

MARJU HIMMA-KADAKAS

Skill performance of
Estonian online journalists:
assessment model for newsrooms and
research



DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on original publications, which will be referred to in the dissertation by their respective Roman numeral.

- Study I: Himma-Kadakas, M., Kõuts, R. (2015) Who is willing to pay for online journalistic content? *Media and Communication*, Volume 3, Issue 4, Pages 106–115.
- Study II: Himma-Kadakas, M. (2017) Alternative facts and fake news entering journalistic content production cycle. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume 9 (2), 25–40.
- Study III: Himma-Kadakas, M.; Palmiste, G. (2018) Expectations and the actual performance of skills in online journalism. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1–22.

The articles are reprinted with the permission of the respective publishers

The author's contribution to the respective articles is as follows:

- Study I: The study was co-authored, initiated and designed by the author. The study was conducted and analysed with the help of the co-author. The author is fully responsible for the manuscript.
- Study II: The study was fully initiated and designed by the author. The study was conducted and analysed by the author and the author is fully responsible for the manuscript.
- Study III: The study was co-authored, initiated and designed by the author. The author participated in the general survey design; the interviews were conducted and analysed in cooperation with the co-author. The author is equally responsible with the co-author for setting the problem to be considered in the article, developing the theoretical framework and developing the discussion.

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing technological and economic environment has changed the notion of journalism as a field and the journalist as an agent (Hanitzsch, 2007; Donsbach, 2008; Anderson et al., 2012; Willnat et al., 2013; Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2015), how journalists perceive and perform their roles, and how they define themselves as professionals (Hellmueller and Mellado, 2015; Beckett and Deuze, 2016; Ryfe, 2016; Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). A number of studies have stated that journalism is in flux due to technological change and economic pressure (Singer, 2005b; Spyridou et al., 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2017). Adapting to new technologies usually changes practices in any field of work; however, technology is not the only factor influencing the changes taking place in journalism. The studies mentioned above treat the impact of technology, economic change and production processes without linking these to the production process. The production process includes processing information into journalistic content, which itself includes using journalistic skills and competences, fulfilling the journalistic role in society, and all this contributes to defining what a journalist is.

The production process has usually been studied from the organisational level (Cawley, 2012; Weaver and Willnat, 2016). Less commonly, a link is made between the production process and the micro level (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Fahmy, 2008) with the skills and competences of individuals on the meso and macro level, taking into consideration organisational and technological influences. Skills are core elements ensuring the quality and trustworthiness of journalistic content. While the skilled practices of journalists are well established in traditional news media, on digital media platforms, including online media, defining the skills and competences that journalists should have is a struggle. This raises the question of who defines the skills that (online) journalists should have and what arguments justify such a definition? By discussing these issues, my thesis expands upon previous research that connects skill performance to role perception (Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Donsbach, 2008; Mellado et al., 2016).

This thesis focuses on the performance of skills in Estonian online newsrooms, and seeks to identify the factors that promote or hinder the performance of those skills. The novelty of the thesis is the approach I adopted to link the performance of skills at the individual level in the online newsroom to the organisational and partly also to the institutional level.

Before positioning the role of skills in a wider context, I will specify the term **skill** and how it is used in this thesis. Skill means the ability to use one's knowledge in practice. In this thesis, skill is a central term that is simultaneously related to knowledge and competence; the latter comprises knowledge, skills and attitudes towards practice. Since skill is instrumental and serves us in individual, social and economic life (Bryson, 2017), using skills in practice can be defined as skill performance (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011). Skill is often

shaped to serve economic ends (Becker, 1964; Braverman, 1974; Vallas, 1990), but also for how certain skills are recognized and valued in society; for example, how journalism is recognized and valued in society shapes the skill performance itself. Skill can be discussed in qualitative (what it is and how it is developed and performed) and in quantitative terms (high-skilled vs. low-skilled) (Bryson, 2017).

The studies in this thesis focus on skill performance in Estonian online newsrooms, looking mainly at the quality of the skills, but also discussing the quantity of skills through the development of online journalism in Estonia.

In order to position journalism as an institution in society on the macro level, I assess the journalist at the individual, micro level, but also the journalists' position in the media segment of the labour market, at the meso level. The skills and competences of the journalists describe what sort of journalistic content can be created. Naturally, not only online journalists characterize this segment of the labour market, but the technological and economic change that has taken place has been most explicit in online journalism and has also influenced skilled practice in traditional journalism. This study outlines the Estonian context in which online journalism has developed and how it, in turn, has changed the landscape of journalism in Estonia.

To outline agency and structure in relation to the labour market, I contextualize my analysis of skills and competencies within certain approaches to the sociology of the labour market. In the general context of human capital in the labour market, Berg (1970) and Berg and Kalleberg (2001) discuss whether human capital is a dependent or independent variable, and in their reasoning, come to the understanding that since the productivity of employees educated to a higher and lower level differ, human capital can be treated as a dependent variable. Becker (1964) continues with a more detailed analysis of how education level and the expenditure of different forms of training on workers influences productivity, finding that expenditure on training influences productivity but this requires the perceived calculation of the balance of expenditures and receipts. Technological change in the work process is always related to expenditure optimization, but also to the skills of workers. However, there are journalistic skills and competences that are independent of technology, and these can easily be underestimated and eroded in the process of deskilling and technological optimization. The technological transformation of work processes demands training, and this transformation can result in deskilling (Braverman, 1974) or up-skilling (Milkman and Pullman, 1991; Gallie et al., 1998; Ashton et al., 1999; de Witte & Steijn, 2000). The restructuring of skills in the labour market is perpetual and has numerous implications (Wallace and Brady, 2001). In order to upgrade their careers, workers leave and re-enter the workforce, but the payoff from such retraining is uncertain; at the organisational level, this sort of restructuring leads to continuous changes to positions and status in the hierarchy – the latter is based on new skills supplanting the old (Wallace and Brady, 2001: 120).

Changes in the media segment of the labour market are nothing unconventional. Changes in the institutional base of journalism have led to changes in the occupation in general, but also journalistic practice (Örnebring, 2016: 7). On-line journalism, more specifically, has promoted *churnalism*, where journalists produce more content with less resources (Davies, 2008; Study III); new digital environments are dominated by amateur media workers or content providers (Ursell, 2004; Karlsson, 2011) that dominate over professionalism (Keen, 2007; Karlsson and Clerwall, 2013). The change is not solely conditioned by the digital technology, but by the changes in how the technology is utilized in journalistic practice; for example, how the compression of time changes the information gathering, communicating with sources and dissemination of information (Örnebring, 2016; Study, II; Study, III).

The outcome of this thesis is a model for the assessment of the skills and competences of online journalists. The model can be used to evaluate the skills and competences of human capital in the newsroom but is also a tool that helps to define the journalist through his or her skills and competences. In this thesis, the term competence comprises of knowledge, skills and attitudes. I use the term skill performance as it relates to the use of knowledge and skills in work practice, but I also use the term competence in cases where attitudes are also inseparable from skill performance.

The aim of this doctoral study is to analyse the role of skills and competences in online journalistic practice in terms of three aspects:

- 1) To outline the expectations and actual performance of journalists in relation to the work processes involved in online journalism;**
- 2) To show the skill performance that is behind online journalistic content in relation to audience expectations;**
- 3) To chart what skills and competences may be specific to online journalism and to develop a model for the assessment of skills and competences.**

The topicality of this thesis rises from the digital transformation of journalism that has for more than a decade raised the question of multi-skilled journalists, who are expected to be ‘Jacks of all trades’ (Pavlik, 2000; Boczkowski, 2005; Huang et al., 2006; Deuze and Witschge, 2017), but from the more critical point of view are ‘...masters of none’ pointing to the reality of deskilled journalists (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Fahmy, 2008; Domingo, 2008; Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2015). News content and news decisions are seldom the output of an individual, and role performance as a concept helps us to connect both journalism and media studies (Mellado et al., 2016). While looking at the empirical studies on online or digital journalism, we should not forget the conventional approaches to professional journalism: how information and sources are evaluated and selected (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Sigal, 1973), how ‘the reality is put together’ meaning how the facts are constructed (Gerbner, 1973; Schlesinger, 1978; Tuchman, 1987; 1980), how organisational practices influence the

production of journalistic content (Gans, 1979), and how internal factors such as pace and space of content, and external factors like market pressure and competition influence what the audience is offered as journalism (Schlesinger, 1978; McManus, 1994; Gans, 2003). A number of the previously referred studies present agency in journalism as an emergent implication that is influenced by societal, political, economic and personal contexts.

This thesis offers a framework that makes it possible to analyse the skills and competences performed on a specific platform, and through that, the journalistic role performed on that platform. For this I use the theory of social domains.

The theoretical framework of the introductory cover article is built upon the theory of social domains developed by Derek Layder (1993; 1997). I chose the theory of social domains, as it binds together agency and structure at the micro and macro level. Layder categorizes four principal social domains and refers to them using the following terms: psychobiography, situated activity, social settings and contextual resources. These domains are bound together by social relations and positions, power, discourses and practices (Layder, 1993; 1997). Although the theory of social domains has not been employed in any of the individual studies of this thesis, it provides necessary interconnections between the studies in the introductory article and makes it possible to propose the research questions of this thesis according to the four social domains. In Table 1 below, I present the research questions in relation to the social domains.

Table 1. Research questions in relation to social domains

	Research question	Domain of psychobiography	Domain of situated activity	Domain of social setting	Domain of contextual resources
1	What skills and competences are online journalists expected to have?	Study III	Study III	Study III	
2	What skills and competences do online journalists perform in their work?	Study III	Study III	Study III	
3	How do the practices in online newsrooms influence the utilization of journalistic skills and competences?		Study II Study III	Study II Study III	Study II Study III
4	What skills and competences should be performed to produce the content that audiences are willing to pay for?		Study I	Study I Study III	Study I
5	What skills and competences define the online journalist?	Study I Study II Study III	Study I Study II Study III	Study I Study II Study III	Study I Study II Study III

My doctoral studies were conducted in Estonian media organisations and the results contribute to the studies (e.g. Harro-Loit et.al., 2012; Värk and Kindsiko, 2018) of newsroom practices in Estonia.

This thesis comprises three individual studies:

Study I explored audience willingness to pay for online news content. To map the reasons for what the audience is willing to pay for (the question deduces from the media economy perspective), data was used from the representative Estonian quantitative survey *Me. The World. The Media*.¹

In **Study II**, the aim was to analyse how the news reporting process is perceived by journalism students and embed this into in the context of the intentional distribution of misleading information such as alternative facts and fake news.

Study III focused on the differences in the expectations of skills and the actual performance of them in Estonian online newsrooms. The aim of the study was to outline potential changes in the skill perception and skill practice of online journalists, and factors that influence the implementation of skills in practice.

The methods used in the studies include quantitative data analysis (Study I), qualitative semi-structured interviews (Study I and III), focus group interviews and the content analysis of news handbooks (Study II). The objectives of the individual studies in this thesis and their research questions diverge from the aim and research questions of the thesis. However, the common element in all the studies is the adjustment of journalists and organisations to the technological environment that online platforms have created.

In the context of this research my position as a researcher is also important. During the research, I worked as a journalist for a regional newspaper *Tartu Postimees*, and since 2014, as an online editor for *Estonian Public Broadcasting*. During this period, I have also been teaching courses in practical journalism at the University of Tartu. I position myself as an insider-researcher, which I explain in more detail in subchapter 3.2. These roles have put me in a slightly different position from other researchers, but I can confirm that I have not contributed to any of my research as a respondent or used the data available to me as a journalist or lecturer in any way that would incline the results of the studies. My parallel roles, however, have given me the opportunity to assess the results of the studies in comparison with the real practices of the newsrooms.

The introductory cover article is structured as follows. Chapter one provides an overview of the societal context of the development of Estonian online journalism in comparison with CEE (Central and Eastern European) countries that resemble Estonia in their socio-political background. Chapter two provides a short overview of the context in which online journalism has been studied,

¹ The questionnaire from the survey *Me. The World. The Media* is the collective outcome of the work of the researchers at the Department of Social Studies at the University of Tartu (Vihalemm and Masso, 2017).

and places it within the framework of the theory of social domains. The methodological chapter of the dissertation describes the data collection and methods used in the articles. The fourth chapter outlines the results of the studies and provides an overview of the expectations and real performance of skills and competencies by online journalists within the framework of the theory of social domains. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of the results of the studies.

I SOCIETAL CONTEXT OF ESTONIAN ONLINE JOURNALISM

In order to position the results of this thesis, it is necessary to give an overview of the development of Estonian online journalism. I will go into some detail because the systematic overviews about the development of online journalism in Estonia are scarce (Tähismaa, 2003; Rebane, 2007; Loit and Siibak, 2012). This chapter is also an attempt to update an unwritten chapter in the history of Estonian journalism. It contains references to the aforementioned written sources but is mainly based on conversations and consultations with people who have been active in editorial management in different Estonian media organisations during the development of online platforms. In order to position Estonian online journalism in the international context, I went into more detail with the description of the situation in other CEE countries in Study III.

Comparative studies prove that journalistic practices differ across countries and depend on a number of variables (Fortunati et al., 2009; Örnebring, 2009; Stetka and Örnebring, 2013; Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2015; Örnebring et al., 2016). In some countries online journalism content is inclined towards the fast-paced publication of aggregated and curated content and *churnalism* (Anderson et al., 2012; Deuze, 2012; Bakker, 2014; Ananny, 2016) rather than investigative and multimedia-rich slow journalism (Dallmann, 2012; Craig, 2015; Ball, 2016), and this is due to the fact that there are more resources available in bigger media systems. In comparative studies, online media is often seen as an alternative for moving investigative journalism from traditional media to a more cost-effective platform that at the same time operates on a fraction of the budget (Stetka and Örnebring 2013, 429).

The online environment and its characteristics (immediacy, interactivity, omnipresence, hypertextuality, multimediality, etc.) do not promote diversity if the work processes and resource allocations do not support it. It is also understandable that journalists are enabled to use their skills and competences in content production. For this reason, I chose journalistic skill performance in relation to technological and economic change as the foundation of the following periodization. I prefer the term stages as more suitable, since stages may not always be unequivocally distinguishable between media organisations in terms of time and economic or technological change.

2.1 Four stages in the development of online journalism in Estonia

We may explain the pace of development of Estonian journalism by looking at the developmental conditions and pace of events in general. If we compare Britain, Germany, Sweden and Estonia in the 1860s (Örnebring, 2013), the early years of the development of the media, we see that Britain and Germany

already had news agencies in addition to print press, while Estonia and Sweden only had print press organisations. The mass press was fully developed or emerging in other countries besides Estonia. The division of labour in journalism was low, unlike other the countries in the comparison (Örnebring, 2013).

This comparison of 150 years before online journalism, may be an intriguing digression, but may also help explain the developmental pace of Estonian online journalism. The development of journalism as an institution and as work was faster in Britain and Germany being industrialized countries and Sweden being developing towards industrialization. Although the technological potential for journalism to develop was there, the societal context did not promote it. This comparison might seem like wandering too far back into the past, but I find it important to illustrate the cyclical changes that have taken place in the development of Estonian journalism. The societal context both in the 19th century and in the 1990s – labour market, economic situation, overall development of society, including audiences – all play a role in the pace at which journalism as an institution and an occupation has developed. To present the context in which online journalism in Estonia started to develop in the middle of the 1990s, I describe the societal context in which the changes took place.

The development of the Estonian labour market in Estonia was dominated by the tertiary sector. The media segment of the labour market was strongly influenced by the rapid growth of media organisations and the establishment of new periodicals – between 1989 and 1996 almost 800 new periodicals appeared (Üleoja, 2017) – this was partly due to the advancement of the advertisement and subscription-based business models.

Journalists in the 1990s experienced the transition from the Soviet regime, under which they were forced to seek a balance between their professional values and standards and the state ideology (Jakubowicz, 1992). The transition from a state controlled and organised media system to a rapidly emerging and expanding liberal, competitive and commercial media market was accompanied by changes in media organisations and journalistic practices (Saks, 2002). This also conditioned the generational replacement at the beginning of the 1990s (Lauk, 1996: 98).

In the context of online journalism, Estonia's technological development was the same as other countries in Western Europe in the middle of the 1990s. The liberal economic policies that emphasized market liberalism created a very competitive media landscape (Jenkins, 2001: 134; Örnebring, 2011) in which the development of journalism as a profession (especially in online sections of newsrooms) was shaped by changes in the labour market.

This, in turn, led to a shortage of qualified media workforce, and media companies started to hire people without any training in journalism (Lauk, 1996; Tali, 2010). The division of labour begins with an analysis of the labour process (Braverman, 1974: 52), but in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s – the early stages in the development of online journalism – journalists and media management were busy taking money for advertising, or as one of the editors-in-chief of the time stated: “We did not have time to think about journalists, we

were busy making news and money.” This may indirectly explain why Estonia has no formal accreditation skills for journalists, but at the same time places itself closer to the Anglo-American model of journalism (Örnebring and Melhado, 2016).

Online journalistic content has been provided to audiences for more than two decades in many places of the world. Based on technological advancement, the development of web news portals has followed quite a similar chronological sequence in Europe and the United States. Technology influenced the performance of skills and competences among online journalists. As the basis for my periodization, I take into consideration technological development on online platforms and the context of resources in society (economic recession, changes in audiences). I have intentionally left overlap in the start and end-points of the stages, since the turning points are not as clear-cut for such a precise periodization. I divide the development of Estonian online journalism into four stages:

1. 1995 to 2000: the ‘static’ stage
2. 2000 to 2008: transition from print to web
3. 2008 to 2012: producing a ‘stream’ of fast and cheap news
4. 2012 onwards: towards independent platforms

1995 to 2000: the ‘static’ stage

The three daily newspapers *Eesti Päevaleht*, *Äripäev* and *Postimees* were the first in Estonia to provide content on the web at the end of 1995. Other newspapers followed within four years, *Maaleht* being the last one to introduce its online platform in May 1999. In addition, the Baltic News Service (BNS) and IT company Microlink started an online news platform Online.ee, which was called *Delfi*. In the same year, the media corporation Ekspress Grupp launched their news portal *Mega*. Until this stage, the only entities to provide timely news content on the internet were the news agencies BNS and ETA. The content was copied from the newspaper without any changes and this is why the stage can be described as ‘static’. Until the year 2000, the journalistic content of the newspapers was provided free of charge online, although the same content in print was charged for from subscribers.

It is also important to discuss the influence of ownership on Estonian media enterprises. In 1998, the Norwegian media company Schibsted bought Eesti Meedia, the media company consolidating Estonia’s biggest daily newspaper *Postimees* and many local newspapers. The Estonian business daily *Äripäev* was established already by the Norwegian *Dagens Industry* in 1989 and is owned by the Bonnier Group. The foreign ownership is important, since in the beginning of the 2000s, it had an influence on the technical platforms, work processes, but also on the financial state of the enterprises during the economic recession. However, a discussion of the direct influence on the technological development and production would require separate research and is not part of this thesis.

From the perspective of the performance of skills and competences, this stage is somewhat insignificant, since the journalists produced their content for other platforms (e.g. newspaper) and it was copied online without the journalists ever coming into contact with the technological environment.

Training in journalism in Estonia had been carried out at the University of Tartu since 1954, and the journalists from the beginning of the 1990s had a formal university education. The basis of the education at the University of Tartu relied more on the traditions of the 19th century national journalism than the realities of the Soviet media (Lauk, 1996: 66). However, the Department of Journalism had been part of the humanities, while in 1966 it joined the Faculty of Social Sciences. This conditioned a shift from the preservation of cultural forms towards a more reflective knowledge in society (Lauk, 1996: 100). It is somewhat remarkable that in the same year, the University of Tartu opened its public relations programme for undergraduates; from then on, journalists and communication specialists were taught quite closely and by the same people.

2000 to 2008: transition from print to web

The beginning of the new millennium started with a crisis in Estonian newspapers – many newspaper journalists were made redundant and the money for developing online platforms decreased. The technical development of the online platforms was expensive and the revenue from subscriptions and advertisements in printed newspapers exceeded the turnover of the online platforms (Tähismaa, 2003). Therefore, the development of online platforms in terms of technology or work processes did not seem to be profitable. This paved the way for decreasing the number of journalists as well as substituting them with low-skilled and low-salary media workers. During this stage, there was almost no original journalistic content on Estonian online news platforms. The content was produced using secondary sources, usually referrals from other news media, press releases and content from news agencies. The work required limited technical skills, mainly to copy and paste the text and publish it. This situation shifted towards change in 2005, when *Postimees* started vigorously developing their news portal as an independent platform (Rebane, 2007).

Since the overall technological development of Estonia was favourable for internet-based platforms, in just three years *Postimees* and *Delfi* developed their online platforms to a whole new technological level. This contributed to the size of their audiences, as people were just discovering the expansive field of information on the internet. The size of the audience was guaranteed by constant news flows, which meant publishing texts as often as possible. This can be considered the starting point for technological acceleration – the construction of time pressure and the requirement to publish vast amounts of texts. This paved the way for the next stage in online journalism – content ‘flow’ – which is described in more detail below.

Economic pressure and the technical development of the platform made media organisations seek opportunities to monetize the content. The first attempts copied the newspaper retail sales and subscription model, where media

organisations limited access to online content using a newspaper subscription or later tried to sell single articles. The first newspaper to monetize their content online was *Äripäev*. In 2000, *Äripäev* tried to limit access to their online content only to subscribers, but this decreased the number of readers and the system was changed so online content was now free of charge for registered users. Since these attempts at monetizing the content did not function, *Äripäev* closed its online portal in 2001 (Tähismaa, 2003). These approaches to monetizing content were quite common in newspapers in Europe and the US (e.g. *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *welt.de*). Many of these failed, since the information was freely accessible elsewhere, or the online content was shovelled from newspapers and contained no additional value from the platform (Brandstetter and Schmalhofer, 2014).

One notable addition to online journalism was made by Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) in 2006. On 9 January, ERR started to publish content on the web (ERR press release, 2006). The content was mainly short news in the form of texts and some videos from other media providers. According to ERR's development strategies (2008, 2009) internet platforms were seen as environments for the consumption of television and radio content on-demand. However, there is one sentence in the development strategy (2011) indicating the need to develop an independent journalistic platform. ERR had had radio and television platforms. The addition of a new technical environment was treated as a substitute for TV-text. It remained this way until 2012, when the technological development of the platform was considered to be a priority (ERR development strategy, 2011). However, the content production during these five years and also some time after that resembled the early years of *Postimees* and other newspapers where no web specific journalistic content was produced, and the main content comprised press releases and referrals from other news media.

During this stage the positive influence of foreign ownership was most evident. Especially *Postimees*, but also *Äripäev* copied many technological, but also journalistic practices from their mother companies; for example, audience reception studies were made available for Estonian affiliates, the latest online platforms were shared and journalists were enabled via training on journalistic practices.

The difference between this stage and the next is that there was no actual expectation of how to increase output capacity and make revenue out of online news portals, the development of the platform was only technical. The development of the content lagged behind. But there was also a turning point between 2003 and 2005, when economic growth made it possible to hire more people to work online; however, it was not exactly clear what their professional journalistic purpose was, since their work was mainly to publish as much of the content that was already available as possible.

Estonia in the early 2000s chose, as did many other Eastern-European countries, the way of 'shovel journalism' where the online content was a reflection of newspaper content. The online news portal *Delfi* functioned separately from a newspaper, and therefore produced content only for their news portal. However,

the content produced only for the portal, or newspaper content reflected online, were not in any way taking into consideration the properties of online media – immediacy, interactivity, omnipresence, multimedia options or hypertextuality. This was also reflected in the ‘underperformance’ of journalistic skills and competences. The online platform was seen as a supplement to the newspaper that was supposed to bring in advertising money. But even more than 10 years later, news portals were relatively ‘static’, lacking immediacy and interactivity, and their advertising turnover was far behind the revenues in legacy media.

While looking at the formal training of journalists at the University of Tartu, this period was not very different from the previous. The curriculum had contributed with theoretical courses in new media, but the practical training in the curriculum had no component specialising on the production of online media outlets. The labour market demanded journalists for online platforms, but the demand was more for low-skilled technical workers; the university-trained journalists proceeded to the newspapers, television or radio, or to the rapidly developing PR sector. Taking into consideration the divergence between the labour force that online platforms demanded and the university training, online was not seen as a platform that would demand special training.

2008 to 2012: producing the ‘flow’ of fast and cheap news

In this point is necessary to pay attention to the work process and professional attitude among Estonian journalists between 2008 and 2012. Since there was no actual perspective on how online media should move forward, the content published online was a complete copy of the day’s newspaper (shovelled content) and press releases (copy-paste content). Although the previous stage also covers the point at which the economic recession in 2008 started, this stage can be characterized in general as dividing between quality journalists (those who could create quality content – for newspaper or television) and cheap online journalists (media workers who mainly copy-pasted and edited texts from other media and news agencies). The reasons behind the advent of cheap online journalism are manifold. If we look at media companies at the organisational level, the main problem seems to be the lack of ideas regarding a number of areas. In the Baltic states the issue of ownership also started to influence the situation (Vobič, 2011; Salovaara and Juzefovics, 2012). Media companies that had enjoyed the benefits (e.g. in-house training, innovative work practices and business models) of foreign ownerships were lost, since media corporations such as Schibsted and Bonnier (who owned *Postimees* and *Äripäev* respectively) sold their shares and the local media organisations were left in a difficult situation. The journalists, as in many other countries, were made redundant and replaced with cheaper online news workers. In terms of skills and competences, the environment for this was laid in the early 2000s: producing a lot of content using low-cost (but in practice also low-skilled) journalists seemed to be profitable during an economic recession. Both the situated activity and the social setting (Layder, 1997) in and between news-

rooms created the collective understanding of what online journalism is – low-skilled people publishing vast amounts of texts fast.

First, there seemed to be a deficit of ideas for how online content should differ from newspaper content, or moreover how to make online-specific content. The idea of a multimedia approach and converged content production was new in Estonia and elsewhere in the world (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006). The novelty of online-specific content raised questions about production and professionalism. Since online content had so far been ‘copy-paste’ and of poor quality; the journalists working for online platforms were not really seen by other journalists as reporters but low quality and low-cost media workers (Leheste, 2012). The development of a separately delineated online media platform with web-specific content was inhibited by a lack of resources on the one hand, and on the other hand, a deficit of skills and competences at both the individual and organisational level. At the organisational level, how online-specific content should be produced was tightly bound to the commercial interests of media organisations.

Second, no ideas actually existed for how to make online content profitable. The utilization of newspaper business models based on selling advertisements was adopted alongside newspaper content that was given away for free. Online mainly consisted of ‘shovelled content’ from print newspapers and from cheaply produced ‘copy-paste’ content. This demonstrates the lack of ideas for how to produce content specifically for online platforms and to make this profitable.

This shifted the audience towards the free online content and made them withdraw their newspaper subscriptions. This shift was also encouraged by the fact that there was an extensive overlap between the content of conventional and online journalism.

The economic recession starting around 2008 may have been the turning point in the differentiation of online and legacy media content in Estonia. For the Estonian media market, this brought on the changes in ownership. In 2013, Schibsted sold Eesti Meedia, but the cutbacks started already in 2010, and led to the reduction of salaries for journalists, redundancies and a decrease in the technological development of the digital platforms. Redundancies were made in many media organisations, usually favouring low-paid and low-skilled online journalists and cutting back on experienced and highly paid professionals.

Around the same time, in 2008, the impact of Facebook, Google, and YouTube might have started to be felt on advertising revenue. These aforementioned internet environments started to drain advertising money as well as audience, and increasingly started to switch their news media repertoires from journalism to social media. Mentally, the economic crisis and social media pressure deepened the stereotype of an unprofessional online journalist with limited journalistic skills.

This stage explicitly showed the differentiation between professional journalists from legacy media and online ‘media workers’; in other words, not journalists. This was mainly conditioned by skill performance, and precisely

how much time was given by the organisation to produce content. As the ‘media workers’ executed quite limited routine work, the journalists in the legacy media environment had more time and opportunities to use their professional skills and competences.

The study by Örnebring and Mellado (2016) (based on data gathered in 2009), indicated that Estonian journalists place the highest value on networking skills, while at the same time placing the least value on editing skills. This, they explain, is conditioned by the changing profile of the work, since networking is the ‘new’ skill. I agree with this finding, but I would add an additional explanation. Networking is valued by Estonian journalists for two reasons: 1) in such a small country, people are often acquainted and related to many people, which also makes it an inseparable part of the journalists’ work; and 2) being networked to sources also helps to get information fast, which also helps the journalists publish vast amounts of easily accessed materials quickly (Study III).

This period was also when training in online journalism at the University of Tartu began. In 2008, online journalism was taught in the master’s programme as an optional course called, ‘Web-editing and publishing’; a compulsory course, “Introduction to Online Journalism” was also added to undergraduate curriculum in 2012.

2012 and onwards: towards independent platforms

Commercialization inevitably pushed smaller-scale operations out of business or into consolidation with other companies (Fenton, 2007). The business models of consolidated media enterprises functioned well during the times of economic growth. Since the general economic context influences the media industry and the process of content production, economic recession did not favour the business models of either small single ventures or media conglomerates.

The consolidated media companies still seemed to struggle to find an effective business model, often by investing in technologies, but also in journalists whose abilities suited the conditions of legacy media production. If we look at the consumption of media content, that practice is generally not wrong (Reuters Digital Media Report, 2015; 2017). At the same time, it does involve a certain lack of sustainability – an orientation towards the older generation and little attention paid to changing trends in preferences. Shifts in media consumption preferences require a dynamic response in production. This is the turning point that differentiates this stage from the previous stages: the organisations are diversifying their online content and through that online journalists are more enabled to create online specific (e.g. multimedia, graphics, interactivity, convergence etc.) content and use a more diverse palette of journalistic skills and competences. The specific quality of the online platforms as a medium is starting to show journalists its true potential. It also indicates how this is not a ‘cheap alternative’, since material that is rich in multimedia content and interactivity and can be converged on other platforms, demands profes-

sional journalistic skills and competences in regard to issues, technical possibilities, and resources.

Consolidated media companies are often more rigid towards innovation and less responsive to new approaches to content production, distribution and marketing. Although the impact of technology, the financial crisis and fragmented audience expectations is hard to evaluate separately, it is clear that these factors in combination have influenced journalistic practice, most apparently in the online environment.

Regarding online journalism in formal education, there are now courses on practical online journalism at the undergraduate and graduate level at both the University of Tartu and University of Tallinn. This shows that the value of training in online or digital journalism has been acknowledged and is seen as equal to legacy media journalism; however, the results of the training will take time to flow through into the practices in media organisations.

II THE THEORY BEHIND THE SKILL ASSESSMENT MODEL

Digital culture has changed how information is constructed, presented and distributed. In these circumstances, it has become a challenge to define who is a journalist. The notion of journalism being in flux demands that we outline what journalism is and what the roles and practices of journalists are on different technological platforms. Talking about the roles, Ryfe (2016) and Reich (2011) refer to generalist approaches (Gans, 1979; Benson, et al., 2012; Mellado, 2015) according to which professional structures, procedures and values are uniform, and journalists use them regardless of the platform. Early studies of digital platforms concerning convergence, and the use of format and technology (e.g. Singer, 2005a; Boczkowski and Ferris, 2005; Steensen, 2009) also indicate that technological and organisational practices are similar across platforms. These studies referred to outcome and practice in general but did not distinguish particular skills and competences that journalists perform on different platforms. Braverman (1974: 52) states that the division of labour in production begins with the *analysis of the labour process*. It is important to analyse the labour within the enterprise and break the work processes down into occupations and industrial processes. Although he did not denote any precise profession, the approach suits the analysis of journalism at organisational and individual levels. I argue that studying practices by analysing only the final outcome, the published content, or by outlining the work processes, does not highlight the actual differences between platforms. In order to see the possible distinctions between platforms, we need to juxtapose the expectation of skills and competences against their performance on a specific platform. In this way we can see further whether there are differences in the performance or practice of roles between platforms.

Skill can be studied through different approaches. Bryson (2017) sets forth three broad categories of approaches:

Political economy of skill approaches (the preserve of economics, political science, sociology, and industrial relations);

Skill as an organisational resource (skill typified by organisational studies and human resource management);

Skill dominated by psychology and education.

This thesis primarily utilizes the approach of the political economy of skill, but also discusses skill as an organisational resource. The political economy approach to skill answers the following questions. What is skill? How do people acquire skills? Why do people have skills? How are they recognized? What is the impact of skills? **Skill is** an individual and social collective resource and is a dependent variable in the job, meaning that the level of skill depends on changes in occupation over time, on organisational performance and overall

economic growth (Vallas, 1990; Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011). **People acquire skills** through socially constructed networks and institutions. The reason why people **have or possess skill** can be due to a human or social right or entitlement to have a certain level of skill. **Skill is recognized** as occupational, and through skill hierarchies and ecosystems (Finegold, 1999; Buchanan, 2006). **The impact of skill** is personal and societal.

In journalism, skill is a resource both for the individual and for the organisation. The level of skill depends on changes in occupation (e.g. technological, organisational, and economic change). Journalists acquire skills in formal training but, depending on the societal conditions, this may not always be the case (Lauk, 1996; Tali, 2010). Skills can be acquired on the job or in the newsrooms (Lehste, 2012; Eek, 2013). The reason or explanation for having journalistic skills can be somewhat vague. The impact of journalistic skills can be important on the individual level, but also has impact on the occupational level and in the general labour market (Payne, 2017; Örnebring, 2016; Study II). Some jobs can be low-skilled and others high-skilled even within the same segment of the labour market.

In this thesis, the theory of social domains ties together, on the one hand, the empirical studies on the practices of (online) journalism, and on the other hand, separates these findings into layers of social domains. The theory of social domains, developed by Derek Layder (1993; 1997; 2013), proceeds from the work on the relations between structures and the individual by Habermas (1971), Giddens (1984; 1987) and Goffman (1959; 1983). Figure 1 introduces Layder's notions of lifeworld and system – a division of terms he takes from Habermas (1984, 1987). Layder agrees with Habermas that both terms refer to an ontological difference in societies. However, “lifeworld refers primarily (although not exclusively) to aspects of social life that have to do with the lived experience of human beings as they go about their everyday business. Thus, lifeworld elements appear more pronounced when we focus on the social domains of psychobiography and situated activity” (Layder, 1997: 56). System elements have to be analysed according to social settings, fields and contextual resources. Complying with Giddens (1984), Layder states that activities and structures are implicated, structures are produced and reproduced by people, and activities depend on the availability of resources provided by the structures (Layder, 1997: 66). Importantly, the system elements are a historical outcome of the previous activities, conflicts and struggles of actors who attempt to secure domination and control (Layder, 1997: 73).

Although Layder explains how he is similar and different to Giddens, he does not talk about Pierre Bourdieu's field theory (Bourdieu, 1993), which also refers to relations of power, social relations and practices, treating these factors as the fundamental structure of human action.

In field theory, Bourdieu approaches structure and agency from the understanding that the society shapes the individual's actions (Bourdieu, 1993). Giddens interprets the relation between structure and the agent by treating both as equals (Giddens, 1984).

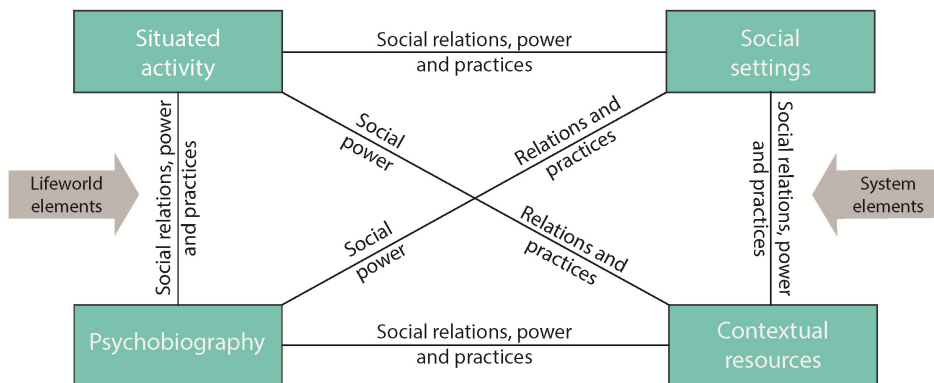


Figure 1. Social domains. Layder 1997: 56.

Bourdieu’s field theory could have also been applicable for framing the studies of this thesis. For example, his concept of habitus consisting of individual predispositions, judgements, assumptions and behaviour, resembles Layder’s domain of psychobiography, which is comprised of the historical and projective dimensions of an individual. But Bourdieu’s cultural capital encompasses education, technical expertise, knowledge, but also social relations between agents; for example, the relations between journalists and their audience as well as other journalists. Bourdieu’s cultural capital would simultaneously embrace to some extent Layder’s domains of psychobiography, situated activities and social settings. This is why Layder’s theory of social domains is somewhat more definite than Bourdieu’s theory of fields or Giddens’ structuration theory.

Asking why I did not choose Bourdieu or Giddens as a basis for the theoretical framework of this thesis is perfectly justified. Comparing these approaches, the difference in viewpoints was the argument for preferring Layder. Bourdieu and Giddens discuss the relation of agent and structure from the point of view of the structure; Layder builds the structure around the agent. Since my studies are mainly about the agent, about journalists, individuals with their independent and collective choices, Layder’s clear and agent-centred theory of social domains seemed the best theoretical structure to use.

Layder explains the theory of social domains as concerned with society as much as it is necessary to understand face-to-face conduct. The viewpoint of the human actor is of great importance, since social life is analysed from the viewpoint of how it is experienced. However, Layder’s approach does not only narrow down to the actor but takes into consideration the collective properties of social life – the context and social setting of the activities. These features constitute the social organisation of society (Layder, 1997: 14). The domains are bound together via a clustering of social relations and practices, discourses and forms of power. Therefore, the theory of social domains makes it possible to analyse practice, in the context of this thesis, the online journalistic practice, from the perspective of a single actor and society.

Domain of psychobiography

Layder introduces the term psychobiography, which combines both the social and psychological aspects of an individual. This domain contains two dimensions: historical and projective. Layder approaches the individual through the term career, which in a wider sense, similar to Goffman (1961), means “any strand of any person’s course through life”. Individuals will experience it from the standpoint of their life features, social relationships and events that appear in their careers (Layder, 1997: 34). On the one hand, the domain of psychobiography embraces the facets of individual experiences contributing to a person’s knowledge and competence. On the other hand, the domain is moulded by external social forces that directly link to the domain of a social setting (e.g. shaping the practices in the newsroom). Accordingly, Layder’s approach to psychobiography embraces the attitudes and values of an individual actor. It makes it possible to study, for example, the personal motivations behind career choices. But in this thesis the domain of psychobiography is treated more from the point of view of professional attitudes and values.

Human agency, from the perspective of social domains, should be seen as a combination of the personal capacities of a person, on the one hand, and on the other hand, bound to social and contextual factors. In other words, the actor is enveloped in the social fabric. In this sense the journalist as a professional actor should be approached by analysing individual, contextual and structural aspects together. My doctoral studies approach the (online) journalists’ professional agency in relation to change in the performance of skills and competences.

In this thesis, I define skill performance as the knowledge and skills that journalists have and practice in order to fulfil their work assignments competently. In some cases, I also use the term competencies, which embraces knowledge, skills and attitudes that are practiced in behavioural repertoires. However, in practice, areas of skill and knowledge are often hard to distinguish from competencies, as also became evident in Study III. For Study III, I developed operational categories (Figure 3) based on Hatano’s (1982) and Carpenter’s (2009) knowledge areas, and Mićo’s (2006) skill categories; in defining knowledge, skills and competences I proceed from these sources.

I also use the terms *skill performance* or *performance of skills and competences* originating from Carpenter and Mićo. The performance in this term should be understood as the practice of skills and competences in the journalistic community.

Journalists are expected to reskill, deskill, and up-skill their practices and working routines, generally without any direct say in the way the organisations they engage with operate (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 12). This points to the re-evaluation of individual skills and competences that is conditioned by contextual and structural aspects. At the structural level, one should look at the media as an industry. As an industry, the media adheres to the four standard features of the capitalist mode of production (Inglis, 1990: 144):

1. Mass production and the distribution of commodities;
2. Capital-intensive technology;

3. Managerial organisation of a highly specialised division of labour;
4. Cost-efficiency as a criterion of success, in other words the maximization of profit.

According to Gomery's critical industry study (1989), the model of structure is based on:

1. Market structure (ownership and changes in ownership);
2. Industrial conduct (key variables include pricing policies, product differentiation, advertising behaviour, and innovation of new technology);
3. Performance (three criteria to judge: efficiency, technological transformation, distribution).

Inglis and Gomery both approach the media industry without the essential component of production: the journalist. Inglis reaches the journalist to the extent that he talks about the "division of labour"; Gomery notices the journalist under the criterion of "performance". The reproduced practices represent the character of established social systems, in other words, workers must take account of established practices or risk censure, deprivation, such as the withholding of certain rewards (promotion, pay increase or better working conditions), or even a penalty (such as being fired) (Layder, 1997: 81).

Neither Inglis or Gomery see the journalist as a human resource – the capital that forms the basis of the industry. What is the human capital approach? According to the human capital approach (Becker, 1964; Berg, 1970; Berg, Kalleberg, 2001) skilled workers are the foundation of the effectiveness of the productive process and they can be recalculated into the equilibrium of receipts and expenditures (Becker, 1964). The definition of human capital comprises abilities, skills, knowledge and the experience of particular professionals (Vandenbussche et al., 2006; Faggian and McCann, 2009; Sardadvar and Reiner, 2017). Van Doorn (2014) distinguishes general human capital and context-sensitive human capital. General human capital is mobile, context-sensitive human capital does not cross boundaries, and journalistic profession can be categorized under the latter.

The human capital approach is closely related to education and training. The productivity rises if workers learn new skills and perfect old ones. However, learning new skills demands resources – time and effort on the part of the trainees and employers (Becker, 1964: 16–17). In journalism, these costs for training can come from producing current output or raising future output. Training might lower or raise current expenditures, but perceived investment in training could sufficiently raise future profits or lower future expenditures (Becker, 1964: 18).

As any capital asset, human capital is also influenced by depreciation (Becker, 1964: 18). Interpreting this in the context of journalism would mean that the training influences the earnings of the worker, but also the receipts and expenditure of the company. Training, meaning reskilling and/or multi-skilling over time, reduces the depreciation of the human capital.

From the perspective of journalists as human capital, the focus is on their performance. This, once again, leads to the topic of skills, and in the context of digital media, the multi-skilling of journalists. The demand for technologically multi-skilled journalists has risen a number of times (Boczkowski, 2005; Weber and Rall, 2013). But by studying the production process and working conditions of online reporters (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Robinson, 2011; Ottosen and Krumsvik, 2012) it becomes clear that online platform assets like interactivity, multimedia ability, and participatory content production has not been fully implemented (Schroöder, 2004; Van Der Wurff and Lauf, 2005). Mitchelstein and Boczkowski highlight four aspects that have gained the most scholarly attention in the research of online news: “modifications in editorial workflow, alterations in news-gathering practices, acceleration of temporal patterns of content production, and the convergence of print, broadcast, and online operations” (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2009: 568). Anderson et al. (2012) address a number of journalistic skill practices through the roles that journalism as an institution should fulfil. The supervision of the functions of democracy demands knowledge and skills for issue multi-skilling; content creation divided into “hard” and “soft” demands the journalistic skills for information processing; the increasing amount of citizen reporting demands a complex of skills and competences for information processing, and harnessing diverse skills for technological presentation and distribution. At the same time, they admit “there is no way to preserve or restore the shape of journalism as it has been practiced for the past 50 years” (p. 3).

Online journalists are more than ever required to be critical and advanced in their ability to process information (Singer, 2005a; Balcytiene and Harro-Loit, 2009), which is closely related to the normative question of news values, which in the end determine what becomes news and why (Strömbäck et al., 2012). They address the initial stages of information processing, which are important in selecting what became news. Since these stages of information processing are usually not visible in the final outcome or news content, it is of even more importance to address them in course in journalism offered at schools and universities (Study II).

There is a number of studies on the temporal acceleration of content production (Pavlik, 2000; Boczkowski, 2009), but they all lack the more integrated view of the practice of skills and competences.

As Örnebring and Mellado (2016) discuss, the issue of defining core journalistic skills has been the concern of employers and educators rather than an object of academic study, but they also emphasize that skills are time and context related. The latter also explains the manifold discussions over journalistic skills in training (Cushion, 2007; Donsbach and Fiedler, 2008), the changing skill demands in the labour market (Dupagne and Garrison 2006; Boczkowski, 2009), novel ways of storytelling (Zavoina and Reichert, 2000; Ursell, 2001; Lawson-Borders, 2003; Cawley, 2008), and the demand for multi-skilled journalists (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Boczkowski, 2005; Domingo, 2008), or skills that are specific to digital platforms (Fahmy 2008; Carpenter

2009; Weber and Rall, 2013) and the aim of defining core or generic journalistic skills (Mico 2006; Fahmy 2008; Örnebring and Mellado, 2013).

While discussing the availability of resources in the newsroom, the issue is related to economic pressure. The latter, of course, is an important influence on the whole work process, but at the same time other resources – time, the availability of journalistic skills and competences – are left unnoticed. The availability of resources influences newsgathering practices and content production. By reporting what skills journalists consider important (e.g. Carpenter, 2009; Örnebring and Mellado, 2016), we cannot transfer this to the actual practice of skills, which is also related to resources, situational activities and social context.

The analysis of the performance of the skills and competences of online journalists in the historical and projective dimensions of the domain of psychobiography makes it possible to see the change. But it also helps to outline the perception of skill expectations and performance with the limiting factors influencing the production cycle.

Domain of situated activity

Journalism, analysed from the production side, can be regarded as processing information into journalistic content. The process contains a number of stages that require specific knowledge, skills and competences in order to provide the factual and reliable quality of the journalistic content. This is best to be projected through the domain of situated activity.

There are a number of ways to interpret the reporting of the news as processing information into journalistic content. However, many of them are similar to each other. McManus (1994: 183) divides production into three stages: 1) discovery; 2) selection; and 3) reporting. He, like the others presented in Figure 2, emphasizes the importance of the initial stage – discovery – which requires a series of decisions from resource allocation to considerations about audience expectations. Quite similar stages of information processing are marked by a number of other scholars. Laakaniemi (1995) and Rich (2000) addressed information processing from the perspective of understanding writing as a process. Rich (2000) outlines the reporting and writing process through the self-coaching method, which has four phases:

- 1) **conceiving:** the stage of developing the idea for a story, focusing it, and refocusing the material if necessary;
- 2) **collecting:** the reporting stage, information gathering, interviewing sources, and gathering additional information in the course of interviewing;
- 3) **constructing:** the writing stage, planning and organising material, and writing a draft of the story;
- 4) **correcting:** the revision stage, checking facts, rewriting, and correcting grammar, style and typing errors.

Perhaps one of the simplest, but most universally adjustable divisions of information processing are proposed by Meyrowitz (1985) and Karlsson (2011).

They divide news reporting into *back-stage performances*, that include stages of information processing (e.g. finding the idea for a news story, gathering information, evaluating sources, fact-checking), and *front-stage performances*, that focus on content production stages, such as presentation and distribution.

This simple division of information processing from Meyrowitz and Karlsson, makes it possible to detect the ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ stages in news reporting, and this is important because the ‘invisible’ stages of information processing are mostly those that ensure the factual accuracy and credibility of the sources. For this reason, it is important to look at the *back-stage* processes, especially the channels through which information reaches the reporter; the latter is tightly related to social relations, situated activities and interaction order.

The stages in news reporting (Figure 2) are situated activities that take place in confined periods, spaces and places in newsrooms and places where the information is gathered and processed. There have been a number of attempts to describe this process, but the layout – the synthesis of these descriptions presented in Figure 2 – is the innovative outcome of this thesis. The novelty of this approach lies in the explanation of the importance of back-stage performances, where social relations and activities comprehensively influence the performance of skills and competences and the final outcome. Outlining the performance of skills and competences in the back-stage is the most suitable way to study the work of online journalists. While, in comparison, the skills and competences journalists performed in legacy media during information processing was also visible in the final outcome, in online journalism the technical platform sets limitations. The online journalistic content is: i) in constant change, which makes it hard to study as a fixed entity; and ii) does not adequately reflect what sort of resources (including human capital) and to what extent these were used in order to produce the content. Therefore, studying the back-stage provides a more adequate overview of how the content is really produced, what skills and competences are used and what influences the processing of information into journalistic content.

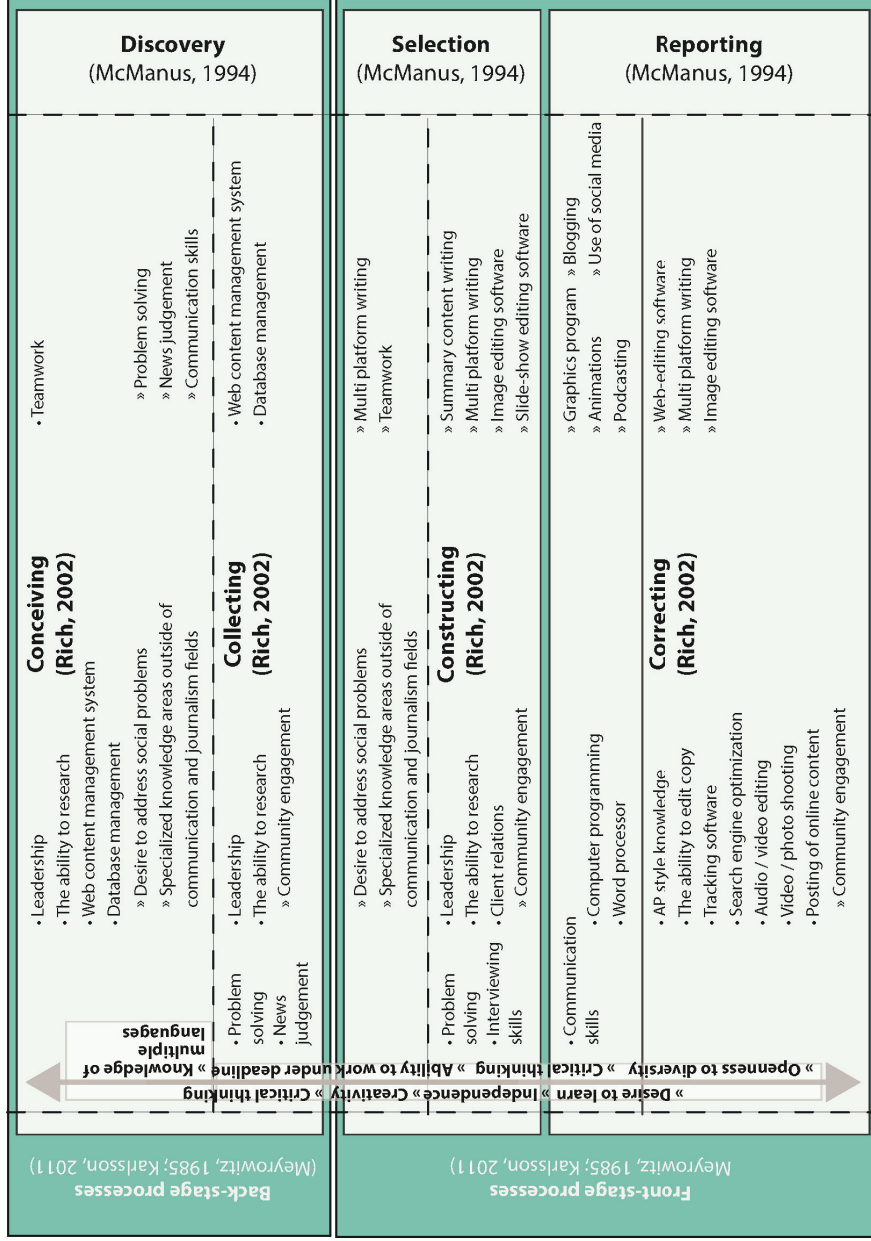


Figure 2: News reporting stages: information processing into journalistic content (Study II).

Processing information into journalistic content is intertwined with situated activities and social relations in most of the stages. Layder (1993; 1997) uses the terms social relations and situated activity and distinguishes these two using bonds and practices. Social relations stretch beyond situated activities; they are social connections and bonds between people in terms of social positions and the practices associated with them. Situated activity does not require actors to have social relations, but social relations will endure even after the situated activity has ceased (Layder, 1997: 59–60).

This, in the context of journalistic practice in the newsroom, is important because social relations reproduce, endure and transmit between newsrooms and media organisations carrying the experiences and practices of situated activities. This influences, for example, what skills and competences are expected and performed by reporters and by editors and managers. The situated activities described in Figure 2 are always produced in interaction between journalists in the newsroom or ‘networked’ newsrooms. But these interactions are also influenced by factors such as the audience and its interactions, economic recession, expectations by co-workers and journalists in other media organisations, the work practices of the precise newsroom/organisation etc. These interactions make up the social setting that conserve the situated activities in the newsrooms. In online newsrooms, where the journalists may not work in the same space but are networked through virtual environments, these sort of situated activities are hard to study. For example, mere observations of newsrooms will not provide an objective reflection of the activities and interactions; instead prolonged participation or participatory observation may outline the situated activities in online newsrooms.

However, Layder emphasizes that situated activity or conduct is more than the sum of the reproduced activities; it may also have an innovative quality resulting from creative interactions from face-to-face encounters. In online newsrooms, the interaction with sources in the situated activities can also be mostly invisible for the researcher (Anderson et al., 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2017). Online journalists hardly meet their sources face-to-face; they approach the sources by calling, but more often use email, text messages and social media environments like Facebook or Twitter (Leheste, 2012). These interactions are often private and invisible (Kivi, 2016), and are undetectable in the final outcome. This is why it is much more complex to study the situated activities of information processing in the online newsroom.

Situated activity is related to interaction order, which determines the production of meaning. When processing information into journalistic content, the order of interactions with sources becomes an important factor. In the production cycle, the information processing stages take place in a certain order; this guarantees the factual basis of the final outcome, the journalistic content.

As shown in Figure 2, the starting point for information processing is finding the idea/material for the news and this makes it even more important to ask about the channels through which information reaches the reporter. Sigal (1973)

divided the paths along which information reached the reporter into three categories:

1. **Routine channels** (official proceedings, press releases, press conferences, non-spontaneous events)
2. **Informal channels** (background briefings, leaks, non-governmental proceedings, news reports, editorials, etc.)
3. **Enterprise channels** (interviews, spontaneous events, books, research etc., reporter's own analysis)

Sigal (1973) admits that on-the-beat efficiency dictates the gathering of news via routine channels. This is why the order in which the interaction with sources in online newsrooms, after the information reaches the journalist, can be more diverse than in legacy media, where talking directly to the source is the norm. Online journalists, proceeding from the requirement for constant publishing, prefer information from channels that provide it fast and 'pre-processed' (Anderson, et al., 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2016; Study III). This practice may be accompanied by failures in processing information into journalistic content.

Study II raised this concern in the context of the emergence of the topical 'alternative facts' and 'fake news' entering the journalistic news production cycle. During the publication of Study II, the discussion of the use of the term fake news emerged. Wardle and Derakhshani (2017) suggest in their report the term 'information disorder', instead. Although I truly agree with the term they suggest, I will still use the terms fake news and alternative facts, or mis- and disinformation referring to Cooke (2017) respectively, since these terms were initially stated and used in Study II. In the context of online journalism, situated activity and interaction order are useful tools in analysing how (mis- or dis-) information enters the routine channels of journalists. However, as Layder states, domains are bound together with the clustering of social relations and practices, discourses and forms of power, and therefore the domain of situated activity is intertwined with contextual resources.

The ability to be newsworthy requires resources and skills, many of which go hand in hand with economic power, at least, and are only possessed by a few (Gans 1979: 242). Therefore, the availability of seemingly newsworthy material may qualify as publishable if there is a lack of resources to assess or fact-check the information's background. It is important to understand that the back-stage performances outlined on Figure 2 are invisible in the final outcome. The skills and competences performed, but also the situated activities and social relations remain invisible. This is why this thesis investigates these stages in practice.

Gans (2003) determines the operating structure of the news media to be the cause of most of the problems. Gans also mentions one of the influencers to be the constant and quick dissemination of news in such a highly competitive industry. Trouble stories always trump those reporting peaceful stories, which are limited to the information that there was no trouble (Gans, 2003: 48). This

exemplifies the fact that Anglo-American journalism focuses on conflict. This is what is common to current beat news and fake news, which often successfully employs the same news values.

This goes in combination with the fact that online news media often favours reporting the closest accessible content – gathering information on the internet, interviewing sources via email or on the phone (Lehste, 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2017). This has led to the situation where journalists cover topics initiated by high-level office holders who are conveniently accessible for the journalist, but whose attitude to the topic may be rather homogeneous and distanced from the diverse groups of audiences.

If the first stage, discovery, is comprised of slot-filling and a scarcity of resources, such as time or professional competences, information that resembles news; for example, alternative facts or fake news, are more prone to pass through the journalistic filter (Schlesinger, 1978: 126–128; Study II).

The abovementioned paves the way to constructing the journalistic fact. Gerbner treats the journalistic fact as setting the focus for directing attention, emphasis to signify importance, ‘typecasting’ and accentuating value and power that are tied together by association via a thread of action (Gerbner, 1973: 183). Gerbner’s approach also denotes that democracy itself does not guarantee the presentation of knowledge as truth. In Tuchman’s (1980) interpretation, the construction of a fact is always related to professionalism and motivated by the political sphere. He also emphasizes that the fact does not exist in isolation – it needs context in a network of other facts for signification. Time and staff are of vital importance to the news organisation, since a shortage of these forces a news organisation to depend on wire services and other news media (Gans, 1979: 239). In the contemporary context this provides favourable conditions for misleading information to enter news feeds, and through that the verification of false information.

Digital journalism or networked journalism has shifted how information is being processed into (journalistic) content (Anderson et al., 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2017). In other words, the social setting in which situational activity takes place inside and outside newsrooms has changed. Layder calls this interaction order. The interruption of interaction order comprises three social domains: social setting, situated activity, and the domain of psychobiography – the latter, in this thesis, from the viewpoint of skill performance.

For journalism, the current situation is the outcome of previous practices and provides the foundation for modelling multiple future scenarios. The discourse of situated activity and situated relations leads to the question of change – is it possible to change practices in online newsrooms, since the “situated” part of the term is in a continuous process of being remade? According to Layder (1997: 62), the “situated” part of the term has the tendency to fade away as people who make the encounter happen disperse in time and space (Layder, 1997: 62). Therefore, to analyse changes, the domain of situated activity needs to be studied. Changes, according to Layder, are possible in the passage of time

and as actors change; in the case of online newsrooms, the developments can happen through changing the journalists and the skills they possess.

Domain of the social setting

Changes in news production are fast and often conditioned by the constantly emerging technological options for publishing and distributing. The emerging digital environments offer diverse informational content that enables audiences to co-create and publish. Social media is one implication of the changes caused by technology that also has a powerful influence on journalistic practice. The fact that journalists see social media as a place for self-promotion and engagement with the audience, but not a tool for accountability or credibility, illustrates the lack of skill and time as resources (Harro-Loit et al., 2012; Weaver and Willnat, 2016). At the same time, social media provides a platform for everybody to create and distribute information, the main competitive asset of journalism.

The domain of the social setting, in which social activities and practices take place, is aggregated by reproduced aspects of social relations (Layder, 1997: 57). The social setting, according to Layder, involves the routine practices of people, with the exception that they also exist independently of specific people and practices. Reproduced social settings are elements of social systems and are related to systemic features like money, property, power and discourse (Layder, 1997: 63).

The interaction between the journalists and their sources (Gans, 1979; 2003) in situated activities in the production cycle demand that journalists perform a number of skills and competences. The production cycle verifies the credibility of the content, the process itself is what makes information journalistic content. However, in the case of online media the process inclines towards appropriating “publishable” material from the internet, and the time pressure and demand for publishing narrows the interaction with human sources. This is conditioned by the acceleration of social time in online newsrooms. The acceleration of social time, according to Hartmut Rosa (2010) can be divided into three dimensions:

- 1) technological acceleration;
- 2) acceleration of social change;
- 3) acceleration of the pace of life.

All three aspects can be analysed according to working life (Rosa, 2005; Ulferts et al., 2013). Applied to online journalism the acceleration of social time is expressed in increasing levels of work intensity and in feelings of work intensity. The latter, for example, is a construction of the social setting in which the pressure to publish constantly and the accelerated pace in general is constructed collectively in online newsrooms and between media organisations (Lehste, 2012). This social setting in combination with situated activity has led to changes in the interaction order (Layder, 1997: 63) in processing information into journalistic content in online newsrooms.

Domain of contextual resources

In order to understand the domain of contextual resources in the wider picture of journalism, we must address the factors conditioning the changes in journalism and how these have been approached. Digitization has changed the consumption and distribution of news content (Reuters Digital News Report, 2017) and this has led to changes in how the content is produced (Hermida, 2010; Örnebring, 2013; Bakker, 2014). The transformation in professional journalism has been going on for more than two decades (Pavlik, 2000; Deuze, 2003; 2005; Weaver and Willnat, 2016; Touri et al., 2017). Production research up until the beginning of the 2000s, has been based on legacy media organisational structures (e.g. Tuchman, 1987; Golding and Elliot, 1979; Fishman, 1980). But this doesn't apply completely to digital or online media or integrated newsrooms, since online media can be considered a separate media platform due to the research of online media assets and distinctive specifics in content production (Pavlik, 2000; Garrison, 2004; Deuze, 2003; 2005; 2007; Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Lawson-Borders, 2003; Domingo, 2008; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2009). In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the changes in journalism have been accompanied by the transformation from socialist regimes to independent states (Salovaara and Juzefovics, 2012; Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2015; Stetka and Örnebring, 2013).

Journalism in its production is outcome oriented. The production of content begins from the availability and allocation of resources. This determines the volume and quality of the journalistic outcome. The allocation of resources depends on a number of things, one of which is the platform-specific content production process. On 'legacy platforms' – television, radio, newspaper – professional production processes have developed over more than half a century.

Online and digital platforms, during the last two decades, have developed by imitating the production processes of newspapers. Based on the content production process, platforms can be divided into 'thick' and 'thin'. 'Thick' referring to platforms such as television or newspapers that demand a lot of production resources: many people with a wide range of skills, diverse technology, and production time and space. 'Thin' meaning platforms (e.g. radio and online journalism) that can publish or broadcast immediately with minimal technological and human resources.

Audience expectations towards the journalistic content of the platform depend on the personal preferences and quality of the content (Cingel et al., 2014; Newman and Levy, 2014; Jansson and Lindell, 2015). For audiences, the informational value and form of the outcome determine their consumption preferences, and their willingness to pay for the content (Herbert and Thurman, 2007; Curtois et al., 2015; Goyanes, 2014; 2015). The pressure of profit demands is often perceived and resolved through meeting the expectations of audiences. But at the same time, the awareness of the audiences is poor – news executives rarely conduct audience research and their image of audiences is based on the data of their advertising departments and they are not obliged to share this with their news staff (Gans 2003: 25). This, in turn, creates an echo-

chamber of the imagined audiences, without actual research on how this accords with reality. First, it creates a situation in which journalists do not know the actual expectations of audiences. Second, the editors and reporters may easily miscalculate the level of media literacy among their audiences, which creates advantageous conditions for misleading information. The results of the study by Strömbäck et al. (2012: 726) refer to the fact that “there is both a conceptual and empirical difference between news selection and news values, news and standards of newsworthiness.”

Jane Singer stated in 2005 that the state of flux demands a reconceptualization of the definition of a journalist based instead on the journalist rather than normative definitions (Singer 2005a). However, her idea demands for a change in the professional standpoint: journalists being a socially responsible and accountable for their actions. Singer’s approach was theoretical and did not consider the limitations of real practice. As she mentions, online journalists can act in a total absence of accountability or to accommodate greater accountability than ever before. Since this moral change is persistent, Singer’s approach could not and has not worked. But what is changeable in this state of flux are the skills as resources. They are learnable and practicable. Spyridou et al. (2012) illustrate the state of flux by using actor network theory by which they outline the newsroom network. The journalist is networked with actors such as skills, attitudes, professional ideology, technology, literacy, audience, educational background, professional experience etc. (Spyriodou et al., 2012: 80). Their research is an example of outlining the ‘state of flux’ in terms of skills and competences – the defining elements of journalism.

The current situation in journalism in Europe (but similarly in Estonia) is characterized by redundancies conditioned by economic recession, fragmentation of journalists between ‘old and valuable, but with limited technological skills’ and ‘underpaid and overqualified’ (Bakker, 2014; Anderson et al., 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2017). By describing the present, we should also look at the past. The study of news production enables us to draw a number of similarities between states of flux in different times.

Contextual resources connect the circuit of power relations – the allocation of resources, social setting of practices and the transformative capacities of individuals – showing the dual nature of social relations and practices (Layder, 1997: 83). These kinds of power relations expand outside organisations. Fields of activity or practices are defined around the struggle for resources; for example, audience attention, and economic and cultural capital.

Layder (1997: 83) stresses that resources must be understood in terms of three dimensions of existence, which must be viewed against the dualism between subjective (internal) and objective (external) aspects of society:

1. Resources exist as an asymmetrical distributive pattern within social systems. The extent to which certain kinds and quantities of resources (money, property, education and so on) are objectively “available” to different groupings in society (of a class, gender and “racialised” nature, for

example). This objective distribution also significantly influences the local “allocation” at the level of fields and social settings.

2. Resources are deployed by individuals who exercise some degree of control over those that are available to them.
3. Resources are intrinsically involved with situated activity in so far as they are selectively drawn upon by individuals (or groups) according to the emergent circumstances of social interaction.

The dimensions of resources influence a number of areas in journalistic information processing, among others the quality of the practice itself – what resources are available; for example, human capital, time, money and others. This leads to the question of supply and demand: is online journalism able to offer the content the audiences demand? The interaction with the public has changed the relationship with the audience(s), since for journalists audiences are often projected by click-counters and social media reach (Bruns, 2011; Boczkowski and Anderson, 2017), but does this provide an objective image of the fragmented audiences of digital media?

There are distinctions between different types of power and control relations between social domains. Journalists as social actors, in order to “produce” their social behaviour, use contextual resources, which Layder categorizes into three types:

1. **material resources** (e.g. money, property or ownership);
2. **dominative resources** (related to securing power, authority and control over others);
3. **cultural/discursive resources** (e.g. practical, technical and interpersonal knowledge and skills).

In this thesis, the focus regarding contextual resources is mainly on the latter – cultural/discursive resources; however, this does not mean that the other types of resources are of less importance or are fully out of the reach of the analysis here. Resources are closely integrated in all three domains, but also constitute an independent domain. As referred earlier, similar to Giddens (1987), Layder emphasizes that activities depend on the availability of the resources provided by the structures. The allocation of resources, in return, depends on power relations, especially on the knowledge, skills and competences at the executive level.

The issues of a scarcity of resources, technological development and ‘fake news’ may seem far from each other in order to be even loosely connected. Let us observe this more closely. During the 1960s and 1970s, international events such as the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement supplied journalists with a series of national stories that attracted a sizeable audience (Gans, 2003). But this situation has changed. The conditions in which journalists currently work are characterized by an overflow of information, competition with many-to-many media, pluralistic social media content, the acceptance of audiences, reliability for advertisers and the corporate pressure for profit. Gans summarizes

that journalists are disempowered by the changes taking place in the news industry (Gans, 2003: 22). This indicates the fact that journalism as an institution is always under pressure from external factors. These factors influence all levels of the field. Gans points to the fact that “profit pressures and budget reductions in the news media have also affected journalists’ control over the news and their professional autonomy in shaping it” (Gans, 2003: 24).

The informational functions of journalists are challenged by digital media as well as by other information providers (Picard, 2015). The information gathering and processing practices of a ‘networked journalist’ are more connected to online and digital sources, which are easily and instantly accessible (Van Der Haak et al., 2012). In online journalism or so-called ‘thin’ media, the initiator (the journalist) and the publisher are often the same. The technological development has created favourable conditions for the simple, fast and cheap publishing and distribution of content. At the organisational level, the opportunity to publish quickly has been turned into demand immediacy, in other words to publish fast and in quantities (Vobič, 2011; Leheste, 2012; Vobič and Milojević, 2014).

Rapid technological development, economic recession, the spread of misinformation and disinformation are all disruptions in society. For journalism, this has led to an imbalance of the professional equilibrium. Therefore, to assess the current state of journalism, moreover – defining what journalism is, we need to evaluate two aspects: 1) survey the elements that define journalistic work; and 2) outline the external factors that create the conditions of ‘flux’.

This theoretical context set out to tie together the macro, meso and micro level approaches to journalism and the journalist. This helps to define what journalism is and who is an online journalist. This manifold theoretical concept forms the basis for the empirical findings of the studies in this thesis. The studies outline the state and development of skill performance among Estonian online journalists. The skill performance assessment model, the novel contribution of this cover article, is developed upon the empirical findings and of the previous theoretical concept.

III METHODS

In order to contextualize the variety of methods used in the studies in this thesis, I will start with a brief outline of the production of studies of news media. The study of news production can be divided into three waves. The first wave emphasized the role of routines and recognized the role of the organisation and economic pressures (Tunstall, 1971; Tuchman, 1987; Gans, 1979). The second wave argued that production routines depend on the context and interpretation of the journalists (Bantz, 1985; Eliasoph, 1988; Pedelty, 1995). The third wave focused on the changes in routines and roles in the newsrooms (Boczkowski, 2005; Ryfe 2009; 2016; Anderson et al., 2012; Shoemaker and Reese, 2013). This thesis is part of the third wave. However, these studies did not take into consideration the real practice of the work of journalists, what skills they have and use and how the aforementioned influencers influence their performance. Therefore, the analysis of news production demands narrowing the scope to focus on where the routines are studied. This thesis focuses on online platforms and the performance of skill and competences.

The research questions in the studies and the research questions of the thesis differ, since the thesis endeavours to adopt a more conceptual approach, which crosses the boundaries of the individual studies.

The three studies pursued different objectives, which were:

- Study I:** to map the reasons behind the willingness to pay for online journalistic content reflected by online media users;
- Study II:** i) to analyse how product-oriented work practices, which resemble the conditions in online newsrooms, influence the processing of information into journalistic content; ii) explain how and why alternative facts and fake news get published in the news media;
- Study III:** to analyse the perceived expectations and performance of skills and competences in the content production process in online newsrooms and outline the set of skills that define journalistic work in online newsrooms.

Journalistic skills and competences at the individual and organisational level functioned to connect the separate studies in the thesis. This, in turn, provided an integral overview of the topic through the theory of social domains.

One of the most important aspects in this thesis is the question: Do changes in practices result in a demand for new skills? And if so, then what kinds of skills?

I start by looking at the change as a process, to outline the factors and conditions in which the changes have taken place. In order to analyse the skills and competences expected and performed in online journalism, we need look at the different approaches to skills and competences in general.

Distinguishing skills from competences is challenging especially in a particular occupation; for example, journalism (Chappell et al., 2003). There have been a number of attempts to categorize skills and competences (OECD, 2005; Finegold and Notabartolo, 2010). However, in practice skills and knowledge areas are often hard to distinguish from competences.

The core elements that characterize professionalism can be categorized under three domains (Örnebring, 2013): expertise, duty and autonomy. In the context of this thesis the first is most important. Expertise (or skill, or knowledge) refers to the domain of specialist, often technical, knowledge that is associated with a profession. Based on different studies, journalists reflect the skills of writing, or being able to extract information and present it to audiences, analyse and synthesize facts in context (Örnebring, 2013: 38).

Hatano (1982) also distinguished three areas: the adaptive expertise knowledge area, technical expertise area and non-technical expertise area. The areas of expertise can be complemented with skills according to Carpenter (2009). These skills and knowledge can be classified under Mićo's multi-skilling categories and used as subcategories for textual analysis – this is what forms the foundation of the studies in this thesis. Figure 3 is a synthesis of Mićo's (2006) multi-skilling levels complemented with Carpenter's (2009) examples of skills and knowledge. These categories were necessary for the operationalization of the analysis in Study III and play an important role in outlining the skills and competences of online journalists in the introductory article of this thesis.

This outlining in Figure 3 is important, since the skills and competences performed in the situated activities are influenced by social relations in online newsroom practices. All of the studies of this thesis are intertwined with these three aspects.

The summary in Figure 3 is important, since the skills and competences performed in the situated activities are influenced by social relations in online newsroom practices. All of the studies in this thesis are intertwined with these three aspects.

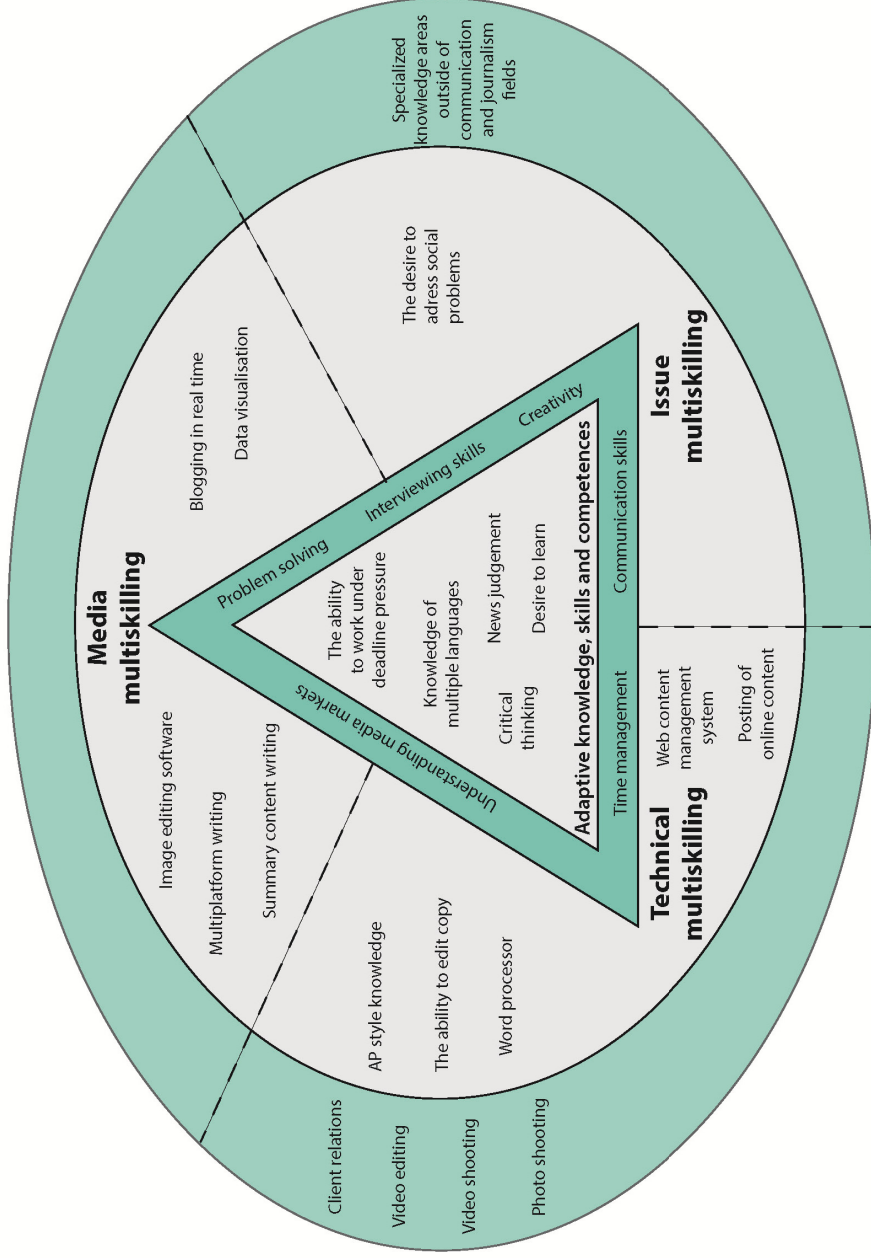


Figure 3: Outlining of knowledge, skills, and competences by multiskilling areas. Developed based on Micó (2006) and Carpenter (2009).

3.1 Empirical data and samples

Study I used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data was derived from the Estonian quantitative survey *Me. The World. The Media*. This is a regular representative study of Estonian society that has been carried out every three years since 2002. The questionnaire of the study contains almost 700 questions on a wide range of topics from everyday life, labour, family, education, politics, media consumption etc. (Vihalemm and Masso, 2017). The data was collected by social survey providers Factum and Saar Poll. The general sample of the study in 2011 was N=1510 and 2014 N=1503.

This was analysed in order to outline the willingness to pay and hindrances to pay among different socio-demographic groups in Estonia. To gain insights into the individual reasons behind the willingness to pay, we conducted 13 qualitative interviews with active online media consumers, and 4 expert interviews with managing directors covering all the dominant media corporations. The active online media consumers were selected from an investors club managed by the Estonian business daily *Äripäev*. The interviewees for the expert interviews were CEO's. This study helped to answer the research question concerning what skills and competences should be performed to produce the content that audiences are willing to pay for. These results can be delayered from the domain of contextual resources, but also reflect the domains of situated activity and social setting.

The data used in **Study II** was gathered in two periods; the first period (2010–2011) focused on the working processes in newspapers, and the second (2017) focused on online media. To analyse how the method of teaching journalism courses influences the perception of news reporting, a product approach and process approach to teaching methods were applied with two different groups of journalism students (1st group, N=42; 2nd group, N=38) in two different years (2010 and 2011). The product approach simulated newspaper work routines emphasizing the product – the final news article. The changes made in the teaching method (process approach) for the second year took into consideration the problems addressed by Laakaniemi (1995). The process approach combined practical assignments from the newsroom simulation with lectures and seminars. In the lectures, news reporting was explained as a process; the seminars gave the students opportunities for reflection and coaching from peers. The group of students who followed the work process in an 'online newsroom' were taught according to the product approach. As in the newsrooms in Estonia (Loit and Siibak, 2012; Leheste, 2012) the group of students had to publish a news 'item' every ten minutes during a 6-hour work shift; the topical areas that were compulsory to cover were foreign news, finance, state politics, culture and entertainment. In addition, one article containing at least three units of multimedia components was required. At the end of all three courses, the students' perception of the content production process was studied in focus group interviews (1st group, N=15; 2nd group, N=13; 3rd group, N=10); students were selected using random sampling (except the 3rd group,

where all participating students were interviewed at the focus group). This study sheds light on the 3rd and 5th research question. The empirical findings can be delayed in all domains, but emphasis falls especially on the domains of situated activity and social setting.

In **Study III**, the data was collected in 2012 and 2015 in order to compare possible changes that were conditioned by changes in ownership and economic conditions in society. The method used in the study was in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with 12 online journalists in 2012 followed by 8 interviews with online journalists in 2015. In both years, five online reporters and five editors from *Postimees*, *Delfi*, *Õhtuleht*, *Estonian Public Broadcasting* and *Äripäev* were interviewed. Three of the editors were the same in both years. The last study of the thesis is probably most interesting for practicing journalists because it delays the answers to the research questions in all social domains and gives the most solid outcome to meet the objective of the whole thesis.

Since the empirical data was collected using mixed methods, I will now provide an overview of the data analysis describing it method-by-method.

Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data analysis of Study I was based on the two pairs of statements about the willingness to pay, by respondents in the survey *Me. The World. The Media* in the 2011 and 2014 datasets. The respondents evaluated which of the two contradictory statements suits his/her preferences. The statements were “*I would be ready to pay for Estonian newspapers more, if they gave more quality information*” vs. “*Newspapers’ online editions should be completely free of charge.*” and “*Newspapers’ online editions could be monetized, since it enables them to raise the quality of the content*” vs. “*There is plenty of quality information, I am not willing to pay for this.*” The answers to these questions in 2011 were compared to the answers in 2014. The correlated variations of the answers to both questions were analysed and the socio-demographic differences in the willingness to pay were checked in the sample. These results were the contextual input for the semi-structured interviews in Study I.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews that were used in Study I and Study III were approached respectively using the questions “*what online journalistic content readers are willing to pay for and why?*” (Study I) and “*what skills are expected and what skills are performed by online journalists?*” (Study III). All of the interviews were analysed in three phases. During the first phase, I reviewed the transcripts with the co-authors of the studies several times. In this phase we also applied open coding. After that we grouped the codes into categories. In the third phase, we developed themes that expressed certain topics that became evident. These topics are presented in the article with examples of the most illustrative quotations.

Case study

In Study II, I used data from a method that is on the border between a case study and an experiment. I prefer to use the term case study here since precise controlled research conditions must be guaranteed in an experiment so it can be repeated. However, my research for Study II was by nature more qualitative and accorded more with the case study method.

The case study was implemented over two years with journalism students at the University of Tartu. To analyse how the teaching method influences the perception of news reporting, a *product approach* and *process approach* to the teaching methods were applied with two different groups of journalism students (1st group, N=42; 2nd group, N=38) over two years (2010 and 2011). The *product approach* simulated newspaper work routines emphasizing the product – the final news article. The changes made in the teaching method (*process approach*) in the second year considered the problems addressed by Laakaniemi (1995). The *process approach* combined practical assignments from the newsroom simulation with lectures and seminars. In the lectures the news reporting was explained as a process; the seminars gave the students opportunities for self-reflection and coaching from peers.

The group of students who followed the ‘online newsroom’ work process was taught according to the *product approach* method. As in newsrooms in Estonia (Loit and Siibak, 2012; Leheste, 2012), the students had to publish a news ‘item’ every ten minutes over a 6-hour work shift; the topical areas that were compulsory to cover were foreign news, finance, state politics, culture and entertainment. In addition, one article containing at least three units of multi-media components was required.

At the end of all three courses, the students’ perception of the content production process was studied in the focus group interviews (1st group, N=15; 2nd group, N=13; 3rd group, N=10); the students were selected using random sampling (except the 3rd group, where all participating students were interviewed in the focus group). The focus group interview in the first year also included suggestions for changes in the teaching methods for the following year’s course. In all three groups the focus group interviews clarified the students’ perceptions of the news construction process.

Therefore, the analysis of the case study functioned partly as input for the focus groups but was also experimentally necessary in order to see what stages of information processing the students left out in the context of the different learning conditions.

Focus group interviews

In Study II, I approached the transcripts from the focus groups with the question “*what stages of information processing did the students outline and what is not mentioned?*” The transcripts were then analysed using ‘framework analysis’ (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). Framework analysis usually contains five stages, but as I was familiar with the focus group interviews and the transcripts, and I had already set the narrowing focus question, my analysis for Study II started

with identifying a thematic framework in which I wrote memos in the margins of the text and extracted short phrases in order to develop the categories.

In the third stage, I indexed the data by comparing the highlighted quotes/conversations between the cases. In the fourth stage, I charted the quotes by extracting them and rearranging them into appropriate thematic content. In the fifth, interpretation stage, I used my theoretical framework of news reporting stages and processing information into journalistic content (Figure 2) as a foundation for selective coding and interpretation based upon that.

3.2 My position as a researcher

Studying the central concepts in the newsroom requires some experiential knowledge, otherwise there might be some serious misunderstandings of what is practice or whether a certain activity is part of the system or just an isolated instance. For a bystander, a lot of these aspects may remain veiled. Even in ethnographic studies, subjects are no longer understood as informants, but as ‘ethnographic subjects’ (Lassiter, 2005: 61). In the studies in this thesis, I cannot be considered a subject. My role as researcher suits Edwards’ (2012: 26) concept of relational expertise, where ethnographers become engaged without going native. I would not regard myself an ethnographer, rather an insider-researcher, as Tedlock (2000) and Costley (2010) refer to the position. Insider researchers draw upon the shared understandings and trust of their colleagues with whom the normal social interactions in working communities have been developed (Costley, 2010: 1).

It is important that insider-researchers make a difference in a work-based situation and situations to be taken into consideration in research. Although I have made ethnographic observations in the newsrooms as an insider-researcher, I have not used the data in the studies of this thesis, for a clear separation between work and research related aims. This is due to the reason mentioned in the introduction: during the studies of this thesis I have been working as a journalist and as a teacher at the university. I have knowingly separated my role as a researcher from my other roles; for example, I have never interviewed my colleagues who work with me in the same newsroom, these interviews were designed by me, but conducted by students who I supervised. The other reason for separating the roles is similar to what Hasse (2015: 102) highlights: the expertise, which the researcher brings to an organisation, may neither be understood nor wanted. I used the distinction of roles to refrain from a knowing influence on the journalists working in the same newsrooms with me. This enabled me to study the influencers that became evident over time (e.g. Study III).

This is all due to my role as a practicing journalist and as a lecturer at the university. Engagement in newsroom practice has helped me to set the focus of the studies and compare the results of the studies with the practices in the newsrooms.

IV EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The studies in this thesis deal with seemingly distant approaches in the discourse of answering what the journalistic work in online journalism is. Therefore, the empirical findings of the thesis are bound together within the framework of the theory of social domains. This makes the analysis possible of diverse aspects, such as the expectations of the audiences of online journalistic content, processing information into journalistic content, skills and competences necessary for this sort of information processing, and the concept of journalists as human capital. The empirical findings of the Studies are presented based on the four domains.

4.1 Domain of psychobiography

According to Layder (1997), the domain of psychobiography is comprised of historical and projective dimensions. I use these dimensions to outline the expectations and performance of the skills and competences of online journalists.

Based on the results of Study III, the expectations of the skills and competences that online journalists should have, are inclined towards *media multi-skilling* and *technical multi-skilling*. This accords with the early research on online journalism (Singer, 2005b; Steensen, 2009). The most important skill online journalists were expected to have, was recording videos and taking photographs, if necessary. This involves technical multi-skilling from the area of routine technical expertise. This contributes to the pool of studies that exhibit the conflict between journalists being expected to be multi-skilled (Pavlik, 2000; Boczkowski, 2005; Huang et al., 2006) and the de-skilling effect of real practice (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Fahmy, 2008; Domingo, 2008; Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2015).

It is notably important that journalists are expected to be ready to produce content for both newspapers and online. However, producing content for both newspapers and online demands knowledge of the convergence, but none of the respondents mentioned the competency of converged content production: neither the skill nor the competency of converged content production was expected or practiced.

The digital media report on Estonia (Loit and Siibak, 2012) states that despite Estonia's advanced level in digital media, the diversifying potential of digital journalism in the news overall has not been fully realized, and Study III confirmed this statement. Loit and Siibak (2012: 8) explain that an article is valued by the number of visitors it attracts, which often leads to flawed editorial decisions, generates misleading headlines, and publishing second-hand stories and copy-pasting PR material. The journalists interviewed in Study II described skills through the perspective of the outcome, excluding the wider background of the competency. The sharpest discrepancy between skill expectation and skill

performance was evident in the *issue of multi-skilling*. Reporters were expected to cover different topics, which seems to indicate variety in the issue of multi-skilling. But in analysing the answers reflecting the real performance of multi-skilling, it became evident that reporters mainly copy-edited press releases from different areas, and any deeper knowledge of the area came from previous editing of texts on the same topic. Understanding different topics was expected of reporters but was rarely practiced in an advanced journalistic sense.

From the historical dimension of the domain of psychobiography, it became evident that the online journalists' expectations and performance of skills and competences diverged; practices were adapted from 'thick' media (newspaper, television, radio), which may prevent the performance of skills and competences.

This outcome is important because this defines how journalists perceive and perform their roles and how they define themselves as professionals (Hellmueller and Mellado, 2015; Beckett and Deuze, 2016; Ryfe, 2016; Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). In the technologically and contextually (e.g. economic and societal influences) developing environment, the performance of journalistic skills and competences helps to define journalism.

In the analysis of the projective or future dimension of the domain of psychobiography, all three Studies contributed. Journalists declined to define skills that are specific for online journalists (Study III). Instead, they stated that journalistic skills were universal, regardless of the platform one was producing content for. From this it can be concluded that skills and competencies were not perceived as online platform specific, and web specific skills were not highlighted as especially valuable for an online journalist. However, this contradicts the audience expectation of online journalistic content (Study I), where it became evident that the audience segment that is willing to pay for online journalistic content expects 'something extra'. This 'something extra' referred to online specific content or very exclusive insights into journalistic information. Therefore, a possible bottleneck in the future is the contradiction between the audience expectation of online journalistic content and the lack of the performance of multi-skilling, technical and media multi-skilling.

The projective dimension can also be observed through the changes. The clearest changes in the practice of online newsroom skills became evident in Study III. Changes were evident in the area of routine technical expertise, technical multi-skilling at both the perceptual and performance level. In 2012, editors did not associate technological skills with storytelling at all; in 2015, it was referred to in the context of the growing cost of IT development – newsrooms are investing in hardware and software, but not in human resources and the development of technical and storytelling skills depends on the initiative of the reporter.

What also became evident was that the editors and reporters are unable to differentiate skills from competences or distinguish journalism specific skills from general transferable competences. This may be a peculiarity of a transi-

tional post-Soviet society, in which the development of journalism as a profession was changed at the beginning of the 1990s.

On the positive side, the perceivable change in expectations and the performance of skills indicate the diversification of skills and competences of journalists. This also indicates that at some point in the future, different versatile skills and competences may be valued in online journalists as resources of the media organisation.

4.2 Domain of situated activity

The domain of situated activity observes the interactional activities between journalists in the newsroom, but also the interactional situations with sources and audiences.

The allocation of resources in newsroom practice will be more closely observed in Section 4.4, but I will discuss the utilization of time as a resource here in the context of situated activity. Study II and III revealed that time is one factor that influences the performance of skills the most. The editors and reporters in all the online newsrooms talked about the expectation and practice of being fast and publishing in quantities (on some occasions 8 to 40 ‘units’ (articles) per 8-hour work shift). At the same time, the interviews revealed that the acceleration of social time for the reporters seemed partly artificially constructed: when we asked the reporters where the expectation of quantity came from, they were unable to answer, except to say that it was the “expectation of the editors” or “what everybody does”. Even when reporters admitted that they had a requirement of a certain number of stories to publish per shift, the number was hardly ever checked; they said that it was a matter of their conscience reminding them to meet the criteria and be fast. A similar “expectation” was constructed on the basis of competitiveness with other media organisations (Study III). This sort of construction of expectations influences the work practice and is created in the interactions between journalists in the newsroom, but also with colleagues in other newsrooms.

Interactions between journalists and sources is one of the overarching components in processing information into journalistic content. In online newsroom practice, the information often reaches the journalist via the internet (Study II; III; Anderson et al., 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2017), so the interaction may retreat to publishing already “processed” information (Study II). Layder borrows the term interaction order from Goffman. This denotes a distinct set of concerns that are specific to that order; for example, processing information into news, and this order distinguishes it from other social orders. Under the influence of time pressure and the expectation to publish at short notice, the back-stage performances – the stages of information processing invisible in the final outcome – are placed under pressure. This, in turn, creates favourable conditions for false or misinformation to enter news journalism (Study II), since the information processing cycle is comprised of slot-filling and a scarcity of

resources, such as time or professional competences. This is not specific to online journalism and may also happen in newspapers, radio or television; but it is more likely to happen in the online newsroom under the aforementioned working conditions.

Interaction with audiences is one component that has evolved technically with the emergence of digital platforms. Two-way interaction with the audience was never as immediate on legacy media. However, journalists do not use this opportunity due to the lack of time and need (Study III; Harro-Loit et al., 2012). The interactive commentary boards for audiences are seen more as feedback in case there are mistakes in the published item.

4.3 Domain of social setting

According to Layder (1997), the domain of social setting creates the space for situated activity and endures the impact of the activities and interactions over time. Social activities and practices take place in the social setting that is aggregated by reproduced aspects of the social relations (Layder, 1997: 57). Social settings are the routine practices of people, with the exception that they also exist independently of specific people and practices. Reproduced social settings are elements of social systems and are related to system features like money, property, power and discourses (Layder, 1997: 63).

Social activities and the performance of skills and competences were similar across online newsrooms in Estonia, raising the question of how these practices disperse and why.

In this thesis the answer to this question lies in skill performance, which can be interpreted as a common practice in the journalist community. The meso level approach in this case shows that skill performance in a situated activity depends on precise organisational work allocation, but these practices tend to be shared within the community, between media organisations (Study III). This became evident when respondents of different newsrooms started to refer to the work practices of other newsrooms (Study III).

Similar to practices, expectations are also dispersed:

“I think it is not only specific for online journalists, but for journalists in general; it is better if you know how to take a picture or think in video genres if needed” (Editor at Õhtuleht, 2012; Study III).

“The role of journalists – or let’s say the role of all media workers – is changing a lot. /---/ Journalists are multifunctional and it is, in my opinion, absolutely compulsory for future journalists to learn all the skills: a little bit of this and a little bit of that” (Editor at Postimees, 2015; Study III).

Technical and multimedia multi-skilling is especially expected, although hardly ever performed to the extent of the expectation. A similar situation exists with skill performance, which depends greatly on the availability of resources,

especially time resources. The pressure to publish a certain number of ‘units’ (meaning articles) seems to be similar in different newsrooms, as is the unwritten rule behind the expectation. The results of Study III can be expressed by the idea *we do it, because others do it*. The social settings of newsrooms are what make the practices disperse at the macro level (Study I and Study III), between newsrooms and organisations. Therefore, this can be considered one of the most important aspects that influences the culture of journalism in society.

Social activity and social relations are in a hermeneutic circle. Social relations endure beyond the situated activities of newsroom practices, transmitting the usage of human capital; for example, the expectation and practice of the skills and competences of an individual, increasing time pressure, creating “unwritten” audience expectations as a constant demand for publishing, and through that constructing the “feeling of competitiveness” between journalists and other media houses. Consequently, the defined practices may be similar across online newsrooms in different media organisations in Estonia. The change in the performance of skills and competences depends on the people and the dispersion of current managerial decision-making over human capital.

As a criticism of the results of Study III, it must be added that since we saw some development in skill performance between 2012 and 2015, we can conclude that by now, the year 2018, the situation has changed even more.

4.4 Domain of contextual resources

In this thesis the contextual resources proceed from Layder’s (1997) distinctions of types of power and control relations between social domains:

1. **material resources**;
2. **dominative resources**;
3. **cultural/discursive resources** (e.g. practical, technical and interpersonal knowledge and skills).

The influence of **material resources** such as money, property, and/or ownership is not always perceived by journalists and often it is not noticeable in the newsroom practice. However, resource allocation becomes evident in the conditions in which skills and competences should be or are performed. The most valued skill that an online journalist should have that was mentioned in Study II and III was speed and the ability to react quickly. Online journalists are expected to have this skill and are also performing it and it is evident in the outcome – 8 to 40 published ‘units’ per work shift. This result correlates with similar studies in other CEE countries (Salovaara and Juzefovičs, 2012; Ghinea and Avădani, 2012; Švob-Đokić and Bilić, 2012).

Approaching journalists as human capital may, in the domain of contextual resources, be categorized as a material resource or a discursive resource. In this thesis, I observe journalists as a feature of the capitalist mode of production as a development from Inglis’ (1990) and Gomery’s (1989) approach to the

industry; and therefore, journalists as human capital are categorized under material resources. Journalism in its production is outcome oriented. The skills, competences, time, process operations made with information, etc. (back-stage performances) are mostly not evident in the final outcome. At the same time, the visible outcome (front-stage performances) reflects volume and quality. In terms of investing in human resources by improving skills, it became evident from Study III that editors did not see their reporting skills and competencies as resources that could increase the value of the final product or that the media organisation could benefit from. For the editors, investments in reporters were seen as salary expenditures; only one editor stated that since information processing was becoming more complex, the specialists deserved corresponding salaries. Improving skills, in the opinion of the editors, was regarded as a matter of the reporters' own interest and was to be achieved in their own spare time. The findings of Study III indicated that editors are unable to see journalists as resources that could provide additional value to the content. This can be considered a mode of resource allocation, in this case making use of the skills and competences of human capital.

Dominative resources, when we talk about journalism, is related to securing power over other media organisations, and gaining and sustaining authority and control among your audiences. Contextual resources being related to the domain of situated activity translate into practice in online newsrooms. The situated activities in which the content is produced indicated discrepancies between the audiences' expectations. Regarding priced content (Study I) the interviewees remarked on the importance of length and the richness of the story, revealing that people are more willing to read long and informative texts online as these stories reflect the work-effort of the media organisation. At the same time Study II and III revealed the expectation for the journalist to be fast and publish quantities of 'units' (articles).

The **cultural/discursive resources** were already treated in Section 4.1 in relation to the dimensions of the domain of psychobiography. But from the angle of journalists as human capital, I will once again examine skills and competences.

The interviewees in Study I all cited examples of immediacy, multi-mediality, and hypertextuality as "extras" employed by online news media. In relation to free-of-charge and priced online news, the respondents highlighted speed and immediacy; however, some compromise on speed was accepted when it comes to priced content. The audience expresses its expectations and preferences through their willingness to pay, and the interviewed respondents in Study I all expressed that they expect high-quality online journalism where they can see the effort and the application of platform assets (immediacy, interactivity, multimediality etc.). This, in a way is a contextual resource that influences production. However, Study II and III indicated that the sort of content that respondents to Study I are expecting, is not produced; neither the practices nor skills and competences performed in Estonian online newsrooms meet the specification of specific, exclusive, in-depth, quality online journalistic content.

V DISCUSSION: SKILLS THAT DEFINE JOURNALISTIC WORK IN ONLINE NEWSROOMS

Journalistic skills and competences are core elements that differentiate journalists from all other media content creators. Journalism is distinguishable from other media due to the **editorial process** that ensures the factual accuracy of the content; this is assured by the performance of different roles in the newsroom; in other words, the organisation. In different legacy media platforms; for example, television, radio or newspaper, these roles are fully developed and distributed between journalists and technical specialists. In online journalism these roles are indefinite, as are the skills and competences they are expected to have and perform.

The legacy of the labour market of the Soviet regime was that labour had the character of a commodity (Jenkins, 2001: 135). The transformation of the media market in the 1990s created the conditions for establishing new media enterprises, but at the same time the practices resembled the same ‘commodity character’. This commodity character approach to production required little specific journalistic knowledge and enabled low-cost in-house training. This, as Becker (1964: 24–28) states, means little expenditure on training but also low skill requirements and would also tend to be less profitable and less effective in the production cycle (Berg and Kalleberg, 2001: 7–8). This could be one stimulus that started the process of deskilling, which according to labour process theory stems from the intention to reduce labour costs, which leads to a degeneration of skill performance (Braverman, 1974). The technical rationalization of which Braverman (1974) talks about in the context of the metal industry, has similarities with the technological change that online platforms brought to journalism. Braverman’s descriptions of the technical control that led to a larger pool of surplus labour, also describes the processes that took place in Estonian online newsrooms at the beginning of the 2000s.

During the last decade, the issue of online journalists’ skills has been raised a number of times, especially in the context of converged media production, which demands versatile skills and competences (Dupagne and Garrison, 2006; Huang et al., 2006; Robinson, 2011; Domingo et al., 2015). Being multi-skilled has been regarded as essential for online journalists; however, skill expectation and skill performance have mostly been studied separately on the basis of actual work practices (Fahmy, 2008; Ottosen and Krumsvik, 2012; Domingo et al., 2015).

The expectation that journalists should reskill, deskill, and up-skill their practices and working routines (Deuze and Witschge, 2017: 12) does not fully consider Estonian online newsrooms, since many of the situated activities do not favour that expectation. I argue that the societal context of Estonia (and also some other CEE countries) may be somewhat different than described elsewhere in Anglo-American journalistic cultures (Pavlik, 2000; Salovaara and

Juzefovics, 2012; Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren, 2015; Stetka and Örnebring, 2013).

By studying the expectations of online journalists and the actual performance of skills in the production process in triangulation with working conditions, we are able to outline the set of skills of online journalists, and factors that influence the implementation of them.

Study III of this thesis showed a discrepancy between the expectation and performance of skills among online journalists. This indicates the lack of a strategic analysis of the actual demand for human resources, the skills they require and the allocation of resources in the newsroom. This discrepancy reflects the domain of psychobiography that comprises the values, attitudes and changes in practices (Study II). The technological change that has taken place over the course of the last two decades has provided opportunities to utilize the features of digital platforms (Study I). But practices, especially the performance of skills and competences, have not developed in correlation with the technological potential (Study III).

According to results of this thesis, the social activities and performance of skills and competences were similar across online newsrooms in Estonia, which indicates that the social activities are dispersed via social relations. Social relations endure beyond the situated activities of newsroom practices and are communicated from journalist to journalist. The practices that are passed on mostly copy the practices of legacy media platforms. Copying legacy media work practices has been understandable through the domain of contextual resources – in the absence of online specific practices, the practices were transferred from knowledge that was available.

But at the same time, this has suppressed the development of the online environment as an independent technological platform and the development of platform specific journalism skills. The fact that editors do not employ reporters according to their skills and competences, and regard training and learning new skills as irrelevant, indicates that online journalists are not seen as human capital.

Based on the results of Study I, II, and III it can be said that Estonian online journalism tries to function in the legacy media information processing cycle. First, this hinders the performance of platform-specific skills and competences. Second, this may pave the way for mis- or disinformation to enter the news flow due to the fact that transforming the information processing practices of ‘thick’ media platforms also presumes the existence of separate editors, who conduct fact-checking and text editing, but who are not included in ‘thin’ platforms such as the online newsroom.

According to the conventional approach, journalistic fact is constructed in a complex sequence of acts (Gerbner, 1973) that is influenced by professionalism and motivated by the political sphere (Tuchman, 1980). But if we add the conditions of contemporary journalistic practice, especially those of online journalism, the result of what is fact and the interpretation of its meaning may vary a great deal. Study II, conducting research on the perceptions of journalism

students about the information processing stages in the news content production cycle, revealed that under conditions similar to everyday news work, many stages are not perceived at all. Some of these information processing stages are vitally important to guaranteeing factual accuracy in journalism. The results of Study II show that the most challenging stages of information processing are related to finding the idea and focusing the information. These are back-stage performances (Meyrowitz, 1985; Karlsson, 2011), which are invisible to the audience. Therefore, the most 'insecure' stages of information processing are the initial stages: the channels through which the information reaches the journalist. This, in turn, paves the way for the legitimization of alternative facts or fake news in news journalism. The product approach in journalism practice, whether on legacy media platforms or online journalism, diminishes the role of source evaluation and fact-checking.

Figure 3 presents knowledge, skills, and competences in terms of multi-skilling areas. Chart 1 summons all skills and competences presented by Carpenter (2009), Mićo (2006) and the studies in this thesis. By delayering the information processing stages into skills and competences, it is possible to profile platform-specific skills and competences. The matrix in Chart 1 shows the palette of skills and competences that an online journalist could use to produce the content. This palette can vary a lot according to newsroom practice (Chart 2) and what resources are enabled for the journalist or how limited the resources are (time, technical advancement, skills of the journalists etc.). The areas of knowledge, skills and competences are distributed by taking into consideration the stages of information processing in news reporting. They are also divided according to Layder's social domains.

Chart 1. Skills and competences located in the journalistic information processing cycle

Meyrowitz (1985), Karlsson (2011)	Rich (2002)	McManus (1994)	Domain of psycho-biography	Domain of situated activity	Domain of social setting	Domain of contextual resources
Back-stage processes	Conceiving	Discovery	desire to address social problems, specialized knowledge areas outside of communication and journalism fields, problem solving, news judgment,	ability to do research, web content management system, database management,	ability to do research,	
	Collecting			leadership, ability to do research	leadership, ability to do research	
Front-stage processes		Constructing		problem solving, communication skills, interviewing skills	problem solving,	
	Selection			multi platform writing, teamwork	multi platform writing, teamwork	communication skills, community engagement
			desire to address social problems, specialized knowledge areas outside of communication and journalism fields	summary content writing, multi platform writing, image editing software, slide-show editing software,	desire to address social problems, specialized knowledge areas outside of communication and journalism fields	
			desire to learn, independence, creativity, critical thinking, openness to diversity, ability to work under deadline, knowledge of multiple languages, knowledge of word processor	independence, creativity, critical thinking, openness to diversity, ability to work under deadline	independence, creativity, critical thinking, openness to diversity, ability to work under deadline	

	Reporting	problem solving, blogging, use of social media	graphics program, animations, pod-casting, blogging, use of social media	graphics program, animations, pod-casting, blogging, use of social media	graphics program, animations, pod-casting, blogging, use of social media
	Correcting	computer programming, word processor	computer programming, word processor		
		<p>AP style knowledge, ability to edit copy, tracking software, research engine optimization, audio / video editing, video / photo shooting, posting of online content, web-editing software multi platform writing image editing software</p>	<p>AP style knowledge, ability to edit copy, tracking software, research engine optimization, audio / video editing, video / photo shooting, posting of online content, web-editing software multi platform writing image editing software</p>		<p>tracking software, research engine optimization, audio / video editing, video / photo shooting, posting of online content, web-editing software multi platform writing image editing software</p>

Deconstruction into social domains, indicates that knowledge, skills and competences can have different meaning in different domains. For example, the ability to work to a deadline in situated activity can refer to being able to perform this skill under specific work conditions, in a social setting it can refer to the expectation of being fast and that sort of expectation can be constructed within the newsroom or between different media houses.

Some skills and competences can be categorized as attitudes, and Chart 1 shows that, on the one hand, most technology specific skills and competences concentrate on front-stage processes. On the other hand, back-stage processes engage different stages of information processing (collecting/selection, constructing/selection, constructing/ reporting, correcting/reporting), and therefore demand a variety of skills. But while analysing within the frames of Carpenter's (2009) skills and knowledge areas and Mičo's (2006) multi-skilling categories, it is evident that skills from routine technical areas and technical and media multi-skilling areas dominate. But this does not mean that the skills from adaptive expertise areas or issue multi-skilling areas are not represented.

The initial stages (conceiving/discovery and collecting/discovery) of processing information into journalistic content determine its newsworthiness, focus and the factual basis of a story. This means that the skills and competences performed in these stages are most important for the quality of the outcome but are also part of back-stage performances. This means that the absence of these skills and competences compromises the quality of journalistic content. In the context of a scarcity of time and resources, these stages are most easily reduced.

If some front-stage processes (e.g. textual and visual editing, layout) are skipped in legacy media – for example, television or newspaper – this will be visible in the final outcome, while in the online environment this may not be the case. It is possible to produce content with minimal technical knowledge and form it into something that looks like journalistic content. If the journalist skips the performance of some back-stage information processing, the problem may not be evident in the final outcome, but the back-stage processes (e.g. finding a newsworthy topic, fact-checks, background work, selection of sources) are what guarantee the factual accuracy and credibility of journalistic content – they differentiate journalism from other media content. Back-stage performances require a versatile palette of journalistic skills and competences.

Even though Study I indicated that fragments of audiences may expect high-quality online journalistic content, Study II and III showed that the sort of content that the respondents in Study I are expecting, is not produced. Neither the practices nor the skills and competences performed in Estonian online newsrooms meet the specification of online specific, exclusive, in-depth, quality journalistic content. Audience expectations belong to the domain of contextual resources that influences production. Of course, the audience's expectations have varied during the two decades since online journalism has developed in Estonia. The discrepancy between what online journalistic content is expected by audiences and what online journalists offer begins from the fact that the

work practices in online newsrooms favour large quantities of content produced quickly with minimal resource expenditure. This leaves no time for the journalist to perform content or technical multi-skilling.

The performance of diverse skills and competences requires time, which for news organisations is also a resource. If the time for the work process is reduced or accelerated, the diversity of skill performance is also reduced. The shortening of the production cycle and the acceleration of time in combination may result in excluding elements of news reporting, which in turn may promote the distribution of false or misleading information (Study II). Looking at output in quantitative terms, the more units of output are required, the poorer the performance of versatile skills and competences (Study III). The production of complex online journalistic content that has additional value for the audience demands versatile skills. On the other hand, the audience is fragmented and different audience segments also have various expectations of the content (e.g. web specific interactive multimedia content and operative news content simultaneously (Study I).

As became evident in the studies in this thesis, online journalists can really be multi-skilled while being enabled to fully employ the features of the technological platform. Online journalists have access to the technology to utilize most of the technological potential of newspaper, television and radio, and also to combine this between platforms. But the decisions and allocation of resources made in the newsroom may limit the performance of these skills to copy-pasting second-hand material. Therefore, the answer to the question about what skills and competences define the online journalist is manifold and depends on the factor of organisational practice.

Chart 2. A reflection of the skills and competences as performed by Estonian online journalists

Meyrowitz (1985), Karlsson (2011)	Rich (2002)	McManus (1994)	Domain of psycho-biography	Domain of situated activity	Domain of social setting	Domain of contextual resources
Back-stage processes	Conceiving	Discovery	news judgment,	ability to do research, web content management system, database management,	ability to work under deadline	
			news judgment,	ability to do research		ability to do research
	Collecting	Selection		problem solving	problem solving	
				summary content writing		graphics program, animations, pod-casting, blogging, use of social media
Front-stage processes	Constructing	Reporting				
			word processor	word processor		tracking software, research engine optimization, audio / video editing, video / photo shooting, posting of online content, web-editing software
	Correcting		web-editing software image editing software	web-editing software image editing software		multi platform writing image editing software

Chart 1 reflects the palette of skills and competences that digital platforms make available. In conjunction with Chart 2, I discovered that the palette of potential skills and competences and the palette of skills and competences that are actually performed vary a great deal. This variance is conditioned by layers of situated activities, social relations and contextual resources. In other words, the performance of journalistic skills and competences in online journalism is conditioned by how certain tasks are performed in practice, how practices emerge and are dispersed between journalists and newsrooms, and how human capital is used for overall performance.

The matrix in Chart 1 makes it possible to analyse the skills and competences performed on a specific platform, and therefore describe the performance of the role of the journalist on that platform. It can also be a support tool for evaluating the employment of human capital in the online newsroom, or a newsroom on another platform.

The results of Study II indicate that defining the work of journalists in online newsrooms is possible based on the expectation and performance of skills and competences. In this thesis I argue that the performance of the role of the journalist can be platform specific, when this is studied from the perspective of the performance of journalistic skills and competences. The results of the studies in this thesis indicate that there are numerous skills and competences performed in the newsroom that support journalistic work.

In the context of the aforementioned we should ask how the resources, including human capital, could be allocated and employed in online newsrooms so the limitations described above could be reduced.

The change in the performance of skills and competences depends on the people and the dispersion of current managerial decision-making in regard to human capital – the abilities, skills, knowledge and experience of particular professionals (Vandenbussche et al., 2006; Faggian and McCann, 2009; Sardadvar and Reiner, 2017). According to Van Doorn (2014), human capital in journalism is context-sensitive; in viewing journalists as human capital, the focus is on their performance. The cost of training depends on the stage in the worker's career that the training is provided. During the initial period employers pay wages plus the cost of training; during other periods they would pay wages alone, and receipts during all periods would equal marginal products (Becker, 1964: 18). This approach treats all workers as equal producers and does not take into consideration the impact that a person's skills and competences have on the marginal product.

As all the studies in this thesis indicated, there is a versatile palette of skills and competences that could be used in online journalism. Online platforms are more versatile than newspaper, radio or television; this is due to the features of digital platforms, including interactivity, immediacy, multimediality, omnipresence, hypertextuality and others. The utilization of these features is only fully applied when journalists are enabled to perform the full variety of these skills and competences; this is where the notion of a multi-skilled journalist comes

from. But the peculiarity of online journalism is that it can also be performed with limited skills and competences.

By restricting time as a resource and forcing quantity as a criterion, less and less journalistic skills and competences are performed.

Therefore, I propose that if the editorial management in newsrooms assess and acknowledge online journalists and human capital, only then can we talk about the existence of the multi-skilled online journalist.

To assess skill performance in the (online) newsroom I developed a model. This model can be used in the online newsroom, but possibly with adjustments also in newsrooms on other technical platforms. For example, information about skill performance in the newsroom can be collected using a survey questionnaire or semi-structured interviews. The categories in the model operate as codes for the analysis of the data. Positioning the results into the model and comparing it to Chart 1 of this thesis, provides an overview of what skills are performed and what could be improved in the practices of a newsroom.

This assessment model offers a challenge for further research, as the extent to which it distinguishes the performance of journalistic skill and the role of the journalist between platforms is still unclear. It would be useful to test this model as a tool for assessing skill performance and through that performing the role of a journalist at newspapers, radio and television.

VI CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis has been to identify practice in online newsrooms and to analyse the role of skills and competences in online journalistic practice. This objective was divided into three aspects: 1) the expectation and performance of skills and competences in work processes; 2) identifying skill performance in accordance with online production in relation to audience expectations; 3) outlining the skills and competences specific to online journalism.

The findings of the three studies comprising this thesis are presented in the framework of the theory of social domains. I can summarize the main conclusions of this thesis by coming back to the initial research questions and combining the results with the layer of the theory of social domains.

Changes in the use of technology relate to situated activities and social relations in the newsroom. Technological transformations are not uniform in different media organisations and depend on three factors: 1) technological development, 2) skills and competences performed by journalists, 3) how human capital is utilized.

1) What skills and competences are online journalists expected to have? and 2) What skills and competences do online journalists perform in their work practice?

To answer these two questions, it was essential to differentiate between the expectation and performance of skills and competences in the studies of the thesis. The results of Study III indicated a discrepancy between what skills and competences reporters and editors expect online journalists to have, and what skills and competences are actually performed.

- In the results of Study III, we recognized similarities with some CEE countries that have reported online journalistic practice to be professionally deskilled and having experienced a drop in quality. Study III revealed that Estonian online reporters are expected to produce content for different platforms. But when compared to the reflection of real work practices, it became evident that although multi-skilling is considered to be important, it is seldom performed in practice. The factor that most influences that is the allocation of resources, also including human resources – skills and competences.
- On the one hand, both reporters and editors expect online journalists to know how to produce content for different platforms (e.g. web and newspaper). On the other, it is considered important to have the skill at the executive level, but not particularly important to perform it in daily practice. Media multi-skilling is poorly practiced in online newsrooms due to organisational factors that influence work practices – neither skill nor competence with converged content production is expected or practiced.
- Journalists are expected to be ready to produce content for both newspapers and online, which demands they have knowledge of convergence. At the

same time, the respondents did not mention the competency of converged content production, neither in expectations nor in performance.

- The expectations of the skills and competences that online journalists should have, as reflected by online editors and reporters, are inclined towards media multi-skilling and technical multi-skilling. Concerning the assets of online platforms like interactivity, multi-mediality and participatory content, available production time is what influences the kinds of skills and competences that are actually employed. The performance of these skills is reduced to a minimum – to copy editing and publishing PR materials and content from other news agencies. Both editors and reporters stated that for the online journalist it is important to know how to take and edit video footage and photographs. But while reflecting their real work practices it becomes evident that these skills are rather rarely utilized. Expertise from the routine technical area of multi-skilling is mostly reduced to the level of the basic technical skills of using CMS and word processing software.
- From the area of adaptive expertise and knowledge, multi-skilling is considered most important by both editors and reporters. Skills and competences for a wide range of topics, specialist knowledge areas outside of communication and journalism fields, critical thinking, and knowledge of multiple languages are considered the most important. But the greatest discrepancy between skill expectation and skill performance becomes evident in this area: reporters mainly copy edit press releases from different fields and any deeper knowledge of the field comes from having previously edited texts on the same topics.
- From the area of adaptive expertise and knowledge the knowledge of different languages is considered to be important. Another competence reflected as important is the ability to work independently; this requirement is conditioned by shortened production cycle, which requires the ability to be accountable for the whole publishing process.

3) How do practices in online newsrooms influence the utilization of journalistic skills and competences?

- There is a contradiction between what reporters are able to do, and what the editors or managers in the newsrooms actually instruct the reporters to do. The skills and competences that could be used to create online journalistic content, which would utilize the available technological potential, are not fully performed. (Study III)
- The reason for this last point is the expectation put on quantity: online journalists are expected to publish articles they call ‘units’ within a short time in order to maintain the speed of the news cycle, to keep the news flow continuous (Study II and III).
- Resource allocation becomes evident under the conditions where skills and competences should be or are performed. The most valued skill that online journalist should have, mentioned in Study II and III, was speed and the ability to react quickly. Time as a resource is allocated according to the

criterion of publishing continuously and fast, regardless of the nature of the content.

- The previous point, in turn, forces journalists to prefer material that is easily accessible and this may contribute to publishing mis- or disinformation (Study II). This is due to the fact that the shortened publishing cycle and time pressure decreases the availability of resources (especially time) that contribute to processing journalistic information.

4) What skills and competences should be performed to produce the content that audiences are willing to pay for?

- The audiences express their expectations and preferences through their willingness to pay. In Study I, it became evident that audiences are fragmented and demand various kinds of content and that there is willingness to pay for online journalistic content. Some audience fragments expect high-quality online journalism where they can see the effort and application of platform assets (immediacy, interactivity, multimediality etc.).
- The general level of interest in news is low, but the willingness to pay (WTP) for online journalistic content (e.g. content other than news texts) is growing (Study I). Hindrances to paying for online journalistic content are more of a technical nature, but WTP is also limited by the fact that online news portals lack original content with additional value.
- Producing content that is journalistically proficient and utilizes the technological features the platform has available demands time and the performance of issue and media multi-skilling, which are limited due to the allocation of resources in Estonian online newsrooms (Study III).

5) What skills and competences define the online journalist?

One of the novel outcomes of this thesis contributes to the pool of studies on the performance of the role of the journalist. Although I do not study the role of journalists, I argue that the role of journalists can be platform specific, when studying it from the perspective of the performance of journalistic skills and competences. This diverges from a number of the generalist approaches to the topic (Gans, 1979; Benson et al., 2012; Reich, 2011; Ryfe, 2016) that suggest that journalistic role performance is uniform regardless of platform.

Defining who is a journalist, is nothing new *per se* (Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Donsbach, 2013); defining the journalist through the performance of skills is. Especially at a time when journalism has to compete with and differentiate itself from a plethora of mis- and disinformation. In this thesis, the topic of mis- and disinformation was treated casually (Study II), but this is also an issue to be discussed at the organisational and institutional level – who is a journalist, when everyone can create media content?

This issue concerns journalism as an institution – is journalism the provider of trustworthy quality information for democratic societies? This leads to the organisational level: how does a media organisation guarantee information quality in an era marked by a misleading and disinforming media environment

(Donsbach, 2013; Study II). This demands work practices that utilize the core journalistic skills of information processing (Study II and Study III), but also make use of the technological assets of the platform (Study I). This is where digital platforms became important. Defining what journalism currently is and how it differs from other media, means defining what do journalists do differently from other ‘media workers’. By processing information into journalistic content (see Study II and Chart 2) journalists distinguish their work from other information in the media. This process verifies and clarifies the facts, but it also demands journalistic skills and competences to do so.

By outlining skill performance, we can distinguish journalists from other media workers. However, outlining skill performance has to be followed by analysing the resources that are available for creating journalistic content. The amount of resources differs from platform to platform (Study II), but also from media organisation to media organisation (Study III). Since studying journalistic skills has ignited the discussion of role performance (or *vice versa*) (Boczkowski and Ferris, 2005; Ryfe, 2009; Benson, et al., 2012; Mellado et al., 2016), my suggestion for further research, based on this thesis, is to take into consideration the availability of resources, while studying skills or role performance.

This thesis provides a number of suggestions for the further research of online journalism. Bryson (2017) touches upon the role of education in skills. Since this was not part of my studies, I do not focus on it profoundly, but highlight one interesting issue for further research: the issue of unpaid internships. Bryson raises the question of whether an intern is seen as an unskilled worker or a novice who is learning new skills. This would be interesting to study both from a historical perspective looking at the development of Estonian independent journalism in the 1990s, but also in today’s newsrooms.

Tali (2010: 25) argued that Estonian journalists are seldom technologically multi-skilled and that they usually do not produce or edit multimedia content without professional help. Today, eight years later, as a practicing journalist I see more and more journalists, especially online journalists, who are able to do that. This change has taken place during the last two or three years, which also explains why it is not explicitly visible in my studies. Therefore, the practice of skills among (online) journalists in Estonia is a subject for further study. Inseparable from this is the fact that there seems to be a skill performance gap between newsrooms and also inside newsrooms – there are media workers who use or are enabled to use a limited set of skills, and there are online journalists who utilize a wide range of different skills. Why? Maybe the assessment model developed in this thesis could help provide some explanation.

In Study III, we emphasized that integrated newsrooms also demand the allocation of time as a resource, otherwise reporters will be divided between working for online platforms or for newspapers, not integrating their skills for both platforms. Based on the results of Study II and Study III, I constructed a model (Chart 1) that takes into account the different profiles of journalistic content production in Estonian online newsrooms. Although this sort of model

is not based on any of the studied newsroom's actual work practice, it can be constructed based on the results of all three studies that are part of this thesis. The model could be improved by adding variables that monitor resources (e.g. availability of time, pace of the workflow; diversity of skills among human capital; availability of technological resources etc.).

The profiles of reporters in online newsrooms take into consideration:

1. Skill and competence performance;
 2. The complexity of processing information into journalistic content;
 3. The expectation of audience demands on online journalistic content;
- The allocation of resources in online newsrooms.

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SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Eesti veebiajakirjanike oskuste rakendamine: hindamismudel toimetustele ja teadusuuringuteks

Siinse doktoritöö eesmärk on kaardistada oskused ja pädevused, mida Eesti veebiajakirjanikelt eeldatakse ja mida nad oma töös tegelikult kasutavad. See eesmärk jaguneb kolmeks alameesmärgiks: 1) uurida, milline on ajakirjanike ootus ja tegelik praktika ajakirjandike oskuste ja pädevuste rakendamisel tööprotsessis; 2) anda ülevaade oskuste sobituvusest tööprotsessiga; 3) kaardistada oskused ja pädevused, mis on spetsiifilised veebiajakirjandusele.

Väitekirja moodustavad kolm eelretsenseeritud teadusartiklit ja sissejuhatav tekst. Publikatsioonide eesmärgid ja uurimisküsimused eraldi on erinevad, kuid neist moodustab ühisosa: ajakirjanduslikud oskused ja pädevused ning nende rakendamine tööprotsessis. Kuigi doktoritöö raames tehtud uuringute artiklid ei lähtunud ühest ja samast teoreetilisest lähenemisest, raamistab need ühtseks käsitluseks Derek Layderi sotsiaalsete domeenide teooria. See võimaldab mõtestada inimestevahelise kommunikatsiooni, sotsiaalse konteksti ning tehnoloogilise muutuse mõju tööpraktikatele.

Uuringutulemustest selgub, et Eesti veebiajakirjanduses võib töötada asjatundlikke ajakirjanikke, kel on head ajakirjanduslikud, teemavaldkondlikud ja tehnilised oskused. Paraku rakendatakse neid oskusi igapäevatoos tagasihoidlikult, sest toimetuses väljakujunenud tööpraktikad soosivad pigem pidevat "ühikute" avaldamist (III uurimus). Teisisõnu oodatakse veebiajakirjanikelt kvantitatiivselt sisu avaldamist, mis aga jätab vähem võimalust luua sisukat, toimetatud ning tehniliselt mitmekülgset veebispetsiifilist sisu (II ja III uurimus). Nii kasutavadki ajakirjanikud väikest osa oskustest ja pädevustest, mis neil ajakirjanikena on, ehkki nii toimetuste juhid kui ka reporterid eeldavad, et veebis töötavad ajakirjanikud peavad olema paljuoskuslikud. Mina.Maailm. Meedia andmetele tuginedes selgus I uurimusest, et auditooriumi hulgas on neid segmente, kes oleksid valmis maksma kvaliteetse ajakirjandusliku veebisisu eest. Kõrvutades neid andmeid kvalitatiivsete poolstruktureeritud intervjuudega kogutud infoga, saime teada, et inimesed oleksid valmis maksma sisu eest, milles sisalduvat informatsiooni pole võimalik saada mujalt ega tasuta. Sealjuures on oluline, et tegu oleks asjatundliku ning teemasse põhjalikku sissevaadet võimaldava sisuga, millest lugeja saab kasu. Siinse doktoritöö seisukohalt huvitavam leid oli see, et intervjuueeritavad väljendasid valmisolekut maksta ajakirjandusliku veebisisu eest, mis on veebispetsiifiline (multimediaalne, interaktiivne, hüpertekstuaalne jne) ning millega lugejal on võimalik veeta aega. Asjaolu, et auditoorium ootab veebist mitmekülgset ning temaatiliselt põhjalikku sisu, tähendab, et ajakirjanikud, kes seda sisu loovad, peavad olema nii tehniliselt kui ka temaatiliselt oskuslikud. Samas tekib just selle juures vastuolu toimetuse tööpraktikaga (Uuring III), mis eeldab kiiresti ja palju avaldamist, kuid ei eelda ega soodusta veebispetsiifilise või temaatiliselt asja-

tundliku sisu loomist. Toimetuses konstrueeritud ajasurve tõttu peavad ajakirjanikud esmaselt oluliseks avaldamist ning nende jaoks on vähem oluline ajakirjanduslik infotöötlemise protsess, mis oma keerukuses ja põhimõtetes eristabki ajakirjandust muu meediasisu tootmisest. Ajakirjandusliku infotöötlemise protsess, ajakirjanike keelekasutuses reporteritöö, on see, mis tagab uudisväärtuse, teema raamistamise, faktitäpsuse, korrektse vormistuse ja toimetatuse.

Sotsiaalsete domeenide teooria psühhobiograafia kihi kaudu lähenemine võimaldab mõista, et taoliste tööpraktikate kujunemise taga on hoiakud ja väärtused. Need on aidanud kohandada veebi kui tehnoloogilise platvormi arengu käigus töökorraldust viisil, mis on mingil ajahetkel olnud sobiv. Seda selgitab doktoritöös toodud peatükk, mis annab ülevaade veebiajakirjanduse kujunemisest Eestis.

Viimast ilmestab ka III uuringust esile tulnud asjaolu, et veebiajakirjanikud ei oska öelda, kust ja kellelt täpselt tulevad ootused nende tööle: näiteks kes täpselt eeldab, et iga 10 minuti järel peab ilmuma “ühik”, et nad peavad ühe vahetuse jooksul avaldama teatud hulga, näiteks vähemalt kaheksa “ühikut” jne. Seega on tööpraktikate taga ühiselt kujundatud hoiakud ja väärtused, kuid samuti ka arusaamad ja mõtteviisid, mis on kujunenud pigem situatiivsete tegevuste ja sotsiaalsete praktikate kaudu ajakirjanikkonna sees.

Psühhobiograafilise kihi ehk tööpraktikat mõjutavate hoiakute ja väärtuste kujunemist ning rakendamist mõjutavad situatiivsed tegevused ehk toimetusetöös aset leidvad üksiktegevused. Need üksiktegevused, näiteks toimetuse juhi antud tööülesanded või nende täitmine, on aja ja kohaga piiratud. Samas mõjutavad situatiivseid tegevusi sotsiaalsed keskkonnad ehk inimestevahelised suhted ja kommunikatsioon. Eesti taolises väikeriigis tähendab see, et näiteks veebitoimetuste situatiivsed tegevused kanduvad sotsiaalsete keskkondade kaudu kiiresti üle ühest toimetusest teise. Ühes toimetuses kasutusele võetud “lindi hoidmine” ja konstrueeritud ajasurve võib saada kiiresti tööpraktikaks ka teises toimetuses. Samamoodi kanduvad toimetuste vahel üle tehnilised uuendused ja muutused, mis mõjutavad tööpraktikaid.

Neljas domeen, mis on mõjutanud Eesti veebitoimetuste tööpraktikaid, on kontekstuaalsed ressursid. See on domeen, kus näeme tehnoloogilise arengu, üldise majanduskeskkonna, aga ka näiteks sotsiaalvõrgustike ja vaeuudiste tuleku mõju. Vaeuudiste ja „alternatiivsete faktide“ jõudmist uudisajakirjandusse käsitles II uurimus, mis kõrvutas ajakirjanduslikku infotöötlemise protsessi ja kontekstuaalset ressursi – ajasurve ning kiiresti avaldatavast materjalist sõltuvat tööpraktikat.

Töö üks olulisem panus veebiajakirjanduse ja ajakirjanduslike rollide uurimise valdkonda puudutab veebi kui platvormi spetsiifiliste oskuste kaardistamist. Digitaalkultuur tervikuna on mõjutanud informatsiooni töötlemist, konstrueerimist, esitamist ja levitamist ajakirjanduses. See on aga pannud üha enam küsima, kes on ajakirjanik ja kas ajakirjanduslikud rollid on platvormi kuidagi erinevad? Kuigi minu doktoritöö uuringud ei puudutanud ajakirjanduslike rollide täitmist, annavad need aluse edaspidi uurida nii ajakirjanduslikele rolle kui oskusi platvormispetsiifiliselt.

Siinse doktoritöö üks olulisemaid väiteid on, et veebiajakirjanike rakendatavate oskuste ja pädevuste palett erineb traditsioonilises meedias töötavate ajakirjanike omast. Kuid ka ühe veebitoimetuse sees võivad korraga töötada nii piiratud oskusi rakendavad meediatöötajad kui ka paljuoskuslikud ajakirjanikud. Traditsioonilises meedias ei ole erinevus oskuste olemasolu ja rakendamise vahel nii suur. Selleks, et kasutada veebi kui tehnilise platvormi võimalusi täiel määral, on vaja kasutada märkimisväärselt suuremat oskuste ja pädevuste paletti kui näiteks televisioonis, raadios või ajalehes. Seda põhjusel, et veebi tehnoloogilised võimalused (näiteks multimediaalsus, interaktiivsus, koheusus, kõikjalviibivus jt) nõuavad pea kõiki traditsiooniliste tehniliste platvormide kasutamise oskusi ning lisaks veel universaalseid oskusi, näiteks oskust luua konvergentset sisu ning juhtida toimetust konvergentse sisu loomisel. Seega võib väita, et veebis saab oskused ja pädevused üldistatult jagada ajakirjanduslikeks üldoskusteks (näiteks uudisväärtusliku teema otsimine, eeltöö, suhtlemine allikatega jmt) ning tehnilisteks. Just viimased, tehnilised oskused võimaldavad veebiajakirjanikel eristuda muude tehniliste platvormide ajakirjanikest. Näitega ilmestades: kui veebis on võimalik dokumendiallikatest luua sisu näiteks kirjaliku teksti, graafilise sisu ja audiovisuaalsete narratiivide kombinatsioonina, siis näiteks raadios, televisioonis või ajalehes seab sellisele multimediaalsele lahendusele piirid platvormispetsiifika.

Samas võib veebiajakirjanike oskuste ja pädevuste palett olla praktikas väga kitsas. Seda põhjusel, et situatiivsed tegevused ja sotsiaalsed praktikad soodustavad kiiret ja pidevat avaldamist (II ja III uurimus). Selle vastuolu teadvustamine toimetuse juhtide hulgas võib aidata toimetusalike tööpraktikaid muuta viisil, mis rakendaks inimkapitali võimalikult tõhusal moel.

Oluline on I ja III uuringu tulemuste puhul välja tuua, et nende andmete kogumise ja artiklite avaldamise vältel on eesti veebiajakirjandus pidevalt arenenud ning töötades veebiajakirjanikuna julgen öelda, et just veebiuudiste toimetuste tööpraktikad sarnanevad küll suures osas jätkuvalt uuringutes kirjeldatule, kuid on toimetusi, mis on vähehaaval laiendatud just aeganõudvaid, põhjalikke ning veebispetsiifilist sisu loovate toimetusalikest, kus ajakirjanikud saavad kasutada silmapaistvalt laia oskuste ja pädevuste paletti. Siinses doktoritöös oli osaliselt soov kaardistada veebiajakirjanduse arengut Eestis ning just nende uute veebitoimetusalike üksuste tööpraktikate uurimine võib olla väljakutse edasistes teadustöodes.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Marju Himma-Kadakas
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Education:

2010–2018 University of Tartu, PhD studies in media and communication; topic of the thesis “Skill performance of Estonian online journalists: assessment model for newsrooms and research”
2008–2010 University of Tartu, graduate studies in journalism.
2004–2008 University of Tartu, undergraduate studies on literature folklore.
1997–2003 Tallinn School no 21
1991–1997 Tallinn Laagna Gymnasium.

Work experience:

2014–... Estonian Public Broadcasting, Executive Editor of ERR Novaator.
2017–... University of Tartu, Junior Researcher of practical journalism.
2016–2017 Estonian Public Broadcasting, Editor in Chief of the portals
2013–2014 University of Tartu, Senior Specialist of science communication
2010–2017 University of Tartu, Teaching Assistant of practical journalism
2008–2013 Daily newspaper Postimees, Reporter.
2009–2010 University of Tartu, Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, Department of Journalism and Communication, Coordinator.
2007–2008 University of Tartu, Student Union, Specialist

Training:

2017 KoostööKunstiKool Belbin Eesti, training in management of changes (December 2016 – January 2017)
2016 Aeternum Koolitus “Leader’s coherent look on the leadership of people” (28. November 2016).
2016 BSC Koolitus “Photoshop Elements Basic” (20. september 2016).
2016 Eurovision Academy e-masterclass “Practical Data Journalism” (5.–12. April 2016).
2015 The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School “Politics, Civil Society and Participation“ (2.–5. August 2015).
2013 University of Tartu and BFM, Cross media seminar (September 2013 – February 2014).

- 2012 Nordplus seminar at Oslo University “Journalistic reorientation” (November 2012).
- 2009 European Commission seminar „Speak Out Against Discrimination“ (24.–28. august 2009)

Languages:

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Organizational affiliation:

- 2017... Association of Estonian Journalists
- 2014... Estonian Association of Young Journalists
- 2012... European Communication Research and Education Association
- 2010... Estonian Academic Journalism Association
- 2010... Media Association for the Young Journalists

Academic publications:

- Himma-Kadakas, M., Palmiste, G. (2018) Expectations and the actual performance of skills in online journalism. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, (in publication).
- Himma-Kadakas, M. (2017). Alternative facts and fake news entering journalistic content production cycle. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume 9 (2), 41–54.
- Himma-Kadakas, M., Kõuts, R. (2015). Who is willing to pay for online journalistic content? *Media and Communication*, Volume 3, Issue 4, Pages 106–115.
- Kõuts, R., Himma-Kadakas, M. (2014). Foreign Correspondents in Estonia: Representatives of the Nordic-Baltic Region. In: Terzis, Georgios (Ed.). *Mapping Foreign Correspondents in Europe* (79–85). Routledge.
- Harro-Loit, H., Lang, J., Himma-Kadakas, M. (2012). Journalists’ blogs as an instrument of media accountability in Estonia. *Central European Journal of Communication* (Vol 5, No 2 (9), Fall 2012 (243–258). Polish Acad of Sciences. (2 (9)).

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Hariduskäik:

2010... Tartu Ülikool, doktorantuur meedia ja kommunikatsiooni erialal. Doktoritöö teema: “Eesti veebiajakirjanike oskuste rakendamise: hindamismudel toimetustele ja teadusuuringuteks”.

2008–2011 Tartu Ülikool, magistrantuur ajakirjanduse erialal.

2004–2009 Tartu Ülikool, bakalaureuseõpe kirjanduse ja rahvaluule erialal.

1997–2004 Tallinna 21. Kool.

1991–1998 Tallinna Laagna Gümnaasium.

Töökogemus:

2014 – ... Eesti Rahvusringhääling, ERRi teadusportaali Novaator vastutav toimetaja

2017 – ... Tartu Ülikool, ajakirjanduse nooremteadur (koormus 0,5)
Õpetatavad kursused: Reporteritöö, Publitsistlikud žanrid, Veebiajakirjanduse alused, Toimetajatöö digitaalmeedias, Veebiajakirjandus ja tekstiloome, Ajakirjandusteooriad, Teadusajakirjandus.

2016–2017 Eesti Rahvusringhääling, portaalide peatoimetaja.

2013–2014 Tartu Ülikool, teaduskommunikatsiooni peaspetsialist.

2010–2017 Tartu Ülikool, ajakirjanduse assistent (koormus 0,5).

2008–2013 AS Postimees, reporter.

2009–2010 Tartu Ülikool, sotsiaal- ja haridusteaduskond, ajakirjanduse ja kommunikatsiooni osakond, grandikoordinaator.

2007–2008 Tartu Ülikool, haldus- ja tugistruktuur, üliõpilasesindus; teabevaldkonna spetsialist.

Täiendkoolitus:

2017 KoostööKunstiKool Belbin Eesti juhtimiskoolitus (detsember 2016 – jaanuar 2017)

2016 Aeternum Koolitus “Juhi terviklik pilk inimeste juhtimisel” (28. november 2016).

2016 BSC Koolitus “Photoshop Elements Basic” (20. september 2016).

2016 Eurovision Academy e-masterclass “Practical Data Journalism” (5.–12. aprill 2016).

2015 The European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School “Politics, Civil Society and Participation” (2.–5. august 2015).

- 2013 Tartu Ülikooli ja BFMi ühine ristmeedia seminar (september 2013 – veebruar 2014).
- 2012 Nordplusi programmi seminar Oslo Ülikoolis “Journalistic re-orientation” (november 2012).
- 2009 Euroopa Nõukogu seminar „Speak Out Against Discrimination“ (24.–28. august 2009)
- 2008 EuroDesk noorte projektijuhtide koolitus (5.–6. aprillil 2008).

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Keelteoskus: Eesti keel emakeel
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Kuulumine organisatsioonidesse:

- 2017... Eesti Ajakirjanike Liit
- 2012... European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA)
- 2010... Eesti Akadeemilise Ajakirjanduse Selts
- 2010... Noorte Meediaklubi

Akadeemilised publikatsioonid:

- Himma-Kadakas, M.; Palmiste, G. (2018) Expectations and the actual performance of skills in online journalism. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, (ilmumas).
- Himma-Kadakas, M. (2017) Alternative facts and fake news entering journalistic content production cycle. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Volume 9 (2), 41–54.
- Himma-Kadakas, M., Kõuts, R. (2015) Who is willing to pay for online journalistic content? *Media and Communication*, Volume 3, Issue 4, Pages 106–115.
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- Harro-Loit, H., Lang, J., Himma-Kadakas, M. (2011). Journalists’ blogs as an instrument of media accountability in Estonia. *Central European Journal of Communication* (Vol 5, No 2 (9), Fall 2012 (243–258). Polish Acad of Sciences. (2 (9)).

**DISSERTATIONES
DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS**

1. **Epp Lauk.** Historical and sociological perspectives on the development of Estonian journalism. Tartu, 1997, 184 p.
2. **Triin Vihalemm.** Formation of collective identity among Russophone population of Estonia. Tartu, 1999, 217 p.
3. **Margit Keller.** Representations of consumer culture in Post-Soviet Estonia. Tartu, 2004, 209 p.
4. **Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt.** Information technology users and uses within the different layers of the information environment in Estonia. Tartu, 2006, 213 p.
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7. **Andra Siibak.** Self-presentation of the “Digital Generation” in Estonia. Tartu, 2009, 257 p.
8. **Pille Runnel.** The Transformation of the Internet Usage Practices in Estonia. Tartu, 2009, 223 p.
9. **Tõnu Tender.** Mitmekeelsus Eestis Euroopa Liidu mitmekeelsuse ideaali taustal. Tartu, 2010, 253 lk.
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