
User Experience Theory and Practice — Individual Portfolio

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Abstract

This paper documents my personal visions and understandings of the User Experience (UX). I first introduce my personal point of view on UX, the goals and objectives of this course. I reflect on my weekly activities of the first three weeks of the course, as well as the choices and motivations of the relevant key aspects of theory, tools and attitudes. Then I reflect on my past work and discuss how to integrate new knowledge and interpretations of UX design on this project, last but not least, I envision my UX proposition for my future work as a UX designer.

1. Introduction

My name is Yiwen Shen, I am a master student studying in the TU/e at the Department of Industrial Design. In my opinion, UX plays an important role in the process of RDD (research, development and design). The aim of this paper is to deepen my understanding on UX design and facilitate me as an ID student to develop attitude, skills and knowledge that are needed to contribute to succeed in the RDD projects. The purpose of this portfolio is to show my understanding of UX through 3 weeks of study and how to apply the knowledge to my future projects.

2. UX — Definition and Description

Definition: UX are the interactions exist between human, artefacts and environment. The platform of UX design can be tangible or digital or the mix of both. UX design provides users with services and functionalities in order to fulfil their psychological, physical and emotional needs [1]. Well-designed UX products or systems do not require a user to spend a lot of time and effort to learn it.

Description: UX design must be based on respect for human empathy and serves to fulfil their needs. Working in UX industry, it requires designers to have a deep understanding of UCD (user-centred design) and strong analytical abilities. UX designer must also develop theoretical knowledge, skills and social awareness, to be able to deal with the interplay relationship between companies, users and products. When conducting a user research project, designers should be able to use appropriate tools and frameworks to generate user insights in order to contribute design solutions (or a prototype).

3. Activity Overview

This section shows the activities during the weekly study. A detailed description of logbook can be found in the appendix 1. In each week, a mind-map hierarchy regarding the selected literature was generated, it served to clarify and structuralize the selected literature in an articulated manner. The mindmaps (appendix 1) facilitate me to generate knowledge as deep, coherent and productive as possible.

Week1

The first-week study brought me useful insights on UX design, 10 satisfying user needs and value-based design. First of all, the UX white paper offers a fundamental overview of UX in three perspectives: UX as a practice, phenomenon and field of study[1]. It helped me to understand UX design in a wider scope. When designing experience in systems or products, it is important for a designer not only to understand the user's individual context but also ensure that predefined experience satisfies their needs. The framework [2], [3] from Hassenzahl brings indeed useful guidance to facilitate designers on how to design experiences that are perceived valuable and enjoyable by users.

Week2

The second-week study deepened my understanding of UX in both psychological and social aspect. The SDT [5] helped me to understand at a greater level of human needs. It can empower my design with strong theoretical and psychological expertise when designing RDD products and system.

To design tangible product seems easier because designers could observe users and generate insights through onsite observation. However, how to design a virtual system, which is not only perceived as positive user experience in their context, but also add social awareness? The social

translucence theory [7] brought me insights to address this problem.

Week3

The last week study brought me knowledge of empathy, empathic design, innovation and UX design frameworks. As a UX designer, it is important to know what is empathy and able to develop it further. The study of this week, for me it felt like that I was introduced a lot comparison between design techniques and frameworks. To summarize:

- The Co-Constructing stories [10], this technique have two phases: sensitization and elaboration. Buskermolen compares this technique with cultural probes and generative techniques. He concluded that co-constructing story requires fewer efforts, while also offers big change to elicit future concept [10].
- Incremental and radical innovation [9]. I consider that incremental innovations are the results of using CDR [14] methods when designing systems or products. The tools and iterative process reminds of what I have learnt from the CDR course. The definition and evolution of radical innovations inspired me further on how to distinguish two types of innovation.
- Comparison of different frameworks and UX definitions [11]. This paper introduces a lot of frameworks of UX design and definitions, since I am working on my M1.2 researcher project, I consider that knowing more than only one design framework and the differences between them would positively guide me through the upcoming project.

4. Key UX Aspects

Reflection from week 1: From a microscopic point of view,

I used to believe that UX was defined as a design practice. This was how I envisioned UX as a design practice: designers need to observe and study users' behaviors when they were asked to experience certain systems or products. Then they apply appropriate methods or tools to collect, visualize, and analyze user's data. This design sequence serves to help designers to capture insights, create meaningful products to add values to people's lives. However, As the UX white paper discussed: UX is also a phenomenon, which means that UX design is sometimes not technology-driven (not just a beautiful user interface design) or observable, but it is rooted in social, physical, and cultural contexts [4].

From a macroscopic perspective, with the historical development economy models, the above-mentioned "creating meaning and add values" aspects of user experience design are also gradually and evolutionally adopted [4]. People living in different periods cherish and appreciate different values. Therefore, it is challenging to design a product or system that meets people's needs based on the same value or the same contexts. However, there are some frameworks can facilitate UX designers to quickly apply them into their RDD process. Hassenzahl's framework [2], [3] is very helpful in solving this problem. There are still lots of differences in fulfilling people's contexts, but their needs are basically the same [2]. He took a psychological approach and claimed that experience can be designed adoptively to the development of economy model, but also be able to fulfill people's needs.

Reflection from week 2: The SDT [6] is the follow-up study of the '10 satisfying needs'. It brought me to a higher level on understanding of people's psychological needs. This theory enlightened me in such a way that when designing experience in systems or products, the use of context and technological parameters play a part of role in design, designing aesthetic

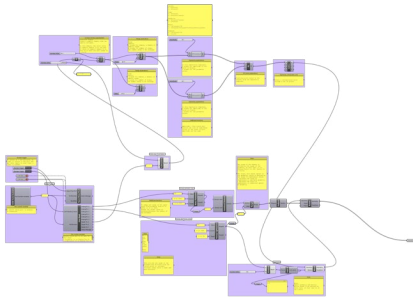


Figure 1: Grasshopper code



Figure 2: TUI box

interactions not only requires designer respect on basic human skills such as cognitive skills, social skills and bodily skill [13], but also respect personal values [5]: competence, autonomy and relatedness.

When designing a system, it is important that the system or product not only provides aesthetic interaction [13], but also provides a good user experience. Thomas and Wendy referred social translucence theory (which is used in the field of architectural design) to facilitate UX designers to address social needs when designing such digital systems.

Reflection from week 3 Zaki explores empathy in a greater manner. He claims that empathy can be trained and developed [8]. Developing empathy skills is important for a UX designer. From what I have learnt from the previous two weeks: the goal of designing a positive experience in systems or products is to fulfil people's needs. In a design practice, UX designers need to "get closer" to the users and understand their current needs, in terms of expectations and functionalities. Designing with empathy can help designers to "get closer" to users. As discussed by Thomas and Wendy [7]: having conversations is the key to achieving reliable and accountable outcomes. The empathic design uses a similar approach, which is also using the conversation approach. Through on-site observational research, designers can gather, analyze and apply their findings to their prototype in order to contribute design solutions and sometimes even lead innovations.

When it comes to innovations, Norman and Vergati discussed two types of innovations, radical innovations and incremental innovations [9]. I consider that empathic design is more likely to bring incremental innovations. Radical innovations were done without design research or careful analysis of a person's or even a society's needs [9]. Vergati discusses that radical

innovation can be driven by technology changes and meaning changing. This reminds of the development of different economic models discussed by Brand [4]. The development of technology can lead to a new economy model entering life. As a result, it can lead to the changing of meaning in a daily context.

Looking back to empathic design, designers need to follow a framework as a guide. Pettersson discusses different frameworks and UX definition. He documented the development of each framework and compared them. This is very inspiring and helpful, especially for my research project.

5. Reflection on Past Work

The example presented in this section serves two goals. First of all, this project showcases my experience in designing a TUI (tangible user interface). Second, I will reflect on what theory and tools or methods can be used in this design in order to improve the user experience.

In the elective "Golden Ratio and Generative arts" offered by Prof. Loe Feijs in Q2, I was asked to make a 'pattern generator' using mathematical theories and programming language to generate graphical contents. I was the only student who used grasshopper 3D (parametric design software) as the main platform for generating 2D patterns or 3D models, while other students used processing. In the midterm demo, when showcasing the code (Figure 1) to my fellow students, it seemed that no one really understood, not only because of the unfamiliarity of the terminology, but also the interactions within this pattern generator brings a lot of confusions. I asked several fellow students as users to try out, but nobody was willing to do it because they have almost no experience with using grasshopper.

In order to tackle this problem and involve them in the design process, bringing them the freedom to customize and manipulate patterns (competency). In the final product, I built a tangible user interface (Figure 2) that allowed users with little or no programming experience to not only generate patterns, but also customize input variables. The idea of having this TUI has proven to be a useful medium for bridging the gap between physical interaction and the digital world.

When I reflected back on this project, I realized that in order to create positive user experience, first of all, it is important as a UX designer to have empathic skills, during the midterm, according to my observations that I discovered that users were encountering difficulties to follow my explanations (relatedness), simply because they were lack of interests and knowledge (autonomy) about grasshopper programming, so they didn't see the value and power of this pattern generator. After I introduced this lo-fi interface prototype as the final product to them, they could generate patterns by themselves without knowing programming. At that moment, I realized that user experience could be designed. The functionality (do-goals) and interaction (motor goals) were provided in the midterm demo, but the holistic experience and needs (be goals) were not being satisfied.

6. Future UX Work

Our lives are surrounded by new technologies and data. Industrial designers should always be open minded and creative, adopting and exploring new technologies and turn them into pleasant experiences and innovative ideas. In order to do this, in the future, I will

Design with the user:

The design of everyday artefacts is not always user

friendly and intuitive, and sometimes it can frustrate users. The essence of design is to facilitate people's lives and create meaning for their daily lives. Good interaction and user experience are shaped by one's feelings, feelings, motivations and behaviours (Hassenzahl, 2001). In order to design a product that provides functions and a superior user experience, designers are required to have a deep understanding of the user and their contexts.

Design with data:

Data has become an important part of people's lives. Data-driven design can provide designer insights to assist with their design process. For technology companies, users, products and data are always intertwined. Companies can collect data from users and then optimise their solutions to meet their design goals while ensuring that their decisions meet the desires of stakeholders. Using data to design can take the design company to the next level.

Design for aesthetics:

Aesthetics is important to industrial design. It increases the level of user commitment to the product, also creates an engaging and intriguing experience. Aesthetics exists not only in the form of products, but also in their interactions and functionalities.

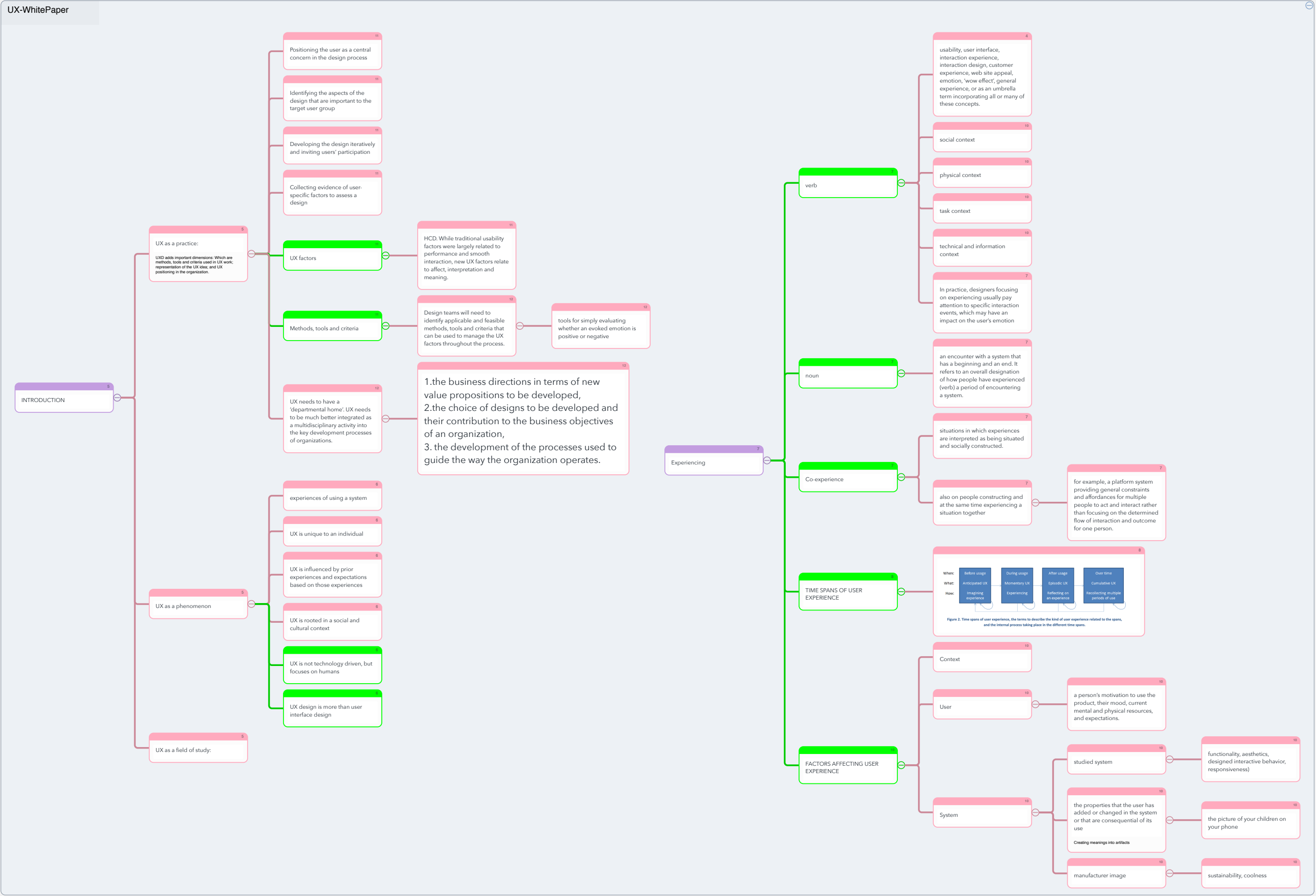
Design for respect:

The users of the product is human, when designing systems or products, the design process always involves the whole human being, designer should always respect human skills: cognitive, perceptual-motor, emotional and social skills (Hummels, Djajadiningrat, and Overbeeke, 2001). In my design, I try to take user as the center and their skills as the radius; it is used to establish a harmonious relationship between people and artefacts, to maximize the potential of human beings and thereby to improve user experience.

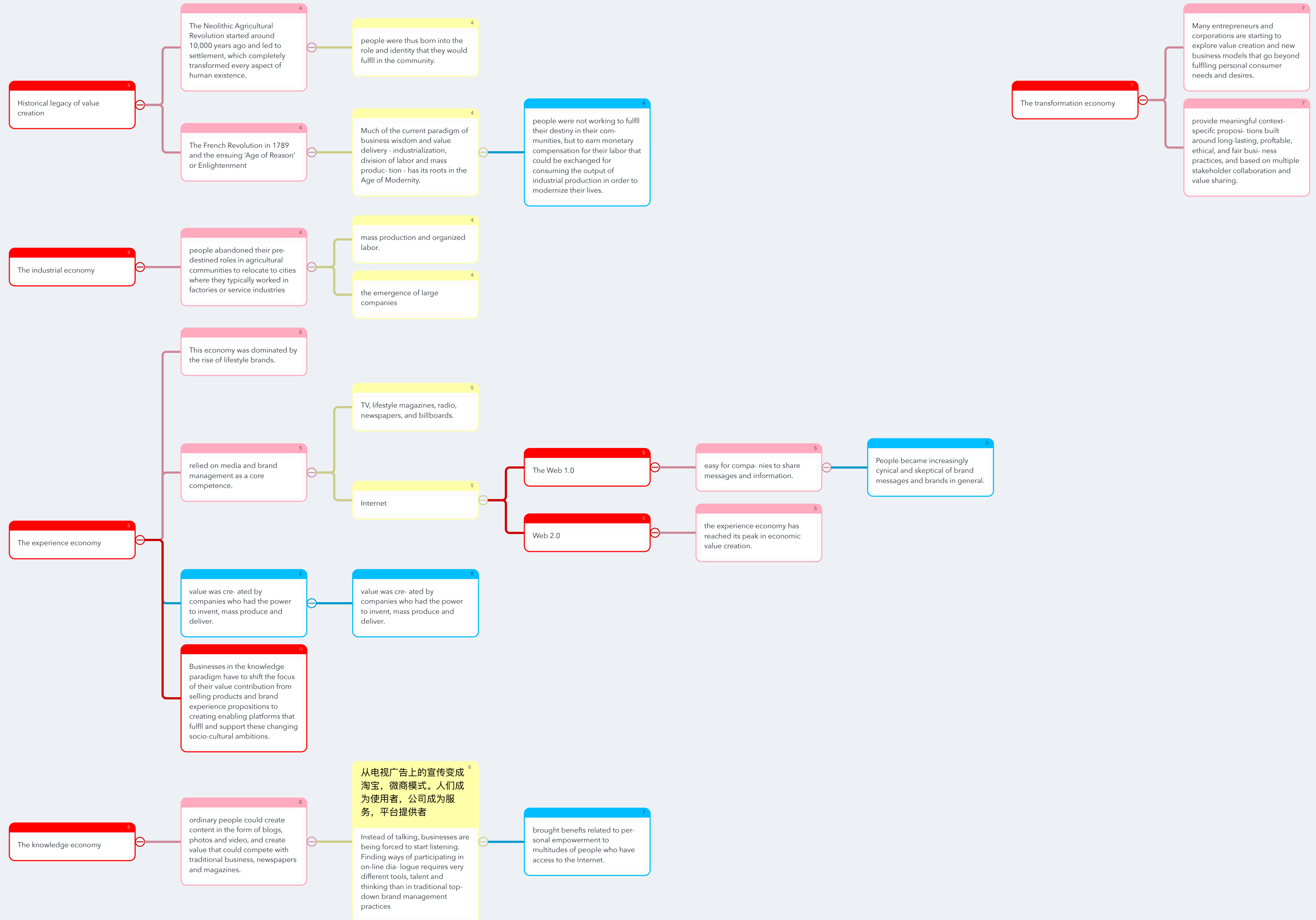
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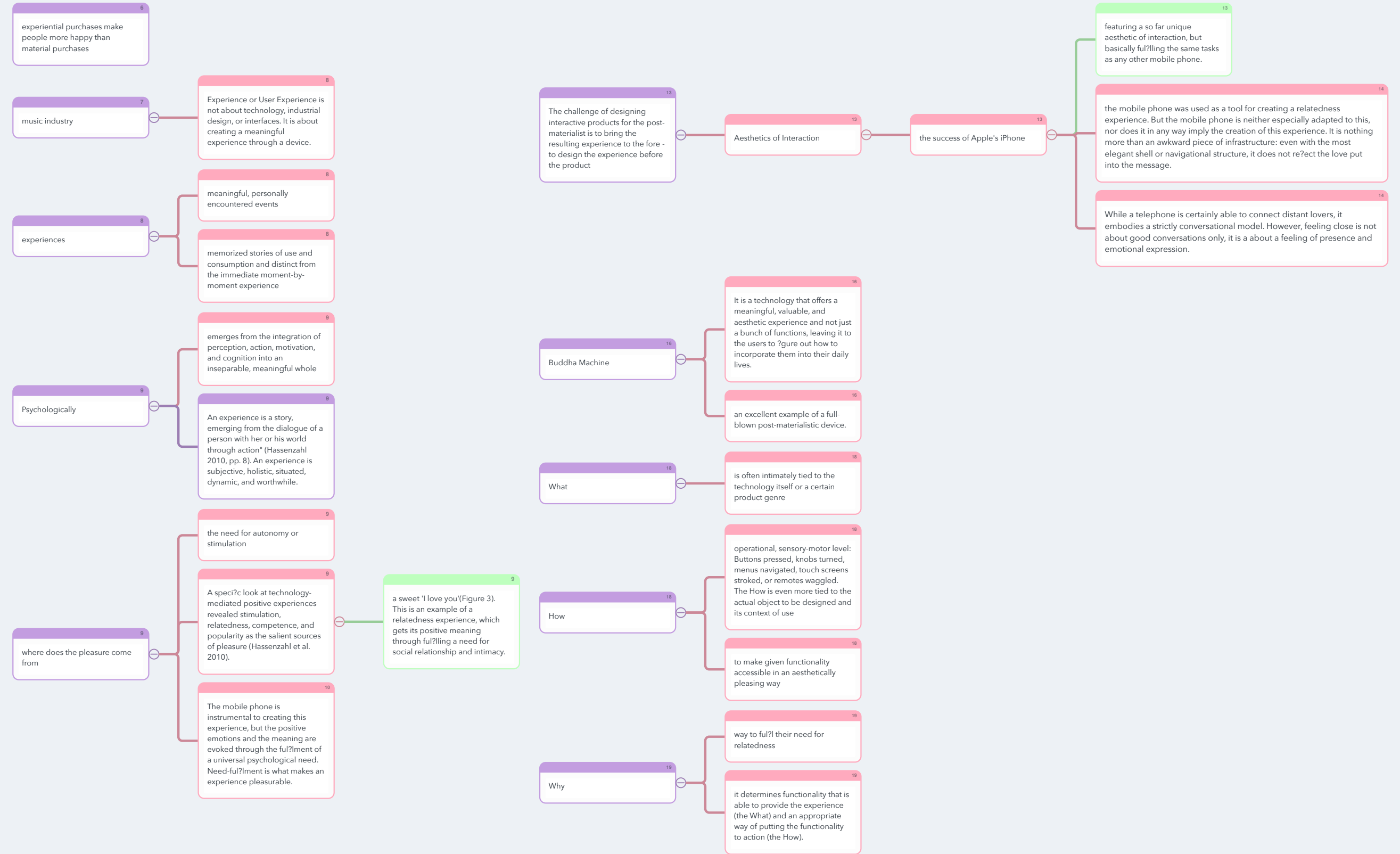
Appendix 1 Mindmaps



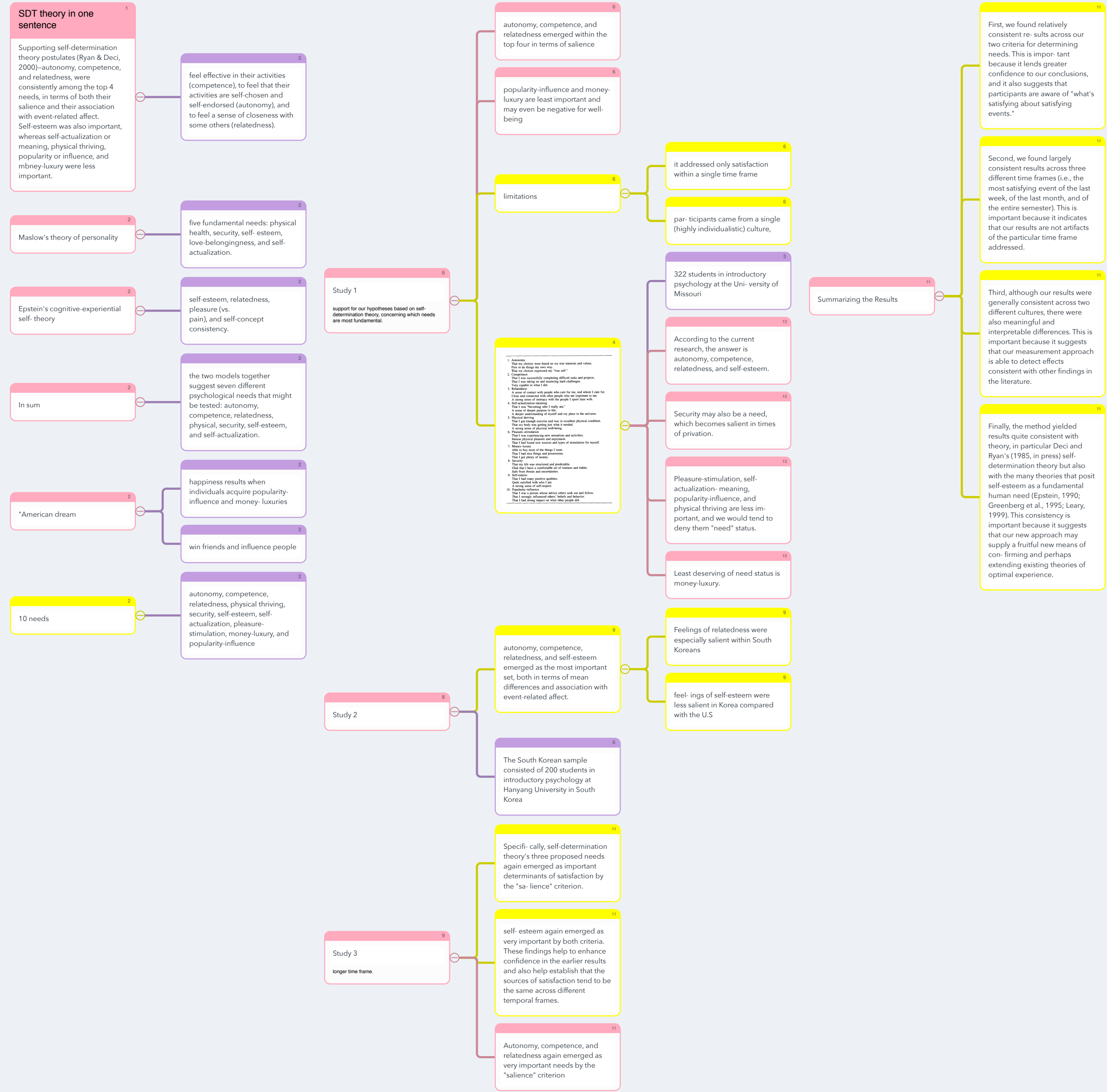
Rethinking value in a changing landscape



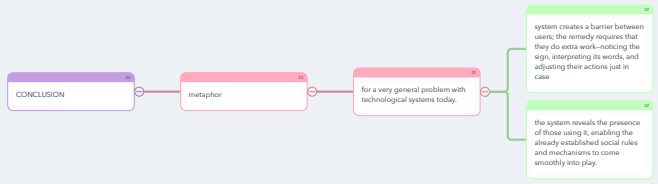
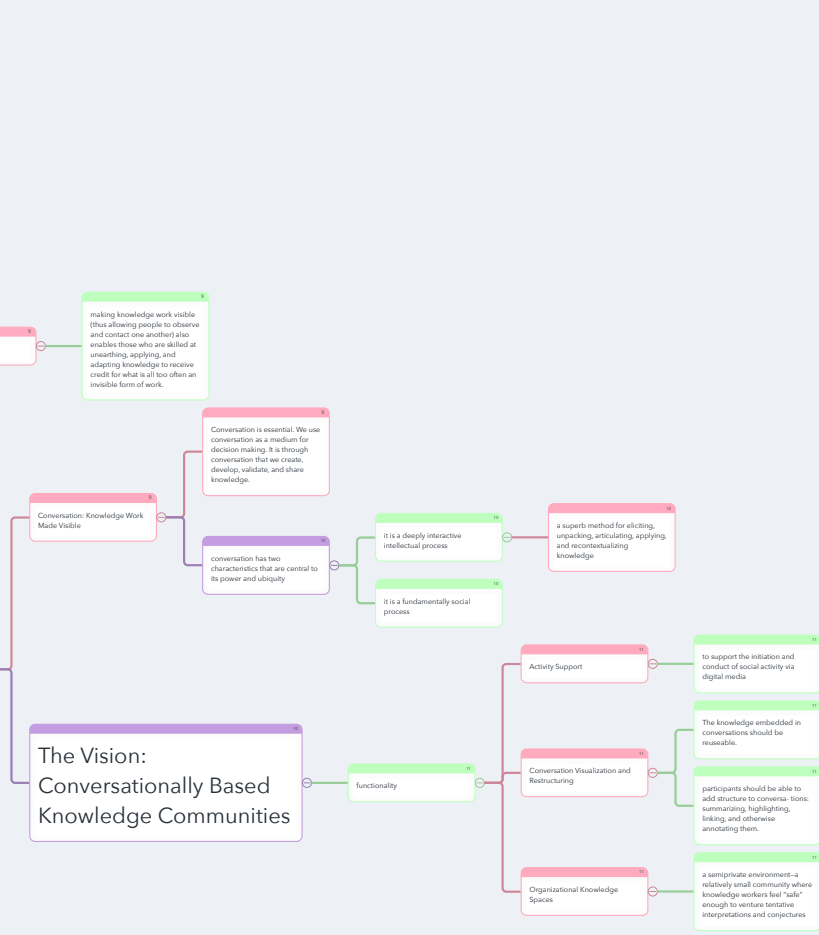
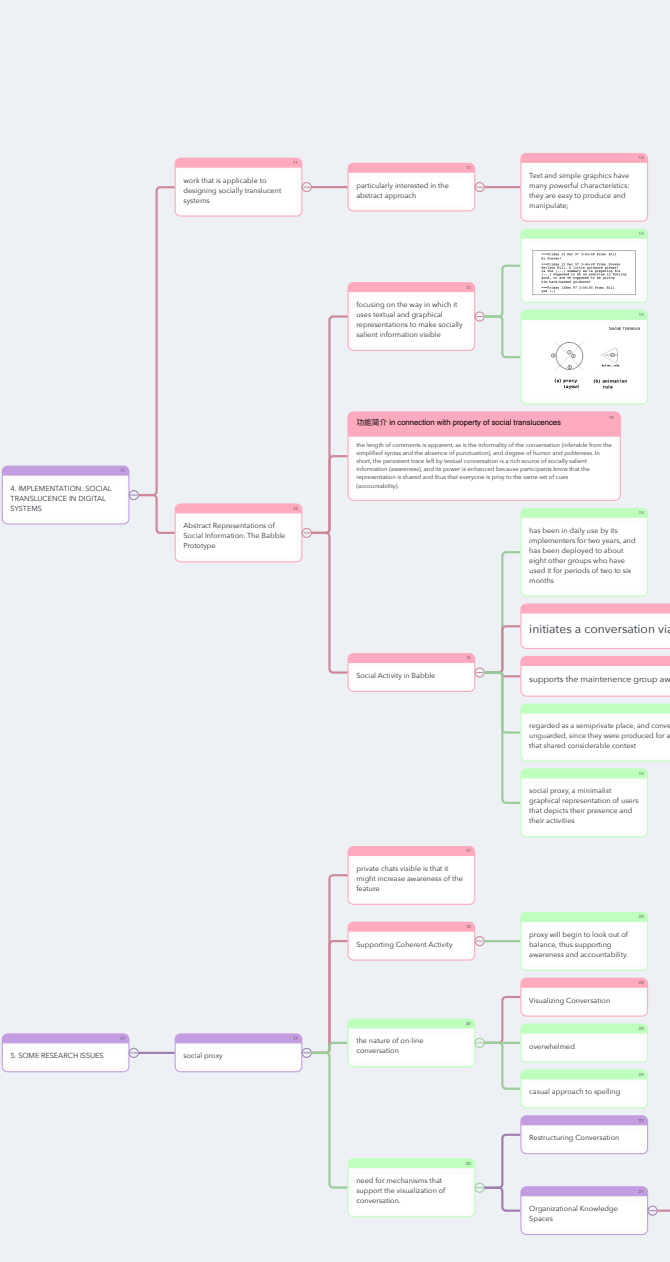
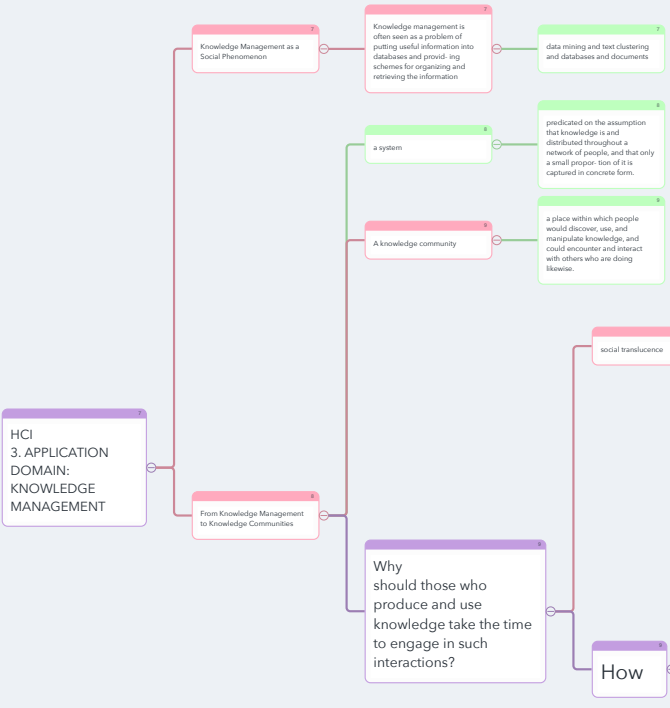
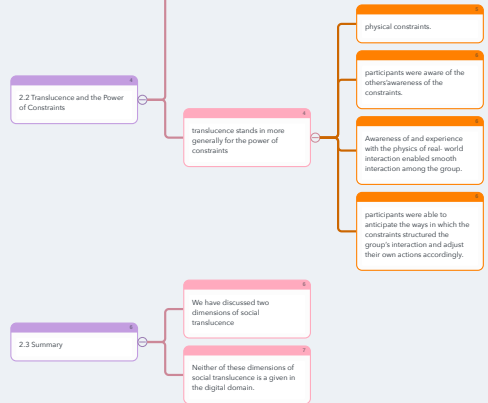
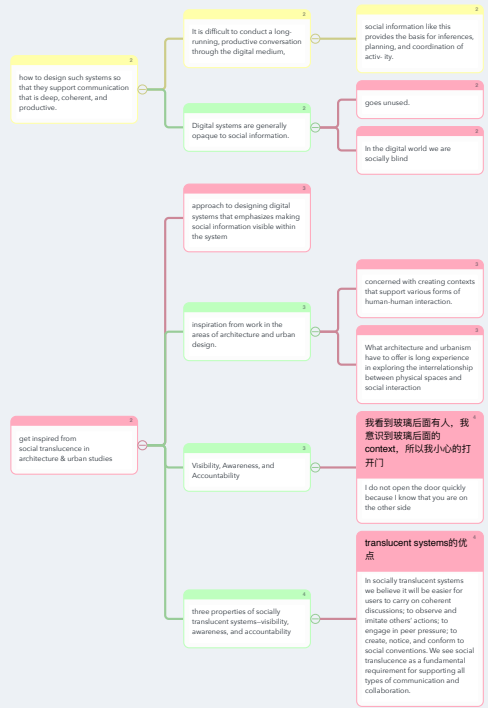
User Experience and Experience Design _
The Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction, 2nd Ed_



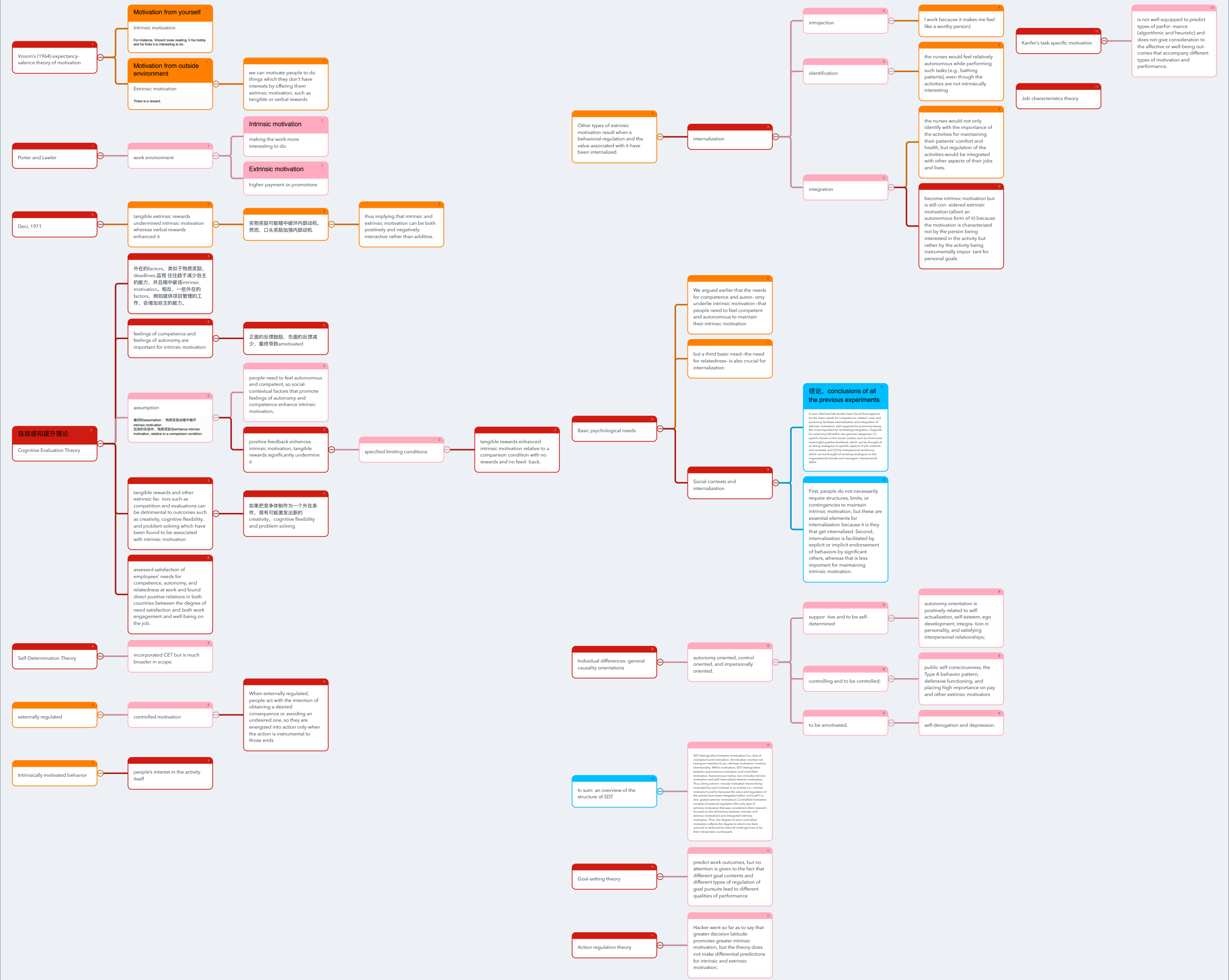
what is satisfying about satisfying events



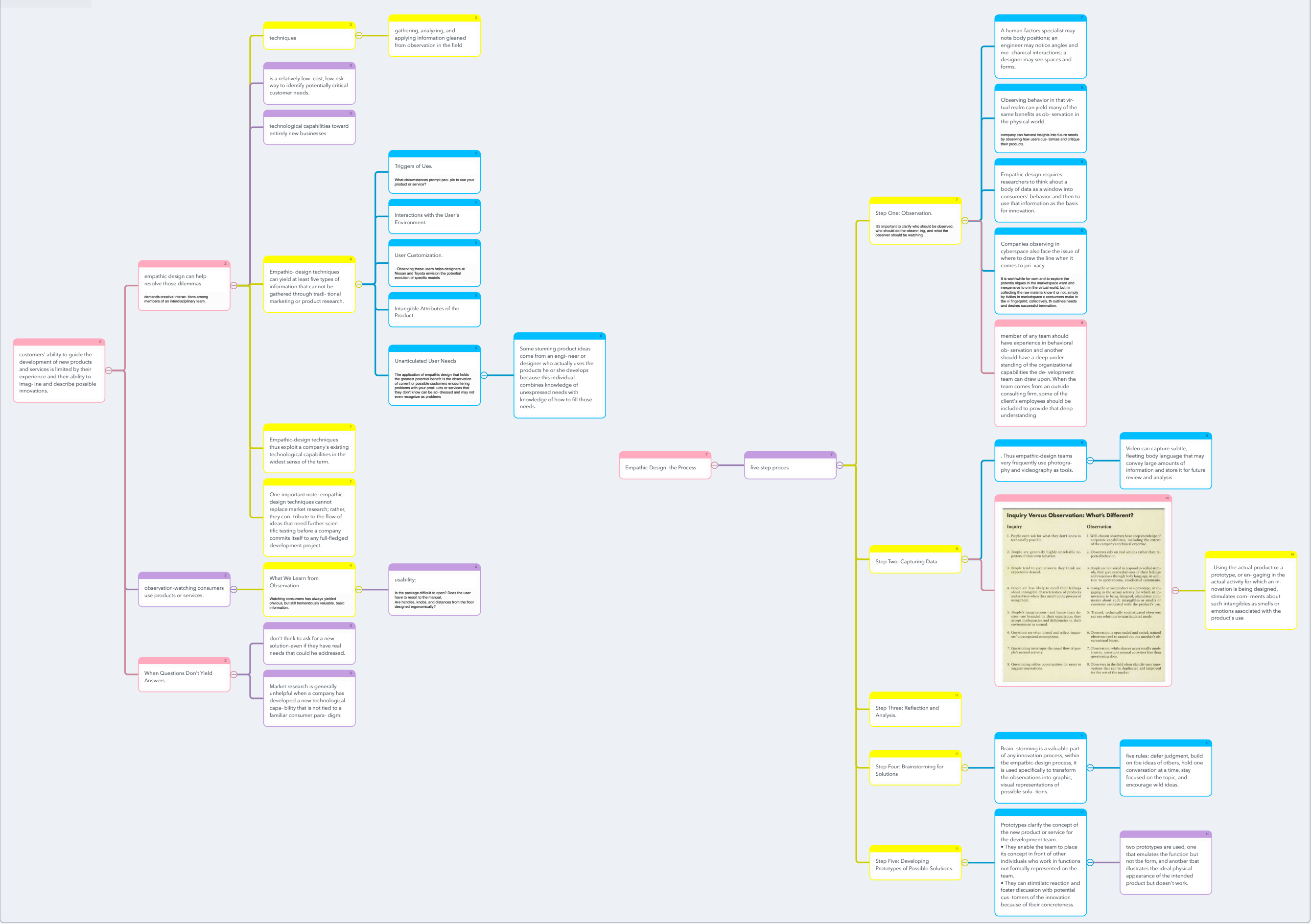
An approach to designing systems

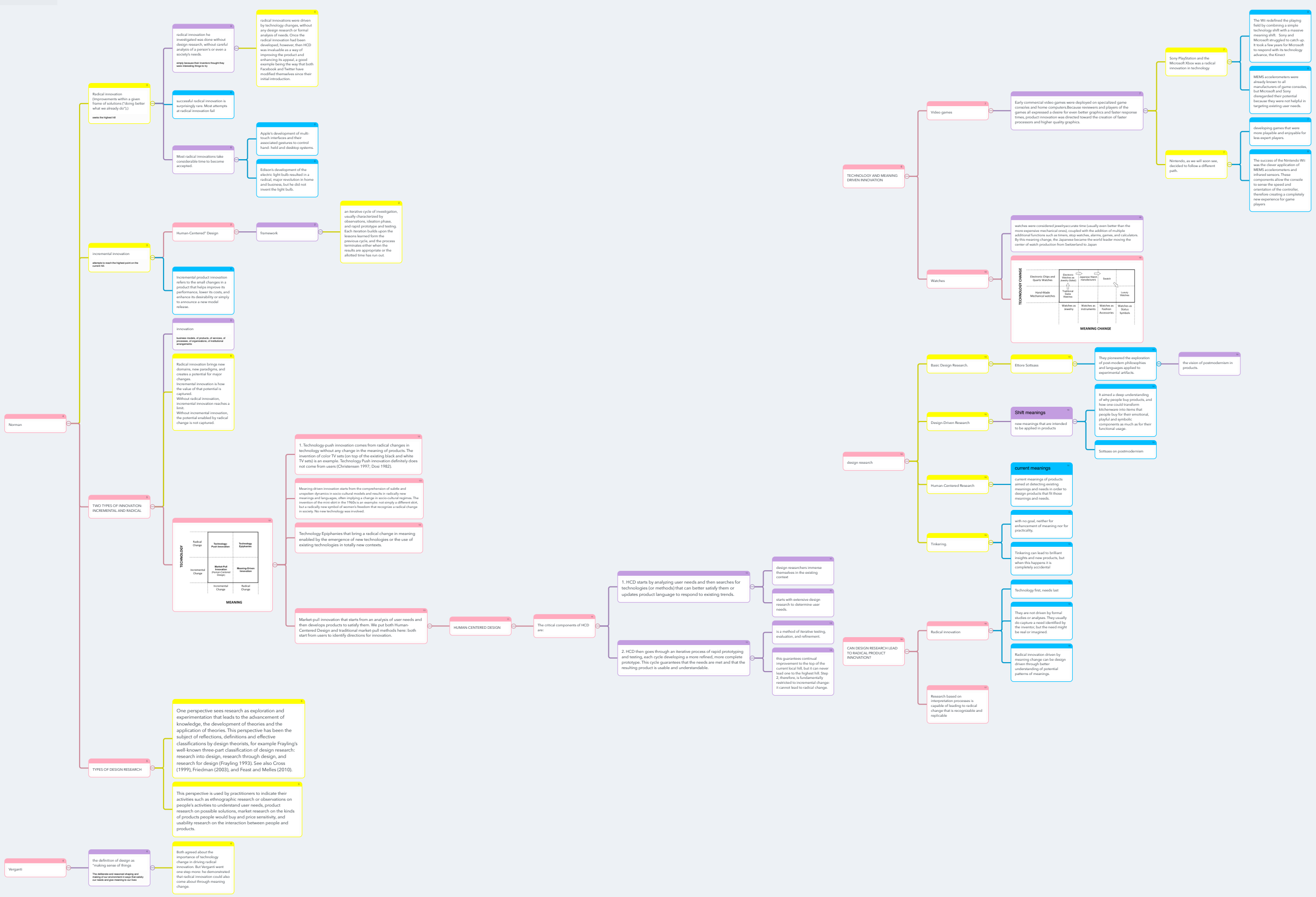


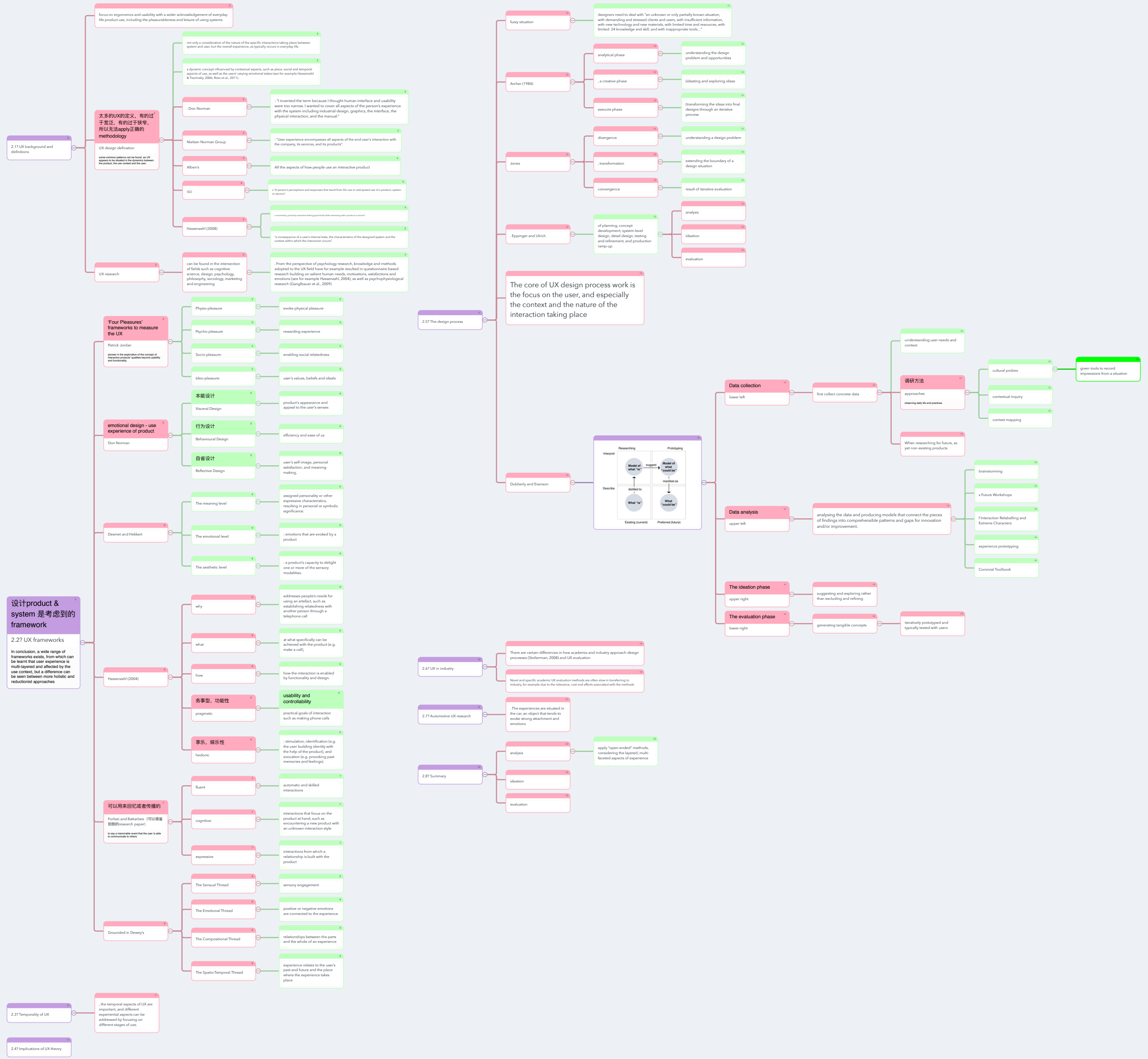
Self determination theory and work motivation



3. Leonard and Rayport - Spark Innovation







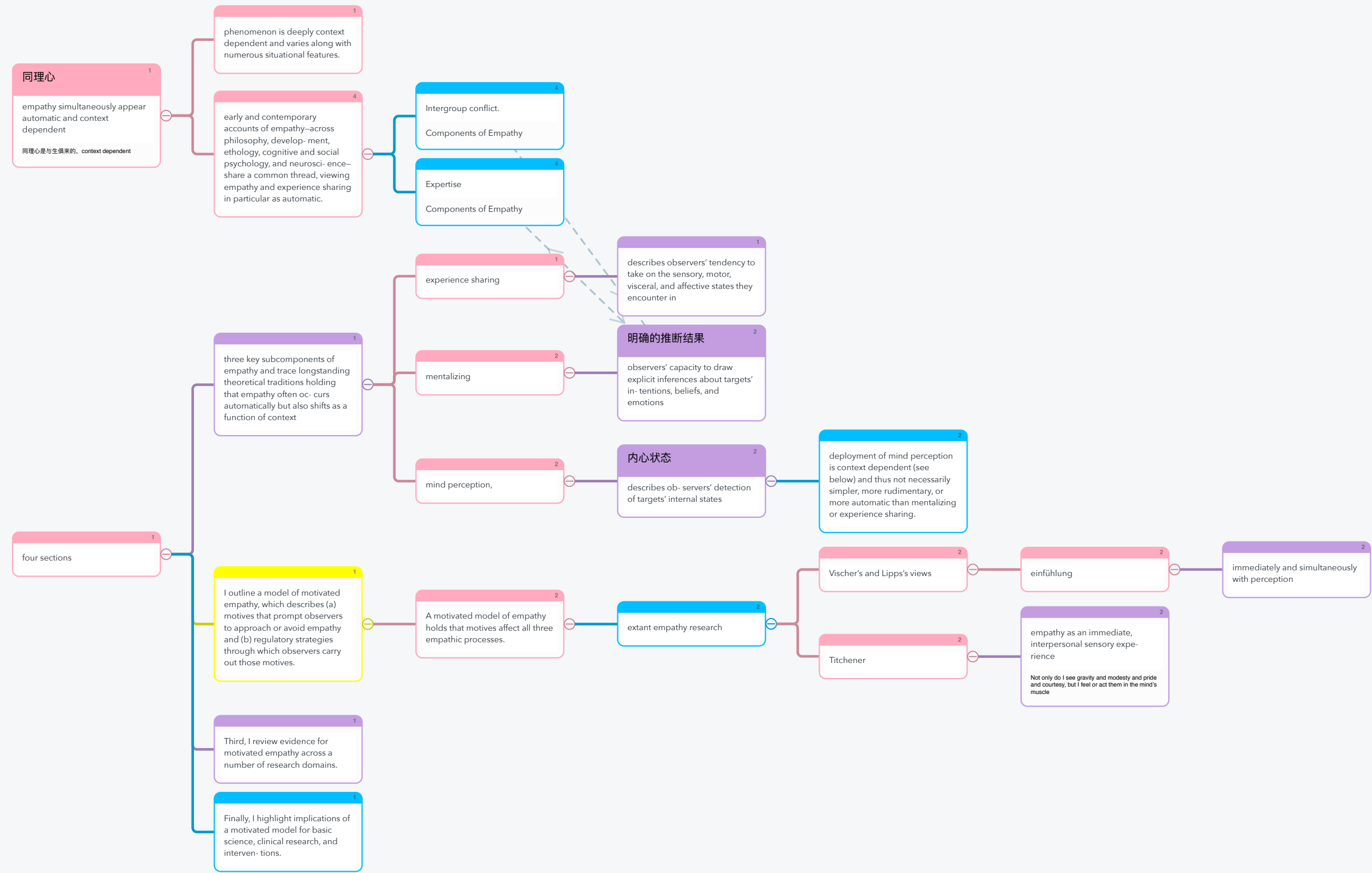
2. Zaki - Empathy a motivated account

Empathy: A Motivated Account

Automaticity and Context Dependency in Empathy

Components of Empathy

Intergroup conflict.
Expertise



Automaticity as a Theme in Empathy Research

Contemporary theory

Foundations and Structure of a Motivated Model

Co constructions

