



# Analysing Photographic Evidence: An Innovative Approach to Qualitative Social Research



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# Introduction

- Qualitative social research emphasizes on an in-depth understanding of meanings and interpretations of gathered data through the use of rich contextual information on social phenomena (Power, 2002).
- Gathered qualitative information can be of many different forms: texts (notes/ transcripts) audio / video recordings of interviews, observations, discussions etc.
- In recent years, one of the formats of gathering information that has been waxed within social research is photographic evidence from the fieldwork (Hurworth et al, 2005; Holm, 2008).



# Photographic Evidence

- Photographic images provide rich data that has been used for many years.
- Use of photography for other reasons than mere illustration was initiated in the 1930s in Bateson & Mead's field study presented in "Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis" (as quoted in Kanstrup, 2002: 3).
- Donaldson (2001: 176) : "It is time to reclaim the lost art of using photographs to conduct research and disseminate results".



# Computer-aided Photographic Analysis

- With the invention and proliferation of new technological tools such as digital cameras and CAQDAS (computer aided qualitative data analysis software) e.g. Atlas-ti, photographic analysis through computer software is taking another dimension in qualitative social research (Rambaree, 2007; Razvi, 2006).
- With the advent of CAQDAS, social scientists are having new avenues for a more rapid, rigorous, and in-depth qualitative data analysis.
- Gibbs et al. (2002: 4): “It is clear that the introduction of new technology has both expanded the ways in which qualitative researchers can collect data and also the settings and situations from which data can be collected”.



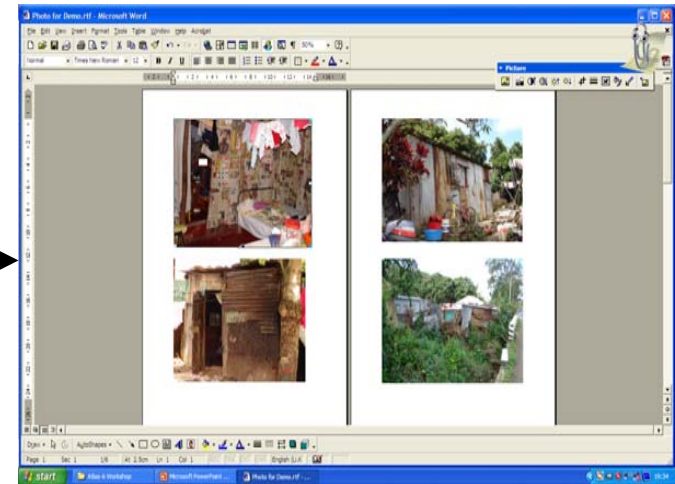
# Atlas-ti & Photographic Analysis

- More than 20 graphic file formats are accepted by ATLAS.ti, e.g. BMP, JPEG, & TIFF (Atlas-ti, 2004).
- Photographic analysis can be carried out with the digital images that can be directly viewed and coded.
- Images can also be linked under the same Hermeneutic Unit with other types of gathered data (texts, audio or video)
  - This allows for enhancing the richness of the contextual data
- The main challenge remains how researchers input, organise and analyse the photographic evidence as qualitative data



# Photo Analysis: Assigning in Atlas-ti 5.0

- There are different ways in assigning photos in Atlas-ti. One of the practical way is to cut and paste the digital photos in the rtf. format.

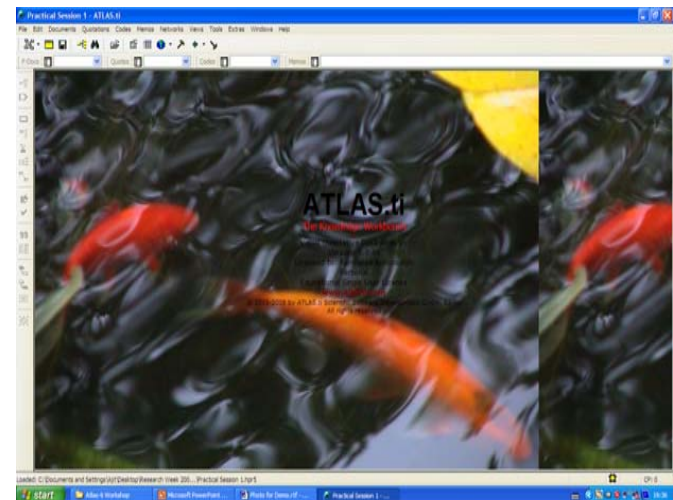


Then, open the Atlas-ti 5.0 software



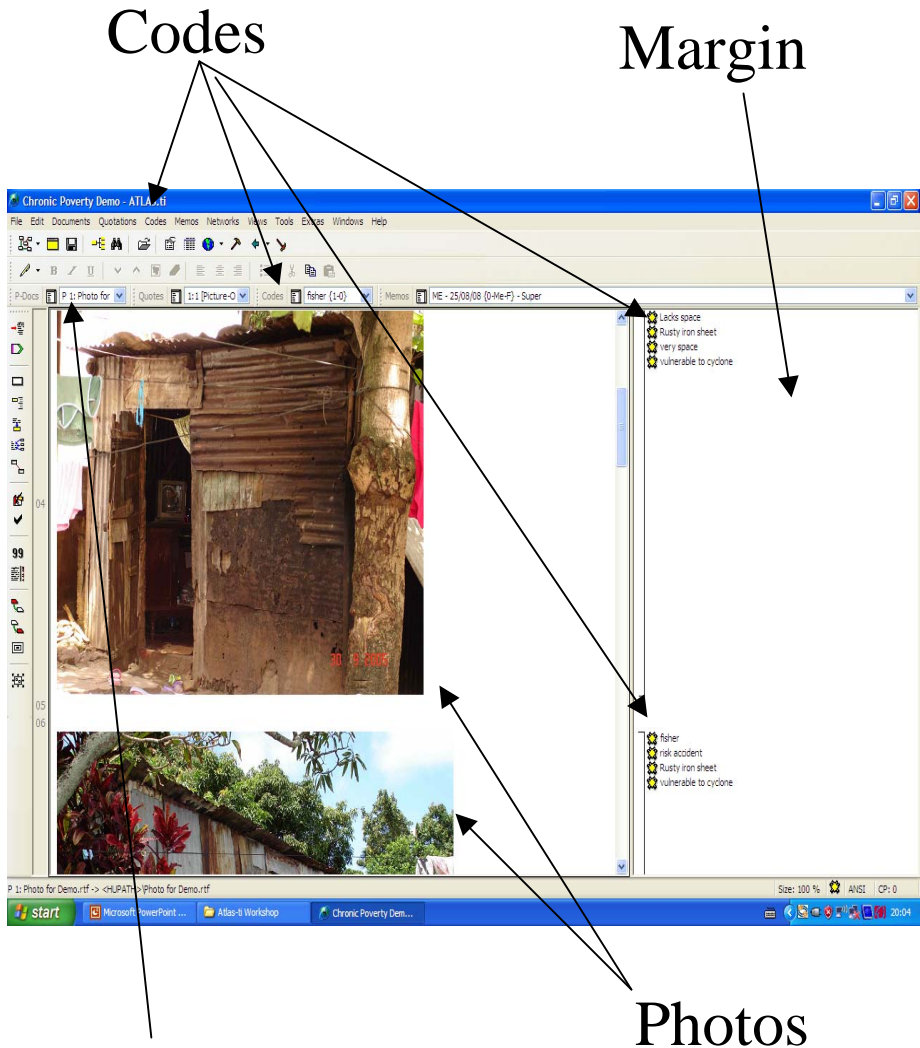
- Next step: assign the rtf file as the primary document

- Once the rtf. file is assigned, researchers can directly view the documents and start the coding process





# Atlas-ti & Photo Analysis: Coding



Codes

Margin

Assigned Doc.

Photos

- Once the document is open, in the margin section, researchers can start coding what can be observed from the image and also from what has been noted during the field-work

## Atlas-ti (2004)

- Coding capture meaning in the data
- A code may contain more than a single word, but should be concise.



# Atlas-ti & Photo Analysis: Networking

Name	Size	Author	Created	Mo
Vulnerabilities	6	Super	25/08/08...	25/08/08

Network of codes

Once the coding process is over, researchers can start with networking with the codes to explore the relationship within

## Woolf (2008:3)

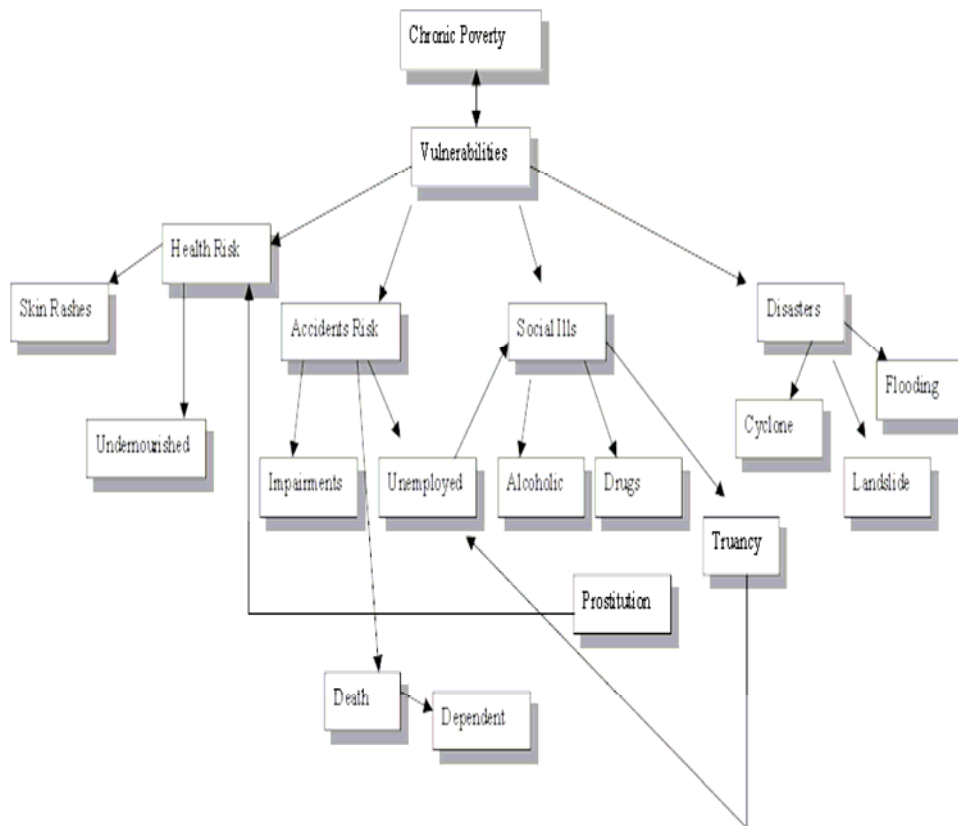
*“Networks are simply graphical views of a part of a project”.*

*“Networks are primarily used for the analytic purpose of moving your thinking and your project forward”.*





# Atlas-ti & Photo: Thematic Analysis (An Example)



Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Attride-Stirling (2001: 387) writes: “Thematic analysis seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes”.



# Conclusion

- Photographic evidence can be used as a vital data in qualitative social research
- With the help of Atlas-ti 5.0, social scientists can carry out more rapid, rigorous, and in-depth data analysis using an innovative approach of using different forms of qualitative data, such as audio, video recordings as well as photographic evidence together under the same hermeneutic unit; thus bringing richer evidence in the data analysis.
- With the advent of new technologies, qualitative research is witnessing a remarkable evolution within the social research discourses (Rambaree, 2007).

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Thank You