

Building Shared Understanding to Complex Problems

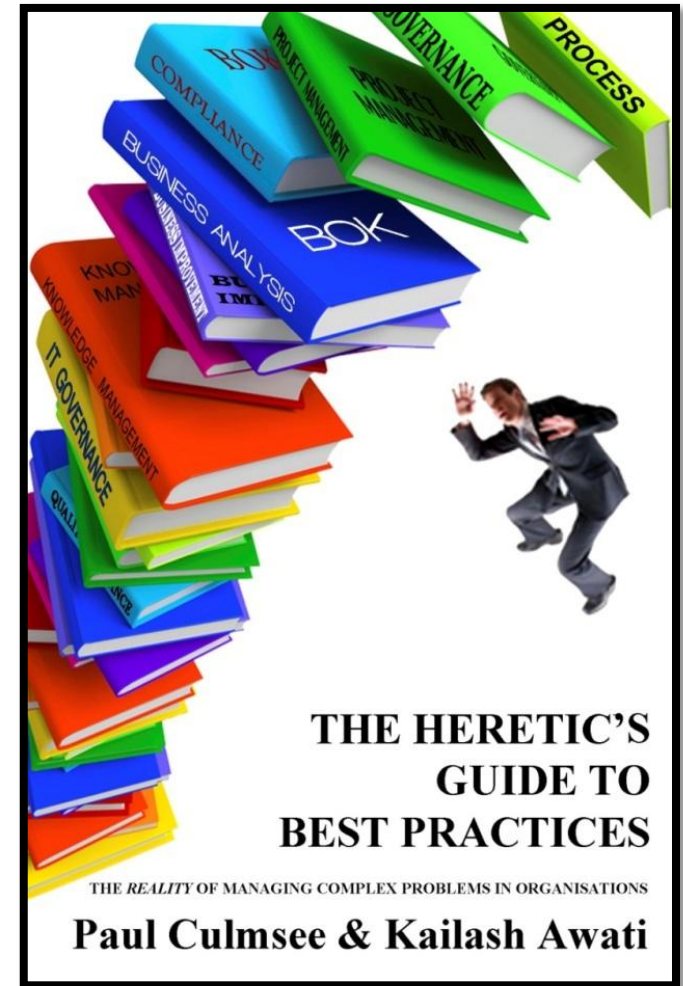
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- Owner - Seven Sigma Business Solutions (Perth)
- Sensemaking practitioner and facilitator for large scale complex projects (non IT)
 - Healthcare, Policy Development, Urban Planning, Civil Infrastructure, Organisational Design, Community Engagement
- SharePoint architect, trainer, coach, facilitator and agony aunt
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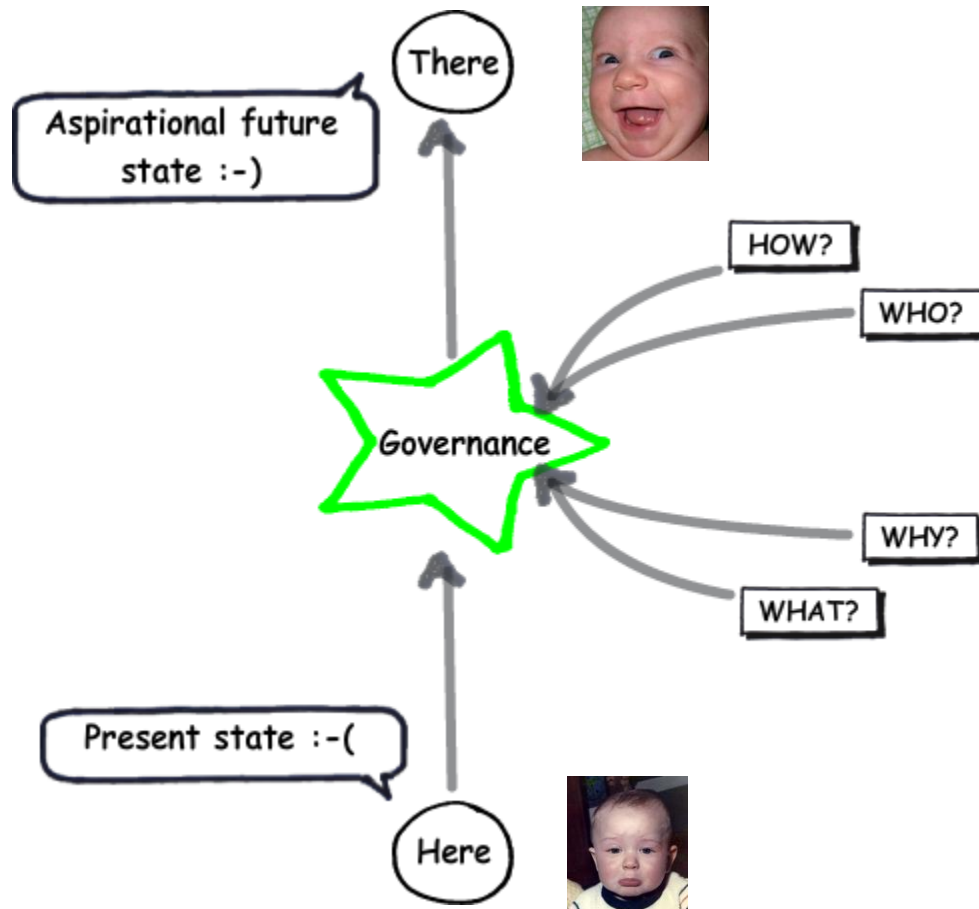
B: www.cleverworkarounds.com



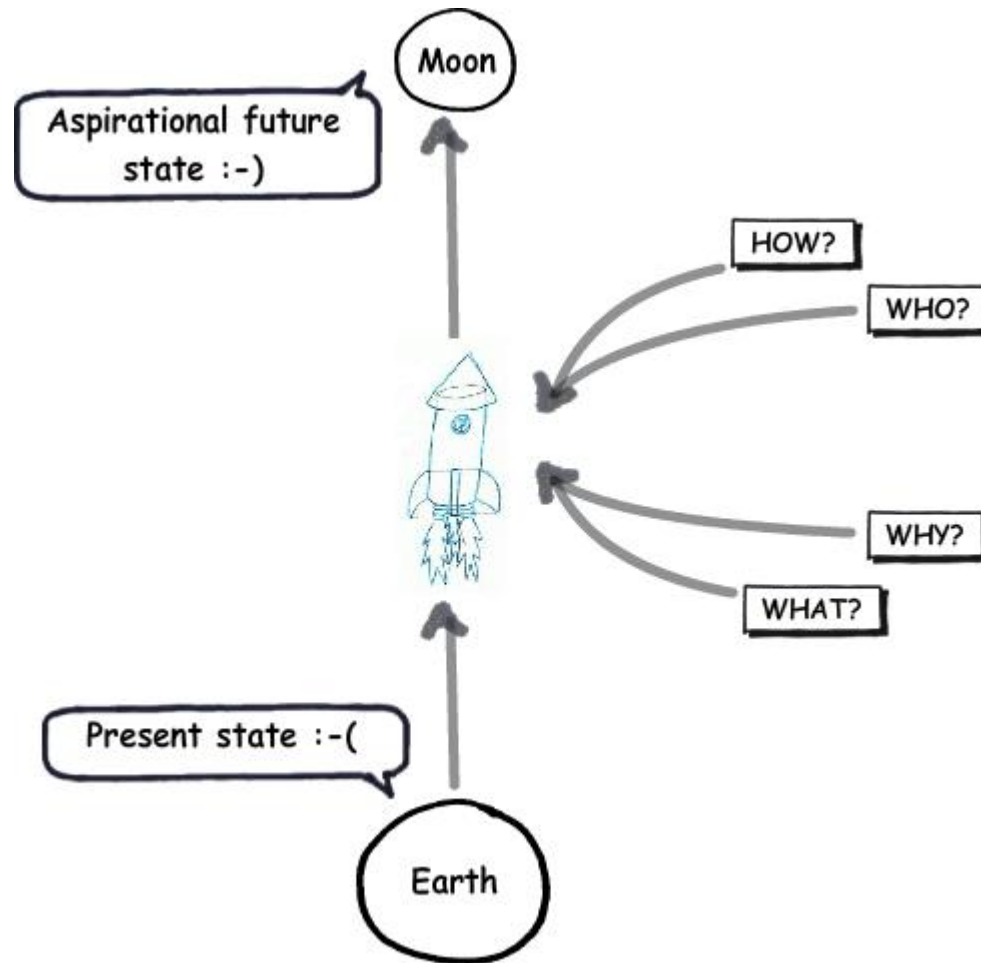
Project Pain...

- “They don’t know what they want!”
- “The requirements are too vague!”
- “If only they had listened to me”
- “Not another %\$%% meeting!”
- “I was never consulted”
- “This is ridiculous – it won’t work”
- “How am I supposed to estimate that?”
- “It was in the minutes – did you read it?”
- “Well if everyone actually followed the process...”

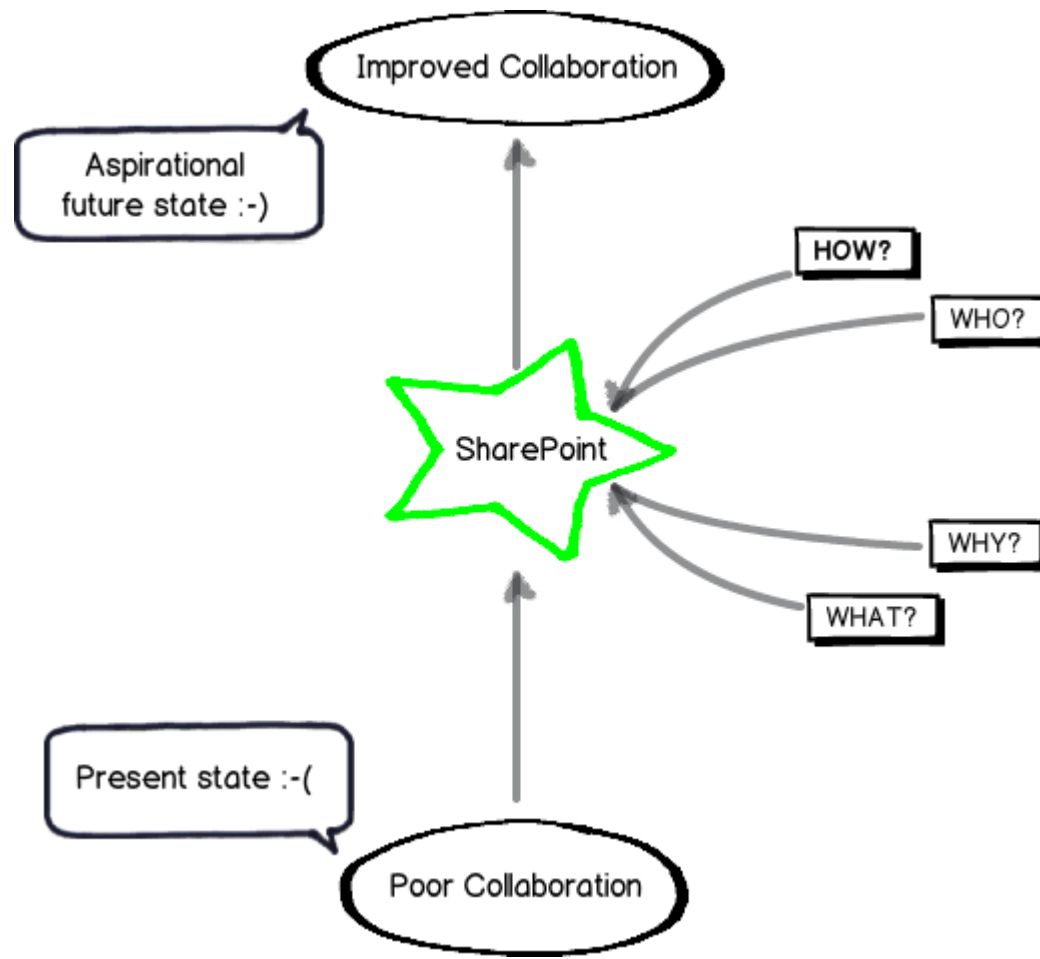




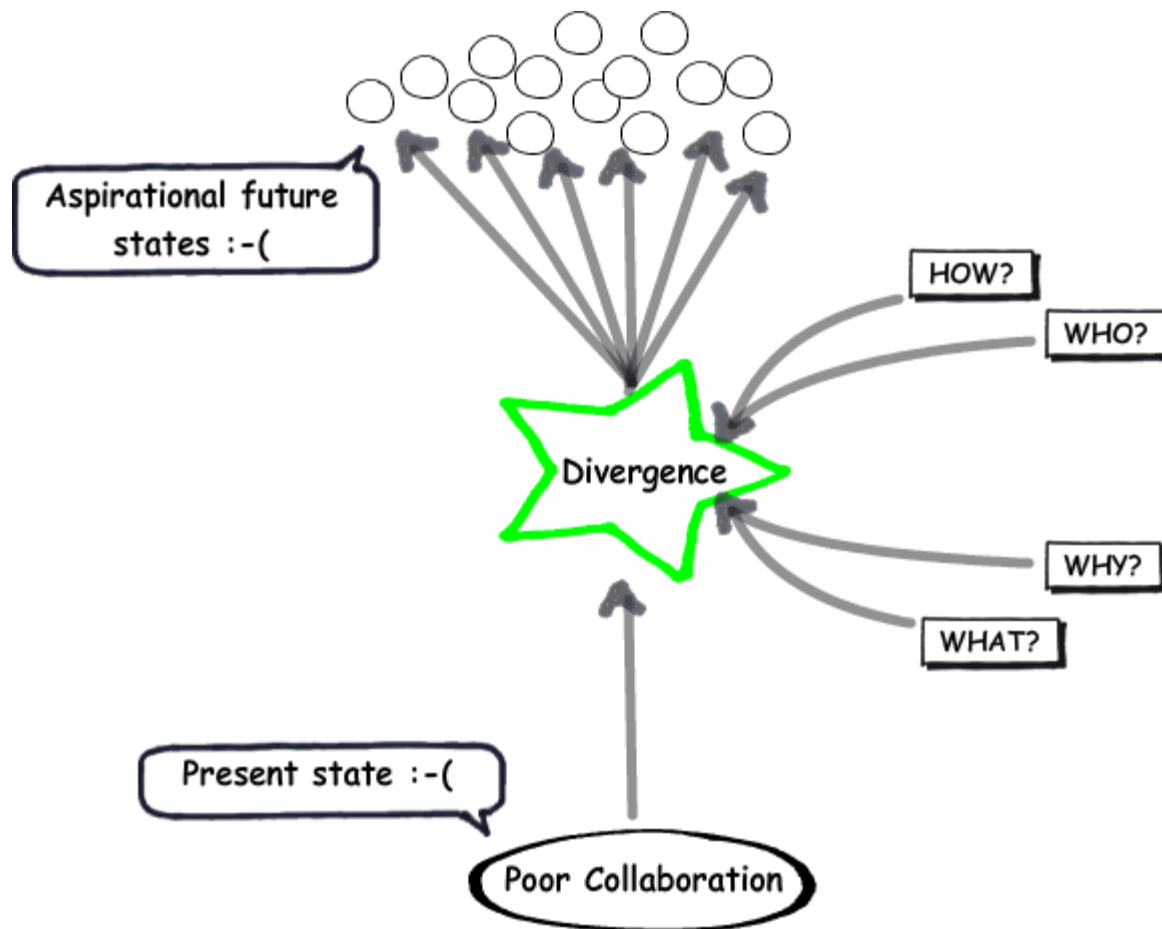
What project is this?



What project is this?



Divergence: Multiple futures



“Complicated” vs “Complex”

- Complicated problems
 - Logical
 - Predictable
 - Repeatable result
 - Does not mean they are easy!



“Complicated” vs “Complex”

- Complex problems
 - Different points of view
 - Unpredictable
 - Difficult to repeat the results
- No “perfect” solution, only a “best fit” solution



Most stated intranet
project objectives are
platitudes. They say
nothing but hide behind
words

The platitude indicator

If you cannot reasonably disagree
with an objective, or measure it, then it is a
platitude

“Most corporate mission statements are worthless. They often formulate necessities as objectives; for example, "to achieve sufficient profit." This is like a person saying his mission is to breathe sufficiently.”

Russell Ackoff

For Example...

“Collaboration will be encouraged”

“A best-practice collaboration platform”

“It’s a SharePoint project”

One “best practice” to rule them all

Ensure a **shared understanding** of the problem among all participants

“The ‘Holy Grail’ of effective collaboration is creating shared understanding, which is a precursor to shared commitment”

Jeff Conklin

But meetings suck...

Are you lonely?

Tired of working on your own?
Do you hate making decisions?

HOLD A MEETING!

You can —

- See people
- Show charts
- Feel important
- Point with a stick
- Eat donuts
- Impress your colleagues

All on company time!



MEETINGS

THE PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE TO WORK

What makes a good tool for sensemaking?

- Simple enough that participants do not have to be trained just to participate.
 - Don't distract people from the problem itself.
- Must be inclusive
 - Allow *all* voices to be heard
- Allow participants to start from what they know *now*.
 - Avoid the “going in circles” pain from feeling that all of the questions need to be answered now and if not, we are doing something wrong

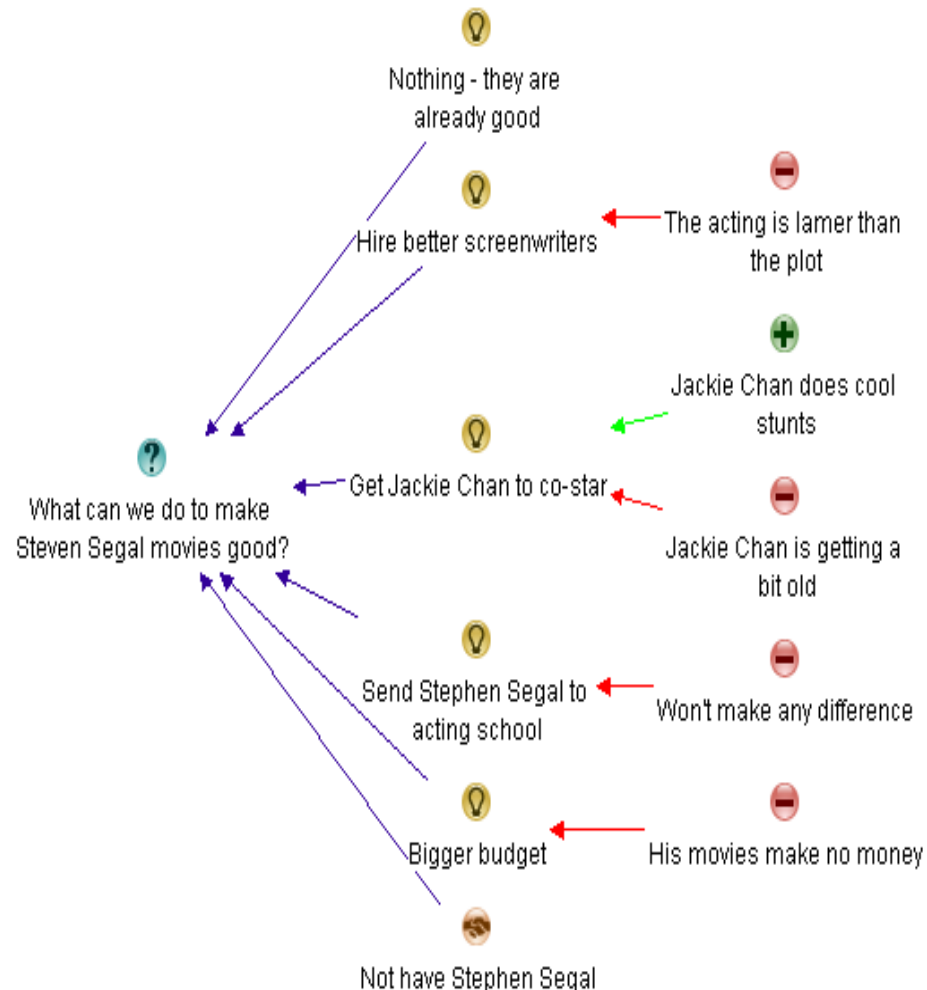
Tool 1: Dialogue Mapping

Issue Based Information System (IBIS)

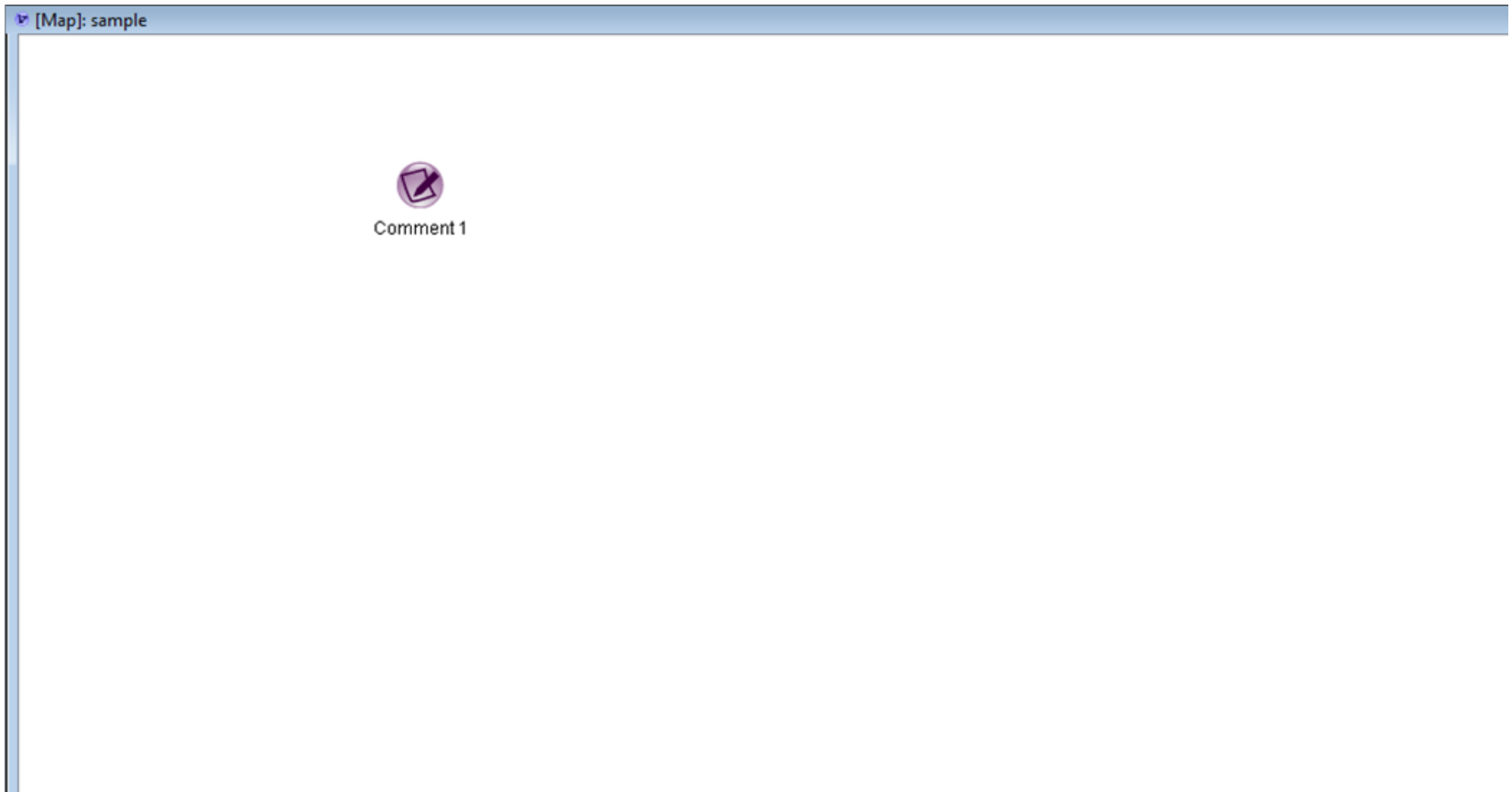
- Complex group discussion broken into basic artefacts
- Questions, ideas, pros, cons

Dialogue Mapping is crafting an IBIS based map of discussion

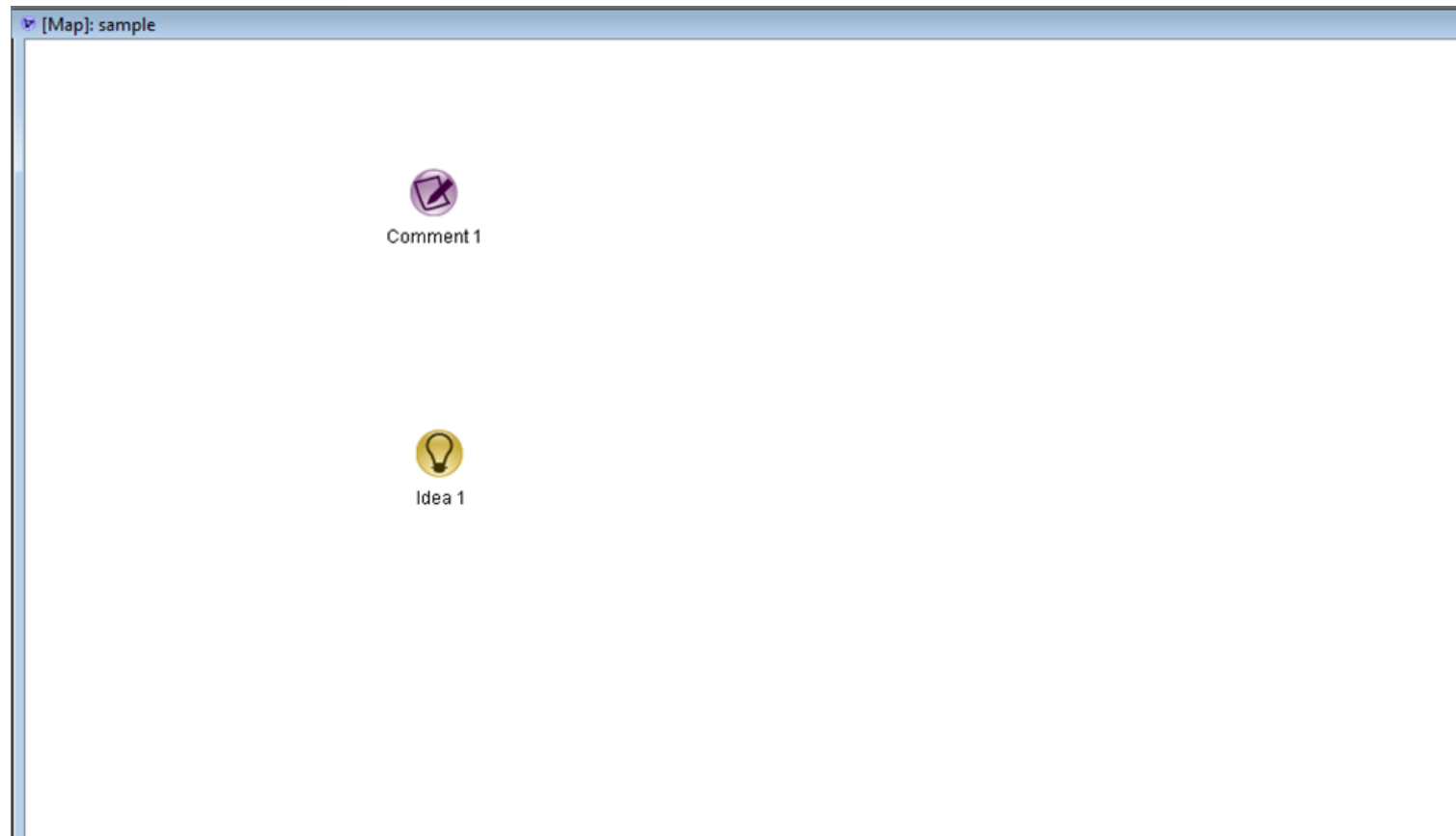
- It makes critical thinking visible.
- Surfaces hidden assumptions
- Reduces divergence



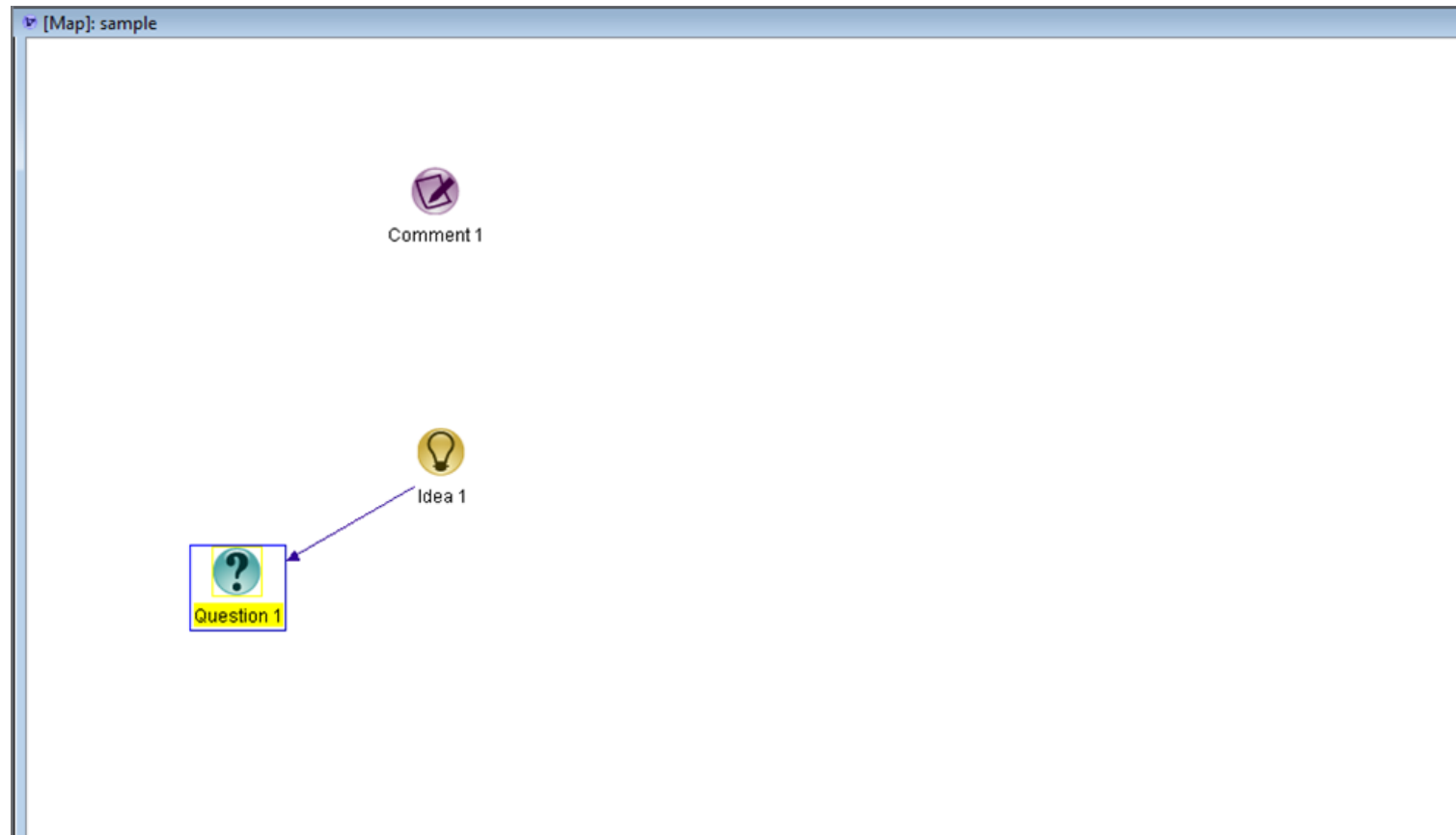
Dialogue Mapping



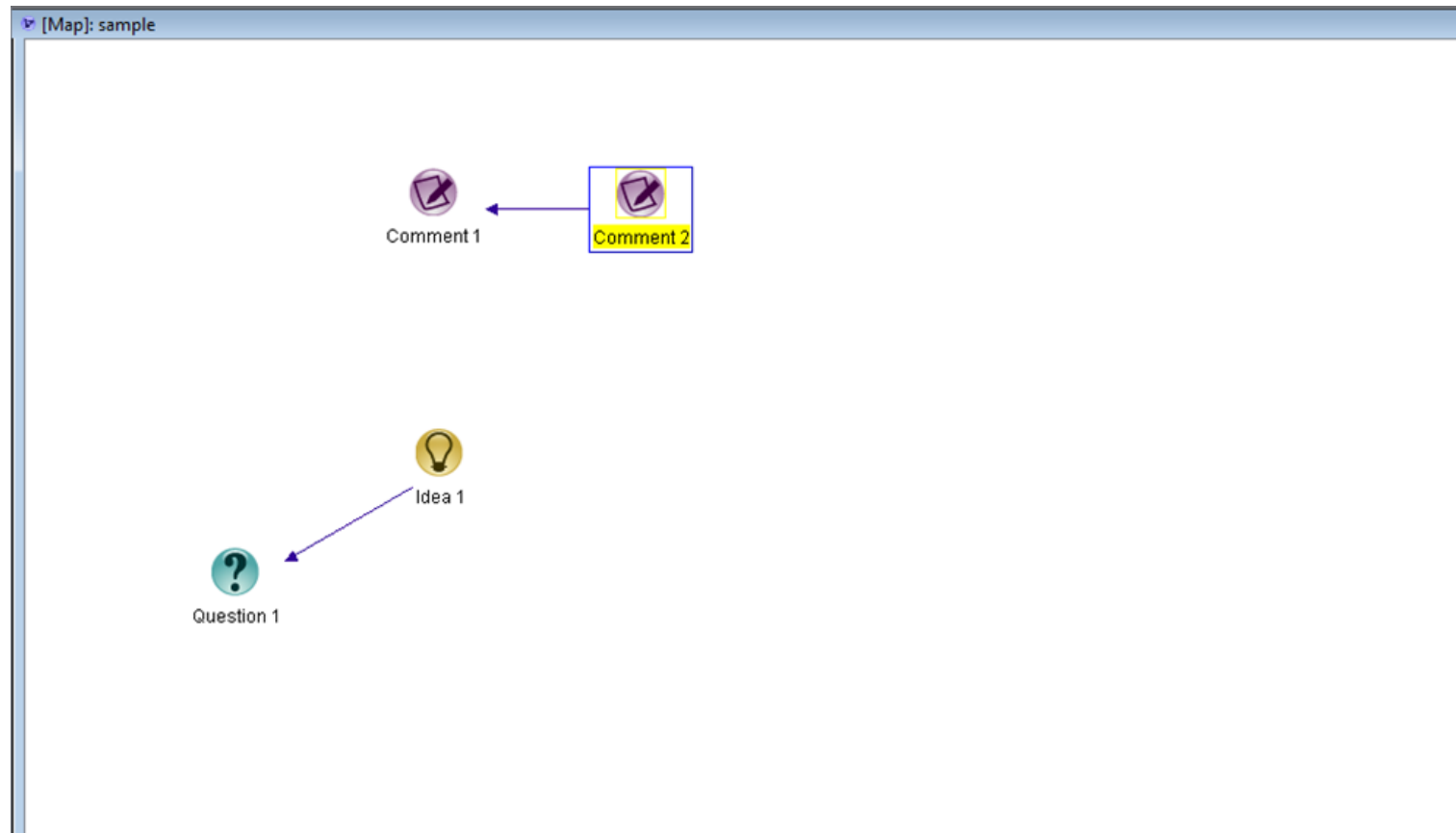
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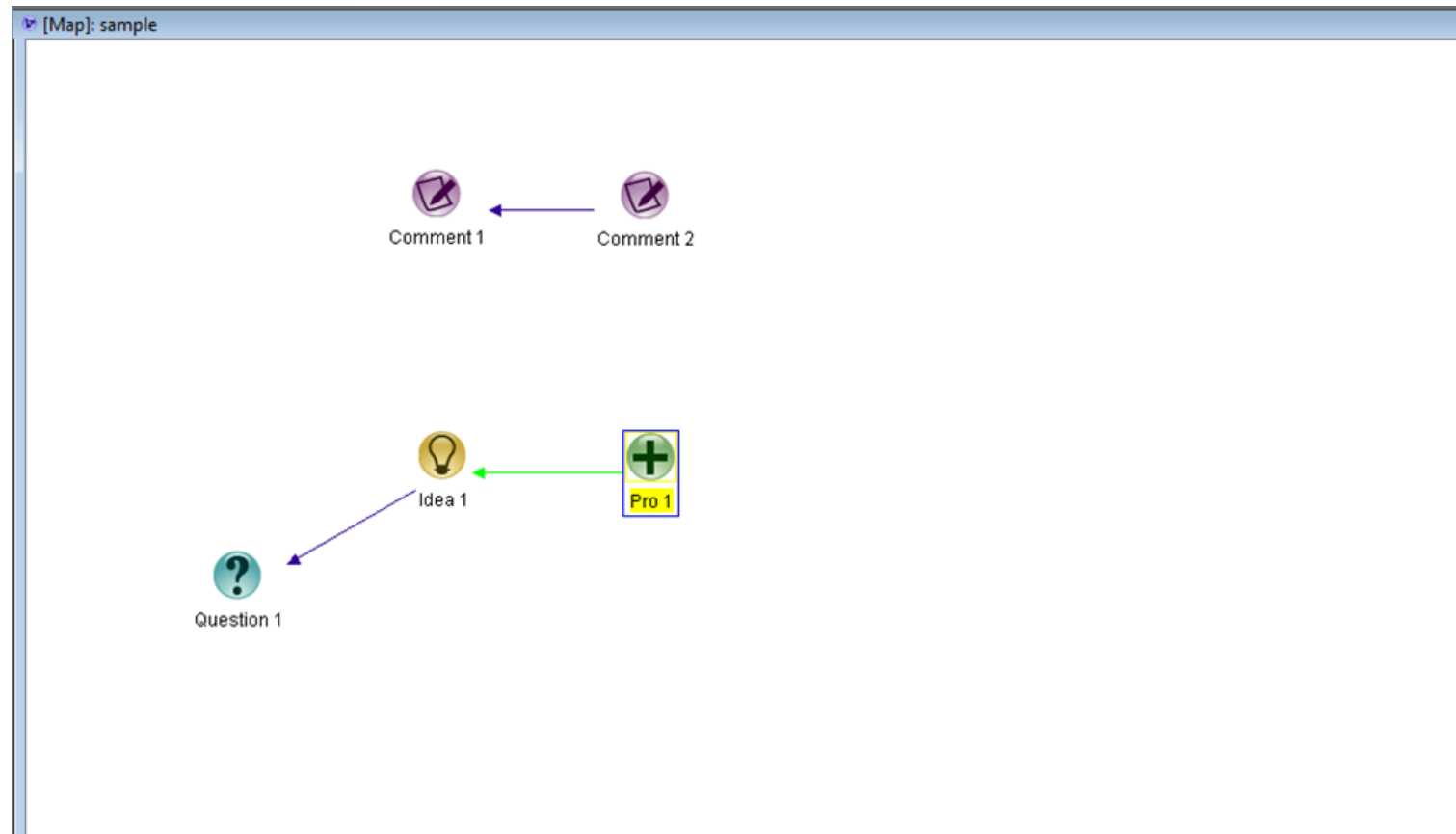
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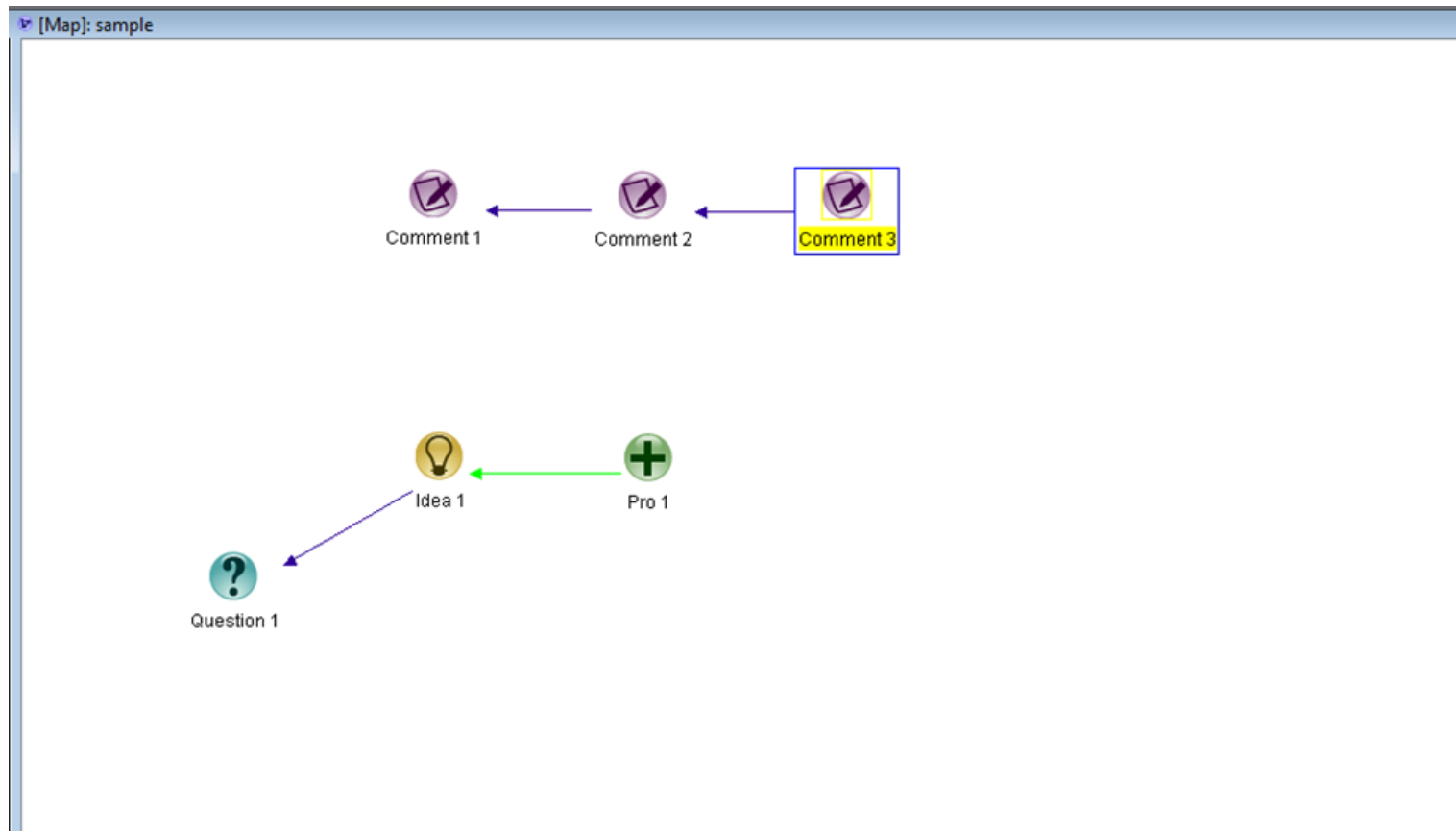
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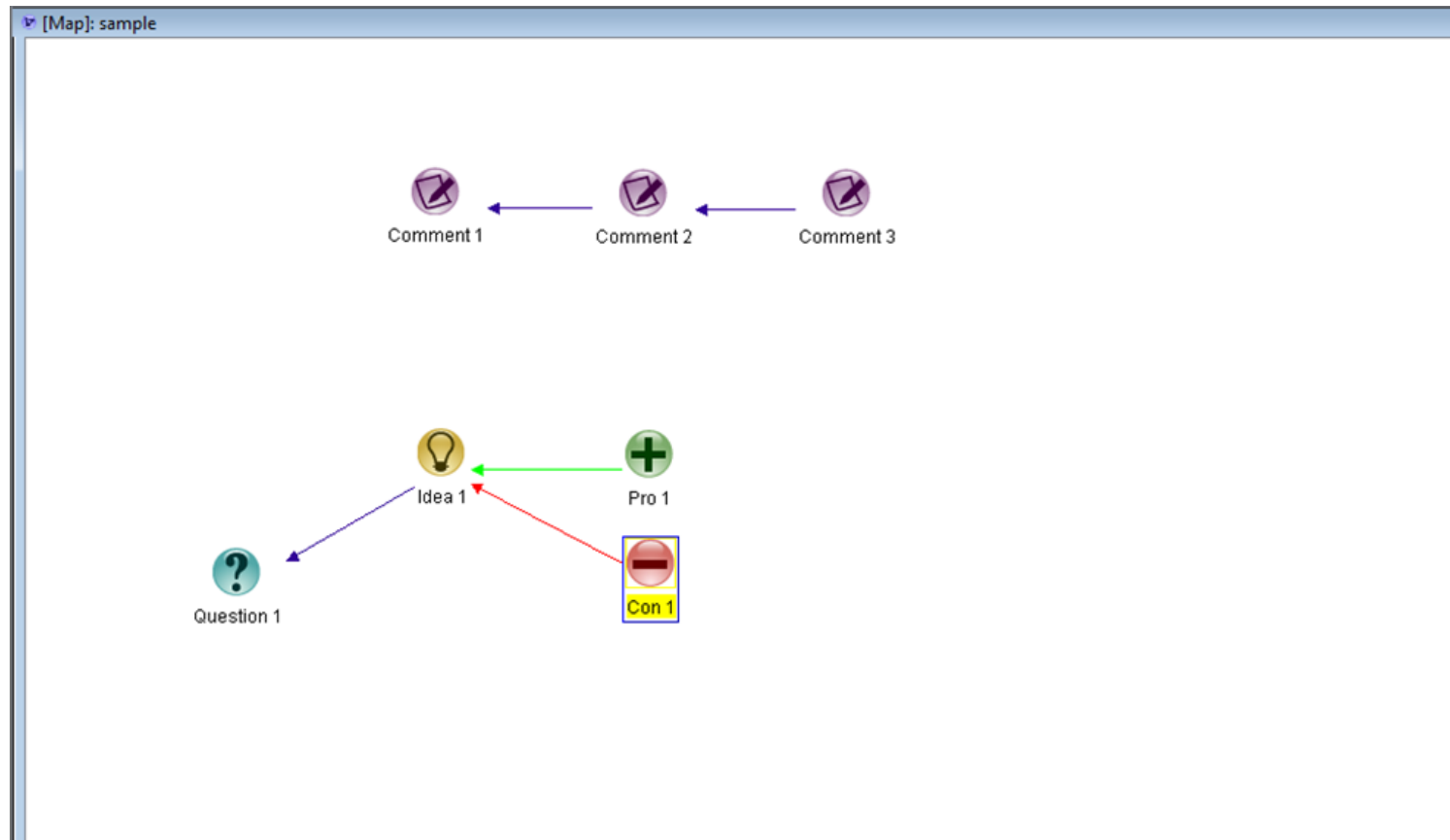
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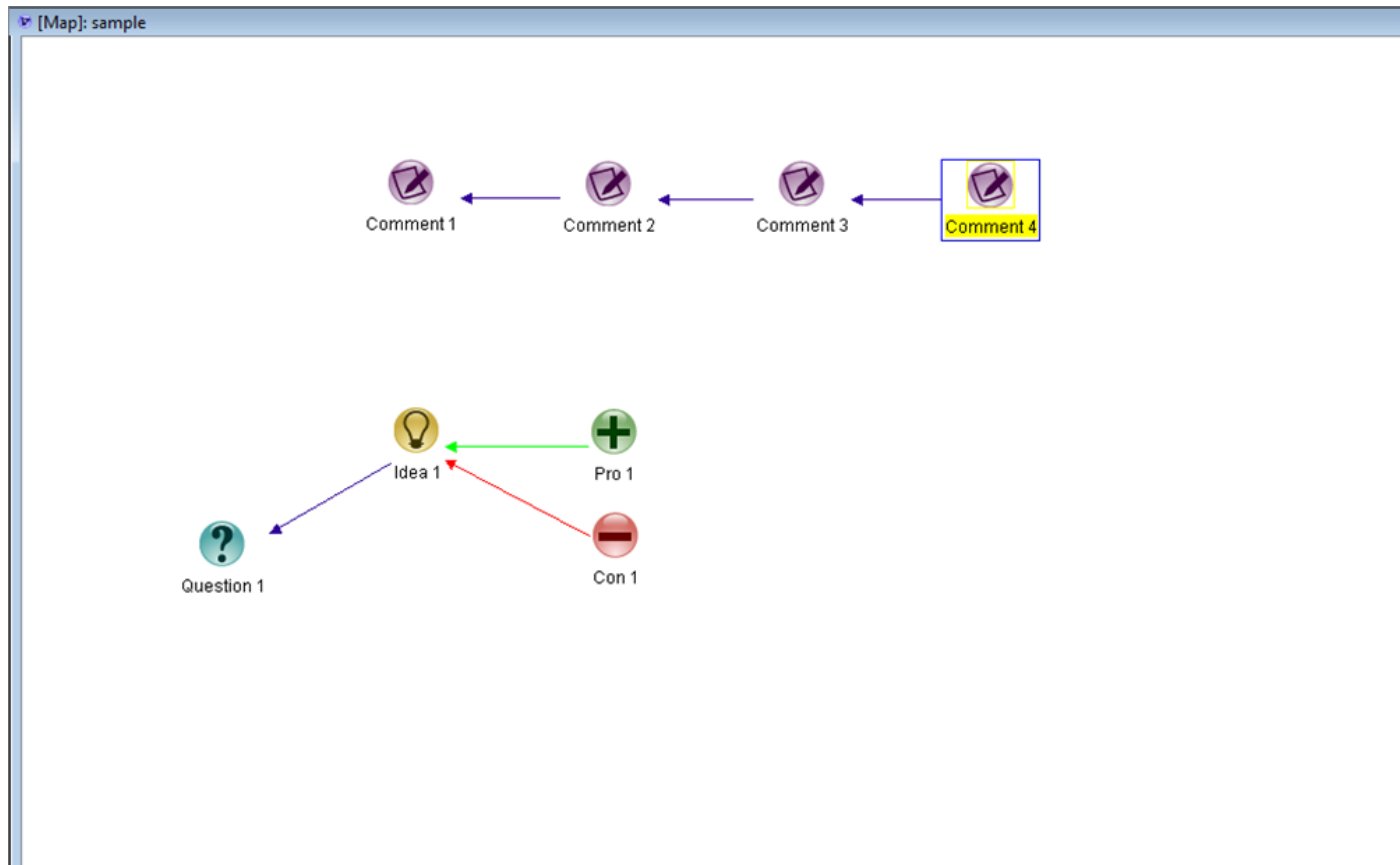
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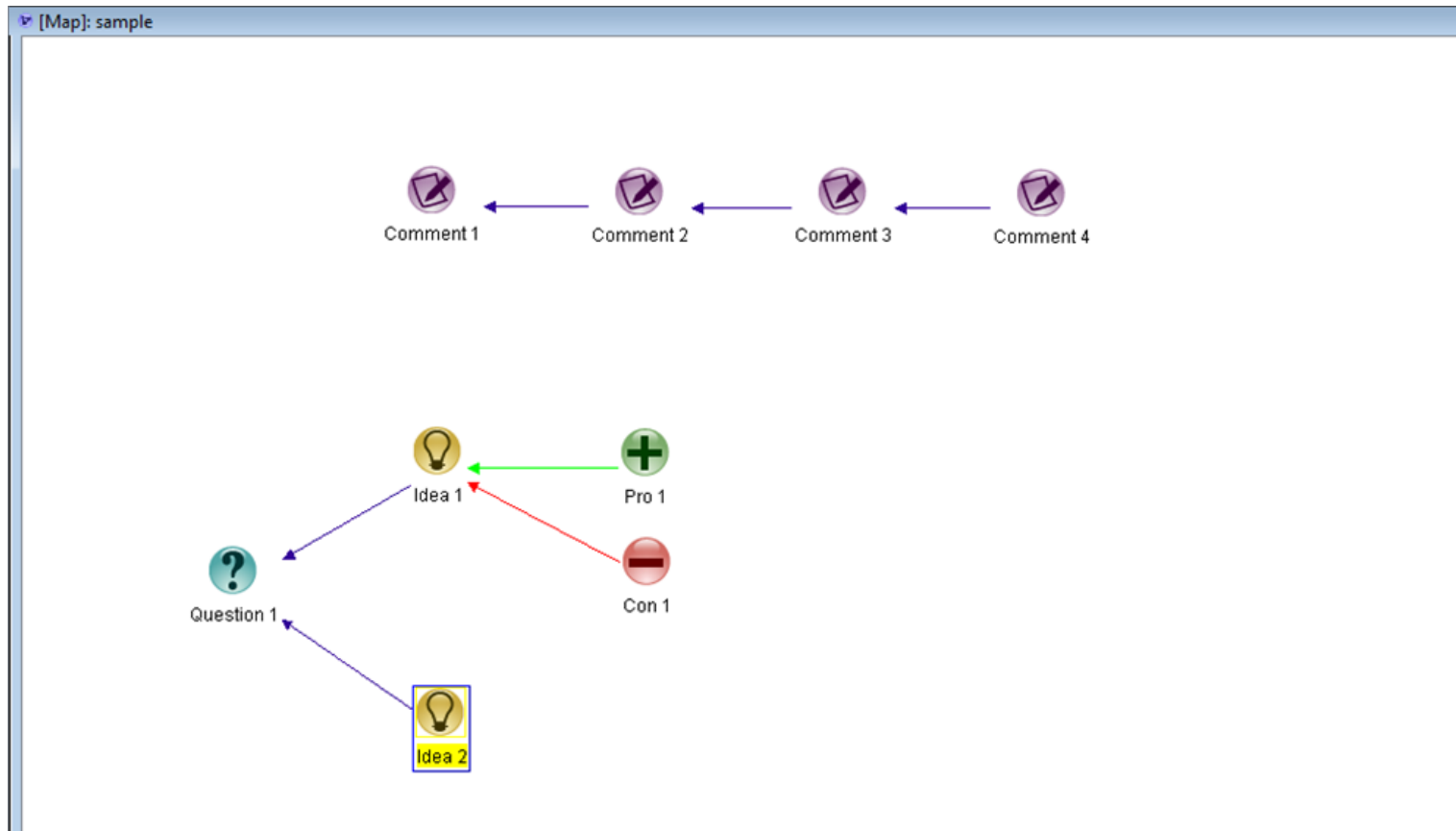
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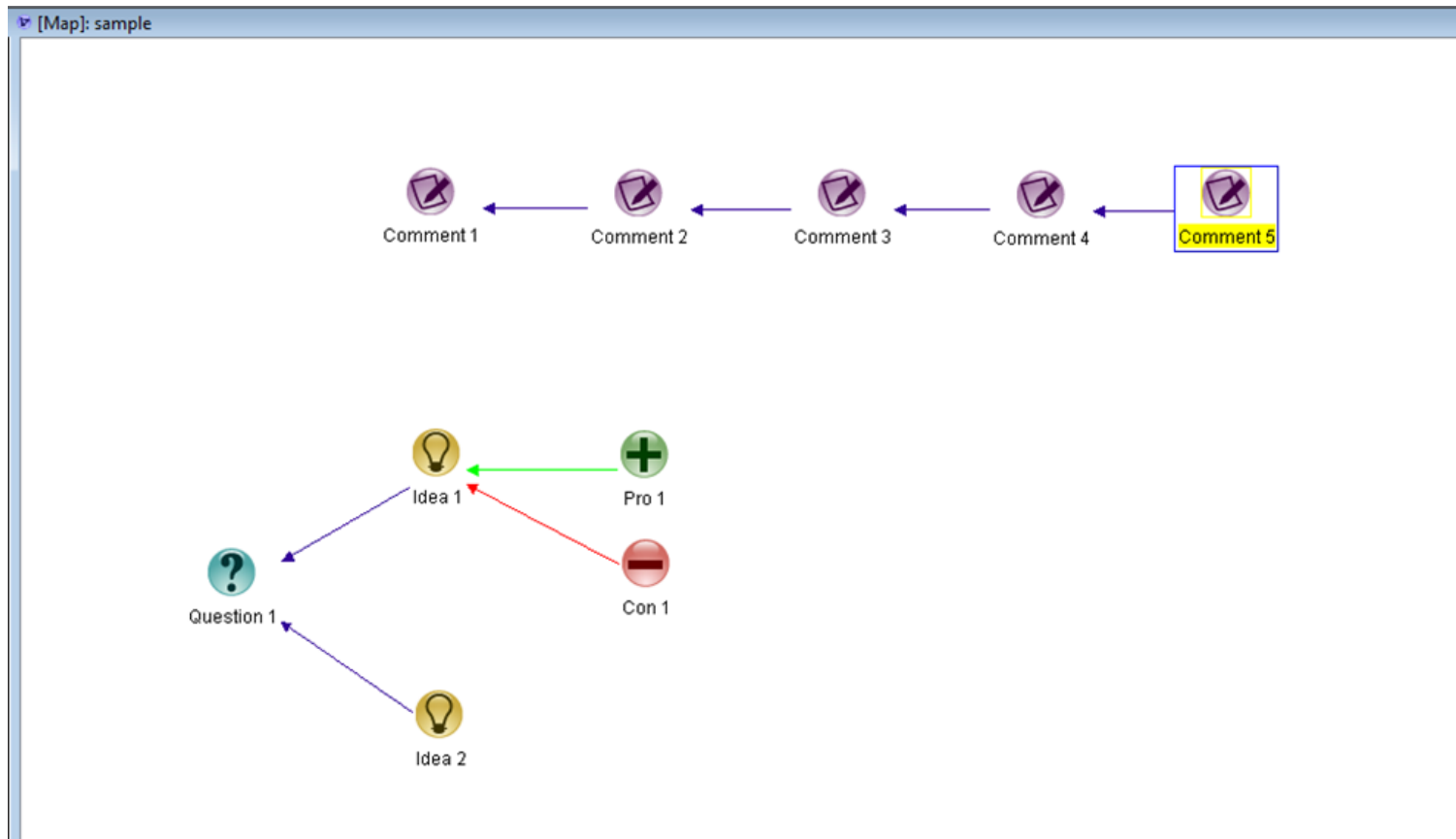
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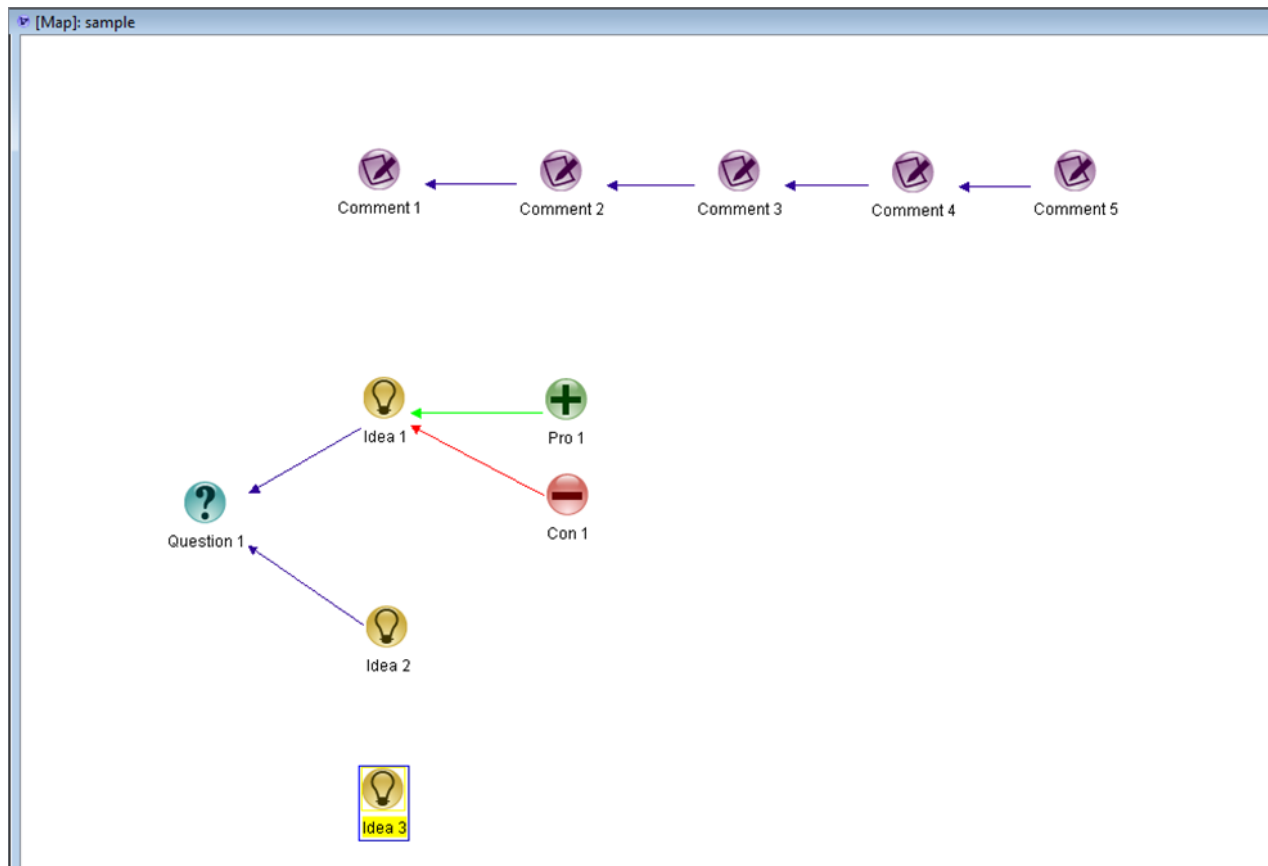
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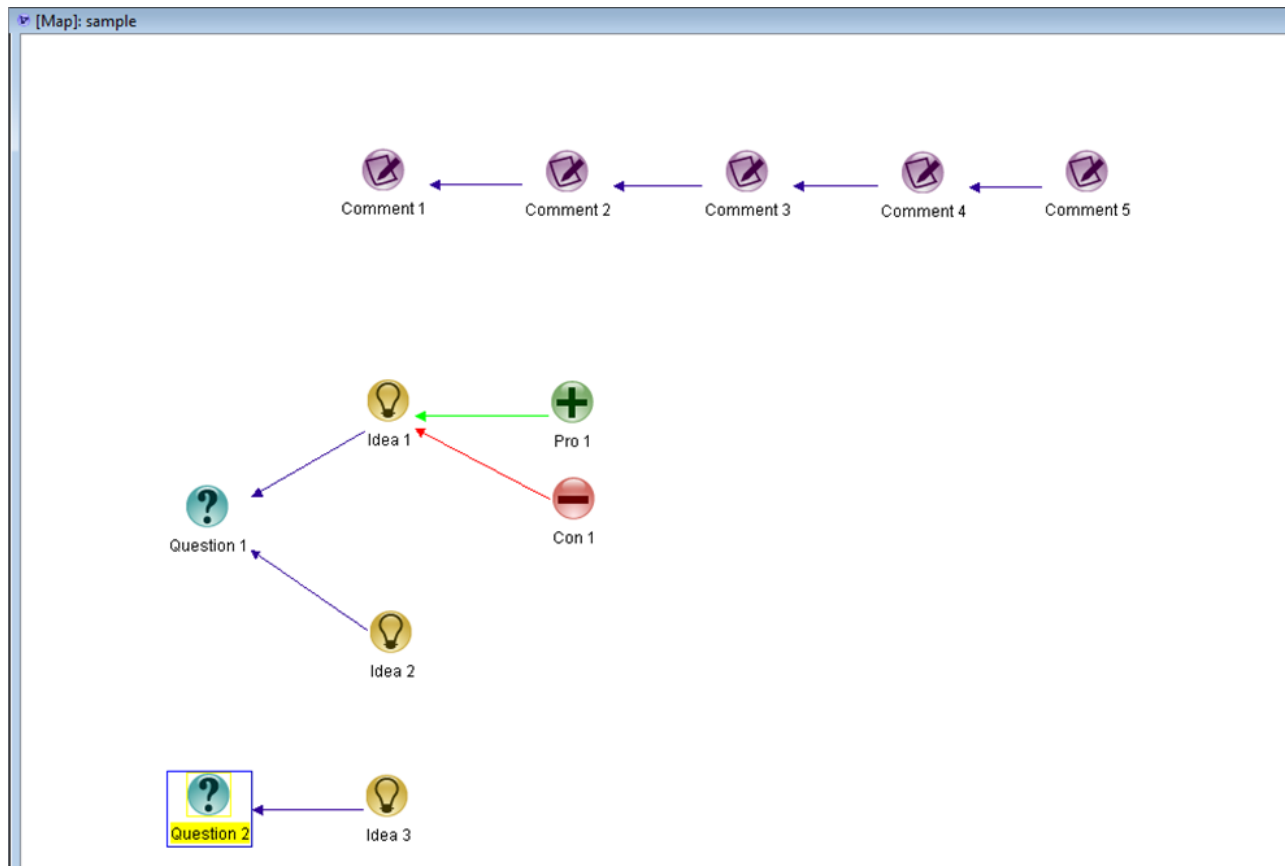
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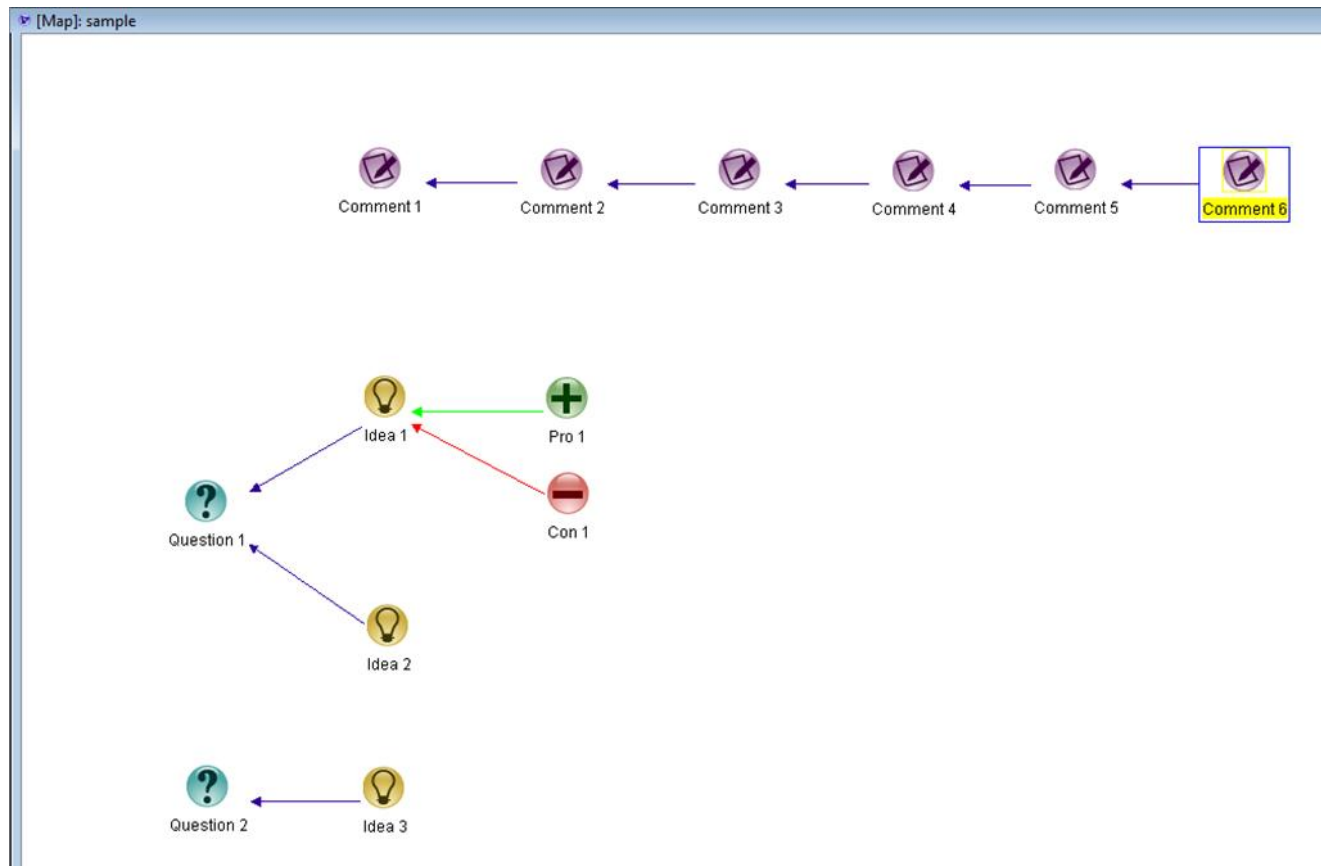
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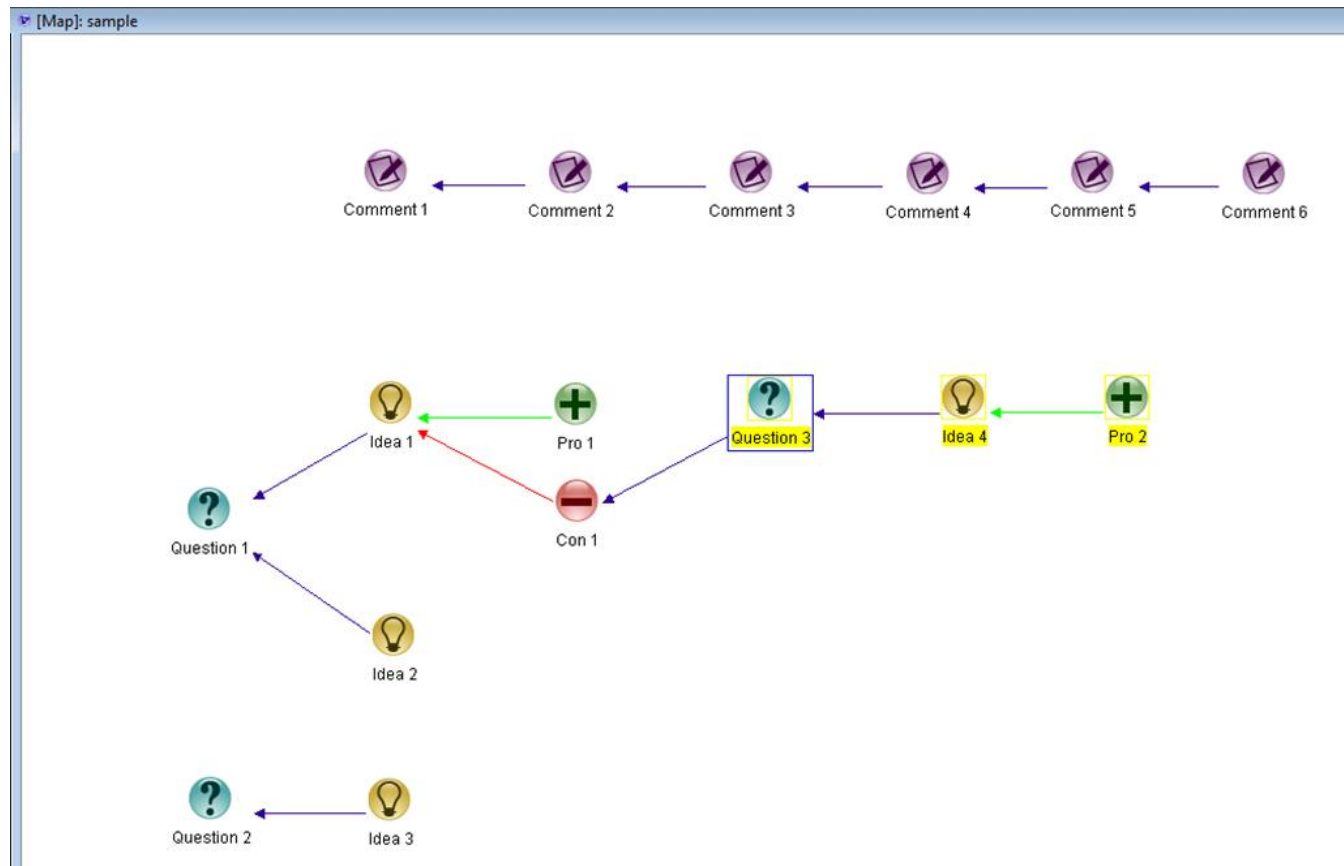
Dialogue Mapping



Dialogue Mapping



Dialogue Mapping



Dialogue Mapping demo

Benefits of Dialogue Mapping

Simple, intuitive, adds clarity to discussion

- Limited short term memory means exploration of a complex problem unaided is confusing and error prone
- All participants have an organised point of reference
- We have captured **decision rationale** and **organisational memory!**

Benefits of Dialogue Mapping

Democratic - Acknowledges all contributions

- Disarms “truth by repetition”
- Disarms “grenade lobbing” (topic shift)

Takes the interpersonal “sting” out of supporting or objecting to an idea

Faster - allows a group to develop shared understanding with much less pain

Life skill – use it anywhere!

Summing up: The rules

- Understand the difference between “Complicated” and “Complex” problems
- Do not allow platitudes to fester
- Shared understanding is a pre-requisite to shared commitment
- All 3 are critical – no exceptions
 - Invest in tools and methods that thrive in these conditions

More Information

- My book: The Heretic's Guide to Best Practices
(www.hereticsguidebooks.com)
- My blog:
www.cleverworkarounds.com
 - SharePoint Project Management, Strategy, Governance and ROI
- My Training Courses:
 - SharePoint Governance and Information Architecture (2 days)
 - Aligning SharePoint to business goals: Don't just say it do it (1 day)
 - Issue Mapping Master Class (2 days)
 - (www.sevensigma.com.au)

