**Topic Selection:**

Choosing your topic is the first step in the research process. Be aware that selecting a good topic may not be easy. It must be narrow and focused enough to be interesting, yet broad enough to find adequate information.

**1-Research tip:** Pick a topic that interests you. You are going to live with this topic for weeks while you research, read, and write your assignment. Choose something that will hold your interest and that you might even be excited about. Your attitude towards your topic will come across in your writing or presentation!

**2-Brainstorming**: is a technique you can use to help you generate ideas. Below are brainstorming exercises and resources to help you come up with research topic ideas.

**3-Background Information:**

Read an encyclopedia article on the top two or three topics you are considering. Reading a broad summary enables you to get an overview of the topic and see how your idea relates to broader, narrower, and related issues.

- **Gale eBooks:**

The Gale Virtual Reference Library contains several business focused encyclopedias such as The Encyclopedia of Management and The Encyclopedia of Emerging Industries which may provide background information on possible topics.

**- Article & News Databases:**

Use the Library's Articles and News databases to search for brief articles on your topic ideas.

**- SAGE Knowledge:**

Hundreds of encyclopedias and handbooks on key topics in the social and behavioral sciences. User Guide

**4-Topic selection, posing problems and questions:**

**4-1-Topic selection:**

Most of the time there are generally two possibilities when selecting a topic: you can apply for a topic advertised by supervisors or select one freely. Both options have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of choosing a topic already announced is that this topic is more likely to be integrated into the work of a research group resulting in close mentoring (Bopp et al. 2000: 57). However, your own ideas may not always be considered in this case.

If you choose a topic freely there will be much more room for creativity and personal contribution but perhaps also fewer opportunities to find peers in difficult times. When concentrating on writing a longer piece of work - such as a bachelor's or master's thesis - it is advisable to choose a topic that truly reflects your interests. This doesn't guarantee good questions or wise topic selections; however, you are more likely to keep up the good work and develop new ideas (Bänsch 1999: 33).

When choosing a topic freely you may spend more time with precedent clarifications or adaptations. You should make sure that the topic selected matches the department's and supervisor's line of research, is reasonable as regards its time frame, and is based on a sound literature review.

However, it is not wise to only choose a topic because there is a lot of further reading material. On the one hand, it is then difficult to focus on a particular subject and on the other hand, it isn't the quantity but the quality that counts (Bänsch 1999: 35).

When having a say in the matter you should seize the opportunity, consider your interests and abilities while asking yourself amongst other things:

Where do my talents lie?

Do I have an inclination towards practical or theoretical work?

Do I plan to stay in academia or not?

What kind of profession is interesting for me?

Do I need a lot of mentoring or do I prefer to work on my own?

When writing a master's thesis it is not necessary to explore completely new intellectual spheres. You should choose a topic already discussed in lectures, seminars or even everyday life, one that can be tackled in a given period of time (Krämer 1999: 16–17).

In addition to social sciences it is mainly geography that has turned out to be a problem-oriented branch of study when dealing with environmental change, globalization, statistical data processing, etc., and trying to find solutions to these problems academically. Even a lecture's or seminar's topic can be qualified as a problem that has to be described, analyzed, and finally solved.

However, in geography problem-oriented research and epistemological research continue to exist side by side. One doesn't only focus on a concrete problem but rather strives to get certain knowledge of a particular issue or e.g. a community. When doing academic research the way of posing a problem determines the superior framework or subject area, respectively. It defines the gist of the matter.

Example: «Tourism can cause social changes in so-called developing countries.»

**4-2-Research questions:**

Posing a question (or even more than one) deals with that part of a problem that has to be explored first and in more detail. It precedes the research, is derived from the problem, and should therefore be solved during the course of your writing if possible. Posing a question should to some extend contribute to a problem's solution.

An academic paper focuses on the questions posed.

Trying to find good questions is one of the most challenging tasks when doing academic research. Without clearly defined questions you risk going overboard. It is therefore necessary to take your time and refer to these questions over and over again.

**Example:** «What effect does tourism have on children going to school in a region faced with poverty?»

**5-Conclusion:** The process of developing research questions is only completed after analyzing all relevant data. In general, a good question isn't determined from the very beginning but only becomes apparent after familiarizing yourself with the matter. It is also legitimate to make modifications or rephrasings. Theoretical pieces, models or methods applied on recent fields of research can be sources for good questions, as well as scientific papers or topics of public discourse, etc. (Bopp 2000: 57). When wanting to concretize a question it can be worthwhile to exchange views with fellow students in a similar situation. Preconceptions and fixed ideas can then be challenged while bearing in mind a wide range of aspects and issues.