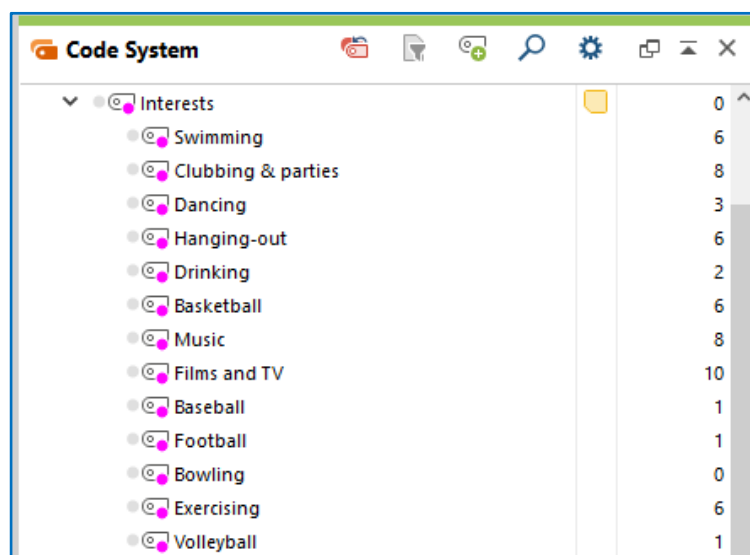




# Spotlight Session: Using the Creative Coding Tool in MAXQDA

## When to use Creative Coding:

- After initial inductive coding work has been done
- When you are ready to re-organise your coding scheme
- To create new groupings of existing codes, including higher-level concepts
- This tool is more visual and intuitive than simply dragging codes around in the Code System window.

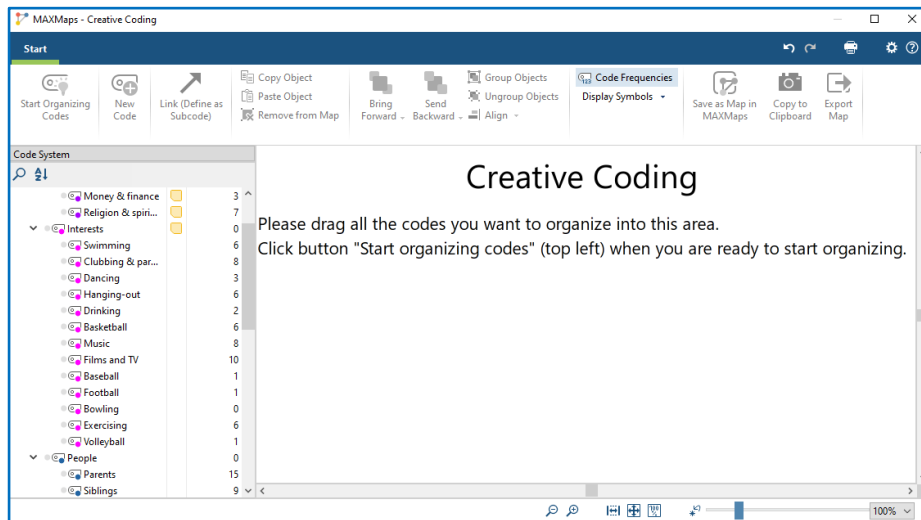


Here is an example based on the English language example project available in MAXQDA 2020. Codes have been applied to the interview documents identifying segments that mention a variety of interests. Some commonalities are apparent and we will create new code groups around these.

## Starting to use Creative Coding:

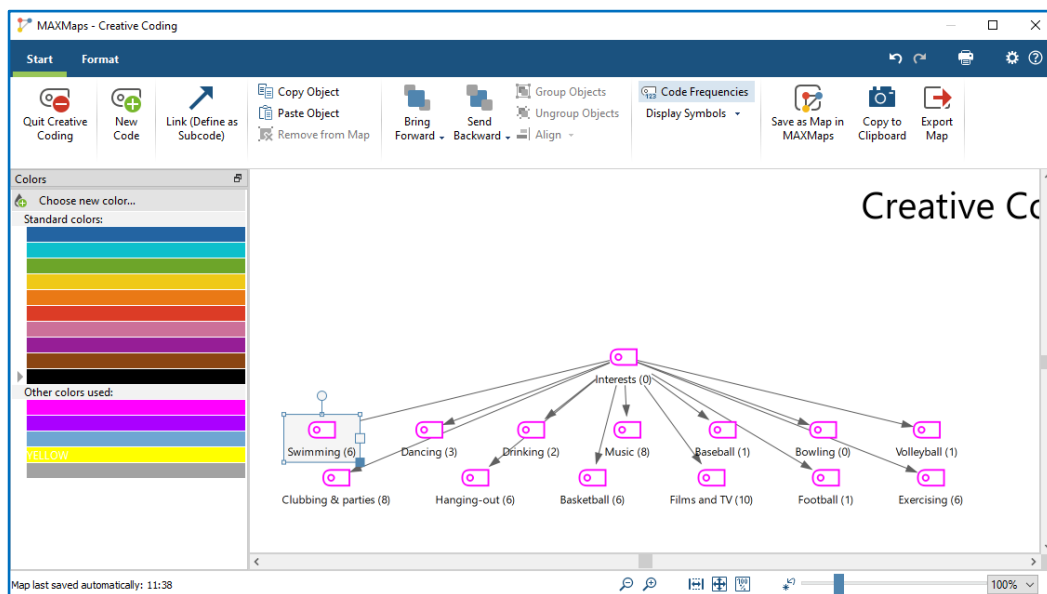
Before exploring this set of tools in a live project please make sure that you have made a backup copy and used the option to open the backup and work in that, so that your master project is safe from unintended changes.

There is only one way to start this function, the menu option **Codes > Creative Coding**. This opens a new window on top of your program and freezes all other functions while it is in use.



### Exercise 1:

- Open the Creative Coding window and explore the ways you can drag in a variety of codes.
- Drag in a group header code to also bring over all of its subcodes
- Use the “Remove from Map” function in the tool ribbon to remove them again
- Drag in separate codes, one at a time.
- Note that the codes you have just brought in are highlighted in the window until you click in the white space, or drag in something else.
- In this example, I will drag in the whole “Interests” group of codes.
- When you are satisfied that you have all of the codes that you want to work with in this particular session, click the function **Start Organising Codes**.



- In the left-hand panel the Code System has been replaced by a colours panel.
- When you click on any object in the map, a second menu option “Format” appears in the blue bar.

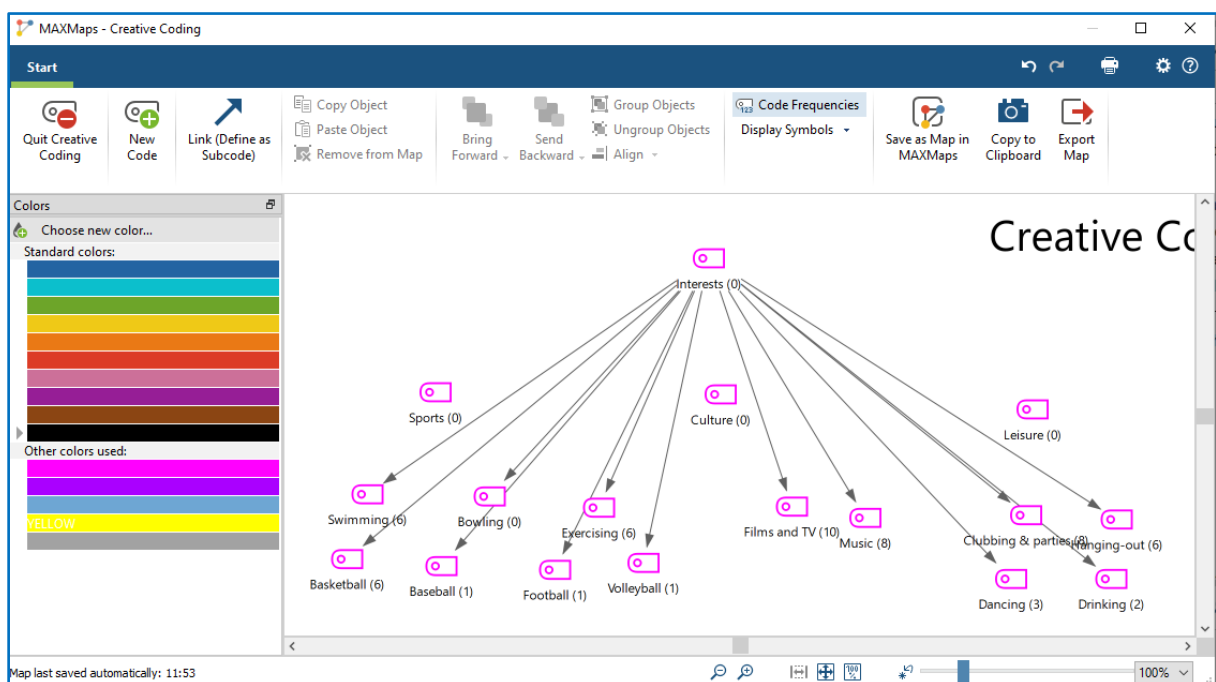


## The “Creative” stage:

You are now ready to restructure this particular bundle of codes in any way that you like. The only limit is your own imagination. You can create new codes to act as headers/holders for sub-groups of codes and these may well come to be your higher-level concepts. Here we will explore the mechanics of the tool.

### Exercise 2:

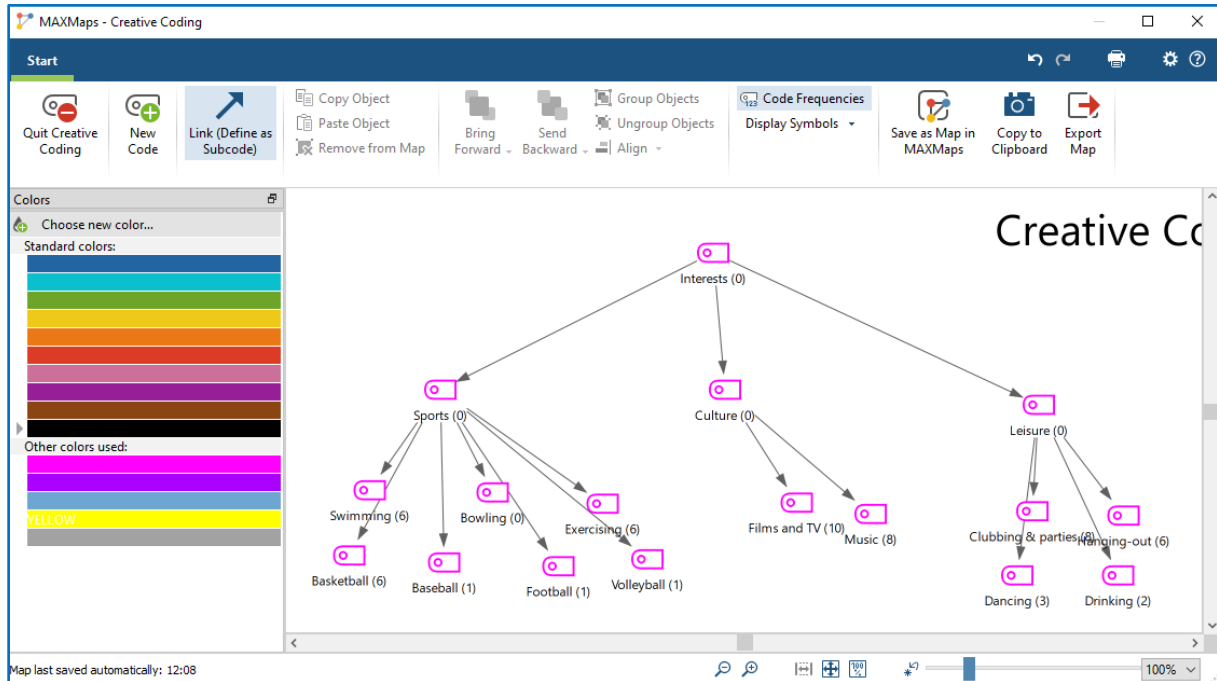
- Use the “New Code” function in the Standard menu to create 3 new codes, called “Sports”, “Culture” and “Leisure”.
- Move the header code “Interests” up the map to leave more space between it and its current sub-codes.
- Arrange the 3 new codes in a line in this space so that they represent a new level.
- Move the lower level codes around so that the 7 sporting ones are roughly below the new “Sports” code, the films and music ones are below the “Culture” code and the other 4 are below the “Leisure” code, as illustrated here.



- Click on the tool “Link (Define as Subcode)” so that it becomes shaded (as an indication that you are now in “Linking” mode).
- You can no longer move the code symbols around the map. Instead when you drag from, say, “Sports” to “Swimming” a new arrow appears joining those symbols and the old arrow from “Interests” to “Swimming” disappears. In this way you have now defined Swimming as a subcode of Sports. Also, because a code can only be a subcode of just one other code, Swimming is no longer a subcode of Interests.



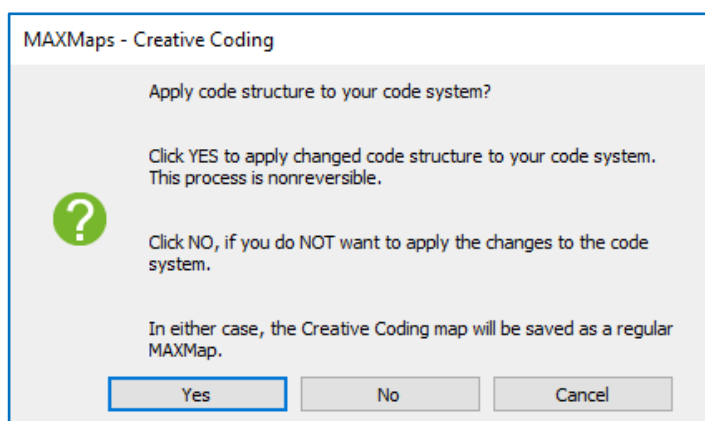
- Create links to define the remaining 6 sporty codes as subcodes of Sports, to make the Films and Music codes subcodes of Culture, and the other 4 codes subcodes of Leisure.
- Then draw linking arrows from Interests to the 3 intermediate level codes that you created a few minutes ago to create a new structure as illustrated here:



- Finally, click again on the “Link” button to unshade it and leave “Linking” mode so that you can tidy-up the map by moving the codes around.
- Explore the various functions on the toolbar such as “Code Frequencies” and “Display Symbols”. Also, after selecting an object, explore the “Format” menu ribbon.
- Change the colour of the “Sports” code by first selecting its symbol on the map, then going to the “Format” menu and selecting “Line” in the “Symbol” block of functions, and choose a new colour in the mixer panel.
- Note that you are also offered the chance to make all the subcodes of Sports change to its new colour as part of this operation.
- Colour is the only format change that will be transferred into the main code system when you quit this session. All of the other formatting options only affect the map display. You might use these to create a more effective summary of the process for inclusion in a report or thesis as an image (by using the 3 functions at the right-hand end of the Standard ribbon).

## The “Impact” stage:

So far, all of the adjustments you have drawn on the map surface are temporary ‘proposals’. It is only when you select the function “Quit Creative Coding” in the top-left corner that you have the chance to put them into effect in your project. Below is an illustration of the dialog you will see when you quit:



- The “Cancel” option is there to get out of the quitting process and return to the creative coding map with the possibility of making further changes.
- The other 2 options give you the choice between applying the changes or not.
- Note that this is possibly the only situation in which a MAXMap actually alters a project so this is a serious choice.
- When you have reassured yourself that you are only working in a temporary backup version of your project, please select “Yes” so that you can see how this creative coding session impacts on this project.
- You should see the new code groups and colours in the Code System window. The codes you have been working on will have been moved to the top of the Code System, so you may want to drag the whole group to a different place.
- Open MAXMaps (in **Visual Tools**) and find the copy of the Creative Coding map that has been added there, this gives you a permanent record of these particular changes.

## Other points of interest:

- You can merge two or more codes into one inside a Creative Coding map, simply by dragging the code/s you no longer want (the “origin” code/s) directly onto the code you want to keep (the “target” code).
- You can display all of the data segments linked to a code by using the context menu for that symbol in the Creative Coding map. This may be very helpful as you consider your reorganizations in detail.
- You can create or edit the code memo associated with any code in the map and these changes will be made in the Code System when you quit with option “Yes”.
- You can ‘group’ several objects in a map by drawing a box around them, say to change their colour in one step, or to move them as a block.
- You can save multiple versions of your Creative Coding maps in order to document the stages of the reorganization; click on “Save as Map in MAXMaps” to do this.