ATLAS.ti 5.5: A Qualitative Data Analysis Tool

Part IV: Networks

Once you have established objects (PDs, quotations, codes), you can beginning building a network within ATLAS.ti. The construction of networks enables users to begin developing theoretical models; it is this aspect of the program that helps users explore and build conceptual relationships within the data.

Whether users build networks or not, there is an underlying network in every Hermeneutic Unit (HU) that is created with ATLAS.ti. A **network** is all objects and links within a particular HU; this network exists whether or not a user creates an actual visual representation of it or not. A **network view**, however, is the actual diagram that a user creates of objects and the links between them. The objects themselves are referred to as **nodes**, and their links are known as **relations**.

When a user defines or links two nodes in a network view, they must define the relation between them; therefore, relations play a role in the construction of a theory.

> The concepts (codes) that are linked using relations represent aspects of the problem domain under investigation. On the other hand, the relations used to link these domain concepts are part of the methodology used to analyze the phenomena. As "epistemological primitives" they constitute the main questions that guide the development of a model, a theory. [1]

The flexible nature of ATLAS.ti allows a user to display myriad network views, but there are also limitations. For example, once two codes are linked, they will be linked in every network view within a particular HU. That is not to say that these two codes cannot be linked to other codes, but the defined relationship between them is set. For example, if the code evening is linked to code conversation, then every network view that contains these codes will display this relationship.

The number of links for any one node is called its degree; the second number in parentheses after a node denotes its degree. A node with a large degree is said to have high theoretical density.

Depending on your methodology, the development of networks can vary greatly. Therefore, this tutorial will only demonstrate the HOW, not the WHY, of creating a particular network view.

---

[1] "The Role of Relations," ATLAS.ti User's Guide.

ATLAS.ti 5.5: A Qualitative Data Analysis Tool

Create a network view

1. Go to **Networks** on the main menu.

2. Select **New Network View**.
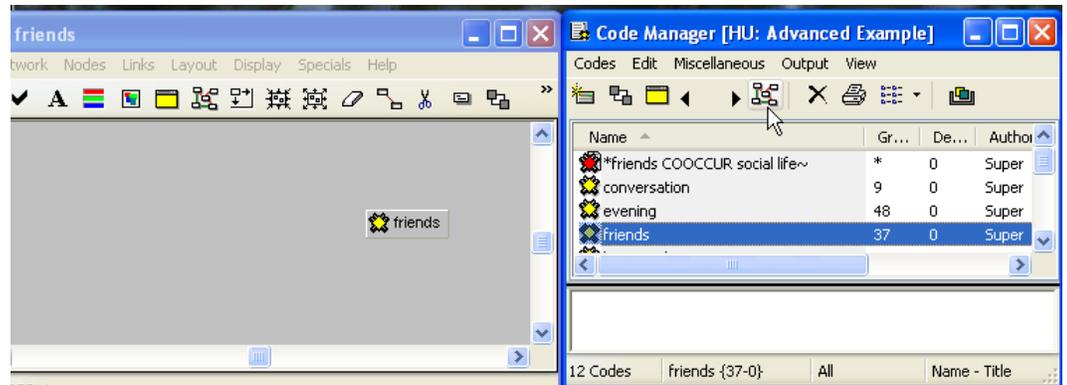
3. Name this network view. Click OK.
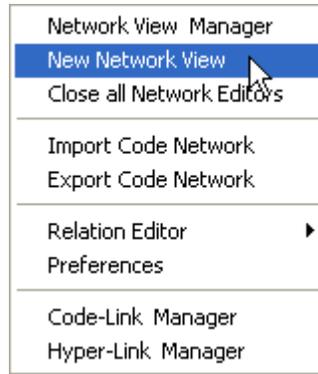
4. You will be given a blank network view.

5. Open the object's submenu; in this example the objects being used are codes.

6. Once you have a blank network view and the object's submenu open, as pictured right, you simply click and drag those codes you want into the blank network view.
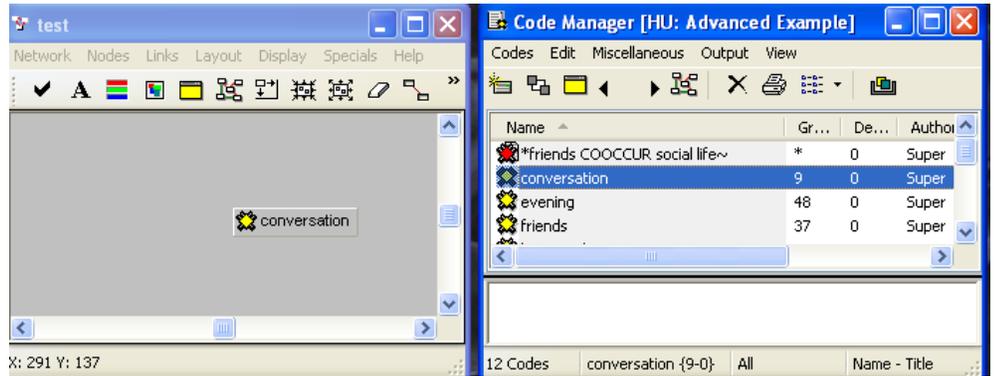
7. The nodes (codes) will now appear in the network view.

8. Alternatively, you can select an object in the manager. Press the network view button, and the object will appear in a new network view window.
By default, ATLAS.ti will name the network view the name of the object. In this example, the object's name is friends so the network view is named friends as well.

9. At this point, you can begin to build a visual representation that can be manipulated and changed throughout the theory-building process by defining the relationships between objects.