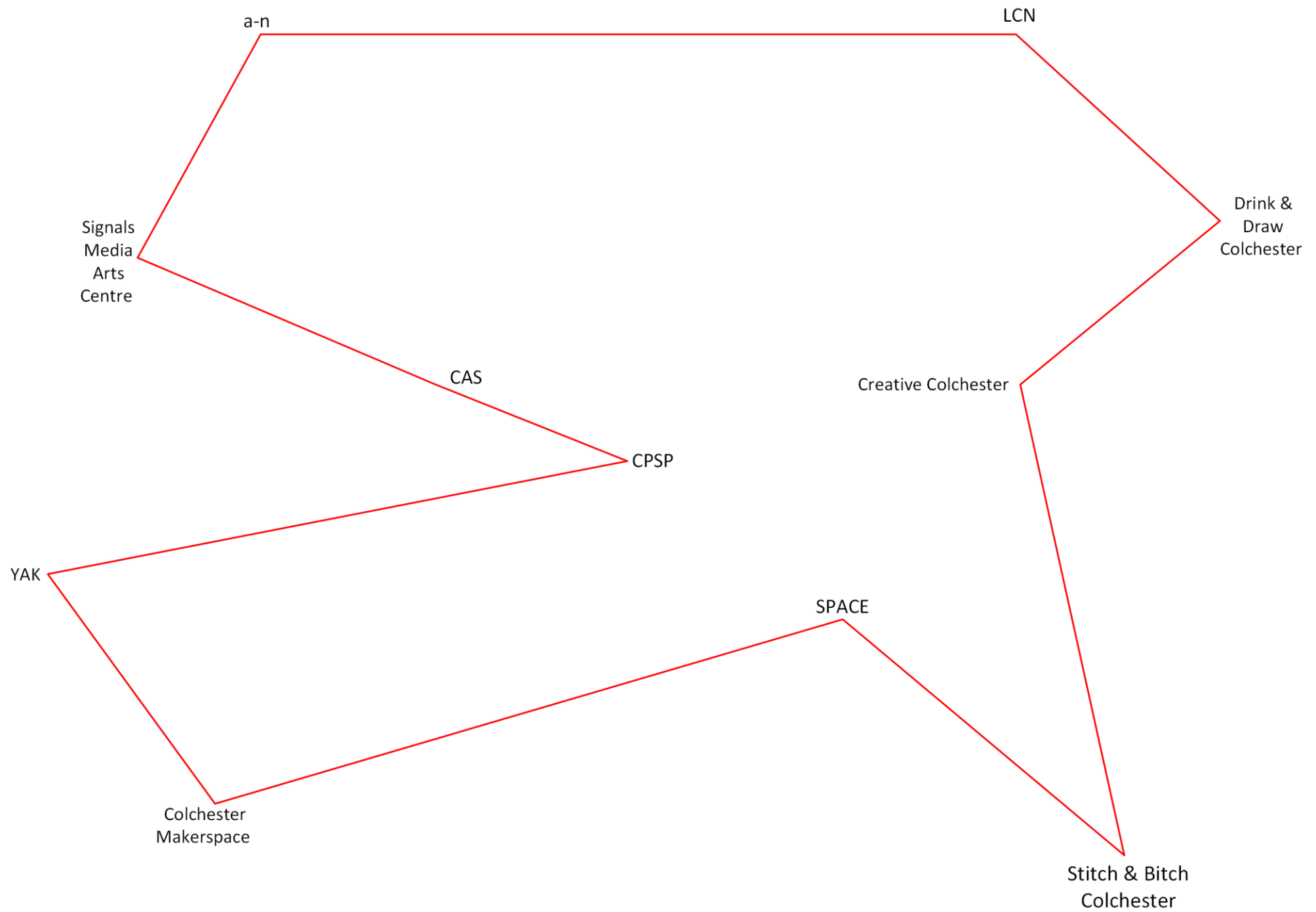
Abbie Cairns, What Now

- Support groups are important to artist survival (Sholis in Madoff, 2009:295)
- Artists must commune with their own kind to avoid isolation (Saltz, 2020:85)
- “Artists should be mentors and mentees at the same time” (Im in Vella, 2016:100)
- CoP for artists are incubated within the academy, but should last outside of it (Reardon, 2008:159, 249)

# Artists

*“...when I was a full-time freelance designer working in a studio on my only London, I missed people and interacting so I kinda need both. It wouldn't be enough for me just to be in my studio all day painting alone. I need people”*

Artist-Teacher B



# FE Teachers

*The trainee teacher classroom is a peculiar place where you are a trainee teacher and a student. It is a place of debriefs and cake. Breakdowns and balloons. Learning and laughing (and crying).*

*We gather here each Monday and Tuesday, full days. We spend almost too much time together. It is like being back at school. But this time everyone is much bigger, and problems are far more complex.*

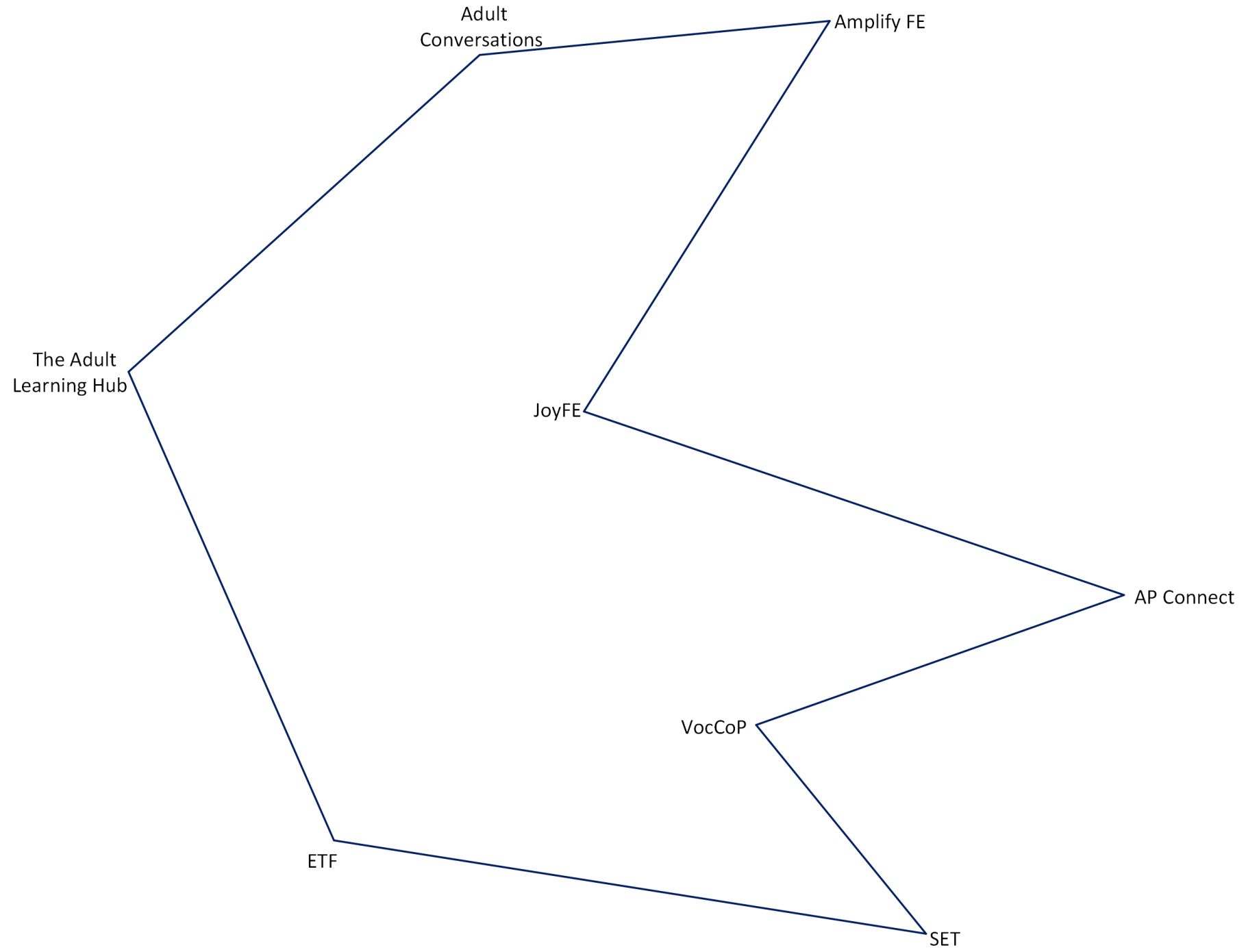
*If one of us has a problem, it becomes the problem of the group. We listen, problem-solve, and rant.*

*It is a readymade group of cheerleaders. There are late-night phone calls about planning and Friday nights spent together writing essays.*

*There is an innate sense of knowing what the person sitting next to you needs at any moment.*

*Abbie Cairns, The Trainee Teacher Classroom*

- Teacher professionalism and autonomy is tied to access to CoP (Hafez, 2015:163)
- There is a need for a new public organization for teachers in the post-compulsory sector, owned and run by the teachers (Groves, 2015:31)
- FE teachers are “attached to the practice of the occupation, the practice of teaching, and the practice of teacher training” (Fejes and Kopsen, 2014:266)



# Artist-Teachers

*"I arrive at a place that I am not sure is for me. I see faces of people that I do not know and overhear conversations that mean nothing to me. We all cluster in the designated room and make the most of the free tea and coffee. A hot water urn and tiny teacups and saucers.*

*Tables are laid out but there isn't a seating plan. Awkward eye contact is made, smiles are exchanged, and then greetings. I meet a mix of primary and secondary school art teachers, and we spend the day together jelly printing and chatting.*

*My contributions are cut short as all conversations lead back to discussing compulsory education. I question why I am here and create another print. Purple ink, layers of colour, texture, and crisscrossed patterns. I take some masking tape and stick it to the wall to dry. I wait and drink another cup of tea."*

Abbie Cairns, No Place

- The art classroom appears as the most notable CoP for artist-teachers (Daichendt 2010; Thornton, 2013:50; Bremmer et al, 2020:5, 10)
- To “maximise the benefits” of employing practicing artists as artist-teacher, they need to be welcomed into the settings CoP (Shreeve, 2009:158)
- Artist-teachers art part of “overlapping yet separate realms of ‘communities of practice” (Vella, 2016:xiv)
- Virtual CoP can “establish connections between and among art educators” (Sweeny, 2016:7)

# Artist-Teachers in ACL

*“I think unfortunately...the very nature it seems to be a very individualized role...I don't have any colleagues as such that I would talk with and there's one other adult education tutor at the college, but he works on different day to me, so I don't see him, which is a real shame. I've never met him”*

Artist-Teacher O

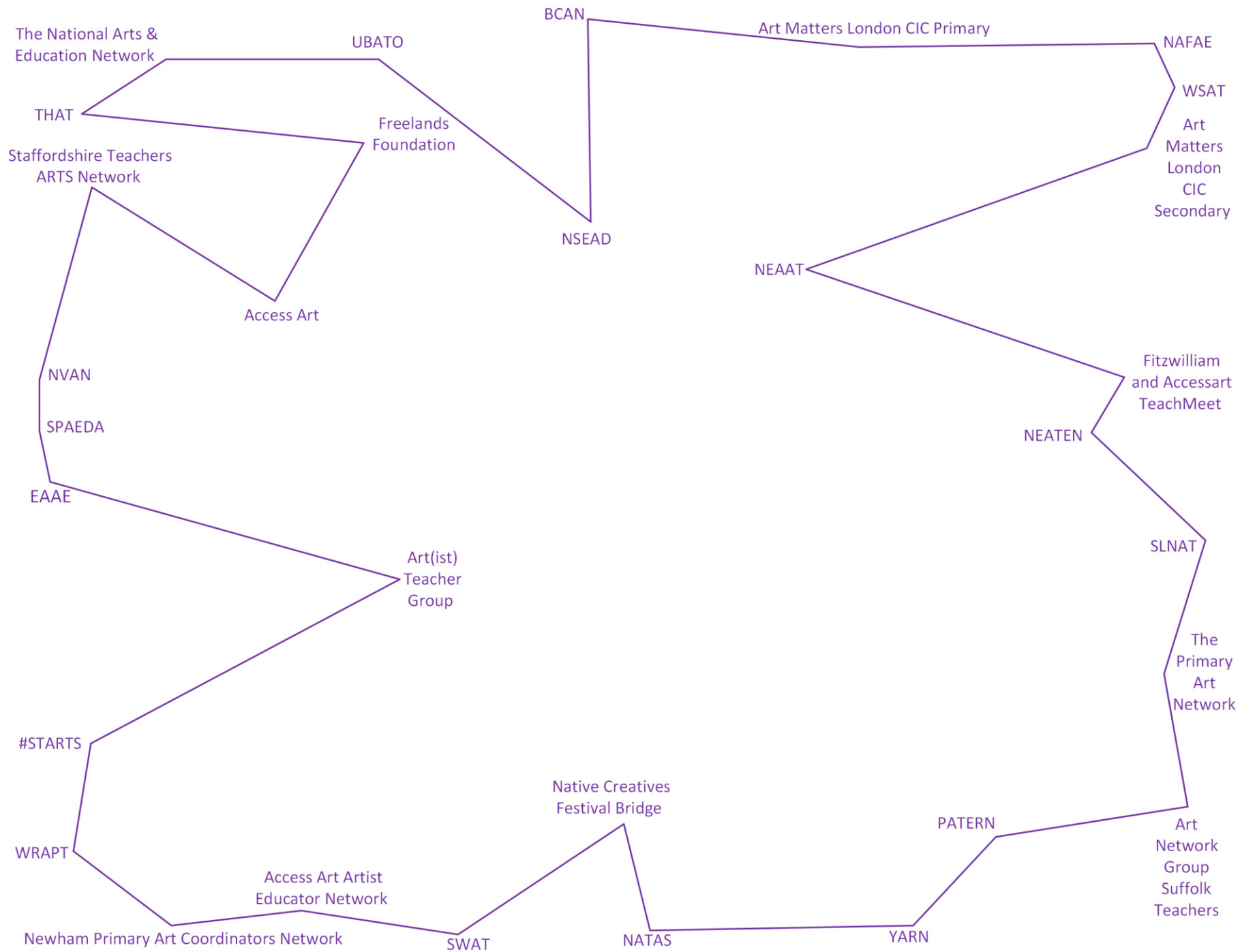
*“...because [Setting 6] cut their staff and cut the staff, it means that the, the whole college now splits into two curriculum areas...So now it's everyone who isn't in ESOL or supported learning is in the same one...So you're suddenly not...got so much in common”*

Artist-Teacher P



# VCoP

- CoP can take place “beyond...physical spaces, ”useful for teachers who want to engage in subject-specific communities (Hillier, 2015:167)
- VCoP “ensured that individuals isolated in their institution could also get involved in the wider discussions” (Rouxel, 2015:136)
- Virtual communities of practice are a practical solution to connecting those working across a large local (Adams, 2007:265)
- Kinship networks are reduced as techno-scientific transformations take hold (Guattari, 1989:19)
- Virtual methods of communication make mutual engagement possible (Wenger, 2000:74)



# Summary and future work

- Communities of practice are groups of people held together by common interest and mutual engagement (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000; Wenger et al, 2002).
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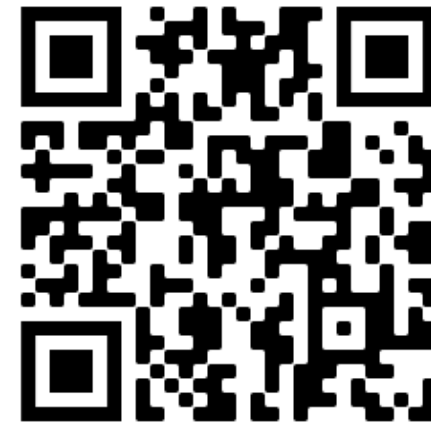
# Thank you for listening

## Communities of Practice and Constellations for Artist-Teachers in Adult Community Learning

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