

**Etienne
Wenger-Trayner**



About me

I am an independent thinker, researcher, consultant, author, and speaker. I am mostly known for my work on communities of practice, though I consider myself a social learning theorist more generally. Theoretically, my work focuses on social learning systems. I am trying to understand the connection between knowledge, community, learning, and identity. The basic idea is that human knowing is fundamentally a social act. This simple observation has profound implications for the way we think of and attempt to support learning.

Practically, these ideas are helping people who face all sorts of challenges, such as:

- design more effective knowledge-oriented organizations
- create learning systems across organizations
- improve education and lifelong learning
- rethink the role of professional associations
- design a world in which people can reach their full potential

I have been making a living helping people and organizations apply these ideas. I do consulting, workshops, and public speaking.

How I got here

I started my career working as a French teacher for many years first in Hong Kong and later in Denver.

There I was also an assistant principal for two years. Then I got interested in the use of computer in education. I got a B.S. in computer science from the university of Geneva and a Ph.D. in artificial intelligence at the University of California at Irvine, focusing on intelligent tutoring systems. In 1987 I joined the Institute for Research on Learning (IRL), where I started to work with anthropologist Jean Lave on the development of a new learning theory centered on the concept of community of practice. Since 1997, I have been helping organizations develop and implement social learning strategies based on communities of practice. I have also kept developing the theory, working with numerous universities, in particular at the University of Manchester, UK, where I am a visiting professor. I now continue both the theoretical and the practical dimensions of this work with my spouse and partner, Beverly Wenger-Trayner.



WENGER-TRAYNER

Here are bios of various lengths for use in announcements, programs, and brochures. Feel free to pick, mix, and match.

General-purpose bio (213 words)

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is a globally recognized thought leader in the field of social learning theory, communities of practice, and their application to organizations. He has authored and co-authored seminal articles and books on the topic, including *Situated Learning*, where the term “community of practice” was coined; *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning, and identity*, where he lays out a theory of learning based on the concept; *Cultivating Communities of Practice: a guide to managing knowledge*, addressed to practitioners in organizations who want to base their knowledge strategy on communities of practice; and *Digital Habitats*, which tackles issues related to the use of technology. Etienne’s work is influencing both theory and practice in a wide range of disciplines. Cultivating communities of practice is recognized as a key component of a learning strategy in a rapidly growing number of organizations across private and public sectors, including business, government, international development, healthcare, and education. Etienne helps organizations apply his ideas through consulting, public speaking, and workshops. He is also active in the academic sphere. He regularly speaks at conferences, conducts seminars, and is a visiting professor at the universities of Manchester and Aalborg. He recently received an honorary doctorate from the university of Brighton.

Shorter bio (150 words)

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is a globally recognized thought leader in the field of communities of practice, who was featured by *Training Magazine* in their “A new Breed of Visionaries” series. A pioneer of the “communities of practice” research, he is author and co-author of seminal articles and books on the topic, including *Situated Learning*, where the term was coined, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, where he lays out a theory of learning based on the concept of communities of practice, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: a Guide to Managing Knowledge*, addressed to practitioners in organizations, and *Digital Habitats* dealing with issues related to technology. His work as researcher, author, and consultant has influenced both thinking and practice in a wide variety of fields, including business, education, government, and social theory.

Even shorter bio (100 words)

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is a global thought leader in the field of communities of practice and social learning systems. He is the author and co-author of seminal books on communities of practice, including *Situated Learning*, where the term was coined, *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning, and identity*, where he lays out a theory of learning based on the concept, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, addressed to practitioners in organizations who want to base their knowledge strategy on communities of practice, and *Digital Habitats* on technology for communities. Etienne helps organizations in all sectors apply these ideas through consulting, public speaking, teaching, and research.

Versions of mini-bios

Not in any order or with any preference. Choose the one that best matches your needs.

Version 1

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is an independent researcher, consultant, author, and speaker. He has published seminal books on learning and communities of practice. His work has influenced both theory and practice in many fields, including education, business, government, and the non-profit sector.

Version 2

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is an independent author, practitioner, and thought leader in the field of social learning theory and its application in various sectors, including business, government, international development, healthcare, and education. He is best known for his work on communities of practice and has authored and co-authored seminal books on the topic. He pursues this inquiry through writing, consulting, keynotes, workshops, and visiting positions in universities.

Version 3

Etienne Wenger-Trayner is a thought leader and consultant in the field of learning systems. He is the author and co-author of seminal books on communities of practice, including *Situated Learning*, where the term was coined, *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning, and identity*, where he lays out a theory of learning based on the concept, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, addressed to practitioners in organizations who want to base their knowledge strategy on communities of practice, and *Digital Habitats*, on technology and communities.

Version 4

Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Ph.D., researcher, author, and consultant, is a recognized pioneer and thought leader in the field of communities of practice and social learning theory. He is the author and co-author of *Situated Learning*, where the perspective was introduced, *Communities of Practice*, which lays out the learning theory, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, for practitioners in organizations, and *Digital Habitats*, on technology for communities.

Click on the link below to access my images folder.



Books



**Learning in landscapes of practice
boundaries, identity, and knowledgeability in practice-based
learning**

Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Mark Fenton O'Creevy, Steven Hutchinson, Chris Kubiak, Beverly Wenger-Trayner

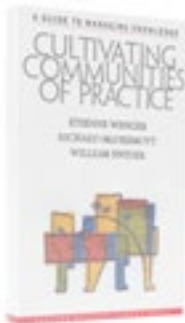
Routledge, 2014or.



**Digital habitats
stewarding technology for communities**

Etienne Wenger, Nancy White, John Smith

CPsquare Press, 2009



**Cultivating communities of practice
a guide to managing knowledge**

Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, William Snyder

Harvard Business School Press, 2002



**Communities of practice
learning, meaning, and identity**

Etienne Wenger

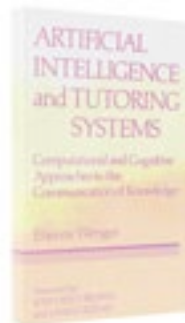
Cambridge University Press, 1998



**Situated learning
legitimate peripheral participation**

Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger

Cambridge University Press, 1991



**Artificial intelligence and tutoring systems
computational and cognitive approaches to the
communicationof knowledge**

Etienne Wenger

Morgan Kaufmann Press, 1987 (out of print)



Personal bio

Etienne Wenger-Trayner

Info you won't find on a professional bio

I grew up in Switzerland in a small town called Neuchâtel. It is by a large lake of the same name. Across the lake, in the distance, you can see the Alps on a clear day. Could be why I always longed to go far and explore.

In my youth, I was a hippie. I also lived in an ashram, both in India and Switzerland.

I was a French teacher, first in Hong Kong for three years, then in Denver for two. All this sparked my interest in learning, especially after I started to read the work of Maria Montessori.

Most of the people in Hong Kong were taking French to gain a few points on the Canadian immigration scale and the kids in Denver were largely uninterested. I wanted to have something more relevant to teach. So, I returned to Switzerland to study computer science at the University of Geneva. This led me to become interested in computer-based approaches to learning.

After moving to the University of California at Irvine to do a PhD, I became interested in artificial intelligence and its applicability to education. A broad survey of that field was the topic of my first book. This early book got me invited to a new, interdisciplinary research outfit in Palo Alto, the Institute for Research on Learning.

There I started to work with an anthropologist, Jean Lave, who had been studying traditional apprenticeship. Together, we started the line of research on communities of practice. Those were deeply formative years. When the institute ended, I went off on my own to follow where the concept of community of practice was being adopted.

I have been married three times. My first wife, Anita, was Chinese; my second wife, Paula, American. I am now married to Beverly who is my ideal partner in life and work. I guess third time's the charm.

Bev and I agreed we would live in California until my youngest went to college. After that, it would be Bev's turn to decide where we live. She chose Portugal, where she had lived more than 20 years before our marriage. So, after spending 37 years in California, I have moved to Portugal. We found the perfect house to both live and start our Social Learning Lab. It took a lot of work to restore it

from years of neglect, but we could not be happier with it.

Two of my own three children still live in California. Jad runs Heart Beet Gardening, an organic urban-farming company in LA. Sheena Birrittella is an aspiring film composer. The third, Kehan, is studying music at the Berklee College of Music. Bev's two children live in California and the UK.

When I am not working on social learning issues, I like to do carpentry. I built some large meeting tables for the social learning lab. Right now, I am redoing the kitchen. For exercise, I like to take power walks and swim. I have always been interested in music. I studied the classical guitar and music theory as a kid. But nowadays, I enjoy improvising on the piano. Nothing very sophisticated, just nice melodies with a very basic, classical accompaniment.

Contact me

WEBSITE

<https://wenger-trayner.com/>

EMAIL

etienne@wenger-trayner.com

ADDRESS

Social Learning Lab Sesimbra, Portugal

Social Media

