



CAUSAL MAPPING FOR OUTSIDERS

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📖 What is Causal Mapping?

Causal mapping is a technique to **visualise what people believe causes what** within a complex system. It creates a "mental map" of the cause-and-effect relationships perceived by an individual or a group.

The process starts with **narratives**—such as interview transcripts, reports, or open-ended survey responses. Causal claims within these texts are systematically identified and structured into a network diagram:

- **Nodes (Boxes)** represent the *factors* or *concepts* (e.g., "Better Training").
- **Links (Arrows)** show the *direction of influence* between them.

🧭 Why Use It and Who is it For?

Causal mapping is a powerful tool for analysing **qualitative data** at scale, helping to understand complex, real-world situations.

Who Uses Causal Mapping?

This technique is primarily used by professionals who need to understand complex social systems and justify their decisions:

- **Evaluators:** To empirically verify whether a planned programme works as intended (Theory of Change) and trace its actual influence pathways.
- **Policymakers & Strategists:** To gain a clearer picture of stakeholder perceptions, anticipate risks, and identify effective intervention points (leverage points).
- **Researchers:** To systematically process large volumes of interview data, often across different groups (e.g., comparing views by location), while keeping data transparent.

Why is it useful

The key benefit is turning massive amounts of qualitative input into a structured visual database which is query-able: you can ask it questions.

- **Understand Stakeholder Views:** It reveals how different people believe a system or problem works.
- **Manage Complexity:** It structures messy, interconnected information into a query-able map.
- **Validate Arguments:** It allows quantifying the robustness of evidence for any causal path reported by stakeholders.

The Causal Map App

The specialised **Causal Map app** provides a convenient way to do causal mapping. Users can import interviews or reports and "code" them: highlighting causal claims and adding them to the database. Much of this process can optionally be automated using AI, enabling rigorous analysis of larger datasets.

- **Transparency:** Every link in the map is transparently tied back to the **original source quote**. This ensures that outputs are verifiable and avoids acting as a "black box," maintaining the rigour essential for qualitative work.
- **Querying the Map:** The final map is a dynamic model of **causal evidence** that can be actively explored to answer sophisticated questions, such as tracing all direct and indirect links from a single input to a defined outcome.
- **AI as an Assistant:** Generative AI is optionally used as a **tireless, low-level coding assistant** to quickly extract explicit causal claims from text.

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