

3I – A Guide to Presenting Qualitative Data

Numerical data naturally lends itself to a wide range of different data presentation techniques and good researchers exploit a large number of these within any particular study. It is tempting to ignore the qualitative data of an investigation, such as interview transcripts and observations, until the analysis stage as many researchers feel that the 'wordy' bit of the data cannot be presented in any way other than as a copy of the literal words used.

In fact, qualitative data can, and should, be presented in a number of interesting and attractive ways.

Quotation Banks

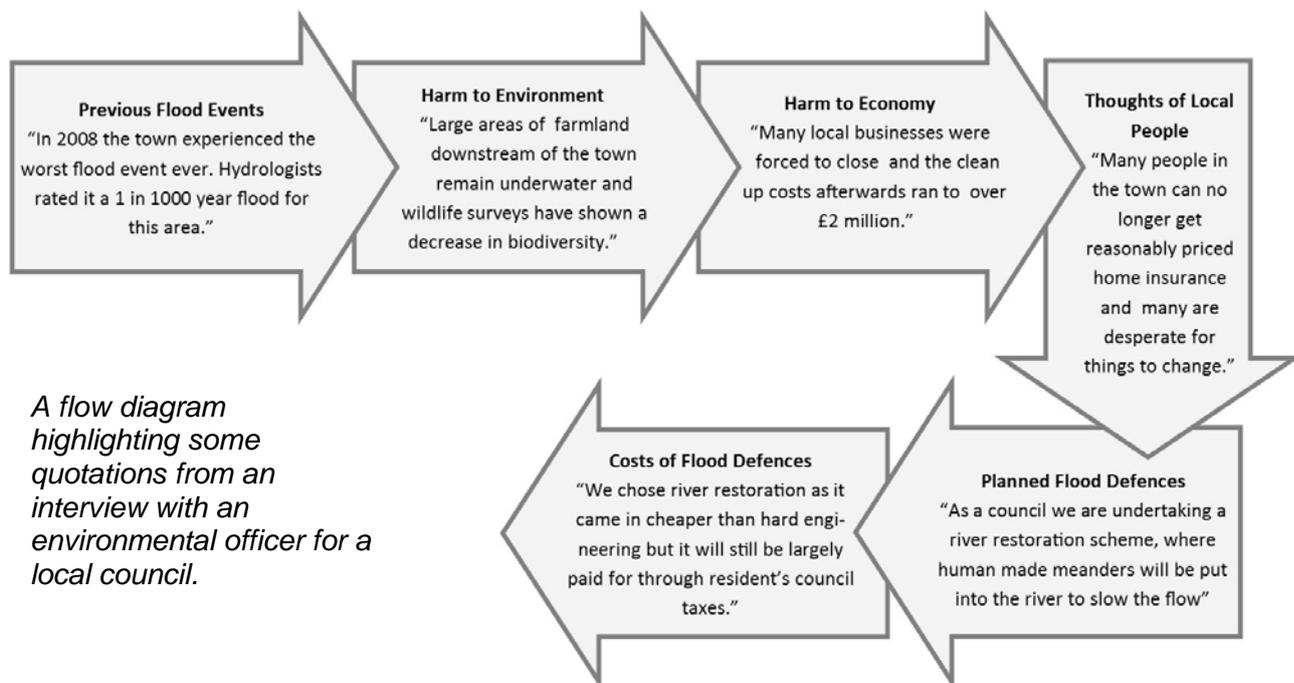
Creating a transcript of any interviews that are taken or oral histories that are recorded should provide the researcher with a number of relevant quotations, each of which can be used as a piece of data. By organising the quotations into themes or categories, a quotation bank can be created for each issue or idea and organised graphically on the page.



A quote bank about the street furniture in the centre of Town A

Flow Diagrams and Mind Maps

A good interview will be one that has a narrative running through it rather than a series of random questions. Therefore, it is possible to create a flow diagram or mind map showing how the interview has evolved, and with a series of quotations or observations rather than a whole transcript of the interview.



A flow diagram highlighting some quotations from an interview with an environmental officer for a local council.

Equally, personal observations can be mind-mapped, overlaying a true map or an interpretive representation of the space in question.



A map of some of the researcher's observations of a town.

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Word Clouds

An interview, a recording of an oral history, or a questionnaire where the questions require an open answer can generate huge volumes of descriptive words and texts which can be difficult to analyse. Creating a word cloud out of adjectives can be a useful graphical way of seeing where a consensus of opinion may lie. A word cloud presents the most frequently used adjectives as the largest in the graphic and those used less frequently as far smaller.

There are a number of free online packages which can create word clouds with relative ease. Most need the researcher to simply type the data (in this case adjectives) into the programme and it will automatically generate a word cloud which can be downloaded.



A word cloud showing how local residents described the stream.