

TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE EXAM - INF5220, 2013

Theoretical skills:

You should be able to discuss qualitative versus quantitative research: What are the strength and weaknesses, appropriate areas of application, are they complementary? Is there a clear line of distinction?

You should be able to describe various types or varieties of qualitative studies (e.g. ethnography, action research, case study, grounded theory). You should know some facts about their theoretical basis and the history of emergence, and be able to describe their emphasis, suitable area of application as well as strength and weaknesses (problems, limitations). This also goes for the methods – you should be able to argue for their strengths and weaknesses, and how they are crafted together. Also, you should understand what the three different research paradigms in IS research imply (positivism, interpretivism, critical research).

Research skills:

For various types of empirical material (interviews, observations, photos, documents, notes) you should know how to collect and how to approach it (suitable ways of organizing, handling, and analyzing). You should also be able to describe and discuss the status or role you assign to the data collected in various ways, as well as discuss how you can generalize from data in sensible ways. You should also be able to reflect on issues of quality, both with regard to reliability of the material and validity of analysis and interpretation (in general and with respect to concrete data collection methods). Also, you should be able to reflect on your own positioning / agenda and how it shapes your study.

Which challenges (practical, methodical, ethical) may you encounter if you gather empirical material from social media, online communities, Internet newsgroups, forums or blogs?

Ethics:

What are relevant regulatory (legal) and ethical factors to consider when collecting data? What does Norwegian legislation say in relation to collection of personal and sensitive information?

Research Design:

You should know what elements a research proposal should contain, and you should be able to write one. Given a case description and a research question, you should be able to choose, describe and justify how you would approach the study, including the specific method(s) you will employ. The kinds of material you will collect, and the object, sample, population, and/or site of study should also be sensibly chosen and argued for. You should be able to describe/evaluate another research study, how it is motivated, whether the chosen approach is well linked to the research question, whether the empirical material is well suited to address the research question, etc.