

## **OnlinePLUS – supplementary material**

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### **4.5 Data analysis**

Data analysis was guided by the overall objective of finding out for the eleven actors in my sample how their summit communication strategies were shaped, i.e. by which factors they were influenced. In line with the methodological approach of structured, focused comparison, this entailed identifying for each of the actors what role the hypothesized factors in my conceptual model played and if there were additional factors that can be viewed as possessing influence on strategic communication decisions. This was to be compared across all actors. Taking into account the second methodological approach of process-tracing, the analysis also had to be sensitive towards dynamics emerging from summit proceedings and interactions (i.e. short-term changes to actors' communication strategies).

Above all, this analytical process was based on the transcripts of all interviews and resorted to qualitative content analysis, which was carried out with the help of QDA (qualitative data analysis) software. The characteristics of this method and the way in which I used it are described below (see 4.5.2). My open observations from the summit, which I collected in a research diary (see 4.4.2), were drawn on for contextualizing the insights stemming from the interviews, and both types of findings are presented in an integrated fashion throughout the empirical chapters. Observatory findings were particularly important for describing the setting and infrastructure of the summit (see section 5.2) and for confirming information that interviewees had stated regarding publicly visible communication activities. The collection of public and internal PR documents that I compiled over the course of the summit (see 4.4.2) was used for similar reasons. The idea was to validate whether what PR professionals said (captured by interviewing) or did (captured by open observation) was reflected by their internal memos (where available) and external PR output. Instead of making these documents subject to a separate content analysis whose findings could stand alone, I hence used them for enriching and validating the information attained by the interviews. This demonstrates the status of semi-standardized interviewing as my core method of data collection.

#### **4.5.1 Transcription**

'Transcription' refers to the transfer of verbal, and maybe also nonverbal, communication contained in audio or video material into written text (Kuckartz, 2010, p. 38; Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr, 2009, p. 161). While content analyses do not necessarily have to be based on written text but are also suitable for audiovisual and other material, working with written text

makes the analysis more convenient and transparent. Regarding the technicalities of transcription, Flick (2006, p. 288) and Kuckartz (2010, p. 41) agree that no widely shared transcription ‘standards’ exist. Instead, various sets of rules coexist, which differ mainly in their preciseness, or degree of detail. A dividing line runs between linguistic transcriptions, which are often very exact and incorporate language characteristics like dialect, loudness, or facial expressions, and transcriptions in the social sciences, where such contextual details do not matter as much and the language can be made subject to some streamlining. As a matter of fact, for the social sciences, Flick (2006, p. 289) even warns of “some kind of fetishism”, where transcription is conducted with degrees of complexity and meticulousness that are not warranted by research objectives: “It seems more reasonable to transcribe only as much and only as exactly as is required by the research question” (p. 290). This does not only save valuable time but can also facilitate the analysis, since “the message and the meaning of what was transcribed are sometimes concealed rather than revealed in the differentiation of the transcription and the resulting obscurity of the protocols produced” (ibid.). The exact rules of transcription should hence be set by the researcher alone – with a close look at what kind of text showing what degree of detail is needed for analysis.

In this study, transcription roughly followed the rather simple set of rules developed by Kuckartz, Dresing, Rädiker, and Stefer (2007, p. 27), which I extended comprehensively. The general idea was to produce written word-for-word replications of the interviews, while at the same time mildly streamlining the language for the sake of reading comfort. This meant, e.g., omitting repetitions, stammer, and typical fillers like ‘well’, ‘I mean’, or ‘basically’. Contextual details, like length of breaks, tone of voice, or changes in the setting, were not transcribed, except for influences to the interview situation that triggered a response from any of the two speakers (e.g. the serving of coffee). Obvious paralinguistic, such as laughter, sighing etc., were included in the transcripts (see the appendices for the complete set of rules).

Transcription comprised three phases: Firstly, rough transcripts, i.e. in not yet streamlined form, were produced for each interview. Due to the enormous amount of time needed for transcribing, the services of an English-language transcription service were used for parts of the material. The interviews transcribed by myself (using the software ‘f4’) included all those protected by special confidentiality agreements or featuring off-the-record passages. In the second phase, the rough transcripts were carefully checked against the original audio files and carefully adjusted to transcription rules. Thirdly, all transcripts were read once more and smaller formatting and spelling errors corrected. All in all, transcription turned over twelve hours of audio recording into more than 220 transcript pages.

#### 4.5.2 *Qualitative content analysis*

In the most general sense, content analysis can be described as an empirical research method providing for systematic and replicable descriptions of texts’ content and formal attributes – often conducted for the purpose of making inferences to texts’ contexts (Früh, 2007, p. 27; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). In line with its origin within the quantitative paradigm, the method was initially only about quantifying certain content qualities, i.e. – in its simplest form – about

counting the frequencies of selected attributes of a text (Gläser and Laudel, 2007, p. 198). Such approach requires a preset understanding of what to look for in a given text, i.e. which aspects to count or to measure. This procedure lacks suitability for more explorative projects.

Recent decades, however, have seen the method's integration into qualitative methodology, facilitated especially by Mayring's (1983) introduction of a 'qualitative content analysis'. His main proposal was to base the development of categories (whose purpose is to measure or capture those attributes of a text that are of interest to a researcher) on a prior inductive reading of the material (Mayring, 2003, p. 75; Gläser and Laudel, 2007, p. 198). Once these categories are formulated and sufficiently tested, the coding frame should remain unchanged for the duration of the analysis (p. 199). Generally, qualitative content analysis can follow three distinct paths (Mayring, 2003, pp. 59-99; Flick, 2006, pp. 313-314):

#### DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

In (1) *summarizing content analysis*, texts are divided up in analytic units, or 'building blocks', and each unit's content is paraphrased. Through several rounds of generalization and reduction, the totality of paraphrases is eventually transformed into a streamlined, concise synopsis of the text. In (2) *explicative content analysis*, rather than abstracting from a text (like in the previous form), it is enriched and contextualized with other information that may originate from other parts of the same text or even totally different sources, such as encyclopedias. In (3) *structuring content analysis*, a text, again split up in building blocks, is measured against particular categories and, for example, coded as representing a certain type (out of a preselected set of types) or measured as constituting a certain degree (on a preselected scale). This final form comes closest to quantitative content analysis.

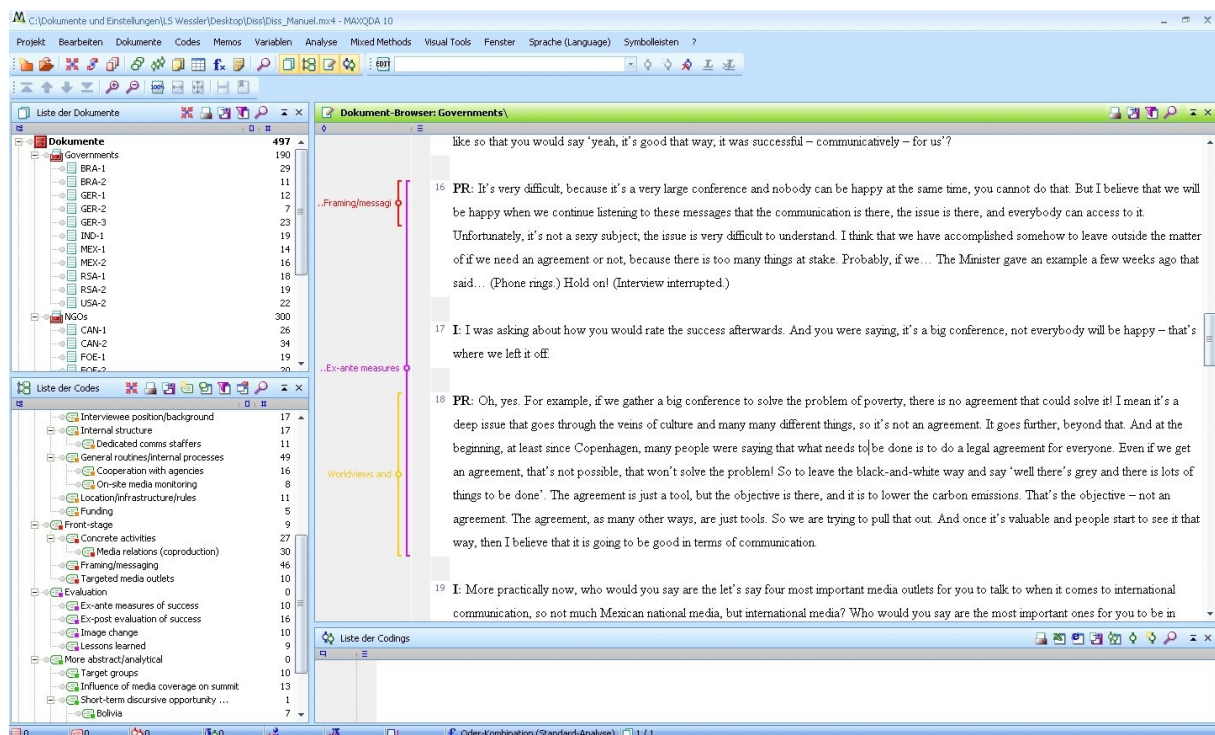
Based on Mayring's archetypal forms of qualitative content analysis, other techniques utilizing categories for text analysis have been developed in the social sciences, some of which were explicitly made for computer-aided qualitative data analysis (QDA). I oriented my analysis of the interview transcripts towards a procedure proposed by Kuckartz (2010), which he termed "thematic coding" (pp. 84-92). It features the deductive development of categories, their testing, and the addition of inductive ones in a first round of coding. Subsequently, the coding frame is finalized and a second round of coding carried out. However, while Kuckartz seems to regard the first round of coding only as a pretest based on minor parts of the material, during which deductively created categories might be adjusted in response to inductive inspirations, I worked through the *entire* corpus in this phase and looked out for aspects that were of interest for this research and deserved own categories. I describe my steps of analysis in more detail below (see 4.5.2.2) but beforehand briefly clarify the convenience of using computer software in such an endeavor.

##### 4.5.2.1 Computer-aided qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis essentially is about immersing oneself in the material. Especially if the research also entails elements of 'exploring' the data – and not just quickly coding one

or two formal categories – , this becomes a complex task: Categories have to be developed and maybe later rearranged or relabeled, certain passages in the material trigger ad-hoc ideas or interpretations that should be saved right away, a particular piece of information at one place in the material should be linked to another, and so forth. All of this could be done by hand, but it becomes more convenient using specialized software.

While respective computer programs provide for a multitude of functions very helpful in organizing and working through textual material, they do not guide users through a fixed process of analysis. “QDA software does not do qualitative analysis itself or in an automatic way like SPSS can do a statistical operation or factor analysis. QDA software is more like a word processor, which does not write your text but makes it somewhat easier for you to write a text” (Flick, 2006, p. 343). Hence, the user should know prior to the analysis for what purposes she or he requires the assistance. Computer-aided qualitative content analysis is not a method by itself, but just a particular way of carrying out whatever form of qualitative content analysis one prefers.

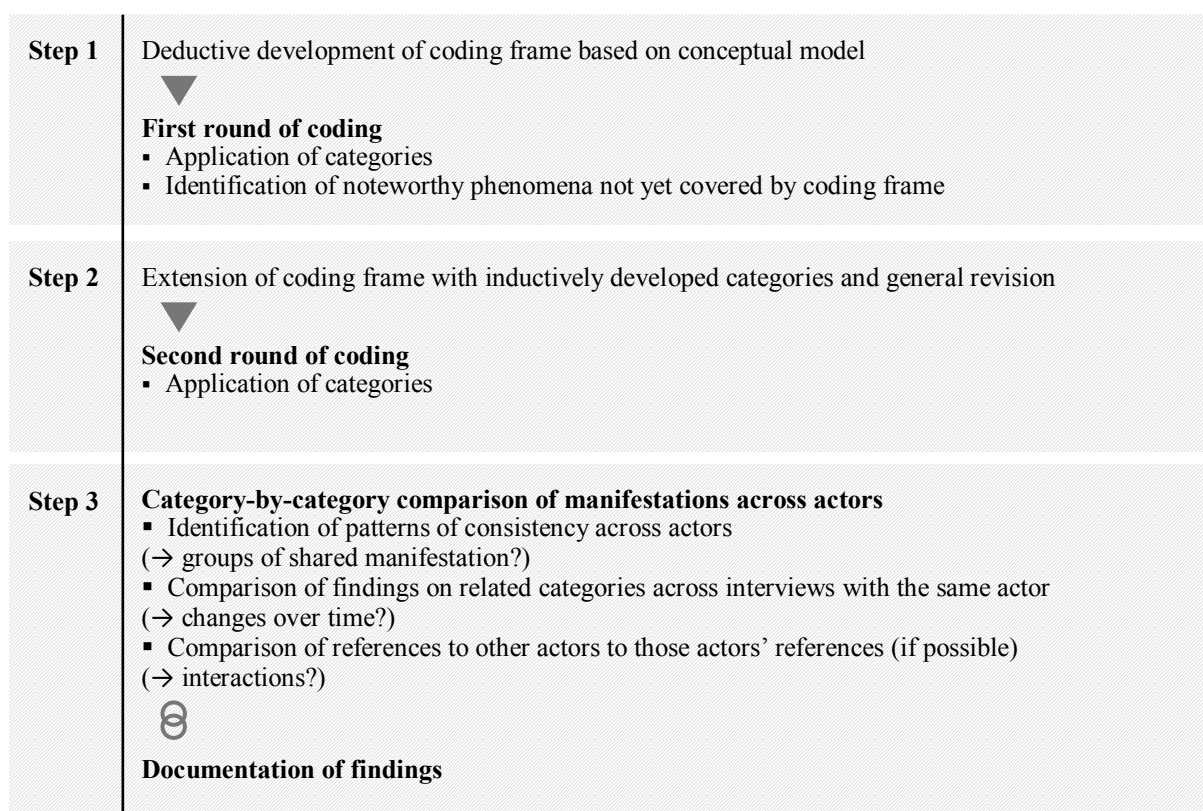


**Figure 4.3:** Screenshot of MAXQDA software during data analysis

For this research, I used the MAXQDA software package for conducting the analysis. After importing all interview transcripts, the software allowed me to build a color-coded hierarchy of categories and apply those to any passage of the material (see figure 4.3). Passages could be attributed to multiple categories, which could also be easily fused, renamed, or relocated within the hierarchy. Also, the attachment of free-text memos to any part of the material was useful. These functions constituted the toolbox for my analysis.

#### 4.5.2.2 Steps of analysis

My analysis included three distinct steps: In the first one, I developed a system of categories, or coding frame, incorporating the factors hypothesized to have an influence on the choice of communication strategy. I made sure that each of the factors was matched by a category and that also other aspects touched upon by my interview questions were covered by this preliminary coding frame. The categories constituted broad labels, like ‘messaging strategy’ or ‘lesson learned’, and basically provided concise content descriptions of the passage they were assigned to. Subsequently, all transcripts were read carefully and coded with these categories. The above-mentioned ‘analytic unit’, which determines on which level (word, sentence, paragraph etc.) categories are assigned (Flick, 2006, p. 313), was, unsurprisingly, the individual unit of meaning, i.e. the particular passage of an interview referring from beginning to end to a particular aspect.



**Figure 4.4:** Steps of qualitative content analysis conducted in this study

As part of this first round of coding, aspects that were not yet covered by a category but of interest for the analysis were also noted down. Through this element of inductive exploration, the coding frame could then be extended. Also, categories that in the first round of coding had turned out to require slight reformulation could be reworked at this point. The outcome was an extensive coding frame whose deductive categories had already been tested once and comprehensively supplemented with inductive ones. (The final coding frame can be found in the appendices.) Based on these categories, the entire material was coded once again as a second step of analysis.

The third step of analysis was then about comparing cases category by category (assisted by a corresponding functionality in MAXQDA) and thereby detecting patterns of consistency across actors (see also tables 6.2 and 6.3). If on a given category, similar manifestations were detected across actors, they were clustered into groups of shared manifestation. In the end, it was checked whether some actors were bound by more groups of shared manifestation than others. Special attention was paid to differences between interviews with the same actor that involved related categories, such as ‘ex-ante measures of success’ in the first interview and ‘ex-post evaluation of success’ in the following one. Thereby, changes over time could be detected. Furthermore, interactions between actors were given close scrutiny. This meant that for each actor, all other actors that were referred to in the interviews were coded and the interviews with those actors (if part of my sample) then checked for reciprocal references. In sum, this third step of analysis, which required the largest amount of time and was closely intertwined with the writing of the empirical chapters, was devoted to identifying patterns and dynamics in the choice of communication strategy and exploring networks of interactions and references across actors. This overall procedure (see figure 4.4) delivered the findings presented in the following chapters.

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