

Communities of Practice and Culture: Can you escape it?

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Madelyn Blair, PhD

Pelerei, Inc.

Agenda

- *Opening Exercise*
- *Explore Meaning*
- *Interactions*
- *Implications*
- *Final Exercises*

Exploring Meaning: Culture

- Culture is composed of
 - Values/meaning
 - Behavioral norms
 - Identity
 - Language
- Culture is learned
- Culture is shared and defines boundaries
- Cultural factors are interrelated

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Exploring Meaning: Communities of Practice

- CoP are groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.” (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder)
- CoP are communities about ‘doing’ to pursue objectives in relationship to others
- CoP is not a team
- CoP is not a network
- CoP is a group

Exploring Meaning: Learning

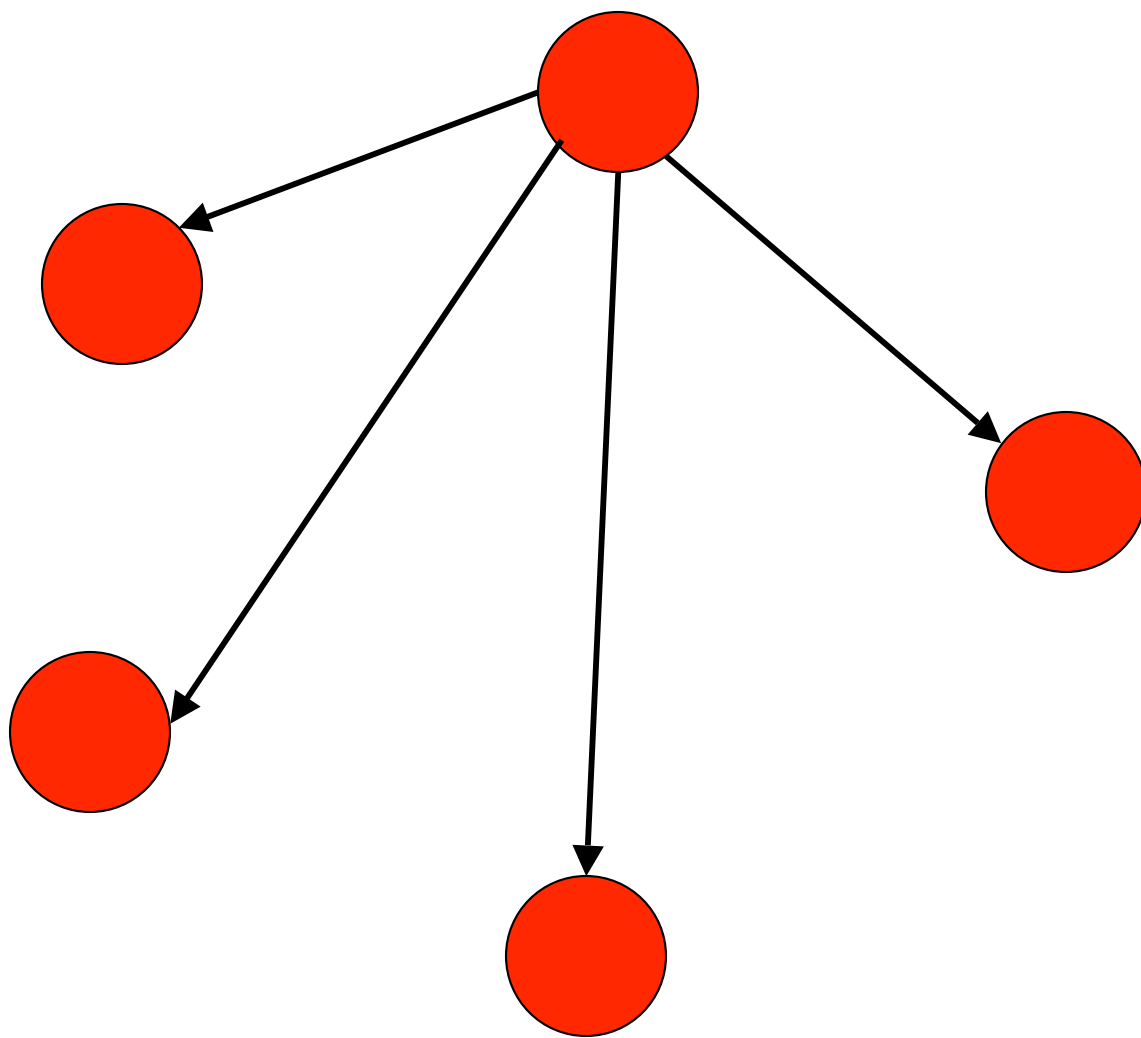
- Learning is inseparable from collective learning
- Learning methods must be embedded in authentic situations (Seely-Brown et al)
- Learning is a process of enculturation
- Learning is a process resulting from acting in situations
- Activity, concept, and culture are interdependent.

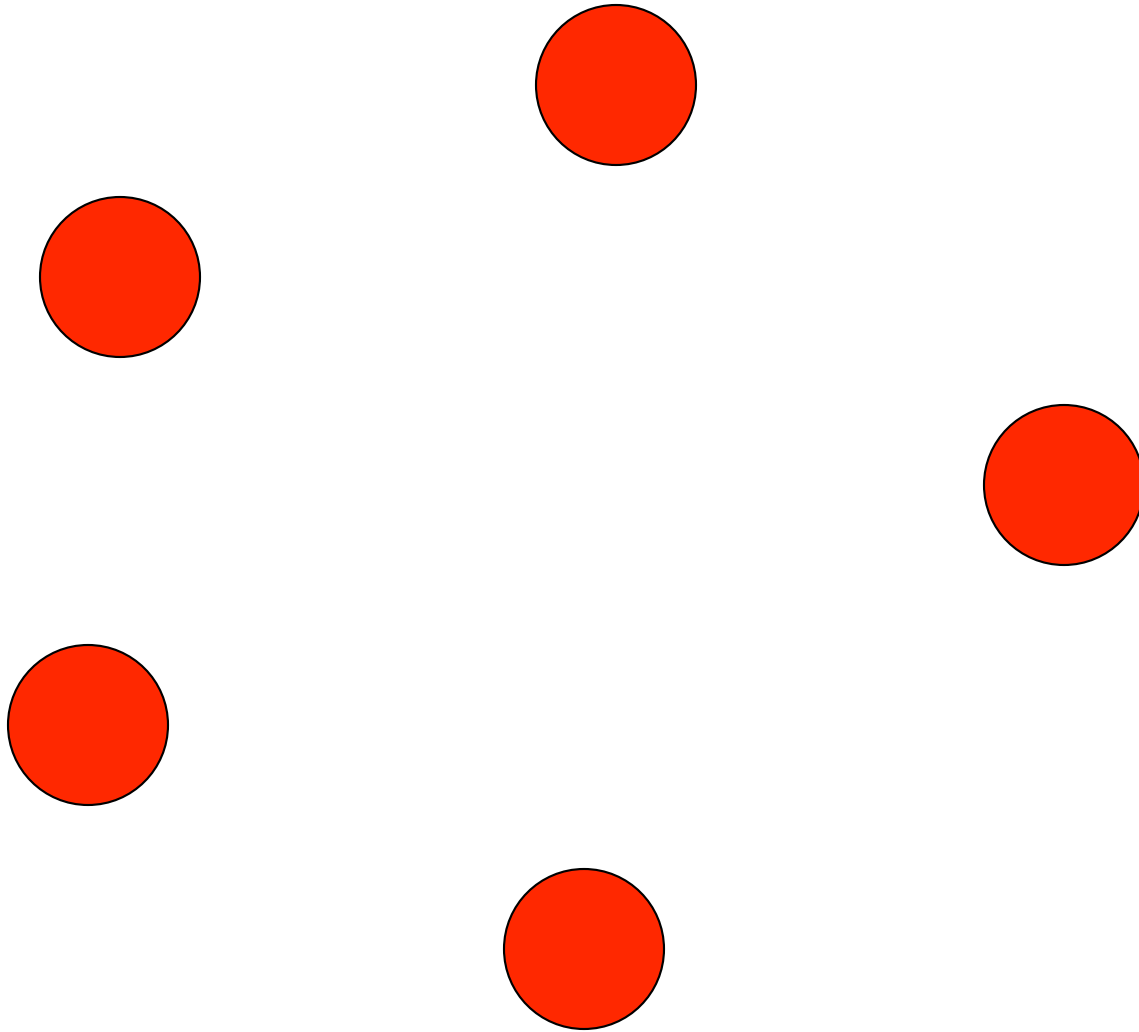
Exploring Meaning: Context and Learning

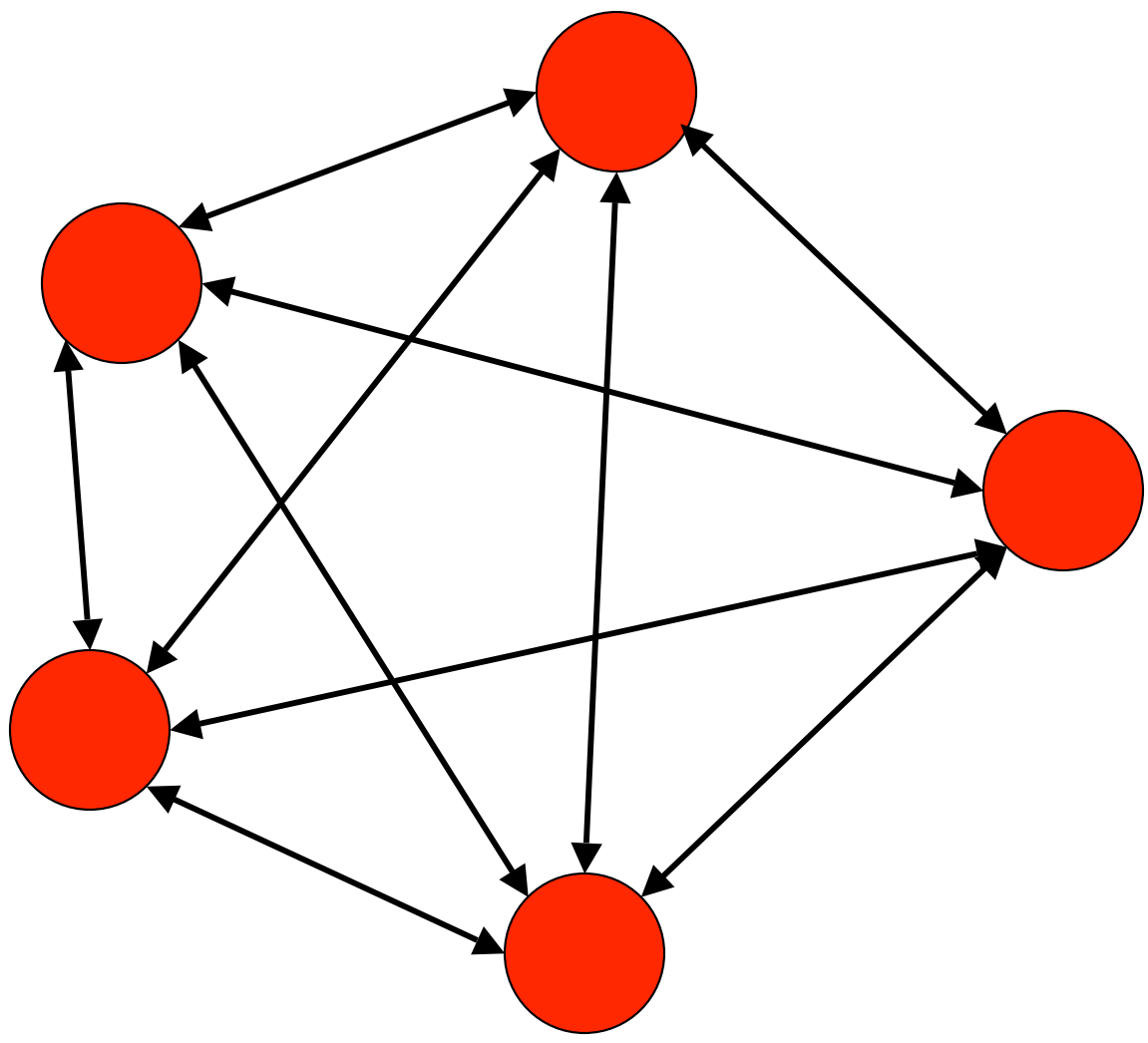
- A mismatch between two contexts is probably the single biggest reason ideas and insights are rejected.
- Even simple information needs a shared context to understand how to use it.

Exploring Meaning: Knowledge

- Knowledge is created in the space made by relationships using language
- Knowledge is enhanced by more diversity
- Knowledge needs space for discovery

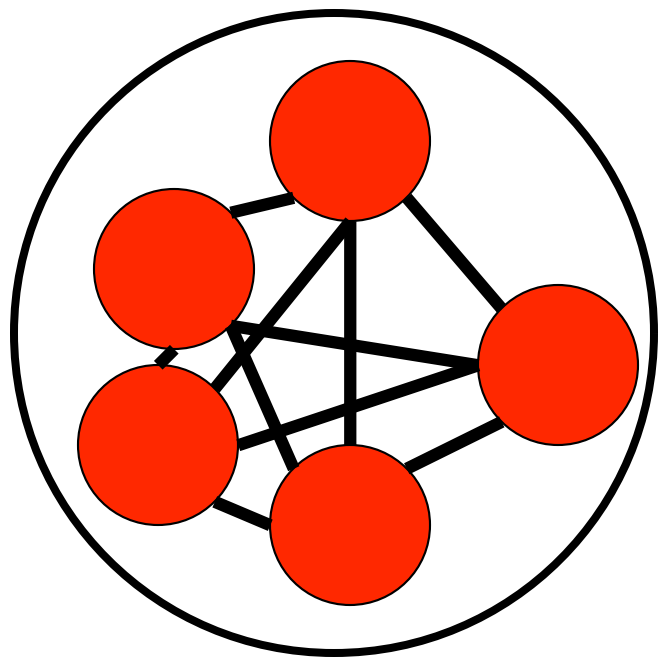


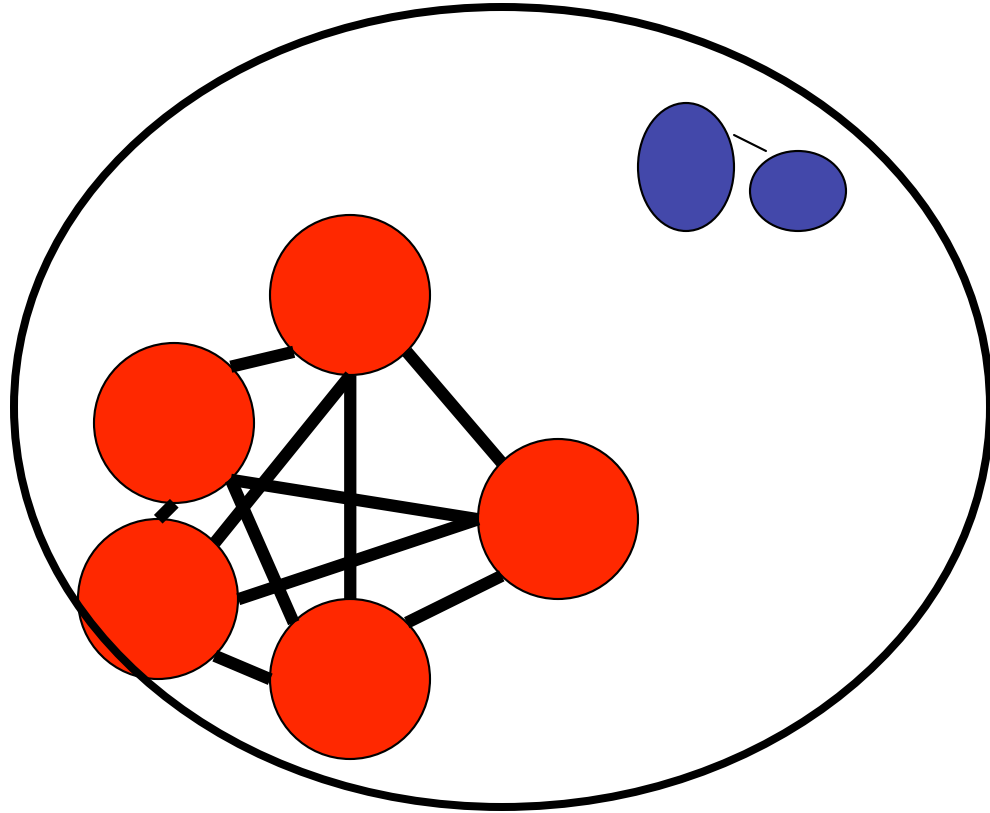


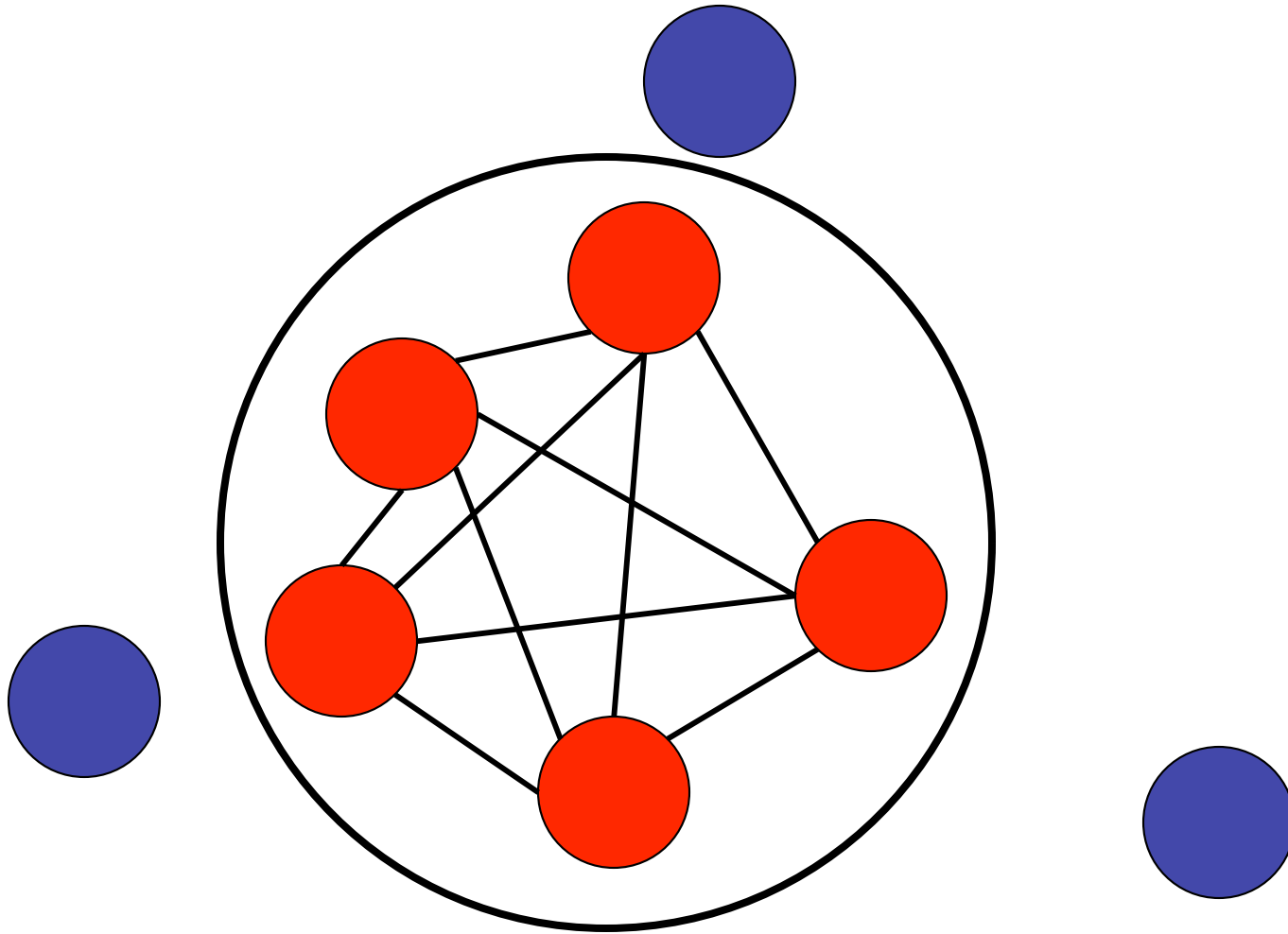


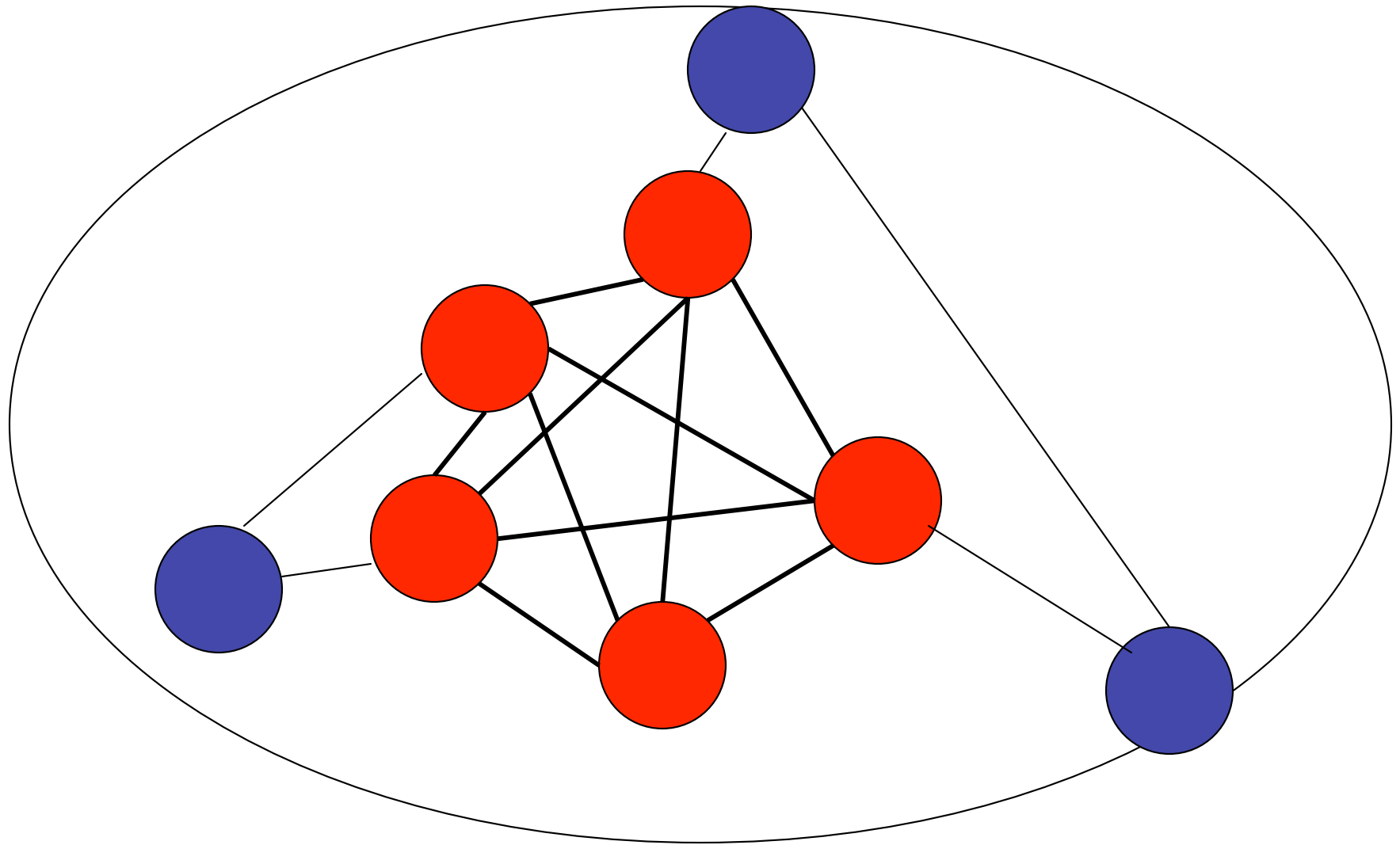
Exploring Meaning: Knowledge

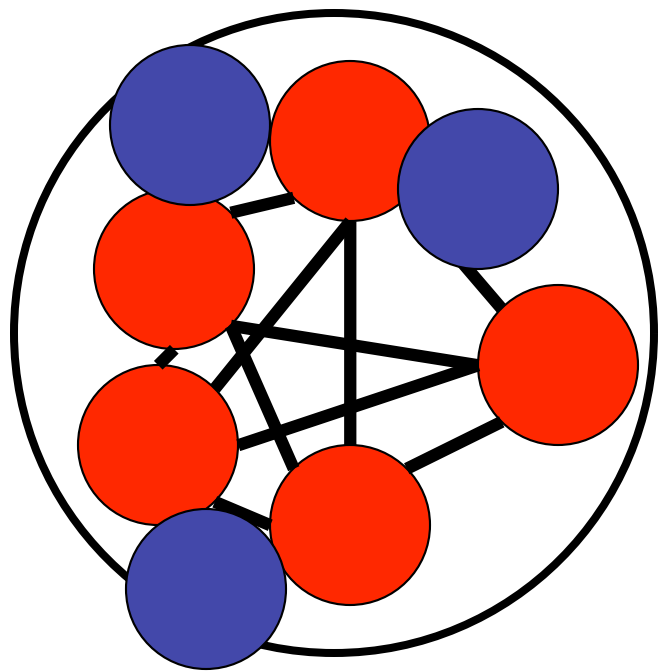
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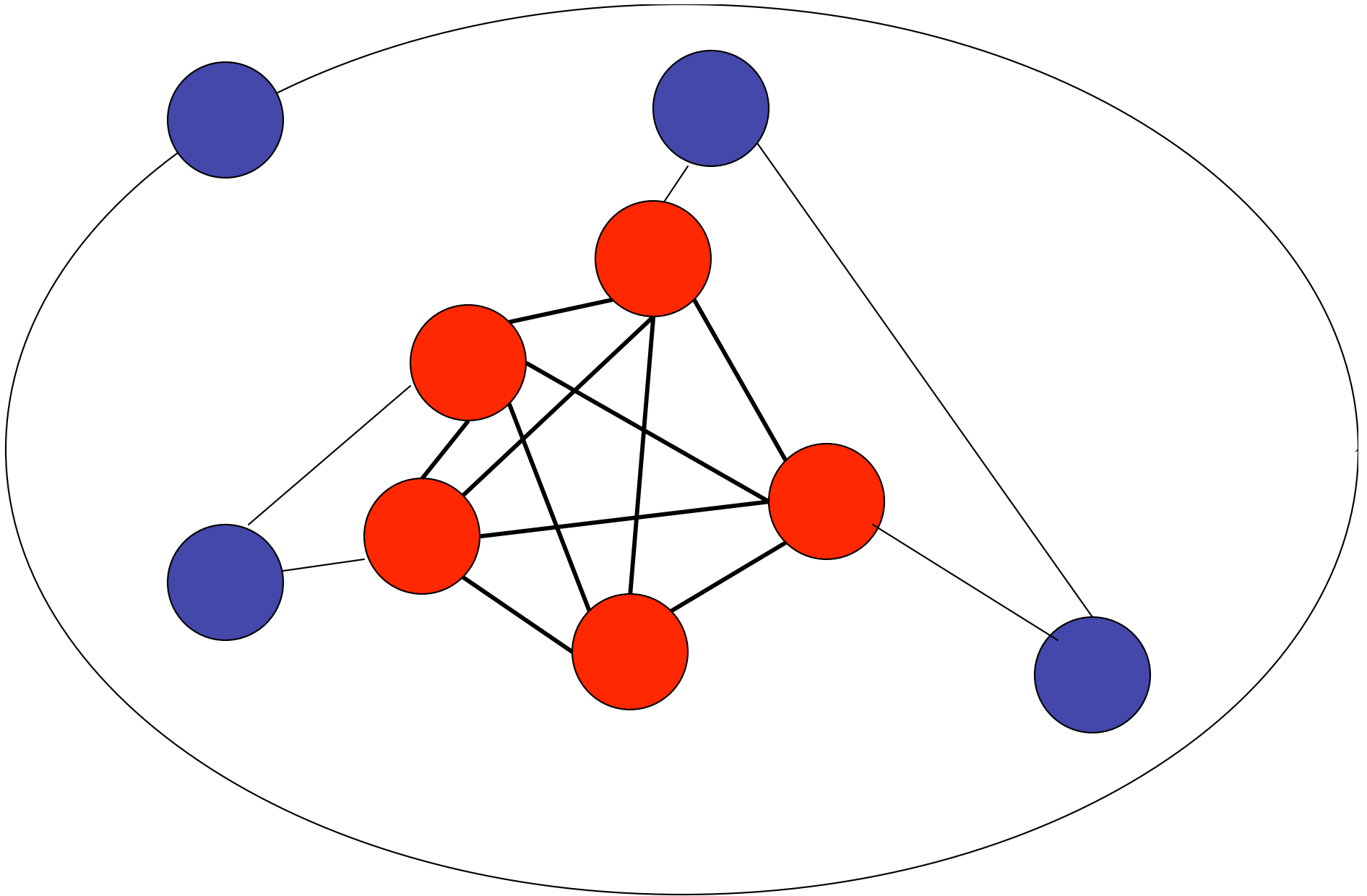












Interactions: Culture and Organization

- Organizations are social systems that create their own culture that is demonstrated through behavioral norms, values/meaning/beliefs, and a shared sense of identity/mission/vision
- Organizations are made up of many sub-cultures

Interactions: Culture and CoP

- CoP live within an organizational culture.
- CoP is made up of people from the organization and bring with them the same enculturation about the organization
- People are capable of playing multiple roles and doing so from different cultural backgrounds

Interactions: CoP and Organization

- CoP can serve the self, the organization, or the “profession”
- Organizations can smother, nurture, or starve CoP

Interaction: Learning and Organization

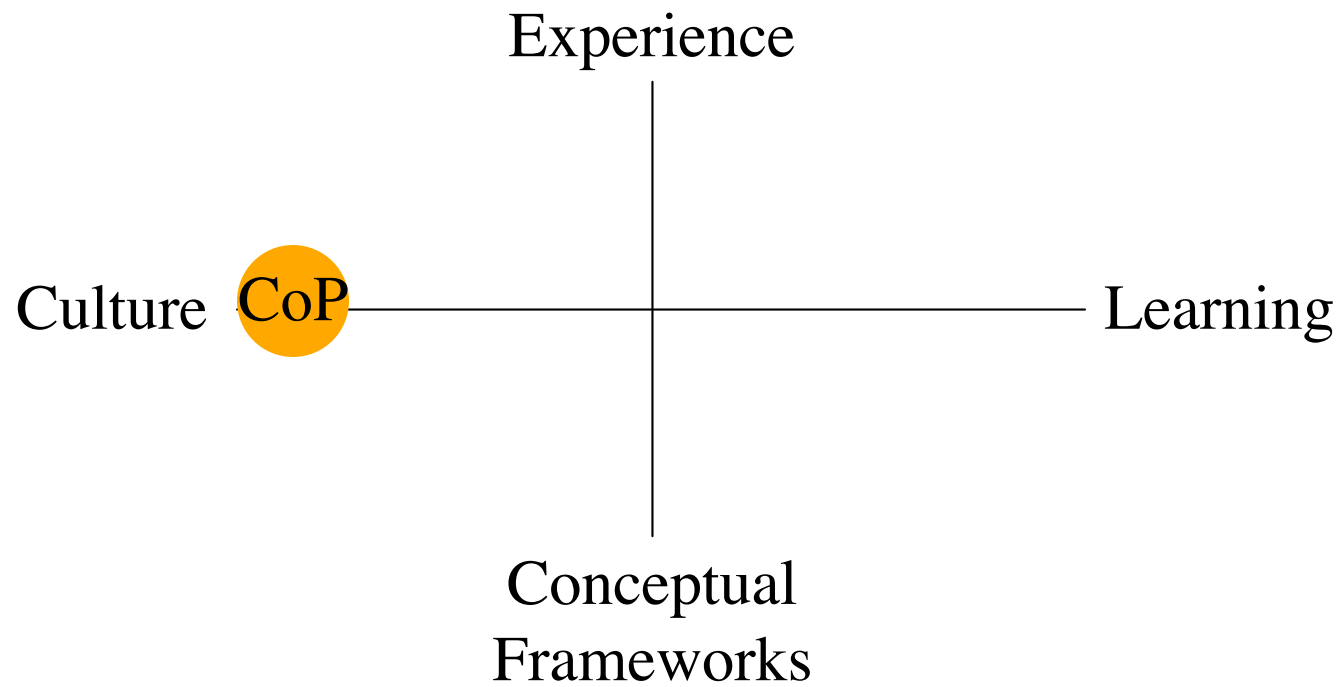
- Learning organizations implies one that is continuously transforming
- Learning organizations facilitate the learning of everyone
- Learning is most effective when there is similarity within group
- Knowledge creation is best done with a diversity among the group members (with sufficient common culture to allow for effective communication)

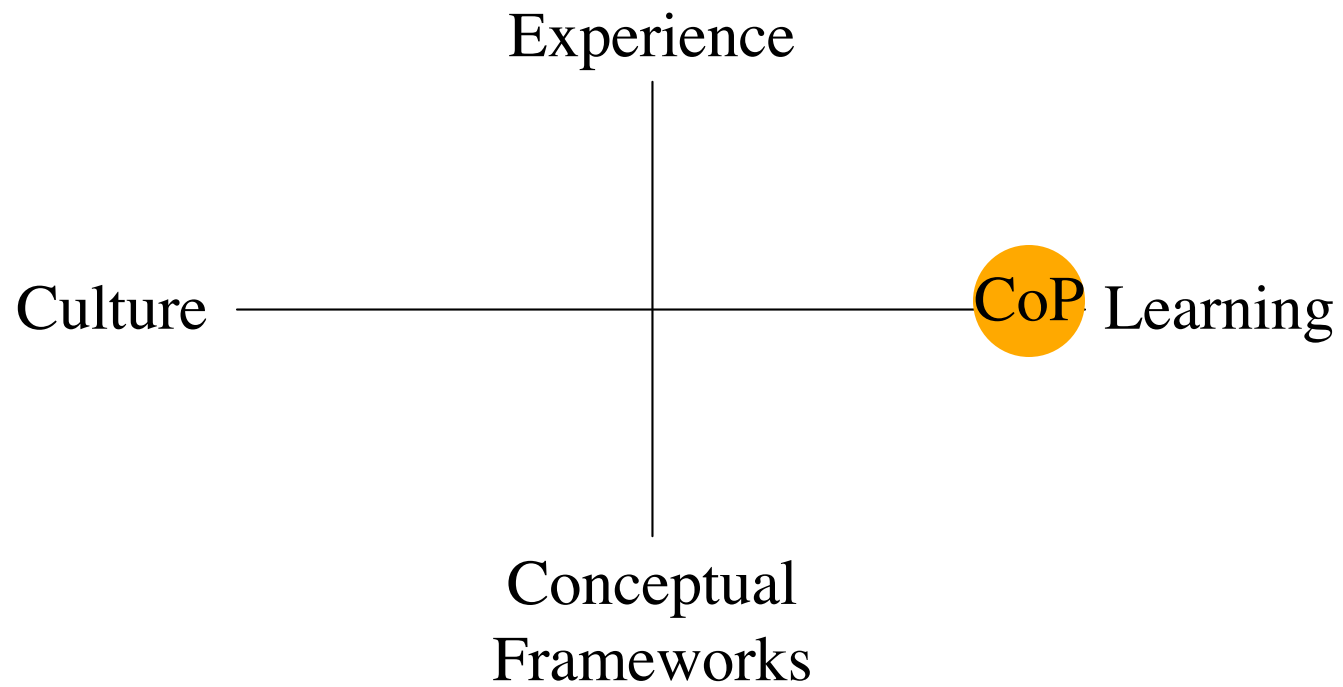
Interaction: Learning and CoP

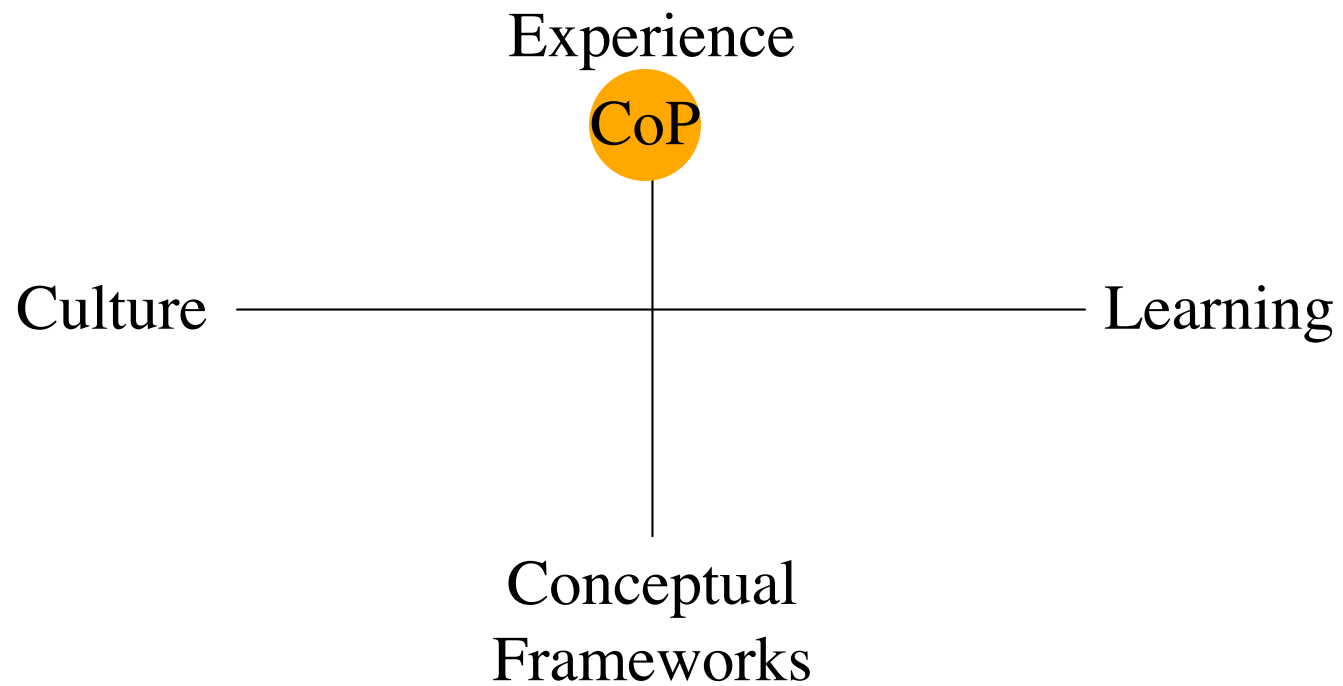
- Culture of the CoP must support learning in order to remain a CoP
- Sharing learning most when similarity within group culture
- Knowledge creation is best done with diverse perspectives

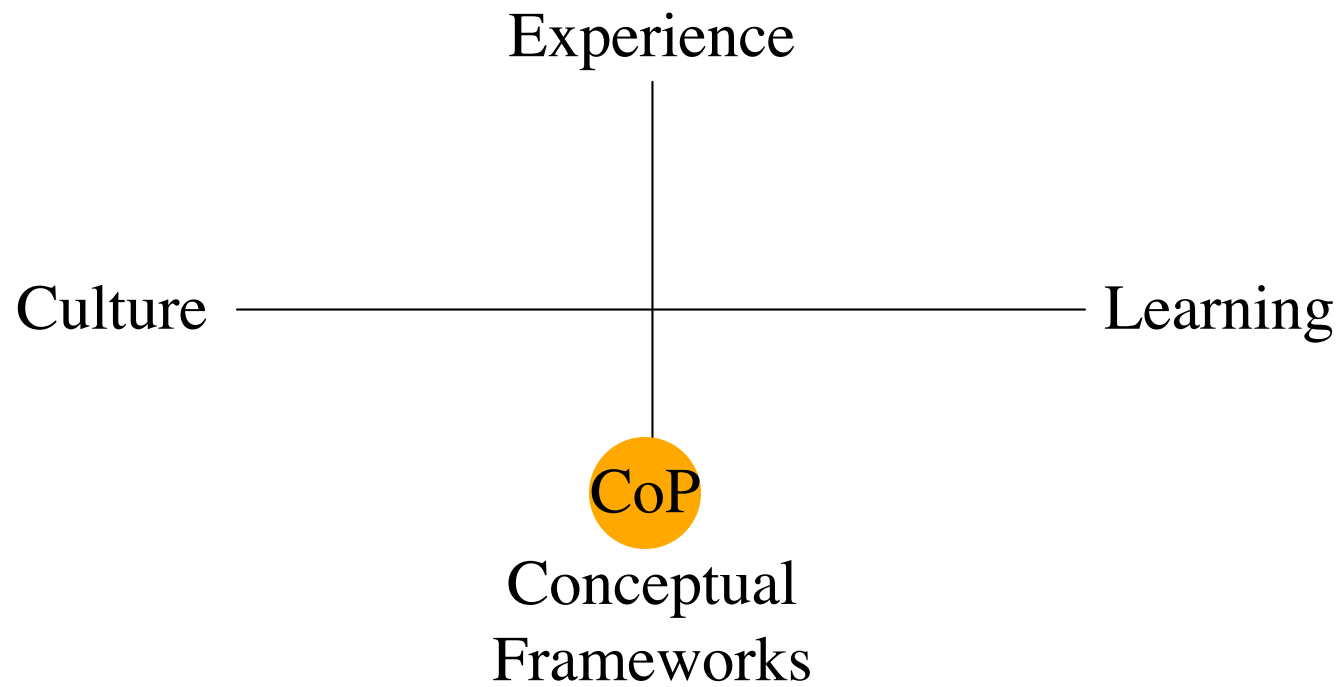
Implications

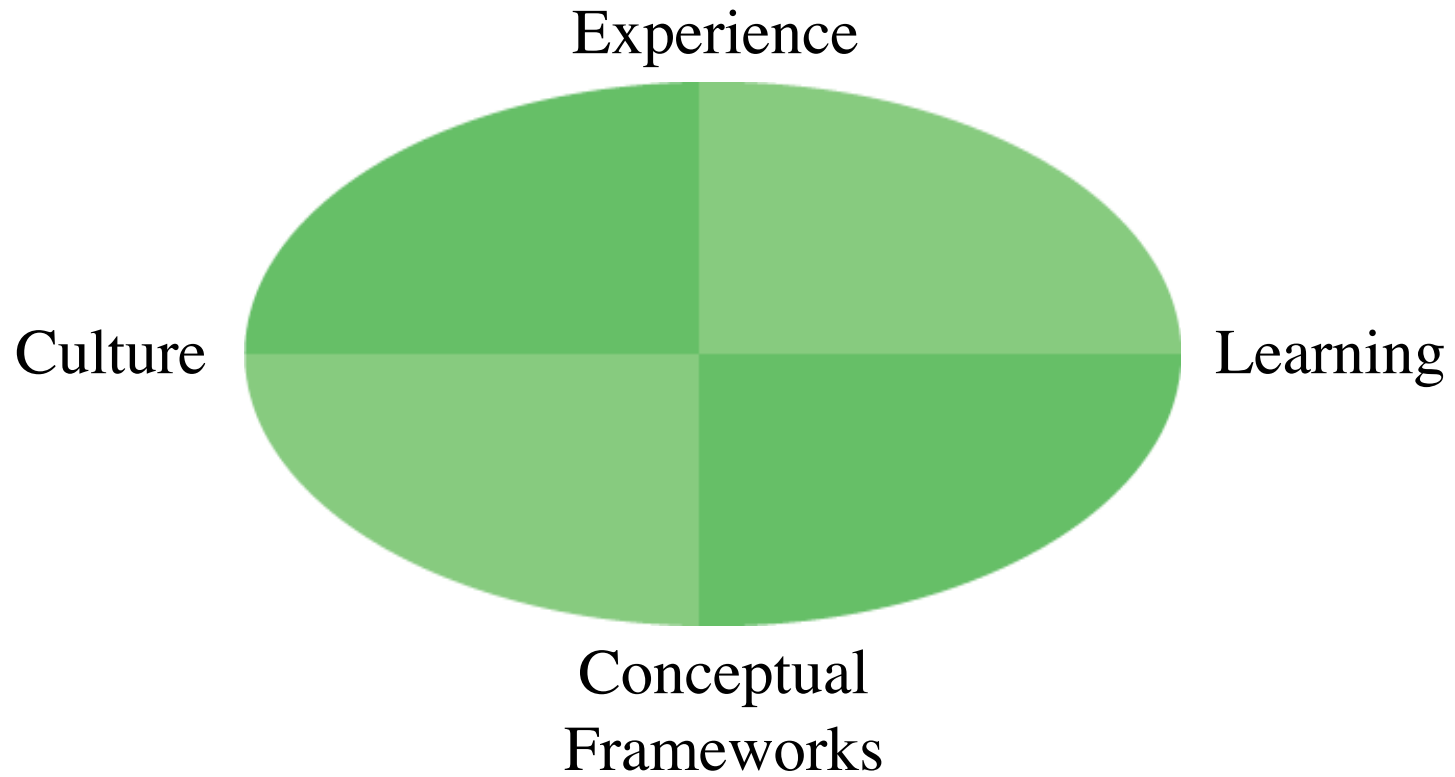
- Knowledge requires **diversity** and white space
- Learning requires **context**
- Organization requires **meaningfulness**

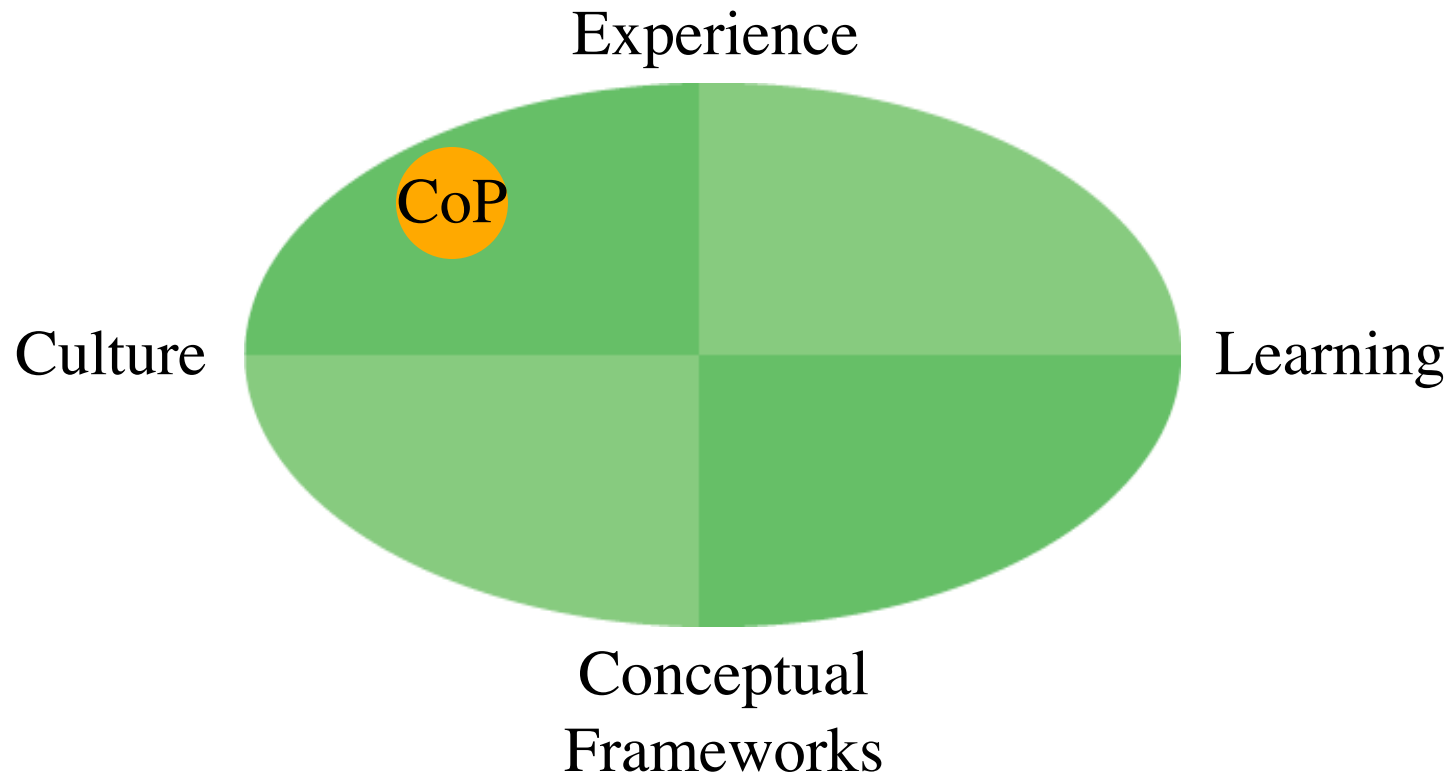


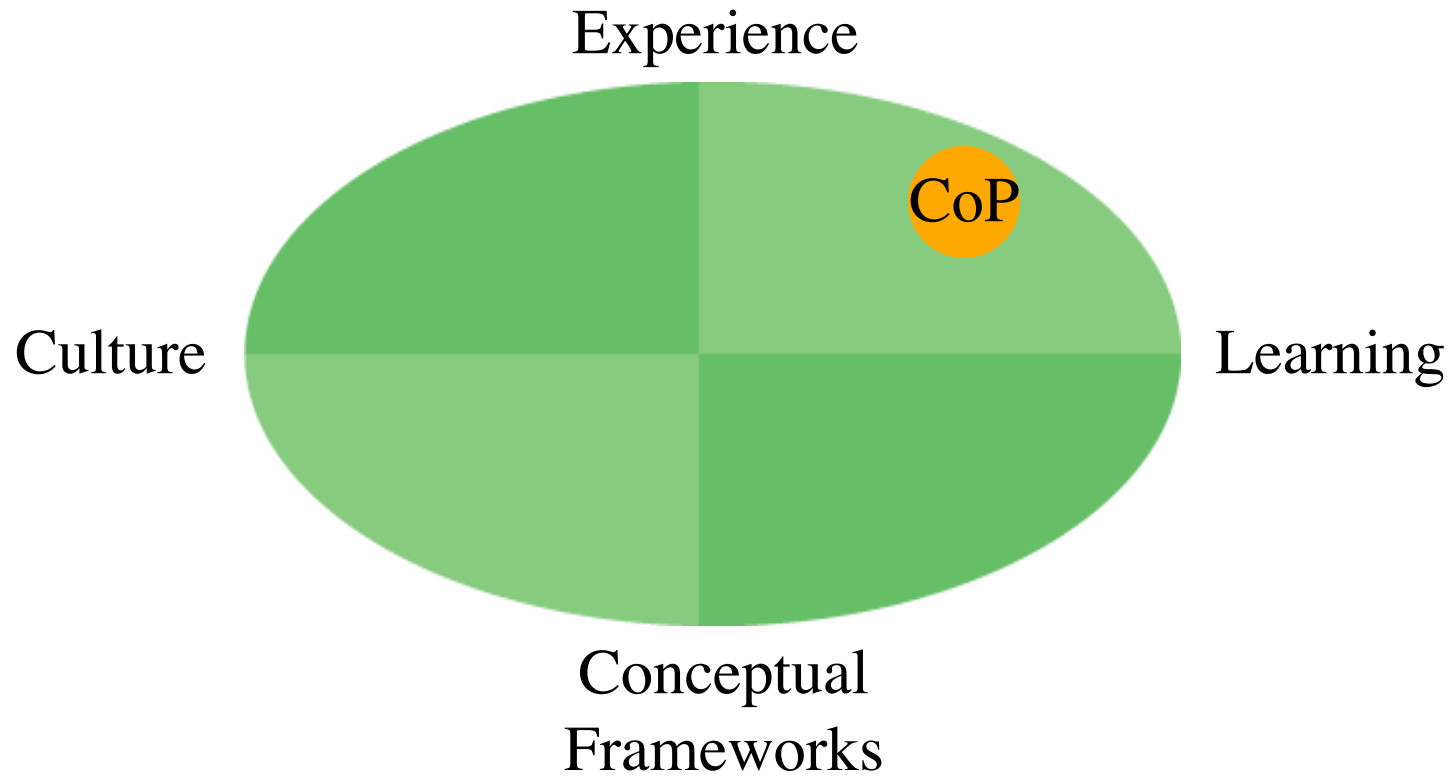


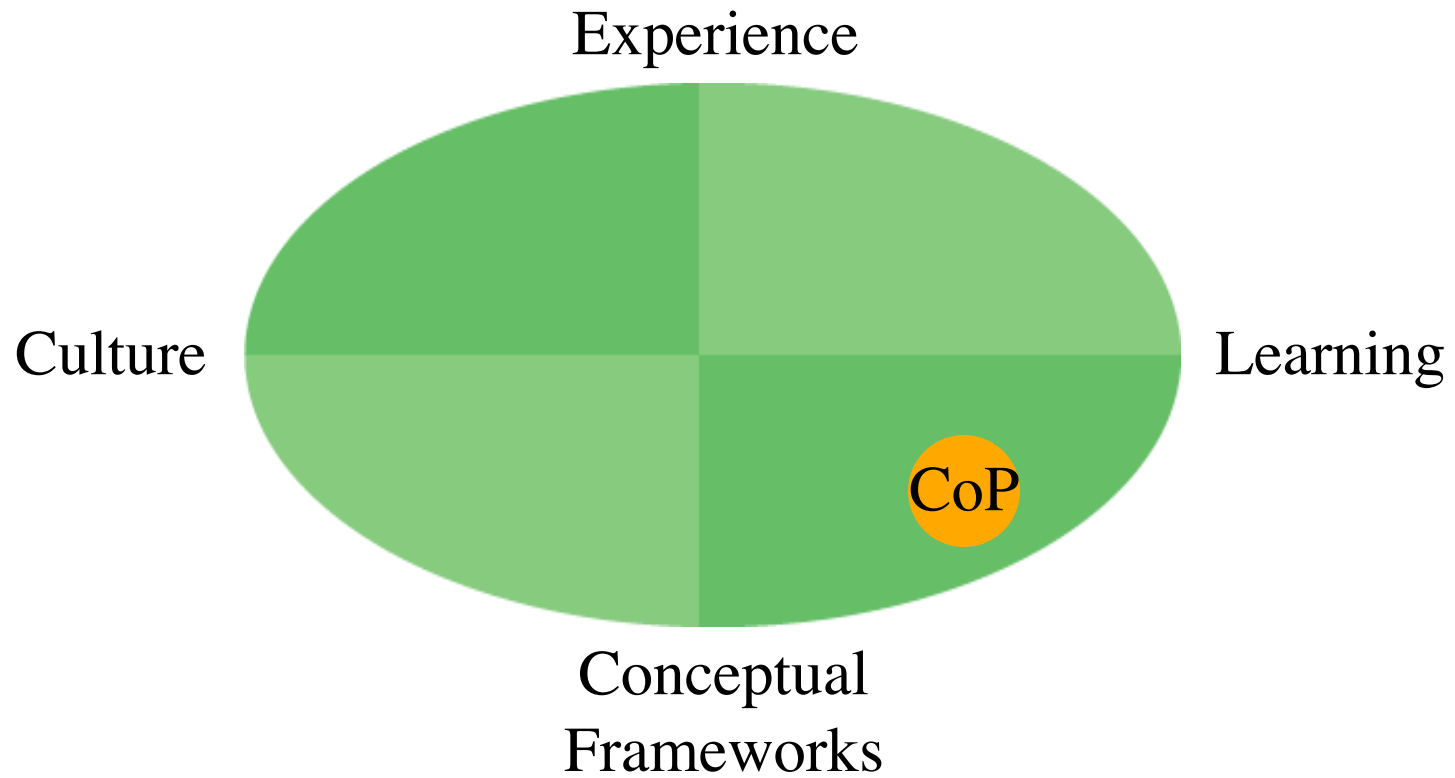


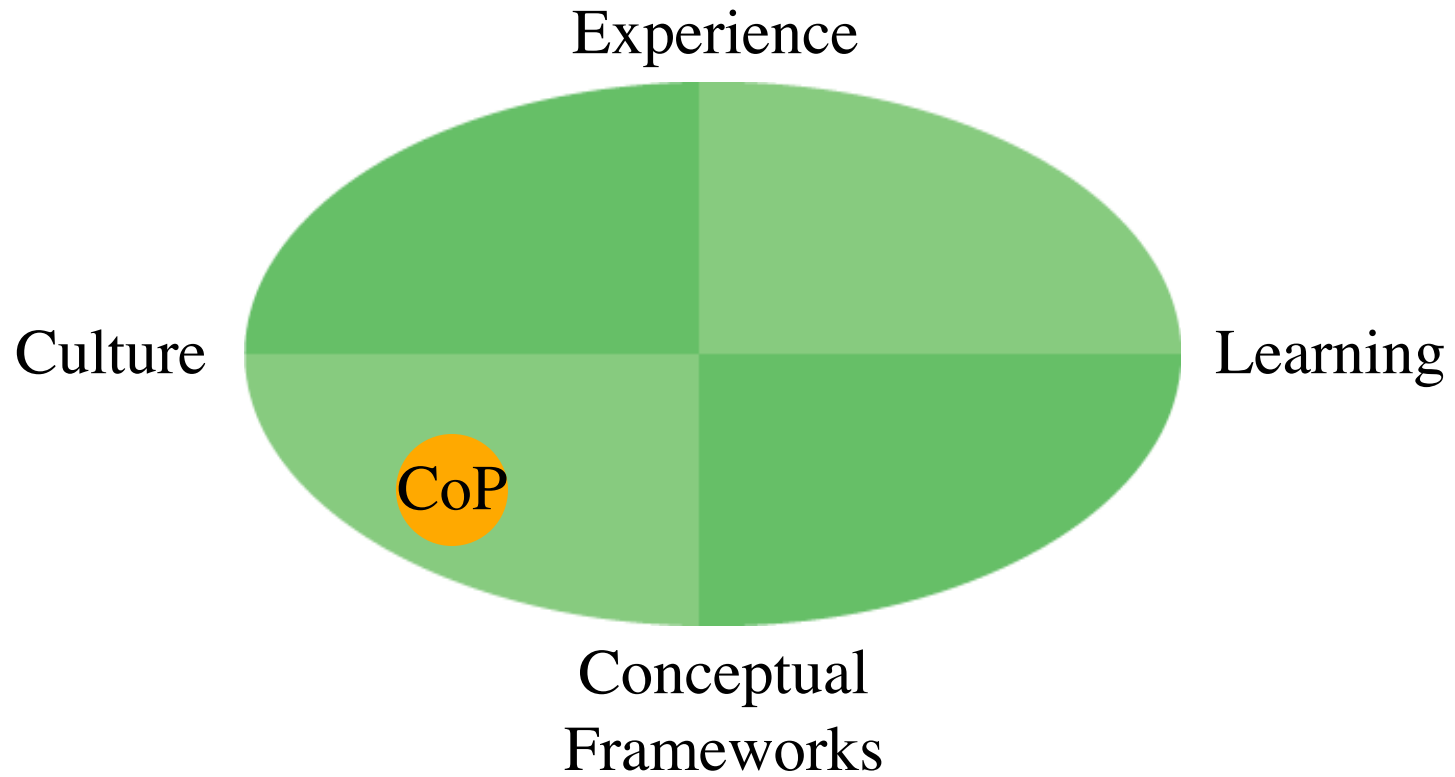


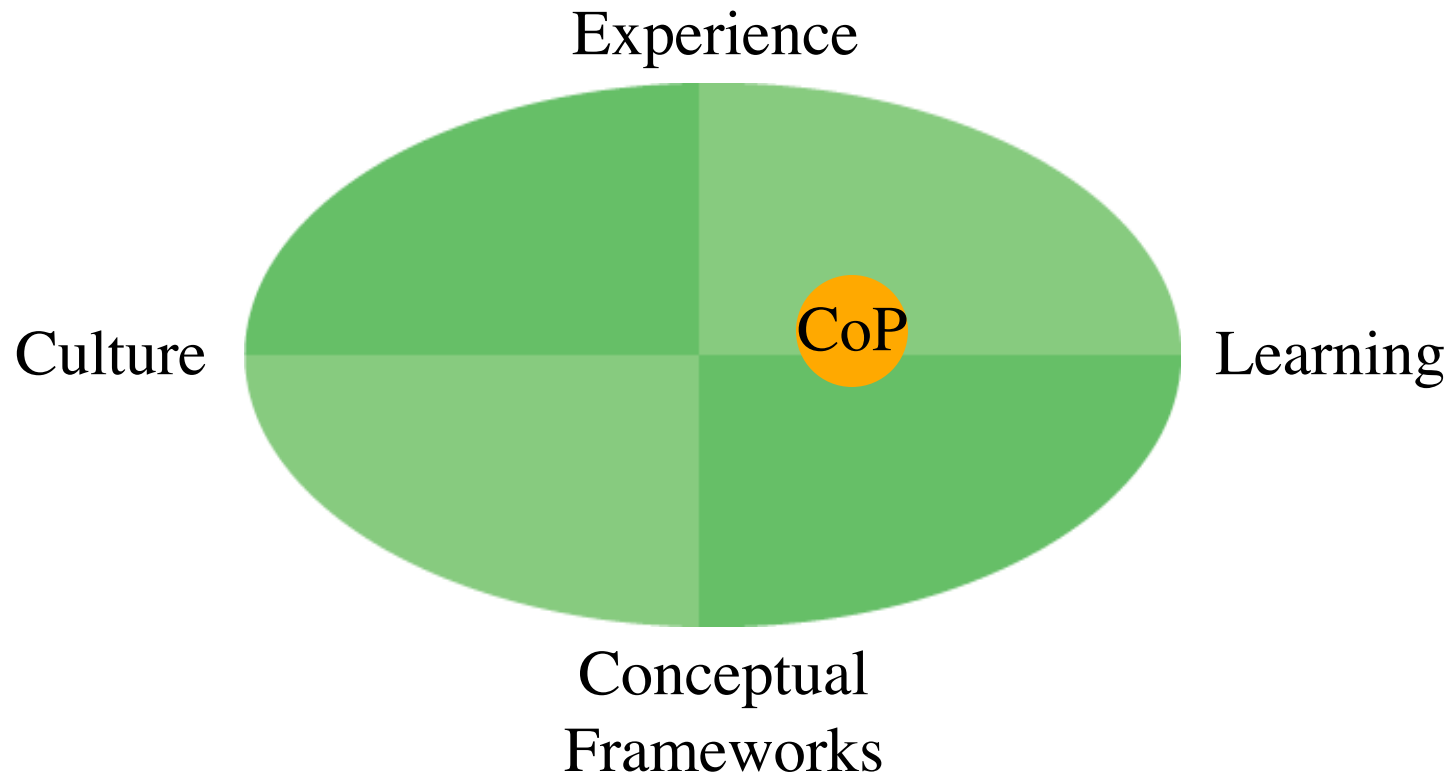












How do you keep the culture of the CoP close enough to the organizational culture to assure effective communication?

- Keep it close enough to continue to communicate
- Invite the other ‘language’ in
- Invite other stories in

How can you help the organization continue to feel comfortable about supporting CoPs?

- Give them what they need in their own language.
- Operative words: **need** and **language**
- Use story to relate to need

What in the corporate culture sustains CoP?

- Values: innovation, quality, productivity
- Behaviors: listening, “open door”, respond
- Identity: strong sense of mission
- Language: willingness to accept some ambiguity

How can CoP build culture that values knowledge sharing?

- Let energy, not structure, lead the way.
- Promote diversity
- Make it easy for information and people to come and go.
- Encourage both public and private activities.
- Serve the members.
- Rituals are helpful to structure.

What is the role of organization values in building CoP?

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