Mind Map

What Is a Mind Map?

A Mind Map is a graphical representation of ideas and aspects around a central theme, showing how these aspects are related to each other. With a Mind Map you can map all the relevant aspects and ideas around a theme, bringing structure, overview and clarity to a problem. A Mind Map helps in systematically unpacking abstract thoughts and notions. It is like a tree, with branches leading to the thoughts and aspect of the theme. Graphically, one can use the analogy of the tree by making branches that are important thicker than others.

Mind Mapping is an excellent technique for developing your intuitive capacity. It is especially useful for identifying all the issues and subissues related to a problem. Mind Maps can also be used for generating solutions to a problem and mapping their advantages and disadvantages. The latter is accomplished by making the main branches the solutions and the subbranches from each of these the pros and the cons. Analysing the Mind Map helps you find priorities and courses of action.

When Can You Use a Mind Map?

A Mind Map can be used in different stages of the design process, but is often used in the beginning of idea generation. Setting up a Mind Map helps you to structure thoughts and ideas about the problem, and connect these to each other. However, a Mind Map can also be used in the problem analysis phase of a

design project. Mind Maps also work well for outlining presentations and reports. In fact, Mind Mapping can be used in a wide variety of situations.

How to Use a Mind Map?

Starting Point

The starting point of a Mind Map is a central theme, for example a problem or an idea.

Expected Outcome

The outcome of a Mind Map is a structured overview of ideas and thoughts around a concept or a problem, represented graphically.

Possible Procedure

1 Write the name or description of the theme in the centre of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
2 Brainstorm each major facet of that theme, placing your thoughts on lines drawn outward from the central thought like roads leaving a city.
3 Add branches to the lines as necessary.
4 Use additional visual techniques – for example, different colours for major lines of thought, circles around words or thoughts that appear more than once, connecting lines between similar thoughts.
5 Study the Mind Map to see what relationships exist and what solutions are suggested.
6 Reshape or restructure the Mind Map if necessary.

Tips and Concerns

- You can find software for Mind Mapping on the Internet. The disadvantages of using computer software are that there is some limitation in freedom of using hand drawings and colours, it is less personal, and it might be less suitable when sharing it with others (you and your computer alone).
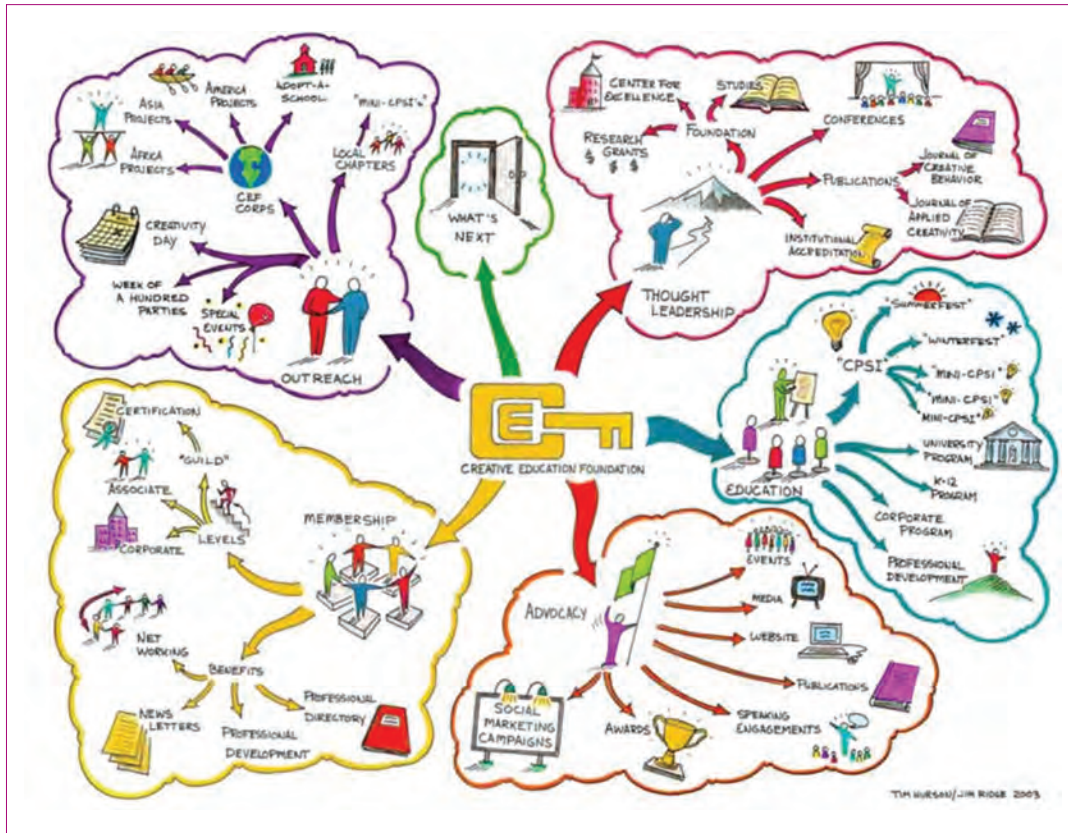- Make digital pictures of your handmade Mind Maps.

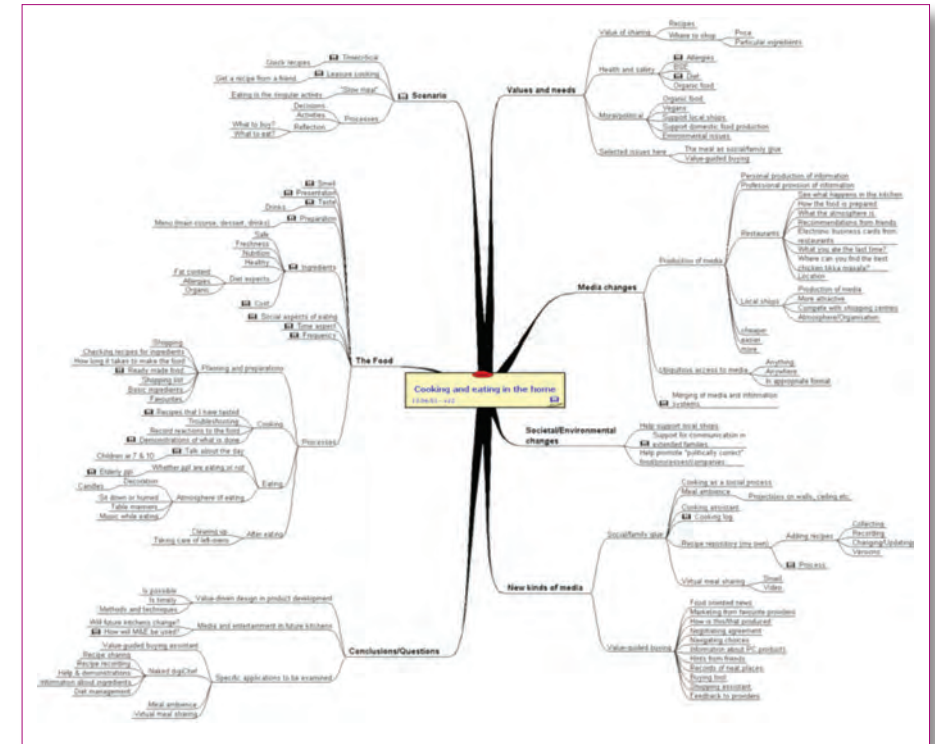fig. 2.22 *Example of a Mind Map (Tassoul, 2006)*

fig. 2.23 *Example of Mind Map created with a Mind Map Software Tool.*
(from student report)

References and Further Reading

Tassoul, M. (2006) *Creative Facilitation: a Delft Approach*, Delft: VSSD.

Buzan, T. (1996) *The Mind Map Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential*, New York: Plume.