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Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS.ti, por Susanne Frieese

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Review I

Friese, S. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti* (2nd ed.) London: Sage Publications. ISBN: 978-1-44628-204-5 (pbk)

For some time I have intended to write this review of the book *Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS.ti*, by Susanne Friese, as during the data analysis process of the research associated with my doctoral dissertation it became a vital tool that allowed me to understand effectively and close up the interesting voyage of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis.

It is best to start this brief text by recalling incidentally the virtues of incorporating technology in the qualitative processes for data analysis. Qualitative strategies are not automatic approaches for analysis, and therefore one must avoid falling into the error of carrying out rigid and deterministic processes, favoring mechanical action and moving away from the real work of analysis (St John & Johnson, 2000). Technology is useful for data processing and storage, and allows us to approach data heuristically (Coffey, Holbrook, & Atkinson, 1996). The use of specialized software like ATLAS.ti assists and supports analysis, extending the mental capacity for organizing, remembering and being systematic (Konopásek, 2007). Also, computer use increases “methodological awareness” (Seale, 2002, p. 108) as the researcher possesses an indisputable record in which the decisions taken during the research are articulated, as well as the observations and results.

The introductory chapter of this book starts with a very good description of CAQDAS, which permits understanding the importance of the ATLAS.ti program in research. It also places in primary position the idea that the use of this kind of technological aid gives rigor to all of the qualitative research process. It is in this chapter that the brilliant idea of observing data as a landscape to be explored (Friese, 2014) is presented, with all that this implies – particularly the complexity of each of its components and the holistic relationship of the whole understood as a jigsaw puzzle.

The text continues as a teaching tour of strategic stations. The first chapter focuses its attention on understanding the NCT method proposed by Friese. This method is an extremely valuable proposal for the qualitative analysis of data and is inspired by the simplification carried out by Seidel (1998) in which all effort is made to achieve understanding of qualitative data analysis as “a symphony based on three notes: Noticing, Collecting, and Thinking about interesting things” (Seidel, 1998, p. 1). The model adapted by Friese that underlies this method is composed of three vertices and their various relationships. It is called NCT because its vertices are made to correspond to the three “notes” of Seidel’s symphony: noticing, collecting and thinking. The method lets analysis move among the three vertices (noticing important information, associating those findings and interpreting them in an intelligent manner), allowing the methodological process to be creative, flexible and resourceful. It also makes it possible to move from descriptive coding systems to conceptual systems for the identification of taxonomic structures, both tacit and explicit. The NCT method is a simple navigation route, and this chapter achieves linking each of the aspects that characterize it to specific functions of the software.

Chapter two makes the first approach to ATLAS.ti. This chapter familiarizes the researcher with the virtues of the program and opens the door for understanding how this technological tool can have positive effects on specific exercises in qualitative research. The third chapter prepares the ground for designing the research project when it is intended to use this software, particularly as regards the preparation of information and response to all of the difficulties that arise when one starts to work with the data.

The subsequent chapters focus on the understanding of technical matters that facilitate use of the program and make the qualitative process flow and bear fruit. Among these are topics related to coding, interaction with the information through the software, the writing of analytical reports and the use of network visualizations in order to understand the relationship among potential conceptual categories. Each of the chapters is organized with comments on its particularities as seen through the lens of the NCT method and with the support of guiding material (step-by-step) in which the reader is challenged to apply the proposed method to tasks suggested in the text. This didactic material is complemented by a website where one can find

pedagogical resources that are important for the comprehension of qualitative data analysis.

In conclusion, this text is a very good new contribution to the field of understanding qualitative methodologies for data analysis. It is an optimal resource for both students and researchers.

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