ATLAS.ti: The Qualitative Data Analysis Workbench

An overview

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The Company

• Based in Berlin, Germany.

• First commercial release in 1993.

• Currently in release 7 (June 2012).
Learning Resources

- To learn ATLAS.ti on your own ([http://www.atlasti.com/download.html](http://www.atlasti.com/download.html)):
  - Quick tour
  - Chapters of the manual (at the very least):
    - Data management
    - Creating, opening, and saving HU
    - Setting up a new project
    - Project back-up and transfer

- To learn ATLAS.ti under the guidance of an experienced instructor ([www.atlasti.com/training.html](http://www.atlasti.com/training.html)):
  - Online 6-hour workshops through web-conferencing
  - Face-to-face 2-day workshops
  - On-site 2-day workshops (on-demand)

- Additional guidance
  - Multiple videos in Youtube.
What is ATLAS.ti?

- Software that assists in the process of qualitatively analyzing research data.

- Data collected through unstructured or semi-structured methods of data collection.

- The researcher is in control of the analysis process.
Ultimate Purpose of Using ATLAS.ti in Analysis

Closing the gap between the original text and the interpretative text

Original Text, Participants’ Voices

Description

Analysis

Interpretation

Final Text, Interpretative Text

Note:
This figure was inspired by the following book: Wolcott, Harry F. 1994. “Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation”. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
You are not forced into a deductive or an inductive approach. The decision as to what approach to take is a methodological one. However, commonly people combine both: start with a set of a priori concepts (codes), as a general framework, but leave enough space for discovery in the form of emergent concepts (codes).
Hermeneutic Unit

• Integrated context for data description, analysis, and interpretation.

• Container that holds the sources of information and all of the analytical work done around them.

• File of extension “hpr6/7“.

• Every research project requires a single hermeneutic unit holding all of the sources of information to be analyzed.
These are the basic elements of an analysis project with ATLAS.ti. Generally speaking, the many other functions and tools available to researcher revolve around these six objects.
Primary Documents: Sources of Information

The multiple file formats accepted allows for rich triangulation.
Primary Documents:
Loading Multiple Primary Documents Simultaneously

- Loading up to four documents simultaneously.
- Allows to conduct rich comparative analysis (e.g., coding two or more interviews conducted at different points in time).
- Allows for rich transcription of audio or video documents.
Primary Documents: Multimedia and Google Earth

Video frame showing quotations and codes on the margin

Audio primary document showing quotations and codes on the margin

Graphic primary document showing quotations and codes on the margin

Google Earth primary document showing quotation named “My house”
Quotations

- Segments of the text selected by researcher or automatically (auto-coding).
- Quotations can be created in all kinds of primary documents.
- The quotation constitutes the basic unit of the analysis project. They can be linked to other objects, they can be left unlinked, they can be described in-depth, and their linkages can be visualized as rich graphic representations.

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Codes

- Concepts that can either derive from external frameworks (deductively created) or emerge from the text (inductively created).
- Codes can be linked to quotations, memos, arranged in families, and represented in networks. They can also be left alone, unlinked.
Memos

- Spaces for reflection, analysis, integration, and interpretation.
- Spaces where to make sense of the data.
- Writing memos should accompany the process of coding.
- Memos can be linked to quotations, codes, and other memos.
- If memos are systematically linked to supporting quotations, it follows that the reflections, analyses, and interpretations contained in them are grounded in evidence.
Families

- Grouping of primary documents, codes, and memos according to shared characteristics.
- Families allow for comparison across cases, conceptual categories, themes, etc.

Network view of primary document family

Network view of code family

Network view of memo family
**Weak-link Network**
Linkages between elements created through the normal analytical process.

**Strong-link Network**
Graphical representations of a semantic type linking codes to codes and quotations to quotations through specific meanings. Researcher’s understanding of the problem.
Qualitative

The Query Tool, which produces qualitative outputs through Boolean, Semantic, and Proximity operators.

Quantitative

The co-occurrence table showing number of co-occurrences between codes.

Excel graph with data from the Co-occurrence table. All quantitative reports can be exported into Excel.
Exporting in Different Formats

XML, HTML, SPSS, EXCEL, RTF, PDF, PNG, etc.

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Project Management: The Copy Bundle Function

- If working with documents that have been “added” (version 7) or “assigned” (version 6.2) into the project, it is necessary to create back-up files using the Copy Bundle function.
- Save the Copy Bundle file in an external drive.
- Use the Copy Bundle function to back-up and to migrate the project between computers.

A. Create Bundle

B. Save Bundle
Create a new folder in a location of your preference in Windows (e.g., desktop, My Documents, shared drive, server). Name it with the name of your project.

Copy all your source document files into this folder.

Save the HU (extension “hpr6”) inside of the same folder.

**Project A**

HU

.doc .docx .pdf .rtf .jpg .wmv, etc.

The HU file (extension ‘hpr’) saved inside of the project folder together with the source documents.

**Project B**

HU

.doc .docx .pdf .rtf .jpg .wmv, etc.

.doc .docx .pdf .rtf .jpg .wmv, etc.

The HU file (extension ‘hpr’) saved inside of the project folder but not inside of the individual sub-folders where the source documents are stored.

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Thank you!

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