Systems Thinking Exercise

90 minutes

renourish

Cornflake Connections

Objectives:

- Understand that everything is connected
- Realize that there are multiple elements, resources, and systems behind the simplest of things
- Learn how and what we ask helps reveal hidden systems at play.

Tools needed:

- Whiteboard, Miro Board, or big sheets of paper
- Sticky-Notes
- Dry Erase markers or markers



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Part 1

Form groups of 3-4 and use the image of cornflakes in a bowl above as your starting point.

"What is this? What do you see?" *(10 mins)*

Using a Miro Board, whiteboard, or big sheets of paper, each group should create a cluster map (think a bigger mind map) of what you know about cornflakes.

For example -

- What are cornflakes made of?
- Where are the ingredients from?
- How are cornflakes made? (by hand, machine)
- Where are they made and how far does it travel?

Share out! *(2 mins per team)*

Each team shares what they know, without repeating anything that the previous teams have already shared.

Part 2

Research! *(30 mins)*

Investigate online more information about cornflakes to better answer the questions asked in part 1.

Add what you learn to your cluster map.

Part 3

Zoom in! *(20 mins)*

You might not have finished all you could find out about cornflakes, so you can divide and conquer here splitting up your tasks on your team.

The next step is to answer these questions and put them on the map.

- What are the impacts (social/environmental) at each node on your cluster map?
- Where are humans on the cluster map?
- Where are you on the cluster map?
- Is this cluster map a closed loop? How could it become closed?

Reflection. *(20-30 mins)*

- What did you learn from this exercise?
- What was easy and what was hard about this exercise?
- How can we visualize connected elements to better understand their relationships?
- Where/when do we stop making connections?
- In your opinion, how would knowing how things are connected impact your work as a designer?

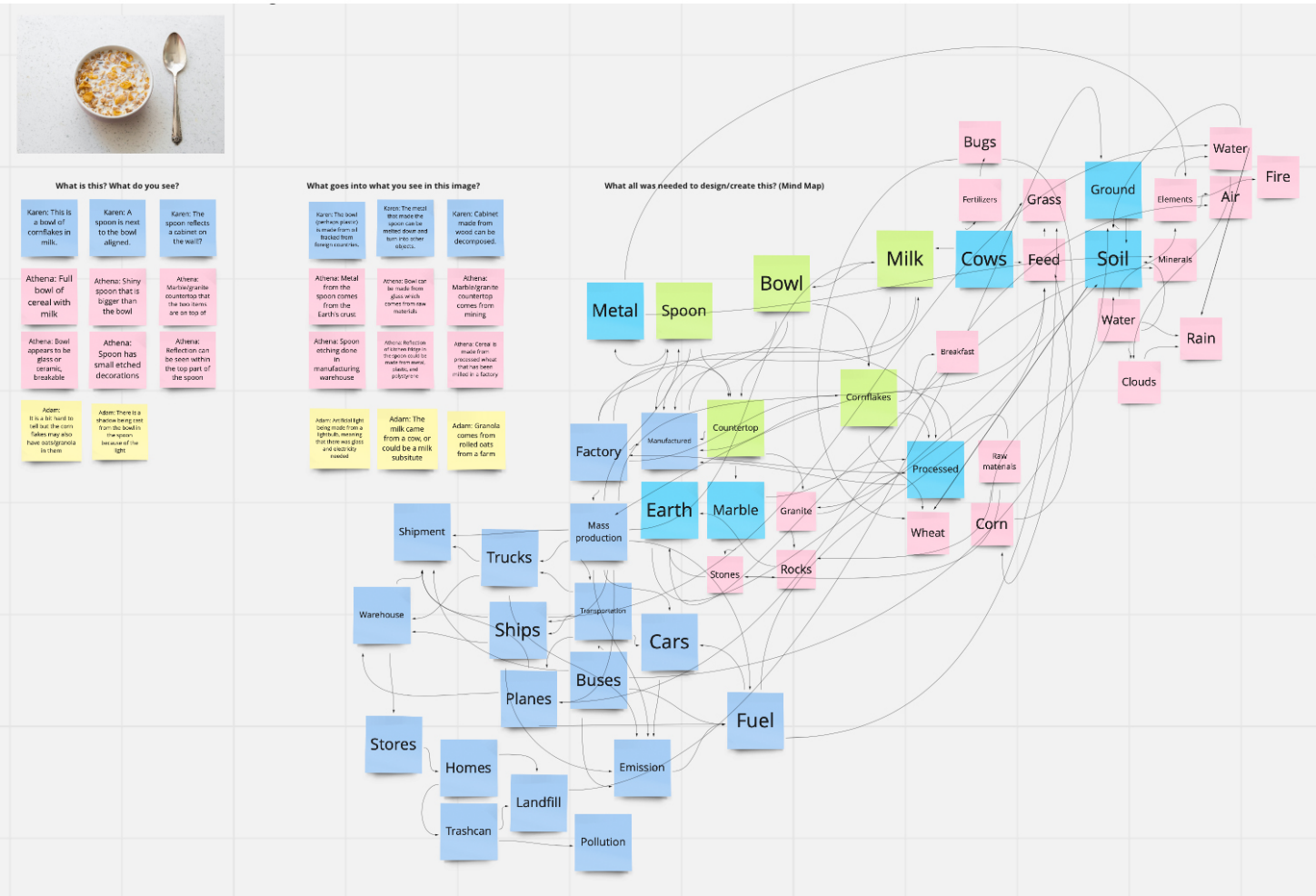
This exercise was created by Eric Benson, Michellle Fehler, and Charlene Sequeira.

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Cornflake Connections Example Mapping

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