



Concept Mapping

Jon Kolko
Professor, Austin Center for Design

ac4d

Concept Map

A representation of a system that sacrifices accuracy for comprehensibility; a tool for sensemaking.

Concept Map

A representation of a system that sacrifices accuracy for comprehensibility; a tool for sensemaking.

A CONCEPT MAP/

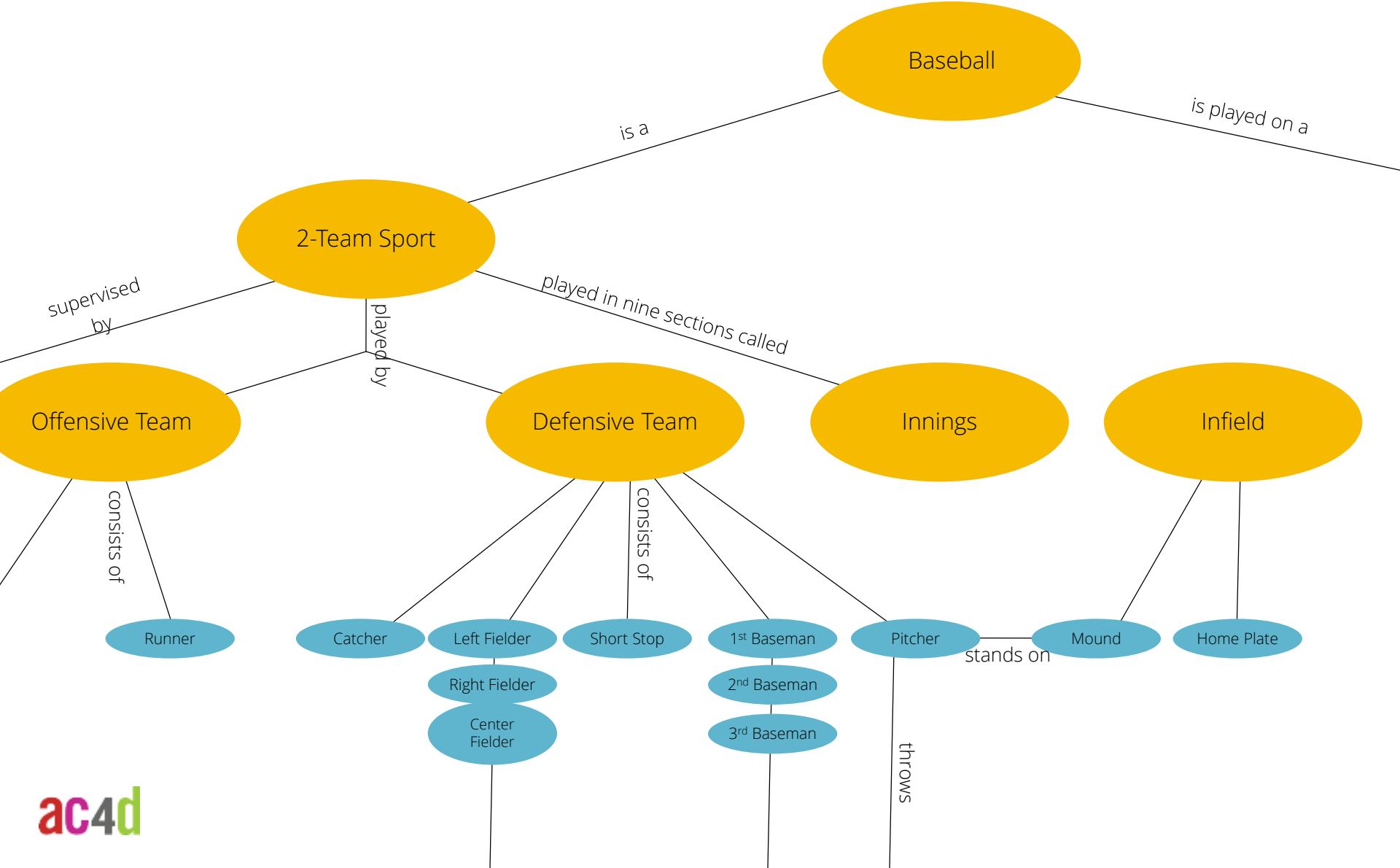
1. Visualizes both the forest and the trees
2. Rarely has a “beginning” and “end”
3. Helps people find their way
4. Provides direction and instruction
5. Forces selectivity, abstraction, prioritization and hierarchy
6. Is visual (a tool for perception)
7. Is semantic (a tool for cognition)
8. Represents the user’s mental model of a how a system might work
9. Can also represent the designer’s manifest model of how a system might appear

Concept Map

We'll use a concept map to understand the organization and boundaries of a complex system.

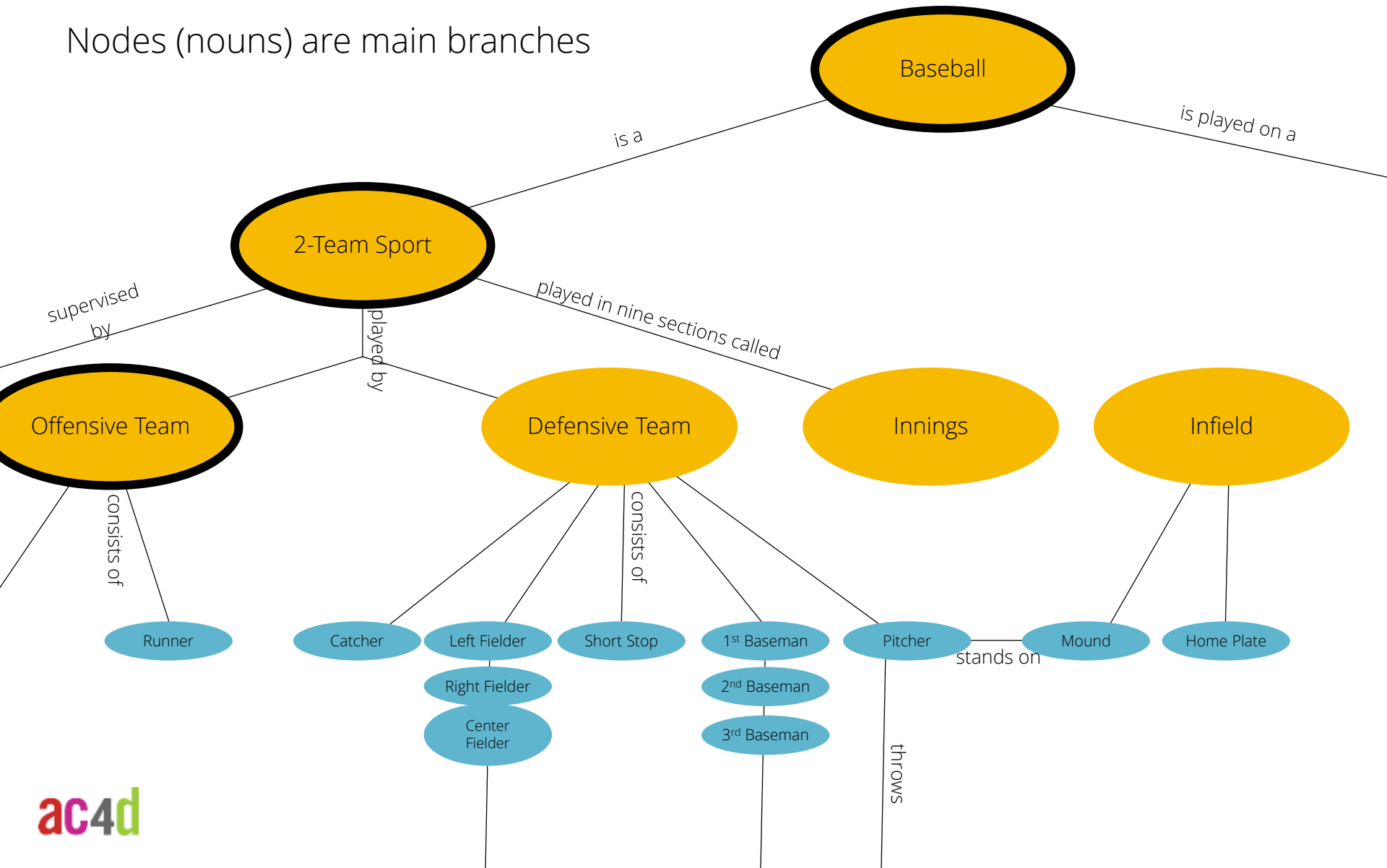
Think of it as a translation between words and visuals – a way of jumping from a set of written requirements to an initial design schema.

For Example...



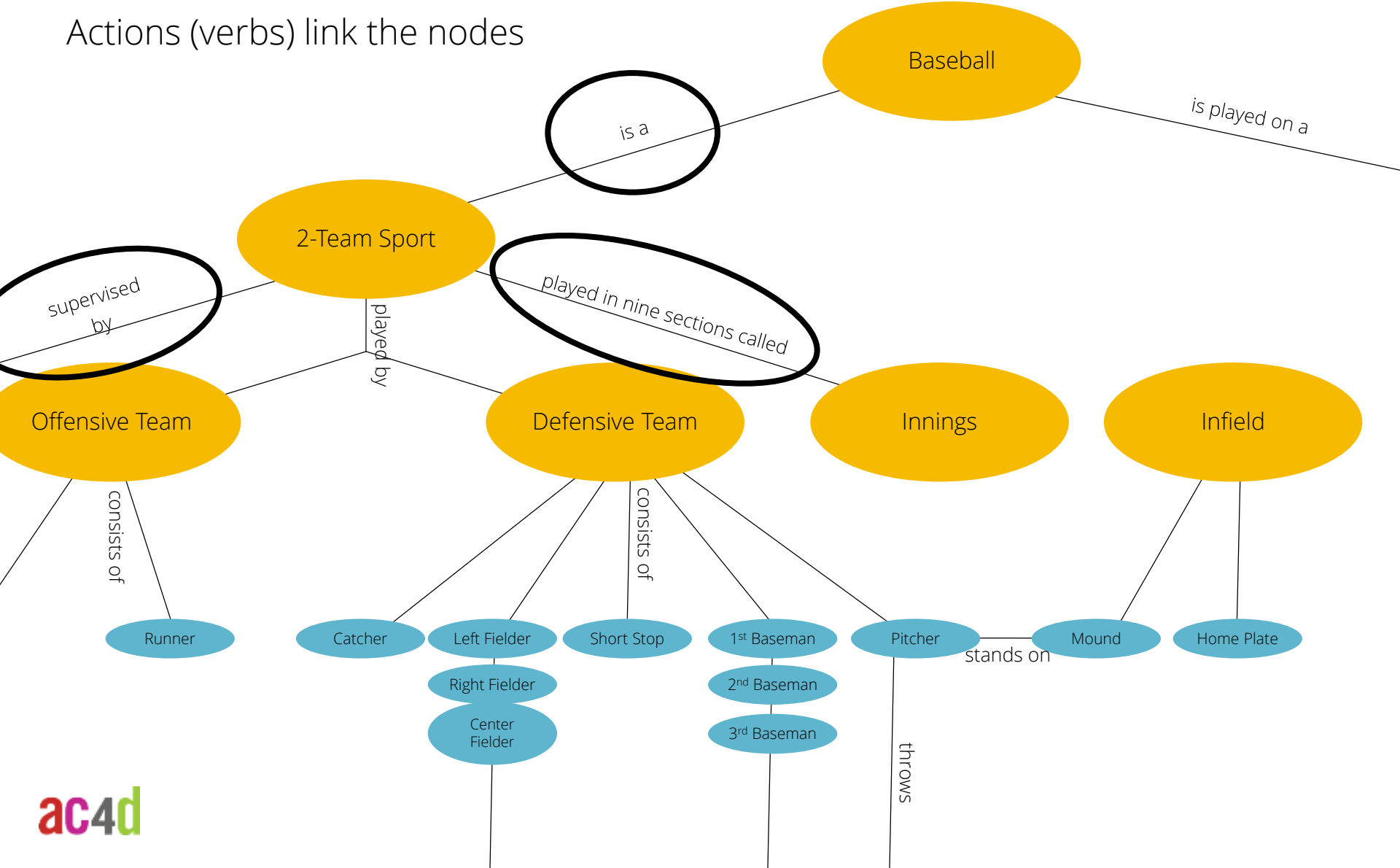
For Example...

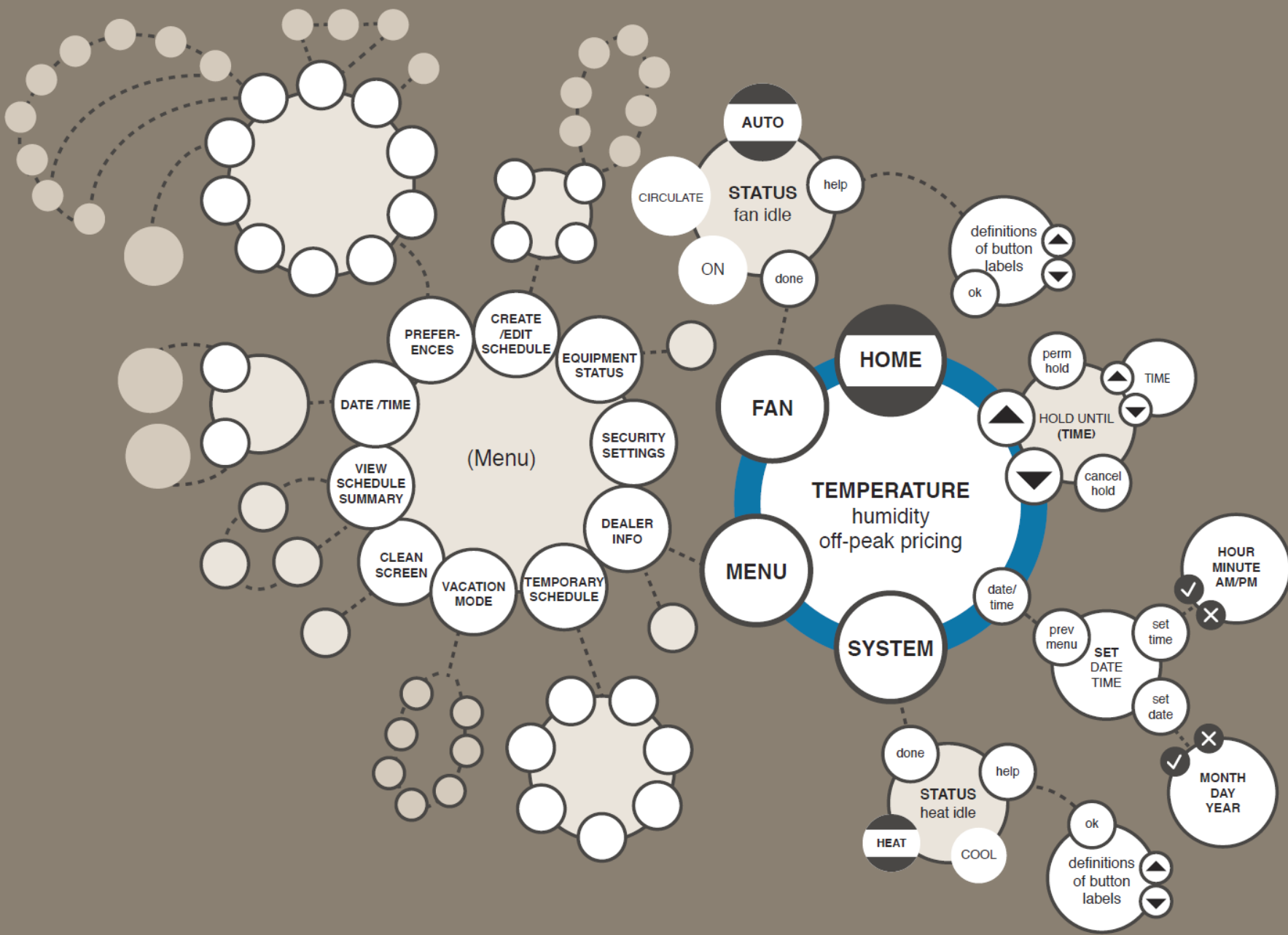
Nodes (nouns) are main branches

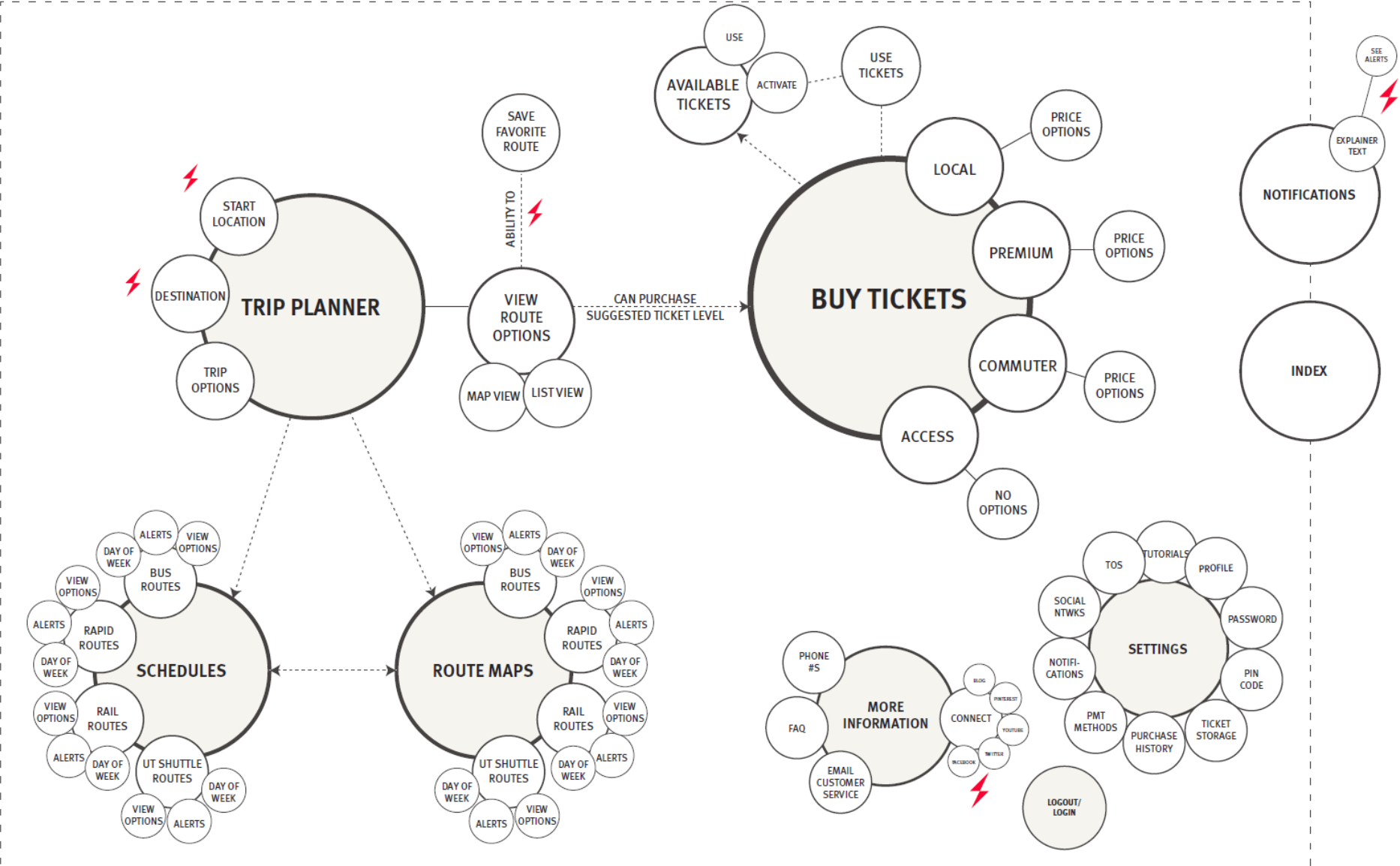


For Example...

Actions (verbs) link the nodes







Creating a Concept Map

1. Create a matrix showing the relations of terms

List terms. Identify the main elements that make up the system; lean on your contextual research to understand the words that matter to the users the most.

Create empty matrix, plotting the words against themselves.

Identify relationships; these are qualitative and require interpretation.

Creating a Concept Map

2. Identify the main branches of the map.

Use frequency of connections, as well as common sense. Create the backbone or structure of the map so that it makes a cohesive sentence.

Creating a Concept Map

3. Fill in the rest of the structure

Be sure to represent all of the elements in the system.

Creating a Concept Map

4. Enhance with visual design

Use visual design to clarify and make the content more accessible .

For example...

Making a concept map of AC4D.

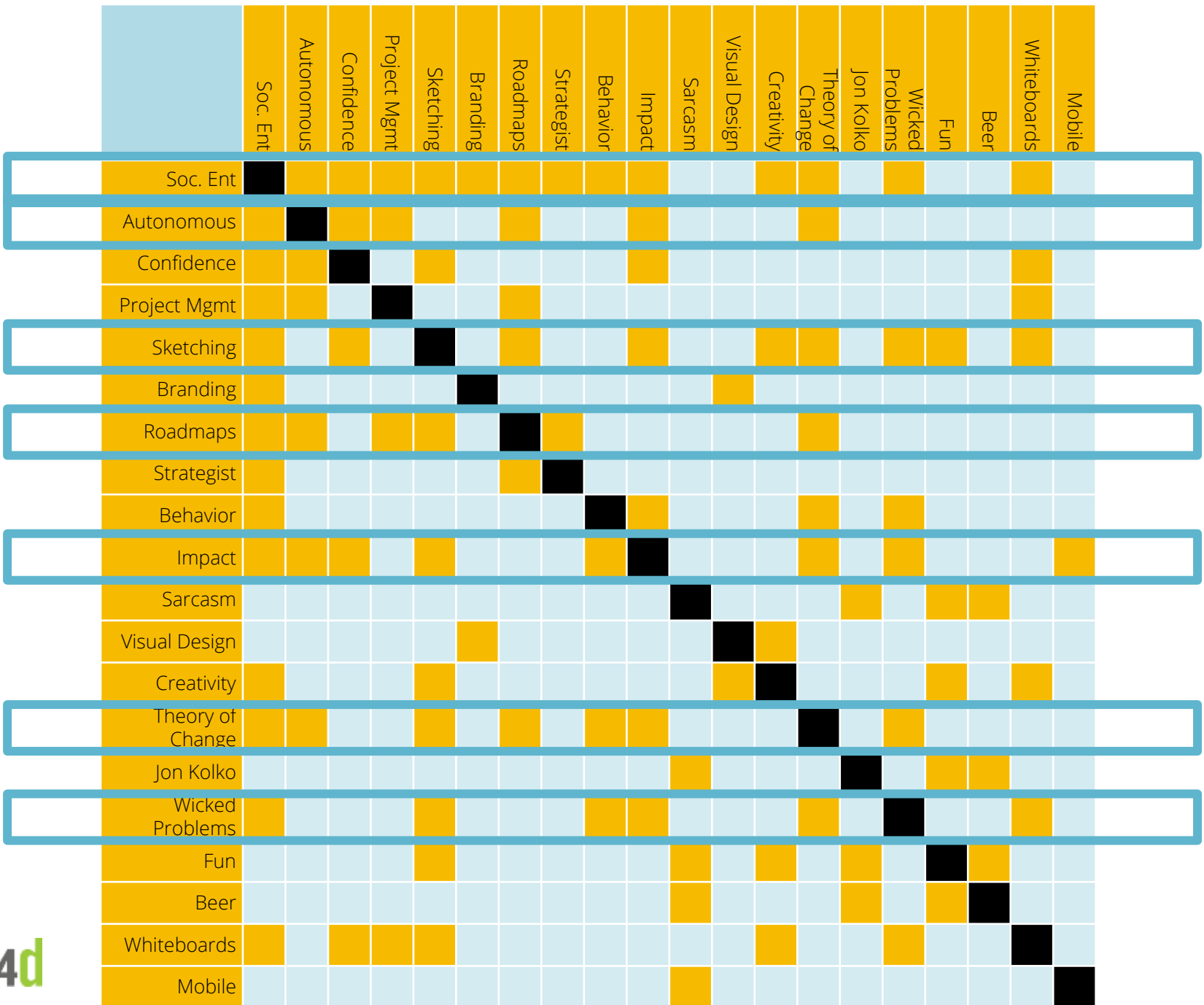
Social Entrepreneurship	Autonomous	Confidence	Project Management
Sketching	Branding	Roadmaps	Strategist
Behavior	Impact	Sarcasm	Visual Design
Creativity	Theory of Change	Jon Kolko	Wicked Problems
Fun	Beer	Whiteboards	Mobile

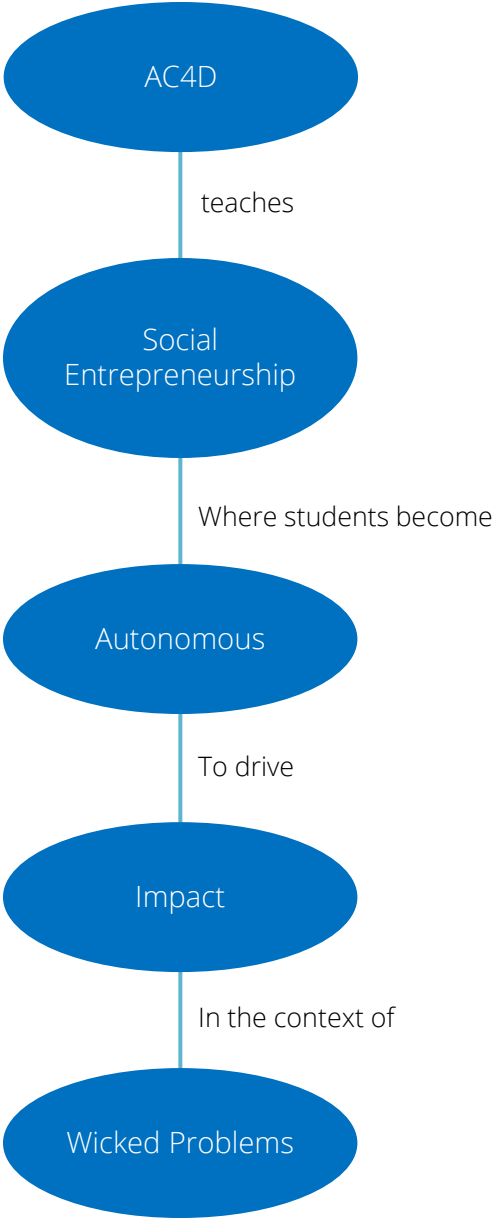
	Soc. Ent	Autonomous	Confidence	Project Mgmt	Sketching	Branding	Roadmaps	Strategist	Behavior	Impact	Sarcasm	Visual Design	Creativity	Theory of Change	Jon Kolko	Wicked Problems	Fun	Beer	Whiteboards	Mobile	
Soc. Ent																					
Autonomous																					
Confidence																					
Project Mgmt																					
Sketching																					
Branding																					
Roadmaps																					
Strategist																					
Behavior																					
Impact																					
Sarcasm																					
Visual Design																					
Creativity																					
Theory of Change																					
Jon Kolko																					
Wicked Problems																					
Fun																					
Beer																					
Whiteboards																					
Mobile																					

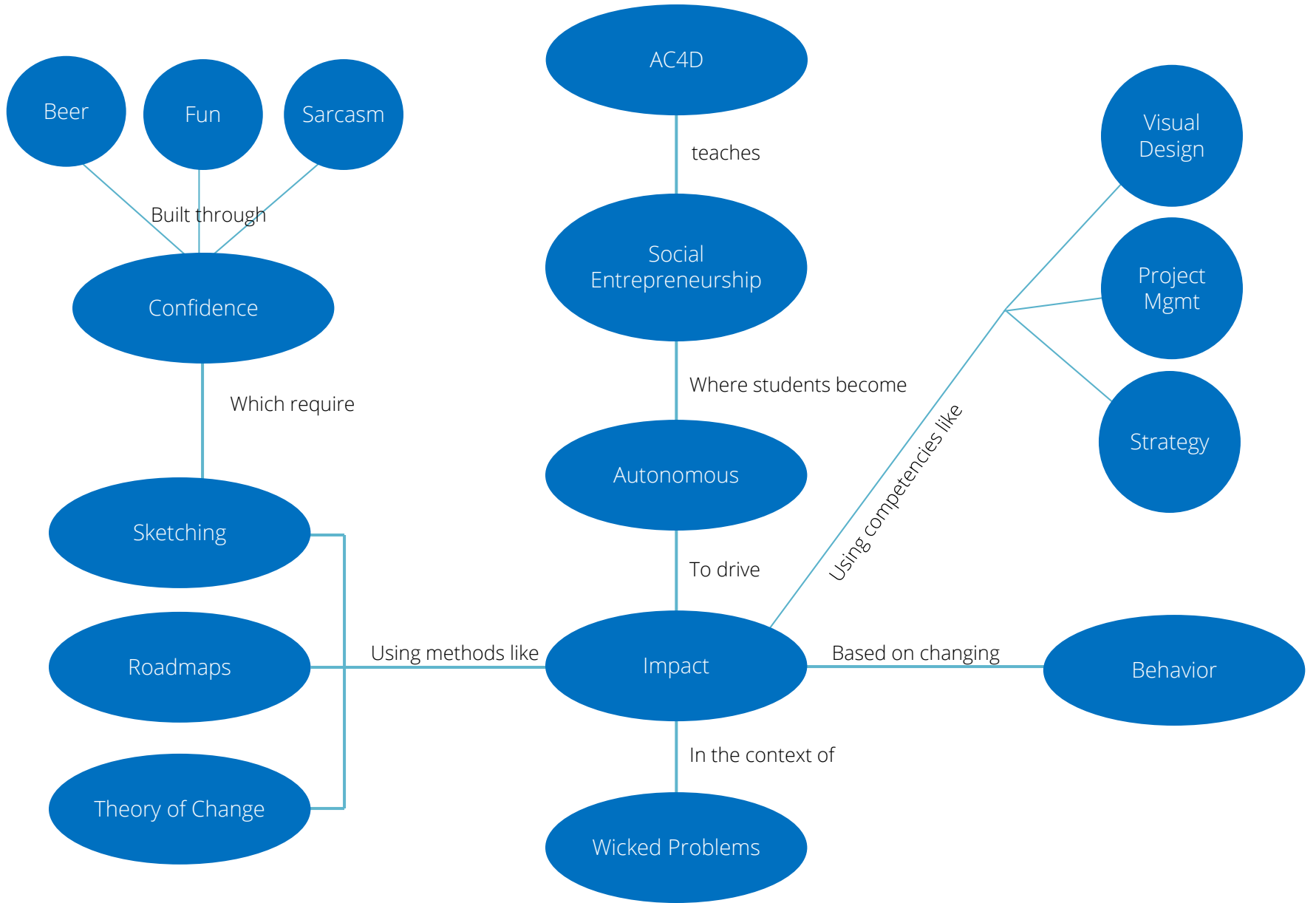
	Soc. Ent	Autonomous	Confidence	Project Mgmt	Sketching	Branding	Roadmaps	Strategist	Behavior	Impact	Sarcasm	Visual Design	Creativity	Theory of Change	Jon Kolko	Wicked Problems	Fun	Beer	Whiteboards	Mobile	
Soc. Ent	■																				
Autonomous		■																			
Confidence			■																		
Project Mgmt				■																	
Sketching					■																
Branding						■															
Roadmaps							■														
Strategist								■													
Behavior									■												
Impact										■											
Sarcasm											■										
Visual Design												■									
Creativity													■								
Theory of Change														■							
Jon Kolko															■						
Wicked Problems																■					
Fun																	■				
Beer																		■			
Whiteboards																			■		
Mobile																				■	

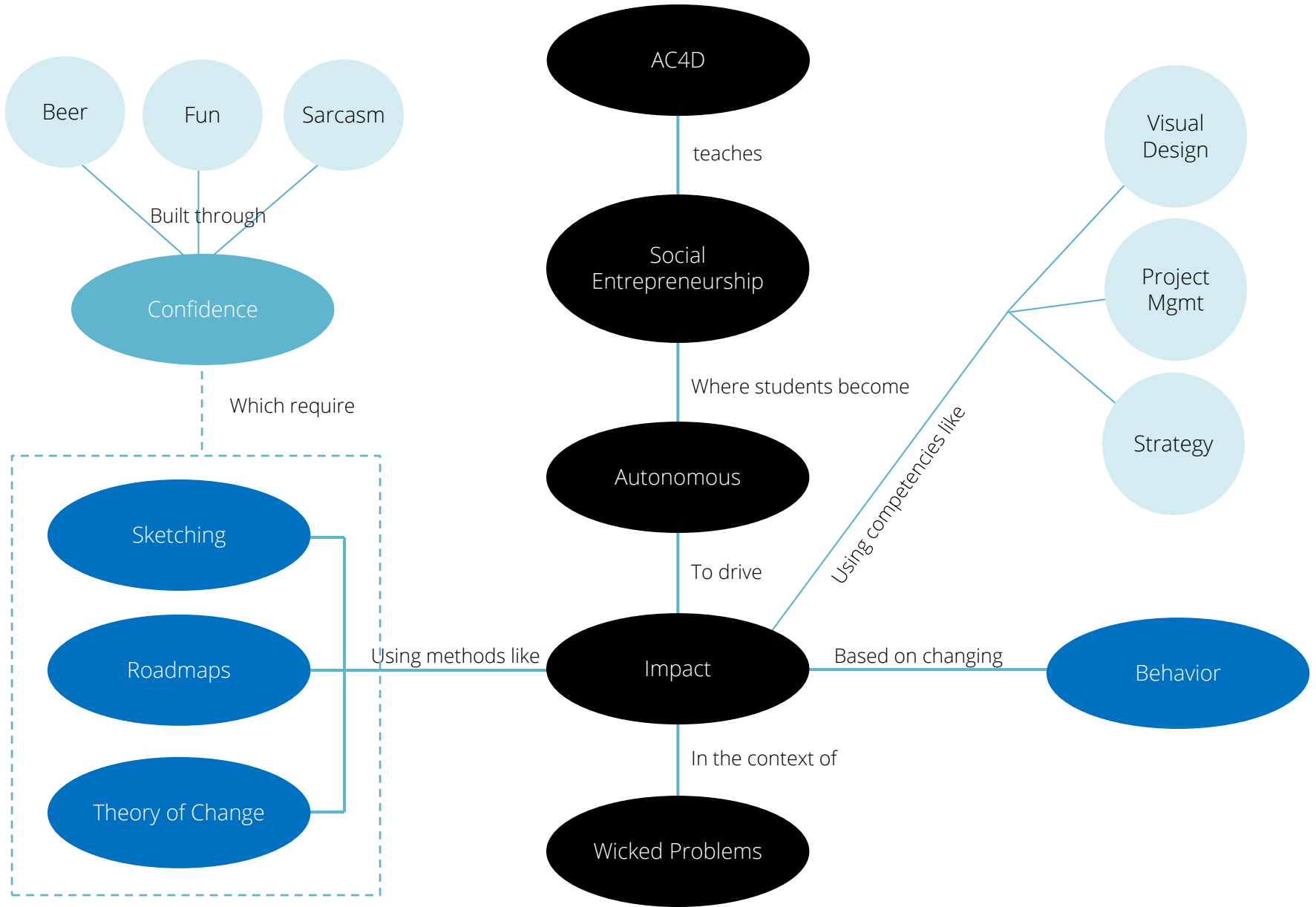
	Soc. Ent	Autonomous	Confidence	Project Mgmt	Sketching	Branding	Roadmaps	Strategist	Behavior	Impact	Sarcasm	Visual Design	Creativity	Theory of Change	Jon Kolko	Wicked Problems	Fun	Beer	Whiteboards	Mobile	
Soc. Ent	Black																				
Autonomous		Black																			
Confidence			Black																		
Project Mgmt				Black																	
Sketching					Black																
Branding						Black															
Roadmaps							Black														
Strategist								Black													
Behavior									Black												
Impact										Black											
Sarcasm											Black										
Visual Design												Black									
Creativity													Black								
Theory of Change														Black							
Jon Kolko															Black						
Wicked Problems																Black					
Fun																	Black				
Beer																		Black			
Whiteboards																			Black		
Mobile																				Black	

	Soc. Ent	Autonomous	Confidence	Project Mgmt	Sketching	Branding	Roadmaps	Strategist	Behavior	Impact	Sarcasm	Visual Design	Creativity	Theory of Change	Jon Kolko	Wicked Problems	Fun	Beer	Whiteboards	Mobile	
Soc. Ent	Black																				
Autonomous		Black																			
Confidence			Black																		
Project Mgmt				Black																	
Sketching					Black																
Branding						Black															
Roadmaps							Black														
Strategist								Black													
Behavior									Black												
Impact										Black											
Sarcasm											Black										
Visual Design												Black									
Creativity													Black								
Theory of Change														Black							
Jon Kolko															Black						
Wicked Problems																Black					
Fun																	Black				
Beer																		Black			
Whiteboards																				Black	
Mobile																					Black









Concept Map, Recap

A representation of a system that sacrifices accuracy for comprehensibility; a tool for sensemaking.

A CONCEPT MAP/

1. Visualizes both the forest and the trees
2. Rarely has a “beginning” and “end”
3. Helps people find their way
4. Provides direction and instruction
5. Forces selectivity, abstraction, prioritization and hierarchy
6. Is visual (a tool for perception)
7. Is semantic (a tool for cognition)
8. Represents the user’s mental model of a how a system might work
9. Can also represent the designer’s manifest model of how a system might appear

HOW TO MAKE IT/

1. Create a matrix showing the relations of terms
2. Identify the main branches of the map
3. Fill in the rest of the structure
4. Enhance with visual design

ac4d

Jon Kolko
Director, Austin Center for Design
jkolko@ac4d.com

Download our free book,
Wicked Problems: Problems Worth Solving,
at <http://www.wickedproblems.com>