

# Mapping stardust

An attempt to make visible  
my intercultural practice.

Frances Richens  
MAIP Unit 2  
2025

[Click to view a video of the paper map](#)








[View of the first unfolded page](#)

We are all made of stardust. Essential elements - recycled too many times to count already - fused together into unique beings for the briefest moment of time. We put labels on the boundaries between us. You and I. Define our identities in relationship to one another in ever-more specific ways. Our lives are shaped by these alliances and distinctions. Bodies moving through space, bound by undeniable forces that keep us cycling in and out of each others' lives.

The trajectory of my practice as an intercultural producer has orbited around two particular such alliances - companies I've worked with: Arts Professional, a magazine aimed at people working in the arts in the United Kingdom, and Quarantine, a company making performance and other artistic projects. I am a writer, an arts communications specialist and a fundraiser. My life fractured when I moved from the UK to Mexico, shifting my practice and my identity as I experience it.

This positionality map imagines my intercultural practice as a series of overlapping galaxies. A constellation of interconnected practices emerges. The most recent addition is MAIP and this map charts the relationships that are emerging with my new peers. The map folds and unfolds to reveal the layering of my identity and how it shifts between the UK and Mexico.

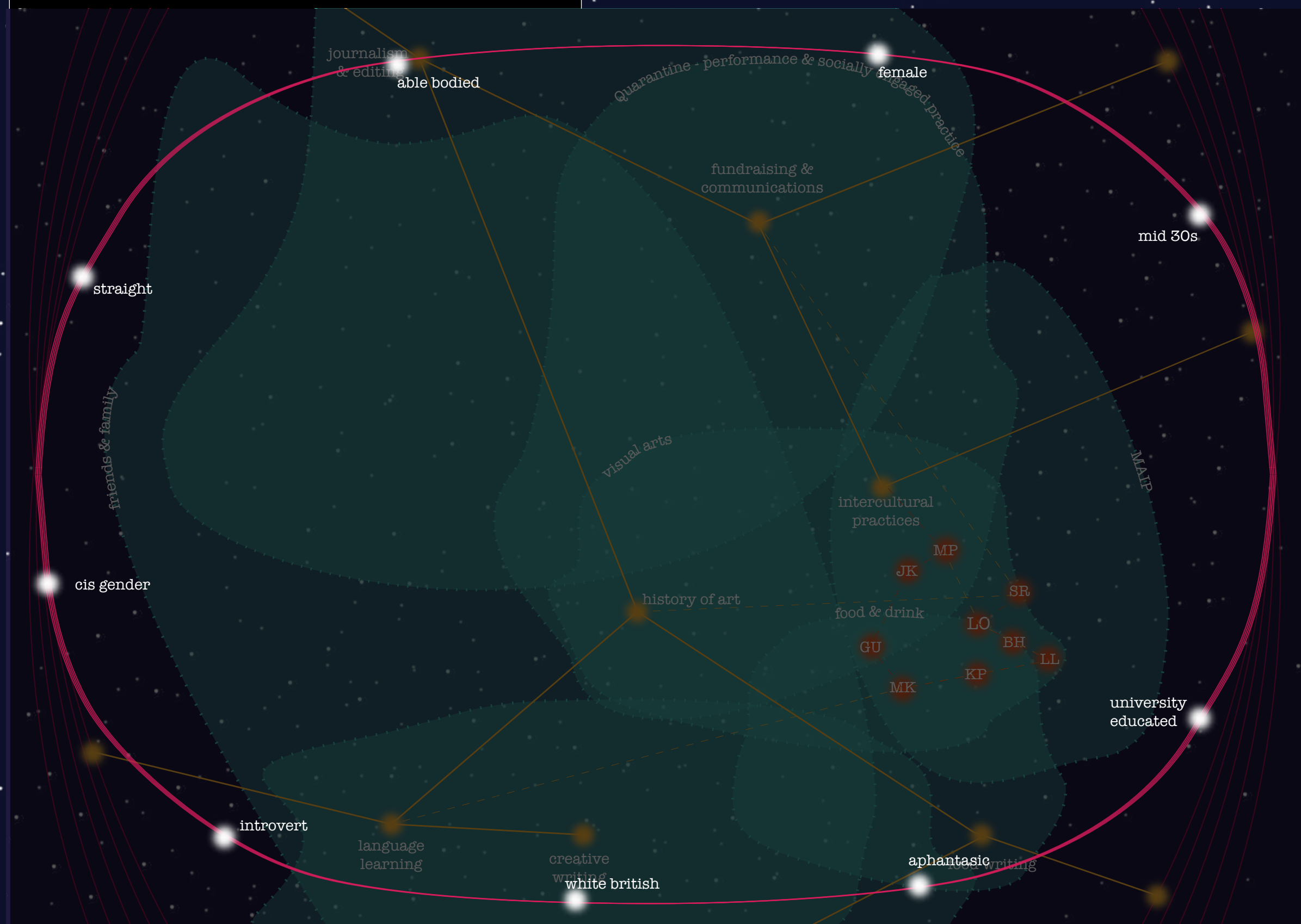
Map key

-  communities and alliances
-  practices
-  social identity markers
-  my connections
-  peer connections
-  BH Berry Ho
-  MK Makhasiri Khanoei
-  JK Jasmine Kuti-Smith
-  LL Lauryn Langston
-  LO Lilia O'Rourke
-  KP Khloe Parker
-  MP Milana Prikhodko
-  SR Sarah Rainbird
-  GU Georgie Udale



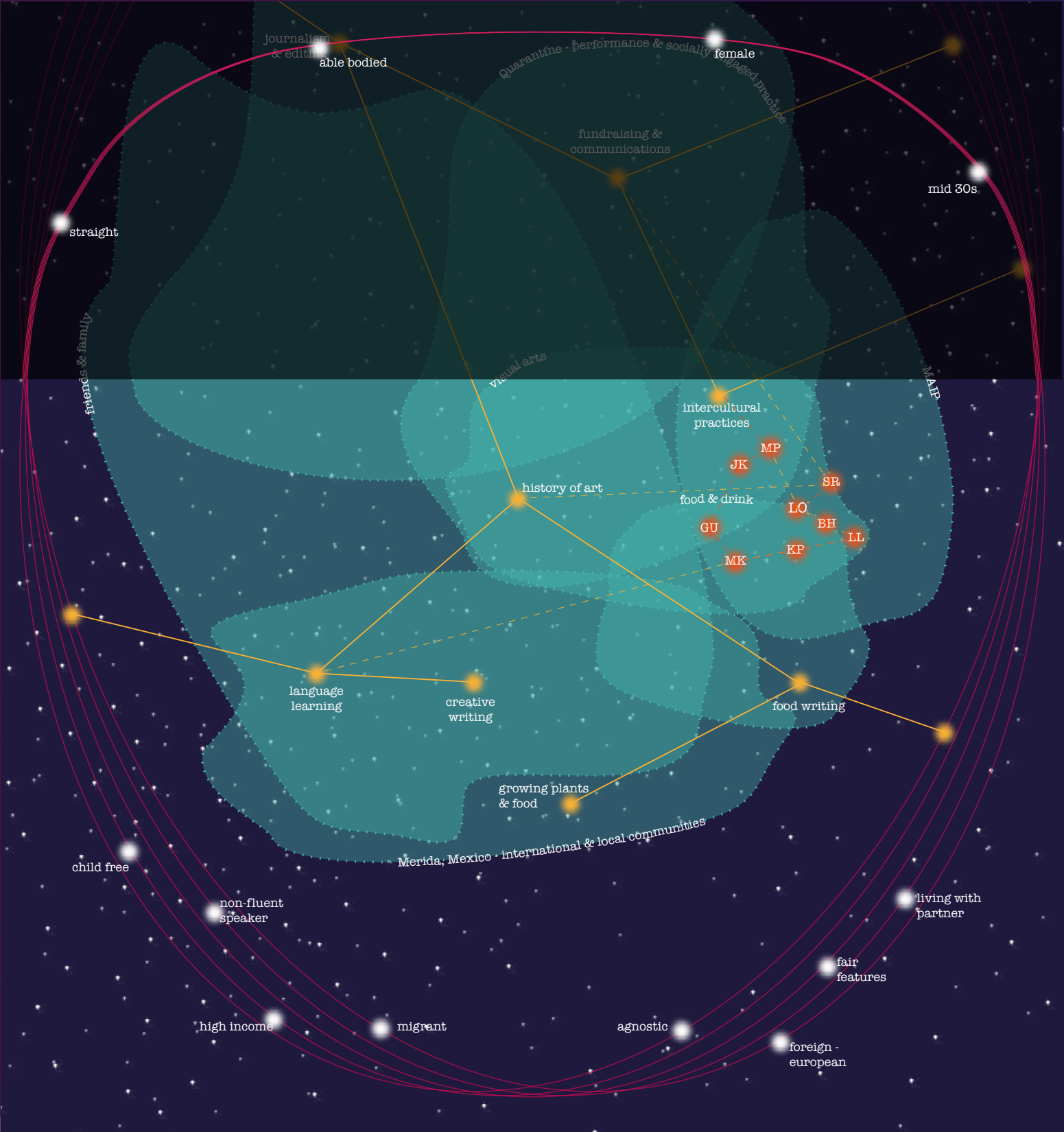
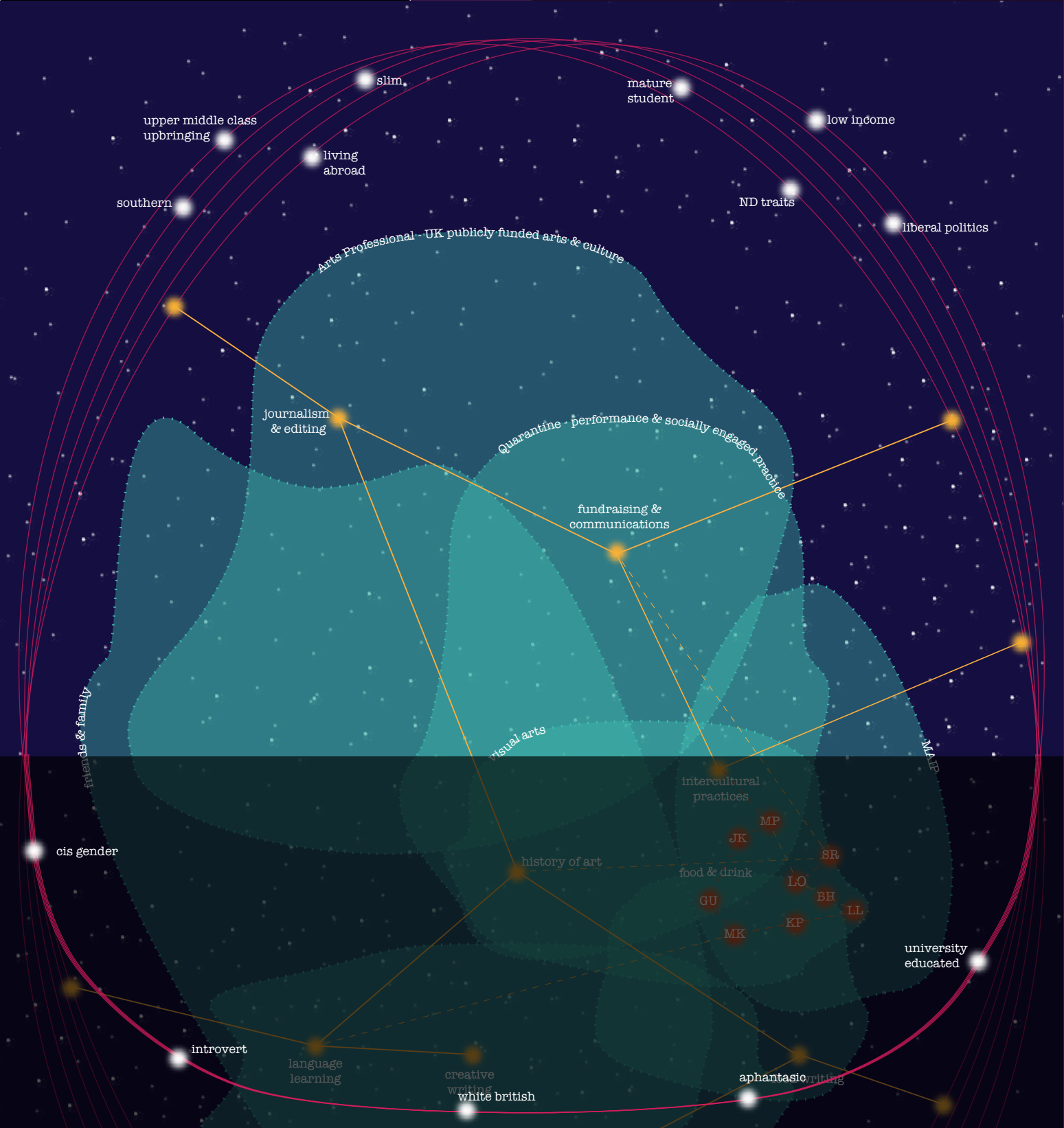


The second unfold reveals my core social identity markers



Unfolding reveals how my identity and the focus of my practice shifts. Unfolding the top leaf reveals a focus on the UK...

My position within the context of the UK is one of intersecting privileges, which have shaped my experiences and perspectives, and afforded me opportunities. Within my geographic, social and professional communities, my positionality has been characterised by conformity – of ease and a sense of fitting in. This applies across my appearance, life experiences and ways of thinking or, as Holmes<sup>1</sup> describes it, my “physical and psychological distance” from my wider community. However, in my practice, I’ve also worked with diverse, multicultural communities across the UK and internationally, where my positionality has shifted towards that of “outsider”. My relationship to these communities is one of facilitator - an administrative and communicative aid between artists and public. In these contexts, my outsider status means there is a distance I need to bridge to build trust and communicate effectively.



... while unfolding the bottom leaf shifts the focus to Mexico.

In Mexico, people notice my light features, my height, my accent. I draw attention and curiosity, and I feel more visible than I am used to. Because I’m European, I’m told people assume that I have money and I’m well-educated. I’ve carried privilege with me in this regard, and this is compounded by my economically advantaged position. Facets of myself that have never felt significant before suddenly have significance, like the colour of my eyes and my lack of religion. My politics don’t neatly map onto the party divides here and my life experiences, cultural interests and tastes don’t align me with an existing community. Being in Mexico has also shifted my relationships to my existing communities in the UK, creating distance and barriers to working together. I’ve lost the status that came with employed work but connecting with people in other places has also opened up new opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> Holmes, A. (2020) ‘Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide, International’, *Journal of Education*, 8 (4). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>



The central unfold reveals the complexity of my intercultural practice and my relationships with my MAIP peers.

Click through the following pages to discover more insights and reflections.

### Map key

	communities and alliances		social identity markers
	practices		my connections
			peer connections

BH	Berry Ho
MK	Makhasiri Khanoei
JK	Jasmine Kuti-Smith
LL	Lauryn Langston
LO	Lilia O'Rourke
KP	Khloe Parker
MP	Milana Prikhodko
SR	Sarah Rainbird
GU	Georgie Udale

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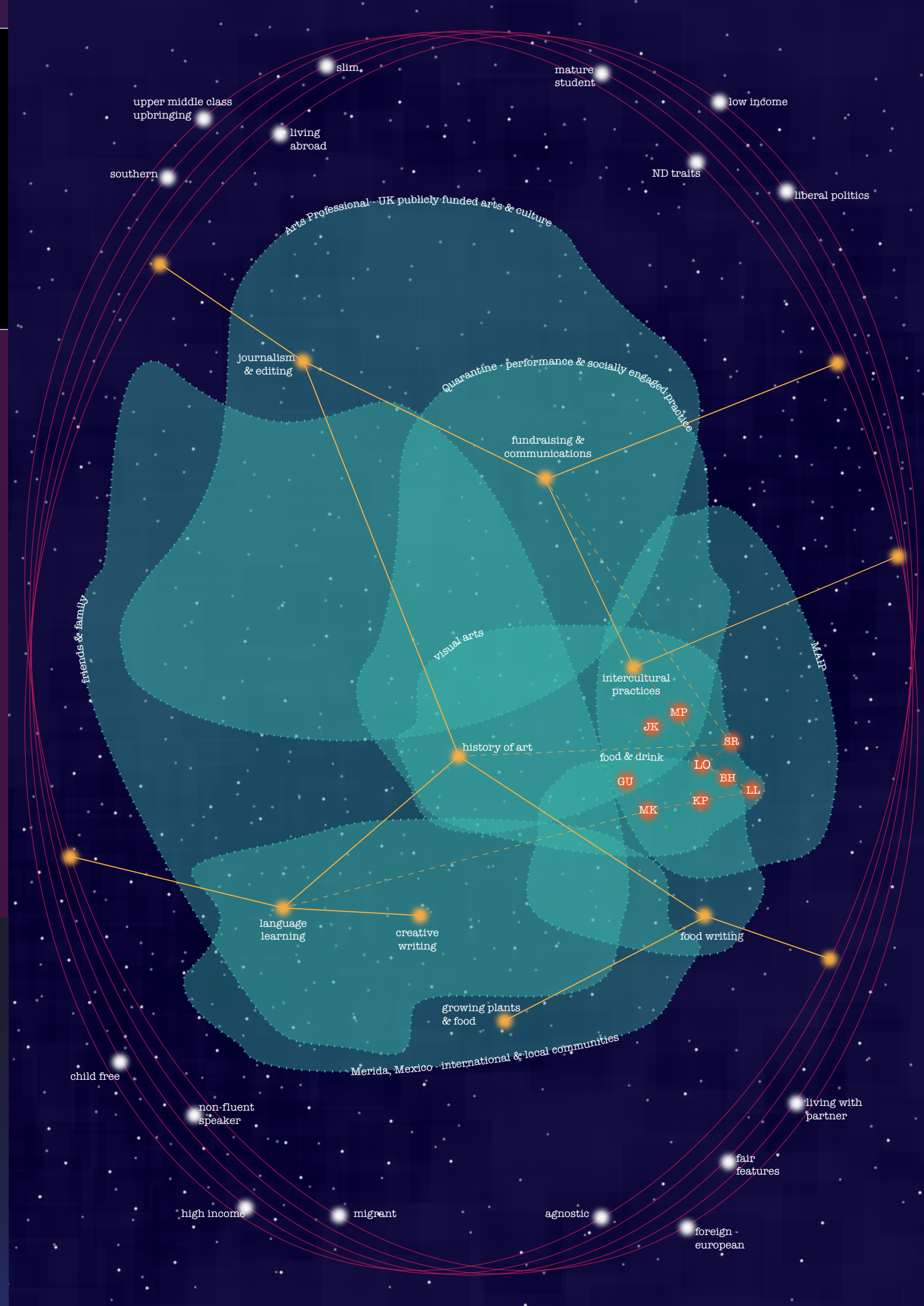
LO Lilia O'Rourke

KP Khloe Parker

MP Milana Prikhodko

SR Sarah Rainbird

GU Georgie Udale



A focus on cultural value

I see art as both beautiful and vital. The artistic projects I've worked on wouldn't be possible in an unsubsidised, purely capitalist system. As a fundraiser, it's my job to understand and articulate their value. My views on cultural value have been shaped by and sit in tension with England's arts funding policy landscape. In subsidised systems, funders have a lot of influence over the art that is made, who makes it and who benefits. How do we ensure representation and equality in art and culture in increasingly intercultural societies and across borders? Many of my peers have experience of different political and social systems, including Lilia who has lived in both communist and capitalist societies. Sarah has experience of fundraising within a different system. What can we learn from each other about how social and political conditions shape art? And what can we make of this rare opportunity to collaborate across borders?

- Relevant experiences: Editing [Arts Professional](#), a magazine about publicly funded art; fundraising for artistic projects, including this [community arts space](#); instigating research on [the value of beauty](#) in art; evaluating socially engaged arts projects.

BH MK LL LO KP MP SR

Map key

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- practices
- social identity markers
- my connections
- peer connections

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Sonder

Sonder is that moment of realisation when you step out of yourself and sense that every other individual in the world has a life as full and real and complicated as your own. I believe that internalising a knowledge of sonder is essential for humanity to live together well. It's a building block of empathy and compassion. Provoking sonder is something that art does very effectively - Quarantine's work does it a lot - and it's an effect I aspire to have in my own practice. I felt it while watching my peers' unit 1 submissions, especially those of Lauryn, Jasmine, Makhasiri, Lilia and Khloe, giving me a chance to observe different ways it can be created. Sonder is tied to our understanding of the relationship between the individual and the collective, and MAIP offers us an opportunity to learn from each other about how different cultures shape this relationship.

- Relevant experiences: Work with Quarantine making performative portraits of people and place like [12 Last Songs](#) and [The people of](#); my creative writing, including the poem on [the back cover](#) of this map; travelling.

MK JK LL LO KP

The connection of food

There are some universal experiences that we share wherever we come from. The need to eat is one of them. Food brings us together. I love to cook and eat, and I see food as a way to connect with different cultures. I'm interested in the way food is tied to cultural identity - not just in the dishes we eat but in the products we grow and buy. Many of my peers have turned to food to express their cultural identity and as material for cultural production on MAIP projects, including Lilia, Khloe and Makhasiri, while Georgie has an advanced understanding of the relationship between agriculture and place-based identity through her practice as a sommelier. Through food, we can build understanding and connection between us, while also learning from each other about how food can be a generator of culture.

- Relevant experiences: Working on artistic projects that involve shared meals such as [No Such Thing](#); growing a vegetable garden and working on land-based projects in different countries, including [this NGO](#); keeping a food blog and sharing food on [Instagram](#); writing [this personal essay](#) on my relationship with corn

MK GU LO KP LL



Map key

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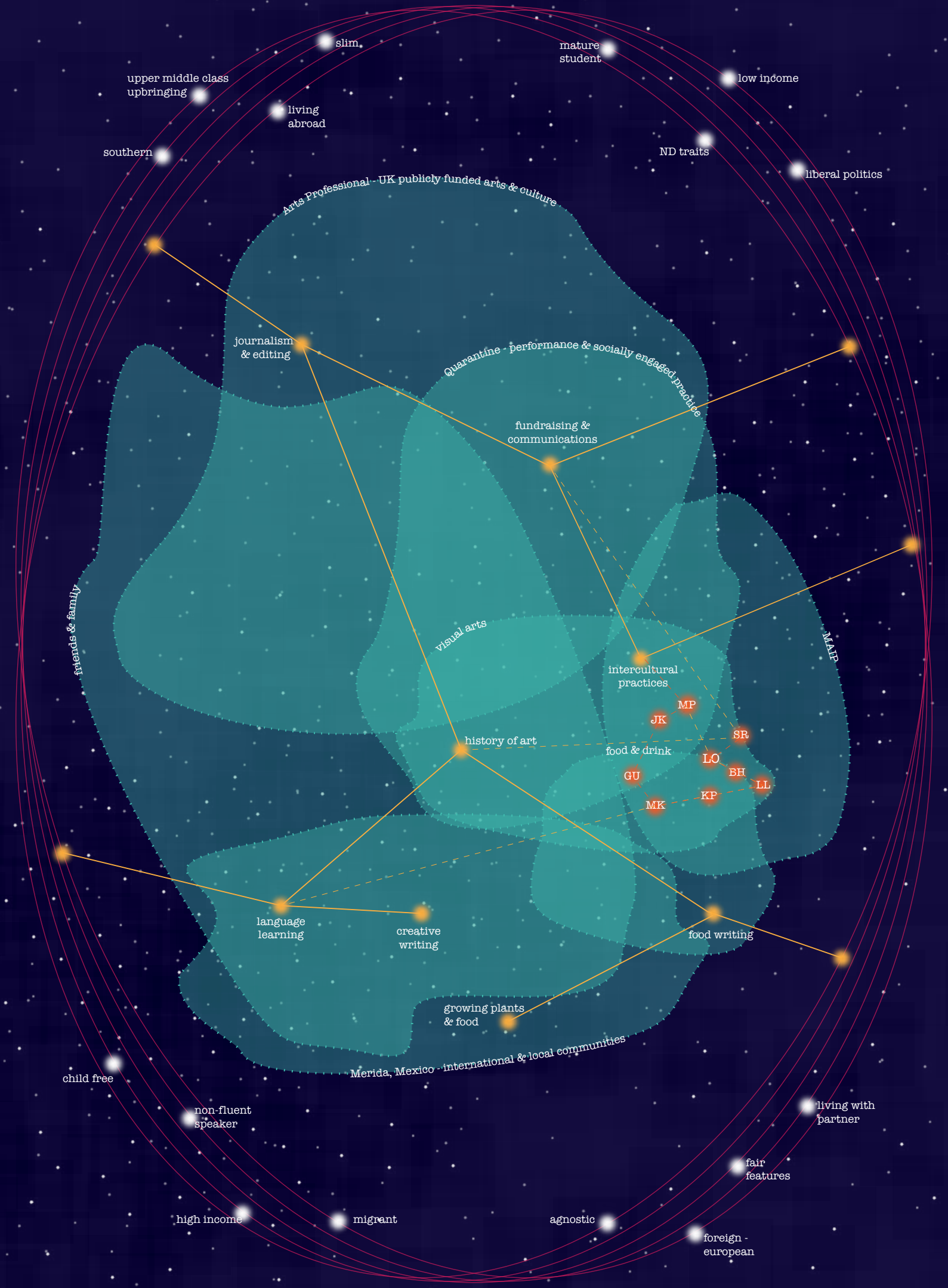
Georgie Udale

Language

I work across written and visual communications, but mostly in texts in the English language. I've come to this work due to the particularities of how I experience the world and the way my brain works. It's where I've identified strength in my skills, where I can generate value and where I feel comfortable. Living in a non-English-speaking country and spending time and effort to learn another language has given me insight into how written and verbal communication is received by non-native speakers. This is shaping how I create materials for intercultural contexts. Many of my peers share the experience of having to adapt to another language, and we are practising intercultural communication every time we meet. Some of my peers work with writing while all have practices built on visual languages, including architecture, AI art, abstract painting, fashion and scenography. These are visual languages distinct to the ones I use in marketing and communications, offering exciting potential for collaboration and learning.

- Relevant experiences: Creating paper-based communication materials for arts projects & companies, such as [this Sampler](#) (collaboration with Dani Molyneux); working as a writer and editor; learning Spanish as an adult.

BH MK LL LO KP MP GU JK SR



Migration

One in 28 people in the world lives outside of the country they were born in, and the rate is growing<sup>2</sup>. Having this experience myself has given me an understanding and empathy for what it means to be separated from a sense of belonging and familiarity. It's also opened my eyes to different ways of thinking and living. I've had to adapt my practice in practical ways but it's also made me more interested in exploring these experiences and in working collaboratively across cultures. As I explored in my Unit 1 submission, the nature of my experience is shaped by the fact I'm living in an ex-European colony. Several of my peers have also migrated in their lifetimes, while others have the experience of being descendants of those who have migrated. We're in the position to have a rich conversation about the challenges and opportunities of migration, and I've already learned from my peers, including from Sarah, Berry and Jasmine, about the ways in which colonialism continues to affect people on an individual and societal level.

- Relevant experiences: Working on artistic projects that facilitate international artistic residencies and cooperation across borders, such as [Meet the Neighbours](#); reflecting on the complexities of being British in Mexico in my [unit 1 submission](#); living in multicultural cities in the UK and abroad, including London, Manchester and Toronto; living in Mexico.

BH MK LL LO KP MP GU JK SR

<sup>2</sup> International Organization for Migration (2024) *World Migration Report 2024*. Available at: <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/msite/wmr-2024-interactive/> (Accessed: 25 March 2025)

The unfolded cover reveals a poem on the back

### A conscious thing

When you consider the size of the universe  
our individual bodies are so small  
they essentially do not exist.

But we are, at the same time,  
a part of the universe.  
The natural organic development of matter.

Did you know the universe is a conscious thing?  
It is aware of its own existence  
because we are aware.

Aware, but not fully cognisant of exactly  
what we are, or how we  
came to be.

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