How to evaluate qualitative data

…and how to get started tomorrow

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background

then

HOCHSCHULE DER MEDIEN

Media Economics & Electronic Media

KTH VETENSKAP OCH KONST

Media Management

now

PH Ludwigsburg University of Education

Media Sociology/Anthropology

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tops

1. The soundness of qualitative data (as opposed to quantitative data)

2. Approaching qualitative data analysis - focus: computer aided content analysis

3. How to get started with CAQDA tomorrow

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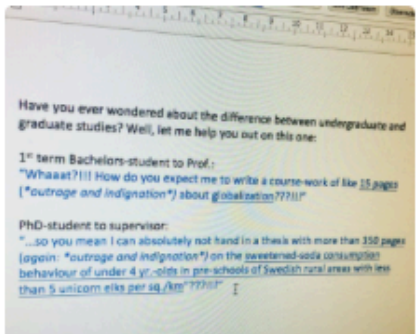
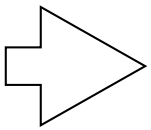


The soundness of qualitative data

the *quality* of qualitative research (vs. quantitative research)

„Qualitative research provides
different kinds of insights by
employing different sampling logics
and different methods.“



not *generally* better. certainly not worse.
just different.

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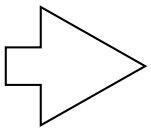

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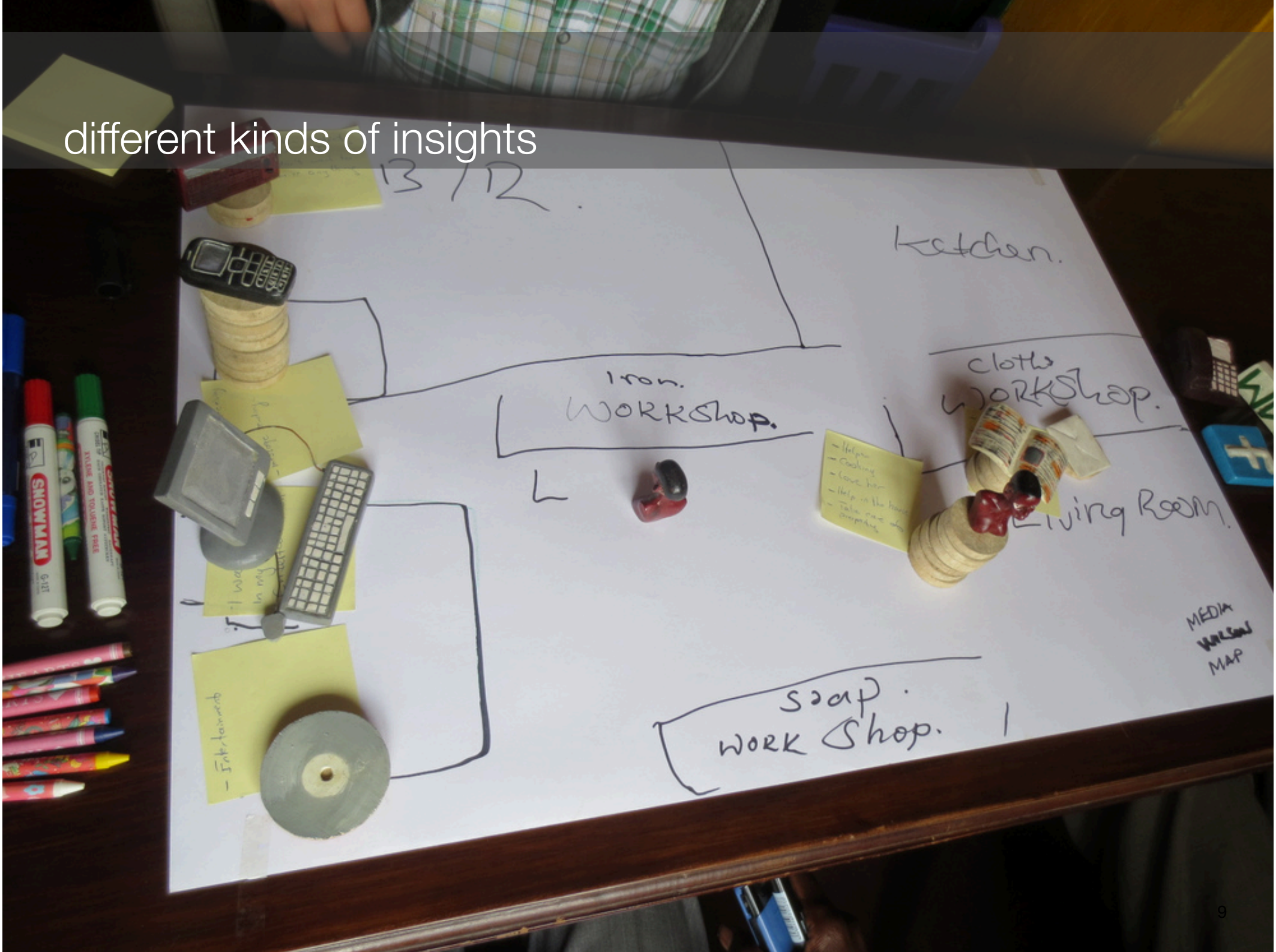

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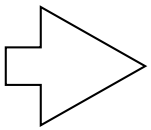

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different sample sizes: how large is ‚large enough'?

Sample Size

I get letters. I get calls. "Is 10 a large enough sample to achieve maximum variation?"

"I started out to interview 20 people for 2 hours each, but I've lost 2 people. Is 18 large enough, or do I have to find 2 more?"

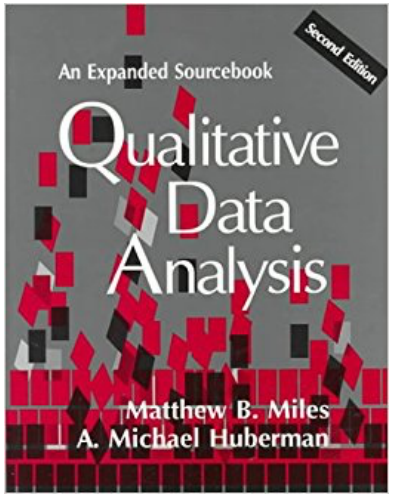
"I want to study just one organization, but interview 20 people in the organization. Is my sample size 1 or 20 or both?"

My universal, certain, and confident reply to these questions is this: "*it depends.*"

There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources.

This issue of sample size is a lot like the problem students have when they are assigned an essay to write.

Student: " How long does the paper have to be?"
Instructor: "Long enough to cover the assignment.
Student: "But how many pages?"
Instructor: "Enough pages to do justice to the subject – no more, no less."



Miles & Huberman (1994)

RULE OF THUMB:
Stop sampling when by and large no new significant insights arise (or when time and budget constraints dictate to stop)

different sampling logics/strategies: some good options

What is it you seek?

Breadth?

- different cases/people
- extreme/deviant cases/people
- disconfirming/exceptional cases/people

Depth?

- typical cases/people
- intense cases/people
- certain/specific cases/people

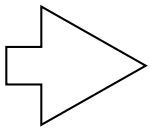
Quant: is my sample representative of the larger population (i.e. random/‚normal distribution‘)?

Qual: how well does my sample allow me to answer the questions/ problem I have?

Content analysis - computer aided

What is Content Analysis?

- A very versatile and flexible method of qualitative data analysis
  - With or without computer assistance
  - Varying degrees of sophistication
  - Text-data (focus groups, tweets, …), images, video, observation notes, etc.
  - Breaks down text/data into bits of text, chunks of data, themes
  - Makes these themes comparable, sortable, workable
  - Helps moving beyond ‚impressionistic' analysis – i.e. merely *browsing through transcripts and taking some notes* or *listening to interview recordings a little*



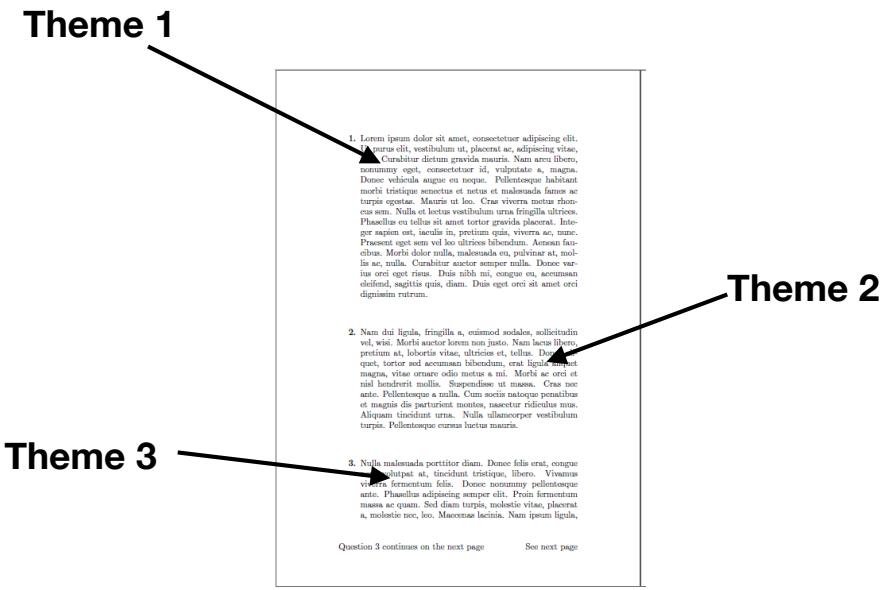
Basic principle: CODING

Two basic principles of coding (researching themes): deductive ! and inductive ?

none of these is *better* - which inroad to take will depend on your problem/question

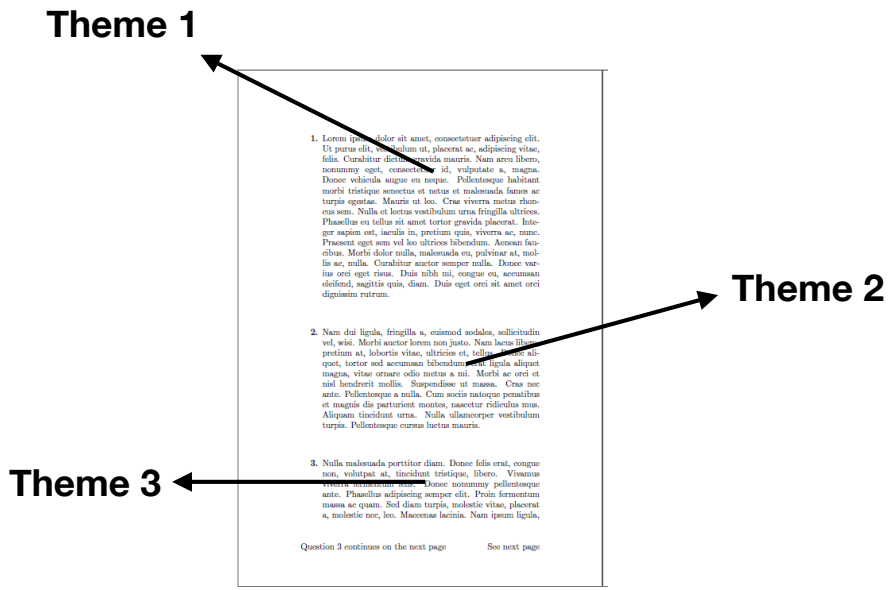
!

APPLY – you already know what is relevant/have the themes - and wanna know its characteristics



?

LET EMERGE – you have rather vague ideas and are still exploring and looking for what is relevant



And what is the exact use of coding? Coding lets you…

- …see patterns in your data (similarities, differences, correlations…)
- …relate bits of data with one another
- …create data-based personas
- …create data-based target group-profiles/milieus
- …systematically analyze qualitative data sets

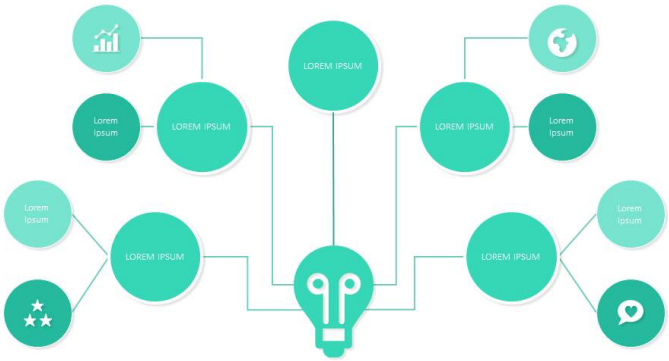
How to get started tomorrow

How to get started on qualitative content analysis tomorrow

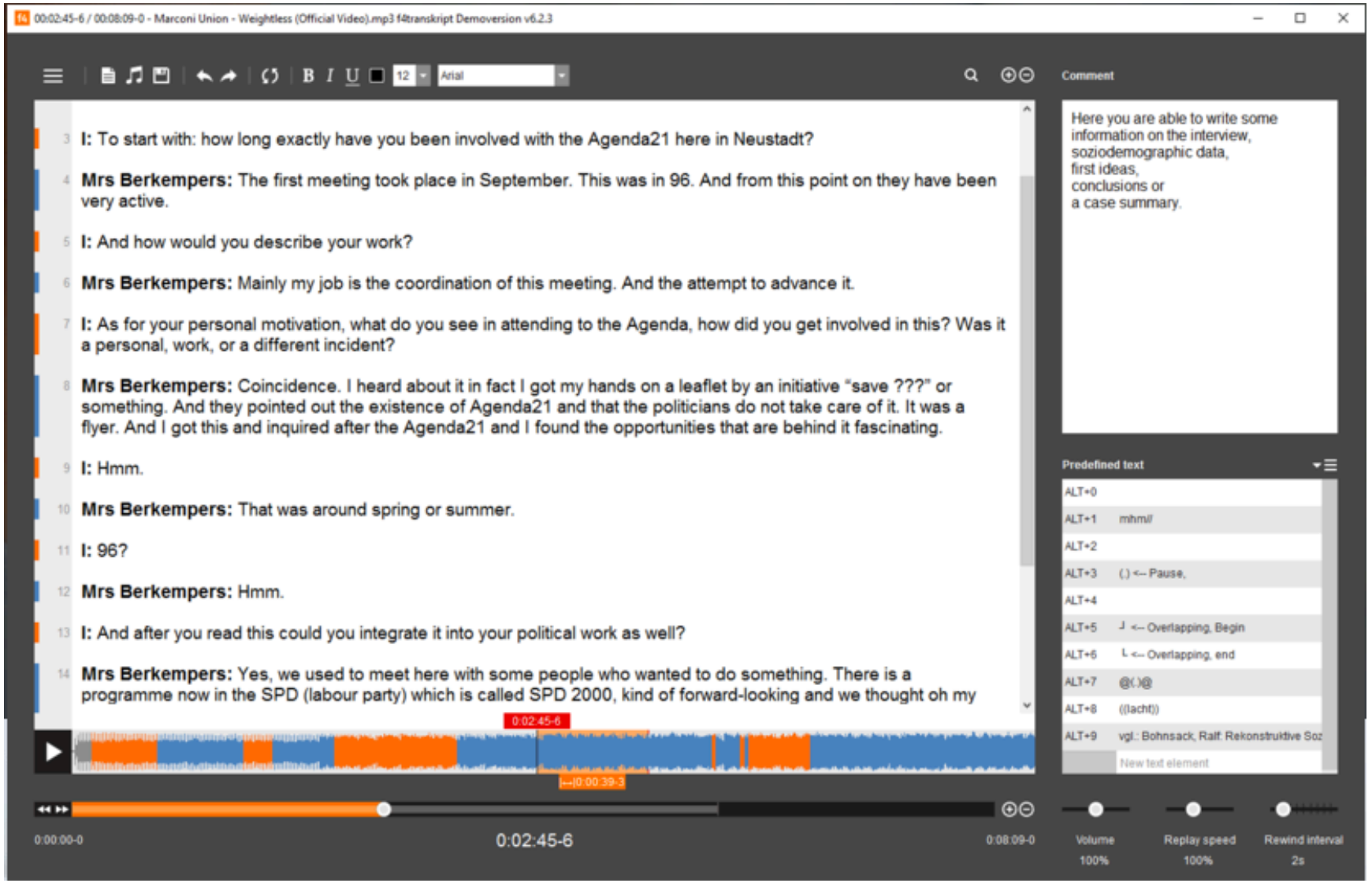
1. **Transcribe**!

2. **Code**!
   (Inductive > Find themes / Deductive > Test/develop/‚flesh-out' themes)

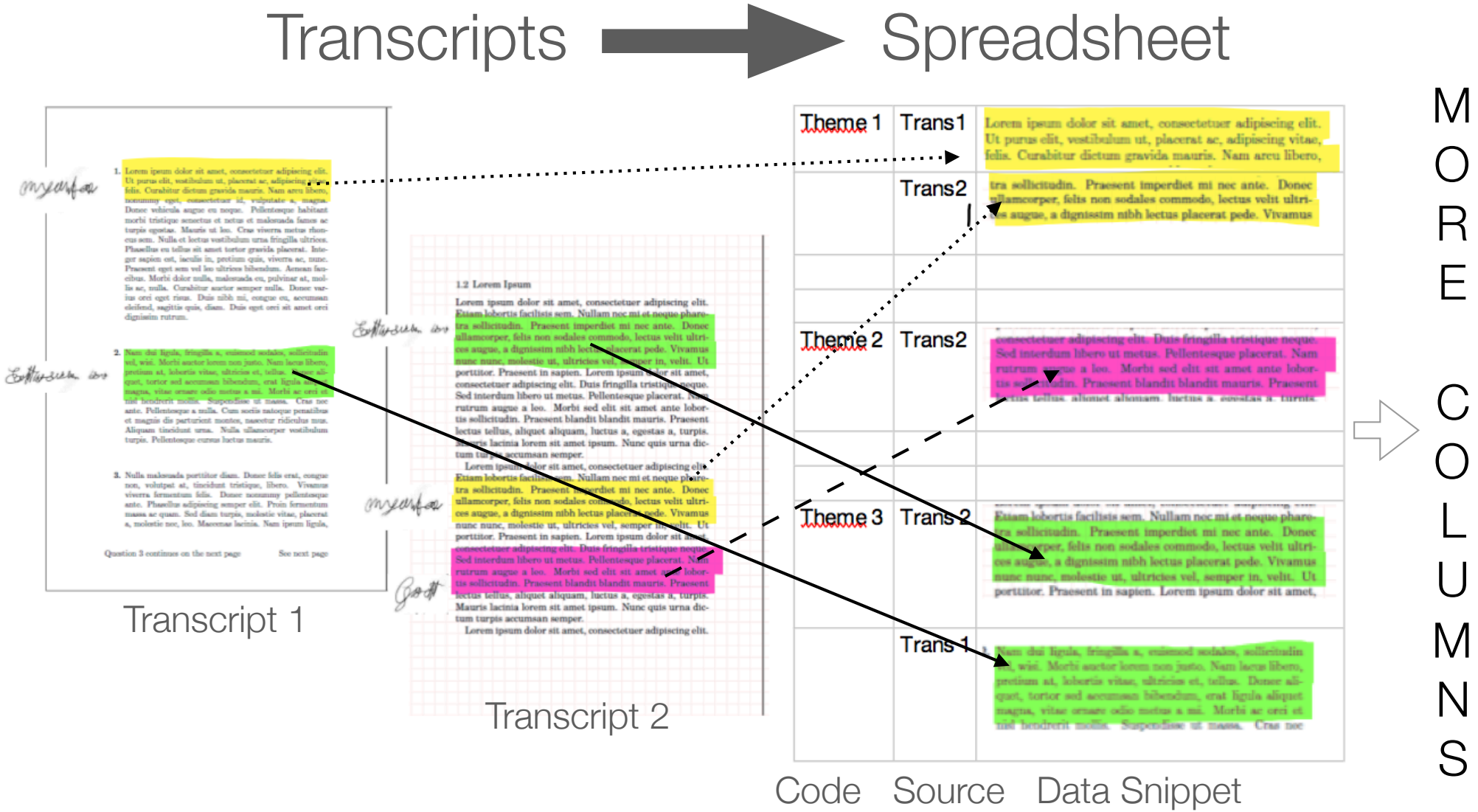
3. **Analyse/work with your themes**!



Get started transcribing in e.g. F4

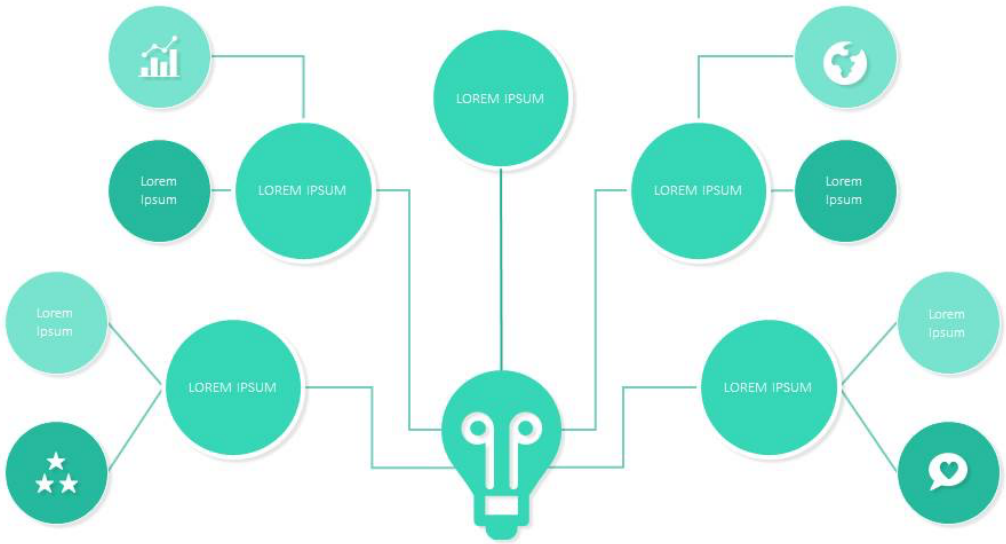


Get started with coding in Excel (moderate data amounts)

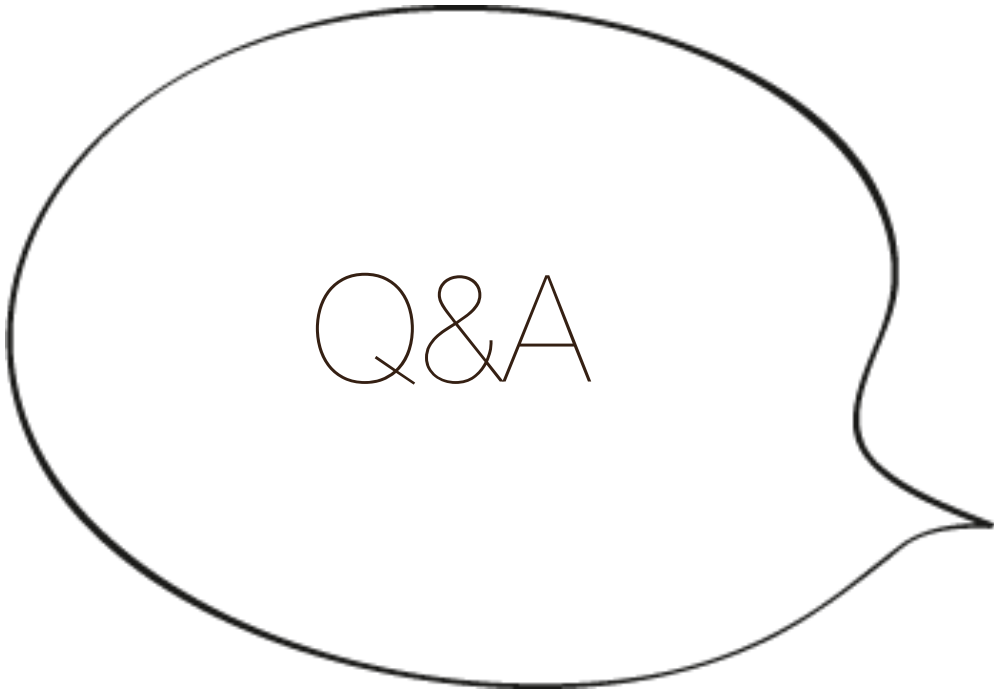


Get started analyzing and working with your themes/codes

- Should themes/codes be condensed or further subdivided?
- What are recurring patterns?
- What correlations become apparent?
- What is unclear/contradictory?
- What was surprising?
- What are implications?
- …



Thank you.



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