

HOW TO TAKE

# Smart Sketchnotes

WITH OBSIDIAN AND ZETTELKASTEN

v0.9.0 | 29.12.2022 | draft



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# SMART SKETCHNOTES

WITH OBSIDIAN AND ZETTELKASTEN

v0.9.0 | 29.12.2022 | draft

Sketchnote Book  
by Edmund Gröpl



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Cover: Sketchnote inspired by Graham Shaw at TEDx, 2015  
[https://lnkd.in/eC\\_7RRjy](https://lnkd.in/eC_7RRjy)

# Foreword

This is a book about ...

In this draft version it is just a collection of ideas and drawings from the authors personal learning journey and experiences about the concepts of visual and networked thinking by using smart sketchnotes.

London

N.N.

February 2022

# Preface

I'm a data scientist and data storyteller. Networked thinking is part of my job since more than 30 years. Working with sketchnotes is a basic need. But why should I start writing a book about Smart Sketchnotes? The answer is easy.

What I've learned in my digital life:

1. Moments are precious.
2. So, I'm taking photos to remember.
3. Too many photos are overwhelming.
4. So, I love to create Photo Books.

But I needed much longer to understand:

1. Ideas are precious.
2. So, I'm taking sketchnotes to remember.

3. Too many sketchnotes are overwhelming.
4. So, I'm just creating my first Sketchnote Book about Digital Sketchnotes.

Do you already have a photo book? And what about having your own Sketchnote Book collecting **Digital Sketchnotes**?

If you love the idea, here are some more great examples:

- A Simple Guide to Sketchnoting, Alessio Bresciani <sup>1</sup>
- Essentials of Visual Language, Yuri Malishenko<sup>2</sup>
- The xLontrax Theory of Sketchnote, Mauro Toselli<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alessio Bresciani, *A Simple Guide To Sketchnoting: How To Use Visual Thinking in Daily Life to Improve Communication & Problem Solving*, 2016, <https://www.amazon.de/dp/B01LYP6JWZ/>.

<sup>2</sup> Yuri Malishenko, *Essentials of Visual Language - Workbook* (Leanpub, 2016), <https://leanpub.com/visualthinkingworkbook>.

<sup>3</sup> Mauro Toselli, *The Xlontrax Theory of Sketchnote*, 2016, <https://www.maurotoselli.com/blog/the-xlontrax-theory-of-sketchnote>.



- Sketchnotes aus Australien, Annelies Schippke<sup>4</sup>
- Collection of 98 Digital Sketchnotes, Chris Spalton<sup>5</sup>

But collecting Digital Sketchnotes is only the first step. In this book you will learn how to benefit from networked thinking and visual thinking as well.

Networked thinking and visual thinking are both approaches to organizing and interpreting information that can be used to help you better understand complex ideas and concepts. However, they differ in the way they represent and structure information.

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<sup>4</sup> Annelies Schippke, „Sketchnotes aus Australien“, *meisterbar* (blog), zugegriffen 29. Dezember 2022, <http://meisterbar.de/australien/>.

<sup>5</sup> Chris Spalton, „Collected Digital Sketchnotes“, Dropbox, 2022, <https://www.dropbox.com/s/cwozl3elf3604pi/Chris%20Spalton%20-%20Collected%20Digital%20Sketchnotes%20.pdf?dl=0>.

**Networked thinking**<sup>6</sup> is an approach to organizing information that involves creating connections and relationships between different pieces of information. It often involves creating a network or map of interconnected ideas and concepts, which can be visualized in the form of a diagram or other visual representation. Networked thinking is often used to identify patterns and connections between different pieces of information, and to explore the relationships between different ideas and concepts.

**Visual thinking**<sup>7</sup>, on the other hand, is an approach to organizing and interpreting information that involves the use of visual elements such as images, diagrams, and graphics to represent and communicate information. Visual thinking can be used to create

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<sup>6</sup> Anne-Laure Le Cunff, „Networked Thinking: A Quiet Cognitive Revolution“, *Ness Labs* (blog), 23. September 2020, <https://nesslabs.com/networked-thinking>.

<sup>7</sup> Willemien Brand und Pieter Koene, *Visual Thinking - Empowering People and Organizations Through Visual Collaboration* (Bis B.V., Uitgeverij (BIS Publishers), 2017), [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL28622690M/Visual\\_Thinking](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL28622690M/Visual_Thinking).

visual summaries of complex ideas, to convey information in a more memorable and engaging way, and to facilitate the process of problem-solving and decision-making.

In summary, networked thinking involves creating connections and relationships between different pieces of information, while visual thinking involves using visual elements to represent and communicate information. Both approaches can be useful tools for organizing and understanding complex ideas and concepts.

We will start taking notes and taking sketchnotes as well. Linked together we can see almost hidden structures. That's the stuff **Smart Sketchnotes** are made of. Start reading to discover your new world of thinking.

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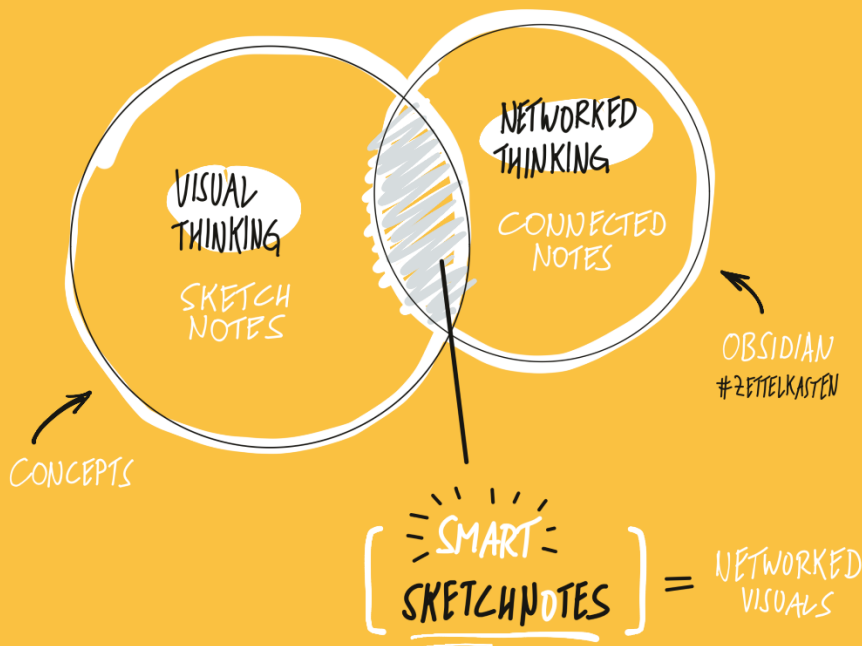
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# INTRODUCTION

SMART  
↑ ↑ ↑

# SKETCHNOTES





Sketchnote<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Edmund Gröpl, „It is not possible to think“, 2022,  
[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/groepl\\_procreate-lernos-lernossketchnoting-activity-7002979335590576128-\\_ocZ/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/groepl_procreate-lernos-lernossketchnoting-activity-7002979335590576128-_ocZ/).

# Understand The Value of Smart Sketchnotes

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO  
THINK  
SYSTEMATICALLY  
WITHOUT WRITING  
(LUHMANN 1992, 53).



SKETCHNOTING

**Sönke Ahrens**

*How to Take Smart Notes: One Simple Technique to Boost  
Writing, Learning and Thinking*

Take Notes

#1

Ideas,  
not  
Art

- MIKE ROHDE



#EDMUND'2021

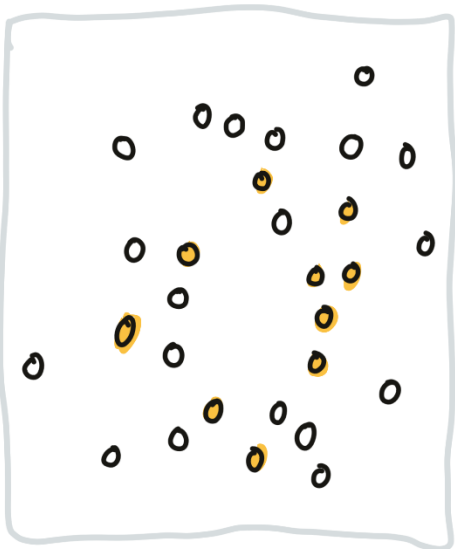
# Take Sketchnotes



SKETCHNOTES ARE RICH VISUAL NOTES CREATED FROM A MIX OF HANDWRITING, DRAWINGS, HAND-DRAWN TYPOGRAPHY, SHAPES, AND VISUAL ELEMENTS LIKE ARROWS, BOXES, AND LINES.

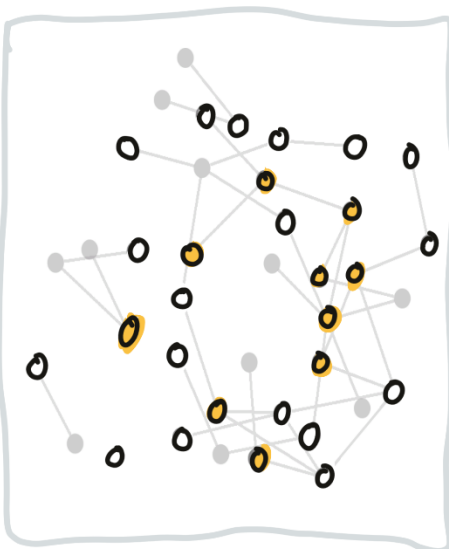
– MIKE RHODE (THE SKETCHNOTE HANDBOOK)

## SKETCHNOTES



IDEAS

## SMART SKETCHNOTES



NETWORKED IDEAS

# Create Smart Sketchnotes



**NO PICTURE PUZZLES – MARTINA GRIGOLEIT**

What is the difference between a sketchnote and a smart sketchnote? It is the same as between ideas and networked idea. Such easy.



START FROM  
PROVEN  
CONCEPTS

# Use Zettelkasten Method

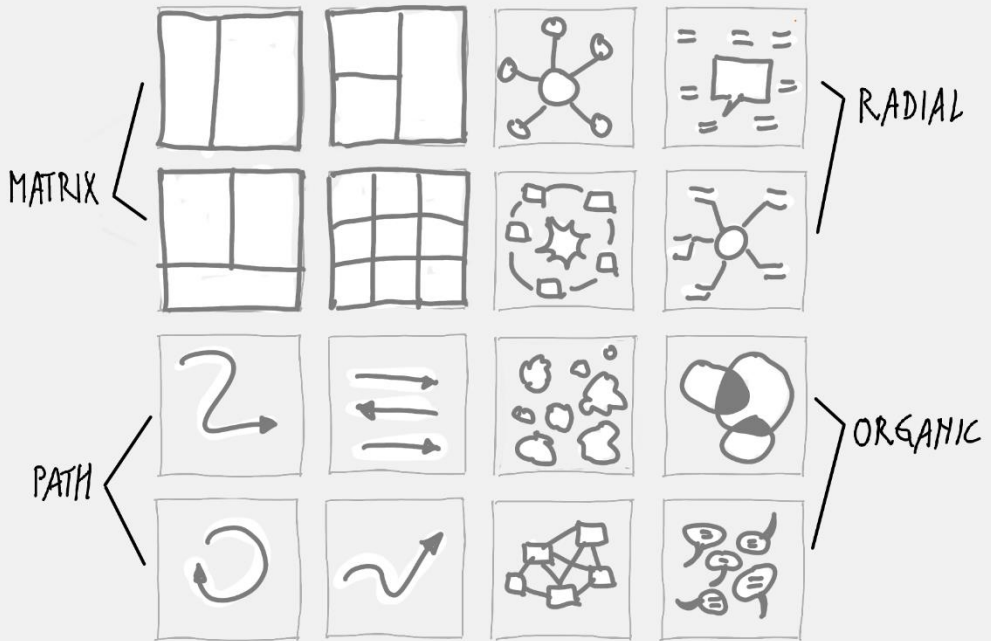


**ONE CANNOT THINK WITHOUT SKETCHNOTING**

What are we to do with all our sketchnotes we had produced over the years? Certainly, at first, we will produce mostly garbage. But we have been educated to expect something useful from our activities and soon lose confidence if nothing useful seems to result. We should, therefore, reflect on whether and how we arrange our sketchnotes so that they are available for later access.

# lernos<sup>co</sup> SKETCHNOTES

KATA 13 - WEEK 5



BASIC

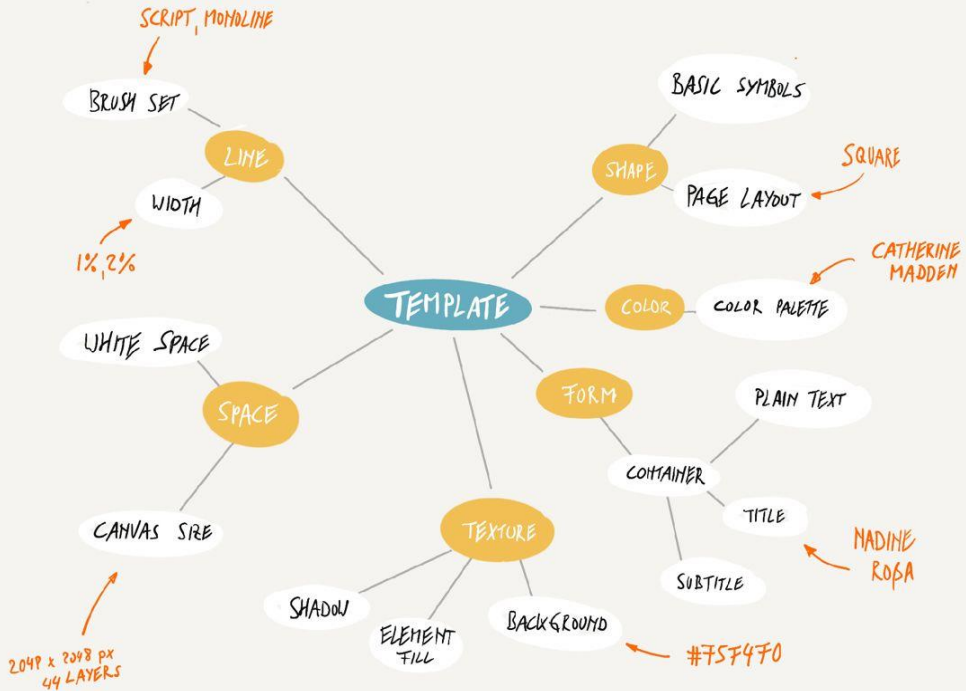
LAYOUT

STRUCTURES

Use Sketchnotes

# lernos<sup>®</sup> SKETCHNOTES

KATA 13 - WEEK 5



MINDMAP

LAYOUT

CLASSIC

# Layout & Structure

What do I know about layouts? - For me it is the main question lernOS sketchnoting produces in week 5. Which layouts do I know? Which are the basic rules working with layouts? Which layouts I am already using? Which layout do I always wanted use? ...

It is like watching an iceberg. Only 10 to 15% are visible. I have just started to learn more about layouts to explore more of the hidden principles. But it is a long journey. ;-)

# Use Mind Maps

**FOCUS ON SOMETHING YOU WANT TO LEARN AND FOCUS ON IT - MARC GUTMAN**

**KEEP A BAD DRAWING UNTIL BY STUDY YOU HAVE FOUND OUT WHY IT IS BAD - ROBERT HENRI**

**WE LEARN BY COPYING. WE ADVANCE THROUGH INTEGRATION. WE MASTER BY TAPPING INTO OUR OWN SOURCE. - KELVY BIRD<sup>9</sup>**

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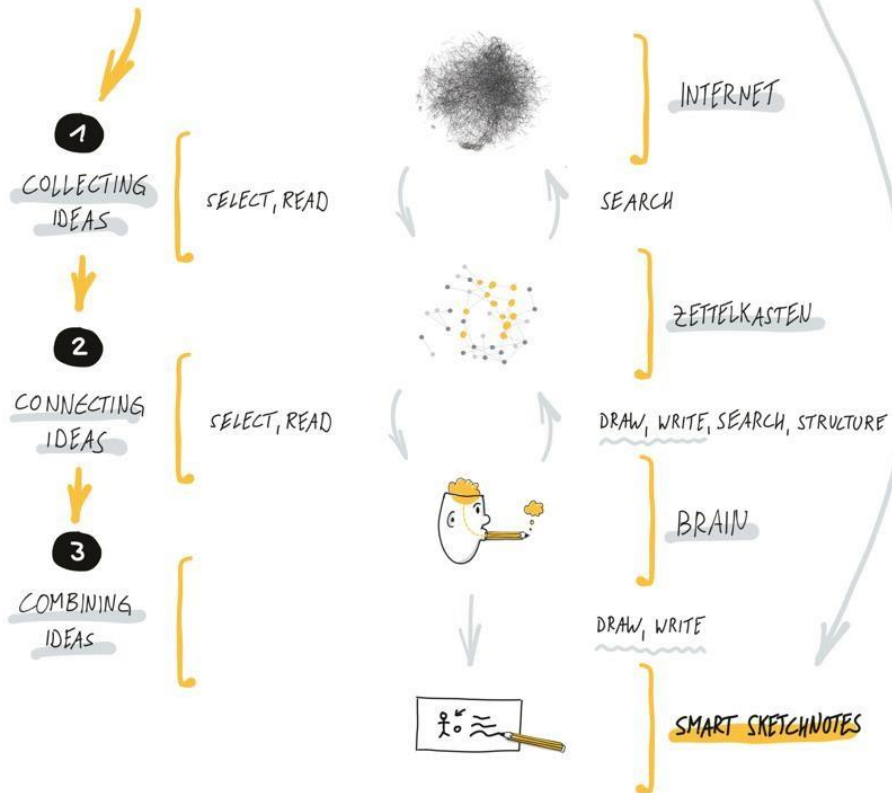
<sup>9</sup> [1]

Use Concept Maps



BUILD UP YOUR  
WORKFLOW

# WORKFLOW for SMART SKETCHNOTES



# Start with Three Steps



**YOU CANNOT THINK WITHOUT SKETCHNOTING.**

To create Smart Sketchnotes you will need three steps for:

1. collecting ideas,
2. connecting ideas and
3. combining ideas.

Compared with the well know process of sketchnoting there is one element in between: It is the “magic” Zettelkasten, something like a second brain, where you can store and most important connect your selected ideas of value.

# Focus on Creating Output

Here are my personal strategies you can try to focus on creating output:

**Set specific goals:** Identify what you want to accomplish and create specific, measurable goals to help guide your efforts. This will help you stay focused and motivated.

**Eliminate distractions:** Remove any unnecessary distractions from your work environment. This could include turning off notifications on your phone or computer, or finding a quiet place to work.

**Use time-blocking:** Schedule specific times for working on specific tasks or projects. This can help you stay on track and avoid getting side-tracked.

**Take breaks:** It is important to take breaks to rest and recharge. Set aside time for breaks and use them to refocus your energy and get back to work with renewed focus.

**Use tools to help you stay on track:** There are many tools and techniques that can help you stay focused and on track. For example, you might use a timer to break your work into manageable chunks, or you might use a productivity app to help you prioritize tasks and stay organized.

**Get feedback:** Seek feedback from others on your work to help you stay motivated and focused. This can help you identify areas where you can improve and stay engaged in your work.

Overall, the key to focusing on creating output is to set clear goals, eliminate distractions, use time-blocking and other productivity techniques, and seek feedback from others to stay motivated and on track.

Make it a Habit

USE DIGITAL  
TOOLS TO  
SUPPORT YOUR  
WORKFLOW



**GET A NEW PEN - MARC GUTMAN**

**THE PAINTER DRAWS WITH HIS EYES, NOT WITH HIS HANDS - MAURICE GROSSER**

**YOU ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TOOL - MARTINA GRIGOLEIT**

I started digital sketchnoting with Paper53®, Adobe Sketch® and Procreate®. But now I surprisingly prefer vector-based tools like PowerPoint®, OneNote®, Miro® and Concepts®. It's also great fun to use a mind mapping tool like SimpleMind®<sup>10</sup> to create structured mind maps like this one.

---

<sup>10</sup> [11]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i79VqhShVww>



Collect Ideas

# Obsidian

Obsidian<sup>11</sup> is a notetaking and knowledge management app on top of a local folder of plain text markdown files. It lets you turn a collection of plain text files into a rich network of linked thought.

## Pros

- Incredible graph view. Not only is it super-fast, but you can apply filters, create groups, and even change the look and functionality of the graph itself.
- Cross-platform app available for iOS (iPhone, iPad), MacOS, Windows, Linux
- No account or sign up required.
- Community support
- No need for an active internet connection.

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<sup>11</sup> „Obsidian“, zugegriffen 29. Dezember 2022, <https://obsidian.md/>.

- Obsidian is a fast-growing platform with new tools added regularly.
- Pricing: 100% free for personal use

### **Cons**

- iOS version works only with iCloud

Excel

Visualize Ideas

## Ebenen



## Präzision

- ☒ Gitter ☐ Punktraster
- ☐ Einrasten ☐ Optionen
- ☐ Messen ☐ 1:1 mm
- ☐ Hilfslinie ☐ Bogen

MISTER MAIKEL

# SKETCHNOTE

WORKSHOP

STRICHSTÄRKE

0,2mm | 0,3mm | 0,5mm | 0,6mm

SONNE



EINFAMILIENHAUS



LASTWAGEN



APPL

SMARTPHONE



DIAMANT



GLÜHBIRNE



KAF

HOCHHAUS

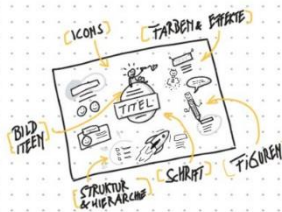


KAFFE



ODER TEE

WA



PERSÖNLICHE  
HIGHLIGHTS  
ERSTE WOCHE



# Concepts

Why not starting from scratch? Also, you have some experience in sketchnoting there is always the chance to learn and improve. My idea is to restart with the new book from Michael Geiß-Hein and also with the drawing tool Concepts app . As Maikel proposes: It will need no longer than 6 weeks. So, let us start.



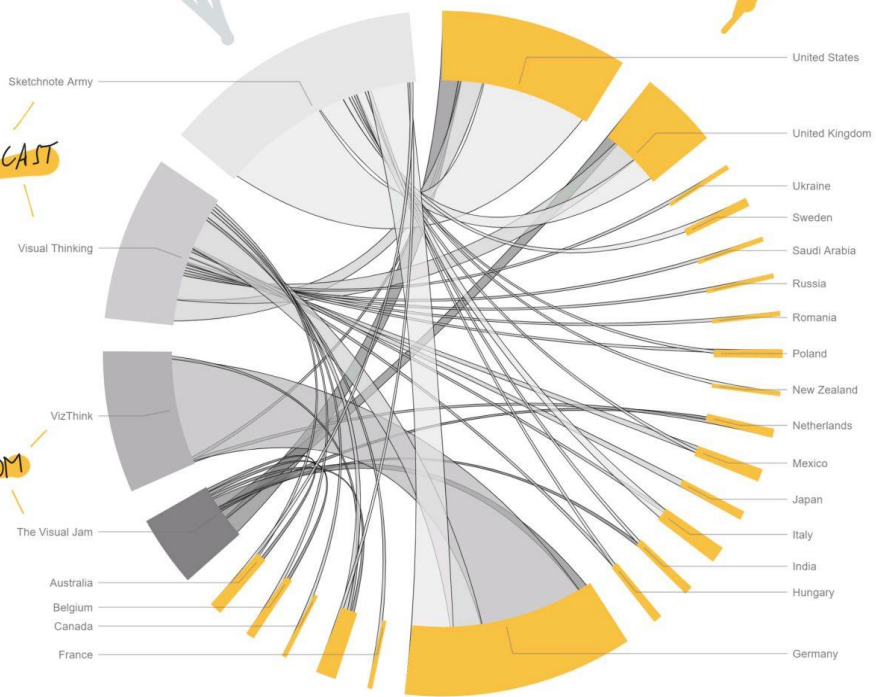
# 4 PLACES TO MEET

GREAT VISUAL THINKERS

FROM MORE THAN  
25 COUNTRIES

PODCAST

ZOOM

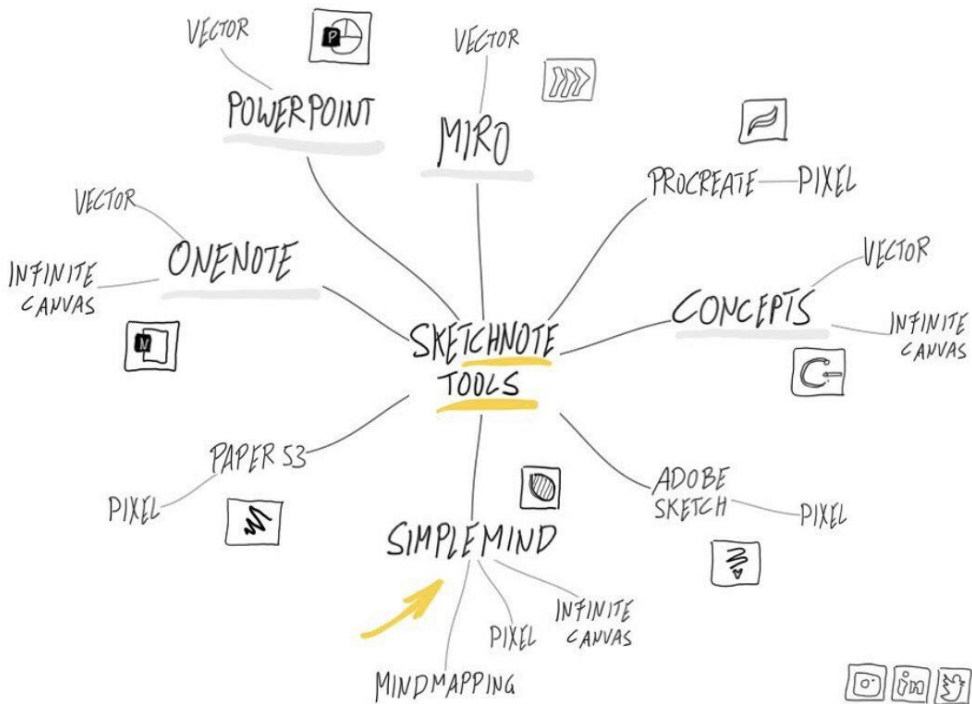


#EDMIND 2022



PowerBI

# Network Ideas



  
#EDMUND2021

# SimpleMind

SimpleMind is a cross-platform Mind Mapping tool with more than ten million users worldwide. It is my preferred tool to create structure notes for my Zettelkasten.

It now offers an integrated drawing editor. Combining mind mapping and sketchnoting is a great idea for brainstorming.

Learn more about this feature by watching SimpleMind <sup>12</sup> on YouTube.

Here are my pros and cons from this use case.

## **Pros**

- HTML export as an input for structure notes in Zettelkasten

---

<sup>12</sup> „Add Apple Pencil Drawings on iPad“, 2021,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i79VqhShVww>.

- PNG export
- Cross-platform app available for iOS (iPhone, iPad), MacOS, Windows, Android
- Infinite canvas
- Use of Apple pencil to add drawings as images

### **Cons**

- Drawings with pencil are pixel based, no vector drawing

Obsidian

Communicate Ideas

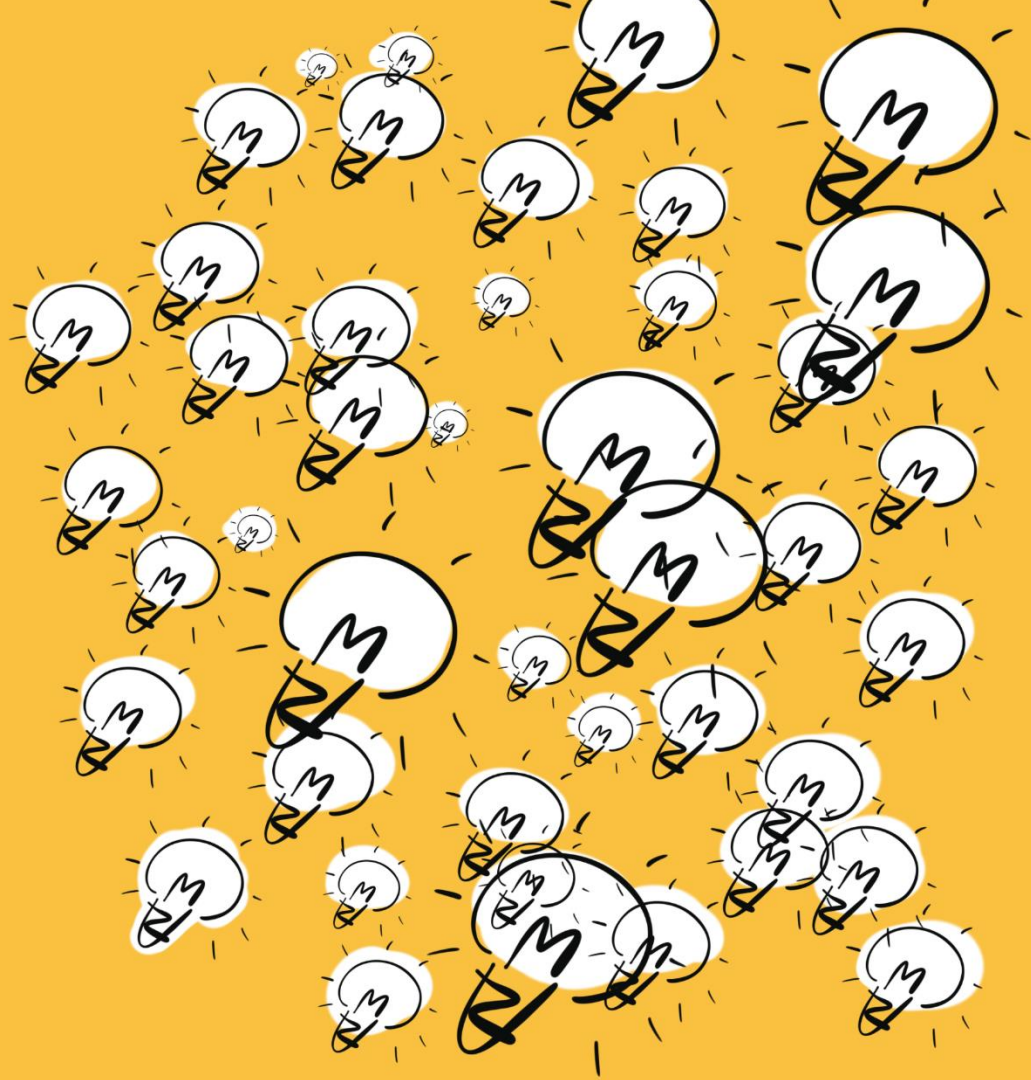
Miro



PowerPoint

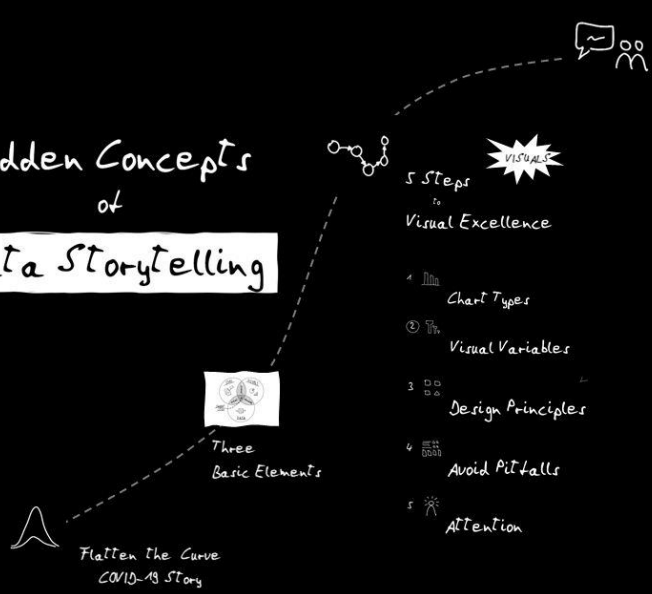
Publish Ideas

Word ©

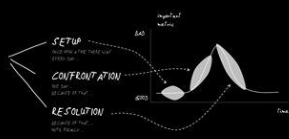


Procreate ©

# Hidden Concepts of Data Storytelling



- The 22 Rules
- Three Act Structure
  - SETUP: Introducing a PROTAGONIST
  - CONFRONTATION: We learn about the PROTAGONIST
  - RESOLUTION: We learn about the PROTAGONIST
- Business Storylines
- Storytelling Canvas



Why not telling  
your own  
Data Story

# PowerPoint ©

Did you ever use PowerPoint for sketchnoting? Here my first example.

Sketchnotes first. - My old way to design a presentation was quite easy: collecting ideas, giving them a structure, and finally building up my PowerPoint slides.

Why not starting with a sketchnote first? It shows all major ideas and the overall structure on one page, just from the beginning.

BENEFIT FROM  
BEST  
PRACTICES



xxx

CONNECT WITH  
LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES

RESOURCES

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# Version History

## **v0.9.0 | 29.12.2022**

- Improved citation with active links in footnotes
- Fresh table of content
- Reworked chapter “Preface”
- Draft text for chapter “Focus on Creating Output”
- Draft text for chapter “SimpleMind”

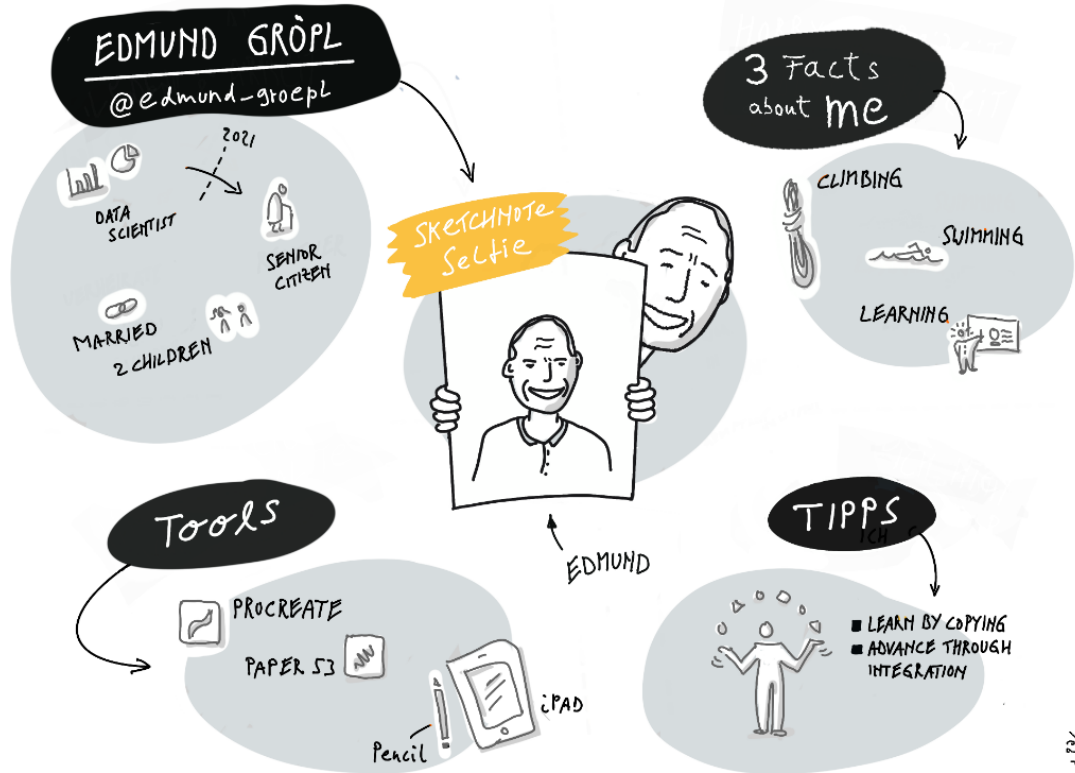
## **v0.8.0 | 25.04.2022**

- First published at LinkedIn: LinkedIn - Smart Sketchnotes v008



# lernos<sup>®</sup> SKETCHNOTES

WEEK 6 - KATA 15: SKETCHNOTE-SELFIE



# The Author

First things first I am a huge fan of data analysis and data discover. It is more than an interest for me to make relations between numbers and produce meaningful results. I have a passion for helping teams to become more data-driven and embracing the power of data storytelling.

I have experience more than 7 years on data analysis, reporting, dashboards and more than 20 years on software development, project management and corporate strategy on biggest companies including research, automation and telecommunications industries in Germany.

In my free time you can find me at the climbing gym, swimming long distances and spending quality time with my wife and my family.

So now I combine these experiences with my math and engineering background in here and I am looking forward to sharing my passion and knowledge with you.

Finally, I love Visual Thinking and Digital Sketchnoting<sup>13</sup>!

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<sup>13</sup> Edmund Gröpl, „Rework of my Sketchnote Selfie“, 2021,  
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/hashtag/?keywords=lernos&highlightedUpdateUrns=urn%3Ali%3Aactivity%3A6826153340188016640>.





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## ABOUT THE BOOK

*How to take SMART SKETCHNOTES* is a book full of insights for sketchnoters of all proficiency levels. It covers a large scale of concepts useful for sketchnoting on digital devices.

We are learning from great visual thinkers and practitioners about their almost hidden secrets. Understanding the overall context helps to navigate in this field of learning. Going in detail will be the next step. The book provides numerous links to valuable resources you need to keep growing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



EDMUND GRÖPL is an enthusiast of digital sketchnoting. He is an engineer working as a data scientist and storyteller. Visual thinking is part of his job. Working with sketchnotes and learning from experts is an intense pleasure for him.