




## Making connections: Using arts-based approaches to explore ways of building supportive and sustainable networks

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# Recognition of Traditional owners and Indigenous cultures

## **Apmere-kenhe Acknowledgement of Country**

Anwerne Mpwarnte-arenye mape itele-areme, apmere nhenhe  
Arrernte-kenhe. Anwerne akaltyirreme itneke. Anwerne  
arrwekelenye mape uthene apmereke-artweye mape uthene itele-  
aretyeke.



# Overview

Introduction and preliminary reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Importance and challenges of connections in the professional context</li><li>• Concepts of weak and strong ties, network density</li></ul>
How do my connections sustain me in my work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poetry writing: 4-line stanzas</li><li>• Combine stanzas to create common poem</li></ul>
What are the challenges and resources of my networks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a plasticine sculpture that expresses the challenges and resources/supports</li><li>• Place sculptures to share</li></ul>
Feedback and reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group reflection on take-home messages</li><li>• Feedback for facilitators/organisers</li></ul>



# Context and Concepts

Importance and challenges of connections in the professional context

**Social network theory:** explores connections between people and groups

- How do our different networks support us and challenge us?

**Social capital and support:** all connections have different capacities to offer support and capital

- Emotional support, helpful information, resources

## **Weak and strong ties**

- **Strong Ties:** determined by interpersonal strength, e.g. friends, colleagues
- **Weak Ties:** lesser interpersonal strength or less frequent contact, e.g. acquaintances, looser professional connections
- **Strength of Weak Ties:** bridging between social clusters, new knowledge because accessing information from different circles

## **Network density**

- More networks = greater network density
- Greater network density = more access to support and resources
- Build network density by building weak ties (weak ties might become strong ties)
- Weak ties need focused development: we're not naturally open to weak ties: seems anti-intuitive
- Shared values/understandings not required to build weak tie connections

# Poetic Representation:

## How do my connections sustain me in my work?

“lived experience is lived in a body, and poetic representation can touch us where we live, in our bodies”  
(Richardson, 1997, p. 143)

1: What people and networking practices support you and your work?

Use a **Y-Chart** to generate these experiential memories of supportive networks.

2: Consider how **these stanzas** express the lived experience of resilience. How might you write about the connections that sustain you?

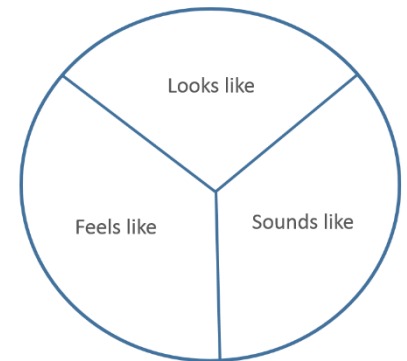
3: Create a themed **4-line stanza** to express these ideas.

-- Start each line with a verb

-- Possible themes: Feeling good working with others, people who inspire me, networking routines or practices that sustain me

4: In small groups, **combine stanzas** to create group poem.

Try to foreground patterns, connections, flow across the different stanzas.



Abandon bad books  
Savour good ones  
Turn your face to the sun.  
Cook.

Write a novel  
Stand at the edge of the ocean  
Roll dough with a heavy wooden pin  
Browse.



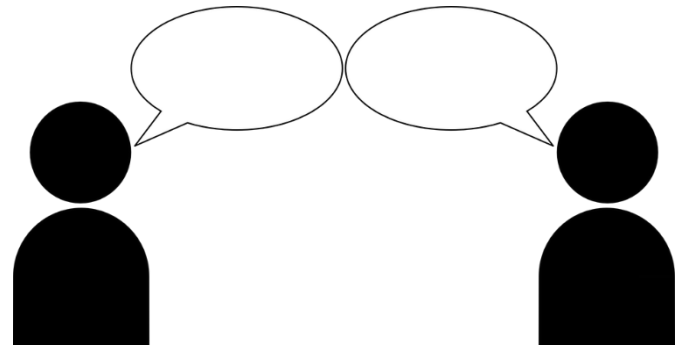
# Group Reflection

**Share in your small groups. This might include**

1. Stanza (Product)
2. Reflection on the ideas (Content)
3. Reflection on the art-making process (Process)

## **Whole group share:**

Pick one thing discussed in small group to share







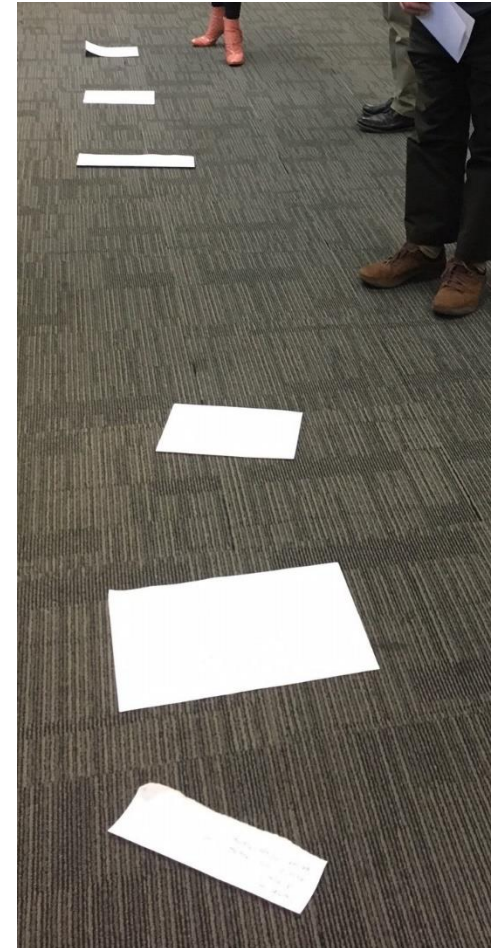
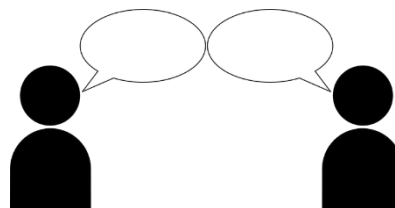
# Group Construction

## Create an extended poem

Try to foreground patterns, connections, flow across the different poems

## Reflect

What experiences of sustaining connections come across strongly?



# Sculptural Representation:

## What are the challenges and resources of my networks?

From verbal art-making to visual art-making



- Expressive play with plasticine- what are the possibilities?
- Transpose idea(s) from poem to sculptural form
- Use properties of materials to construct story, map, picture, model...



‘The visual provides expression where words fail. What have we been missing and what can be made visible when we work in **a form that is not only about, but also is the thing itself**’

Sousanis 2015, p. 59



What other aspects of your network constraints and resources emerge from the sculpting process?





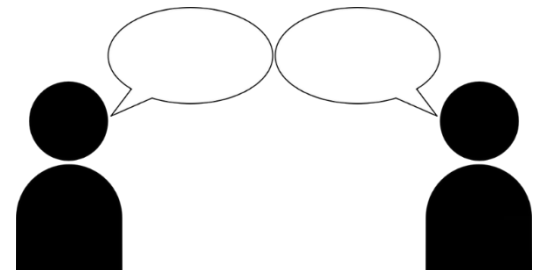
# Group Construction and Reflection

**Place pieces, one at a time, to emphasise connections and contrasts between pieces and what they express**

- Share as much or as little as you wish about what your piece is expressing and why you placed it where you have

## **Reflect**

- What common threads emerge about network challenges and resources?





# Discussion

- What was your experience of this process?
- What do you notice about these art-works?
  - Similarities/differences
  - Striking/appealing elements
- As a whole, what does this collection suggest about supportive and sustainable networks?
- Where next for you and your networks?



# Thank you!



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