

Some notes on chapter structure

RATIONALE

Chapters help readers (and yourself ☺) to better comprehend the structure and composition of your text. The proposed IMRaD structure (*Introduction, Methods, Results & Discussion*) for research papers provides a general orientation; while of course you may add additional levels – depending on the length and depth of your text. To emphasize this, we may call these major chapters “sections”. These sections are usually subdivided in chapters and subchapters. For example, the *Introduction* section can have several chapters where you introduce the background, related studies, but also the study area (the latter could also be an opening chapter to the *Methods* section, in particular when it also contains details on the data being used).

When using subchapters make sure you introduce at least two of them. If you only have one subchapter you do not need it. Subchapters serve to further structure the chapter like you would categorize a certain variable (if you have a variable “age” and you only have one age class you do not need classes). An aesthetic, yet not mandatory, approach to construct a hierarchy could be to use a symmetric number of subchapters per each chapter (see fig. 1). It is recommended to define chapters and subchapters via the pre-defined (and customisable) formatting styles; otherwise the table of contents (ToC) cannot be generated automatically.

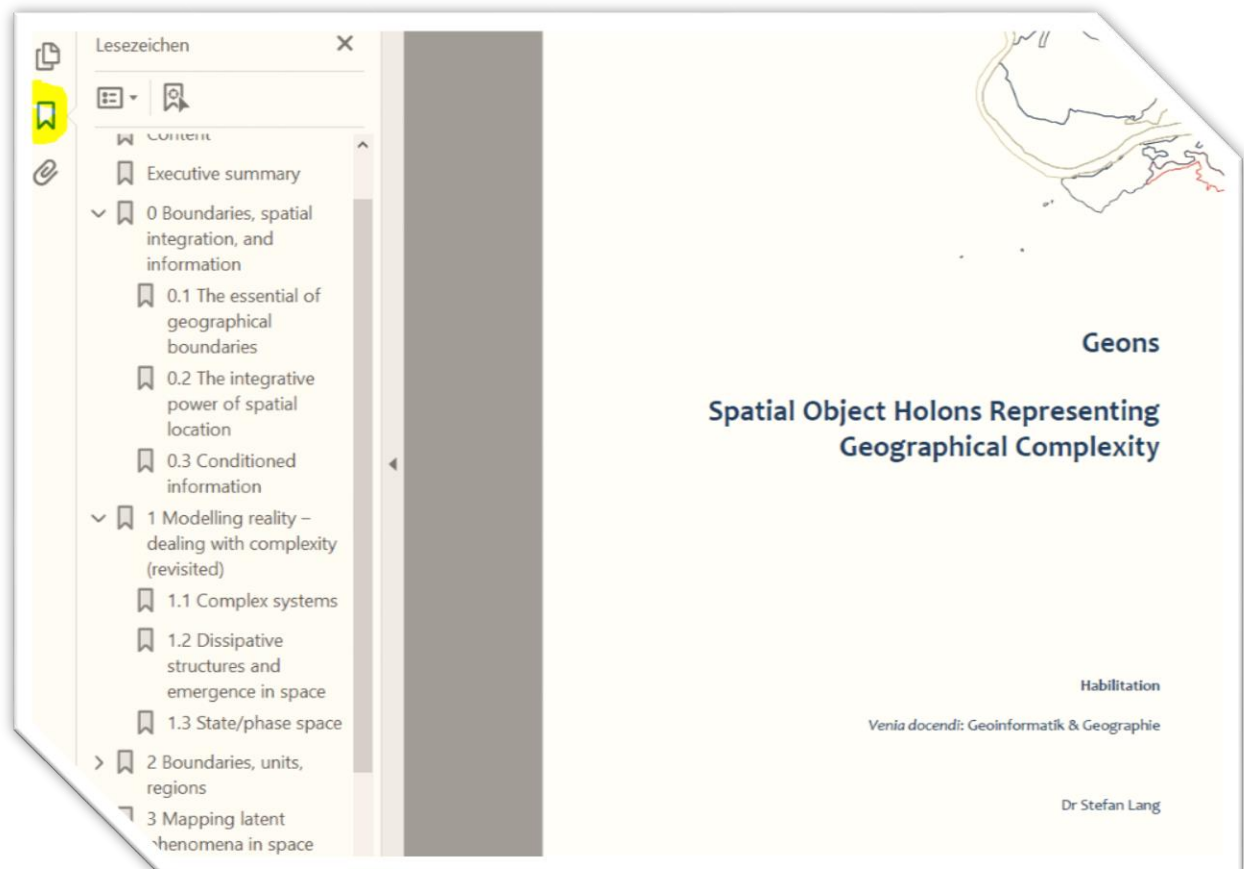


Fig. 1 – Symmetric chapter structure.

A minor formatting issue is the use of capitalised words. In figure 1 you see the words in the title (right) capitalised, while the chapter do not use capitalisation. In the end, this is a matter of taste; personally, I find it easier to grasp the structure of a table of content and navigate when chapter headings use regular grammar-conform spelling.

GENERATE BOOKMARKS IN PDF

The screenshot in figure 1 also shows the usage of PDF bookmarks. Assuming you were defining chapters and subchapters via formatting styles, you can use the navigation pane in MS Word to show the structure. In order to resemble this chapter structure in a PDF version of your document, when saving the file as a PDF, press 'options' to see the following dialog (fig. 2, sorry in German). The additional symbol shown in the navigation pane of Acrobat Reader (or other PDF readers) indicates you have successfully generated bookmarks based on your chapters – as done for this document). In particular, when you do a lot of online reading, this greatly helps navigate quickly through the PDF.

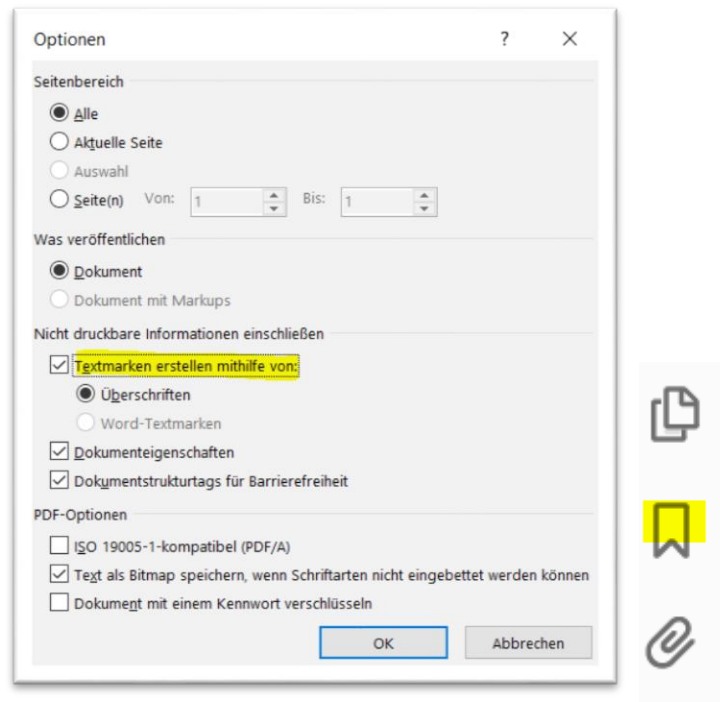


Fig. 2 – Generating bookmarks in a PDF