TITLE: Adventures with NVivo: Analysing Ethnographic Results and the Particularistic Aspect of Node Saturation

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at a researcher's experience of analysing results from an ethnographic study of corporate governance in a developing country. I collected three forms of data: interview questionnaire, media articles and participant observation. Using a computer assisted qualitative analysis data program called NVivo, this paper looks at the 'adventure' or experience of analysing the data and the particularistic concept of node saturation that emerged whilst using the program to analyse the data. The use of NVivo has allowed for a thicker and richer discovery and analysis of the data for this researcher.

KEYWORDS: NVivo, Qualitative Research, Ethnography, Nodes, Data Analysis

1.0 INTRODUCTION

My research applied an ethnographic style approach to investigate the following research question: what is the impact of corporate governance reforms in Philippine institutions and firms. My unit of analysis was corporate governance institutions and firms. I collected data using a triangulated method of interview questionnaire, media articles and participant observation. I analysed the data using the computer program, NVivo. The following table summarises my research methodology

<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>

2.0 ETHNOGRAPHIC METHOD

According to Angrosino, "Ethnography is the art and science of describing a human group – its institutions, interpersonal behaviours, material productions, and beliefs." (2007: 14) and its researchers are "primarily concerned with the routine, everyday lives of the people they study." (2007: 15). Furthermore, ethnographic methods are used when "the social issues or behaviours are not yet clearly understood." (Angrosino 2007: 22).

The approach I have taken fits in the ethnographic style as I wanted to find out the meaning of corporate governance to people and understand the context of corporate governance reform in the country. Having a qualitative research approach allowed me to study the phenomenon of corporate governance in the Philippines in situ. This research follows Geertz's (1973) 'thick description' which attaches importance to the details of actions and events that provide meaning and understanding – in this research, of how corporate governance was shaped informed and introduced in the country

3.0 DATA COLLECTION

This section looks at the data collection methods that were applied in my research. The following research techniques were used: interviews, document analysis of media articles and other text, and participant observation. The figure below is a visual representation of how I saw these three sources of data working together to support my chosen methodology:

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

Interviews

Interviews were the primary source of my data collection during my field research in Manila. This method fitted in with the ethnographic approach I applied in my research as interviewing is "inextricably and unavoidably, historically, politically and contextually bound." (Fontana & Frey 2005: 695). As Angrosino beautifully describes it, the ethnographic interview is "a kind of partnership in which the informed insider helps the researcher develop the inquiry as it goes along." (2007: 42)

My interview data provides the validity to the phenomenon I observed during my research – it is a collection of people's experiences and views of corporate governance and personal interaction with my interviewees. For those companies/organisations and their representatives (all senior management executives and/or board members) who did agree to be interviewed, the interviewees were done face-to-face that lasted at a minimum, an hour long to three hours while a few wanted the interview to be conducted by email due to reasons of geography and time. Overall, 40 interviews were conducted with 60 representatives. Most face-to-face interviewees were conducted with one or two present. In one particular case, I had a lunchtime interview conducted with 9 representatives from one organisation and this was my one sample of a focus group type of interview. After the interview, I typed up my interview notes the same day to ensure the data was still fresh in my mind. Overall, an interview transcript was an average 10 pages long (1.5 space, A4 size) with the shortest being 7 pages and the longest being 18 pages. If there were further queries that emanated from the interview, further contact was achieved through email, phone or mobile phone texting. The last method was a particularistic Philippine cultural trait as mobile texting was heavily used in the country given the country's lack of landline access and paucity of internet connections.

Media Articles and Other Text

Supplementing my interview data were my secondary sources of data: media articles and other text. Like interviews, documentary research is heavily used in qualitative research (Silverman 2006) as they are "a ubiquitous feature of social life." (Gibson & Brown 2009: 65).

While in Manila, I collected newspaper clippings or media articles I deemed relevant and related to my research. Over the four months, I became rather methodical and formed a habit of reading the daily broadsheets then cutting the most useful. For my newspaper articles, a total of 892 articles were collected and they were coded in NVivo. The bulk of these articles were collected between June 1, 2007 and 31 August 2007. The articles were hard copy versions from the main Manila newspapers and they were cut and pasted in scrapbooks that eventually reached two volumes which I carried back with me upon return to Sydney. After my in-country field trip, some articles were collected afterwards in light of geopolitical issues in the Philippines and these articles were saved electronically.

Participant Observation

Finally, the last technique I used was me as a participant-observer. This technique is not a research method but rather "a strategy that facilitates data collection in the field." (Bernard 1988: 150). Concurring with Angrosino's (2007) sentiment on the participant observation technique, I conducted my research both as a subjective participant and objective observer. I kept a diary during my stay and wrote structured pre and post-interview observation notes. With each face-to-face interview I had a preamble which described the circumstance of the interview (e.g. how was s/he accessed), my observations of the venue, the time and length an interview took (brief, comprehensive), the behaviour of my interviewees during the interview (open, closed, comfortable, uncomfortable defensive, encouraging etc) and my own feelings as a researcher after an interview (elation, disappointment, able to establish a rapport with the interviewee or not).

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

In managing, organising and analysing my interview, media and other text data, I used a computer program called NVivo. As I was working from an ethnographic approach, I principally used the program in a code and retrieve manner though the program has features that extend to include building sophisticated models and conceptual networks. Gibbs (2002) and Bazely (2007) provide a comprehensive account of working with the program. The screenshot below shows the main page of NVivo:

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 1 HERE>

I customised the folders under Sources (on the left hand side) by creating categories of Interviews, Literature Review, Media, Meetings and Notes. Documents under this folder were coded line by line. Under Memo, I added folders on Future Research, Interview Observations, Journal, Thematic Notes and Summaries. They form supplementary information and I did not code them but referred to them and created notes to jot down ideas as I was coding the main Sources documents. My approach in the data analysis of my interview and text data was I had a more bottom-up approach in exploring the

data. What I found useful in the NVivo was the ability to create nodes. “Nodes are containers to hold ideas, and represent concepts or categories” (Madden 2008: 16) and they were invaluable in my research. My node-heavy coding allowed me to structure my results in a way that I never thought possible prior to my data analysis stage. My use of nodes heavily influenced how my results were written up. I did not create ‘a priori’ nodes though I was guided by overarching themes in my data. I initially thought I’d take the top-bottom up approach and create several nodes in which to code but realised early on that this way of coding did not suit my work style. The inductive inquiry extended into the data analysis. As I analysed each line and passage of text, I allowed several definitions and perspectives for the data which again, finds more affinity in the grounded theoretical approach of qualitative analysis (Charmaz 2006). However, I did not lose sight of my initial research themes and the use of NVivo allows the combination of both deductive and inductive approach to qualitative data analysis.

Node Saturation in NVivo

As I had combined inductive and deductive methods of inquiry, the latter had given me a useful list of concepts that was already present to test my hypotheses and therefore code my data as appropriate. I was “bringing a strong theoretical basis” to my research and as Bazely suggests, in this form of “*a priori* or theoretically derived codes”, a researcher using NVivo generally ought to:

> ”analyse your research question and identify from within it every category or concept that is used, knowing that you will need a node for each concept in order to gather (and then relate) data about them.” - (2007:76)

Indeed, most of the text fell in clearly defined ideas that were generated from my hypotheses. However, I did not allow myself to be restricted in my reading of the text. I did not have the problem that Bazely chides deductivists of having as I did not restrict myself or “confine” my reading of the text. Instead, I allowed further interpretations of the data thus generating further development of ideas that went beyond the boundaries of my initial research inquiry but which substantiated it. Where grounded theory emphasises “theory work should continue until data saturation has been achieved” (Gibson & Brown 2009: 27), my approach to the NVivo qualitative data analysis was to saturate each passage of text to the point where I reached “node saturation”. I coded every line from my interviews whereby after I had coded all my primary text, I had categorised to 1077 items. The following historical screenshot shows the nodes that only had one reference and one source which I soon merged with other nodes:

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 2 HERE>

After amalgamation and merging of some nodes that had a singular reference and deletion of some duplication, I had managed to bring it down to 972 working nodes.

In my data analysis, node saturation for me was where every possible theme or category attributed to a statement or sentence was coded. Thus for one line, it was possible to several nodes attached to it. For example, one line of an interview where there were political overtones made by a private included nodes related to the political environment, the situation of the firm, the structure of the firm, relationship with the government and several others. This is a form of "fracturing or slicing data" where the multiplicity "capture what is happening in a single passage of text" (Bazeley 2007: 71)

An example of what I mean by node saturation is the coding I have undertaken in this poignant passage of raw interview data below which I have captured and enlarged as a screenshot from NVivo:

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 3>

The screenshot is divided into three columns – the left hand side shows the Folders of Sources and Memos containing other documents; the middle shows the raw interview data; the right hand side shows the coding stripes that contained the nodes in the interview.

The interviewee wishes for anonymity hence this document is entitled Anon. This passage contains a moment in the interview when off-the-record data was made. Prior to that, the interviewer was explaining the business' relationship with the government which veered into a macroeconomic narrative of the political environment in the country. Text in bold was done by me to emphasise and indicate the importance of that particular data.

In this particular passage, the text was coded to the several nodes (indicated by the coloured stripes) principally to the top level nodes of Presidential appointments and Corruption. Just in the right hand column where the nodes appear, is a strip of line called "Coding Density". It shows how heavily the passage was coded to nodes – the thicker the line, the more nodes it had been coded to. For this particular sentence:

> "The government is corrupt from top-to-to bottom. Change the constitution, change culture. You can't get anything done here, it's all done by facilitation."

hovering my mouse over the coding density, a textbox appears which shows this text was coded to 18 nodes principally to Asian corporate governance, Business strategy, Competition, Corruption (and secondary or sub-category level headings), Culture, Government, Legislation and Political Environment.

Apart from trying to objectively analyse this passage, the other side is this passage - like so many other texts in my interview data - did have a profound effect on me as a researcher. During my

research stay in the Philippines I frequently emailed my supervisor about the distress I felt and unburdening the frustration my interviewees felt about the operations of the country. Undoubtedly the use of NVivo tries to depersonalise the elements that may intrude or 'emotionalise' the integrity of the data but I did want to briefly mention that I wanted to be objective as possible but the compounding effect of such interview text did have an affect on me as a person.

Additionally, I did not make much use of the tree (or hierarchical) function in Nvivo as I found it made the search function much more time consuming for me personally. To find a solution for this, I created free nodes with hierarchies by having a dash or '-' attached to a main node to denote a sub-category or a sub-sub-category.

Thus with the node "Business groups – family", "Business groups" is the main tree/node or category with branches or subcategories forming from it such as "family", "non-family". Thus I created a primary level, then a sub-category level, and a sub-sub-category level.

Below is a tree diagram of the "Business groups" node as an umbrella term encompassing all its sub-sets.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE>

Thus, under the "Business Groups" node, the sub-category of "Family" had a third level which included that encompassed "Banks", "Companies"," Challenges / Weaknesses of" ," Founder", "Related Party Transactions", "Relationship with Government", and "Transition from closed to open."

Having this multiplicity of nodes allowed me to write better as I had structured the nodes, worked and refined them, and thus subsequently identified as to whether it was a main node. Thus for 972 nodes, I had several main nodes. For the main topic of my research, corporate governance was noded 81 times with sub-categories. The most frequently coded corporate governance nodes were awareness, applicability of, reforms, perception of, regulators, and practice.

Coding and Analysing Media Articles

I similarly undertook the same analytical approach towards my media text. In NVivo, an Internal folder called "Media" was created with six internal documents (or items)representing the six newspapers these articles came from: *Business Mirror, Business World, Manila Bulletin, Manila Standard, Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Philippine Star.*

The screenshot below shows the list of newspapers, the number of nodes and the number of references. Most of the articles collected came from three broadsheets: *Business Mirror, Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Business World.*

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 4 HERE>

As the newspaper articles were hard copy versions, it took over a period of 12 months for a summary of each article to be typed, categorised, and dated in NVivo as this was concurrently going on with my data analysis of interviews. A summary was done instead of the entire article transcribed in view of the relevance of the data in the newspaper article and. Inputting the data was time and labour intensive however for these newspaper articles were core of the triangulated methodology I had applied and they substantiated and complemented my interview data.

The next screenshot below shows a Business Mirror (a broadsheet) article called "Fraport's Achilles heel" which was related to the expropriation of a German-built airport terminal in. In NVivo, the article was coded thus: Heading 2 which is in italics and bold text for the date of the article, Heading 3 which is in bold text for the author and title of the newspaper article, and Normal for a summary of the article text:

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 5 HERE>

The text of the article was coded under the major nodes of Capital Markets, Corruption, Foreign Ownership Controls and Investors. Similarly to my interview data, one line in the text was coded to 19 free nodes reproduced in the table below:

<INSERT TABLE 2 HERE>

There was overlap with some categories. For example, a node of Trust was created mostly to relate Philippine society's viewpoint on trust. However, I had also created a trust sub-category attached to the Culture-Business node mainly to code statements of my interviewees where they mentioned trust or which related to the importance of trust in their business interaction. Thus, "Trust" as a concept was important to both business and society. In this particular line in the media article, undermining trust in business (due to expropriation) and undermining trust in society (due to perceptions of corruption) were both applicable. Thus, the line was coded to both nodes.

Another instance where such overlaps occurred is present in the major node of Foreign Ownership Controls (FOC). Under FOC I created a sub-category of "Facilitating corruption". I did not create a sub-category of FOC under the major node of Corruption as FOC was a major node in its own right. In this instance it was about foreign ownership controls facilitating corruption as a foreign investor could not have majority ownership (and therefore control) over its investment. The foreign investor was dependent on the largesse and goodwill of its local partner not to take advantage of its majority ownership in the joint venture. In this case, the foreign investor was sorely disappointed and the case went to arbitration as the terminal was expropriated. Thus, FOC are an important factor in the investment decision of a foreign investor and this was substantiated in my interview data.

NVivo also allows coding stripes for each node hence the multi-coloured stripes below.

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 6 HERE>

This was the time and labour intensive aspect of coding newspapers in NVivo line-by-line but as previously stated, this method allowed the validation of my interview and observation data – that what my interviewees were speaking about had basis in the data I had collected from the fourth estate.

The program allowed auto coding by style heading. This created a tree node file in the program and listed newspaper articles by date. The screenshot below shows the creation of the second-panel from the left called “Tree Nodes” listing articles by date, expanded with a sub-category of authors and the newspaper article titles:

<INSERT SCREENSHOT 7 HERE>

5.0 WRITING UP THE ANALYSED DATA OR RESEARCH FINDINGS

The multiplicity of nodes I had created does bring to mind to the extent I was using a grounded theory methodological approach. Gibson and Brown provides a good summary of the debate between Glaser and Strauss' groundbreaking work on grounded theory (1999 [1967]) and the controversy that followed in Strauss and Corbin (1990) in that Glaser had accused the latter of advocating “the imposition of a priori analytic themes.” (2009:26)

Why did I undertake such node saturation? Perhaps in a way to ensure that I had covered all possible interpretation of such a statement and to ensure I did not overlook the relevance and meaning of the statement. The subtleties of language are such that what is perhaps most important is what is left unsaid. Below is a graphical presentation of a funnel that shows how all the nodes I created in NVivo helped structure the writing of results.

<INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE>

The results focused on the convergence of corporate governance and business families with the additional issue of financing. This graphical representation of a funnel shows how I worked from the macro-level of the multiple nodes to finally produce and finally write up the results relating to business groups and owners of the company.

While I do not recommend this type of node saturation, for my ethnographic approach to this research, this was the way I found best working the data analysis program. Using NVivo helped clarify the data I had collected by providing a more objective way of seeing it.

Node saturation was a time-consuming aspect of my research that took some 14 months to complete but I had saturated the data to all the possible nodes that I cannot be helped but be satisfied that I had covered every interpretation and meaning of each line of an interview.

6.0 CLOSING REMARK

In undertaking an ethnographic approach to my research and using NVivo to analyse my data (including node saturation with my data), I have been able to see my data in a multiplicity of ways that would never have been possible had I not used the program. The use of NVivo has allowed for a thicker and richer discovery and analysis of the data for this researcher and has allowed writing up my findings in a more structured manner.

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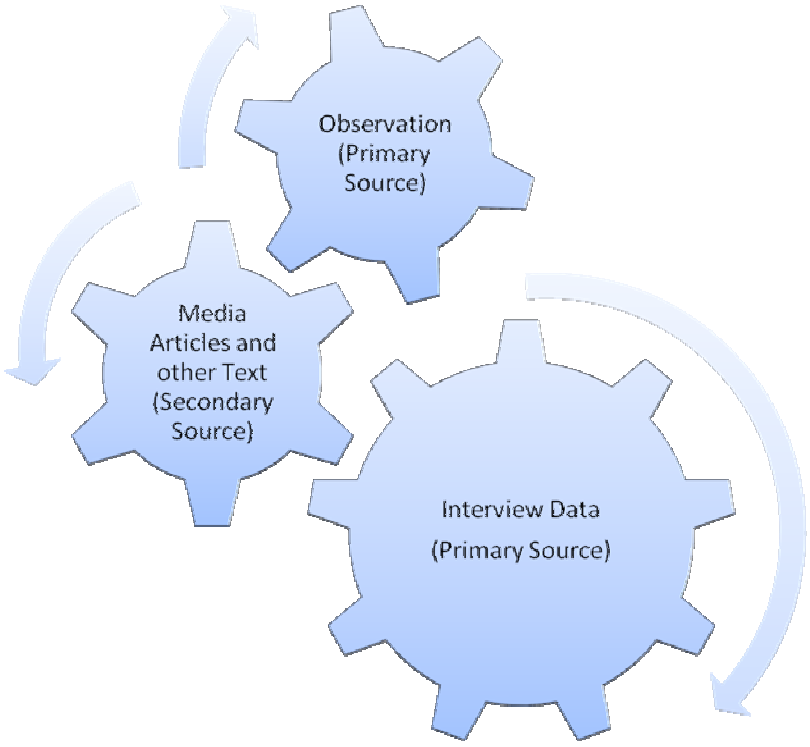
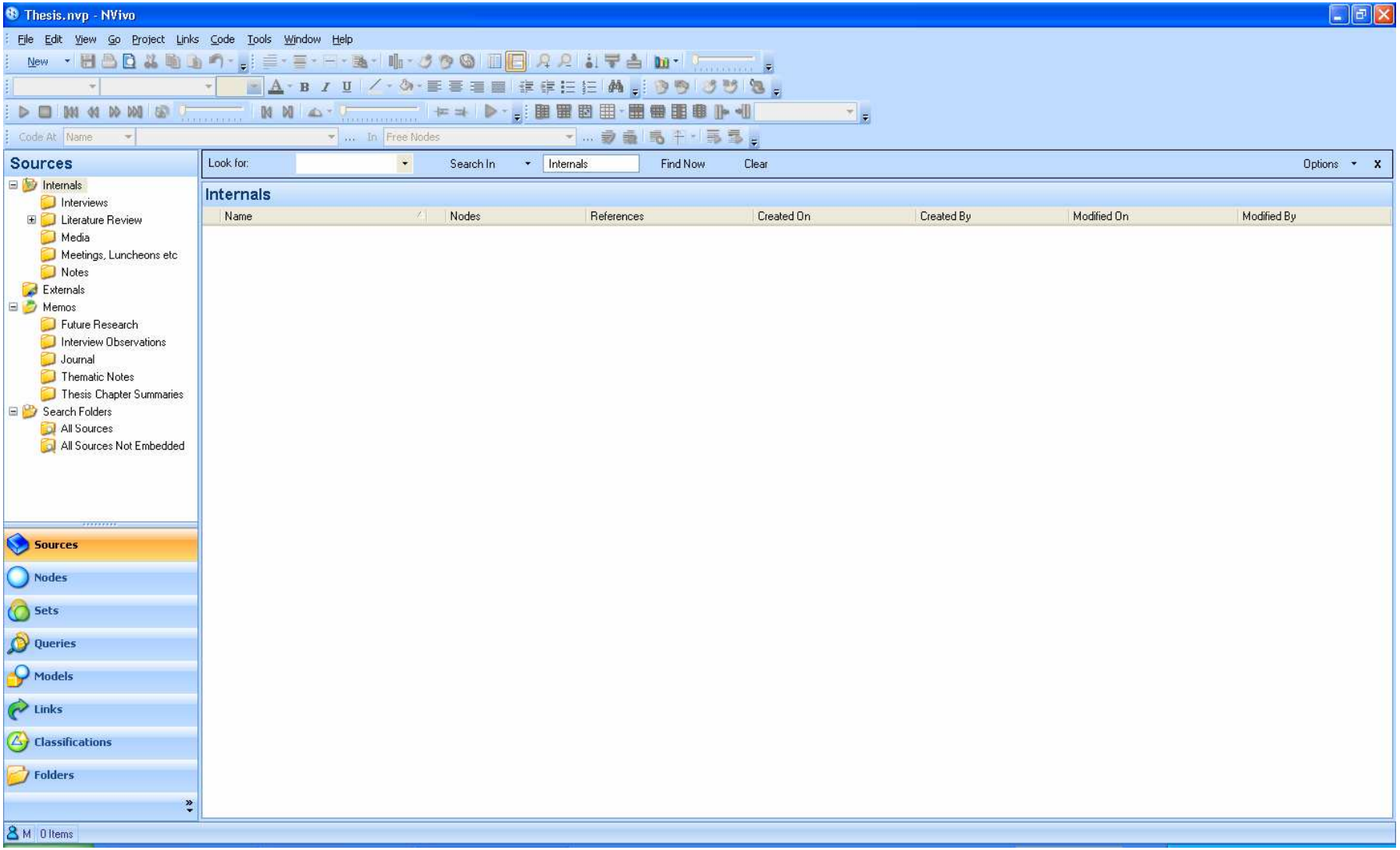
Table 1: Summary of Research Methodology

Research Design	Qualitative – Ethnographic style approach
Research Question	What is the impact of post-1997 corporate governance reforms in Philippine institutions and Philippine firms?
Data Collection and Method	Triangulation: Interview Questionnaire, Media Articles and Participant Observation
Unit of Analysis	Corporate governance institutions and firms in the Philippines
Data Analysis	Computer program: NVivo

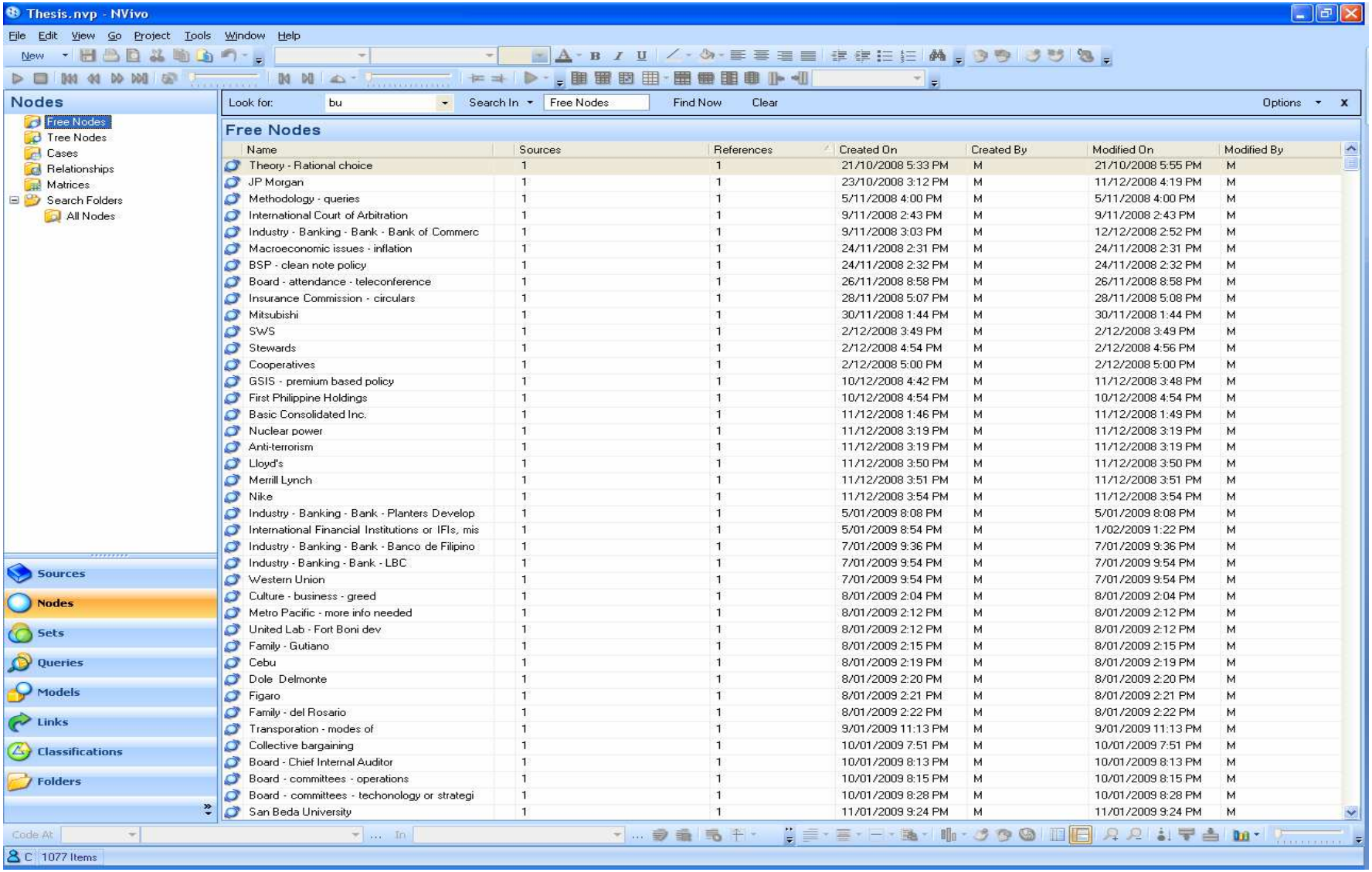
Figure 1: Three Sources of Data – A form of qualitative triangulated method in a gear motion



Screenshot 1: Home page of Nvivo project



Screenshot 2: Node Saturation in NVivo



Screenshot 3: Coding of raw interview data in NVivo

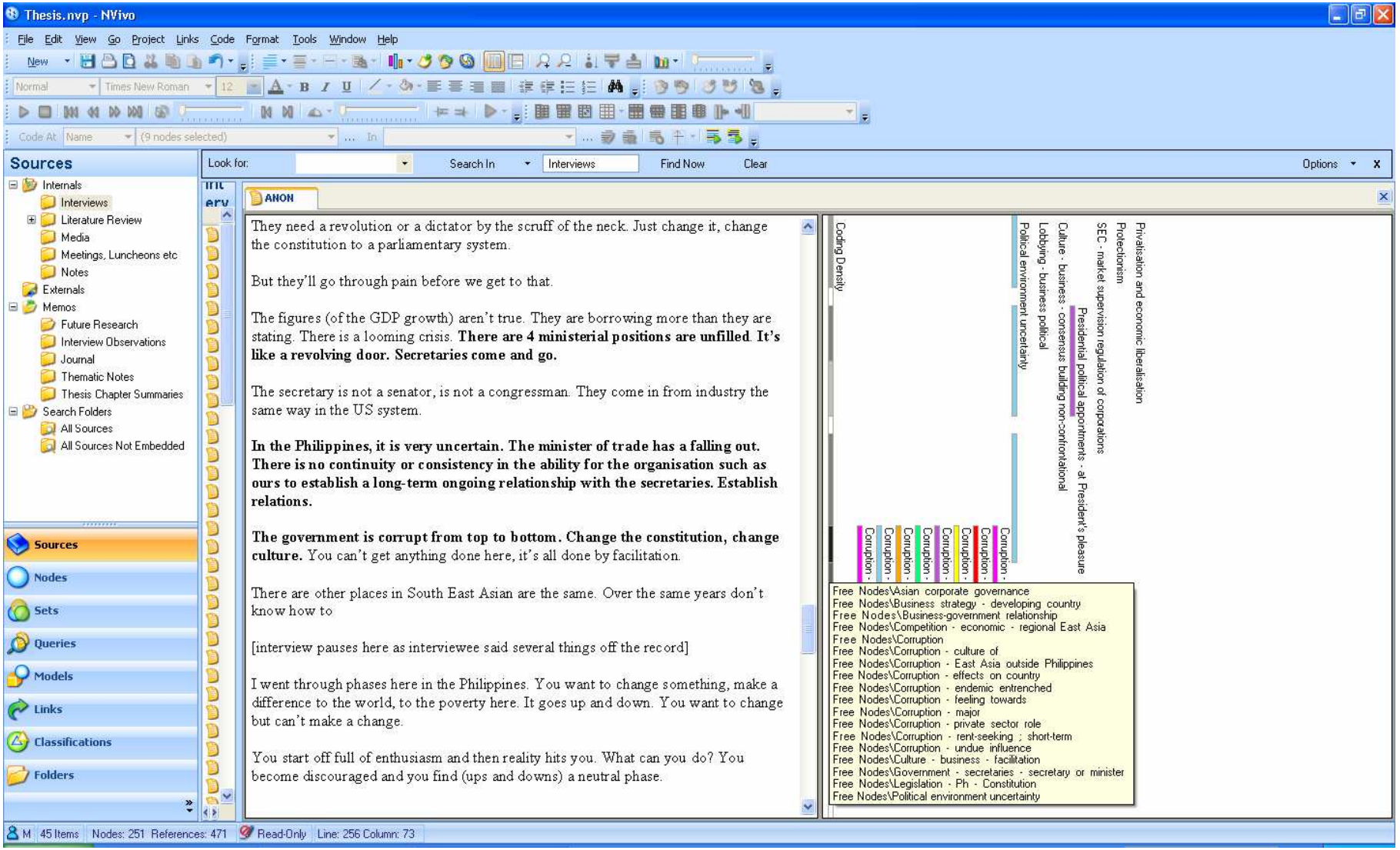
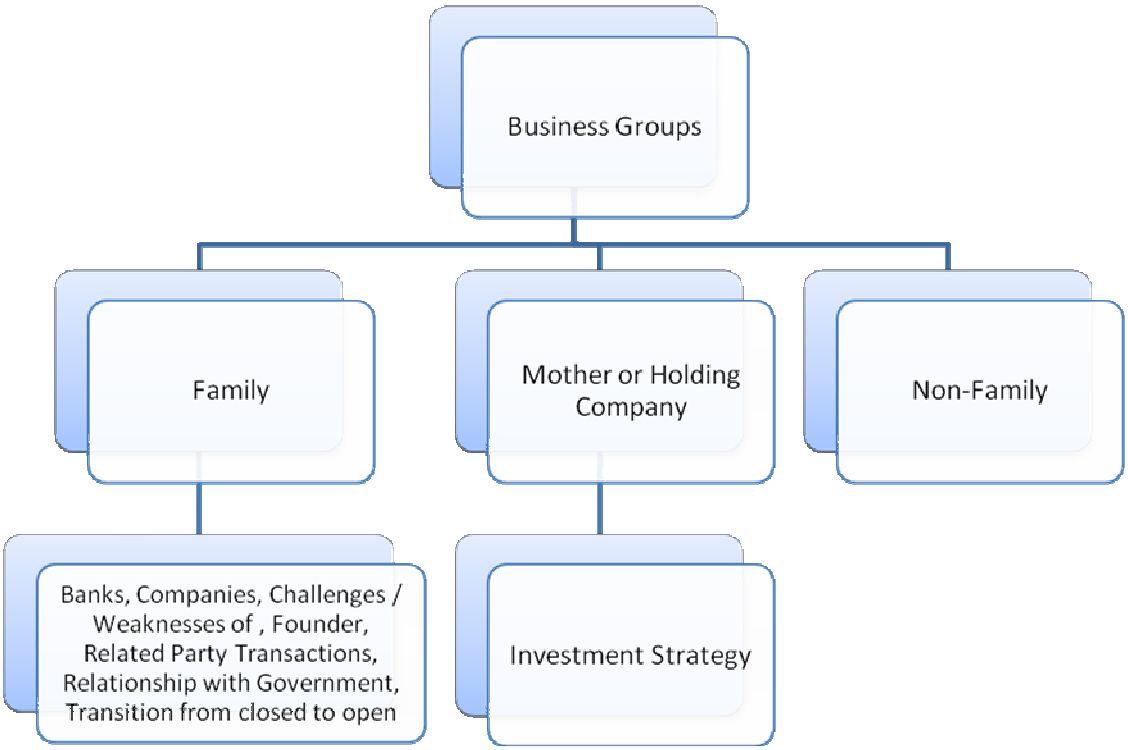
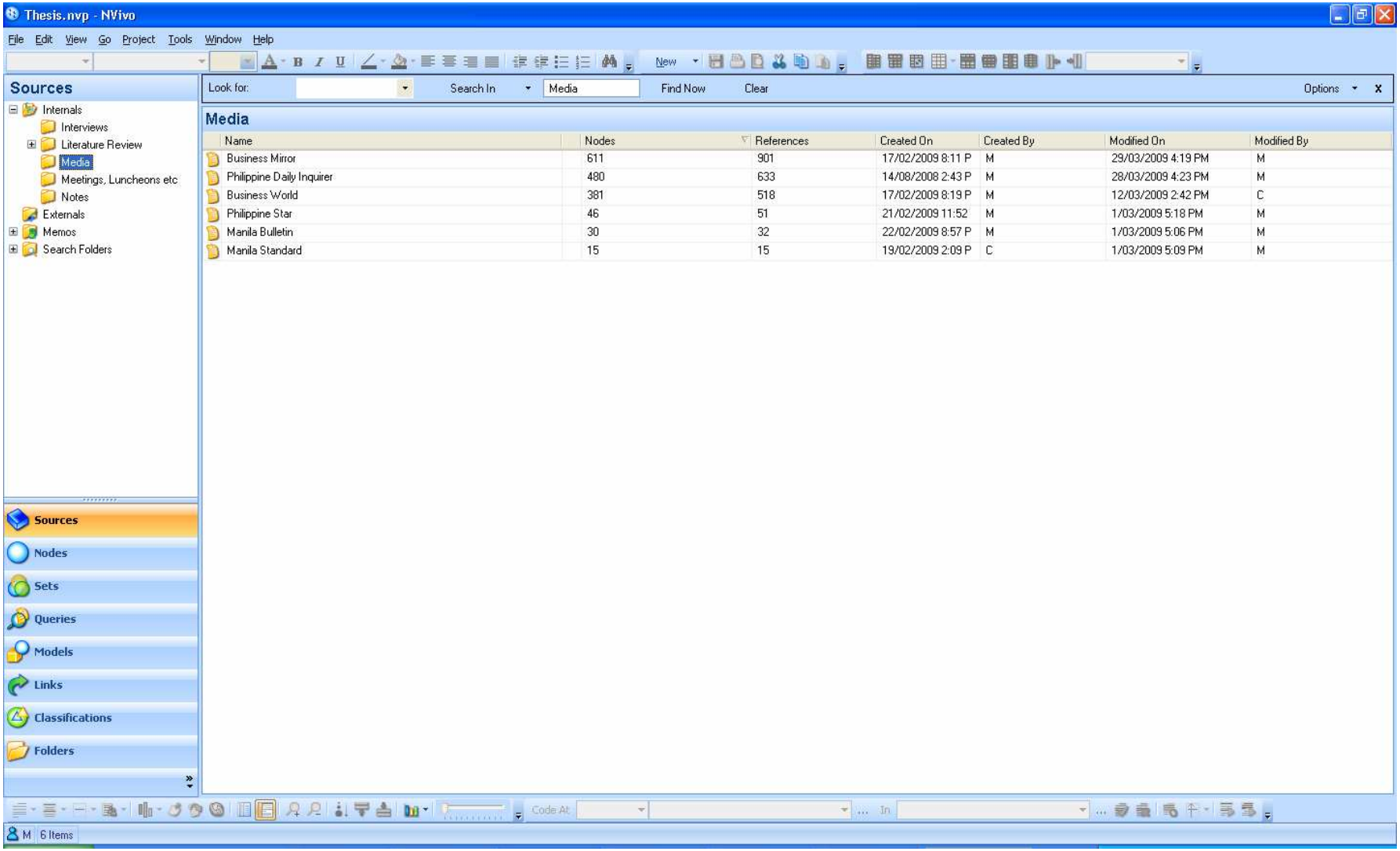


Figure 2: Main node of Business Groups and its sub-sets



Screenshot 4: Media Folder, Number of Nodes and References



Screenshot 5: Node Saturation in Media Articles

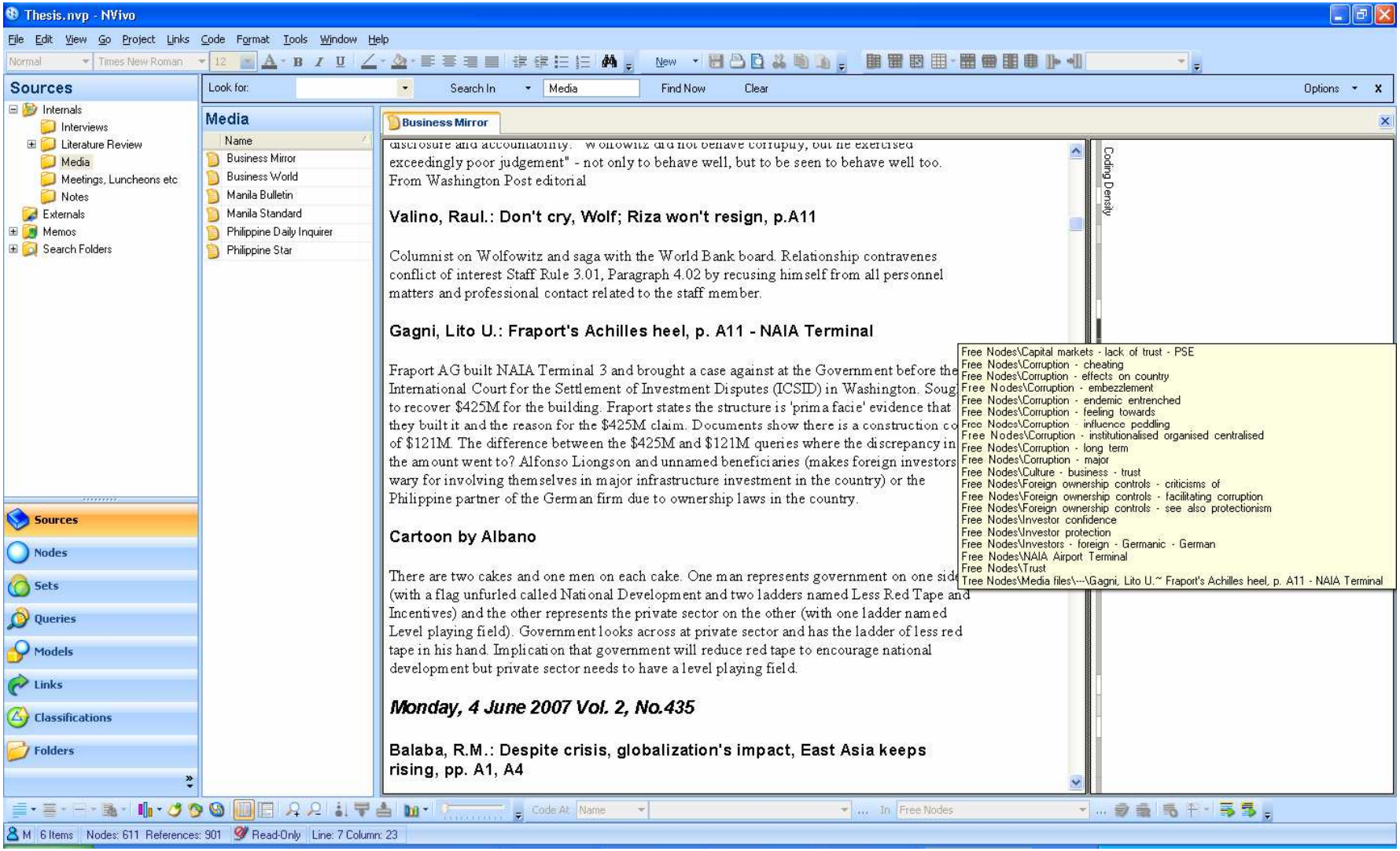
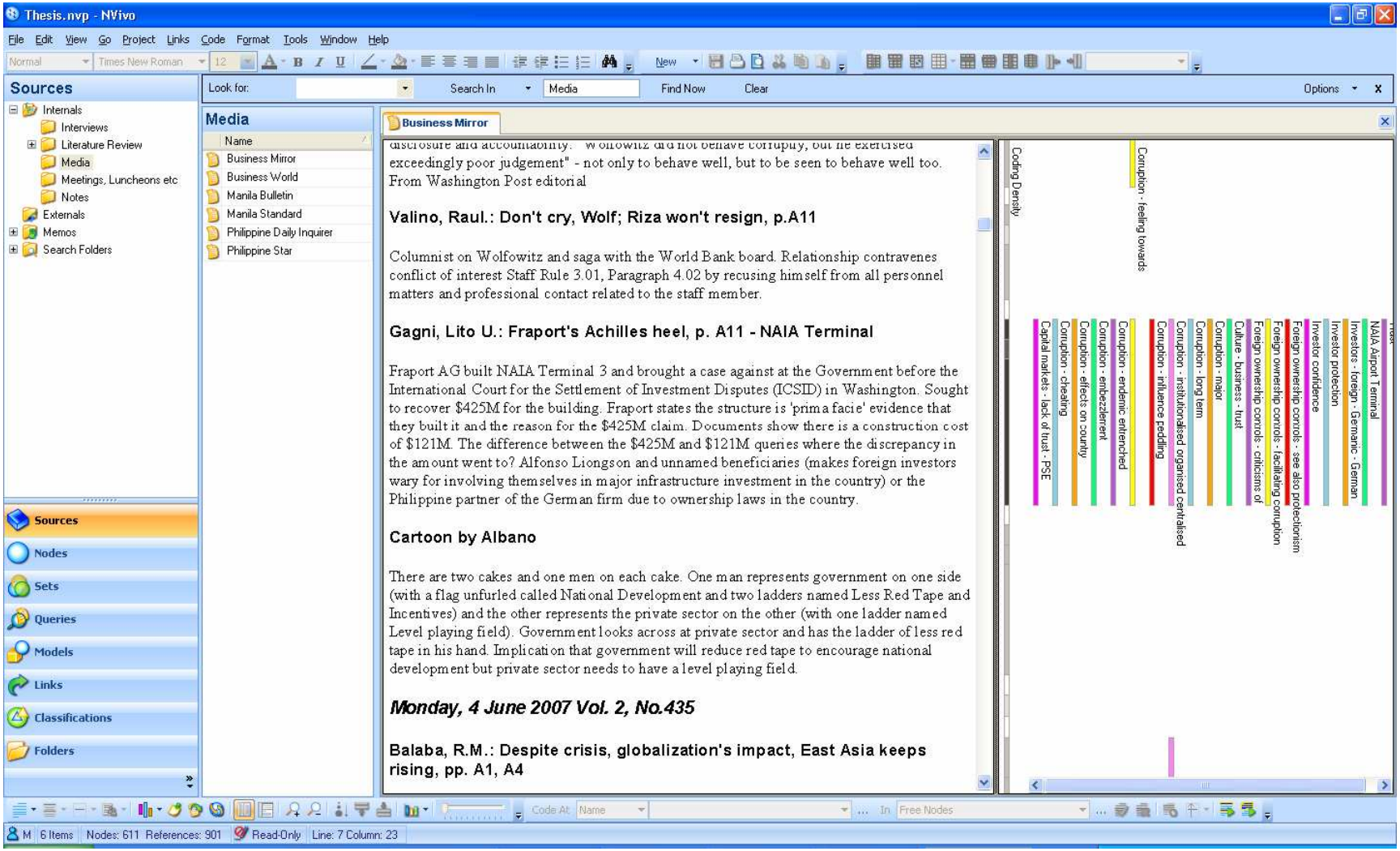


Table 2: Nodes for One Line of Newspaper Text in NVivo

Node	Sub-Category	Sub-Sub-Category
Capital markets	Lack of trust	Philippine Stock Exchange
Corruption	Cheating	
	Effects on country	
	Embezzlement	
	Endemic / Entrenched	
	Feeling towards	
	Influence peddling	
	Institutionalised / Organised / Centralised	
	Long-term	
	Major	
Culture	Business	Trust
Foreign ownership controls	Criticisms of	
	Facilitating corruption	
	See also Protectionism	
Investor Confidence		
Investor Protection		
Investors	Foreign	Germanic – German
NAIA Airport Terminal		
Trust		

Screenshot 6: Coding stripes in NVivo



Screenshot 7: Tree nodes and coding stripes of an article

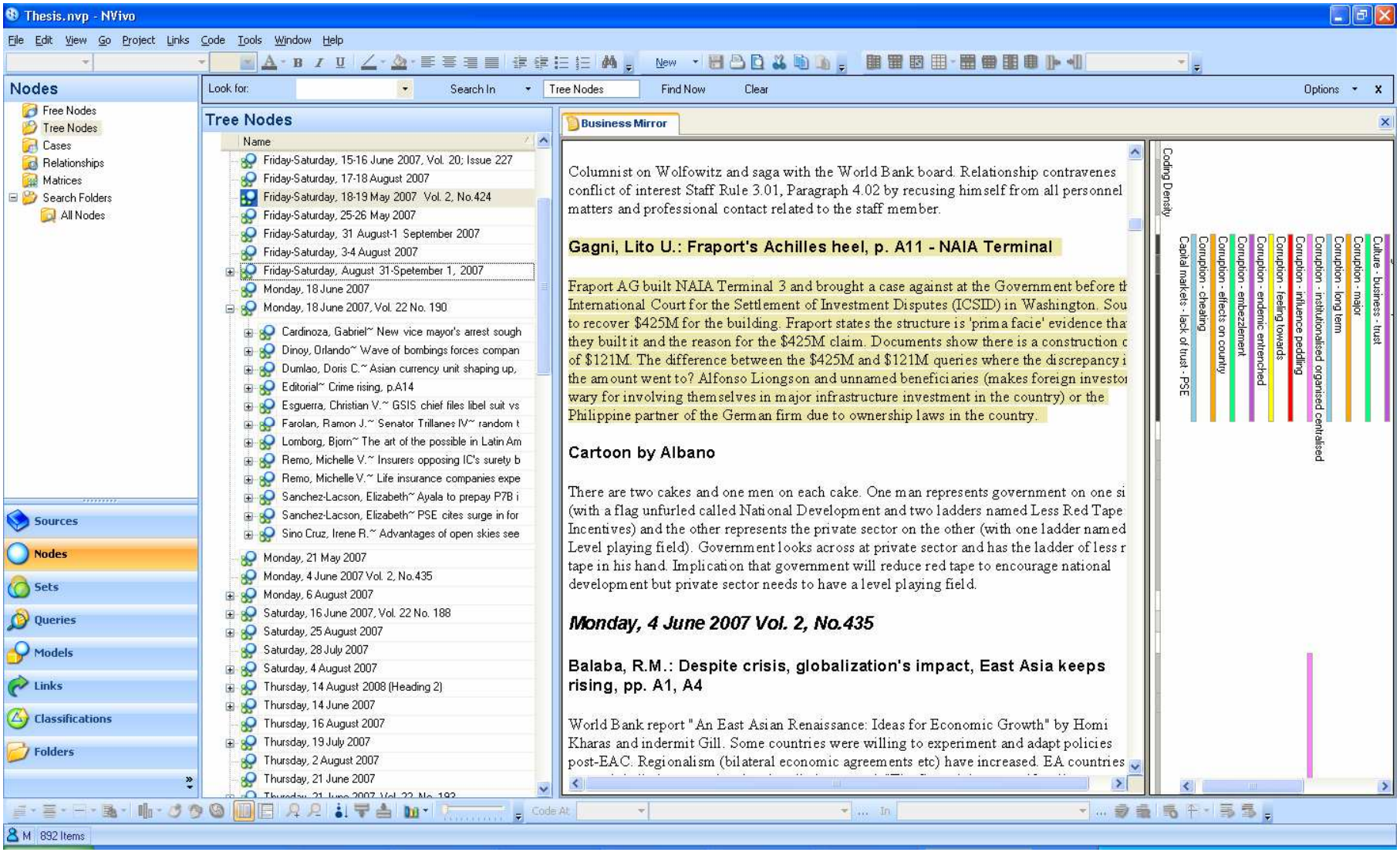
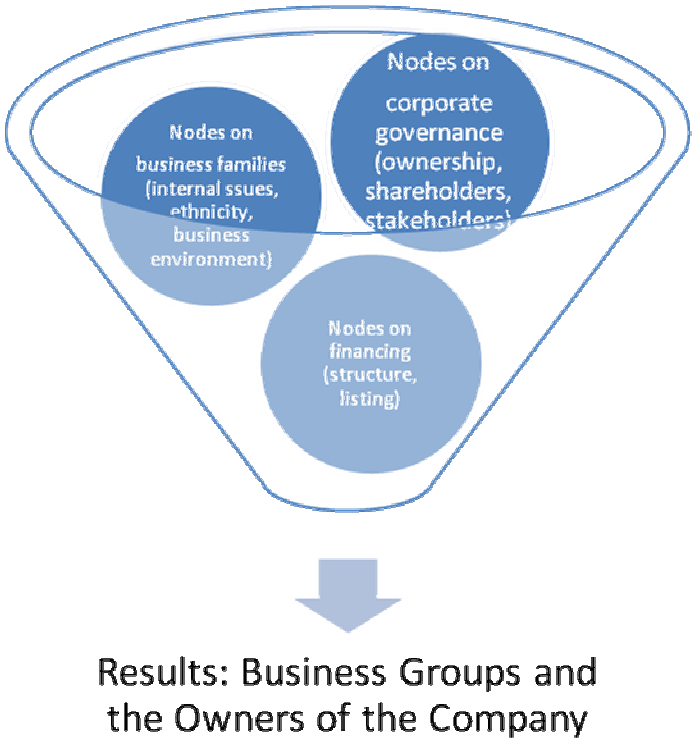


Figure 3: "Funnelling" Main nodes from NVivo funnelled to structure results



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	See also Protectionism	
Investor Confidence		
Investor Protection		
Investors	Foreign	Germanic – German
NAIA Airport Terminal		
Trust		

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preferred stream(s) from the ANZAM Conference Stream list, as well as up to 6 keywords describing the content of their research. The list of keywords can be found on the paper submission site after selecting your preferred Conference stream - please use at least four of these keywords for your submission to assist us in assigning appropriate reviewers for your manuscript

- At least one author for each paper that is accepted for presentation in the Conference Program is expected to register and pay to attend the Conference to present their research. All of the costs to attend the Conference, including the registration fee, must be paid by presenters. ANZAM does not pay honoraria for any presentations.
- An individual can appear in up to three sessions of the refereed scholarly Conference Program (as presenter, co-author, session chair or facilitator). This is to encourage greater participation and to avoid individuals appearing to dominate a stream or segment of the Conference Program.
- Presenters of papers will have 15 minute timeslots, plus 5 minutes for discussion. Research Symposia and Workshops will be allocated 90 minute timeslots.
- During the conference, a climate of free exchange and constructive criticism is encouraged. It is also important to demonstrate respect for colleagues/presenters with different perspectives and methodologies/methods.
- For those selected to present their abstract in poster format, it is expected that one of the presenting authors be present at their poster during break times to discuss their research with fellow delegates.

Note to Authors

Each presenting author will be required to register and pay for the Conference by the author registration deadline to ensure their abstract(s) are included in the final program. All costs to attend the Conference, including the registration fee, must be met by presenters.

All Conference Papers accepted for the ANZAM Conference Program are made available to delegates in the Conference Proceedings which is presented in a CD format. The Conference Proceedings has an ISBN number and indicates clearly that all refereed papers were double-blind peer reviewed. In addition, a printed conference summary will report titles, authors and abstracts for refereed conference papers and posters, as well as panels and symposia.

Paper & Poster Guidelines

Original research papers, which may be theoretical, empirical, literature reviews, or case studies, aligned with the conference theme, 'Managing Unknowable Futures', and ANZAM's research streams/tracks, are invited. See above for Conference Streams.

Conference Papers should be prepared as a Microsoft Word document and conform to the editorial guidelines and formatting specified for ANZAM Conference Papers.

Please refer to the below ANZAM Conference Paper Style Guide and ensure you read the General Policies & Requirements section before submitting your paper.

ANZAM Conference Paper Style Guide
The page limit for papers is twelve (12) A4 pages, with 2.54cm (1" margins), double spaced text, 11-point Times New Roman font. Note, page limits do not include references/bibliography, Tables and Figures (which are placed at the end of the document in keeping with JMO Guidelines), or the cover page with author details.

Please also download the following documents as they will be a useful reference when preparing your Conference presentation.

Paper Presentation Guidelines

Poster Presentation Guidelines

Paper & Poster Review Process

Papers submitted for oral or poster presentation at the Conference will be reviewed and authors will be advised of their acceptance and presentation type mid July 2010.

All Conference Papers will be refereed using a double-blind peer review process. The review criteria include:

- Significance/importance of the topic
- Conceptual foundation/relevant literature
- Research questions*, aims and objectives
- Methodology*
- Quality of analysis/coherence of argument
- Relevance of findings for theory/policy/practice
- Clarity/readability
- Overall evaluation (including contribution)

** if these are relevant for the style of paper*

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Important Dates

Call for Papers Open: 1 May 2010
Online Registration Opens: August 2010
Paper Submission Deadline: Closed
Authors Acceptance Notification: 31 August 2010
Registration Deadline Date for Authors: 3 November 2010
Early Bird Registration Deadline: 3 November 2010

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ANZAM Conference 2010
Managed by arinex pty limited

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Symposia/Workshop

The ANZAM Conference Program also includes Research Symposia and Workshops focused on professional development topics to increase the value of the conference for participants. These sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes during the concurrent stream sessions. Please refer to the below Research Symposia and Workshop Guidelines and ensure you read the above General Policies and Requirements section before submitting your paper.

Research Symposia and Workshop Proposal Guidelines

Research Symposia focus on leading-edge research. Workshops cover a broader domain including research methods, getting published, external funding, accreditation processes, teaching innovations, managing workloads, supervision etc.

Presenters of workshops should submit a 300 word outline of the topic and relevant issues. A template is available here

Symposia/Workshop Review Process

The criteria for selecting Research Symposia and Workshops for inclusion in the Conference Program include:

- Relevance to ANZAM's purpose
- Relevance to conference theme
- Relevance of presenter's expertise
- Professional development potential for participants or research quality
- Topicality

Click here to Submit a Research Symposia/Workshop Outline

Reviewing for the Conference

If you are interested in serving as a Reviewer for the 2010 ANZAM Conference please contact the Conference Convenor, Dr Bruce Gurd, on bruce.gurd@unisa.edu.au. Please note the timing of the review period (July-August) and ensure that you will be available to review typically up to 3 papers during this time. You are expected to provide constructive advice for authors on how to improve their papers for presentation at the conference and subsequent publication.

Audio Visual Information

Oral Presenters

Please note that for all oral presentations the following equipment will be available in each session room for use by speakers - Data Projection (PowerPoint), laptop (PC compatible), lectern and microphone.

Poster Presenters

For those selected to present their abstract in poster format, it is expected that one of the presenting authors be present at their poster during break times to discuss their research with fellow delegates. More information on the required format of posters will be provided to the submitting author should the abstract be accepted for a poster presentation.

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24th Annual Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management Conference

Managing for Unknowable Futures

8 - 10 December 2010
Adelaide, Australia.

www.anzamconference.org

Welcome from Conference Chair

My Colleagues and I from the University of South Australia welcome you to Adelaide to the 24th ANZAM.

Two schools within the Division of Business – the International Graduate School of Business and the School of Management – have co-operated together to bring you this conference. We acknowledge the support of Professor Gerry Griffin, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Division of Business, Professor John Benson, Head of the School of Management and Professor Mile Terziovski, Head of the International Graduate School of Business.

We look forward to three outstanding plenaries – Professors Sara Rynes, Professor Sri Zaheer and our team of speakers at the Final Plenary. The concurrent presentations are of a high standard and this conference has attracted an interesting range of workshops.

A lot of effort has gone into the Social Program, so we hope you enjoy the welcome function in Foyer F, the dinner at Glenelg Beach at the Stanford Grand, and the final Happy Hour on Friday afternoon.

We trust that you find the conference invigorating for your own research and teaching and a time to build new relationships with fellow academics.

Dr Bruce Gurd
ANZAM Conference Chair

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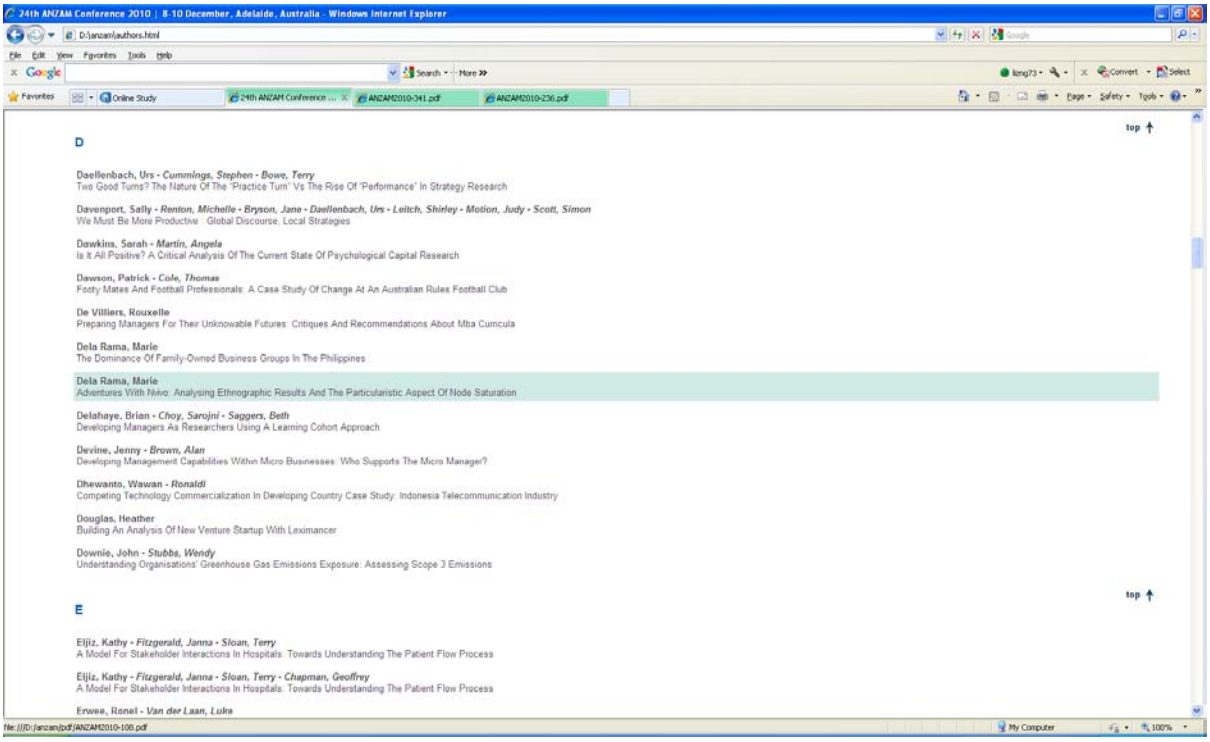
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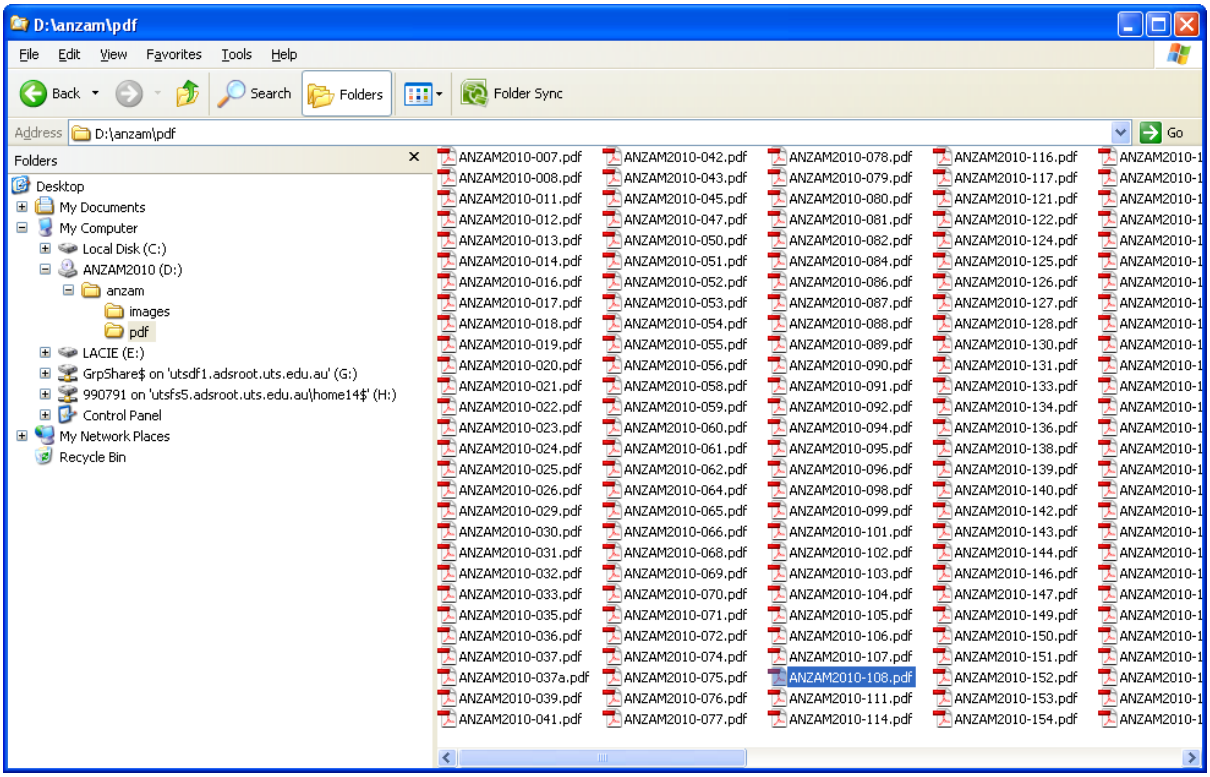
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