

Writing + Structure

INF5220

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Sisse Finken, Design group

WHAT GOES WHERE IN A THESIS OR DISSERTATION?

- **Title**
- **Summery** 1 page (or an abstract)
- **Acknowledgement**
- **Table of content**

Introduction

Setting the stage. Provide the readers knowledge about the content and answer the question: what is this piece of work about? by giving the reader a short precise presentation of the content of your work, including the motivation for your study: what are you inquiring (object/subject of investigation) – how and in what way is it important for a broader audience?

Present:

- * Your main motivation for conducting your study (explain in what way your study is important)
- * Describe the area of your research (the problem domain)
- * Purpose of your research, incl. your research question(s)
- * Your contribution
- * A brief description of how you attempt to find out (methodology/ methods/ theory/analytical concepts)
- * You could also try to answer:
 - * What is the target audience?
 - * What is your personal motivation for this study?
- * Sketch the structure (content in each chapter) of the thesis

Literature review

Position your work vis-à-vis related and/or similar research. In doing so you show your contribution to a specific research area.

- A survey of literature (journals, conference proceedings, books) on areas relevant to your research question(s) and study. What do you see as challenges in relation to existing literature on the topic you're studying (e.g. this topic is new; this is under researched; or, x has never been approached from this methodological or theoretical angle)? Do you find inspiration in the literature? State similarities and differences. Write one section per. each subject matter that you locate. If no or limited research has been published on your specific topic think alternatively about it (does it concern organization of something, functionality, use, design, categorization, decision-making, did the field merge into another field, etc.)
- Conclude the chapter with summarizing what you want to develop further (vis-à-vis the exciting literature) or what you see as a challenge. A summary could be presented in a list, model, etc. Each issue could correspond to your analytical chapters or sections in your analytical chapter; but they should definitely be discussed in the discussion or conclusion of your thesis.

Theoretical chapter

Description of the theory and/or the analytical concepts you have chosen to work with.

- In what way is the theory/concepts fruitful when engaging with your material? Both in the field, when analyzing, and writing up your thesis. Argue for your choice of theory, framework, or concepts, and justify your choice.
- Do not explain the theory, framework, or the concepts with examples from your fieldwork in this chapter (save it for your analyses).
- If you aim at developing theory (using Grounded Theory), your chapter should be structured in a way that leads up to your motivation (e.g. argument such as: the theory needs elaboration in this and this way, which I will provide insight on in xxx way).

Case or empirical setting chapter

Where, what, whom, when, duration of time and why. Provide a description of the setting/field/place/object of study. In this chapter you should argue for and justify your choices: how/why did you select your 'case' and its participants?

- Provide an overall impression of the 'place' where your research unfolded -> the specific background information that is necessary (helpful) for understanding your case; but which is not the kind of information you want to delineate within your analyses. That is, rich descriptions of e.g.: a company, its products (services), its customers, the participants in your study (who were involved, why these participants, and if relevant: their age, gender, educational background, etc.), their inter-relations, work task, practices etc., duration of the study.
- The description of your case could be based on your own empirical work mixed with other's descriptions (research, documents, web page, etc.).
- Not always a separate chapter. You could present this information in the methodology chapter in a section devoted to describing your case.

Methodology chapter

A discussion of what you have chosen to do *and* how your choice is relevant and relates to the knowledge you seek.

- Law + ethical considerations: e.g. sensitive data?, personal data? Consent form; confidentiality; anonymity (keys?); only collect material relating to the topic of your thesis; deletion of material after successful end exam (date of completion) -> here you make use of Gisle's lecture.
- Paradigm
- A choice of methodology and methods between alternatives -> justify. You should demonstrate that you are aware of strengths and weakness of your strategy and methods used.
- A detailed report of the fieldwork that was carried out:
- What did you do, how did you do it, and why did you what you did (justification + relevance). Some of the activities can be summarized in an appendix outlining your activities in the field + e.g. your interview guide. How did you conduct observations (what kind of situations, what time, what activities, particular focus, etc.)? Whom did you interview, on what issue(s), in what situations or settings (during work hours, in an office, at a cafe?) Did you collect documents (which ones, from where, specific situation?).
- How did you work with your data (organize by indexing in themes, concepts? coding/memos?)
- Do you encounter any challenges during generation of data (access, change of method, some transcripts not read (verified) by participants, limited time, break down of recorder during an interview, etc.)

“During data collection, I will follow the Norwegian regulations on collecting and managing personal information entitled: Personopplysningsloven (Personopplysningsloven, 2000). Pursuant to Section 8 of this law, I will collect data only from those who give written consent. Prior to getting consent, the participants will be informed about the conditions with which the data will be used, as defined in Section 19. In accordance with Section 11, I will only collect data which is relevant to my study, and use it only to the closely defined purpose of this thesis. No sensitive data will be collected, and all data will be kept confidential.” Rekaa, I. E. L. (2010) – master thesis. This excerpt appears with Rekaa's consent.

Analytical chapters (analysis of empirical material)

In working actively with your field material you show how you land on your conclusions (answer your research question(s)).

- Theory /concepts are briefly re-introduced and applied.
- Thoroughly analyze a broad variety of your research material (show patterns/deviations and explain what they mean – e.g. follow a statement or an argument about xxx through your different field material and explain what it means. Or, you can show and exemplify categories/topics of interest for your outcome by using your different field material.
- One or several chapters - how do they relate to each other?
- Analysis and discussion can be integrated. Alternatively, the discussion can be provided in a separate chapter. The discussion should link up to the issues discussed in chapter two and/or three (literature review + theory).

Interpretation/discussion

Put into perspective and contextualize your contribution.

- If you do not integrate your analysis and discussion then you need a chapter devoted to interpretation/discussion. It's a matte style (or how you work).
- What does the outcome (your findings) from your analysis tell? In what way is it important and relevant, for whom, why? What e.g. did you point to in the literature review as challenging and how does your outcome relate to this?

Conclusion

Sum up and cementation of the outcome of your fieldwork.

- Summary of findings, main problems and your conclusions.
- Present your research question(s) once more (you should return to them or to your initially stated aim through the conclusions drawn).
- What did they lead to?
- Comparisons with literature in chapter two - how does your outcomes (findings) fit in?
- What is your contribution and what are its implications (practical, theoretical and/or methodological)?
- Possible directions for further research.

Bibliography

- Alphabetically listing of all the texts referred to or cited

Appendix

E.g. interview guide, photos or a visual depiction like a drawing of the field site and/or the relations of material-immaterial members -> if relevant, such depiction could go into one of the chapters), maybe a log of activities in the field (date/time; activities (observation, interview, attending meetings, phone, email, online visits)).

NB!

Remember, throughout your chapters, to bring with you your research questions. E.g. when writing the methodology chapter, think about the questions you seek answers to and how the methodology and methods have been fruitful in generating empirical material that answers these questions. Always remember to argue for and show the relevance of the choices you have made. Move between description and explanation (justification/relevance).

This outline is based on Silverman 2005, previous lectures, questions from and conversations with previous students of INF5/9220

REPRESENTATION - Writing Style

- Realism (dispassionate third person voice)
- Confession (personal style + personal encounters from the field)

Madden advocates for mixing and finding your own style

- More traditional top-down style in Sørensen

Overall message from Madden and Sørensen:
find your own voice and style