Rakontu 2.0 Visual Design
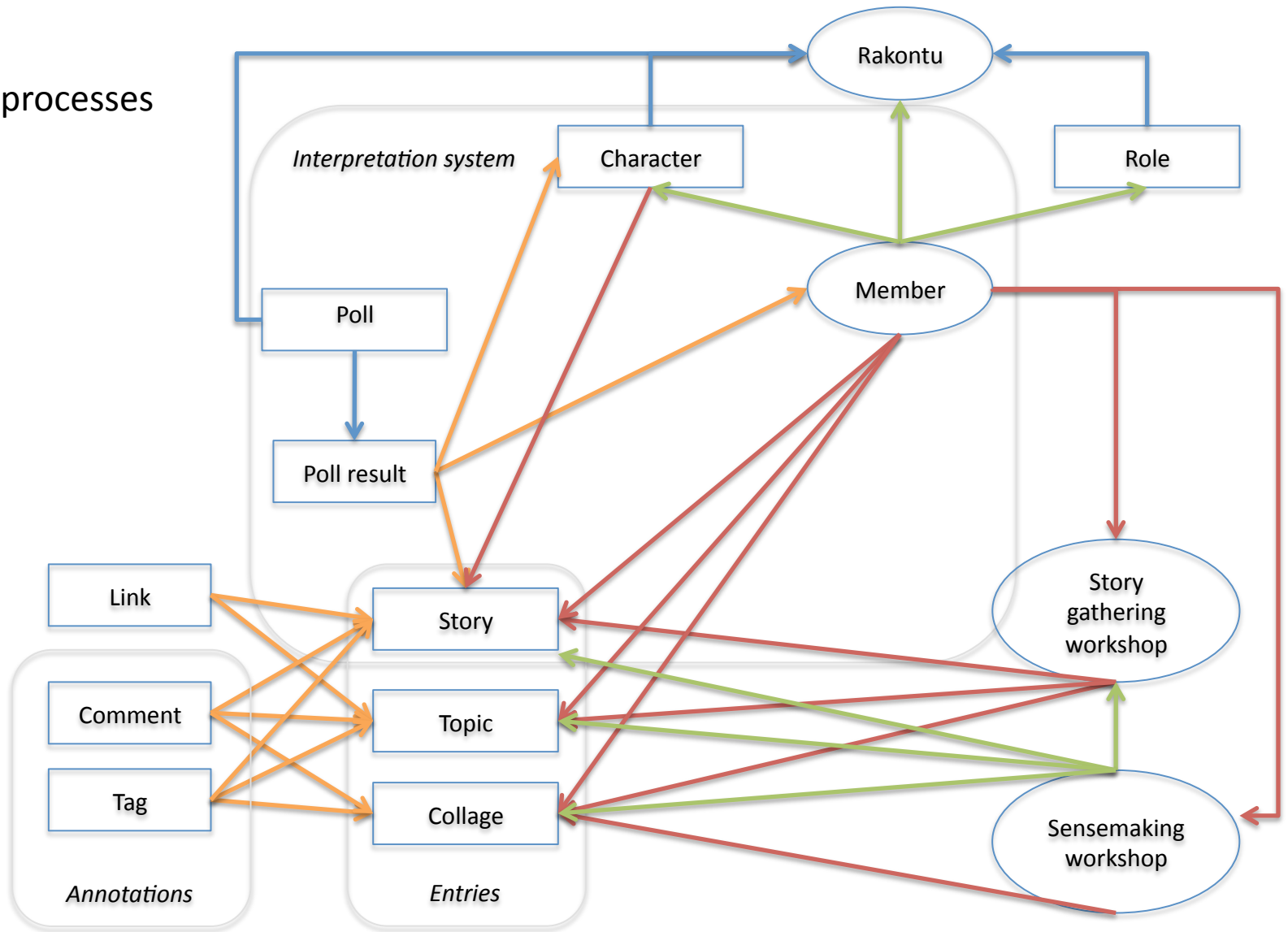
- Cynthia Kurtz - April 2011 (document version 1.0.1)

- This is a TENTATIVE DRAFT plan for the visual design of Rakontu 2.0.

- Rakontu is software to help small groups of people share and work with their stories together to achieve common goals.

- Rakontu is and always will be free and open source !!

- For more information see rakontu.org

- This is a design for a rich client desktop application which will communicate with other such applications via mediating server; a web interface would be different (probably simpler).

- This document has a sister called **Rakontu 2.0 architecture.pdf** which is probably somewhere near where you found this document. Many of the terms mentioned here are explained more fully there.

- Please send feedback/suggestions/help to cfkurtz at cfkurtz dot com

Rakontu 2.0
Objects and processes

Interpretation system

Rakontu

Character

Role

Poll

Member

Poll result

Link

Story

Story gathering workshop

Comment

Topic

Tag

Collage

Sensemaking workshop

Annotations

Entries

Key

Defines   Creates   Uses   Describes   Data   Process

Rakontu
About Rakontu
Preferences...

Quit Rakontu

File
Import...
Export...
Print...
Publish...

Edit
Undo
Redo

Cut
Copy
Paste

Find text...

Community
Open...
Configure Connections...
Close

Cafe
Timeline

Tell a Story
Start a Topic
Hold a Workshop
Send a Message

Library
Browse

(Visualization plug-ins)

Search ...

Role
Guide
Curator
Liaison
Facilitator
Researcher
Manager
Developer

Personal
Profile

Messages
Drafts

Help
Rakontu Help
Tips
Bug report
User forum

What some of the menus might look like ...

Harris Road Community ∨

A spot for everyone on our road. Issues, problems, hopes, history.

> **> Bulletin board**
> *Melanie*, *Today 4:12 pm*
> Story workshop next Monday at 4 pm. Theme: paving the road.
> *Joe S.*, *Yesterday 5:08 am*
> What does everyone think of the new question about the dam proposal? Does it work?

+

> Messages
Ron, *4/5/2012*
Cynthia, have you figured out how to manage your drafts yet? Happy to help.

+

> Members
✠ Joe S.
☺ Melanie Smith
☎ Helen (Blue house)
⚷ ✎ Cynthia Kurtz
⧗ Ron M.

Two Views of the Community

- A Rakontu community is at once a group of people interacting (a **café**) and a group of collected stories (a **library**)

- The interface reflects this dichotomy and interplay

- The activity timeline shows *what is going on here* – visiting the **café** tables

- The content browser shows *what is in here* – rummaging in the **library** stacks (+ Visualization plug-ins: many views of the library)

Cafe timeline

- What has been going on lately – cafe, **activity**
- The story of the stories
- Links and patterns across time
- Horizontal axis is always time, vertical axis is "swim lanes" distinction showing, e.g.:
  - by **type** of activity: topic, story, comment, etc
  - by **who** is doing things: member, role, character
  - by **group** activity: workshop to collage to topic
  - by **interpretation**: answers to poll questions (feeling: happy/relieved/angry/ etc)
  - by **expression**: containing particular words or phrases, for example
  - by **connection**: links made, changed, tags set/changed, etc
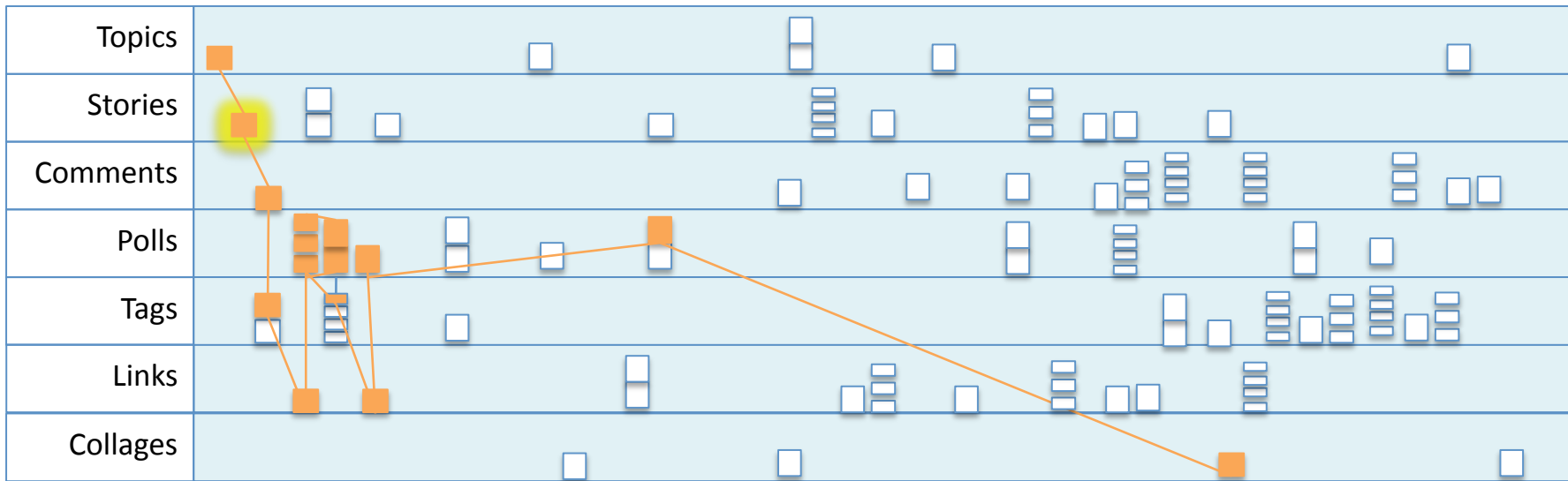
Topics	
Stories	
Comments	
Polls	
Tags	
Links	
Collages	

Gold faucets   Cynthia. **Monday 4:32 pm**

Okay, so I was out at the construction site for that new big mansion last week? And I'm talking to one of the guys and he says take a look at this. And he gets out a box, and they ordered all GOLD faucets for their bathrooms, all fifteen of them or whatever. I'm like, that's just not right, and he was like hey, if you've got it...

but I don't know, I don't like what it does to our town. We've always been good hard working folks. It just rubs me the wrong way. I told my Dad about it and he thought it was a bad sign, said it wouldn't have happened in the old days, people would have known better.

\/ Comments (1)
Fred said Today at 5:15pm:
I'm not that upset about it. The thing that bothers me more is that they are building on top of the old *(...)*   Add comment

> Links (New folks in town, Haves and have-nots)

> Tags (new construction, old ruins)

\/ Poll (7 responses)
How important is this story?
▭ 4 not very
▭ 2 some
▭ 1 very
How do you feel about this story?
▭ 3 indifferent
▭ 2 irritated
▭ 1 angry
▭ 1 (no response)
                                                            Change your answers

User has clicked on one story and they can see how it connects throughout the system over time – the "story of the story" ...

That reminds me of the time...
That's not what happened!
This is related to ...

Topics				
Stories				
Comments				
Polls				
Tags				
Links				
Collages				

Gold faucets   2 pm

Okay, so I was out at the cor...
last week? And I'm talking t...
at this. And he gets out a bo...
their bathrooms, all fifteen ...
not right, and he was like he...

but I don't know, I don't like...
been good hard working fol...
my Dad about it and he thou...
have happened in the old da...

What other experience did this remind you of?

I saw something like that last year. I was going out by the beach, and I saw some kids hanging around a nice house. I knew one of them so I stopped and asked what they were doing. They said they always wait there because those people put out the best garbage. It's recycling I guess but couldn't they take their stuff to the exchange area like we all do? Seems rude to make people come to their house and pick it up for them. Like we are their garbage people or something.

Why did that other story remind you of this one?

People not knowing they are offending, but not bothering to find out either

How do you feel about the story?

| [ ] happy | [ ] relieved | [ ] hopeful | [ ] enthused | [ ] proud |
| [x] sad | [x] angry | [x] hopeless | [ ] indifferent | [x] disap... |

How long do you think you will remember it?

a day or two --x-------------- as long as I live

Who do you think should hear it?

New people who come here, the rich folks

User clicked on "That reminds me of the time" and adds a new story. The interaction should feel like a conversation or interview, not a form. The popup window is small which helps them keep in view the story they are responding to and its context. As soon as they enter their story they see it appear in the context as well, with the link they created.
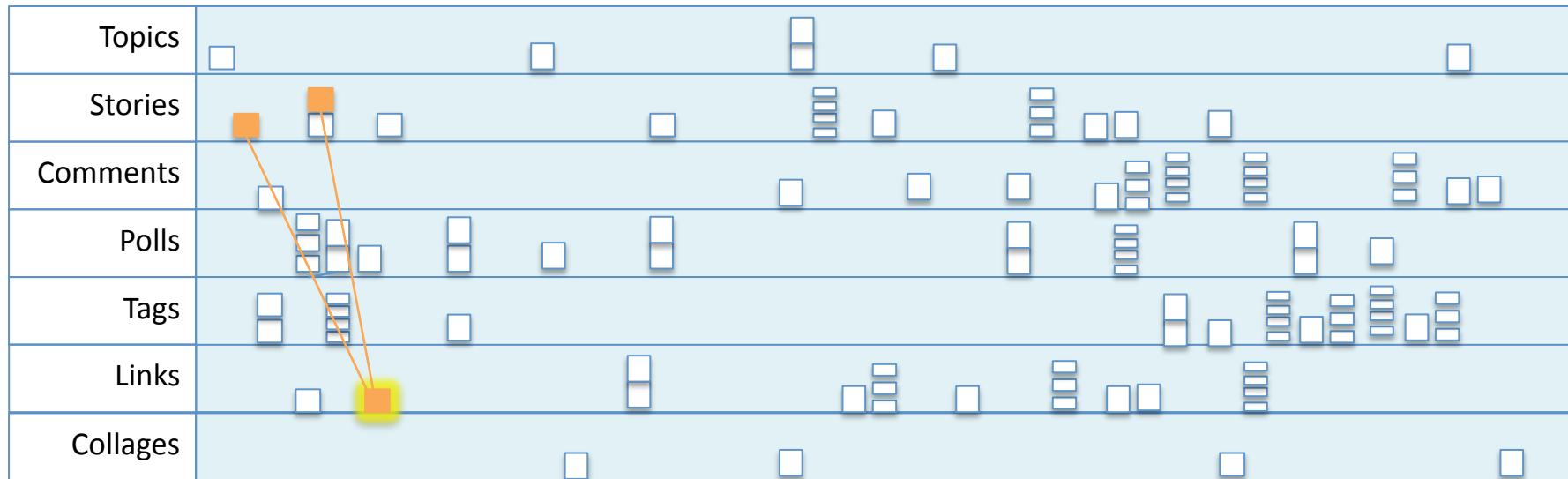
That's not what happened!
This is related to ...

1 angry
1 (no response)

Change your answers

Topics						
Stories						
Comments						
Polls						
Tags						
Links						
Collages						

Link type: **reminded**   Cynthia, Monday 4:32 pm

Why? *It made me think of people withholding information ...*

Gold faucets	Cynthia, Monday 4:32 pm

Okay, so I was out at the construction site for that new big mansion last week? And I'm talking to one of the guys and he says take a look at this. And he gets out a box, and they ordered all GOLD faucets for their bathrooms, all fifteen of them or whatever. I'm like, that's just not right, and he was like hey, if you've got it...

but I don't know, I don't like what it does to our town. We've always been good hard working folks. It just rubs me the wrong way. I told my Dad about it and he thought it was a bad sign, said it wouldn't have happened in the old days, people would have known better.

> User has clicked on a link and is looking at why two stories were linked...
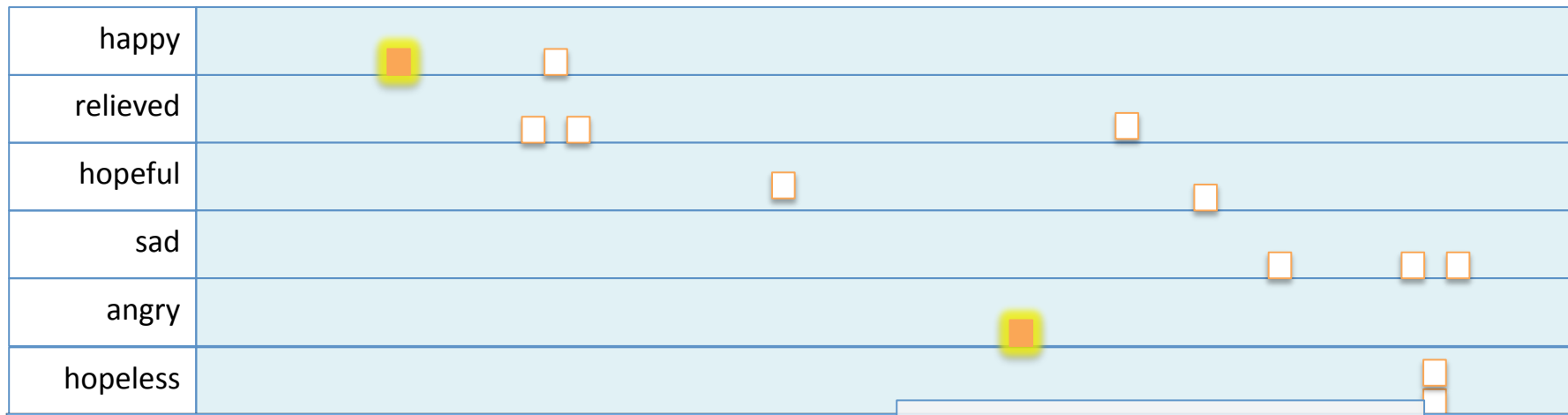
What is causing all these horse flies?	Cynthia, Monday 4:32 pm

Hey, I heard something from one of the forestry guys up at the state office. He said that they were trying a new biological treatment, that's what he called it, against those narrow-flies that have been causing so much havoc in the pitch pines. And then, and this is what will surprise you, he says that - as an "unintended consequence" - those were his words - the horse flies "took off" because nothing was eating the dead stuff in the woods. Now he said that was his own opinion and not everybody agreed with him, and he said it wasn't an official thing. But have you noticed the horse flies these past two summers? My old dog has been beside himself in late July. We have to keep him inside, he doesn't stop scratching and swatting them away. They get him right next to his eyes, poor old thing. Anyway, it's just something I heard, and I won't say who said it either, don't want to get him in trouble.

happy	
relieved	
hopeful	
sad	
angry	
hopeless	

Docks sprayed, Sarah, today 9am
What is going on with the dock vandalism?
Last week three docks had spray paint on
them. I went out on Sunday morning and...

Thanks from the Smithsons
June Smithson, **today 10 am**

I just want to say thanks to everyone who helped us out when our house caught fire. We saved most of the kitchen and living room stuff. The bedrooms were lost but we were so grateful for what we still have. My photo albums were untouched! Out of the whole house that was what I most treasured!! But what a fright it was to have to run out of the house in the middle of the night. What a group of volunteer firefighters we have, they really know their stuff. Anyway so I just want everyone to know that we were overwhelmed with all the help we got. So many people introduced themselves as sort-of neighbors and said they had enjoyed our big flower garden over the years, and they brought all kinds of things to help out. So much food we didn't have to cook for weeks, and new clothes and, just lots of help. We are truly grateful to everyone who reached out to help us. Work on the rebuilding will start in just a few weeks, and we are over at my mom's house, if anyone is looking, just down the road at the house with the green roof. Thanks again everyone.

What is causing all these horse flies?
Cynthia, **Monday 4:32 pm**

Hey, I heard something from one of the forestry guys up at the state office. He said that they were trying a new biological treatment, that's what he called it, against those narrow-flies that have been causing so much havoc in the pitch pines. And then, and this is what will surprise you, he says that - as an "unintended consequence" - those were his words - the horse flies "took off" because nothing was eating the dead stuff in the woods. Now he said that was his own opinion and not everybody agreed with him, and he said it wasn't an official thing. But have you noticed the horse flies these past two summers? My old dog has been beside himself in late July. [...] atting them away. They get him right next to his eyes, poor old thing. [...] either, don't want to get him in trouble.

> User is looking at stories with different answers to the "feel about" question and comparing two of them. They are also hovering their mouse over a third and seeing the start of it.

Content browser

- Poke around in the stacks – library
- Not "what is going on" but "what is IN here"
- Time is not an important element, though it can come into play as one option
- All possible browsing elements are in play

Members	Cynthia	Workshops	Last week at the lake
Polls	Paul	Topics	Old man winter
Comments	**Ellen**	**Stories**	Running away
Links	Joe S.	Comments	Why not try? I said
Tags	MeToo	Tags	Guess what guess what
	Joseph Travertine	Links	**The fence is broken**

The fence is broken   Ellen, Tuesday November 5, 2012

I don't know who did it, but I found a note out by that fence, you know which one I mean. Those vacation people put a big fence up around their property because I guess somebody left a few beer cans around. Which I think was kind of rude, I mean, they are here what two days a year? Anyway so a few weeks ago I guess some of the young people broke the fence, a bit, not a lot. And I was out walking the dog and there was this note lying in front of the fence, it was all soggy from the rain and hard to read, but it said stuff like "you people" don't have any respect for others, and how dare you and so on. I don't think they realize that people actually LIVE here and that their ugly fence is something we have to look at EVERY DAY and it's an affront to us to have put it up in the first place. Anyway I'm not going to do anything about it, but there it is.

Comments
Links
Tags
Poll results
Attachments

7 responses
How important is this story?
▇▇ 4 not very
▇ 2 some
▇ 1 very
How do you feel about this story?
▇▇ 3 indifferent
▇▇ 2 irritated
▇ 1 angry
▇ 1 (no response)

User has "drilled down" by member to see the stories told by Ellen and picked one. Inside that story they are looking at poll results collected.

Members	Stories	How feel	trivial	Last week at the lake
Polls	Members	How long remember		Old man winter
Comments	Characters	Why told		Running away
Links		Happened to		Why not try? I said
Tags		Who should hear		Guess what ...
		Useful to newcomers		The fence is broken
			lifelong	

The fence is broken   Ellen, Tuesday November 5, 2012
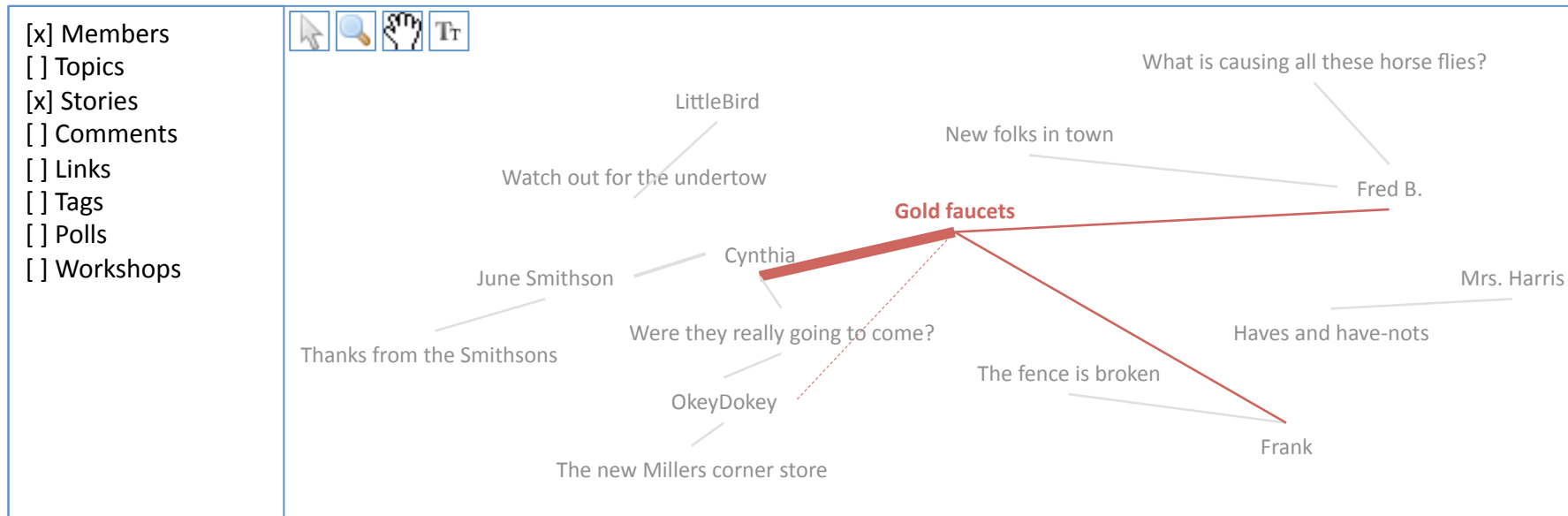
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Comments	Last week at the lake, reminded
Links	Tensions and resolutions, collage
Tags	Changing our town, report
Poll results	
Attachments	

User has "drilled down" by polls about stories, to the question "how long will you remember this story?" They have used the range slider to say they want to see stories in which people (anybody) answered the question with a value between (roughly) 10 and 30 on a scale from 0 to 100. The list of stories results and they choose one to read. Below the story are its annotations and links, and they are examining links from this story to others.

Visualizations

- Here we should not have ONE visualization but leave things open to a LOT of different ways to visualize connections and data. Best to leave this OPEN !!

[x] Members
[ ] Topics
[x] Stories
[ ] Comments
[ ] Links
[ ] Tags
[ ] Polls
[ ] Workshops

What is causing all these horse flies?

LittleBird

New folks in town

Watch out for the undertow

Fred B.

Gold faucets

Cynthia

June Smithson

Mrs. Harris

Were they really going to come?

Haves and have-nots

Thanks from the Smithsons

The fence is broken

OkeyDokey

Frank

The new Millers corner store

Network diagram is just ONE possible visualization. Other possible ones:

- mindmap
- landscapes (like scatter charts but with more meaning?)
- layers of landscapes (like GIS)
- circle connection diagram (things arranged in circle, links between them)
- Gantt chart (for projects)
- something to show multiple perspectives
- cartoons?
- bubble charts (size means one thing, color another, placement in xy another)
- various ways of showing hierarchies and meshworks (and both)

Role screens

- Here is one screen design for each of the named roles:
    - guide
    - curator
    - liaison
    - facilitator
    - researcher
    - technician
    - manager/owner

Messages	★ How do you become a guide?	joe	Yesterday 1:50 pm
Requests	✓ I lost my story draft!!	Helen2	Monday 12:30 am
Topics	✓ What's a poll?	Marge	4/4/2012
	✓ I can't get into the chat	SillyPerson	4/2/2012

How do you become a guide?

I think I could do this guide thing but whos permission do I need?

Guides will spend a lot of time using the **activity timeline**. In addition they need to see **messages** asking them for help, **requests** to do things related to stories/topics/etc, **topics** and responses to them, and **resources** to help people. They might also run **workshops** which are just **tours** in which they explain (over the phone or Skype) how to use Rakontu.

Messages	★ Audio interview	transcription	Marge	ten minutes ago
Requests	✓ Your opinion?	poll	joe	Monday 2:40 pm
Topics	✓ Russian story	translation	erik	3/2/2012
	✓ For grandma	read aloud	Wanda	2/14/2012

Audio interview   Marge. ten minutes ago

This is the tape I collected yesterday after the town meeting. I'd really like it if somebody could transcribe this before the next meeting so we can use it in the newsletter.

Messages	Subjects	✓ Quotes from the old folks	SillyPerson	1/2/2012	12 responses
Requests	Plans	★ Photos of the old cemetery	Joan M.	12/2/2011	0 responses
Topics	**Memory joggers**	✓ What the bridge used to look like	Helen2	11/5/2011	1 response
	Reports	✓ Remember the one-room schoolhouse?	Wanda	6/9/2011	33 responses
	Ideas	✓ Report from August workshop	erik	6/8/2011	9 responses

Photos of the old cemetery   Joan M, 12/2/2011

Here are some photos I found in the barn last week. Does this bring back any memories?

Show   *with*

Topics	**no**	**tags**	Last week at the lake
Stories	few	comments	Old man winter
Collages	many	links	Running away
Entries	duplicate	poll results	Why not try? I said
Workshops	conflicting	texts	Guess what ...
Members	varying	versions	**The fence is broken**
Characters	unvarying		

The fence is broken   Ellen, Tuesday November 5, 2012

I don't know who did it, but I found a note out by that fence, you know which one I mean. Those vacation people put a big fence up around their property because I guess somebody left a few beer cans around. Which I think was kind of rude, I mean, they are here what two days a year? Anyway so a few weeks ago I guess some of the young people broke the fence, a bit, not a lot. And I was out walking the dog and there was this note lying in front of the fence, it was all soggy from the rain and hard to read, but it said stuff like "you people" don't have any respect for others, and how dare you and so on. I don't think they realize that people actually LIVE here and that their ugly fence is something we have to look at EVERY DAY and it's an affront to us to have put it up in the first place. Anyway I'm not going to do anything about it, but there it is.

Comments
Links
Tags
Poll results
Attachments

0 tags

(select) ⬇   vandalism

property ⬇

neighbors ⬇

Add tags

Curators will spend a lot of time using the **content browser**, but their dedicated screen looks for **gaps** and **broken places** in the data – the equivalent of a book out of place or a shelf out of order in the library.

Off-line members

Joe Momrath	Messages	Fording the stream	**Comments**
Helen	**Stories**	**Grandma's cookies**	Links
Grandma Josephine	Workshops	Don't give up the struggle	Tags
		Where the schoolhouse was	Flags

Melody Cramwell, Monday 5:23 pm
Hey Helen, I remember those cookies too. It is so good to hear your voice here Helen. Will we see you at the next workshop? I think it's next month, why don't you ask Karen about it. I'd be happy to drive you.

Liaisons need a screen that helps them **manage** their interactions with off-line members: **representing** them, **ferrying** messages to and from them, **adding** stories, **checking** on those stories, **printing** things to read or show to them.

Upcoming workshops

Getting our road fixed
Preparing for history day
Story album for new neighbors

Title
Date/time
Notes
To-do list
Participants

April 11, 2011

Notes:
Story sharing workshop
Be there at 9am to get ready.

Helpers, watch out for people not understanding why we are telling stories.

Facilitators need a screen that concentrates on **workshops** and preparation for them. (They also need a way to edit characters, which is not shown here.)
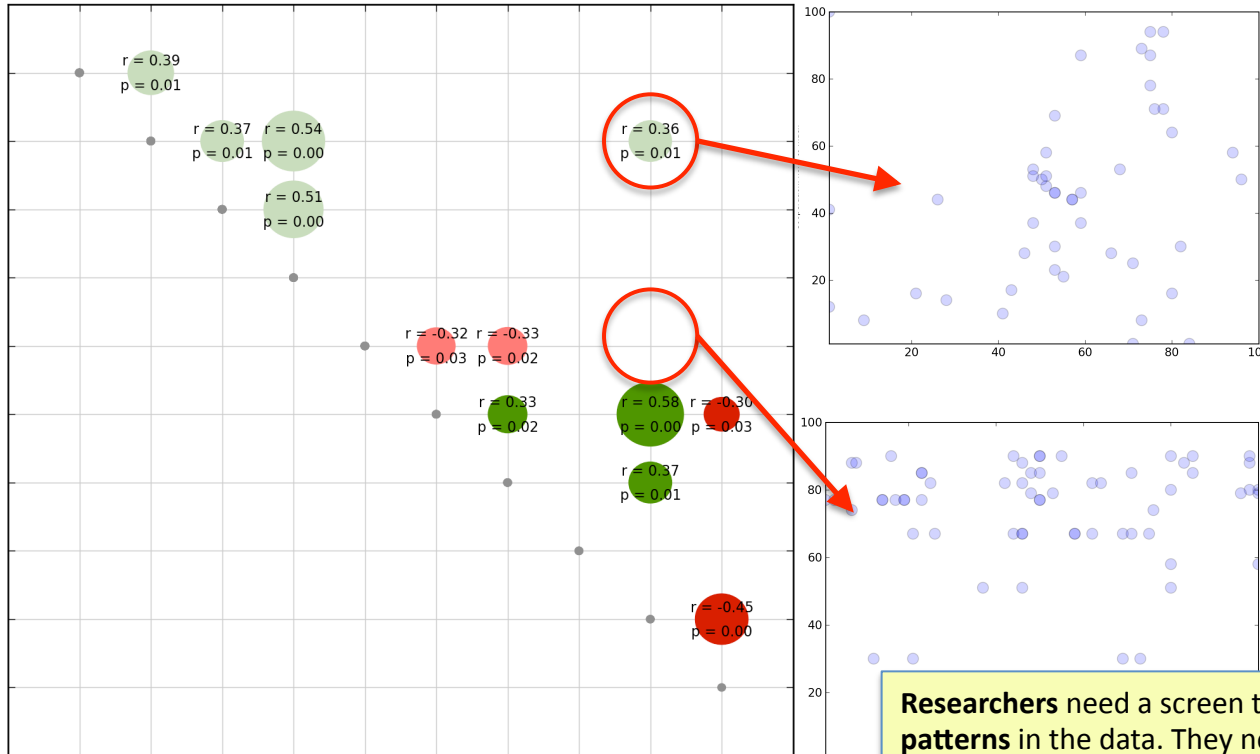
Look at	*with*	*filtered by*	*question*	*answers*
Choices **Scales** Texts	Choices **Scales** Texts	**Choices** Scales Texts	Storyteller: Age Storyteller: Profession **Storyteller: Position on dam**	for undecided **against**

Notes

Do you see how there is a correlation between memorability and irritation, but only among those against the dam project.

Researchers need a screen that concentrates on **patterns** in the data. They need to run a series of **visualization** outcomes and **statistical** tests, probably on a regular basis, and see the results periodically updated. They need to be able to prepare a catalyzing **topic** to be used in a **sensemaking workshop**.

Um, stuff with packets and things...

Technicians need a screen that concentrates on technical details of the software usage.

Members	John McQueen	on-line member	May 11, 2012	curator
Appearance	Sharon B.	on-line member	Two weeks ago	guide, liaison, manager
Settings	**Royce**	**on-line member**	**Yesterday**	**facilitator**
Flags	Helen	OFF-line member	About a month ago	none
Messages				

Royce has created 5 topics, 25 stories, 55 comments, 12 tags, 2 flags, 3 workshops.

Members	Invitations	**Guide**
Appearance	**Roles**	Curator
Settings	Attachments	Liaison
Flags		Facilitator
Messages		Researcher
		Manager

The **guide** role is:

    agreed

Text to be read when member takes on role:

> Guides answer questions, encourage people to tell stories, and maintain the vitality of the on-line member community. Guides must agree to receive messages so they can answer questions.

Managers need a screen that concentrates on membership and overall settings.

Other screens

Not doing ones not marked here in bold because they will be fairly simple forms.

- Reading
  - About this Rakontu, about its members, member profile
  - Reading a story or topic
  - Viewing a collage
- Changing
  - Editing member profile
  - Entering a story or topic
  - **Building a collage – of each type**
- Communicating
  - Making a comment
  - Sending and receiving messages
- Workshops
  - **Storytelling**
  - Sensemaking

Stories, topics and collages
(drag things here to include them)

The night the bed fell
Rosie the rancher
Let's all fly a kite
No news is good news
Why not go up there?
Okay, I'm listening
I wish I had gone back

I suppose that the high-water mark of my youth in Columbus, Ohio, was the night the bed fell on my father. It makes a better recitation (unless, as some friends of mine have said, one has heard it five or six times) than it does a piece of writing, for it is almost necessary to throw furniture around, shake doors, and bark like a dog, to lend the proper atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is admittedly a somewhat incredible tale. Still, it did take place.

It happened, then, that my father had decided to sleep in the attic one night, to be away where he could think. My mother opposed the notion strongly because, she said, the old wooden bed up there was unsafe- it was wobbly and

What is going on?

going to sleep
waking up
loud noises

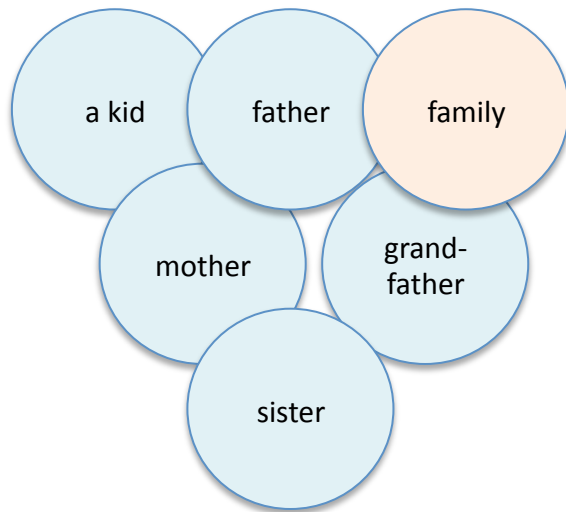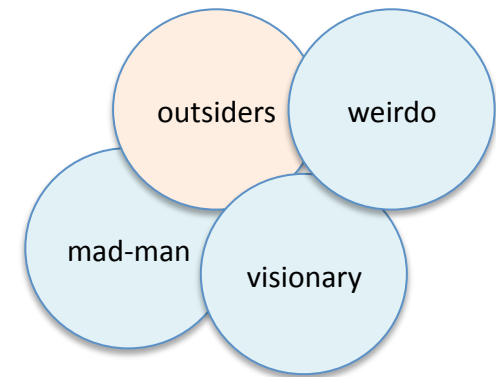*Who is doing things?*

a kid
father
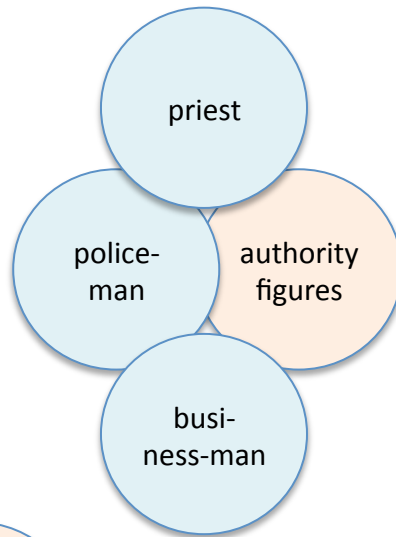mother
cousin
grandfather
sister
policeman

What matters to them?
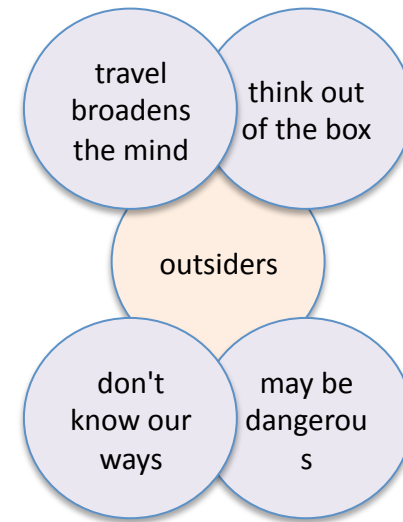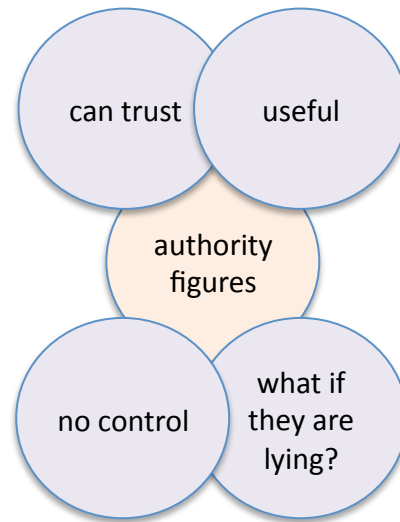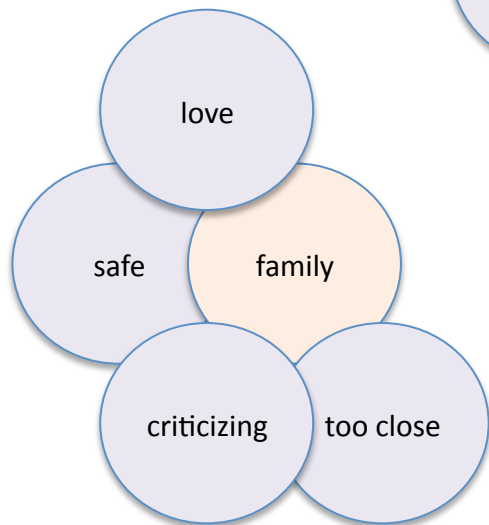
quiet
peace
a bit crazy!!

Archetype derivation workshop – part one. People drag stories into the list (or create them right there??) then type texts into lists of story elements – probably just text boxes.
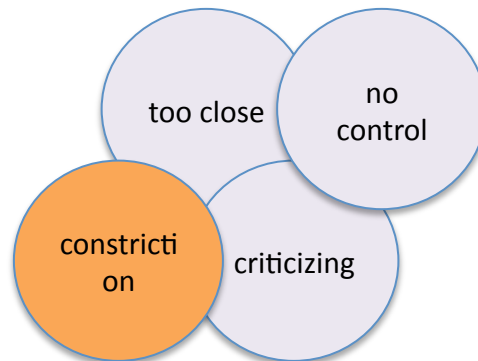
Who is doing things?

a kid
father
mother
cousin
grandfather
sister
policeman
priest
businessman
madman

priest

police-man

authority figures

busi-ness-man

outsiders

weirdo

mad-man

visionary

a kid

father

family

mother

grand-father

sister

Archetype derivation workshop – part two. Now doing characters only. People drag "who is doing things" character elements out of the list and into the space randomly. Or there could be a "put these all in the space randomly "button. Then they start clusting them. While clustering they add cluster names- though that is optional and sometimes people don't do it.

can trust

useful

authority figures

no control

what if they are lying?

travel broadens the mind

think out of the box

outsiders

don't know our ways

may be dangerous

love

safe

family

criticizing

too close

Archetype derivation workshop – part three. People create a NEW canvas and copy the cluster names ONLY to it. They now create new shapes with new colors for attributes.

safe

can trust

love

safe people

may be dangerous

don't know our ways

what if they are lying?

danger-ous people

improvement

think out of the box

useful

travel broadens the mind

too close

no control

constriction

criticizing
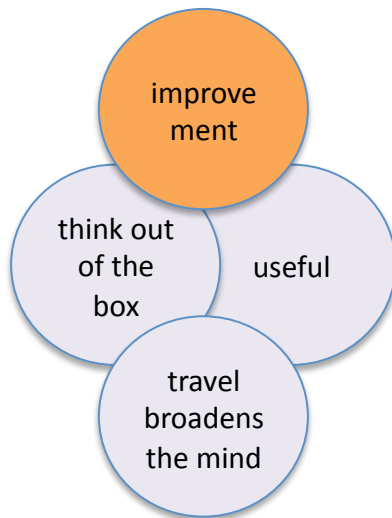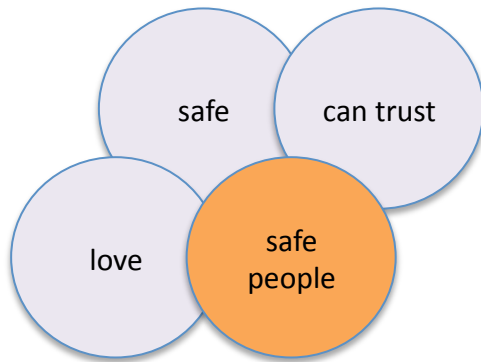
Archetype derivation workshop – part four. People create a NEW canvas AGAIN and copy the attributes ONLY to it. They now cluster the attributes and name the clusters and it's done.

Also want some way to see the connections here, all the way back to the original stories. Link lines?

strong,
hostile

strong,
friendly

the bridge
when it
was new

the dog
when it
was rabid

these
things
are not
as high
priority

A **landscape** exercise. First step is the same as for
archetypes – select entries then type in elements
based on them. Some elements might BE entries,
some might not. Then: define space with shapes at
corners, place elements, add labels/shapes to
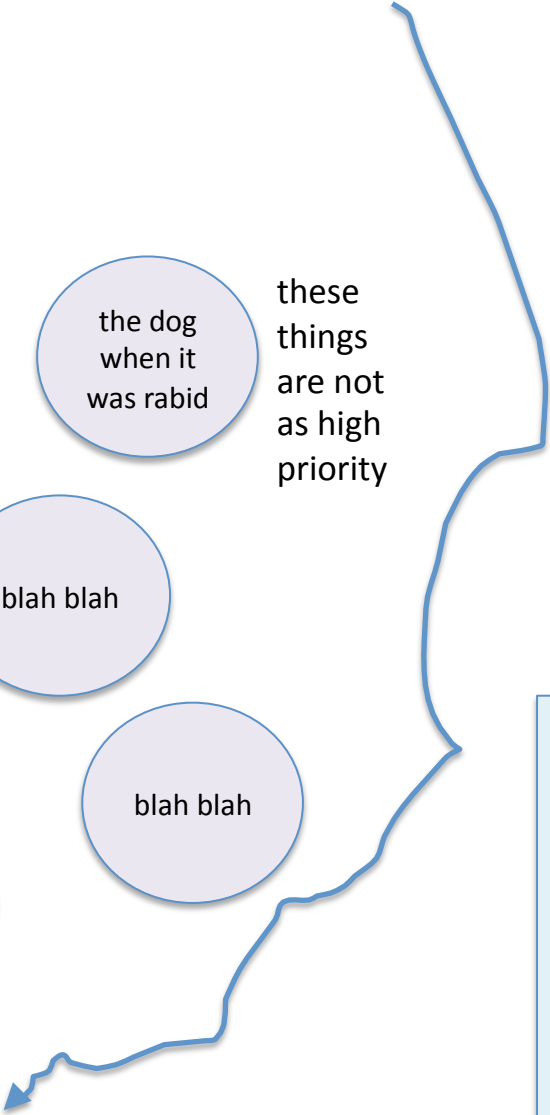describe patterns.

blah blah

blah blah

crumbling foundations

blah blah
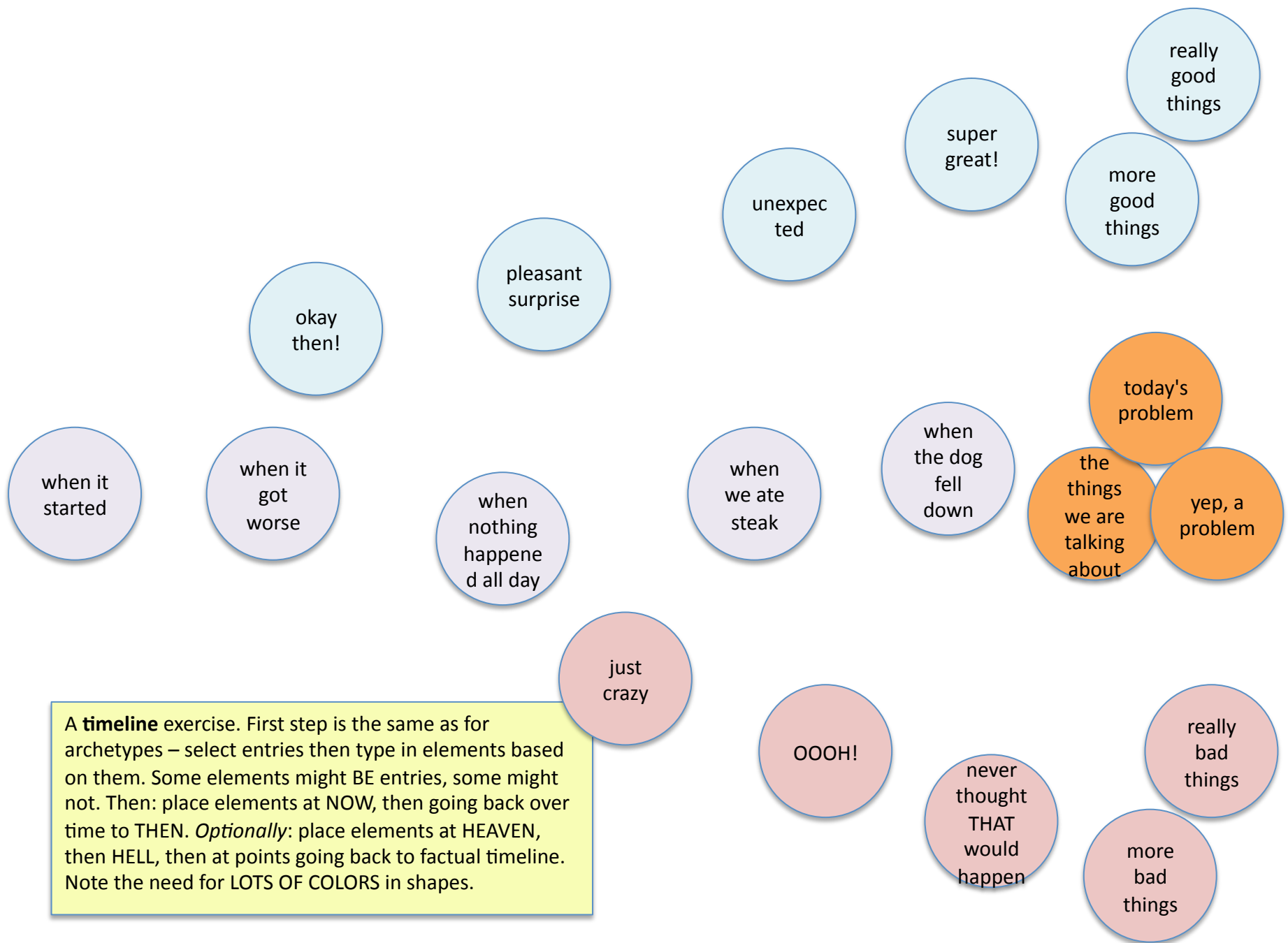
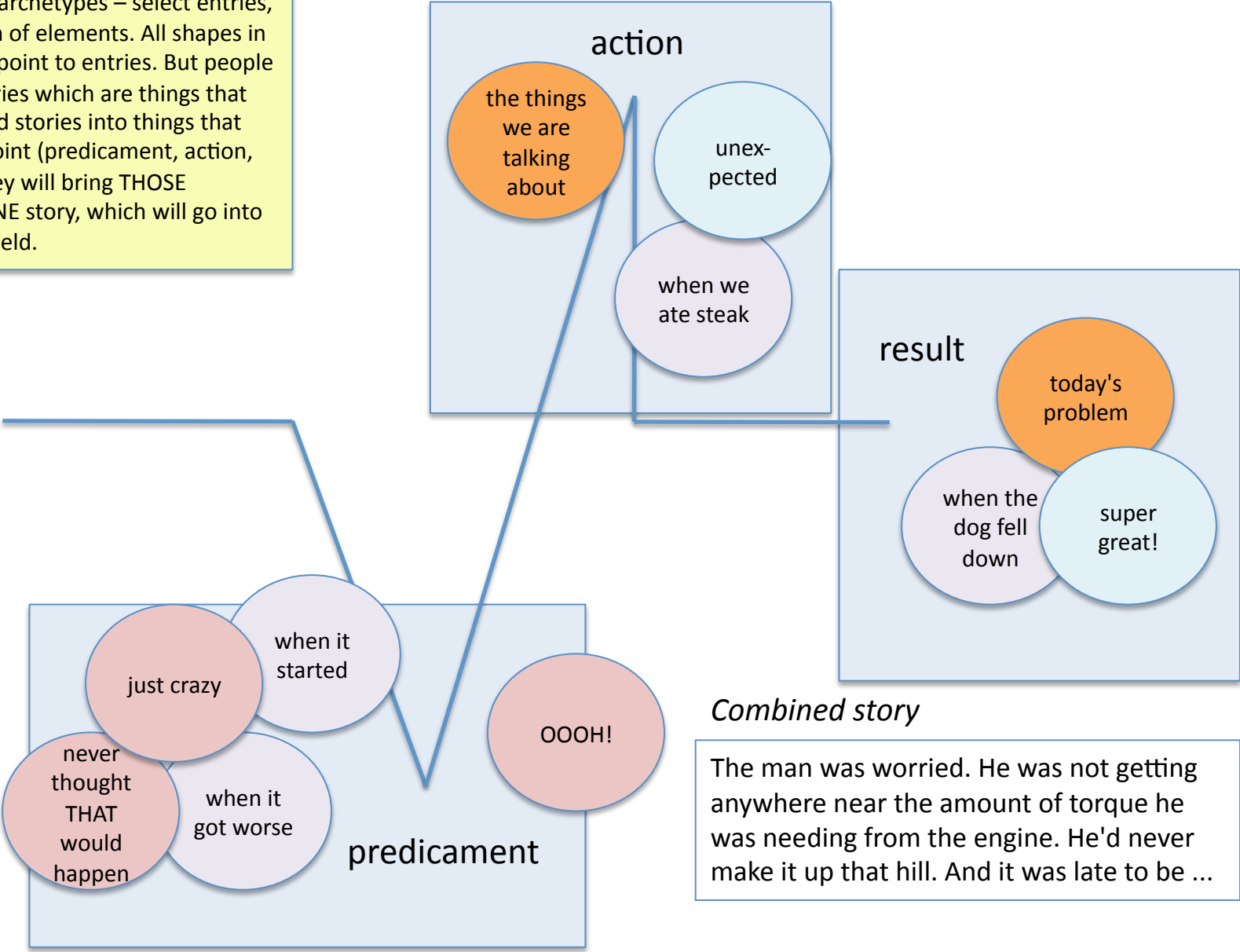the
carriage
house

the bridge
today

weak,
hostile

weak,
friendly

really good things

super great!

more good things

unexpected

pleasant surprise

okay then!

today's problem

when the dog fell down

when it started

when it got worse

when nothing happened all day

when we ate steak

the things we are talking about

yep, a problem

just crazy

A **timeline** exercise. First step is the same as for archetypes – select entries then type in elements based on them. Some elements might BE entries, some might not. Then: place elements at NOW, then going back over time to THEN. *Optionally*: place elements at HEAVEN, then HELL, then at points going back to factual timeline. Note the need for LOTS OF COLORS in shapes.

OOOH!

never thought THAT would happen

really bad things

more bad things

A **story construction** exercise. First step is the same as for archetypes – select entries, BUT no typing in of elements. All shapes in this collage will point to entries. But people create NEW stories which are things that combine the told stories into things that slot into each point (predicament, action, result). Then they will bring THOSE together into ONE story, which will go into the main TEXT field.

action

the things we are talking about

unex-pected

when we ate steak

result

today's problem

when the dog fell down

super great!

Combined story

The man was worried. He was not getting anywhere near the amount of torque he was needing from the engine. He'd never make it up that hill. And it was late to be ...

just crazy

when it started

OOOH!

never thought THAT would happen

when it got worse

predicament

Live chat

Cynthia
Yep that's what happened.
Paul
Why?
Cynthia
I don't know. I wasn't looking when it happened.

It kind of just grew there. | Send

Stories told so far

The night the bed fell
* Rosie the rancher
Let's all fly a kite
No news is good news
Why not go up there?
* Okay, I'm listening
I wish I had gone back

+ -

I suppose that the high-water mark of my youth in Columbus, Ohio, was the night the bed fell on my father. It makes a better recitation (unless, as some friends of mine have said, one has heard it five or six times) than it does a piece of writing, for it is almost necessary to throw furniture around, shake doors, and bark like a dog, to lend the proper atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is admittedly a somewhat incredible tale. Still, it did take place.

How do you feel about this story?
[ ] great
[ ] fine
[ ] okay

Thanks for reading this!

- Please send feedback/suggestions/help to cfkurtz at cfkurtz dot com

- For more information see rakontu.org

- We are actively soliciting help for this project – feedback, encouragement, coding, writing, funding, cabbage, whatever! ☺ so come and join us!