



Inside a contested profession

A comparative study of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam

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We just
have a
different
sensibility



Quote by an editor-in-chief from Singapore

PhD Dissertation

Emilie Tinne Lehmann-Jacobsen

Inside a contested profession

A comparative study of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam

Supervisor: Stig Hjarvard

Submitted: June 26, 2017

To Sune & Otto
For always being there

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Copenhagen, June 25, 2017

English abstract

Journalism is a contested profession. Normative assumptions based on its connection to democracy infuses a variety of expectations as to what journalists should and should not do. These norms have made it particularly difficult to discuss and study journalism in non-Western or non-democratic countries where the profession has often been defined as a Western “other” – as what it is not. This dissertation takes another approach and investigates journalism in Southeast Asia from the bottom-up leaving room for journalists’ own interpretations and understandings of their profession.

Through a comparative study of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam based on qualitative interviews and extensive document research, the dissertation intends to uncover perceptions of journalism, role orientations and role struggles among journalists – though without disregarding forces conditioning the two journalistic fields. It furthermore discusses how, and to what extent, similarities between Singapore and Vietnam reflect a particular Southeast Asian model of journalism.

A combination of Bourdieu’s field theory and role theory is applied to scrutinise structures of the journalistic profession on micro, mezzo and macro level. Whereas role theory works as both a discursive tool in conversations with journalists and as an analytical tool sensitive to agency processes on a micro level, field theory adds relational aspects and helps to connect the micro level analysis to macro level structures, uncovering the forces conditioning the profession.

The analysis reveals political forces to be most dominating in structuring and conditioning the journalistic profession in both countries which leads the dissertation to suggest a reconceptualization of Bourdieu’s field model to account for political capital. Though economic capital and cultural capital (profession-specific forces) also conditions journalism, political forces structure the profession on a number of levels. The state’s active involvement in the profession in both countries through laws and regulation and with promotion (and to some extent enforcement) of normative scripts influence journalists’ perceptions of ideals, routinized practices and role orientations. But with different approaches to media management, the states’ interference in the two countries’ media environment manifests itself differently with Vietnam taking a more hands-on, yet inconsistent, approach compared to Singapore’s subtler self-administered approach where the media take part in enforcing rules and regulation.

Although journalists in Singapore and Vietnam generally agree on many journalistic ideals (such as objectivity and facticity), practices (including similar news values) and role orientations (in particular more neutral roles), they prioritise and realise them differently – which correspond with the nature of normative expectations they are met with and the internal structures of their fields.

Though the dissertation cannot, based on this study, provide evidence of the existence of a Southeast Asian model of journalism, it does find parallels between the two journalistic fields which could lead to the conclusion that they might be different reflections of similar conditioning forces or even of related media systems. These similarities might have nothing to do with the countries’ shared location in Southeast Asia but instead mirror their complex state-media relationship. In its final chapters, the dissertation therefore advocates for an expansion of Hallin and Mancini’s media system theory to account for, and differentiate between, systems characterised by strong state inference.

Dansk resumé

Journalistik er i vestlig optik uløseligt forbundet med demokrati, hvilket har skabt en række normative antagelser og forventninger til, hvad journalister bør og ikke bør gøre. Disse normer har gjort det særlig vanskeligt at diskutere og undersøge journalistik i ikke-vestlige eller ikke-demokratiske lande, hvor professionen ofte bliver anskuet som en modsætning til vestlig journalistik - som alt det, den ikke er. Denne afhandling anlægger en anden tilgang og undersøger journalistik i Sydøstasien med udgangspunkt i journalisters egen forståelse og fortolkning af deres profession.

Gennem et komparativt studie af journalistik i Singapore og Vietnam baseret på kvalitative interviews og omfattende dokumentanalyser har denne afhandling til formål at afdække journalisters opfattelser af journalistik, rolleforståelser og rolle-stridigheder (role struggles) – dog uden at se bort fra de journalistiske felters rammevilkår. Ydermere diskuteres der hvordan – og i hvilket omfang – ligheder mellem Singapore og Vietnam afspejler en særlig Sydøstasiatisk journalistik model.

En kombination af Bourdieus felperspektiv og rolleteori benyttes til at undersøge den journalistiske professions strukturer på mikro-, meso- og makroniveau. Hvor rolleteorien både fungerer som et diskursivt redskab i samtale med journalister og som et analytisk værktøj sensitiv overfor aktørprocesser på mikroniveau, tilfører feltteorien relationelle vinkler og kobler analyser på mikroniveau med strukturer på makroniveau. Processen afdækker desuden professionens rammebetingelser.

Analysekapitlerne viser, at politiske forhold i høj grad konditionerer og strukturerer den journalistiske profession i de to lande, hvilket får afhandlingen til at foreslå, at Bourdieus originale felttegnning gentænkes, så journalistiske felter også kan positioneres i forhold til politisk kapital. Til trods for at økonomisk kapital og kulturel kapital (forstået som professionsspecifikke forhold) også konditionerer det journalistiske felt, kan politiske forholds tilstedeværelse i feltet spores på en række niveauer. Statens aktive involvering i den journalistiske profession gennem lovgivning og regulering samt via promovring (og til en vis grad håndhævelse) af normative skemata påvirker journalisters opfattelser af idealer, praksisser og rolleforståelser. Men med forskellige forvaltningstilgange manifesterer staternes involvering i de to landes mediemiljøer sig forskelligt. Hvor Vietnam har en mere direkte, om end inkonsistent, tilgang, benytter Singapore sig af en mere subtil selvforvaltningstilgang, hvor medierne til en vis grad selv er med til at håndhæve regler og regulering.

Selv om journalister i Singapore og Vietnam overordnet set kan nå til enighed om mange af de samme journalistiske idealer (såsom objektivitet og fakticitet), praksisser (herunder sammenfaldende nyhedsværdier) og rolleforståelser (særligt når det kommer til neutrale roller), prioriterer og realiserer de dem på forskellig vis – i overensstemmelse med de normative forventninger de bliver mødt med samt i forhold til de indre strukturer af deres respektive felt.

Mens afhandlingen ikke med dette studie kan finde belæg for eksistensen af en Sydøstasiatisk journalistik model, påviser den paralleller mellem de to journalistiske felter, der kunne føre til konklusionen, at de kunne være forskellige afspejlinger af de samme rammebetingelser eller måske endda af relaterede mediesystemer. Disse ligheder har muligvis intet at gøre med landenes fælles geografiske placering i Sydøstasien, men kunne også tilskrives mediernes komplekse forhold til staten i begge lande. I afhandlingens sidste kapitler foreslås derfor en udvidelse af Hallin og Mancinis mediesystemteori for at kunne tage højde for – og differentiere imellem – systemer med markant statslig involvering.

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I remember sitting at my desk in February 2010, three weeks in of my 6 months stay, in the Culture and Press section at the Embassy of Denmark in Hanoi Vietnam pouring over press clippings from an event the embassy had recently sponsored. A Vietnamese multi-artist had created a gigantic spectacle with music and dance performances, moving art pieces, and a massive light show that could be seen from afar. The performance was the second instalment of a three-part celebration of Hanoi's 1000-year anniversary and intended to show Vietnam's development through the ages. It attracted a lot of attention but the coverage in the local media left me, a Danish educated journalist, puzzled. The articles consisted mainly of bland descriptions of the stages, listings of the different instruments, musicians, and, dancers participating and the odd report of audiences' facial reactions when witnessing the impressive event. Nobody cared to offer any analysis or review of the event – even if it dealt with the somewhat turbulent history of the nation. The coverage mostly left the impression of being facts from the press release mixed with minor on-the-spot observations that only seemed to be included to demonstrate that the journalist had actually been present at the show.

“What did you expect?”, my Vietnamese superior asked me, when I presented her with my confusion, and continued to give me my first introduction to the practice of journalism in Vietnam. Having only been used to work with the media in Denmark, I came to realise how utterly little I actually knew about the understandings and practices of journalism in other parts of the world – not least Southeast Asia. While I knew of the different approaches to media legislation, of issues with press freedom and censorship, and of the severe consequences some journalists faced when they were deemed to be in violation with rules and regulation, I had no clue to what that actually meant for practicing journalists and the sort of journalism they produced.

“You have to read between the lines”, my supervisor explained and highlighted the parts where the article described the audience's reaction. What I had written off as half-hearted attempts of describing the atmosphere at the event was actually key to the reviews. Without infusing themselves directly into the report, journalists managed to give their opinion or interpretation of the show through descriptions of the spectators. Even if it was not a highly sensitive show with hard-hitting political undertones, journalists had nonetheless invoked some of their routinized practices to cover the event without explicitly displaying their personal opinions. They were not the ones assessing the performances or questioning the artists' interpretation of 1000 years' of national development. They were merely presenting people's experience of the show.

My meeting with journalism in Vietnam became an eye-opening experience. I came to realise that there was far more to journalism in highly controlled countries like Vietnam than typically presented in foreign media accounts and depictions carried by international organisations and NGOs. But few seem to tell the other sides of the story. Few have gone behind the stereotypical classifications of journalism and journalists in the region fostered by a Western understanding of well-functioning media systems and good journalism. Few have taken on the task to fully comprehend how the profession of journalism in countries with a complicated state-media relationship is actually perceived by the people working with it on an everyday level. I hope that this dissertation may help to change that by showing other aspects of the journalistic profession in Southeast Asia – aspects that may not only help create a better understanding of journalists and journalism in the region but also of the normative theories surrounding the profession and the stereotypical depictions of the journalist.

Through a comparative study of journalists' perceptions of journalism and their roles and responsibilities as journalists in Singapore and Vietnam, this dissertation intends to shed light on journalism in Southeast Asia and uncover the professions distinct qualities. In addition, it will through the comparison investigate whether there exists a version of journalism unique to Southeast Asia. As will be discussed in this introductory chapter, the two countries have been chosen as they embody a variety of different elements customary of countries in the region. The underlying assumption is that if it is possible to show evidence of a shared understanding of journalism in the two case countries, it might be possible to talk of a version of the profession unique for the region and of a (or several) prototypical journalist(s) customary of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the comparative approach “sensitizes us to variation and to similarity” (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 2) and it is therefore an invaluable tool when trying to grasp something as complex as the journalistic profession. Though the dissertation works with a qualitative bottom-up approach where the findings are guided by journalists' account and perceptions of their own profession, macro perspectives on the structuring forces surrounding the profession in both countries are also assessed and included to add extra layers to the comparative analysis. As will be argued, these perspectives are necessary to contextualise the micro level findings. Similarly, normative theories on journalism (and media systems) are considered throughout the dissertation even if it could appear as if it largely employs an emic approach. But, as we will see, etic perspectives are equally important to synthesise findings when dealing with a profession as contested as journalism.

This introductory chapter will set the scene for the dissertation. Before we can discuss theoretical frameworks and methodological considerations when doing qualitative studies on journalism in Southeast Asia, we need to look into normative theories of journalism, the region under scrutiny, the existing literature on media and journalism in Southeast Asia and the case countries selected for the comparative study.

Going beyond normative theories of journalism

In 1896, Adolph S. Ochs, then publisher of *The New York Times*, published a declaration of principles for the newspaper and its journalists. Among other things, he declared his ambition for the newspaper to be concise, timely and relevant for the public. Most remembered from his piece is, however, his aim “to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interests involved” (The New York Times 1996). The part pledging “without fear or favor” has become somewhat of a mantra for journalists – especially in the US – but it is also a perfect example of the normative foundation of the

journalistic profession. A vast abundance of values and ideals surrounds journalism and frame discussions, analyses and perceptions of the profession. While there, according to Benson (2008), in principle are "as many normative theories of journalism as there are political systems, from Marxism-Leninism to diverse conceptions of democracy" (Benson 2008), studies of the profession have, as Hallin and Giles (Hallin and Giles 2005) point out "focused heavily on normative models, models of what journalism 'should be', rather than of what it is and why". Normative theories have, in a sense, for a long period set the standards for how journalism should be framed and discussed.

One of the first – and probably one of the most disputed – attempts at providing a normative theory covering the world's media systems was *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm 1956). As foretold in the title, the book presented four different press (or media) systems grounded on different political systems and ideologies: the authoritarian, the libertarian, the social responsibility and the Soviet-Communist. The four theories all bore evidence of being conceived in the context of the *Cold War* with narrow, biased views of the non-Western systems (Nerone 1995). Despite this argument against the theories' relevance and applicability, they continued to live on and has, as Hallin and Mancini (2004, 10) eloquently put it, "stalked the landscape of media studies like a horror-movie zombie for decades beyond its natural lifetime". Many of the subsequent normative theories took the original models for granted and continued where Siebert, Peterson and Schramm left off with theories that in a similar fashion connected media or press systems to political systems. Especially the Communist and the authoritarian models persisted – albeit with some alterations and add-ons. Merrill and Lowenstein (Merrill and Lowenstein 1979), for instance, replaced the two non-Western models with three, a social-centralist, an authoritarian and a social-authoritarian¹, while Hachten (Hachten 1981) kept the original four models (though combining the libertarian and social-responsibility into one "Western") but added two new, a revolutionary and a developmental, to account for (temporal) transitional systems in the developing world – models that were also supported elsewhere by scholars like McQuail (McQuail 1983). Although some, such as Altschull (1984) with his First, Second and Third worlds, tried to move away from the original framework and instead organise media systems around economic systems, the fundamental division between "the West and the rest" laid out by *Four Theories of the Press* lingered on. Even Hallin and Mancini's attempt at putting *Four Theories of the Press* to rest with three non-normative, empirically-based models, the Liberal Model, the Democratic Corporatist model and the Polarized Pluralist model, presented in their 2004 book *Comparing Media Systems*, has been accused of following the same narrative based on their concluding remark that the polarized pluralist model "is most widely applicable to other systems as an empirical model of the relation between media and political systems" (2004, 306). This suggestion places the model in a similar position as its predeceasing authoritarian and communist models by becoming "a catch-all concept that includes everything that does not fit into the other two models" (de Albuquerque 2012, 73).

One could argue that many (if not most) of the normative theories suffer from "othering". Just as Said (2003) argued, by help of his analysis of Western (Occidental) cultural representations of the East (the Orient), that the Western visions of the Orient were a symbol of Western domination and a reflection of Western norms and ideals through differentiation, so are the normative theories that huddle a wide variety of countries and cultures into the same model. One of the biggest critics of *Four Theories of the*

¹ The social-authoritarian model was, as Szpunar (Szpunar 2012) points out, added to account for the lack of distinctions within the authoritarian model, as Merrill and Lowenstein in earlier versions of their models had changed the original Soviet-Communist model to include other Communist systems and instead positioned the Soviet Union in the authoritarian model.

Press, Nerone (2004), called the theories' authoritarian model a "classic constructed other" or "the fevered expression of what we reject", and similar things could be said about some of the other models mentioned above. Western notions of ideal media and press systems, and the elements that fall hereunder, are in many ways defined in contrast to what is unwanted. Political (or other) interferences, state intervention, instrumentalization, censorship, and self-censorship are all examples of undesirable components of a (Western) media system.

While contrasting ideals against others might be necessary to define their meanings and boundaries, as Szpunar (2012) points out, the existing normative theories makes it difficult to study or theorise about media in countries that was previously part of the West's "other". Not least when it comes to journalism that with Deuze's (2005) definition best can be understood as an "occupational ideology" with its own systems of beliefs, norms and values. Even if large international comparative studies (Weaver 1998; Weaver and Willnat 2012; Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011) have shown disagreement on these professional norms and ideals, normative assumptions of the profession continues to persist. Without exemplifying Deuze (2005, 445) speaks of a "dominant occupational ideology of journalism" among journalists in elective democracies "on which most newswriters base their professional perceptions and praxis". Others are more upfront and make direct equations between Western norms and the dominating norms of journalism. Carey (1996) even goes as far as stating that journalism "is another name for democracy or, better, you cannot have journalism without democracy". Although few have taken the argument as far as Carey, journalism is nonetheless in many ways being held hostage by normatively based assumptions surrounding the profession.

The different international indexes on press freedom that are released every year by NGOs, such as US based Freedom House and its French counterpart, Reporters Without Borders, are perfect examples. As Holtz-Bacha (2011) shows in her analysis of the two indexes, both "mirror the norms, values and experiences of the highly developed Western democracies". In the latest index from 2017 assessing the press freedom of 199 countries, Freedom House therefore came to the conclusion that only 13 percent of the world's population enjoys a free press (Freedom House 2017). Reporters Without Borders' 2017 index ranking 180 countries according to "the level of freedom available to journalists" painted a similar picture with only 16 countries getting top-scores and no less than 72 countries were placed in the bottom with situations being classified as either "bad" or "very bad" (Reporters Without Borders 2017). While it may be a fair assessment of the working environment of journalists in these countries, as Josephi (2013) acknowledges, "the grading system is based on the assumption that every country should aspire to become a democracy in which journalists can practise their profession free of interference from the state".

Attempts have been made to "internationalise" (Downing 1996; Thussu 2009) or "de-westernise" media and journalism theory (Curran and Park 2000; Gunaratne 2010; Wang 2011; Ray 2012; Waisbord and Mellado 2014) – or at least to post calls about it – but as Waisbord and Mellado (2014) argue there has been little agreement about what should be de-westernised and how to go about it. Few would probably have issue with correcting the "the self-absorption and parochialism of much Western media theory" (Curran and Park 2000), with a "de-westernising" of theories and methods that prioritises "non-Western contributions to the traditions of communication arts (i.e. rhetoric, semiotics, phenomenology and critical studies)" (Gunaratne 2010), or, with case-selections that go beyond the Western world (Thussu 2009). Yet, the field still suffers from a lack of guidance or clear frameworks that moves it "beyond conventional arguments about why 'de-westernization' matters" (Waisbord and Mellado 2014).

Although this dissertation does not attempt to provide a complete framework on how to “de-westernise” journalism studies, it does suggest that a qualitative bottom-up approach might be of assistance to scholars that wish to study the journalistic profession in non-Western settings. But it does not suggest completely discarding the original Western normative theories. While it may be tempting out of a, as Ray (2012) puts it, “postcolonial impulse”, there is (still) no evidence to support the fact that “Western models of communication often do not do justice to non-Western communicative situations but indigenous can” (ibid., 242). As Ray, Waisbord (2015) warns media and communication researchers dealing with non-Western countries to take particularistic positions that may result in “absolute relativism, negating the possibility that experiences can be compared, or that journalistic concepts and ideals may have similar resonance across settings” (ibid., 32). Just as a universalist approach based on normative assumptions about journalism’s co-dependency with democracy is ill-advised so is a particularistic that stubbornly rejects Western theories in an attempt to obliterate a colonial past.

The solution thereby perhaps lies in a third position somewhere in between the two. Szpunar (2012) argues for an approach that “involves an explicit turn to face our normative ideals and question whether or not they allow us to understand contemporary circumstances in a constructive way, while, nonetheless continuing the empirical work needed to understand those circumstances”. We should not completely renounce (Western) normative theories but use them to make sense of empirical findings through discussions of their rendering. If the “language of democracy” has become commonplace and connected to the practice of journalism “[e]ven in the most repressive authoritarian states”, as Benson (2008) notes, then we need to comprehend how that language is understood and interpreted in these societies. We need to move beyond studies that take their points of departure in normative theories and evaluate media from top-down perspectives (similar to the yearly press freedom evaluations mentioned above) and instead commence with bottom-up perspectives that pay attention to journalism on a ground level. While I do not agree with Josephi (2013) that a complete “decoupling of political system and journalism” is needed, we do need to start with the profession itself and the people practising journalism, the journalists, to understand and test “the most entrenched of journalism paradigms and to underline the contention that using a political system as the main descriptor of journalism proves too limiting a frame in which to view it”. We need to remember that there are more definers of journalism than the political system conditioning it and though political forces cannot (and should not) be removed from the equation we must consider other forces as well.

Hanitzsch (2007) has proposed probably one of the most ambitious theoretical frameworks for comparative research of “journalism cultures”, as he calls it, in recent times. In an effort to combine both etic and emic strategies, or universalistic and particularistic strategies, he develops a framework that deconstructs journalism culture into its “constituents and conceptual dimensions”: institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies (ibid., 371). With awareness of the Western bias in past journalism research, he tries to construct a structure that can account for the variance in role perceptions across cultures, different interpretations of the philosophical underpinnings of the profession, and journalists’ relationship with – and response to – ethical issues. Constructing a theoretical framework does, however, require some elements of normativity, which Hanitzsch fully recognises, and his dimensions unfortunately still bear evidence of classical (Western) conceptualisations of journalism. His three institutional role scales, interventionism, power distance and market orientation, along with his two fundamental dimensions of journalism’s epistemologies, objectivism and empiricism, are based on well-known conventions of the profession’s connection to political and economic incentives and its

preoccupancy with objectivity and advocacy. While I truly admire Hanitzsch's efforts and find great inspirations in his attempt to capture several dimensions of journalism with his theoretical framework (along with his subsequent attempts at putting it into systematic use in the Worlds of Journalism Study²), I find that a bottom-up approach that maps journalists' perceptions of their profession and the roles they perform is necessary before such an extensive theoretical framework can be built. I would fear that substantial nuances would be drowned out by the normative dimensions even if they might well be important constituents of a specific journalism culture. I do by no means argue for an emic approach that only pays attention to culture specific dimensions – a study of journalism needs to concern itself with the norms and ideals that hover around the profession with claims of universality – but we are at this point in time not ready to construct a theoretical framework that is able to capture all elements of the globe's journalism cultures. We still lack perspectives from countries and regions previously belonging to the West's "other" before major assumptions about a universal theory on journalism can be formulated. As Hallin and Mancini (2004, 303), I too call for more qualitative studies "based on field observations and extensive interviewing, of the operation of media organizations and/or their interactions with other social actors and institutions".

I propose an inductive qualitative approach that starts with the journalists' themselves and their understanding of journalism, the norms and ideals guiding their work, and the roles and responsibilities they have vis-à-vis the forces that are conditioning their profession. Engaging journalists in discussions about their ideals, routines and self-understandings or observing them in action while they perform their routinized practices can help pave way for a better understanding of the profession. Naturally, these statements and/or observations cannot stand alone. While discussions on journalists' norms, practices and responsibilities can help unlock the door, they have little relevance if not contextualised. Whether contraposed to normative theories, compared with other, to use Hanitzsch's expression, "journalism cultures", or seen in relation to external settings such as political systems, market structures or cultural settings, contextualisation of the data is necessary to make any conclusions on the journalistic profession in a specific country, culture or region.

On a theoretical level, I therefore advocate frameworks that make it possible to include both micro and macro perspectives of the journalistic profession. We need theories that helps open up or deconstruct the profession so we, just as Hanitzsch (2007) suggests, can analyse its constituents and detect how journalists interpret their roles and responsibilities and legitimate their practices and purposes. We need a framework that can help us make sense of the ideals guiding the profession and the challenges they are met with when confronted with conflicting normative expectations. A theoretical framework should not just consider journalism as a closed container but find ways to include external forces conditioning the profession. While journalism may not be a synonym for democracy, it would be difficult to argue that the profession has no connections to political powers. The same could be said about economic forces as journalism at the end of the day is a commodity in most societies. Depending on the culture under scrutiny other external forces might be equally relevant to include and a theoretical framework for the study of journalism needs to be sensitive to all possible influences. As will become evident in the theoretical chapter, this dissertation argues for a framework that consists of role theory and Bourdieu's field theory but there might be many other ways to approach the profession. However, I find that a

² A wide-scale international comparative quantitative study of journalism. It has currently (in 2016) finalised its second wave with participation of researchers from 67 countries and interviews with more than 27,500 journalists. See more on www.worldsofjournalism.org

framework that includes discussions on an agency level (role theory) combined with a more structural, relational theory like Bourdieu's field theory that makes it possible to relate micro level perspectives to macro level conditions is ideal when trying to map a journalism culture – or journalistic field, as Bourdieu's field theory would label it.

On a methodological level, I argue, that a qualitative approach to data collection (such as in-depth interviews, ethnography or case studies) is best suited for the task. While quantitative studies have the benefit of providing large amounts of data points, they suffer from a lack of thick data descriptions that we are in dire need of when dealing with less studied journalism cultures. Furthermore, without the necessary background information we could derive from these thick descriptions, we may get ahead of ourselves and fall into the trap of moulding quantitative studies on normative assumptions which has proved problematic in some large-scale comparative studies and resulted in causes of error due to misinterpretations of the standard questionnaire. As Josephi (2005) reminds us it must have been perplexing for Weaver and his collaborates (1998) when the data showed Chinese journalists to a higher degree agreeing with the watchdog role than their French or German colleagues.

The specific theoretical and methodological framework utilised for this dissertation will – along with the implications of these choices – be presented and discussed in detail in chapter 2 and chapter 3, respectively. However, before we can move on to these frameworks, we need to turn our attention to the region of interest for this dissertation, Southeast Asia, and the countries selected for the comparative study, Singapore and Vietnam.

Introducing Southeast Asia

While there has been vivid discussions in the past whether or not Southeast Asia qualifies as a region (Emmerson 1984; Acharya 2012), the 11 countries³ geographically located south of China, east of India and north-west of Australia is today commonly seen as belonging to the Asian sub-region. Not least due to the foundation, expansion and integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, commonly known as ASEAN, that promotes economic, political and security cooperation among its member-states. Created in 1967 by five of the region's countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), all but one country, Timor-Leste⁴, are today members of the association. The association was initially formed out of the political environment of the 1960s where the region was, as Caballero-Anthony (1998) puts it, marked by “intramural tension and mistrust, whilst the patterns of relations among the states was an interplay of amity and enmity”. The colonial era was over and all countries (except for Thailand, the only country in the region who was not colonised) were dealing with the difficulties of independence. Civil wars erupted in several countries and though some avoided armed conflicts all had their own confrontations to tackle. Furthermore, with conflicts also arising between the states, regional collaboration seemed necessary to avoid additional turmoil and ASEAN became the answer “as a diplomatic device for subregional reconciliation” (Leifer 2013).

³ In alphabetical order: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste (also known as East Timor) and Vietnam.

⁴ The country is currently seeking membership and is expected to join the association in 2017 or 2018 (Parameswaran 2016).

ASEAN aside, the countries in the region are, however, quite diverse. Not only in terms of sizes⁵ and languages⁶ but also when it comes to political, economic and ideological underpinnings such as regime types, forms of governments and religions. As Ba (2009) states, if there is one thing that most observers of Southeast Asia would agree on, it is the region's diversity. Despite the obvious differences among the region's countries they also have a great deal in common. While the colonial era marked the region and shaped the trajectory of many of its current nations, Southeast Asia's entire history has been shaped by external forces (Beeson 2009). Countries such as India and China along with the expansion of religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam have had a major influence on the region's cultures and beliefs (*ibid.*). The countries in the region share many of the same paths of development – not least within the last 50 years – though they may have reached different end-results.

One of the key elements of this development has been the countries' economic growth and ability to move quickly up the development ladder. Compared to other regions (such as Africa), Southeast Asia is seen as an exemplary success story (Rigg 2004) and since the turn of the millennium the region has been home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world (Wilson 2014). Although the 1997 Asian financial crisis⁷ dampened the praises (the economic growth was in many years during the 1990s described as "The East Asian miracle" after a 1993 World Bank Report (1993)), the economic development in the region is still considered with awe. Today, all of the countries in the region are seen as middle class income countries or higher by the World Bank⁸.

On the political side, the countries may have adopted many different regimes and forms of government (from absolute monarchy in Brunei and single-party Communist states in Laos and Vietnam to parliamentary republics in Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste, and presidential systems in Indonesia, Myanmar and the Philippines) but there seems to have been a prevalence for what Beeson (2012) terms "strong-man" and/or military rule in the region that can be explained "in large part by the combined challenges of nation-building and economic development". Political leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore (prime minister from 1959 to 1990), Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines (president from 1965 to 1986) and Mohammad Suharto in Indonesia (president from 1968 to 1998) are three examples of "strong men" that for long periods set the tone of the development agenda in their respective countries (and the region for that matter), whereas Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines are examples of countries that have experienced varying degrees of military rule and military coups. Another common trait is single-party dominance that is not only found in the two single-party Communist states but also in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and – to some degree – Cambodia. Although democracy has found its way to the region several decades ago, its precise form "may well fall short of what we might intuitively expect democracy might look like" (Beeson 2012). Case (2013) for instance calls Malaysia and Singapore the best examples of "semi-democratic regimes" with their dominant parties and restrictions for opposition parties (*ibid.*, 7), while the Philippines (in particular under Marcos), Cambodia and Indonesia (under Suharto) are examples of "pseudo-democracies" where elections are held regularly but

⁵ Geographically speaking, Indonesia is by far the largest country with an area 2,600 times bigger than the region's smallest country, Singapore. Indonesia is also the largest country in terms of population with its 258 million inhabitants. Timor-Leste is the region's least populated with 1.2 million inhabitants.

⁶ While each country formally only has one or two official languages (besides from Singapore who has four), they are almost all home to a vast amount of minority languages and dialects (Goddard 2005).

⁷ The crisis started in Thailand with the collapse of the Thai Baht and spread to most countries in the region with Thailand and Indonesia being most affected.

⁸ With the ascension of Myanmar in 2015 and Cambodia in 2016 to the "lower middle income" category.

“rigged” and civil liberties “nearly extinguished, with rights of expression, information, and assembly all rigidly controlled” (ibid., 8). In addition to the semi- and pseudo-democracies, the region has several authoritarian regimes, such as Myanmar (before its political reforms in 2011-2012), Brunei, Laos and Vietnam, with “no trace of civil liberties or elections” (ibid., 9). That leads Case to the conclusion in 2013 that only two of the region’s countries could be characterised as formally democratic, the Philippines and Thailand. With the latest military coup in Thailand (in 2014), the toll is, however, down. Even though Myanmar has undergone major political transformations and held its first free elections in 2015, it is probably too soon to give the country Case’s “formally democratic” label.

When it comes to media and journalism, the region also shares some common traits – at least when having their press freedom evaluated by international NGOs. Southeast Asia is seen as one of the least free regions – just after the Middle East. Timor-Leste is the only country that does not receive grave marks (see table 1 below). While the ranking differs slightly between the two press freedom indexes (in contrast to Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House for instance ranks Singapore above Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar), they are in general agreement about the countries having serious issues with their press freedom. Particularly Laos and Vietnam, who compete for the lowest rankings in both indexes.

Table 1: Press freedom in Southeast Asia

<i>Country</i>	Reporters Without Borders (2017)	Freedom House (2017)
Timor-Leste	98 (noticeable problem)	69 (partly free)
Indonesia	124 (difficult situation)	99 (partly free)
Philippines	127 (difficult situation)	88 (partly free)
Myanmar	131 (difficult situation)	161 (not free)
Cambodia	132 (difficult situation)	153 (not free)
Thailand	142 (difficult situation)	169 (not free)
Malaysia	144 (difficult situation)	152 (not free)
Singapore	151 (difficult situation)	150 (not free)
Brunei	156 (difficult situation)	164 (not free)
Laos	170 (very serious situation)	182 (not free)
Vietnam	175 (very serious situation)	178 (not free)

Although the indexes do not claim to say anything about the quality of journalism, the fact that the media in these countries is perceived as having serious issues with their press freedom or is labelled “not-free” has contributed to a stereotypical image of the media and press in Southeast Asia that journalists in the region do not necessarily agree with. This depiction, I argue, has not only had consequences for the choice of media development strategies in the region where most foreign donors have prioritised training of journalists (particularly in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) but also for the research that has been undertaken on media and journalism.

Researching media and journalism in Southeast Asia

When Heng in 2002 presented an overview of the literature on media in Southeast Asia post-1980, he concluded that most related to the transitional trends of the countries in the region – meaning the

“increased forces of democratisation”, the “revising of old economic strategies”, “significant socio-cultural changes” and the “challenges of information technologies” (Heng 2002, 1). He furthermore went on to explain, that though the amount of literature had grown exponentially in the latter part of the period, there was visible unevenness in the distribution across the countries in the region. Of the 126 country-specific studies he identified and analysed, “only six were about new ASEAN members – Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam” (ibid., 2-3), while the majority of the literature were about the media in the five founding members of ASEAN, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. Even though the amount of literature on the media in Southeast Asia has continued to grow exponentially since Heng’s overview in 2002, the somewhat skewed distribution persists. Some of the countries in the region continues to be marginalised – perhaps due to less developed academic environments, language barriers or access to information.

Singapore with its strong academic environment (and great sources of information and access to relevant data) is one of the countries in the region that has received most attention along with Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Several large-scale studies of the countries’ media and journalism cultures have been executed such as Hanitzsch’s (2005) quantitative study of Indonesian journalists, McCargo’s (2000) long-term ethnographic study of political journalism in Thailand and George’s (2012) in-depth investigation of Singapore’s media management. The five countries are also often the ones being used in international comparative research projects as representatives of Southeast Asia (Weaver and Willnat 2012) or in edited books on different media related topics (Rodan 2004; Atkins 2013; Couldry and Curran 2003; Cole 2006; Zhou, Rigger, and White III 2014). In comparison, the remaining six countries, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Vietnam, receive far less attention and are often merely mentioned in passing. Perhaps due to scarce data as few in-depth studies of the countries’ media and journalism situations have been undertaken. Studies on the media and journalism in these six countries are often minor case studies (such as Alkaff, McLellan, and Chuchu’s (2016) study of “hard news” stories in two Brunei newspapers), top-down assessments of the media environment (such as Clarke’s (2005) analysis of the role of international aid in the Cambodian news sector, Duangsavanh’s (2002) overview of the consequences of Laos’ economic reforms on the media sector and Brooten’s (2016) examination of the media’s role in the ongoing political transition in Myanmar), or appraisals made by international development donors and organisations in preparation for media development programmes (such as USAID’s 2006 report on the media in Timor-Leste (Kalathill 2006)).

No one has attempted to map the media system of Southeast Asia or do a full comparative study of the region’s journalism cultures. The comparative research that does exist on the region’s media typically deals with most-similar cases. A lot of studies have therefore been made between Malaysia and its former federal member-state Singapore (Rodan 2004; George 2006; Kenyon and Marjoribanks 2007; Kenyon 2010) but we also find studies looking into the four Malay-speaking countries, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei (McDaniel 1994) or the region’s most-developed and most-researched countries in different constellations (such as Lewis (2007) on Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore). Some comparative studies look into media and journalism in the remaining countries (like Downie’s (2000) analysis of journalism training in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam or Brooten’s (2011) comparison of media reforms in the two (former) militarized states Myanmar and the Philippines) but also in comparative perspectives these countries are underrepresented.

The lack of large comparative studies of media and journalism in the region has, however, not prevented discussions and tentative attempts at classifying or categorising the region’s media models and

approaches to journalism. In his overview of media in Asia, Gunaratne (1999) for instance groups Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in one media model, China, North Korea and Vietnam in a second and Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar in a third – albeit without providing any further explanation than their “various degrees of authoritarianism” (ibid., 208). McCargo (2012) opposes the structural approach and instead pays attention to agency when trying to capture the media in Asia which he sees as being “adept at creative borrowings and imitation” (ibid., 202). In his opinion most Asian countries “do not really have media systems in the sense so ably captured by Hallin and Mancini” (ibid., 219). Instead he suggests looking at what role the media *can* play at times of crisis and change and identifies three key roles (McCargo 2003): agents of stability “charged with the task of helping preserve stability and order” (ibid., 3), agents of restraint where it provides checks and balances of government policies, and agents of change where it helps foster change in society. Though I understand McCargo’s position, I do not agree that Asian countries do not have media systems. Instead, I argue, that the current configuration of Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) media system approach cannot capture all aspects necessary to comprehend and categorise media systems in the region. I will return to this discussion in chapter 4 and 8.

The perhaps most well-known discussion on media and journalism in Southeast Asia did, however, not start within academia. During the 1970s leaders and governments from some of Asia’s most successful countries (such as Japan, Singapore and South Korea) began discussing and promoting unique Asian Values that they argued had been key to their development (Xu 2008). These values traversed into discussions on media and journalism during the 1980s and 1990s – particularly in Southeast Asia where Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia’s Mahathir Mohammad were vivid advocates a shared set of regional values guiding journalism practices – an approach to journalism that can be said to be somewhat related to the concurrent discussion on development journalism.

According to Xu (2005) the fundamental (normative) components of Asian Values in journalism fall into three parts: 1) the role of the media in society (with the press being expected “to assign priorities to its role in informing, educating, maintaining stability and harmony, and assisting economic development and nation-building” (ibid.)), 2) the media’s relationship with the government (with the media being expected to be cooperative instead of adversarial), and 3) press freedom (with the media being expected to behave socially responsible when exercising their rights). The promotion of the values was heavily criticised as being a way for the more repressive governments to justify their political control of the media (McDaniel 2009), and it has also proven difficult to provide any evidence of their existence. In a 2002 comparative study of 10 Asian online newspapers, Massey and Chang (2002) found that the supposedly Asian values of “harmony” and “supportiveness” were only evident in the domestic news coverage in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei whereas there was no sign of support for the values across the 10 countries – or even across the entire Southeast Asian region. It is, however, noteworthy that the study found support for the values in three of the regions countries which Massey and Chang ascribed to similar degrees of media control in the three countries, or, “because the political leadership promotes them as beneficial to national development, and the journalists conceive themselves as the government’s nation-building partners” (ibid., 999). Though I have no intention of reviving the Asian values debate, I do take note of Massey and Chang’s conclusion and will, as part of the analysis, consider the states’ abilities to transfer cognitive scripts to journalists. Perhaps it is not a matter of agreeing on specific values but of the authorities’ coercive skills when the media (and journalists) mimic the state’s cognitive scripts.

This dissertation does not intend to provide a fully sketched normative model on media and journalism in Southeast Asia but it does intend to take on some of the discussions that has so far been

lacking in the existing literature. Few attempts have been made to fully comprehend the journalistic profession in the region. Most have worked with classifications based on top-down approaches scrutinising media legislation and state intervention and the few in-depth studies that have been undertaken has either been based on normative (etic) assumptions (like the wide-scale quantitative studies such as *The Global Journalist in the 21st Century* or the *Worlds of Journalism* study) or single case studies with little consideration of the findings applicability on the entire region. This dissertation will not only attempt to map the journalistic profession in each of the two case countries through an inductive bottom-up approach. It will also contextualise the findings with consideration of structuring forces, contrast findings from the two journalistic fields and reflect on the existence of a version of journalism unique to the Southeast Asia. As so, the dissertation has the three following main objectives:

1. To study perceptions of journalism, role orientations and role struggles among journalists in Singapore and Vietnam;
2. to contextualise these perceptions in light of forces conditioning the journalistic field in the two countries;
3. and, to discuss how, and to what extent, similarities between Singapore and Vietnam reflect a particular Southeast Asian model of journalism.

The dissertation works with an interpretation of journalism similar to Deuze's (2005) definition of journalism as an "occupational ideology" and Nerone's (2013) "ism": "That is, it is a belief system. In particular, it is the belief system that defines appropriate practices and values of news professionals, news media, and news systems" (2013). Although somewhat loose (as the definition of other "isms"), this definition makes it possible to consider journalism as both a profession and as a practice (or practices) infused by the profession's ideological foundation. Furthermore, the dissertation looks into journalists' role orientations as opposed to role perceptions or role conceptions. Journalists' orientate themselves around a variety of roles – normative, cognitive, narrated and performed (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017) – and it therefore seems logical to discuss role orientations instead of the more narrowly defined perceptions or conceptions that, according to Mellado, Hellmueller, and Weaver (2017) relates to perceived "role expectations in society" and "journalists' own formulation of the journalistic roles that are most important to them", respectively. In a similar manner, the notion of role struggles has been chosen to account for both the difficulties journalists encounter on an agency level and the more relational struggles of the journalistic field vis-à-vis its structuring forces.

Journalists' own understandings of journalism is, however, not the only perspectives included. As the profession is conditioned by a variety of forces and structures, I will also include institutional perspectives on the profession in each country and discuss legal frameworks and ideological underpinnings.

Case selection: choosing Singapore and Vietnam

In order to fulfil the dissertation's research objectives, I have chosen to do a comparative study of Singapore and Vietnam. The countries were selected as they embody different elements and characteristics of the region. Singapore and Vietnam both share (as most other countries in the region) a similar past as former colonies and have had their share of experiences with different overlords and

liberation struggles. However, they also represent countries on different developmental stages (Vietnam having recently become characterised as a low middle-income society and Singapore being a high-income society), of different sizes, and with different forms of government (one is a single-party communist country and one is a parliamentary republic), see appendix 1. Even though one could perhaps argue for the selection of other dissimilar cases in the region, the two countries were still chosen based on a “most different” case selection approach (Seawright and Gerring 2008) as they share the geographical location in Southeast Asia but vary on a number of other parameters. One could therefore speculate that if there are evidences of a common understanding of journalism among the two countries, the same thing could be said to be in evidence for the entire region of Southeast Asia.

Another reason for the selection of Singapore as a case relates to the country being one of the most adamant advocates for the Asian Values and for creating a shared vision of the media unique for Southeast Asian countries. Led by the country’s father Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore championed ideals, not least in ASEAN, to be considered when dealing with media in non-Western countries. Including Singapore in a comparative study of media and journalism in Southeast Asia thereby seems advisable if we want to understand the ideological underpinnings of the profession in the region.

Vietnam did not participate in the Asian values debates, which in itself qualifies the selection of the country to see if the discursively constructed values indeed have any relevance in the region, as their advocates strongly claimed. Another qualifying feature is its press freedom status. The country is consistently being evaluated to have one of the lowest levels of press freedom (see table 1). Not just in the region but also in the world. With an ambition to go behind the classic depictions of journalism in countries with little press freedom, it seemed natural to include Vietnam in the case selection. Finally, on a more personal level, the author had, as described in the introduction, prior knowledge of the media scene in Vietnam and the necessary contacts to get access to potential research participants. As we will see in the methodological chapter, this was of particular importance for the outcome of the study.

Researching media and journalism in Singapore and Vietnam

As mentioned in the short literature review of media and journalism research on Southeast Asia, Singapore and Vietnam place in opposite ends of the scale when it comes to the amount of studies that has been done on the two countries. Singapore is one of the countries that has received most attention whereas far fewer studies have been done on Vietnam.

A strong academic scene in Singapore has secured a vast amount of literature on the country’s media environment. The topics typically place within three categories: the state’s media management and the media’s relationship with the state; the impact of the Internet on politics and civic engagement; and, one-off case studies looking at a variety of media-related matters. The first two categories have by far received most attention – with the second category being on the rise over the last 10 years. In the first category, Terence Lee’s and Cherian George’s sizable scholarships on Singapore are worth mentioning. While Lee in particular has paid attention to the policy side with a top-down approach (Lee 2001, 2004, 2005b; Lee and Willnat 2009; Lee 2010), George has with his background as a journalist in Singapore tried to provide perspectives from the journalistic scene, albeit still with priority given to media policy and regulation (George 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012). Both scholars have contributed to the second category on the effect of the Internet as well (Lee 2005a; Lee and Kan 2009; George 2005) but particularly since the 2006 election where the online media marked their presence in political news coverage, this category has flourished with a vast number of studies from a variety of scholars looking into election coverage

(Cenite et al. 2008; Tan, Mahizhnan, and Ang 2015), the role of (alternative) online (and social) media (Soon and Cho 2014; Goh 2015) and political participation (Skoric et al. 2012). Finally, the third category is less populated with studies that deal with everything from framing studies (Massey 2000) and studies of news coverage on specific topics (Goh 2008) to audiences' media use (Chua and Chang 2016) and perception of the media (Tandoc and Duffy 2016).

When it comes to studies concentrating specifically on journalism and the journalistic profession in the country, the selection is scarce. Although George has provided some insights into the profession, as mentioned above, his accounts still suffer from being submissive to a top-down approach even if his analysis of the state's media management model is extremely comprehensive. Furthermore, his insider position in the field might make it difficult for him to recognise all of the field's unique properties that an outsider perspective (which I argue for in chapter 3) or a comparative study might have detected. In addition to a couple of case studies (Tay 2007; Duffy and Ashley 2012; Duffy, Tandoc, and Ling 2017), only two large-scale studies of the journalistic profession have so far been made: Hao and George's (2012) contribution to Weaver and Willnat's (Weaver and Willnat 2012) worldwide study of journalists' perceptions of their profession and Duffy's (2016) contribution to the Worlds of Journalism Study. In both cases, journalists were required to rate their profession based on pre-fabricated questionnaires to make it comparative to the other countries participating in the overarching studies.

I will contrast the findings from these two studies to my own throughout the dissertation. I do, however, need to note, that I have difficulties with the findings from Duffy's (2016) report on Singapore. Not only does it to some extent contradict the study from 2012 (as well as my findings), it also seems awfully contradictory in itself as there are very little agreement on any of the roles. As will become evident, my study shows a very united journalistic field with large agreement on ideals, practices and roles (as did Hao and George's study from 2012), whereas Duffy's study shows the opposite. Although my study is based on a much smaller sample, I do fear that Duffy's study has been either misunderstood by the participants or that sampling issues have skewed the findings. For a broadened discussion on these issues, please see appendix 2 with a comparison of the 2012 and the 2016 studies and their sampling methods.

With an academic scene that is still in development (and mostly publishes in Vietnamese) and the difficulties researchers meet when conducting research in the country (as we will discuss in chapter 3), Vietnam is one of the countries in Southeast Asia with limited (English) literature on media and journalism. The most thorough attempt to understand the media environment in Vietnam dates back to 1998 when David G. Marr edited a book on media structures in the wake of the *Doi Moi* reforms⁹ with contributions from both Vietnamese and foreign experts (Marr 1998b). The book looked at the media from different angles with both historical accounts, case studies and inside tales from a variety of media practitioners. The book did, however, say very little on the journalistic profession and journalists' self-perceptions.

The literature that followed Marr's book can be divided into three main categories: reports by NGOs, international organisations and associations assessing the media in light of legislative frameworks and human rights (McKinley 2010; Abuza 2015); academic articles, papers and theses studying the media through case studies, anecdotal accounts and legislative frameworks (Eek and Ellström 2007; Sidel 2008;

⁹ *Doi Moi* means renovation or renewal and was a series of economic reforms introduced in the late 1980s after the Sixth Communist Party Congress in 1986. The goal of the reforms was to transform the Vietnamese economy from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy inspired by China.

Bui 2016); and, finally, minor cases studies from a variety of academic fields where media analysis is used to discuss different issues in the Vietnamese society (Huong 2012; Labbé 2015; Vu 2017).

Some studies have tried to examine the journalistic profession in Vietnam, but they are mostly descriptive in nature like Huong (2012) who discusses the characteristics of the Vietnamese press through consideration of the laws and regulations surrounding the profession. Or Cain (2013) who examines the relations between the Party-state and the media. Although Cain interviewed journalists for his study, he does not go into detail with their perceptions of journalism or role orientations. Again the publication primarily focusses on state management. Worth mentioning is also McKinley and Schiffrin's (2013) peak into citizen journalism and the Vietnamese state's attempts at controlling the flow of information online.

The only studies that looks more specifically at the profession concentrate on journalists' backgrounds and journalism education (Dinh 2004; Loo and Hang 2007; A. Nguyen 2008) – and they too are mostly anecdotal in nature. The only study that works with an actual sample of the journalistic population (albeit a small one consisting of 67 journalists all working in Hanoi) is Loo and Hang (2007). Unfortunately, their study only revealed journalists' educational background and their use of information and communication technologies.

As is evident, no one has attempted to study journalism in Vietnam from journalists' point of view. Neither qualitatively nor quantitatively¹⁰. Most studies of journalism in the country have adopted a top-down approach with attention being given to the conditioning forces surrounding the profession (and almost exclusively the state's media management). This dissertation thereby fills a gap with its ambition to study the journalistic profession from a bottom-up perspective. Not just in Vietnam where studies of this kind is visibly a scarcity but also in Singapore where the only studies looking at journalism from journalists' perspective primarily have been based on Western normative theories with pre-constructed surveys leaving little room for differing interpretations of ideals, practices and roles. With this dissertation, I hope to contribute with new insights that may elevate discussions on journalism in Southeast Asia to new levels and create room for local interpretations and understandings.

Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of three parts. The first part looks into the dissertation's theoretical framework and methodological considerations. Chapter 2 will go into detail with the two theories applied to analyse journalists' perceptions of journalism, role orientations and role struggles and contextualise findings with consideration of external forces. As will be seen, I argue for a combination of role theory and Bourdieu's field theory to map both micro, mezzo and macro levels of the journalistic field in the Singapore and Vietnam.

In chapter 3, I outline my sampling approach, interview technique and analytical process. I argue for a combination of different sampling strategies to recruitment of participants, an active interview technique with a semi-structured interview guide to data collection and a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive coding and theme development to data analysis.

¹⁰ I tried to instigate a quantitative study of journalism based on the Worlds of Journalism Study to supplement my qualitative findings (and make it comparable to the data available on Singapore) but it proved impossible to accomplish on my own and I could not find any institution that would agree to sponsor the survey officially. Though I did manage to get some replies through my network it was far from enough to be representative of the entire journalistic population and I could not justify including the handful of replies in this dissertation.

The second part delve into the dissertation's analytical dimensions. Starting from a macro perspective, chapter 4 looks at the structuring forces of the journalistic fields. It sums up the historical trajectories of the media environment and scrutinises the different forces conditioning the journalistic profession. In chapter 5, 6 and 7, the analysis moves to micro and mezzo levels of the journalistic fields in Singapore and Vietnam. While chapter 5 looks into journalists' perceptions of journalism, understood as both ideals and practices, and chapter 6 examines journalists' role orientations, chapter 7 considers the role struggles that may arise when journalists are met with conflicting role expectations.

The third part discusses and synthesises the findings before summing up and concluding on the dissertation's three research objectives and the hypotheses listed in the dissertation's theoretical chapter. Whereas the consequences of journalists' role struggles will be evaluated on a macro level in chapter 8, chapter 9 will consider the dissertation's comparative objective and discuss whether there, based on this study, are any evidences of a version of journalism unique to Southeast Asia. Finally, conclusions are drawn in chapter 10, where I also provide suggestions for future research.

Conceptualising journalism on micro, mezzo and macro levels

If we want to understand journalists in non-Western settings working under or with restrictive governments, we need approaches that elude the trap of fitting journalists' roles into pre-established normative ideals based on Western understandings of the profession. We need an approach that takes both journalists' own understandings of their (professional) roles and responsibilities while not excluding the forces conditioning the professions. In other words: we need a theoretical framework that accounts for agency as well as structure.

As this theoretical chapter will argue, a combination of two theories, role theory and Bourdieu's field theory, might prove useful. Role theory helps us, as Mellado (2015, 596) points out, to understand the ideals and values that legitimise and define journalism. It helps us to see the underlying expectations that guide role orientations and it reveals role strains influential on journalists' role prioritisation. Field theory on the other hand helps us understand how the profession is structured and positioned in accordance to external forces such as state and economic interests. Furthermore, as will be explained, Bourdieu's *doxa*, *illusio* and capital concepts provide us with necessary vocabulary and analytical dimensions to discuss self-evident norms and ideals, motivations and controlling interests. However, the concepts are only distinguishable with assistance from other theoretical framework as Bourdieu himself provided little guidance on how to map these key features of a field. Again, I find value in role theory as it with its operability makes it possible to discuss responsibilities, practices and functions from which the analytical dimensions can be extracted. The two theoretical frameworks complement each other and combined paint a more holistic picture of the journalistic profession. The purpose of this theoretical chapter is then to present the two frameworks and explain how they in collaboration can help to investigate journalism in Singapore and Vietnam.

The theoretical framework will be explained in three stages: Firstly, role theory, and the challenges position-holder can experience with conceptualising their roles, will be presented. It worked as the point of entry for the study – empirically as well as conceptually. Secondly, Bourdieu's field theory will be laid out on macro, mezzo and micro levels before the third and final part will sum up how the two frameworks complement each other and can be used in tandem to understand journalism in the two case countries.

Role theory

Whether at work, at home with family or out with friends, roles play a key part of our everyday life and the way we interpret the society we live in. We identify ourselves through roles based on social categories such as gender, age, employment status, occupation, nationality etc. *Who* we are correlates in many ways with *what* we are. This makes the concept of roles a useful empirical tool for researchers as it can be applied to comprehend people's view of their positions in relation to society. Because, as Lynch (2007) points out, "social roles represent a point of articulation between the individual and society, the concept offers an appealing conceptual bridge between agency and structure". With role theory we can grasp what motivates people's behaviour whether they are performing the role of the mother, the wife or the journalist – or all roles at once. With role theory we can delve into the underlying demands and expectations experienced by a role occupant, or position-holder, and analyse why the person is compelled to act in a certain way. For the purpose of this dissertation, role theory works as a discursive tool to understand journalists and the practice of journalism from a bottom-up perspective. Instead of analysing the journalistic profession top-down based on normative assumptions of the profession, attention is given to journalists' understandings and interpretations of their roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the expectations they experience due to their positions.

The theatre is the main inspiration for role theory. Stryker (2002, 217) explains, that "the vision is of actors playing parts in scripts written by culture and shaped by evolutionary adaptations". Albeit a simplified depiction, the metaphor sets up the basic foundation of the theory and tells us that roles are scripted and laden with expectations. Furthermore, roles cannot exist in a vacuum but are connected to, and formed by, external forces and conditions. A role should thereby be understood as "the expected behavior of people who occupy a particular social status and position in society" (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach 2017, 5) – although it may be "limited in some way by contextual specifications and do not represent the total set of all behaviors exhibited by those persons studied" (Biddle 1979, 58).

Roles are typically divided into four broad types: 1) basic roles, associated with gender, age, social class etc., 2) position or status roles, normally linked to organisations and formally organised groups, 3) functional group roles, such as "leader", "follower" and "mediator", and, 4) value roles, attached to positively or negatively valued identities like "hero" or "villain" (Turner 2002, 234). Basic roles and value roles may apply across all group and organisational boundaries whereas functional group roles and position (or status) roles are connected to specific groups and organisations. Position or status roles also tend to be more normative in character compared to the three other types, as they are dependent on the organisation they are linked to. Organisations are equally interested in providing normative guidelines – or normative controls, as Ashforth (2001) labels them – to support position-holders' role commitment. "The stronger the controls, the less latitude the individual retains for thinking, feeling and acting – for conceiving of himself or herself as different and separate from the organization and role" (ibid.). When dealing with a profession such as journalism that is subject to demands from not just organisations and institutions but also many other groups and individuals who feel they have a stake in the role performance of journalists, these experienced normative guidelines or controls are particularly interesting. To what degree do journalists for instance feel that normative controls or normative scripts guide their role orientations? And are they even capable to distinguish normative scripts from individual motivations? Have the normative guidelines perhaps become so internalised within the role script that journalists do not question their origin?

Given the many different types of roles, it seems only logical that a person possesses many different roles at the same time (daughter, mother, wife, journalist, colleague, friend etc.) – a role system. Though a person normally only performs one dominating role at a time, there may be situations where a person has to play two or more roles simultaneously. Similarly, position-holders may find themselves performing different versions of the same role depending on who they are engaging with. Roles are multidimensional and depends on context and interaction. Each role is associated with a set of other roles or groups who the role normally interacts with. This is commonly labelled the role-set (however, sometimes also referred to as the position set) and understood as a “complement of role relationships which persons have by virtue of occupying a particular social status” (Merton 1966, 282). The role-set of a journalist for instance consists of the journalist’s relationship with her audience, her editor, her colleagues, her sources etc. Each of the agents in a role-set (commonly described as the role senders or the norm senders – I will use the latter) has expectations to the performance of the position-holder, which they impose on the person by either legitimatising or sanctioning the performance. These norm senders in the role-set condition the role through their shared expectations. With many roles we would expect consensual expectations from the norm senders but in cases where the norm senders have conflicting expectations, the position-holder may experience role strain. We will return to this shortly.

As role theory was not developed at once but over a period of time with contributions from a variety of academic fields such as sociology (Parsons 1951; Goffman 1959, 1961; Merton 1968), psychology (Moreno 1934) and anthropology (Linton 1936), many different definitions of its central concepts exist. Even the key concept, the role itself, is conceived in several ways: from Levy’s explanation of the role as a “position differentiated in terms of a given social structure” (Levy 1952) to Parsons’ understanding of roles as limited to “what the actor does [...] seen in the context of its functional significance (Parsons 1951). Whether roles, or the expectations related to a specific role, should be understood as norms, beliefs or preferences depends on whom you ask. But as Biddle (1986, 68) explains, though the differences may appear substantial, “the problem is more terminological than substantive”. Five different strands are, however, generally seen within role theory: functionalist, structural, organisational, cognitive, and symbolic interactionist.

Functionalist role theory (generally attributed to Linton (1936) and Parsons (1951)) and structural role theory have received most criticism of the five due to their views on the social system as being stable (or even static) and individuals largely being conformists to norms and expectations (Martin and Wilson 2005). Similarly, organisational role theory (promoted by Gross et al. (1958) and Kanh et al. (1964)), that, as the name suggests, primarily concerns itself with institutional roles and work-related role issues (House and Rizzo 1972; Jackson and Schuler 1985), has been criticised for seeing organisations as rational, stable entities and “that all conflicts in them are merely role conflicts, and that the participant will inevitably be happy and productive once role conflict is resolved” (Biddle 1986, 74). In contrast, cognitive role theory, that is related to cognitive psychology and focuses on the relationship between the individual, role expectations and behaviours (Hindin 2007), is criticised for being too engulfed in cognitive aspects and neglecting to connect findings to structural (or temporal) phenomena (Biddle 1986, 76). Symbolic interactionist role theory is therefore the strand most commonly used. With its point of departure in Mead’s (1934) notions of the mind and the self, it sees social interaction as the cornerstone of role learning while norms are “merely a set of broad imperatives within which the details of roles can be worked out” (Biddle 1986, 71). The writings of Goffman (1959, 1961) and his concept of dramaturgy describing social interaction in theatrical metaphors have also contributed to the symbolic interactionist

perspective. As Goffman sees it, an individual's identity is not stable but performed through roles and constantly remade through interaction with others.

The functionalist approach and the symbolic interactionist approach are favoured when it comes to studies on professional roles within the journalistic field (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach 2017, 5). While the functionalist perspective sees roles as being prescriptive in nature and based on shared normative expectations in a stable social system, the symbolic interactionist approach does not regard identities or roles as stable but something that are performed and constantly transformed through interaction with others. Roles are not fixed but “negotiated and changeable within a particular social process” (ibid.). This dissertation subscribes to the latter perspective and sees journalists' roles as behaviour influenced by internal and external expectations. Dependant on time and space, roles are subject to change. In contrast to the functionalist perspective that due to its more restricted view of roles find it difficult to deal with processes where position-holders negotiate role demands and expectations to deal with incongruity (Lynch 2007), the interactionist perspective with its more fluid vision of roles created through interaction sees these negotiation processes as being part of the making of roles (Stryker 1991). The interactionist perspective thereby sees position-holders as *active* participants in the role formulating process. This understanding of position-holders correlates with Bourdieu's view of agents in a specific professional field. They too are active participants – albeit conditioned and motivated by external forces, as we will see. Similarly, the role occupants or position-holders in the interactionist role theory perspective engage with structural demands in an effort to anticipate consequences of actions, monitor results and adjust behavioural patterns (Lynch 2007, 384).

Role expectations and role struggles

Expectations are key to the study of roles. Discussing professional roles, Goffman (1961) defines roles as activities position-holders engage in accordance with the *normative* demands upon that position. Role theory therefore moves beyond the roles and positions themselves and examine how the behaviour of a person “is shaped by the demands and rules of others, by their sanctions for his confirming and nonconfirming behaviour, and by the individual's own understanding and conceptions of what his behavior should be” (Thomas and Biddle 1966, 4). Especially the latter part of this quote is important as it tells us that it is about the position-holder's *interpretation* of the experienced expectations that guides role orientation. There is no perfectly defined script the position-holder must follow when performing a role. As Turner (2002, 233) explains a role refers to a *cluster* of behaviours and attitudes that are thought to belong together. The role is not set from the beginning but created in the interaction with others and only continues to exist through legitimisation from other actors in the interaction – with conformity to role expectations being rewarded and failure sanctioned (Stryker 2002).

In complex social systems such as our society, position-holders will normally experience issues with the expectations they are met with. These experienced difficulties in fulfilling role obligations are unavoidable and inherent in the social system. Most thereby experience so-called role strain in different forms on a daily basis whether it is because one is being met with too many expectations, too few (or too ambiguous) expectations, or conflicting expectations. Coping with role strain is part of role performance – although there might be different strategies to overcome (or accept) the experienced difficulties in meeting challenging expectations.

It could be that the expectations are insufficient which – especially when it comes to position roles that to a large extent relies on normative guidelines – could lead to role ambiguity. Or as Ashforth (2001)

puts it: “Ambiguity arises in novel and unfamiliar situations where past learning and expectations provide limited guidance”. While role ambiguity is typically researched and theorised in terms of its relation to work related stress, low job satisfaction and job performance (Jackson and Schuler 1985; Tubre and Collins 2000), another interesting consequence of experienced role ambiguity is the position-holder’s choice of coping strategy – which is important if the position-holder shall be able to “act with purpose and confidence” (Ashforth 2001, 66). Instead of retracting from a situation (for instance by quitting a job with too much ambiguity), some position-holders will attempt to explore the normative demands or controls on their own. Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) explain: “If an employee does not know what he has the authority to decide, what he is expected to accomplish, and how he will be judged, he will hesitate to make decisions and will have to rely on *a trial and error approach* in meeting the expectations of his superior” (my emphasis). This trial and error approach is particular interesting when dealing with professions such as journalism that in some countries still finds itself on different stages of professionalization. While still being under development, the normative demands are not fully in place from all norm senders and journalists might find themselves experiencing role ambiguity. The lack of clear guidance may subsequently force journalists to attempt a strategy of trial and error to help set up the boundaries of the profession. When dealing with countries such as Singapore and Vietnam where journalism is still undergoing a professionalization process one could therefore hypothesise that role ambiguity among journalists are more prevalent – with Vietnamese journalists experiencing ambiguity to a larger extent than journalists in Singapore. Furthermore, one could hypothesise that a high degree of role ambiguity among journalists will lead them to more frequently test the boundaries of the profession through a trial and error strategy while a low degree of role ambiguity may result in less rebellious journalists.

Besides being insufficient the expectations experienced by position-holders may be in actual conflict with one another – making it difficult for the position-holder to decide which norm sender to conform to. Broadly defined a role conflict is any situation “in which the incumbent of a position perceives that he is confronted with incompatible expectations” (Gross et al. 1966, 288). This should, however, as Biddle (1986, 83) stresses, not be confused with other concepts such as role ambiguity (see above), role mal-integration (when different roles in an individual’s role system do not fit well together), role discontinuity (when an individual must perform a sequence of mal-integrated roles), or role overload (when a person is faced with too many expectations because they play “more different roles than they have the time, energy, or resources for” (Turner 2002)). Role conflicts are constricted to role strain experiences that violate the core (or the values) of the role, or roles, a person holds.

Conflicts can occur on two different levels: interrole (also referred to as interpersonal) and intrarole (also referred to as intra-personal). An interrole conflict occurs when two or more separate roles are in conflict with each other, and an intrarole conflict occurs when a person experiences contrasting expectations as to what others expect of him when performing a role. A role conflict has to be solved before the incumbent can act, which means that a position-holder experiencing a role conflict will have to decide on a coping strategy based on an evaluation of the differing expectations in the role-set.

In an intrarole conflict, a position-holder will be affected by many different factors when having to choose a proper coping strategy. Aubert (1979) argues, that the outcome relies on the power of the norm senders. The power may stem from the emotional relationship to the norm sender, the competency of the norm sender and the available sanctions of the norm sender (ibid., 90). In the end, the position-holder will most likely conform to the norm sender with the most power and adjust his performance

accordingly. Kahn et al. (1966) add more nuances to picture and argue that besides interpersonal relations personality factors and organisational factors must also be taken into account when assessing the situation. Furthermore, they suggest understanding conflict resolution as a constant negotiation.

Gross et al. (1966, 292) also agree that many different factors have a say in the outcome of a role conflict. Nevertheless, they argue that individuals may be differentiated into three main groups “according to whether they are primarily oriented toward legitimacy or sanctions in making decisions”. A position-holder may stress the legitimacy of the differing expectations, give most priority to the sanctions as to provide the best defence for himself, or, take both aspects into account when evaluating the situation (ibid., 292-293). The outcome of the conflict will then depend on the main priority of the individual in the given situation. These conclusions have since been elaborated by van de Vliert (1981), who presented a three-step theory of role conflict resolution. The first and most frequent reaction to a role conflict is choice among the norms, while the second, compromise, and the third, avoidance or withdrawal, “only play an important part in the minority of situations in which the role prescriptions are equally legitimate or illegitimate, as well as simultaneously associated or not associated with sanctions” (ibid., 82). Most of the research van de Vliert used for his analysis was focused on role conflicts in organisations and Biddle (1986) therefore suggests consideration of a broader range of coping strategies. He highlights Hall (1972) who discusses three types of responses to a role conflict: “negotiating with others to change their expectations; restructuring one’s view so that the problem is less worrisome; and adjusting one’s behavior (Biddle 1986, 83)”.

Within journalism studies, role theory has mainly been used to understand different forms of role conflicts. Interrole conflicts, that arise when journalists are performing other professional roles simultaneously with their roles as journalists, have been the principal concern. As an example Belz, Talbott and Starck (1989) showed how journalists shifting to public relations positions would suffer from interrole conflict due to the perceived disparity between their old journalistic role and their new public relations role. A similar study on freelance journalists with a secondary position in the PR field came to the conclusion that the journalists in question were very much aware of the conflicts and tended to primarily identify with their core occupations as journalists (Fröhlich, Koch, and Obermaier 2013).

Though the concept of intrarole conflict is rarely used, many studies have dealt with journalists’ role perceptions and the different factors that influence journalistic values and practice (see chapter 6 for a more in-depth overview). The understanding of journalist’s role perceptions can partially be seen as inspired by role theory as it is typically defined as “generalized expectations which journalists believe exist in society and among different stakeholders, which they see as normatively acceptable, and which influence their behavior on the job” (Donsbach 2008, 2605). This generally translates to different societal, cultural and institutional factors that in different degrees are thought to have an impact on the way journalists perceive themselves. Or as Willnat and Weaver (2013, 173) concluded in their 2012 study of the global journalist in the 21st century, “journalists tend to put more emphasis on one role than on another, depending on the institutional, cultural and political situations in their own countries”. Translated to role theory, this means that the norm senders in journalists’ role-set have a high influence on how the journalist perceives his or her role(s). The journalist therefore has to constantly engage in intrarole conflicts with the different norm senders and choose the appropriate coping strategy to conceive the role as a journalist.

This aspect is particular interesting for the purpose of my study of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam where the journalistic profession to a far bigger degree relies on normative demands and

controls. One could therefore assume that role conflicts will be more prevalent among journalists in more authoritative countries like my two case countries where the state plays a big role in the media environment. The expectations from this norm sender may clash more often with journalists' own understanding of their roles and responsibilities – leading to role strain and role conflicts. In a comparative perspective, one could hypothesise that journalists in Vietnam (where the state, on paper, is involved in all media operations as will be explained in chapter 4) experience more role conflicts than journalists in Singapore who appear more autonomous with media outlets further removed from state involvement. Given the idealistic nature of the journalistic profession one could further assume that when it comes to role conflict resolution, journalists would choose either a negotiation strategy or a withdrawal strategy. If the conflict becomes unbearable journalists might confront the problem head on or simply choose to walk away from the situation. However, in countries like Singapore and Vietnam where the journalistic field has close ties to the political field (as will be described in chapter 4), negotiation might not be feasible. Instead one could hypothesise that journalists in these two countries to a larger degree will restructure their view of the situation or adjust their behaviour according to the norm senders that showcase the highest amounts of power.

Although role theory provides an entry point to the study of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam, it tells us little about how the profession relates to other institutions and forces in societies – the entities from which the norm senders derive. As described in the introduction to this chapter, I find Bourdieu's concept of field theory useful as a way to fill out the voids and complement role theory with macro perspectives. Not only does it provide us with analytical dimensions to understand the ingrained rules, routines and practices of a profession and its associated roles, it also helps us make sense of the different forces that conditions a profession and the internal struggles for domination and control over a profession. It gives context to the role perspective by setting up a framework for the internal hierarchy of roles and providing possible explanations to role strain outcomes and resolutions. Yet, before the linkages between the two theoretical frameworks can be lay out in details we need to set up the premises of Bourdieu's field theory.

Field theory

“It is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies, ‘models’ or ‘rôles’ – which one would, moreover, have to postulate in infinite number, like the chance configurations of stimuli capable of triggering them from the outside, thereby condemning oneself to the grandiose and desperate undertaking of the anthropologist, armed with fine positivist courage, who recorded 480 elementary units of behaviour in twenty minutes’ observation of his wife in the kitchen” (Bourdieu 1977, 73).

If we are to take Bourdieu's word for it, it seems impossible to solely focus on journalists' roles to understand the practice of journalism. To reduce something as complex as action or practice to the conception of a (or several) role(s) is a misunderstanding in his view. Bourdieu therefore devoted most of his life to develop a scientific language that could help shed light over social action without reducing its relation to external structures or subject intentions and instead taking both “the observed regularities

of social action” and “the experiential reality of free, purposeful, reasoning human actors who carry out their everyday actions practically” (Swartz 1997, 95) into account.

His concepts of fields, habitus and capital (1984, 1993, 2005) became key ingredients in understanding human behaviour. His ambition was to create a way of combining both macrostructures of the social world and microstructures guiding the individual to understand action or practice. Especially when it comes to specialised realms of social behaviour such as the performance of professional roles, Bourdieu finds it important to incorporate several levels of analysis. Starting at the macro level and looking at external structures or forces in society, moving over a mezzo level with attention to internal logics and struggles for dominance in a specific field (e.g. a profession or a social class) before ending up at the micro level and scrutinising an agents’ dispositions to perform in the field, creates a more complete understanding of social action.

Starting at the macro level, fields are, as Willig (2016, 54) sums up, “semiautonomous microcosms defined, at the same time, by their own game rules and by their relations to (and the game rules of) other fields in the overall social space”. As Bourdieu on several occasions has stated: “To think in terms of field is to think relationally” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 96). A field analysis helps “convey the conflict character of the social world and guards against presenting social hierarchies abstracted from their relations of opposition and proximity” (Swartz 1997, 129). Instead of focusing on the individual characteristics of agents and groups, field analysis proposes looking at the struggles and dynamics of social life that shape their behaviour (ibid.). But the struggles must be analysed in connection with micro level conditions such as the dispositions of the agents in a field to “play the game” – to perform the professional roles of the field, so to speak. Here Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and capital come into the picture. In *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984), Bourdieu tries to put the different elements together in an equation in an attempt to explain the dialectic relationship of the different levels and elements:

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

Even though he does not go into detail to explain the formula, his point is clear. An agent’s behaviour must be seen as a combination of habitus and capital inside a field. Or to put it differently: practices are not “to be reduced to either habitus or field but grow out of the ‘interrelationship’ established at each point in time by the sets of relations represented by both” (Swartz 1997, 141-142). This vision of practice relates to the interactionist role theory perspective that similarly sees behaviour or role performance as taking place within organised systems of action based on constantly negotiated roles (Lynch 2007).

In recent years, field theory has gained increased recognition as an analytical tool within journalism studies. Researchers have found value in its applicability to understand both micro- and macro levels of the journalistic field and explain how journalism and journalistic practices are structured in terms of power relations. The framework has been used, just to mention a few, in historical studies of the evolution of journalism (Krause 2011), in ethnographies of newsrooms and national journalist populations (Schultz 2007; Wiik 2010; Meyen and Riesmeyer 2012; Willig 2012), to explain changes within journalistic practices (Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2013; Hellmueller and Li 2015), to differentiate between journalism and journalistic practices on different platforms (Møller Hartley 2013; Siapera and Spyridou 2012) and, as a way to understand the impact of new communication technologies on journalism (Vos, Craft, and Ashley

2012; Tandoc 2014)¹¹. Benson (2005) finds the field approach specifically useful in comparative media research and shows how it can be used to map field variation with a comparison of the journalistic fields in France and the United States. Even more, field theory approaches “highlight cross-national differences in order to draw out the *variable* qualities of fields and field configurations” (ibid., 86). Only by comparison with other journalistic fields, will certain distinct features of a journalistic field become visible.

But it is not just on the macro-level that field theory can prove itself useful when dealing with journalism in a cross-national or cross-cultural perspective. Bourdieu’s concepts of *doxa*, the unquestioned rules of practice, *illusio*, the driving belief that makes the game worth playing, and capital, the things that must be invested and can be earned by playing the game, help us make sense of differing ideals, practices and role orientations between two (or more) journalistic fields. Mapping these differences will create a better understanding of a journalistic field and perhaps pave way for an explanation as to why it is impossible to talk about a commonly held interpretation of journalism.

Field theory on macro-level

On an overall level, society should in Bourdieu’s view be seen as differentiated into a number of semiautonomous systems referred to as fields. Generally, a field should be understood as a realm of specialised human activity placed within the national social space (Dickinson 2008, 1386). While the most commonly known and discussed fields are the political field, the economic field and the cultural field there may be as many fields as there are specialized realms of human activity in a society and all fields may be home to one or several subfields (Willig, Waltorp, and Hartley 2015, 3). Even though an unlimited number of fields may exist in a national social space, it would be a mistake to see society as *only* made up of fields, or that all forms of social organisation can be visualised as a field. Neveu (2007, 338) explains, that fields should not be an omnibus concept and that a social domain will not be a field before “the institutions and characters who enter it are trapped in its stakes, values, debates, when one cannot succeed in it without a minimum of practical or reflexive knowledge of its internal rules and logics”.

When it comes to professions such as journalism one could therefore argue that it takes a certain amount of professionalization before the agents identifying as journalists can be said to be organised or positioned in a journalistic field. As an example Krause (2011) shows with her analyses of the development and transformations of the American journalistic field, that despite the existence of newspapers in the 17th and 18th century, the journalistic field did not appear before the 1830s with the revolution of the penny press. In other countries the trajectory might be different with professionalization starting at other points in time and provoked by different factors. As Swartz (2013, 59) explain, fields can differ in their degree of institutionalisation and “in the primitive phases when a valued resource is just becoming an object of struggle the actual boundaries of the arena of struggle may well just be emerging”. Each country, or social space, will therefore have its own unique distribution and configuration of fields – with some being more developed and institutionalised than others.

The social space, its fields and the positions of the social agents within them are all structured on the basis of differentiation and relation. On an overall level, the national social space should be understood as structured around a basic opposition between economic and cultural power, or capital. Economic capital is simply money or assets that may be turned in to money, while cultural capital “encompasses such things as educational credentials, technical expertise, general knowledge, verbal

¹¹ See also Willig (2016, 58–59) for a comprehensive overview of field theory’s contribution to media studies.

abilities, and artistic sensibilities” (Benson 2006, 189). Based on empirical investigations (field analysis), a field can be placed in the national social space according to its relations to the two poles. The more economic power a field possesses, the closer it will be to the economic pole, and the more cultural power a field possesses, the closer it will be to the cultural pole. Though the cultural power is generally seen as the weaker, Benson (1999, 464) explains, that it is still “influential to the extent that it legitimates and masks economic wealth”. Furthermore, the fields will be differentiated and hierarchically divided according to the overall amount of capital, they possess. Visualising the structure, one could imagine a three-dimensional space with a horizontal axis measuring cultural versus economic capital and a vertical axis measuring the overall volume of capital. Depending on the amount of capital and the proportion of the capital, fields will be situated over and under each other and constantly battling for the dominating positions in social space. In all social spaces, though, the field of power will hold the top position.

It is important to note that the field of power should not be seen as a field similar to other fields in social space. It is more of a meta-field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 18n32), an arena of struggle “among the different power fields themselves (particularly the economic and cultural fields) for the right to dominate *throughout the social order*” (Swartz 2013, 62). The field of power is not the same as the political field or the state though they are related, as will be explained later. Instead it is battlefield not over particular forms of power as in other fields but “among the different forms of power to be recognised as the most legitimate” (ibid.).

When analysing a field, Bourdieu therefore finds it of utmost importance to start by positioning it “vis-à-vis” the field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 104). Is it part of the field of power? And if so does it take a dominating or dominated position? Next step, to understand the structures of the field and continue down the path with a field analysis on mezzo and micro levels, is analysing how it relates to other fields. Or as Benson (2014, 25) points out regarding the importance of field positioning when it comes to analyse the power of the journalistic field: “Analysis of field position helps us see that symbolic and material resources operative within the journalistic field are multiple, sometimes opposed, and sometimes allied in unstable hybrid formations”.

Positioning the journalistic field

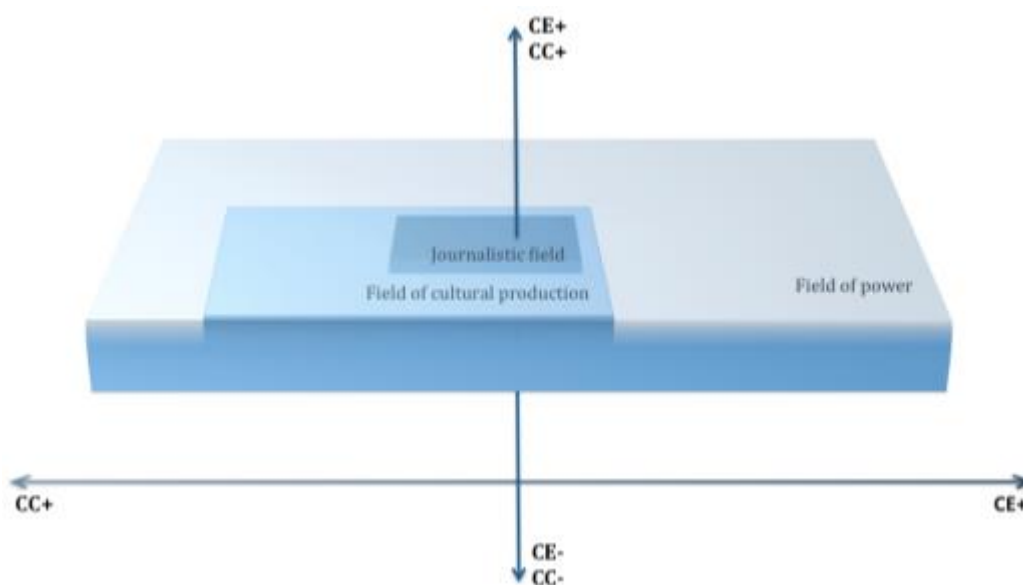
Though Bourdieu himself did not make empirically founded analyses of the journalistic field before his passing in 2002, he did recognise the profession as qualifying as a field. In fact, Bourdieu argues that it is necessary to look at journalism exactly as an autonomous field if one wants to understand how the profession works:

“to understand what happens in journalism, it is not sufficient to know who finances the publications, who the advertisers are, who pays for the advertising, where the subsidies come from, and so on. Part of what is produced in the world of journalism cannot be understood unless one conceptualizes this microcosm as such and endeavors to understand the effects that the people engaged in this microcosm exert on one another” (Bourdieu 2005, 33).

However, journalism can only be viewed and analysed as long as it has its own rules and worldview and as long as the agents within the field, the journalists, have a shared set of values and beliefs. In Western democracies, Neveu (2007, 338) writes, the journalistic field can only exist as long as “techniques such as the interview, writing conventions such as the rule of the five W’s, and professional beliefs such as

objectivity or the Fourth Estate” are institutionalized and embodied as part and parcel of a professional identity. Even though, the existence of a field cannot be answered without empirical investigations, a few things appear to be commonly accepted about the journalistic field and its position in social space. First of all, the journalistic field is typically viewed as a subfield within the field of cultural production together with the arts and sciences. Being placed within this field, the journalistic field also automatically belongs to the field of power. In an attempt to visualise the field, Benson (1999) has produced the illustration reconfigured in figure 1 showing how the journalistic field is located within the large-scale production area of the field of cultural production which, due to its mass production for general audiences, places journalism closer to the field’s economic pole.

Figure 1: Structure of fields in social space



Based on Benson (1999, 466). The model is to be viewed as three-dimensional with the journalistic field hovering within the field of cultural production and the field of cultural production hovering within the field of power. The vertical axis indicates the amount of capital and the horizontal axis indicates the type of capital (CE = economic capital and CC = cultural capital).

Bourdieu generally sees the journalistic field (in France) as having very little autonomy. As he explains in “On Television” (1998a), the journalistic field is much more dependent on external forces than other fields of cultural production (like mathematics, literature, law and science): “It depends very directly on demand, since and perhaps even more than the political field itself, it is subject to the decrees of the market and the opinion poll” (ibid., 53). The field constantly has to take both market forces and public opinion into account and therefore has little autonomy as a field. Schudson (2005) argues that a complete autonomous journalism would never work:

“What keeps journalism alive, changing, and growing is the public nature of journalists’ work, the nonautonomous environment of their work, the fact that they are daily or weekly exposed to the disappointment and criticism of their sources (in the political field) and their public

(whose disapproval may be demonstrated economically as readers cancel subscriptions or viewers change channels)” (2005, 219).

Without the struggles for autonomy (in the forms of marketplace competition and vulnerability to the assault of sources), the field would cease to exist. In Bourdieu’s depiction of the journalistic field, the struggle for autonomy is primarily a battle with external economic forces. The state or the political field appears to play a very small, if not insignificant, role. Or as Benson puts it, “he has no way of talking about the state or political power except as in league with economic power” (Benson 2006, 195). This has been one of the major critiques of Bourdieu’s field theory, as it seems puzzling not to include the state or political capital as distinct external forces to the journalistic field. This does not just seem relevant in countries where the media work in close relationship with the state but in most countries where the media are regulated by laws, depend on subsidies or are integrated in cultural or media policies. This has led some (Fenton 2010; Handley and Rutigliano 2012; Kunelius and Eide 2012) to try to fit political power or the state into Bourdieu’s visualisation of the journalistic field by suggesting overlaps between the political field and the journalistic field, while others (Couldry 2003, 2014) have worked with Bourdieu’s concept of *state meta-capital* to explain how the state can wield its power over other fields. As Bourdieu explains the state meta-capital is particularly capable of exercising its power over the rate of exchange of other capitals in a field “and thereby over the balance of power between their respective holders” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 114). The state is thereby a meta-field (related but not equivalent to the political field or the field of power (Swartz 2013, 69)), and the meta-capital is therefore not derived from the workings of any specific field, “but works across them” (Couldry 2014, 235).

Benson (2006, 196; 2014) goes in another direction and proposes a (re)conceptualisation of the journalistic field as largely structured around an opposition between a state-cultural/civic pole on one side and a state-market pole on the other. As he explains the state cannot be excluded from either pole. “The state, in the form of lawmaking and regulatory bodies, extends its reach over both nonmarket and market actors in the field of power” (Benson 2014, 25). In his view, it is thereby not possible to discuss journalistic autonomy from the state as it would “consist precisely in the professional and organizational balancing, or tension, between these two opposing heteronomous poles”, (Benson 2006, 197). It will be placed somewhere in the space between the two poles but it is “unable to sustain itself without some degree of dependency on one or the other” (ibid).

The question is whether this reconceptualization of the basic opposition is sufficient. While I do agree with Benson that the state plays a significant role in both nonmarket and market areas, I would argue that simply incorporating the state on both sides of the opposition makes it impossible to fully envision the struggle for autonomy in relation to the state and to political capital. Placing the struggle in a space somewhere between the two poles seems inadequate and creates little room for differentiation. Some journalistic fields might be more autonomous of state interference in both aspects than others. Furthermore, the reconceptualization still fails to capture the concept of political capital, which, according to Bourdieu, is different from state meta-capital.

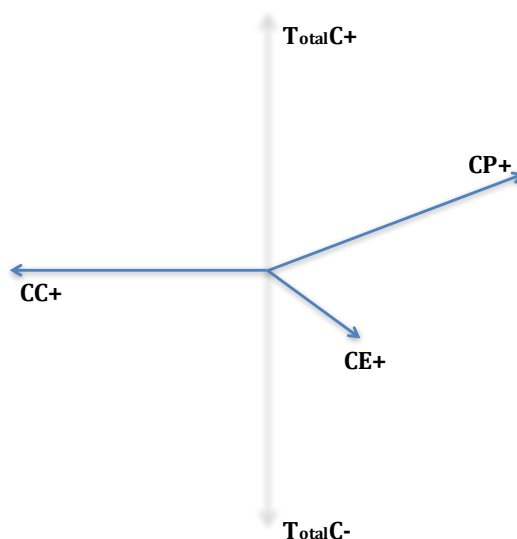
Though Bourdieu in his work generally pays less attention to political capital as compared to other forms of capital (Swartz 2013, 67), he recognises it as an important force – not least in connection to the overarching field of power. His understanding of the capital is connected to his view of politics as being “about the mobilization of public support for particular views of the social world”, which makes political capital “the capacity to mobilize social capital and needs to reach beyond the boundaries of the political

field for broader support” (ibid., 69). Political capital is a “reputational power resource” (ibid., 137). It is a form of symbolic capital, which, with the words of Bourdieu (1991, 192), includes “*credit* founded on *credence* or belief and *recognition* or, more precisely, on the innumerable operations of credit by which agents confer on a person (or on an object) the very powers that they recognize in him (or it)”. The power derives from other agents and fields and requires constant work both “to accumulate credit and to avoid discredit” (ibid.), as it is a capital form extremely vulnerable to changes. Though it is different from state meta-capital it is related to the state via the internal struggles of the political field. The state represents “those ideas, classifications, values that become official” and is therefore the end result of the struggle in the political field (Swartz 2013, 137). In addition, with the political field being a subfield of the field of power and the state being “the central organizing mechanism that adjudicates relations among power fields within the field of power” (ibid., 63), the state is key in determining the value of political capital in the overall struggle to be the legitimate form of domination in social space.

In the context of the journalistic field, it seems illogical not to find a way to include political capital as a differentiating, structuring element. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) illustrated with their attempt at developing a theoretical framework to analyse media systems, variables of a country’s political system or political culture influence the structure of a country’s media environment. Institutional structures stemming from the political culture “shape the development of the media by creating constraints and opportunities to which media organizations and actors respond” (ibid., 297). Of course the connections between the two systems should not be interpreted as “a mechanic, one-to-one correspondence” as other factors will also interact with both the political system and the media system (ibid., 296), but the relationship is nonetheless a key factor to understand the position of media and journalism in a society.

A solution to the problem at hand could be to work with yet another reconfiguration of the forces structuring the journalistic field (see figure 2). Instead of working with two poles, I propose a three-pole visualisation where the journalistic field is not only positioned in accordance to an economic and a cultural pole but also to a political pole.

Figure 2: Three axes structure of social space (conceptual design)



Own model. The model is to be viewed as three-dimensional with one vertical axis and three horizontal axes. The vertical axis indicates the total amount of capital and the horizontal axes indicate the three different types of capital (CE = economic capital, CP = political capital and CC = cultural capital).

The addition of another pole makes it possible to locate fields in accordance to political capital, cultural and economic capital. Especially in journalistic fields where there is a strong divide between state and market, the addition of another axis might prove useful. Benson's notion of an overlap between market and state will also be covered with this depiction but with the possibility of highlighting nuances from one journalistic field to another depending on the field's location in relation to the two axes.

Positioning a journalistic field in relation to the three poles requires scrutiny of the field's connection to the economic, political and cultural field. It is a matter of analysing the relative power of the different forces in the field in order to understand how the field is positioned in the area of tension between the three poles. Benson (2014), for instance, illustrates in his comparative analysis of the American and French journalistic fields how the French field due to the state's subsidies of civil society and media institutions is positioned closer to the cultural (or with Benson's wording, civic) pole than the American field, which in turn is placed closer to the economic (market) pole given its dependency on especially advertising revenue. Despite the lack of a political pole in Benson's analysis, he still explains how both fields are organised in relation to the political field, which could be imagined as "hovering above and partially parallel" to the journalistic fields (*ibid.*, 37) – indicating perhaps the journalistic field's inherent connection to the political field also stressed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). However, a concrete political pole might have aided Benson in being more specific about the legitimacy of political capital in the American and French journalistic fields. Though he does touch upon the states' interferences in both fields he still lacks a way of analysing the dominance of the political capital in relation to the other two capital forms instead of seeing it as either being contained in the cultural or economic capital or as "hovering above" the fields. Though Benson does not seem to find it relevant to add a distinct political pole when dealing with journalistic fields in Western democracies, I would argue for its importance – in particular when dealing with post-Communist countries, emerging democracies and authoritarian states where the media have either been or continues to be owned or controlled by the government and generally seen as an important tool in propagating policies and development. These fields rely on political capital as a resource – both as a way to work with the state and as a way to distance themselves from the state. Recognising political capital as a distinct capital, that the state has stakes in but not necessarily fully controls, makes it possible to map nuances in state-media relations and the field's degree of autonomy. With a political pole it becomes possible to map the journalistic field's potential shifting positions over time as the political environment changes and other forces or forms of capital become increasingly more dominant. Moreover, a political pole might prove itself useful in comparative studies of journalistic fields to understand the differences in state-media relations. Just as Benson (2014) proved in his comparative study of the journalistic fields in the United States and France with his attention to the differences between the two fields' positions to the economic (market) field and the cultural (civic) field there might be nuances to journalistic fields' positions to the political field that will only become apparent through comparison.

Field theory on mezzo level

Looking at the journalistic field on a macro level is, however, only one element in the field analysis. Zooming one step further in on the field takes us to the mezzo level and the internal structures and logics that organise the field's agents and drive their struggles over dominant positions.

Just as the social space in its original depiction is structured around an opposition between two poles so are the fields themselves. All fields will be structured around a heteronomous pole on one side that represents the external forces to the field and an autonomous pole on the other side that represents capital unique to the field in question, the field's cultural capital. Social agents will be positioned according to their relation to the different poles in the same way the fields are placed in relation to the oppositions in social space. The power and position of a social agent will be determined "by his or her social capital (membership of networks, social connections, friendships with the 'right' people), cultural capital (skills, knowledge, educational background), or economic capital (command over economic resources)" (Dickinson 2008, 1387), as will also be discussed in the next section.

As fields are hierarchically organised, social agents are continuously in competition with each other over the dominating positions within the field and agents will seek out different strategies depending on their positions in the field and vision of the field's trajectory. Bourdieu sees three types of field strategies: conservation, succession, and subversion. Swartz (1997, 125) explains:

"Conservation strategies tend to be pursued by those who hold dominant positions and enjoy seniority in the field. Strategies of succession are attempts to gain access to dominant positions in a field and are generally pursued by new entrants. Finally, strategies of subversion are pursued by those who expect to gain little from the dominant groups".

The strategies are all part of the internal struggles for dominance in the field. However, as Bourdieu (2005, 36) describes, even though agents will struggle to obtain the power to impose the dominant vision of the field, "these struggles are always based on the fact that the most irreducible adversaries have in common that they accept a certain number of presuppositions that are constitutive of the very functioning of the field". Or said in another way: people have to agree to disagree. They have to have a common understanding of the game, of the inherent rules of the field, the constituting part special for the given field.

Bourdieu uses the concept of *doxa* to explain a field's unquestioned rules and norms. Briefly put, a field's *doxa* is the rules and norms taken for granted within a field, all the things that go without saying. When dealing with professions and professional roles the concept seems especially relevant as it helps to explain what needs to be known about a profession to become socialised within a field – or perhaps rather what one will come to know during socialisation as not everything will be explicated. The *doxa* is therefore one of the constituent parts of the field. Without a shared understanding of which rules to follow or organise practice around, the game, the field, has no reason to exist.

Doxa is contrasted to the realm of opinion, the speakable, which is divided into two discourses: orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The former is to be understood as the straight or straightened opinion, the conservative viewpoint, which aims, "without ever entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa" (Bourdieu 2000, 169). Or as Holton (1997, 43) puts it: "a nostalgia for some version of the good old days". It is where the dominating views about the field are found. Heterodoxy, on the other hand, pulls the opinion in the other direction and challenges the perception of *doxa* within the field. As Bourdieu (2000, 169) explains, orthodoxy only exists in the objective relationship to heterodoxy that is "made possible by the existence of *competing possibles* and to the explicit critique of the sum total of the alternatives not chosen that the established order implies". The dominating actors within the field will have an interest in defending the orthodoxy discourse whereas the dominated actors will try to push back

the limits of *doxa* and expose the arbitrariness of the taken for granted (ibid.). With the right amount of material and symbolic means, the dominated actors might succeed in changing the discourse and alter the perception of *doxa*. These different distinctions of the “rules of the game” can be used to analyse the competing perceptions of the rules inherent in a field. When it comes to a profession, some rules and norms will be “speakable” and easy accessible. One could imagine that these are what you study if you educate yourself to become part of a professional field. Some of these norms will be described as “best practices” or the ideals everybody are striving for (the orthodoxy), while others will be seen as of lesser value or perhaps even “bad practices” (the heterodoxy) though they still belong to the field. When you enter the field, you will come to know that there is more to learn, more to become accustomed to. Becoming successful within a field, or mastering the game, requires complying with the *doxa*.

The *doxa* of a journalistic field may be understood as “a set of professional beliefs which tend to appear as evident and self-explaining norms of journalistic practice” (Schultz 2007, 194). Journalists and editors work by these rules without naming them. They are part of the daily news routine and the foundation for all news stories that get published or aired. These rules of the game decide whether or not a story is newsworthy. What these self-evident norms and ideals consist of may differ from one journalistic field not another – and perhaps even from one newsroom to another. Mapping the *doxa* of a journalistic field thereby reveal central practices, routines and ideals that journalists may take for granted while researchers will see them as key to comprehend the field and the agents inhabiting it.

Having a shared set of rules or norms is, however, not enough. Sharing a belief of the importance of the rules of the field, that the “game” is worth playing and defending, is equally important for the field to exist and uphold its boundaries against other fields. Even though agents in a field might want to revolutionise the field in some way or another (not least new entrants of the field who will seek to challenge the status quo and gain dominance over the field), they still have to accept *illusio*. Or as Bourdieu explains:

“They may want to overturn the relations of force within the field, but, for that very reason, they grant recognition to the stakes, they are not indifferent. Wanting to undertake a revolution in a field is to accord the essential of what the field tacitly demands, name that it is important, that the game played is sufficiently important for one to want to undertake a revolution in it” (Bourdieu 1998b, 78).

As with *doxa*, *illusio* is a key element when analysing professions in the field theoretical perspective. Grasping *illusio* of a field means understanding what drives agents. What makes them believe in the profession? What makes them legitimate their choice of profession? What makes them fight for their profession when confronted with challenges? When it comes to the *illusio* of the journalistic field it has been described as the element that for instance gives the war correspondent the impetus to take risks because of the “belief that journalism is one of the pillars of democracy – or more cynically that it allows one to be where the action is” (Neveu 2007, 339). Seen in relation to role theory, *illusio* can help us comprehend why some roles are more important than others – why some roles are seen as legitimising the profession more than others.

In the journalistic field, the general opposition between the autonomous and the heteronomous sides, the dominating and the dominated, structuring the field is in Bourdieu’s view (presumable based on his perception of the French journalistic field) a struggle between “those who are ‘purest’, most

independent of state power, and those who are most dependent on these powers and commercial powers” (Bourdieu 2005, 41). Neveu (2007, 336-337) elaborates and describes the autonomous pole as consisting of agents “who are most dedicated to the values, skills and resources which allowed the field to become a social space different from other fields”, while external forces have a major influence on the heteronomous pole making a good journalist being defined by either his or her ability to reach a large audience or by a strong and lasting commitment to one’s party or ideology.

However, these views and depictions of the journalistic field are largely based on interpretations of journalism in Europe and North America. Therefore, it is important to note, that how the opposition in other national journalistic fields will be characterised depends on the structure of the national social space and the organisational ecology of the journalistic field. Tracing this opposition therefore gives insights into the dominating views of the field. Which groups or which roles are for instance seen as “the purest” and which are regarded with lesser value (and perhaps even frowned upon)? And are there perhaps more than two poles? Just as we might consider more than economic and cultural capital structuring the field on a macro level so might we consider more than two poles organising the dominant players within the field. If a journalistic field is analysed to be conditioned by three forces, three (or more) poles might also be structuring the field internally.

Furthermore, just as the opposition may differ from field to field (and thereby may be more easily detectable in a comparative perspective), it may change over time. Svith (2015) for instance illustrates how the poles within the Danish journalistic field have changed from a “classic” journalistic struggle between a referring cluster and a watchdog cluster in the 1970s to the 1990s to a more interventionist struggle between a strategic information cluster and a news journalistic cluster due to the increase of journalists leaving the news world to find employment in corporate communication, PR and strategic communication. This shift has led to a different power structure within the field, which in turn has impacted (altered) the internal logics of the field along with the field’s *doxa* and *illusio*.

The basic opposition between the dominating and the dominated poles, the field’s *doxa*, and its *illusio* are thereby all interconnected on the mezzo level of a field and cannot be analysed without one another. To understand the inner workings of a field all must be taken into consideration as the second step of the field analysis before moving from the macro level to the micro level.

Field theory on micro-level

Zooming further in on the field away from the external forces and the internal structures and logics that positions agents within a field, we arrive at the micro-level where agent’s dispositions to “play the game” of the field comes under scrutiny. This is the third and final step of Bourdieu’s field analysis (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 105) to understand practice and includes first and foremost an analysis of agents’ habitus along with the capital they possess.

A person cannot simply enter a field. To become part of a field, knowledge, skills and perhaps even talent is needed – or to use Bourdieu’s terms, habitus and capital. Habitus should be seen as both a “structuring structure” and a “structured structure” that “organizes practices and perception of practices” (Bourdieu 1984, 170). It is a system of dispositions that “inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules” (Bourdieu 1993, 5). Habitus is something that is constantly created – and reproduced – through a social process. It is not something that an individual chooses to possess or something that is

being ascribed by external structures but something that is created in the interplay between the two over time. Capital, on the other hand, is something that a person possesses – his or her personal “power”, valuable in the fight over dominating position in the specific field.

To become successful in a field, a person will have to invest his or hers “(academic, cultural, symbolic) capital in such a way as to derive maximum benefit or ‘profit’ from participation” (Bourdieu 1993, 8). Distribution of capital within a field will be unequal and possession of one form of capital does not necessarily imply possession of other forms of capital. One agent may be in possession of economic capital but have no symbolic or cultural capital. The amount and form of capital in combination with the habitus will be determining for the positions within the field just as the field’s amount and form of capital will be determining for the field’s placement within the social space.

In the journalistic field, the habitus unique to the field, the journalistic habitus, will imply understanding the journalistic game and knowing what is necessary to produce news. However, different journalistic habitus might be at play, as there will be many different types of agents involved in the production of news. Willig (2012, 379) explains that, theoretically speaking one could imagine specific forms of habitus according to the different positions in a newsroom (“editorial habitus” and “reporter habitus”), according to the different journalistic genres (“foreign correspondent habitus” and “investigative reporter habitus”) and according to the type of media (“magazine habitus” and “newspaper habitus”). Again it is important to stress that journalistic habitus is not something set in stone but something that is forever changing. Not only in the field but also within the individual agent. Switching from one type of newsroom (or one beat) to another might ultimately cause changes in the habitus.

As in other fields, the capital used by agents in the journalistic field can come in many different forms, such as economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. The cultural capital unique to the journalistic field, the journalistic capital can, with the words of Willig (2012, 374), be seen as “the resources the agent (media or journalist) can put into the game, resources that are recognised in the field and by the other agents in the field”. It is a form of capital closely connected to peer recognition: “Having a lot of journalistic capital means having a lot of respect from journalist colleagues and having a good position internally in the journalistic hierarchy” (ibid., 380). Just as with habitus, the journalistic capital can take many different forms – material as well as immaterial. Getting a pay raise or a promotion is a very material form of journalistic capital, whereas positive feedback from an editor or a colleague belongs to the more immaterial category. A journalistic award like the Pulitzer Price is both material and immaterial and something that in many journalistic fields equals high amounts of journalistic capital.

Although the journalistic habitus will not be mapped in detail for the purpose of this study it does prove useful when it comes to describing and discussing what constitutes “a journalist”. It provides us with a concept to talk about the dispositions of a journalist and the socialisation necessary to become and continue to be one. Bourdieu’s capital concept will be used analytically in several ways. As described earlier it helps us on a macro-level to understand a field’s position in social space. On a micro-level it helps reveal internal hierarchies and interpret journalists’ motivations when choosing a coping strategy confronted with conflicting or ambiguous expectations to their role orientations. With the concept of capital, we can, as will become evident throughout this dissertation, explain what drives journalists’ ideals, practices and roles.

Combining role theory with field theory

Although Bourdieu himself found it difficult to see any usefulness in role studies (or at least functionalist roles studies) as the quote on page 33 bore evidence of, I would argue that role theory approaches are useful on both operational and conceptual levels. On an operational level, role theory is a comfortable and intuitive theoretical framework to work with when trying to understand what constitutes a profession. Most people understand the concept of roles and have something to contribute with when trying to describe their own roles. Similarly, on a conceptual level, the framework is accessible and makes it possible to view a profession from a bottom-up perspective and give attention to the viewpoints and interpretations of the people actually working within the profession.

A bottom-up perspective of a profession as complex as journalism is, however, somewhat deficient if it is not set in relation to conditioning structures. While role theory might be useful to analyse and discuss roles it pays little attention to the forces influencing the roles making it “unclear what structures social actors are trying to make sense of or adapt to” (Lynch 2007, 385). To account for this insufficiency, other theoretical frameworks therefore have to be included. In this chapter I have laid out Bourdieu’s field theory as a complementary framework – and vice versa. I argue that combining role theory with Bourdieu’s field theory produce a more nuanced and multifaceted analysis of the journalistic profession. Not only will we be able to see what motivates journalists’ role orientations and their choice of coping strategies when confronted with conflicting or ambiguous expectations, we will also get a clearer image of the influences stemming from the structuring forces. Yet, Bourdieu’s field theory also benefits from the collaboration, as role theory makes key features of a field, such as the concepts of *doxa* and *illusio*, operational. Although envisioned as a sort of “grand theory” that can map both micro and macro levels as well as agency and structure, the theory lacks clear guidance as to how the different dimensions should be empirically investigated. For the purpose of studying journalism and journalists’ self-perception, role theory can help fill out the voids and provide the operability, field theory is lacking with its attention to concrete practices, responsibilities, priorities and challenges. The two theoretical frameworks thereby complement each other on several levels and makes it possible to map perceptions, transform them into analytical dimensions and relate them to external structures.

Combining the two theoretical frameworks thereby requires us to employ them synergistically in an analysis. While we need role theory to engage individuals under scrutiny in discussions on their norms, ideals and practices before we can discern a field’s *doxa* and *illusio*, we need the *doxa* and *illusio* to comprehend motivations behind role orientations and role prioritisation. Similarly, while we need role theory’s visualisation of norm senders trying to infuse role expectations or normative scripts into position-holders’ role orientations to understand how external forces directly impacts a field, we need the concept of capital to understand how position-holders negotiate expectations and choose an appropriate coping strategy. By analysing the power of norm senders in terms of capitals, we might be able to understand journalists’ decisions when choosing to conform with one over another. Perhaps some capitals are of more value to journalists than others. Perhaps it will be more fruitful for the journalist to conform to a certain norm sender over another in the hopes of receiving (or in the hopes of not losing) a specific type of capital. This type of capital analysis is not only useful when understanding journalists’ roles, it is also important to understand journalists’ role distribution and role priorities.

Finally, the micro level analysis provided by both theoretical frameworks in combination with one another of norm senders, dominating capitals and coping strategies can feed into the macro level analysis

also of dire importance to understand a profession. Here, however, on the macro level, field theory takes over as role theory has little to say about the structuring forces. While it can weigh in its opinions about which forces have the biggest pull on role conceptualisations (through its attention to norm senders) and thereby on the field as a whole, it has no way of relating a profession or a field of actors to other professions or fields. The addition of field theory to a role theoretical perspective therefore allow us to move from the micro and mezzo levels to a macro level and see the profession in relation to external structures. By allowing a collaboration between the two frameworks we do not only get a more comprehensive in-depth analysis of journalists' self-perception, we are also able to see how the profession is conditioned by external forces and what that means for the its relationship with other fields and powers. Yet, before we can move on to analyse the journalistic profession in the two case countries selected for this study, we need to go in detail with the methods utilised to gather the necessary information on which the analyses are based.

Researching journalism in Southeast Asia

“Put most simply, interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives”

(Holstein and Gubrium 2003, 67).

The quote above illustrates the primary quality of interviewing as a data generator: engaging in conversations with people about a subject close to their hearts, themselves. Talking about oneself is something that most people find themselves capable of and perhaps even enjoyable or therapeutic (Hammersley and Traianou 2012). It should therefore come as no surprise that the method is one of the most widely used techniques for conducting systematic social inquiry and, as Holstein and Gubrium (2003, 67) point out, it has previously been estimated that “90 percent of all social science investigations use interviews in one way or another”. And this study is no exception. I too decided on doing interviews with journalists and editors in Singapore and Vietnam to achieve the kind of rich data necessary to study journalism in Southeast Asia from a bottom-up perspective. However, despite the convenience of the interview as a data generator, the approach is not without its own problems. Especially if the interviewer like me has several things working against her. Like being an obvious outsider as a “Western” researcher studying the “East”; having to work with language barriers and translation issues; and, last but not least, studying a potential sensitive topic that requires special considerations and precautions.

In this methodological chapter I will go into detail about the different methods and approaches applied for accessing, collecting and analysing data for this dissertation. I will outline my sampling approach, interview technique and analytical process. I will evaluate my method, as I move forward, and consider potential ethical implications. As will become evident, I argue for a combination of different sampling strategies (with snowball sampling being the most dominant) to recruitment of participants, an active interview technique with a semi-structured interview guide to obtain data and a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive coding and theme development to data analysis.

Sampling frame and sampling strategy

In qualitative studies the research participants play an important role. Given that qualitative research typically focuses on fewer cases than quantitative research cases are commonly selected purposefully (Patton 1990). Whereas the logic and power of sampling in quantitative research lies in randomisation

and representativeness, the logic and power of purposeful sampling “lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (ibid.). For that matter, the sampling in qualitative research will be constructed with “reference to the research questions, so that units of analysis are selected in terms of criteria that will allow the research questions to be answered” (Bryman 2015).

Depending on the population under scrutiny and the overarching research question different sampling strategies can be applied to select the best possible sample for the study. However, in most qualitative research, several sampling strategies are typically applied simultaneously to create the most credible sample and give room for the project to develop as it unfolds. For instance, in ethnographic studies where, due to the difficulty of finding appropriate participants, most apply a combination of opportunistic sampling and snowball sampling, as Bryman explains (2015, 415). Ethnographers will apply opportunistic sampling where they use participants available for their research and snowball sampling when they “attach” themselves to helpful participants and let them aid in the recruitment of new participants. I too ended up relying on a combination of sampling strategies to secure a rich and variegated sample in both of my case countries. Snowball sampling did, however, end up being the primary approach. Particularly in Vietnam, where referrals were paramount for recruitment.

The initial sampling frame for research participants included first and foremost individuals employed as either journalists or editors in the mainstream media in the two countries. In Vietnam, it was narrowed down to journalists working in either Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, the country’s two biggest cities and where most national media outlets are placed. Participants should either be currently employed or have been employed by a news media. All media, newspapers, magazines, television news outlets, radio news outlets and online news outlet, were relevant – as long as the participants were employed to perform a form of news work. Without working with a fixed definition of news, it was implied that news should be understood as reports on current matters. This very broad description was chosen to secure a wide variety of participants in the study instead of limiting it to journalists only reporting on political news. As the project developed, it also became relevant to include individuals involved in other forms of journalism or news work such as self-labelled independent journalists, citizen journalists and bloggers. These people were targeted in a similar way as journalists and editors.

In an ideal world, I would have gotten access to my research participants through official institutions such as national journalists associations or through agreements with major news organisations and made a representative random sample of the journalistic population in each country. Unfortunately, that was, as will be explained, not possible. I therefore ended up with a mixed purposive sampling strategy (Patton 1990) consisting of critical case sampling, opportunistic case sampling, maximum variation sampling, confirming and disconfirming cases sampling, and last, but not least, snowball sampling as the overarching strategy used in connection with all of the others.

I chose the critical case sampling strategy to make sure that I got most out of the time I had at hand. As Patton writes, critical cases “are those that can make a point dramatically or are, for some reason, particularly important in the scheme of things” (Patton 1990, 174). I would therefore target cases that I – or my contacts or former research participants – deemed to be of most value to my project: journalists or editors who would be “in the know” of the current situation of journalism in their respective country.

As the project developed, I also invoked the confirming and disconfirming cases strategy and maximum variation strategy to test hypotheses and emerging patterns. Theories that evolved based on the findings from the first fieldtrip would be tested on the next by seeking out participants that matched

participant from the first round – and participants that did not. Patton (1990, 178) makes an effort to underline how important it is to take the disconfirming cases into consideration as well since they “may be ‘exceptions that prove the rule’ or exceptions that disconfirm and alter what appeared to be primary patterns”. Similarly, I would seek out individuals that would have different backgrounds and experiences than the ones I had already been in contact with based on the logic of the maximum variation strategy: locating shared patterns emerging “from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts” (ibid., 172). I hoped, by going in both directions, to strengthen my arguments for the emerging findings despite my sample not claiming representativeness of the entire journalistic population in either country. Besides these strategies, I also gave in to a more opportunistic sampling approach and allowed myself be inspired by developments during my fieldworks. As I only embarked on fieldtrips of short length, I decided on making the most of them and followed as many leads as possible when in the field. As Patton rightly describes: “Fieldwork often involves on-the-spot decisions about sampling to take advantage of new opportunities during actual data collection” (ibid., 179). I therefore kept an open mind and made myself available for potential new participants.

The most valuable sampling strategy was, however, snowball sampling that is typically seen as the best approach when trying to get access to hidden or “hard-to-reach” populations as former research participants will help recruit new participants (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Although the journalistic profession is hardly a “hard-to-reach” population, it nonetheless became the best method for an outside researcher like myself to get access to the journalistic fields of Vietnam and Singapore. Due to the sensitivity of the topic (as most interviews on journalism is assumed to involve discussions on press freedom and censorship), trust was a key issue and having other people validating me and my project was in many cases necessary for recruitment of participants. In Vietnam, I came to rely almost exclusively on snowball sampling or other forms of referral methods as contacting potential research participants directly left me emptyhanded. Similarly, in Singapore despite the country having a tradition of doing studies on journalists, I was not a known figure with roots in the local research community (I have no doubt local researchers have much better access than I had – just like I would have in Denmark) and I assume that that was one of the reasons I experienced a hard time getting access in the beginning.

Despite the strategy’s usefulness in getting access to hidden populations or groups normally not accessible for researchers, it should be used carefully – and preferably in connection with other sampling strategies. Among key critiques are its lack of randomisation and representation of a population, the risk of community biases, and the researcher’s lack of control over the sample.

Though attempts have been made to find ways to incorporate randomisation into the snowball sampling strategy (like initial attempts of randomly selecting subjects from a reference list made by former participants (e.g. Goodman 1961)), there is still no obvious way of doing it. It lies inherently in the method that it is not feasible to draw a random sample and researchers should therefore go about it differently when trying to secure a diverse sample. Some (such as Heckathorn 2002) recommend beginning with “ethnographic mapping to select a maximally diverse set of initial subjects, and then conducting only a single wave to preserve the diversity of the initial sample and avoid the unknown biases that would arise from multiple waves” (ibid., 12). Others suggest using large samples and replicating the results to strengthen any generalisations (such as Atkinson and Flint 2001) or combining snowball sampling with other sampling strategies (such as Cohen and Arieli 2011). I chose a method where I combined snowball

sampling with other strategies and initiated parallel snowballs with the help of other contacts from other networks.

When it comes to community biases, the usual criticism is targeted against the choice of the first respondents in the chain – the ones who get the snowball rolling (Van Meter 1990; Kaplan, Korf, and Sterk 1987). A lot of responsibility is put in the hands of the first chain. Similarly, there is a fear that selections made solely on the basis of snowball sampling will end up being subject to a homophily bias. Participants will refer to others in their own network – people with whom they have social ties – and the composition of the next chain in the snowball sample will reflect the first one (Heckathorn 2002, 13). Relying solely on snowball sampling might then cause the sample to “miss ‘isolates’ who are not connected to any network the researcher has tapped into” (Van Meter 1990). As with the issues related to the sampling strategy’s lack of randomisation, researchers have tried similar approaches in attempting to overcome potential community biases. Though it is by no means a guarantee that ethnographic mapping, larger samples or a mixed sampling strategy will solve the biases, the different approaches do, however, make it possible to test hypotheses on a more diverse sample and argue for generalisation of conclusions.

Finally, there is an obvious issue with letting the recruitment of new research subjects rest in the hands of former participants. In some studies, where snowball sampling is used extensively, former respondents end up becoming informal research assistants (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981) and it becomes imperative that these individuals are capable of representing the research project in the studied community and that “the information they disperse be credible and compatible with the research effort” (ibid., 153). It is therefore imperative that the researcher contains control of the sampling process and guides the recruiters when new participants are to be contacted. Even though it is the former participant who initiates contact it is the researcher who makes the call whether or not potential candidates are suited for the project. In my study, I therefore made sure to discuss potential candidates with my research participants. However, I rarely (if ever) experienced any issues with proposed subjects. On the contrary, I found great advantages in having former participants aiding in the recruitment process as they based on their participation already knew the premise of the study and what it entailed to participate. Yet, I would make sure to take part in informing potential participants about the project and often only leave the introduction part to the former participants.

Sampling in Singapore

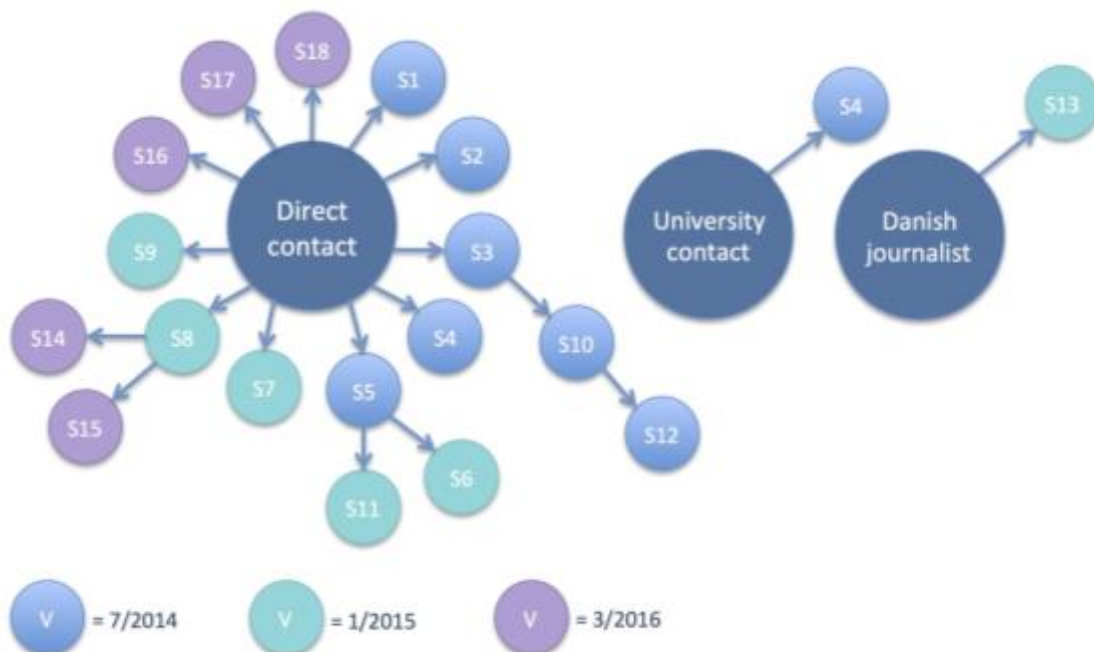
The Publishing and Creative Media Union is the official organisation for journalists in Singapore but with fewer than 100 journalists actually belonging to the union (Heng and Tan, 2014) it seemed like the wrong place to recruit interviewees. Key media organisations were therefore identified by mapping the media landscape and a process of reaching out to these, in the hopes of obtaining access to potential research participants, started. Unfortunately, this approach did not seem to work and after careful consideration, I therefore decided on trying a more direct approach and contacting potential participants either directly or through different contacts in my network. I started out targeting journalists and editors working for Singapore’s biggest media outlets. I would find potential participants by going through newspapers either in print or online and seek out a variety of people covering different beats. As most journalists had their email addresses placed in connection to their by-lines, it was quite easy to find contact information on the different people. As the project developed, I began seeking out participants that would help broaden the spectrum. I would go after journalists from other media not represented in the first sample, journalists

working freelance, journalists with long/short experience, journalists covering different beats and so on. However, despite my attempts at getting a variety of journalists from different media outlets in my sample, I do not claim the sample to be representative of the entire journalistic population in Singapore.

This method of establishing contact by the use of critical case sampling, opportunistic case sampling, maximum variation sampling, confirming and disconfirming cases sampling strategies followed by the use of snowball sampling proved more successful and ended up in a total of 19 interviews (see appendix 3 for an overview). As can be seen on figure 3, I had three different entrances to the journalistic field in Singapore: 1) directly, where I personally contacted potential interviewees, 2) through a contact person at the National University of Singapore who knew a key figure in the Singaporean media landscape and referred me to this individual, and 3) through a Danish journalist based in Singapore who I did not know before embarking on my trip but contacted while in the country and who ended up referring me to one of his contacts in Singapore.

As is visible from figure 3, I had the most success with the direct approach. It became increasingly easier after the first visit to get access to potential interviewees when I could mention that I had been talking to others from the media field on previous visits. Without mentioning any names (unless I had their permission to do so when reaching out to specific people), I would inform any potential research participants that I had been talking to colleagues of theirs and would be interested in talking to them as well to get their views on the situation. My previous informants became a sort of gatekeepers to new participants and gave me, as Herod (1999) describes it, a degree of credibility in the eyes of potential interviewees. I give credit to this approach that I actually succeeded in talking to a wide variety of journalists and editors across the media landscape in Singapore.

Figure 3: Flowchart, sampling in Singapore



The flowchart shows the result of my sampling strategy in Singapore. As is visible I approached 11 interviewees directly and eight through referrals by either former participants (in six cases) or other contacts (in two cases). The blue bobbles signify interviews conducted in July 2014, the green ones were conducted in January 2015 and the purple ones were conducted in March 2016.

Sampling in Vietnam

My ambitions for getting a representative sample of the journalistic population was equally high to begin in Vietnam. Contrary to Singapore, Vietnam actually has an official association for journalists. However, after conferring with people from my Vietnamese network, I was strongly advised against collaborating with the association, as I would have very little control over my sample – if the association at all agreed to help me. I was also told that it might take a very long time to even obtain a permission to do such a study through this official channel and I would waste valuable time sitting around waiting for it. I therefore decided on using a more direct approach to recruit participants.

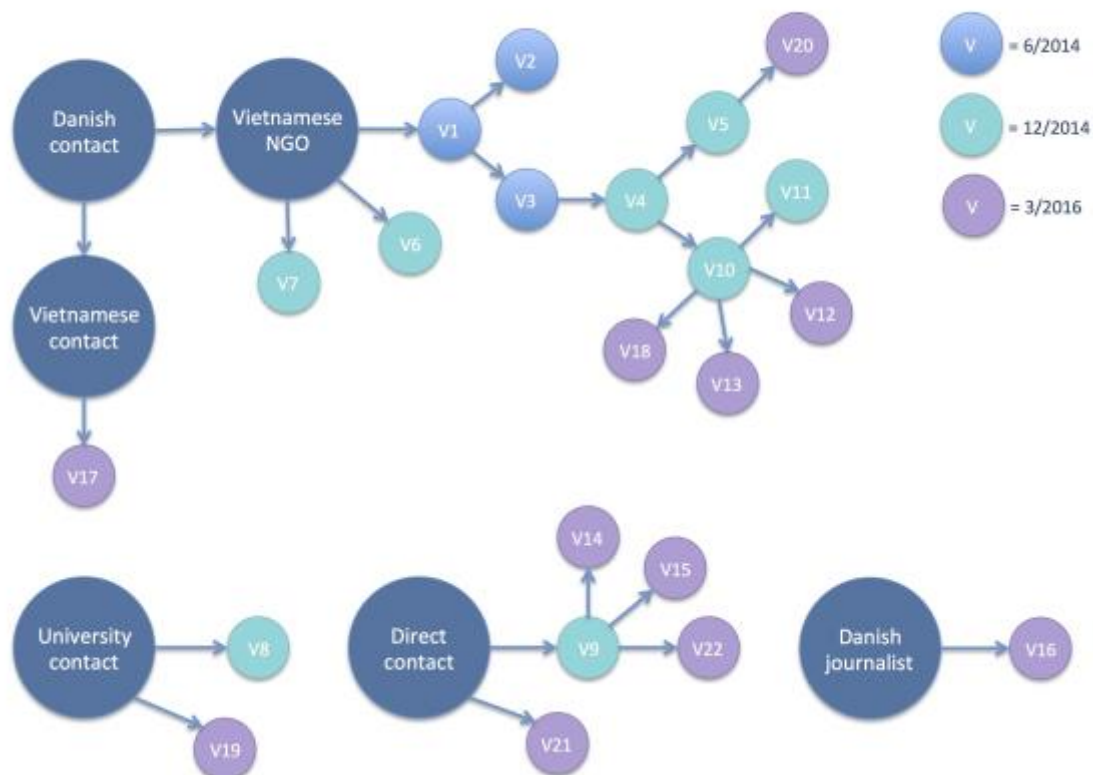
As in Singapore, I mapped the media landscape and tried contacting journalists and editors directly. But I quickly found out that this approach would not work in Vietnam. Even if I did succeed in finding contact information on journalists or editors working for the mainstream media, I would get no replies. Despite the fact that I did have a Vietnamese institution sponsoring me¹², I was not able to find any entrances to the journalistic field on my own. Doing research in Vietnam is quite different than doing research in other countries. It is not just research in journalism studies that encounter difficulties in Vietnam. Foreign researchers from other fields such as geography (Scott, Miller, and Lloyd 2006), health science (Turner 2013; Boggiano, Harris, and Nguyen 2015), and anthropology (Turner 2013) have also met their share of difficulties when trying to do any form of data collection in the country. Scott, Miller, and Lloyd (Scott, Miller, and Lloyd 2006) explain how independent, foreign social science researchers are a relatively new phenomenon in Vietnam and combined with the importance of passing through the right channels (from the top down), having pre-established contacts with a host institution in the country and following very specific guidelines and protocols laid out by government officials, doing field work in Vietnam is a tricky task that requires a lot of adjustments to expectations and research practices. These challenges are seconded by Boggiano, Harris & Nguyen (2015), who also add the linguistic and cultural issues, researchers performing cross-cultural field research, especially in Vietnam, will have to deal with, to the list.

To find potential entrances to the journalistic field in Vietnam, I started out having a lot of informal meetings with people in both my professional and private networks. As neither the official way nor the direct approach would work, I would be relying on others to help me with introductions to people who could then assist me in recruitment. Snowball sampling therefore became the key strategy for recruiting participants for the study and my combined efforts resulted in a total of 22 interviews with a variety of journalists, editors and citizen journalists from Vietnam (see appendix 4 for an overview). Figure 4 shows, the four different entrance points, I had to the journalistic field in Vietnam: 1) a friend who had been working for an international NGO in Vietnam and put me in contact with a local NGO with media development related programs and with a personal contact of her own, 2) an acquaintance at the National University of Singapore with a Vietnamese background who introduced me to two different journalists through her contacts in Vietnam, 3) directly, as I on two occasions succeeded with the direct approach, and, 4) a Danish journalist/media development specialist, who put me in contact with one of her contact's contacts. As is clearly visible from figure 2, the snowball chain initiated by the contact from local NGO proved to be most successful and resulted in a big part of my sample. In order to avoid community

¹² Vietnam National University, Hanoi, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Journalism and Communication, <http://ussh.vnu.edu.vn/en/faculties-and-departments/faculty-of-journalism-and-communication>.

biases, I pursued other entrance points on my second and third field trip. Some proved successful (like the ones resulting in interviews with V16, V17, V8 and V19) while others left me emptyhanded.

Figure 4: Flowchart, sampling in Vietnam



The flowchart shows the result of my sampling strategy in Vietnam. As is visible I approached two interviewees through direct contact and 20 through referrals by either former participants (in 13 cases) or other contacts (in seven cases). The blue bobbles signify interviews conducted in June 2014, the green ones were conducted in December 2014 and the purple ones were conducted in March 2016.

In the case of both Singapore and Vietnam, I could mention all of the dead-ends I encountered and all of the contacts who could not help me despite their initial promises or determined efforts but I see no reason for that. Instead let me just note that I must have reached out to more than 100 persons either directly or through different contacts and referrals but ended up with a total of 41 actual interviews – in addition to the many informal talks and discussions on journalism I had with both media professionals and observers of the media in both countries.

Interviewing journalists

As in other social sciences, the qualitative interview is also a widely used method in journalism studies. The method has been used to look into aspects such as journalists' views on news values and news judgment (Gans 1979; Besley and McComas 2007), journalists' approach to information seeking (Attfield and Dowell 2003), journalists' conceptions on public opinion (Gingras and Carrier 1996), journalists'

views on objectivity (Tuchman 1972), journalism education (Tanner et al. 2012), and job satisfaction of journalists (Greenberg et al. 2007), just to mention a few. The popularity of the method might be explained by the fact that journalists, in theory, make very good informants. As Besley and McComas (2007) argue, journalists fit all of Lindlof and Taylor's (2011) characteristics of good informants by being not just "veterans of the scene" and "competent users of the local language" but with backgrounds as professional communicators "it should be expected that they are able to provide insight into their professional practices, including the context and possible meaning of their actions" (Besley and McComas 2007, 344). However, interviewing professional interviewees is not necessarily as easy as it sounds. As Zelizer (2005) points out, they are "notorious for knowing what news is but not being able to explain it to others". Schultz (2005), for instance, experienced quite a few challenges during her study of news values among Danish journalists. Not only did her interviewees find it difficult to comprehend why an interview about one subject would take more than 10 minutes, they also questioned her interview technique. Especially her tendency to let them talk without interruptions came under scrutiny. "If you only let me talk, you will never get to the heart of the matter"¹³, as one respondent told her (Schultz 2005). Schultz describes her ordeals as a clash between two fields: the journalistic and the scientific. Both fields have an interest in defining reality and this battle for power became even more visible as interviewer and interviewee tried to position themselves in relation to one another during the interviews (ibid., 92).

While Schultz was interviewing journalists and editors in Denmark, her native country, I interviewed journalists and editors in Southeast Asia. If interviewing journalists and editors in itself is a tricky task, I will argue that interviewing journalists and editors working in media systems and journalistic fields that by the Western world are considered constricted or deprived of press freedom is even trickier. Not least if the researcher, like myself, by coming from the West per definition is an outsider. However, being positioned as an outsider can turn out to be an advantage as the researcher might be able to "scrutinise certain problems more closely, instead of seeing them as common phenomena or not seeing them at all" (Liamputtong 2010). Combine that with an insider perspective of the journalistic profession in general and you have, what I claim to be an ideal combination to get access to valuable insights of a journalistic field in a cross-cultural setting. I deliberately chose an active interview technique with a semi-structured interview guide that allowed me to use my positionality to secure rich data by reducing power asymmetry and creating discursively constructed common grounds. Yet, the approach is not without its own potential sources of errors. As we will see, careful consideration of the implications of the approach is necessary to secure its validity and researcher integrity.

Interview guide

To prepare for the interviews, an interview guide consisting of eight different themes and subjects was created prior to the fieldwork (see appendix 5). Each theme had a number of questions that could be posed depending on the situation. As listed in table 1 below the eight themes related to the overall research question and the theoretical foundation of this dissertation in different ways and served distinctive purposes in the mapping of the journalistic fields and journalists' role orientations in the two case countries.

¹³ Translated from Danish. My translation.

Table 1: Interview guide and purposes

Themes	Data	Key concepts	Hypotheses/purposes
Background	Age, gender, education, experience, current position.	Background variables.	
News values and ethics	Ideals, norms, best practices, responsibilities.	Role theory: expectations and normative scripts. Field theory: <i>doxa</i> and <i>illusio</i> .	Journalists in Singapore and Vietnam holds similar ideals, which could be evidence of similar understandings of journalism in Southeast Asia.
Practices and routines	Routines, best practices, norms.	Role theory: expectations and normative scripts. Field theory: <i>doxa</i> and <i>illusio</i> .	Journalists in Singapore and Vietnam apply similar practices, which could be evidence of similar approaches to the journalism in Southeast Asia
Roles	Responsibilities, functions, purposes, roles.	Role theory: roles, expectations, norm senders, normative scripts, role strain. Field theory: <i>doxa</i> , forms of capital, hierarchical structures.	Journalists in Singapore and Vietnam orientate around similar roles, which could be evidence of similar understandings of journalism – and perhaps one or several prototypical journalist roles – in Southeast Asia.
Becoming a journalist	Socialisation processes, field requirements, professionalism.	Role theory: roles, role requirements. Field theory: <i>doxa</i> , hierarchical structures.	Uncovering socialisation processes and the hierarchical structures of the journalistic fields.
Being a journalist	Relations with other agents in society, perceptions of the profession	Role theory: expectations, norm senders, normative scripts, role strain. Field theory: conditioning forces, forms of capital.	Uncovering norm senders and role struggles in the journalistic fields and evaluating the impact from different conditioning forces.
Constraints and difficulties	Constraints, censorship, access to information, press freedom.	Role theory: expectations, norm senders, normative scripts, role strain, coping strategies. Field theory: conditioning forces, forms of capital, field autonomy, field positioning.	Evaluating the dominance of different norm senders in the journalistic fields and positioning them in social space.
The future	Current and future challenges of the journalistic profession.	Role theory: expectations, norm senders, role strain, coping strategies. Field theory: field positioning, field trajectories.	Evaluating challenges and threats to discuss the current positions and future trajectories of the journalistic fields.

The interview guide was meant as inspiration for the semi-structured interviews. It was never the intention that all questions necessarily should be posed in all interviews. It would depend on the interview situation, the interviewee's willingness to share (sensitive) information and the time at hand. It would be a matter of evaluating the interview as it unfolded and follow the lead of the interviewee rather than sticking ferociously to the guide. The ambition was to get around as many of the subjects suggested by the interview guide but also leaving room for the interviewee to contribute with insights and observations not necessarily covered herein. Given the sensitivity of some of the subjects (e.g. censorship and press freedom), I would carefully consider whether some topics should be left out or potentially saved for later.

Firstly, the sensitive issues were not the primary focus of the study, and I did not want them to overshadow what was really the issue: perceptions of journalism. I did, however, suspect that some of the issues would be discussed – especially given the fact that, this is normally what is in regards to journalism in Southeast Asia. Secondly, I did not want to make my research participants uncomfortable by bringing up subjects that could potentially alienate them from the situation. I would rather that the subjects would be brought up naturally during the conversation than me feeling obliged asking them as part of my interview guide.

Though some (Gorden 1975) would argue that the lack of standardised questions would lead to less comparative data, I share the perspective of Barriball and While (1994), who argue that the opportunities to change the words but not the meaning of questions in semi-structured interviews “acknowledges that not every word has the same meaning to every respondent and not every respondent uses the same vocabulary”. This point is particularly important when asking respondents to engage in conversations in a foreign language, which, as we will see shortly, was most definitely the case in this study. Here flexibility is needed to make sure that there is a clear consensus of the meaning of a question. The possibility to provide context, clarify or rephrase a question is crucial to standardise the interview frame and facilitate comparability.

Active interviewing

Traditionally, interviewers were supposed to be as neutral as possible when engaging with interviewees. All efforts should be invested in getting the interviewees to present information on the research subject without risking any form of “contamination”. The interviewer would merely ask the interviewee to open up the vault of information already available for the taking. The interviewer, as Gubrium and Holstein (2001) describe, would ideally use “his or her interpersonal skills merely to encourage the expression of, but not to help construct, the attitudes, sentiments, and information in question”. As an example, in Brennen’s “Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies” (2013), interviewers are among other things advised to “adopt a neutral stance”, “refrain from influencing a respondent’s commentary”, “refrain from asking leading questions” and questions that “illustrate your personal opinions, biases and/or prejudices” (ibid., 34-35).

Not surprisingly, these ideals can be difficult to achieve and the question is whether they are even worth striving for. If one of the keys to get useful information is creating a comfortable stage for the interviewee to feel safe and free to talk about private matters for later public use (Kvale 2007), then it seems contradictory to refrain from engaging in conversation with the interviewee. How is one to encourage an interviewee to talk openly about personal matters, sensitive issues or difficult struggles without showing any signs of interest, emotion and engagement? In an interview, all participants will be responsible for the data creation in one way or another and Holstein and Gubrium (2003) therefore encourage researchers to use this to their advantage instead of trying to pursue unrealistic ideals.

With a more active conception of the interview, both interviewer and interviewee take parts in the knowledge production. Instead of being a static box of knowledge, the researcher may open by asking the right questions in the right way, the interviewee becomes an engaged member of the research effort whose “interpretive capabilities must be activated, stimulated, and cultivated” (Holstein and Gubrium 2003, 75). Holstein and Gubrium make an effort to underline that this does not mean that interviewers are coaxing preferred responses out of their interviewees. Instead they are bringing alternate considerations into play (ibid.).

Listening and reflecting on the themes brought into play becomes an important part of the interview and the interviewer will need to both identify with the interviewee and show respect for his or her sentiments and positions (Mies 1993). Abell et al. (2006), for instance, explain how “on occasions, self-disclosure on the part of the interviewer may constitute a useful research strategy”. Especially when researchers are dealing with vulnerable research participants or delicate subjects, self-disclosure or other forms of active engagement in the conversation can help ease the situation and break down the boundaries between the researcher and the research participant. As so, this technique has proved itself useful in studies dealing with LGBTQ issues (Hayfield and Huxley 2015; Kim-Yoo 2016), race and culture (Song and Parker 1995; Ramji 2008), sex workers (Kock 2016), and feminism research (Mies 1993).

Given that the technique is not in alignment with the suggestions and advices normally listed for interview situations, the active approach may appear as a method inviting biases. The interviewer is in great risk of contaminating the data as he or she actively engages with the interviewee instead of retracting and observing. However, Holstein and Gubrium (2003, 78) argue that this criticism only holds, “if one takes a narrow view of interpretive practice and meaning construction”. No matter how many efforts are put into standardising an interview situation, interaction between the involved parties is unavoidable and the data will be constructed in collaboration between interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer should of course still behave ethically and constantly reflecting on his or her involvement – but retracting is not a solution.

The active approach also proved invaluable in my data collection. I quickly realised that the more I engaged in conversation with my research participants and offered my own perspectives on matters, the more I got out of them. Since I dealt with people who, for the most part, interview for a living, I had to break down the walls of the interview. I had no use for short and concise replies commonly sought by journalists for news stories. Instead, I wanted my research participants to engage in a reflective dialogue about their experiences as journalists and editors. There is, of course, no way of knowing whether I would have gotten the same results with a more withdrawn approach but I am convinced that investing engaging myself and occasionally offering my reflections (or personal experiences) on topics, I got my interviewees to reveal more insights from their professions.

The active approach not only allows interviewers to engage with interviewees. It also makes it possible for interviewers to use their positionalities to their advantage in the data collection process. Whereas a researcher’s positionality is often seen as obstructing the data collection process (especially if the ideal is to have the researcher being as invisible as possible), in an active interview situation it can be an effective tool.

Positionality

Cross-cultural research was for a long time pseudonym with white western middle-class (primarily male) researchers travelling to far-away countries to study indigenous people living lives very different from their own. The differences were, as Mercer (2007) describes, “so seemingly obvious that it was considered easy to draw a distinction between the stranger and the native”. However, as the research community developed and researcher began to study “not the strange but the familiar” (ibid.), the clear-cut distinction between the stranger and the native changed into a new distinction between the “insider” and the “outsider”. Questions about what position would be the best to study a community from arose. Is it for instance possible from someone coming from the “outside” to fully understand what is going on “inside”

of a community completely different from the one they have been socialised within? Similarly, one could ask whether it is possible to investigate one's own community and culture without neglecting important features? Two sides formed in the debate and have dominated in ever since: the insider doctrine versus the outsider doctrine. Merton (1972) explains how the insider doctrine sees the insider researcher as the one with the best potential to understand the community in question as he or she has full access to the social and cultural truth. The outsider in this doctrine "has a structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups, statuses, cultures, and societies" and will therefore never be able to fully understand the group (ibid., 15).

The outsider doctrine takes a different approach, which Merton explains by referring to a popular quote used by both Georg Simmel and Max Weber: "one need not be Cesar to understand Cesar" (Merton 1972, 31). This of course implies that it is possible to observe something from the outside. Some even argue that the results will be more objective as the outsider may pose questions about issues that seem self-evident to insiders. Herod (1999), a perceived "outside" researcher himself, agrees with this view. As he argues, the "insider" doctrine forgets the basic foundation of the interview being a social interaction where both interviewer and interviewee participate in the formation of the data. The insider may shape the interaction differently than the outsider but "it makes little sense to assume that one version of this knowledge is 'truer' in some absolute and 'objective' sense" (ibid., 314).

Even though the debate as to which researcher position is the best for a qualitative study continues to this day, very few researchers do find themselves in a complete insider or outsider position. The binary in the debates is, as Mullings (1999), describes "less than real, because it seeks to freeze positionalities in place, and assumes that being an 'insider' or 'outsider' is a fixed attribute". Consequently, people have begun to reflect more upon the dichotomy or even rejecting it completely. Several have argued for a more nuanced view where the insider and the outsider should be seen as opposite sides of a continuum (Mercer 2007) with researchers taking up different positions according to their relationship with the population they are studying.

Banks (1999) concretised the idea even further by attempting to create a typology consisting of four ideal-typical cross-cultural research positions: the indigenous-insider, the indigenous-outsider, the external-outsider and the internal-outsider. The two indigenous positions have researchers coming from within the community and either being a fully legitimate member (indigenous-insider) or having lost that ability after being socialised into another community (indigenous-outsider). The two external positions have researchers coming from "the outside" and either ending up adopting the researched community's beliefs and values (external-insider) or never coming close to socialising within the researched community (external-outsider). The external-outsider will, according to Banks, use his or her position as an outsider as justification for the validity of the research because he or she "has a more objective view of the community than researchers who live within it" (ibid., 8).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) introduced the idea of a more layered approach that takes a researcher's multiple positions into account. Similarly to others, they find it impossible to be a complete insider or a complete outsider. Researchers will always occupy positions in "the space between" and these positions will always be in flux: "We may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher (which includes having read much literature on the research topic), we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions" (ibid., 61). "The space between" is, as Kerstetter (2012) puts it, a "multidimensional space, where researchers' identities, cultural backgrounds, and relationship to research participants influence how they are

positioned within that space”. The researcher might be an “outsider” when it comes to e.g. profession, race and religion but an “insider” when it comes to gender, age and family position. In that aspect it might be possible to find common ground with a research participant and get access to some of the inside information that is commonly associated with the insider position even though, culturally speaking, the researcher is not a legitimate part of the community. Mullings (1999) is in agreement with this approach and explains that researchers often must seek *positional spaces*, as she calls them, to acquire trustful information. These spaces are areas “where the situated knowledges of both parties in the interview encounter, engender a level of trust and co-operation” (ibid., 340). Based on her own experiences conducting qualitative interviews with managers and workers in information processing companies in Jamaica she explains how shifting between different aspects of one’s identity to create positional spaces with interviewees will give access to valuable insights. Depending on the situation and the person she was interviewing, she would position herself in ways that rendered her as either a partial insider or outsider.

Kerstetter’s (2012) “space between” and Mullings’ (1999) “positional spaces” could also be seen in light of Bourdieu’s field theory. Researchers, professionally belonging to the academic field, use their inside knowledge of the field they are investigating to position themselves in the field. Depending on the amount of symbolic capital and knowledge of *doxa*, the researcher might be able to play the role of integrated agent in the field. That was exactly the case in my interviews. I would try to position myself as an, to use Banks’ (1998) terminology, “external-insider”. As a person coming from a completely different country with another history, culture and language I was not even going to pretend, that I could position myself as an insider to Vietnam or Singapore. Instead, I would use my background as a journalist and create my insider position based on my past experiences from this field. As I cannot claim to be an insider to neither the Vietnamese nor the Singaporean journalistic field, I would position myself as an insider to a discursively constructed universal journalistic field moving across national and cultural boundaries: A universal field that was referred to not only by me but also my interviewees. This discursively construct made it possible for us to discuss journalism on equal terms. We were both insiders, players in the field. I would make sure to set the scene for this positionality from the very beginning by informing my interviewees of my own background as a journalist when I explained my motivation for embarking on this project. As so, the scene would be set for the introduction of the position later in the interview. In the excerpt below with S5, a young journalist from Singapore, I use my positionality as a journalist to create the feeling of a mutual bond. During an exchange about the training courses she had to participate in when starting out at her newspaper and the “learning by doing” training most junior journalists experience in the beginning, we bonded over the difficulties of starting out in the business.

S5: (responding to a question on the sort of training she received at her newspaper) Yeah how to do interviews. How to structure a story and that sort of things. But a lot of the learning is on the job.

Interviewer: Yes of course. That's really the best way to learn journalism, right? Can't really read about it in a book.

S5: You have to do it, and get edited and screamed at.

Interviewer: Oh yeah there's a lot of that. You just have to take it. "Okay yeah - I'll delete it - it was bad, my mistake" (both laughing). All the time, yeah. [...]

Sharing experiences like this helped to position me as an insider of the journalistic field who had been through the same ordeals to become an acknowledged member. It provided me with journalistic capital and made it possible for S5 to relate to me in a different way – and perhaps open up more about her perspectives of the inner workings (and challenges) of the journalistic field in her country. She would not have to explain all the basics for me. I knew of the journalistic field and its *doxa* being an accepted member of it, albeit in a different country. Nevertheless, we were on the same team, so to speak.

At other times I would find it necessary to break out of the insider position and take advantage of my outsider position to ask questions that might have appeared self-evident for an insider. As Herod (1999, 325) explains, there can be a lot of value to the outsider position as “one is constantly questioning and taking things less for granted, often precisely because one does not understand certain things in the way an ‘insider’ does”. It might also be possible for the outsider to ask questions, that a local researcher might not be able to ask – simply because the researcher is not part of the local community and therefore is perceived as less threatening. Considering the sensitivity of some of the things I was discussing with my interviewees, they might choose to reveal their views on press freedom, censorship and self-censorship simply because I was not caught up in the politics of it all. This is of course purely speculation, as I have no proof that my participants actually revealed more information to me compared to a local researcher but I definitely felt that they had an interest in getting me to understand how the system, from their point of view, worked. Scoggins (2014) had similar experiences during her fieldwork interviewing police officers in China. She found that despite the fact that her position as an outsider (young white American researcher interviewing primarily Chinese male police officers) did make it difficult to get access and probably influenced the type of information she received, it sometimes worked to her advantage as some “respondents were curious about foreigners and happy to tell their story to someone who was willing to listen” (ibid., 394). On a more concrete level, using the outsider position to question processes, working habits and concepts added extra depth to my analysis. Without using my outsider position, I would not have gotten to understand the concept of the “newsmaker” which is an integrated phenomenon of the journalistic field in Singapore and something that most of the journalists and editors, I talked to, used without hesitation (see chapter 5).

Interviewer: [...] But just one of the final things that I was hoping you could maybe help me understand a little bit better – because I hear many journalists and editors in Singapore talk about newsmakers. This expression ‘newsmakers’ is very new to me. It is not something that **we** work with in Denmark or I have heard other places. Could you explain to me what **you guys** mean when you say newsmakers?

As the excerpt above from my interview with S10 illustrates, I shifted from one positionality to another when trying to get him to discuss the concept of the newsmaker. I started out as the “external-insider” where I invoked my journalistic persona and placed both the interviewee and myself in a discursively constructed universal version of the journalistic field by using the word “we”. I then positioned myself as an outsider by questioning the concept and asking him to explain what “you guys mean”. By shifting positionalities over the course of an interview I could place myself within the field as an equal member

and outside of the field as the inquisitive researcher, depending on what would help me get the insights, I needed.

Power asymmetry

Positionality is more than just a matter of being an insider or an outsider of a field. The mere construct of an interview as a staged conversation between two (or more) individuals sets the scene for a symbolic battle over power. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, 37) explain, the power asymmetry reveals itself on several levels: the interview is essentially a one-way dialogue with predetermined roles; the dialogue is instrumental as the researcher has clear goal; the conversation might even be manipulative to reach said goal; the researcher has the “monopoly of interpretation” – without (necessarily) involving the interviewee; and, the interviewee may counter the purpose of the interview by, for instance, withholding information or changing the subject.

Power asymmetry is something that is commonly discussed in interviews where the asymmetry is quite obvious and the researcher is interviewing people stemming from a different social class or group than his or her own. The researcher is either studying “down” or “up” – both of which have some implications for the data collection process. In the first case, the traditional case, where the researcher is engaging with people that might have little or no education, lives in a third-world country or find themselves in another “disadvantaged” position in relation to the researcher, there is a risk of exploitation with the interviewee becoming an object for the researcher (Aléx and Hammarström 2008). Not least in cross-cultural research projects this is something there is a lot of focus on because, as Liamputtong (Liamputtong 2010) says, “researchers deal with individuals who have been exploited, who are marginalised and vulnerable in so many ways”. The researcher is the one with the “upper hand” in the power relation and should act ethically towards research participants and try to reduce the power asymmetry.

In the second case, where the researcher for instance is dealing with elite sources or others ranked hierarchically higher than the researcher, primary concerns are getting access to participants and the fear of manipulation of research result (Smith 2006). Here the researcher might be in a disadvantaged position in risk of exploitation. The power may rest in the hands of the interviewee, as elites, according to Darbi and Hall (2014) “have clout and by their very nature seek to control and dominate interviews”. That does not mean that elite interviewees should be avoided but the researcher should be aware of the power asymmetry and consider the consequences this dynamic has on the outcome of the data.

Some researchers (Nader 1972; Hannerz 2004; Plesner 2011) have, however, argued for a third category – studying “sideways”. Here the interviewer and the interviewee is at the same level and even though there might still be negotiations over power it is not as pronounced. Using my project as an example, one could argue, that I was able to study “sideways”. Due to my background as a journalist, I could use my positionality to place myself at the same level as my research participants and thereby reduce power asymmetry. Or as Plesner explains (2011, 471): “Both the researcher and the research participant bring interests to the table that both sides are familiar with, and although these interests may sometimes conflict, the terms of the negotiations are not foreign to the participants, and their conditions are, in principle equal”.

Nevertheless, while this setup might reduce power asymmetry, it is not without its own pitfalls. As Plesner (2011) further points out, the interview situations will instead be “marked by the blurring of boundaries between interviewer’s and interviewees’ contributions” as well as a mixing of the study

specific language (in her case social scientific as she is interviewing other social scientists and in my case journalistic) and everyday language (ibid., 477). This may cause the researcher to become caught up in the moment and lose focus on the task at hand: to retrieve information about the research subject. I too experienced falling into this trap and failed to ask obvious questions or dive deeper into a subject. For instance, in my interview with V17 during an exchange about objectivity:

V17: [...] So I mean in every sense a news story is quite subjective but I mean - what do you say - but we need to keep it objective in the way that we use objective tools to report.

Interviewer: It's a fine balance, right?

V17: Kind of. I just don't know how to really express...

Interviewer: no no it's fine. As I said it's really journalism 101 but that can also be a good way for me to get an understanding of how you see journalism. [...]

Instead of probing and asking the respondent to please go more into detail about what he means by “objective tools to report”, I leave the issue and pose a new question.

Furthermore, it would be a mistake to think that the “studying sideways” approach could eliminate all power asymmetry in an interview. As in all other forms of social interactions, power is always present, and despite efforts to avoid it, “both the interviewer and the interviewee are constantly seeking to (dis)equalize their respective authorities” (Nunkoosing 2005). Acknowledging the power asymmetry and accepting both interviewer’s and interviewee’s efforts to dominate the conversation, intentionally or unintentionally, is therefore paramount in the data collection process as well as during data analysis. Even though I might think I succeeded in controlling the power imbalance in an interview, the interviewee could have perceived it differently. Researchers conducting qualitative studies must therefore be aware of their positionality, and their perceived positionality, to uncover the “manoeuvrings of power” (Anyan 2013) that can be potential sources of errors in the data collection and data analysis.

Recognising the power asymmetry may, however, also work to the researcher’s advantage. Just as it can prove useful for researchers to position themselves as “insiders” or “outsiders” in interview situations so may power relations be used strategically in data collection. Herod (1999) talks about how he has downplayed his position as a researcher with a doctorate degree in some instances while placing more value on it on other occasions to get access to specific informants or milieus. Similarly, Ntseane (Merriam et al. 2001) explain how she in her study of semi-literate businesswomen in Botswana would use her age, gender and cultural background to place her at the same level as her informants but downplay her connection to academia as to not alienate herself from them.

I too worked intentionally with my positionality in my interview situations. It became an effective tool to create a common space for a conversation on a specific subject. Not only did I make use of my former profession as a journalist to position myself as an “external-insider” of a universal journalistic field meeting my interviewees as equals, I would also be able to use my gender, my age, my status as pregnant (during the fieldworks in December 2014 and January 2015), teaching experiences or current occupation as a researcher as “ice-breakers” or strategic entry points to conversations. By actively investing myself and carefully operating my identity based on constant evaluation of the interview

situation, the interviewee and the direction the conversation was going in I tried to reduce power asymmetry and create a comfortable environment with room for reflexivity on equal terms.

Language, translation and interpretation issues

Interviewing is all about oral communication and in a cross-cultural study involving several languages it is necessary to address issues of language, translation and interpretation. Just as positionalities, it may have an impact on the data collection. Nevertheless, it is surprising how little scholarly attention the use of language in cross-cultural qualitative studies has been given considering its significance for qualitative research. As Hennink (2008) underlines, “language represents both the research *data* and the *process* by which the data are generated”. However, language-related issues are often ignored or underrated as potential sources of error in a study. Typically, the presence of language and translation issues are only acknowledged “in descriptive and brief terms” with footnotes explaining whether an author has translated a quote or if an interpreter was used (Pereira, Marhiah, and Scharff 2009). The translation act is, as Müller (2007) writes, “treated as a *fait accompli*”.

When methodological implications of language differences between the researcher and the researched are discussed, most focus on the challenges of working with translators and interpreters (Squires 2009) – with disadvantages and pitfalls typically being the focal point. Using interpreters is seen as a potential problem that might cause data errors, as nuances will be lost in the translation process (Aranguri, Davidson, and Ramirez 2006; Berman and Tyyskä 2011). However, recognising interpreters’ presence in the project and seeing them as co-constructors of the data together with the researcher and the research participant might be more productive (Edwards 1998; Brämberg and Dahlberg 2013).

Even without the presence of interpreters, translation issues must be considered. If a common language is to be used among researcher and research participant one or both might have to communicate in another language than their native tongue. In these situations, the translation process is not happening out in the open but internally. Either the researcher will have to translate questions or enquiries or the participant will have to interpret the posed questions and enquiries and translate the answers before replying – or both researcher and research participant will perform interpretation and translation tasks simultaneously. These situations add extra layers to the data, as there is nothing neutral or value-free in translation and interpretation processes. “Translation is not merely a representation or reproduction – it creates something new and unique” (Müller 2007). Some, such as Lawrence (1988), insist that the burden of translation and interpretation should be on the researcher who is the one gaining from the research and urge interviewing in the informant’s language despite not being fluent.

But even if the researcher had the time and the resources to acquire the skills necessary to conduct research in the native language of the research participants, all translation and interpretation issues would not be erased. Despite attempts at “neutralising” the potential effect of his or her presence in the data by bridging the language gap, the researcher will always bring “a set of filters, some cultural, some personal, through which phenomena are observed” (Gade 2001). Or as England (1994) underlines: “The researcher cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork *is* personal”.

The question is therefore not how to overcome language barriers, translation and interpretation issues in cross-cultural research with more than one language involved but how to acknowledge their existence and reflect on their potential impact on the data. Both Squires (2009) and Hennink (2008) argue for greater transparency of how language and communication issues are addressed through the research process. This will not just improve rigour in cross-cultural qualitative research but also “enable a better

understanding of how data that originate in another language are produced, translated, interpreted and reported” (Hennink 2008). By reflecting on language use, translation and interpretation at different stages of a research project researchers can improve the trustworthiness of their study (Squires 2009).

Considerations on language use were on the top of my mind from the very beginning of this project. To start with I do not speak Vietnamese. Though I did try to take classes in Vietnamese prior to my fieldwork (which unfortunately ended up being cancelled), I knew it would be impossible to acquire the necessary level of eloquence to conduct interviews in Vietnamese within the time frame of the project. Furthermore, English is not my first language. While I do consider myself to be fluent in English, Danish is my first language. When I did chose English as the primary language in this study and conducted all interviews in Singapore and Vietnam in English, it was because I assessed it to be the common denominator between my interviewees and me. Due to the sensitivity of the subject and the fact that many of my interviewees were only interested in participating if they were secured full anonymity, I decided to involve as few people as possible – and thereby avoid the use of translators. For me, creating an atmosphere of trust was paramount and I felt that I could obtain that better by being the only “interviewer” present.

In Singapore my decision did not pose any problems as English is considered the lingua franca. Though some of my interviewees might consider one of the country’s other recognised languages as their primary language¹⁴, all of them were perfectly fluent in English – perhaps only slightly coloured by Singlish, the country’s English-based creole language. It positioned me as the one who had made an effort to speak “their” language, which typically results in respect from participants (Gade 2001). I experienced how people would be impressed with my English skills and lack of accent, which I would argue contributed in breaking down some of the more formal boundaries between my interviewees and me.

It was a different matter in Vietnam. Despite the fact that the Vietnamese in general do have a good English proficiency¹⁵ – especially among the younger generations – it would be a mistake not to think that my choice of only interviewing in English did not have any impact on my sampling in Vietnam. As I relied on a snowball sampling strategy, people would refer me to potential participants of whom they knew spoke English. I am aware of that bias in my sampling but I do not consider it an eschewing factor. Being able to speak English is seen as an asset among journalists in Vietnam – and for some positions it is even a prerequisite.

I did on a couple of occasions interview people who did not speak English (at least not at a level where they felt they were capable of communicating their perspectives clearly) and where I relied on a fellow acquaintance to translate for us (in the case of V7, V9 and V15). In the case of V7 it was my contact who acted as translator when the interviewee needed it. She was familiar with the purpose of my project – and with the journalistic profession in Vietnam through her own work – and determined to help me get the information, I needed. Similarly, she had a professional relationship with V7 who trusted her and was comfortable with her translating for both of us. The mutual trust resulted in a relaxed atmosphere where I felt V7 was able to express his opinions without averseness. In the case of V9 and V15, it was members of their own organisation who did the translation. We therefore did not have to

¹⁴ See appendix 1.

¹⁵ The EF English Proficiency Index ranks Vietnam 29 out of 70 evaluated countries. Compared to other Asian countries, Vietnam is estimated to have a higher English proficiency than Japan (ranked 30), Indonesia (ranked 32) and China (ranked 47) but lower than India (ranked 10), Singapore (ranked 12) and Malaysia (ranked 14). <http://www.ef-danmark.dk/epi/regions/asia/vietnam/>

bring someone from “the outside” in to translate but could keep it within the same group. As stated above, my main concern was to protect my interviewees and create comfortable interview situations where they felt safe and secure to share their insights. By having someone from their own association, who they knew and trusted, do the translation, I felt I achieved that.

In Vietnam, it also spoke to my advantage that English was not my native language. I too was out of my comfort-zone, just as the interviewees, and language was therefore also something that came up during the interviews. I would typically apologise for my lack of Vietnamese language skills and if I struggled with a word in English I would make sure to vocalise it – not just to make clarifications but also in an effort to show that my English is not perfect either. I felt that these exposures of language struggles could also reduce the power asymmetry between my research participants and me – especially if the participant in question appeared to be having difficulties with the language. I was determined to do my best to help my research participants save face to maintain the flat structure of interaction. Just as I would use my positionality as a tool, my language skills (and lack of language skills) also became effective in creating a comfortable interview situation.

Data collection

All data utilised for the study was collected from September 2013 to February 2017. Interview data (the primary data source) was collected on field trips to Singapore and Vietnam (see below). Most of the additional data was gathered during the same field trips (such as data on journalism educations and potential case studies) or online (such as information on press awards, new laws and regulations and potential case studies).

Field trips

A total of four fieldtrips were made in connection to the project: two in 2014, one in 2015 and one in 2016. In 2014, I visited Vietnam and Singapore on a combined fieldtrip in June and July and Vietnam again in December. In January 2015, I visited Singapore and in 2016, I embarked on yet another combined field trip to both Vietnam and Singapore.

I deliberately decided on several shorter field trips rather than one or two long ones. This decision was made primarily due to two reasons: Firstly, to leave room for deliberations and data exploration between field trips. Secondly, on a more practical level, it was easier to organise several shorter trips to the region in between teaching responsibilities and other homebound obligations. As I furthermore became pregnant a year into my project, I also had to take both the pregnancy (and the restrictions on travelling while being pregnant) and my maternity leave into consideration.

The primary purpose of the field trips was to conduct interviews for the project but I also used the occasion to nurture my network, have informal talks with people working in relation to the media, gather information on journalism education in the two countries and keep updated on on-going stories as potential case studies. A lot of time was also spent getting in contact with potential interviewees, setting up and preparing for interviews. I quickly found out that it was much easier to find participants for my interviews when I was in the country as to scheduling meetings several weeks or months in advance from my desk in Copenhagen. Journalists and editors rarely know their schedule more than a couple of days in advance – and it is always costumed to change. Most people I got in contact with before embarking

on my field trips asked me to contact them when I was in the country. Since it was impossible to know beforehand exactly how many interviews I would end up with, I made sure to make myself flexible and be prepared to meet people whenever and wherever it would be convenient to them.

Ethical considerations

“Primum non nocere”, first do no harm, is the primary principle when it comes to ethics in all research disciplines – not least in cross-cultural studies, as Liamputtong (Liamputtong 2010) stresses. With a different culture, the consequences of participating in a research project might be very different from what the researcher is used to from his or her own country. When embarking on research in cross-cultural settings, the researcher must therefore be extra careful that the research does not cause any unintentional harm or danger to the participant in any way. Though it might be difficult to explain what “harm” really is, as Hammersley and Traianou (2012) point out, it is a matter of evaluating potential or actual outcomes that might thwart, set back or defeat an interest. Potential threats of harm arising from research can, according to the authors, be summed up into five categories: 1) Physical inflictions, 2) psychological damage, 3) material damage, 4) damage to reputation or status, and, 5) damage to a project, group, organisation, institution or occupation to which the participant belongs (ibid., 62). Even if the risk of harm in a qualitative study is (for most fields) quite low, researchers should “make reasonable assessments of the likelihood and severity of particular kinds of harm” (ibid., 74) and take these into considerations before, during and after engaging with research participants.

To reduce the risk of harm and aid the researcher in conducting ethical research, four different guidelines are commonly mentioned: informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the role of the researcher (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). Obtaining informed consent from research participants, and thereby securing that they understand the overall purpose of the study in which they are participating and their right to withdraw at any time, safeguards the autonomy of the individual. Making agreements about confidentiality in regards to potential personal information revealed during interviews secure the participants’ right to privacy. Reflecting over of the potential consequences of the study not just for “the persons taking part in the study but also for the larger group they represent” (ibid., 96) through outweighing of benefits versus the risks of harm makes the researcher aware of potential conflicts in carrying out and reporting on the research. Finally, maintaining one’s integrity as a researcher and acting morally responsible is of utmost importance to the scientific quality of the study. Brinkmann and Kvale underline that especially in interview studies, “the importance of the researcher’s integrity is magnified because the interviewer himself or herself is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge” (ibid., 97). Being reflective of one’s role in the research is therefore an integrated part of the data collection, the data analysis and the reporting.

Informed consent

In my data collection process, I made sure to get informed consent from all participants. I would be very clear on the purpose and intended outcome of the project and make sure that my participants knew what role they played in the data. Based on advice from others having conducted fieldwork in Southeast Asia, I chose not to work with any written consent form. Some people fear that they, by signing a document, are signing away their anonymity and a written consent can thereby be the deal breaker for some potential

participants (Liamputtong 2010). The consent would therefore be made orally before the interview and once again after the interview to make sure, that all participants were still in agreement with what they had consented to prior to our talk. None of my participants refused to take part in the project – neither before nor after the interview had taken place.

As part of the informed consent, I would notify participants that they would be anonymous in the data set. For some this was an important factor for agreeing to do the interview in the first place. Especially in Vietnam, some journalists were very concerned about keeping their anonymity. Others, however, would be a bit more apprehensive since they as journalists themselves normally did not accept anonymous sources. “People know what I think on these issues. That is not a secret”, as one interviewee told me. It was apparent to me that especially journalists and editors with an abundance of journalistic and political capital would take this view on their anonymity whereas younger journalists with less experience and lower ranks would feel more comfortable being anonymous.

The interviewees also consented to have our conversation audio recorded. Before interviewing I would ask for their permission to do so and once again inform them that the interview data would only be used for my research. Being journalists and editors themselves, and thereby used to work with recorded conversations, nobody questioned this. On five occasions (all in Vietnam) I chose not to record the conversation and instead rely on note-taking. In three of the cases (V9, V14/V15 and V22), I met with citizen journalists or dissidents who prior to the interview informed me of their run-ins with the government and how the police had them under surveillance. I decided it would be better not to record the conversation in case somebody should show an interest in our meeting and instead take careful written and mental notes of our conversation. The remaining two interviews that were not recorded were conversations with people (V1 and V7) that started as informal talks but evolved into regular interviews and I therefore did not record the conversations from the beginning.

All of the interviews were transcribed in the transcription program F5. I choose to do it myself to secure the anonymity of my research participants and because I am convinced that there is an analytical gain in working extensively with one’s data. The transcriptions are, however, not public available. Even though they are anonymised, I have chosen not to include them in the publicly available appendixes for this dissertation in case interviewees can be identified on the basis of their collected accounts. Though interviewees’ positions will be mentioned when quotes¹⁶ are presented, their names and workplaces are withheld.

Confidentiality and consequences of research

The consequences of my research were on my mind from the very beginning. I was very determined to protect my interviewees of any potential harm, their participation in my project could cause. This was the main reason behind my decision to keep everyone anonymous in my data set. I did not want that any of the things my interviewees had disclosed in our sessions could be used against them, personally or professionally. Some people chose to be extremely outspoken about their views on the political situation in their respective countries and the effects they felt it had on their professional lives. As I am in no position to evaluate exactly what consequences these kinds of confessions might have on my research participants’ future career opportunities or lives, keeping their anonymity has been my primary task.

¹⁶ All quotes are presented as they were delivered during the interviews. This, along with the fact that English is not the first language of many of the interviewees, explains most of the grammatical errors and misspeaks.

It was not just a matter of keeping their anonymity when reporting on my data, I also took my precautions during my fieldtrips. I therefore let my interviewees chose the setting for the interview. I wanted them to meet me at a place they felt comfortable with. Somewhere they could relax and feel safe and secure. Most people chose cafes¹⁷ but some invited me to their offices.

Only on two occasions did I experience discomfort during an interview where I feared that there was possibility of risking the anonymity of my interviewees. On both occasions I was interviewing citizen journalists from Vietnam. The first time, one of the two people I was supposed to meet (V9 and his friend who was present as an interpreter if needed) announced upon arrival that the police had followed him on the way to our meeting (something that they did on a regular basis due to his writings and affiliation with other citizen journalists) and that I probably would be on their radar from now on. I knew that I had all of my authorisations¹⁸ in order and had nothing to hide in terms of my stay in Vietnam and the purpose of my research, but I had no interest in having the police taking any particular interest in my research and potential future research participants. To take my precautions, I made sure to linger back at the café and let my interviewees leave before I left. The strategy seemed to work and nobody followed me or took any notice of my research or me for my remaining time in Vietnam.

The second time was different. I was meeting with V9 again and some other citizen journalists. As recounted in appendix 6, my meeting resulted in the police officers assigned to the citizen journalists to draw their attention to me instead. For the remainder of my time in Ho Chi Minh City, two plainclothes police officers would follow my every move. I had finished most of my interviews in the city and did not have any other scheduled before leaving for Hanoi – and chose to keep it that way. Even though I could perhaps have gotten one or two additional interviews in Ho Chi Minh City through my contacts, I chose not to. I would under no circumstances compromise the anonymity of any of my interviewees. I did one interview over Skype from my hotel room (an interview that was scheduled before the incident) but otherwise kept a low profile. I furthermore decided that if I suspected anyone following me when I continued my fieldwork in Hanoi, I would cancel all of my meetings and find different ways to interview people. Luckily, it never came to that. Even though the police continued to follow me (all the way to the security check at the airport), no one picked up the trail in Hanoi and I could continue my research unaffected. I did, however, make sure that the meeting I had planned with a citizen journalist in Hanoi (V22) took place on the very last day of my stay in the city – just to be on the safe side if a similar situation should occur.

Positionality and role of researcher

As discussed earlier, I took a very active approach to interviewing and engaged myself personally with my interviewees. I used my positionality to create interview situations where I could meet my interviewees on common grounds and place myself as an “external insider” with comprehension and empathy for their positions and struggles. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) note, there is a fine balance between identifying with one’s research participants and “going native”. The researcher should at all times keep a

¹⁷ In Vietnam, I noticed that people often chose cafes in areas expats and tourists would frequent. In Singapore, people would be more practical and generally chose cafes close to their job. Only four interviews took place in non-public spaces: three of them were with interviewees from the same media company (S3, S10 and S13) with the interviews taking place at the company headquarter in either a cafeteria or a meeting room and the fourth was with a Vietnamese editor (V12) in a meeting room in his office building.

¹⁸ Such as my visa and my affiliation agreement with Vietnam National University, Hanoi, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Journalism and Communication.

professional distance and take measures against ignoring some findings or emphasising others due to personal relationships or professional ties to research participants. Validation of results and transparency of the procedures by which the conclusions have been arrived at is, according to Brinkmann and Kvale (ibid.), key to maintaining research integrity. I am fully aware that engaging with interviewees at the level, I have, is not unproblematic. As Mullings (1999), who similarly used her positionality to minimise power asymmetry, I too reflected over the ethical implications of my approach and thought about whether I could have been more explicit about the dimensions of my positionality. For instance, when meeting with citizen journalists in Vietnam, some had the assumptions that I was in a position to advocate their cause in “the West”. Despite my attempts to explain that I did not have any pull with the Danish government in providing financial support for training or technical equipment, some continued to see me as a potential collaborator that might be able to assist them.

Other scholars have raised concern over how one’s use of positionality and self-disclosure by the interviewer is perceived by research participants (Herod 1999; Abell et al. 2006; Milligan 2016). While researchers might think, they are portraying themselves in a certain way it might be perceived differently by the research participants. I might have thought that I succeeded in creating a universal version of the journalistic field in which I could interact on equal terms with my interviewees but they might have felt it differently. Maybe they continued to see me as an outsider with little understanding of their field and subsequently chose not to let me in on the *doxa*. Nevertheless, I would argue that I succeeded in most cases. Even though I am well aware that I did not succeed all the time (like my interview with V6 who ended up interviewing me rather than the other way around), I do think that I by drawing on past experiences as a journalist, using both my insider and my outsider position and actively engaging with my interviewees created an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality that eventually led me to deeper insights of the journalistic fields of Vietnam and Singapore.

Data analysis

As Bryman (2015) points out, because qualitative data deriving from interviews “typically take the form of a large corpus of unstructured textual material, they are not straightforward to analyse” – and no clear-cut rules, as to how the analysis should be carried out, exist. It therefore comes down to the researcher to evaluate which approach suits the material and will result in the best possible outcome. With the words of Braun and Clarke (2006) what is important “is choosing a method that is appropriate to your research question, rather than falling victim to ‘methodolatry’, where you are committed to method rather than topic/content or research questions”.

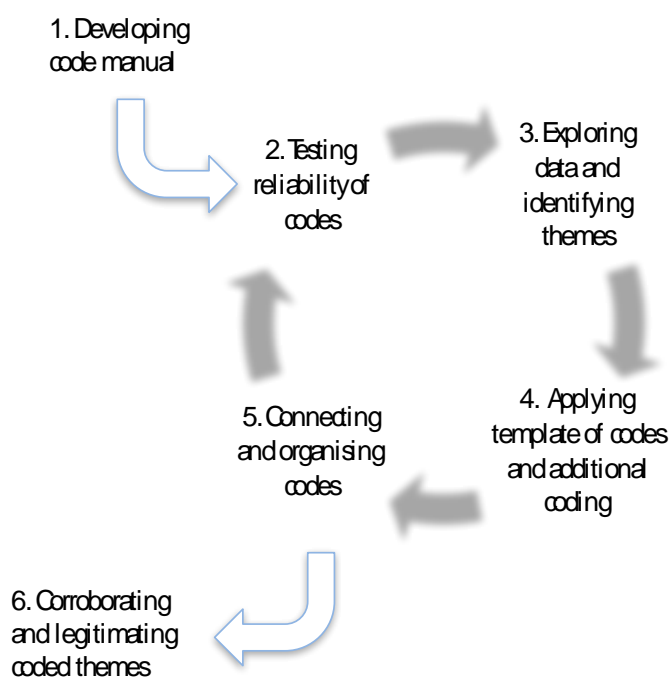
As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, I chose to submit my data to a thematic analysis – one of the most commonly used methods of analysis in qualitative research (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012). Though poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged (Braun and Clarke 2006, 77), the approach is seen as a foundational method, tool (Boyatzis 1998), and process (Ryan and Bernard 2000) to use within and across different qualitative analytical approaches. Briefly put, thematic analysis is about “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79). It requires careful reading of the text and continuing evaluation of emerging themes and categories. Much therefore rely on the researcher’s interpretation abilities and demonstrating rigour in the analysis process.

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) suggest a hybrid method to thematic analysis that incorporate a data-driven inductive approach and a deductive approach with a pre-developed codebook to secure rigour. As they explain the process, which involve six different steps of development, appliance, and

reflexivity, makes it possible to identify how themes are generated from the raw data (ibid., 91). Transparency secures the rigour and validity of the findings. Braun and Clarke (2006, 96) concur and points out that due to the flexibility of thematic analysis “you also need to be clear and explicit about what you are doing, and what you say you are doing needs to match up with what you actually do”. They present a concise checklist of 15 criteria to contemplate when evaluating the quality of one’s research, which focuses on everything from the quality of the data (transcription), the validity of the coding, the structure and interpretation level of the analysis, the language and reflexivity of the written report, to time. Only by developing a realistic structure for the thematic analysis and showing transparency throughout the entire analytical process can researchers validate their findings and free themselves of the classical “anything goes” critique often attributed to qualitative research (ibid.).

The thematic analysis approach used in this study was based on Fereday and Muir-Cochrane’s hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. A set of codes regarding journalistic practices, ideals and roles were developed based on the research question, hypothesis and theoretical framework prior to the analysis. After the data collection, all interviews were transcribed and entered into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo where the original codes were tested and new themes and codes identified, tested and corroborated. Figure 5 presented below (inspired by Boyatzis 1998, Braun and Clarke 2006, and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006) illustrates the different stages of the analytical process.

Figure 5: Stages in the analytical process



Own model. Based on Boyatzis 1998, Braun and Clarke 2006, and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006.

As the figure shows the thematic analysis was an iterative, reflexive process. The deductive element (stage 1) initiated the analytical process where three sets of tentative codes were developed based on the research questions and the theoretical framework. In regards to field theory, the codes focused on *doxa*, *illusio* and

forms of capital. In regards to role theory, the codes focused on norm senders, expectations, responsibilities and tasks. Besides these codes a category of more broad topical codes were applied – with headers such as “newsroom practices”, “constrains” and “future challenges”. Though not codes per say, the category was to be elucidated with sub-themes during an inductive exploration of the data.

Testing the reliability and validity of codes (stage 2) was done several times throughout the analytical process as each new code that emerged would be tested. However, the first reliability test happened immediately after the preliminary fieldtrip were I went through the collected data to determine the applicability of the codes. Besides concluding that the initial code set was reliable, the code set was developed extensively to include more nuances and new categories such as specific journalistic practices, journalistic ideals and journalistic roles.

In practice, the second, third and fourth stage took place simultaneously as new codes emerged during exploration of data and appliance of the code set. The codes got more elaborate and nuanced over time, which led to the fifth stage where codes were connected, calibrated and organised. As with the other stages this stage was also continuing – though mostly at the end of the data processing when the reliability of codes had been tested several times.

At the sixth and final stage, the codes were confirmed – or corroborated, as Crabtree and Miller (Crabtree and Miller 1999) prefer to call it. This stage is, not surprisingly, crucial, as it is an integrated part in documenting findings. Codes essential for the findings must be backed by evidence from the data set. Not just in a descriptive manner – it must, as Braun and Clarke (2006, 93) point out, make an argument in relation to the research question. This stage is most visible in the dissertation’s analytical chapters (chapter 4-7) where all findings are backed up by the data material. Through discussions of the findings, the legitimacy of the codes is confirmed and substantiated. Only findings that could be thoroughly backed by the empirical data has made it to this dissertation in an effort to secure the validity of the uncovered perceptions of journalism, journalistic role orientations and role struggles.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the dissertation’s methodology. It explained how a mixed purposive sampling strategy (with snowball sampling being the primary) proved most successful in recruiting research participants for the study. Although, I do not claim to have secured fully representative samples of neither the journalistic field in Singapore nor in Vietnam, I am confident that I have gotten variegated samples of news journalists with participants from a wide variety of media types, with different levels of experience and types of expertise.

In regards to data collection, an active interview approach where the researcher carefully engaged with research participants and emphasised different aspects of her positionality proved most effective to access insights on the journalistic profession in Singapore and Vietnam and reduce power asymmetry between researcher and research participants. With awareness of the potential risks with applying this approach, I continuously reflected on the ethical implications and made sure to communicate the purpose of the research and how the interviews would be used in the dissertation. Participants were guaranteed full anonymity and informed consent was obtained from all involved.

The data was analysed by using a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development where codes were constantly evaluated in an iterative, reflexive process. The results of this process will be presented in the coming chapters where we will turn our attention to the analytical part

of this dissertation and look into the journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam, journalists' perceptions of journalism, role orientations and role struggles.

Contextualising journalism in Singapore and Vietnam

The following chapters look into different aspects of the journalistic profession in Singapore and Vietnam but before delving into micro and mezzo level analysis of the fields, some context on the macro level is needed to understand the structures surrounding the profession in the two countries. This chapter sums up the historical trajectories of the media environment in both countries and goes into detail with the political, economic and profession-specific forces (what Bourdieu would denote as cultural forces) that condition journalism in the two countries.

The chapter considers, among other things, historical, legal, institutional and economic factors and draws on analysis of a variety of documents, facts and figures related to the media industry and journalism in Singapore and Vietnam. The dissertation's primary empirical data is also employed to substantiate facts and figures. While a lot of the material used for this more descriptive, contextualising chapter derives from other sources (carefully referenced throughout the account), comprehensive scrutiny with consideration of many different documents precedes this account.

As the analysis will show, the journalistic fields in Singapore and Vietnam are situated according to both political, economic and profession-specific (cultural) forces. Political forces have by far the biggest impact on the structures of the fields in both countries but the profession also relies on market forces to secure revenue and cultural forces to legitimate the profession's existence. While similar forces may structure the fields, their denominational values as capitals differ from field to field – which, I argue, create different internal structures and struggles for dominance, a discussion we will return to throughout the dissertation.

Though this chapter primarily considers the conditioning forces in the light of Bourdieu's field theory, I end with an examination of the structures in Hallin and Mancini's (2004) media system framework to show that even though this theory places strong emphasis on the media's dependency on political structures it also needs revisions – in particular to account for the complicated state-media relationship in countries like Singapore and Vietnam.

Historical trajectories of the media

To better comprehend the development of mass media in Singapore and Vietnam I have chosen to divide the historical account into four different periods that each has left significant marks on the trajectory of the media and the journalistic field in the two countries: the colonial period (1824-1945 in Singapore, 1858-1945 in Vietnam), the liberation/reunification period (1945-1965 in Singapore, 1945-1975 in Vietnam), the nation-building period (1965-1990 in Singapore, 1975-1986 in Vietnam) and the transformation period (from 1990 in Singapore and 1986 in Vietnam). This section sums up the periods and their contributions to the current media environments. For the historically interested reader, a more detailed account of the four different media historical periods can be found in appendix 7.

In both countries, the first mass media, the newspaper, was introduced while the countries were under colonial rule (1824 in Singapore and 1861 in Vietnam). The media served primarily the ruling elite (Anuar 2001; Peycam 2012) although newspapers for the local population also found their way to the media market in the period. The press system was by and large based on the systems already in place in the mother countries (England in the case of Singapore and France in the case of Vietnam) with requirements for publication licenses, pre-publication censorship and expectations of collaboration with the authorities (Anuar 2001; McHale 2004; Peycam 2012).

Following World War II, where both countries were occupied by Japan, the liberation/reunification period commenced. Singapore had, compared to Vietnam, an easier transition into independence although it took close to 20 years and a rocky start that included a short stint as a member of a Malaysian federation before the country at the end of the period was founded. Vietnam had far more ordeals that included two wars, a division of the country into two and massive human losses and irrevocable damages. The wars naturally impacted (or perhaps rather constrained) the development of the media in the period and both in the North and in South, the media became part of the war (and propaganda) efforts.

Although a new medium, the television, was introduced in both countries during the period and the radio, that had been introduced by the end of the colonial era, continued to attract audiences, little changed in the media environment – at least when it came to legislation and regulation. The governments' (and, in Vietnam, the military forces') attention was fixated elsewhere and the legislative frameworks introduced during the colonial era were to a large degree continued into the liberation/reunification era (see appendix 7).

After having obtained independence, the two countries began to (re)build and develop their nations. Particularly in Singapore, the media became an important tool in nation-building processes (Seng 2012; Freeman and Ramakrishnan 2016) and the media scene flourished – albeit under state supervision (Seng 2012). Although, the Communist Party in Vietnam had recognised the potential of the radio in reaching the masses during the Vietnam war, media development was not of primary concern. To regain control of information streams, the Party nationalised all media and the number of newspapers dropped dramatically and the spread of radio and television stagnated (Huong 2008). Common for both countries was the states' interests in railing in the media and having them take part in building and supporting the nations. As so, legislation in both countries continued down the path laid out by the colonial era with the state having several means of involvement in media affairs. Even though, the media in Singapore were not nationalised as in Vietnam, the state was still granted influence by issuing annual licenses and taking part in appointments on management levels.

By the late 1980s in Vietnam and the beginning of the 1990s in Singapore, new developments in the two countries fostered the start of a transformation period in the media environment. In Vietnam, the introduction of a socialist market economy with the *Doi Moi* reforms in 1986, send the media on a whole new trajectory. From having been relying on state subsidies, the media now had to seek revenue from sales and advertising (Huong 2008). The media scene (particular the printed scene as the state still retained its ownership of broadcast media) exploded within a couple of years with a wide variety of media types seeing the light of day (Marr 1998a; An and Trieu 2009). In Singapore, transformation went in the other direction with increased centralisation (George 2012) resulting in a market consisting of just two media companies: Singapore Press Holdings, publishing all but one of the country's 15 newspapers, and MediaCorp being in charge of radio, television and a sole newspaper.

The arrival of the Internet during the 1990s in prompted even more transformations not just due to the appearance of online media outlets (and increased competition for eyeballs and advertisers) but also to new forms of communication and information sharing, bypassing the traditional information channels¹⁹. Despite the media environment undergoing immense transformation, the states in both countries have continued to hold a similar approach to media management and legislation. Although, new laws have been introduced (as we will see later in this chapter), they resemble to a large degree the legislative frameworks of the previous periods. The states maintain a high interest in the media and a view of the media as a nation-corroborative entity.

In conclusion, Singapore and Vietnam share similar historical trajectories as for the development of their media. Born out of the colonial era, their media became important arenas for a growing nationalist consciousness. After having obtained independence from foreign forces, the countries enlisted the media in their nation-building efforts. Going into a new era, new purposes and responsibilities might be laying ahead. Yet until formulated, the media, at least on the surface, continue to be encouraged to follow the path laid before them primarily by laws and regulations put in place by governments that have no experience with any other approaches. With increased globalisation, growing civil societies and the rapid spread of new communication technologies, the media environments are undergoing transformations that perhaps require new mind-sets. Not just by the media and the journalists working within the industry, but also by the legislative powers that may need to reconsider regulative approaches instead of building on top of inherited laws. As will be discussed next, the states still hold the same perception of the media as they did in the countries' inception, which heavily steers their media management. While Singapore may have a more pro-active and self-regulative approach compared to Vietnam's more aggressive stop-gap approach, the authorities nonetheless have similar understandings of the purposes and responsibilities of the media which infuse the power they hold over the journalistic fields.

Political conditions of the journalistic field

This section looks into the non-market forces, the laws, regulations and subsidies set in place by the political field. In Singapore and Vietnam, the states have very clear ideas as to what the media should and should not do, which heavily influence the structure and position of the journalistic field. The states do not just set the boundaries for the field through laws and regulations, they are also very explicit about how they think the media should and should not act. As will become evident, with limited autonomy from the political field, the journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam are compelled to positions

¹⁹ We will return to the consequences of the arrival of these new communication technologies in chapter 8.

themselves in accordance with the instructions from the political field – although other forces have begun to pull them in other directions.

Roles and responsibilities

The authorities in both countries are generally very outspoken about their visions for the media. In Vietnam, some of these elucidations are clearly stated in the media laws making it obvious to journalists what views the state (or the Communist Party) holds of the responsibilities of the journalistic profession. In Singapore, one needs to look other places to find out what the state and government see as the media’s responsibilities – although most journalists and editors would probably know it by heart.

Following its ambition of encouraging self-regulation, Singapore has deliberately avoided listing any specific requirements in terms of tasks and responsibilities in the legal framework, however during the last 50 years the country’s leaders have been very vocal about how they think the media should behave. One of the best known examples stems back to the 1970s, when then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew spoke at the General Assembly of the International Press Institute in Helsinki, delivering an often quoted speech on Singapore’s position on the media:

“we want the mass media to reinforce, not to undermine, the cultural values and social attitudes being inculcated in our schools and universities. The mass media can create a mood in which people become keen to acquire knowledge, skills and disciplines of advanced countries. Without these, we can never hope to raise the standards of living of our people” (Yew 1971).

Looking through a selection of speeches given by Singapore’s ministers over time, a clear image of their vision of the ideal Singaporean media (and/or journalist) emerges. They tend to be especially blunt on what they think the media should not be: adversarial and a fourth estate like the press in the United States. In table 2 below, some of the most vocalised roles of the press described in the authorities’ statements have provisionally been divided into six different categories:

Table 2: The government’s view on the tasks and responsibilities of the media in Singapore

<i>Roles</i>	Tasks and responsibilities (according to Singapore ministers’ speeches and statements)
Disseminator and interpreter	“accurate reporting, clear analysis, and intelligent interpreting of events and developments through Singapore eyes for Singapore minds” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995). “be a neutral medium for conveying the news” and “report fully and fairly what goes on” (Shanmugam 2010).
Educator	Deliver “credible, balanced, and objective reporting” (PM Lee Hsien Loong in (Sim 2015). “create a mood in which people become keen to acquire the knowledge, skills and disciplines of advanced countries” (PM Lee Kuan Yew 1971). “reinforce, not to undermine, the cultural values and social attitudes being inculcated in our schools and universities” (PM Lee Kuan Yew 1971). “explaining to Singaporeans the complex world we live in – how we are to make a living, what are the bigger forces at play affecting our lives” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).
Nation-builder	“The press has a role to forge consensus and not forment confrontation, facilitate nation-building and not fray the social fabric” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).
Public-servant	Not a “Government mouthpiece. I have no use for ‘boot-lickers’ or ‘running dogs’” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).

	<p>“play an important role in communicating important messages from the government to the people” (Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore 2013).</p> <p>“taking a balanced, long-term perspective of the country’s interests, reporting the news for Singaporeans through Singaporeans eyes, and understanding the country’s social and regional context when reporting on sensitive and emotional issues” (PM Lee Hsien Loong in (Sim 2015).</p>
Bridge-builder	<p>Provide “a forum for readers’ complaints and debate on national issues” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).</p> <p>“has a role to reflect the ground sentiment to the government” (Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore 2013).</p>
Not like Western adversarial watchdogs	<p>“should not adopt an adversarial role” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).</p> <p>“The Western idea of the press [...] goes against our goal of consensus politics, of getting Singaporeans to row as a team” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).</p> <p>“should not join the political fray and become a political actor” (Shanmugam 2010).</p> <p>“the concept of the press being all powerful and having the last word smuggles in the power that ordinary citizens do not bestow on them” (PM Goh Chok Tong 1995).</p>

According to the statements presented in the table above, the media in Singapore is generally encouraged to function as neutral disseminators; thorough interpreters; responsible nation-builders and social educators; bridge-building public servants fostering dialogue between the government and the people; and, anything but Western adversarial watchdogs undermining the national and political agenda. Even though the authorities will claim that journalists and the media in Singapore have the freedom to publish anything they want, they expect the media to behave responsible and in accordance with the roles, the state deems best for the country.

In Vietnam, the state’s understanding of the media is clearly stated in the Press Law (2016). Article 4 of the Press Law (2016), concerned with the “Functions, tasks and powers of the press”, provides a clear description of the state’s understanding of the press (understood as both print and broadcast media) operating within the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The press is “an essential medium of communication for social life”, “the voice²⁰ of the Party and state agencies, socio-political organizations, socio-politico-professional, social organizations and social-professional organizations”, and, “a forum of the People”. Furthermore, the law lists a variety of “tasks and powers” (art. 4, §2a-e), that the state sees the press having, as well as a series of “obligations” for journalists (art. 25, §3a-e). The tasks and obligations can be tentatively divided into six categories: disseminator, mouthpiece, educator, nation-builder and bridge-builder (see table 3 below).

Table 3: The government’s view on the tasks and responsibilities of the media in Vietnam

<i>Roles</i>	Tasks and responsibilities (according to Press Law 2016, art. 4, §2a-e)
Disseminator	“provide truthful information about domestic and world affairs in line with the interests of the country and the People” (art. 4, §2a; art. 25, §3a)
Mouthpiece	<p>“propagandize and disseminate, and contribute to the formulation and protection of, the line and policies of the Party, policies and laws of the State, achievements of the country” (art. 4, §2b)</p> <p>“build and promote socialist democracy” (art. 4, §2b)</p> <p>“protect the viewpoints, line and policies of the Party and policies and laws of the State” (art. 25, §3b)</p>

²⁰ Interestingly, in earlier press laws (1989, 1999), the press was characterised as the “mouthpiece of Party organisations, state bodies and social organisation”.

	“discover, propagandize and protect positive factors” (art. 25, §3b) “prevent and fight against wrongful ideas and acts” (art. 25, §3b)
Educator	“raise the People’s intellect” (art. 4, §2b) “satisfy the healthy cultural need of the People” (art. 4, §2b)
Nation-builder	“contribute to the political stability and socio-economic development” (art. 4, §2b) “protect and promote the fine traditions of the nation” (art. 4, §2b) “strengthen the great national unity bloc” (art. 4, §2b) “build and protect the Socialist Fatherland of Vietnam” (art. 4, §2b) “discover and report on examples of good people and good deeds, new factors and advanced models; to prevent and fight against violations of law and negative phenomena in society” (art. 4, §2d) “contribute to maintaining the purity and clarity and development of the Vietnamese language and languages of ethnic minorities” (art. 4, §2dd)
Bridge-builder	“reflect and guide public opinion; act as a forum for the People to exercise their right to freedom of speech” (art. 4, §2c) “reflect and opinions and legitimate aspirations of the People” (art. 25, §3a) “promote mutual understanding among countries and peoples” (art. 4, §2e)

The state primarily sees the press as part of the state apparatus: it should help promote the ideology, values and policies of the Communist Party. Another important role is to build bridges between the people and the government to foster a shared understanding of the country’s problems and challenges.

Laws and regulation

The governments’ visions of the press are also reflected in the regulative framework surrounding the profession. With regulations on both general, institutional and individual level, the states both enable and restrict the media, thereby setting up visible boundaries and conditions for journalism.

Freedom of speech, freedom of expression and press freedom

Both countries guarantee freedom of speech and expression in their constitutional frameworks, albeit, not without limitations. As stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (1965, art. 14 §1), every citizen of Singapore has the right to freedom of speech and expression but the Parliament may impose on the rights “as it considers necessary or expedient in the interest of the security of Singapore or any part thereof, friendly relations with other countries, public order or morality and restrictions designed to protect the privileges of Parliament or to provide against contempt of court, defamation or incitement to any offence” (ibid., art.14 §2). Similarly in Vietnam, the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Thirteenth National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2013) states that citizens “shall enjoy the right to freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, of access to information, to assemble, form associations and hold demonstrations”. Yet, the rights, can be circumvented “for the reasons of national defence, national security, social order and security, social morality and community well-being” (ibid., art. 14). Adding regulations to the protecting of press freedom and freedom of speech and expression is not unique. As Hallin and Mancini (2004, 163) explain, several European countries, adhering to what they label The Democratic Corporatist media system, have regulations in place limiting press freedom, which reflects “the assumption that media are a social institution and not simply a private business”. However, in contrast to Singapore and Vietnam, the limitations in the European countries appear more delineated and direct their attention towards specific areas concerning hate-speech, advertising directed at children and paid political advertising (ibid.). The

vagueness of the restrictions in the constitutions of Singapore and Vietnam are therefore often criticised by human rights organisations out of concern that they might be employed as it pleases the governments (Human Rights Watch 2013, 2016).

In contrast to Singapore, Vietnam has, with the passing of the 2016 Press Law, principles directed specifically at press freedom – both for citizens and for journalists. The law (The Thirteenth National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2016) states, that citizens have the rights to “create journalistic works” (art. 10 §1), “provide information to the press” (art. 10, §2), “express opinions on domestic and world affairs” (art. 11, §1), “contribute opinions on the formulation and implementation of the line, guidelines and policies of the Party and laws of the State” (art. 11, §2), and, “contribute opinions, criticisms and recommendations and express complaints and denunciations through the press” (art. 11, §3). However, these rights are equally limited in article 9 of the law, that lists a series of prohibited acts such as “distorting, defaming or negating the people’s administration” (art. 9, §1a), “causing division among strata of people, between the People and the people’s administration, the people’s armed forces, political organizations, and socio-political organizations” (art. 9, §2a), and, “distorting history; negating revolutionary achievements; offending the nation and national heroes” (art. 9, §4), just to mention a few.

Institutional level

When it comes to the laws directly targeting news media and thereby the journalistic profession, Singapore tends to regulate on an institutional level whereas Vietnam is involved on both the institutional level and the individual level. Singapore operates with three laws directed at news media, the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act (hereafter NPPA) from 1974, the Broadcasting Act (hereafter BA) from 1994 and the Undesirable Publications Act (1967)²¹, whereas Vietnam only has one, the Press Law (hereafter PL) from 2016. Both countries have defamation laws or articles, Singapore has the Defamation Act (1957) while Vietnam has articles dealing with defamation in the Civil Code (2015), as well as different codes of practices (in the case of Singapore), decrees, circulars and decisions (in the case of Vietnam) regulating the news media scene in different ways (see appendix 7).

The dominant law affecting news media in Singapore is the NPPA, traceable back to the colonial Printers and Publishers Ordinance of 1920, requiring all media by law to apply for an annual license (art. 21). However, as stated in article 21 §1, the Minister “may in his discretion grant, refuse or revoke” the permit as he sees fit²². Though regulated under a different law, the BA, the same provisions apply for broadcast media (radio, television and some online news media²³). Licenses also have to be renewed every

²¹ The Undesirable Publications Act of 1967 (revised in 1998) prohibits the sale, importation or circulation of publications (including sound recordings, photographs and discs) published or printed outside or within Singapore deemed obscene or objectionable.

²² With the 1986 amendment of the NPPA, the government also secured control over foreign publications by empowering the Minister to restrict the circulation of publications that “engage in domestic politics” (NPPA 1974, art. 24). This has had a profound effect on international publications like *Time*, *The Economist* and *Asian Wall Street Journal* who have had their circulation restricted under the law.

²³ Two different licenses exist for online media: a class licensing scheme and an individual licensing scheme. The first is for “political parties registered in Singapore, providing any content on the World Wide Web through the Internet” and “groups, organisations and corporations” (and in some cases individuals) “engaged in providing any programme for the propagation, promotion or discussion of political or religious issues relating to Singapore on the World Wide Web through the Internet” (Infocomm Media Development Authority 2017a). The second scheme, introduced in 2013, requires “online news sites that report regularly on issues relating to Singapore and have significant reach among readers” to apply for an individual license and put up a “performance bond” of 50,000 Singapore dollars (Media Development Authority 2013). The scheme caused

year and may be revoked by the Minister. This part of the regulative framework mirrors Vietnam's as all agencies or organisations that wish to establish a "press agency" in Vietnam according to the PL (2016) has to apply for a permit with the Ministry of Information and Communication (art. 18 §1). As in Singapore, the permit can, as stipulated in article 59 §2, be withdrawn at any time if the "press agency" publishes or broadcasts information with contents described in article 9 of the law (see above). Though the press law in Vietnam lists offences that may result in the revoking of a license, the formulation of offences is vague, which leaves room for interpretation and in effect grants the authorities significant power over media licenses.

In both countries, the state also has a say in who is allowed to own media companies. In Singapore ownership of newspapers is restricted to public companies (NPPA 1974, art. 8) with at least 50 different shareholders. George (2012, 30) calls this a "counter-intuitive stroke of genius" by the then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who understood that capitalism was not a threat to the government. Instead of nationalising all media, he made sure that no individual or corporation could hold a controlling interest in newspapers (ibid.). As a result, article 12 of the NPPA (1974) states that no person may hold more than 12 % of the shares of a newspaper company without the state's permission. Furthermore, all companies are required to create two classes of shares: ordinary and management, making up 99 % and 1 % respectively (NPPA 1974, art. 10, §4). Management shares, that have the same cash value as ordinary shares, have 200 times more voting power on "any resolution relating to the appointment or dismissal of a director or any member of the staff of a newspaper company" (NPPA 1974, art. 10 §11). This may not have been unusually if not for the fact that the authorities decide whose shares are given this "supervoting" status (George 2012, 31). A similar shareholder system regulates ownership of broadcasting media (BA 1994, art. 34-35). At the outset, no one knew how the government planned to use its power over "supervotes" and appointments, but as George points out (2012, 33), time has shown that the law generally is used to place trusted former senior official into the role of the publisher, while leaving the editor jobs in the hands of experienced professionals.

Although less sophisticated in Vietnam, the PL (2016) similarly gives the state powers over ownership and central appointments in media companies. To begin with, only "Party agencies, state agencies, socio-political organizations, socio-politico-professional organizations, and religious organizations of provincial, equivalent or higher level operating lawfully in accordance with Vietnamese law may establish press agencies" (art. 14, §1). This literally means that only organisations (or institutions, local administrations, ministries etc.) affiliated with the Communist Party are allowed to establish "press agencies", which is why the media in Vietnam are typically described as state-owned²⁴. However, as will be touched upon in this dissertation, media outlets may in effect have very little to do with the organisations to which they are linked. Besides provisioning the media to be affiliated with a legally recognised organisation, the law also has requirements to the heads of press agencies. According to article 23, the head of an agency must be "a Vietnamese citizen with a permanent residence address in Vietnam", possessing a "university degree or higher degree", have a "valid press card", and have "good ethical

uproar with one popular site, the socio-political commentary website, www.breakfastnetwork.sg, refusing to comply and eventually shutting down but most ended up registering.

²⁴ It is therefore not possible for foreign companies to establish news outlets in Vietnam but import of foreign publications is allowed by licensed importers (Press Law 2016, art. 54). Similarly, broadcasting of foreign television channels is also allowed if the Pay TV provider has secured the correct license (Decision 20, 2011).

qualities” (§2a-d). As in Singapore, the law has been used to interfere in appointments of editors-in-chiefs and directors of press agencies.

Content level

As for the content of the news, neither Singapore nor Vietnam officially has direct pre-publishing or pre-broadcasting censorship. In Vietnam, it is even stated in the PL (2016) that the media “shall not be censored before printing, transmission and broadcasting” (art. 13, §3). In both countries, the media can, however, be asked to retract stories or offer apologies if they are deemed to be in violation with e.g. defamation laws or national security laws. This also applies to online news media – and in some cases blogs and social media. In Vietnam, online news media and social media can, according to a circular issued in 2014 (Circular No. 09/2014), be required to remove content in violations with applicable legislation “within three hours of self-discovery or upon request by a competent government agency” (Civil Rights Defenders 2015, 7).

In Singapore, the press is regularly invited to press briefings on new initiatives or announcements where ministries and government agencies provide key points and suggest ways to best represent the material in the media. Furthermore, the authorities encourage the media “to assist them” (as S14 explains) spreading certain information to the public.

In Vietnam, authorities have chosen a more direct approach. Though they too have press briefings, there are also special meetings reserved for the editors-in-chiefs of the biggest Vietnamese news media (newspapers, TV-stations and internet media). The meetings, which according to Hayton (2011, 140) are mandatory, takes place every week at the Ministry of Information and Communications. This is “where the Communist Party manages the media” (ibid.). At the meetings, which are never reported on, news from the last week is being scrutinised. It is not an open discussion but a meeting where the Ministry can voice items from the media perceived “negative” by the authorities. The Ministry also uses the meeting to recommend stories for the upcoming week.

Though direct censorship is not as widespread, self-censorship is everywhere in the media – on both institutional and individual levels, creating layers of self-censorship around stories considered of sensitive character. In Singapore, self-censorship has even become institutionalised in the form of the so-called OB-markers. These markers are best understood as “informal rules of engagement” that delineate a field of play that is “narrower than what is legally permissible” (George 2012, 65). In other words, the OB markers control areas that the press should either treat as off-limits, even though they are not prohibited to do so by any law or regulation, or handle with caution. In his memoirs, former editor-in-chief of *The Straits Times*, Cheong Yip Seng, mentions several of them: coverage of the opposition, coverage that could potentially undermine fundamental policies and key institutions (such as racial and religious harmony, bilingualism, meritocracy, racial quotas for public housing and bilateral relations with Malaysia and Indonesia) and coverage of unpopular policies (Seng 2012). While the topics are not necessarily banned they should be carefully covered with extensive checks for accuracy and balance (ibid., 428).

While there are no equivalents to the OB-markers in Vietnam, some topics are (with the words of V10) considered “taboo” – meaning that some topics are not to be covered by the media or only covered superficially. Journalists mention topics such as high-level corruption, dissidence and racial or religious conflicts. The guidelines are, however, less clear compared to Singapore – and more susceptible to change (see chapter 7).

Individual level

Whereas the state of Singapore only has legal requirements to the media on an institutional level, Vietnam lists specific requirements to journalists in the Press Law. The law defines a journalist as a “person who carries out press activities and has a press card” (art. 25, §1). It goes on to list journalists’ rights, which includes to “be protected by the law in their professional activities”, access to information (including material and documents from organisations and agencies and access to court hearings) and right to training (art. 25, §2a-e). The law also equips journalists with shield laws such as protection of sources (art. 38, §4), where it states: “Press agencies and journalists have the right and obligations not to disclose information about information providers”. However, this right can be bypassed in cases where “the disclosure is necessary for the investigation, prosecution and trial of very serious and particularly serious crimes” (ibid.).

When it comes to journalists’ obligations most align with the role categories listed in table 3. The state, represented by the Ministry of Information and Communications, furthermore decides who are eligible for a press card and may revoke it if a person is deemed to be in violation with the law (art. 28, §6). This practice is often used to reprimand journalists, who have stepped out of line in the eyes of state, and strip individuals of their professional titles and privileges.

Although the legal framework in Singapore does not contain any rights²⁵ or obligations directed at journalists specifically, the state does have a say in who gets access to information by administering the granting of Press Accreditation Cards through the Ministry of Communications and Information. The card, which gives access to “ministerial functions and government events”, is only issued to “media personnel” who works “full-time with a news organisation”, not including “specialised publications” such as lifestyle magazines” (Ministry of Communications and Information 2017). In contrast to Vietnam, the power over press accreditation cards is rarely used as a way to reprimand journalists but it is used to define what a journalist is as it excludes groups, such as freelancers and journalists working for alternative media, from having access to the same information as the mainstream media.

A number of other laws and regulations impact the profession on an individual level. Laws dealing with defamation and contempt of court in both countries are important pieces of legislation when it comes to controlling the media, and journalists are more often being charged with offences under these pieces of legislation than the media related laws and regulations.

In Singapore, the Internal Security Act (1960) was for a long period an important tool to target what was seen as political dissidence (George 2006, 44) but today the Defamation Act of 1957 is more commonplace when it comes to libel in all media formats. Together with the law dealing with contempt of court, the old Supreme Court of Judicature Act (1969) and the recently passed Administration of Justice (Protection) Bill (2016), the Defamation Act has been the most regularly used instrument against the media, individual journalists and of latest’s also bloggers and online activists²⁶. With the amended Administration of Justice (Protection) Bill from 2016, contempt of court may be an even wider used instrument as the new law stipulates that material posted on the Internet (which can include social media) may be deemed in contempt of court (art. 11, §2).

²⁵ Singapore has no such shield laws for journalists in place, which on a couple of instances have resulted in journalists being required by the court to reveal their sources (Hwang 2017).

²⁶ In March 2016, for instance, the publisher of the socio-political blog *The Real Singapore*, Ai Takagi, was sentenced to 10 months in jail on four accounts of sedition (Chong 2016).

In Vietnam, the Ordinance on State Secrets (2000), the Penal Code (2015) and different decrees and circulars (Decree 97/2008, Circular No. 07/2008, Decree 02/2011, Decree 72/2013, Circular No. 09/2014, Decree 174/2013) are used to regulate not just journalists who work for the mainstream media but also citizen journalists, online activists and dissidents. While the Ordinance on State Secrets deals with offenses related to “gathering, disclosing, losing, appropriating, buying and selling, and illegally destroying State secrets” (art. 3), the Penal Code’s three national security articles focus on “activities aiming to overthrow the people’s administration” (art. 109), “conducting propaganda against the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam” (art. 117), and, “abusing rights to democracy and freedom to infringe upon the interests of the State and the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and citizens” (art. 330). Decree 72 from 2013 has so far had the biggest impact. Though vaguely worded, the decree prohibits online activities that oppose the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; threatens national security, social order and safety; sabotages the national fraternity; contradicts national traditions; and, provides false information (art. 5, §1a-e). In addition, it imposes legal liability on the users of social media for all information stored, provided and shared on social networks (art. 26, §4).

A tight net of boundaries

Through the different laws and regulations, the states in Singapore and Vietnam have drawn the boundaries for the media and journalists to operate within. In Singapore, the state tries to take an invisible position and let the media regulate themselves, resulting in several layers of self-censorship and the institutionalised OB-markers. Even though draconian powers are at the government’s disposal, less visible tools are often used. This form of “calibrated coercion” where the media tend to do the censoring themselves is, according to George (2012, 95), one of Lee Kuan Yew’s masterpieces.

In Vietnam, the state is much more visible, actively guiding, regulating and striking down on the media, and outlining its vision of the media in its laws and regulations. By providing the legal framework and appointing itself responsibilities of both directing “the implementation of regulations on information, report, statistics, commendations and discipline in press activities” (Press Law 2016, art. 6, §9) and “Inspecting, examining and handling violations of the press law” (ibid., art. 6, §10), the Vietnamese state position itself as both the legislative, executive and judicial branch of the media. In contrast, the Singaporean state may hold power over the legislative and the judicial branch but leaves the day-to-day maintenance, the executive branch, to the media themselves. Here the media are to make their own interpretations of the laws and have to decide how to avoid stepping outside of written and unwritten boundaries, which may result in extra layers of caution and less initiative to challenge the status quo.

Given the states’ active involvement in the media industry in both countries, the journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam are bound to position themselves in accordance to political forces. They are in many aspects dependant on the political fields and the internal struggles forming them. Political capital plays a major role in the journalistic field as the states can decide the fates of media institutions as well as the careers of journalists and editors. Journalists aspiring to climb up the hierarchy will have to take political capital into account. Similarly, media institutions can be economically successful but without the approval of the state it can be difficult to be sustainable.

Political forces are, however, not the only ones conditioning the journalistic fields in the two countries. Just as a media institution in Singapore and Vietnam cannot be in business without some amount of political capital, it cannot function without conforming to market conditions and recognising economic capital.

Economic conditions of the journalistic field

With a population about 18 times bigger than Singapore it comes as no surprise that Vietnam has the highest amount of media outlets of the two. Official accounts from the Ministry of Information and Communications state that the country had 1,236 so-called “press agencies” in December 2015²⁷: 858 were print media (with 86 publishing national newspapers, 113 local newspapers and 659 magazines), 105 were online media outlets (with 83 of them belonging to established print media), 207 curated news aggregator websites and the remaining 66 (two national and 64 regional or local) were in the broadcasting business (Ministry of Information and Communications 2015).

In Singapore, two companies own the 15 newspapers, 15 radio stations²⁸ and seven television channels that make up the national mainstream media. Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) owns all but one of the national newspapers (10 of which are in English, five in Chinese, two in Malay, one in Tamil and one in both English and Chinese), about 40 local print-magazines and three of the radio stations. Government-owned MediaCorp owns the only non-SPH owned newspaper, and is in charge of most of the broadcasting industry, owning the remaining 12 radio channels and all television channels. However, SPH owns a 20 % share in MediaCorp’s broadcasting business and a 40 % share in its newspaper business. In addition to the legacy news media, 14 online news sites are acknowledged as news media by the authorities. 11 are registered under an individual license scheme while the other three are registered under the minor class licensing scheme (see note 23). Seven of them belong to SPH (four of them online versions of already existing media outlets) and two belong to MediaCorp (both online versions of already existing media outlets). Of the remaining, one is owned by Yahoo²⁹ and four by local media start-ups³⁰.

In both countries, newspaper circulation has decreased since the 2000s (see figure 6 and 7 below), advertising revenue has dropped dramatically and companies are looking for alternative business models. In Singapore, SPH still gains most of its revenue from advertising (54 %) whereas only 15 % comes from circulation (SPH 2016, 64). According to SPH’s annual report 2016, revenue for its media business declined with 7.6 % compared to the previous year, “as advertisement and circulation revenue fell 61.5 million (9.2 %) and 5.3 million (3 %) respectively” (ibid., 64).

Although, the Ministry of Information and Communications in Vietnam reported a revenue increase of 13.93 % in the newspaper industry (including online outlets of established newspapers) in 2016 compared to 2015 (Ngoc 2016), revenue from newspaper sales and advertising has decreased. No official numbers on the distribution between the revenue sources exist but looking at the available data for the national newspaper *Tuoi Tre* it is possible to find evidence of a trend. According to McKinley (2010, 12), the newspaper used to earn 90 % of its revenues from advertising but today, the newspaper claims to get only 55 % from advertising³¹. Similarly, as shown in figure 6, newspaper sales have been in decline since 2008.

²⁷ A press agency is a specific unit under an official agency or organisation that has been given permission to produce a journalistic product (Press Law 2016, art. 16).

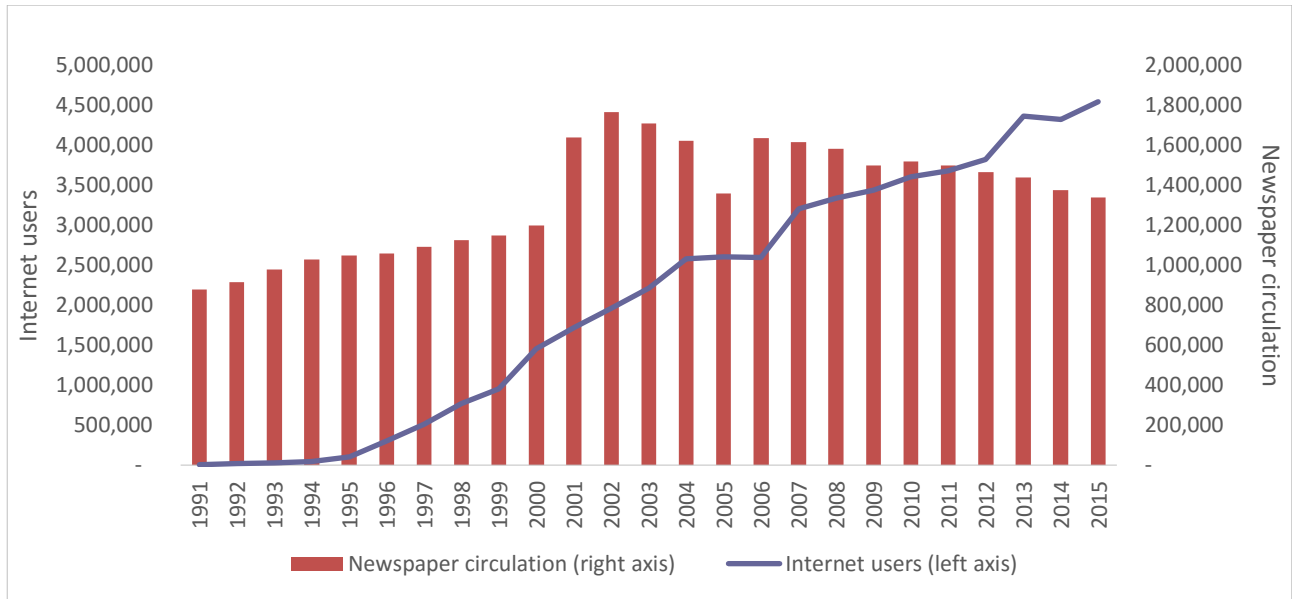
²⁸ Three more radio channels are available in Singapore: BBC World Service and Sastra Radio’s two radio channels. Sastra radio belongs to the Singapore Armed Forces Reservists’ Association under the Ministry of Defence.

²⁹ Yahoo’s local news site, sg.news.yahoo.com, was the first non-mainstream online media to acquire an individual license in Singapore.

³⁰ Mothership.sg, theonlinecitizen.sg, themiddleground.sg and theindependent.sg. Mothership.sg is the only site that is registered under the individual license while the other three are registered under the minor class licensing scheme.

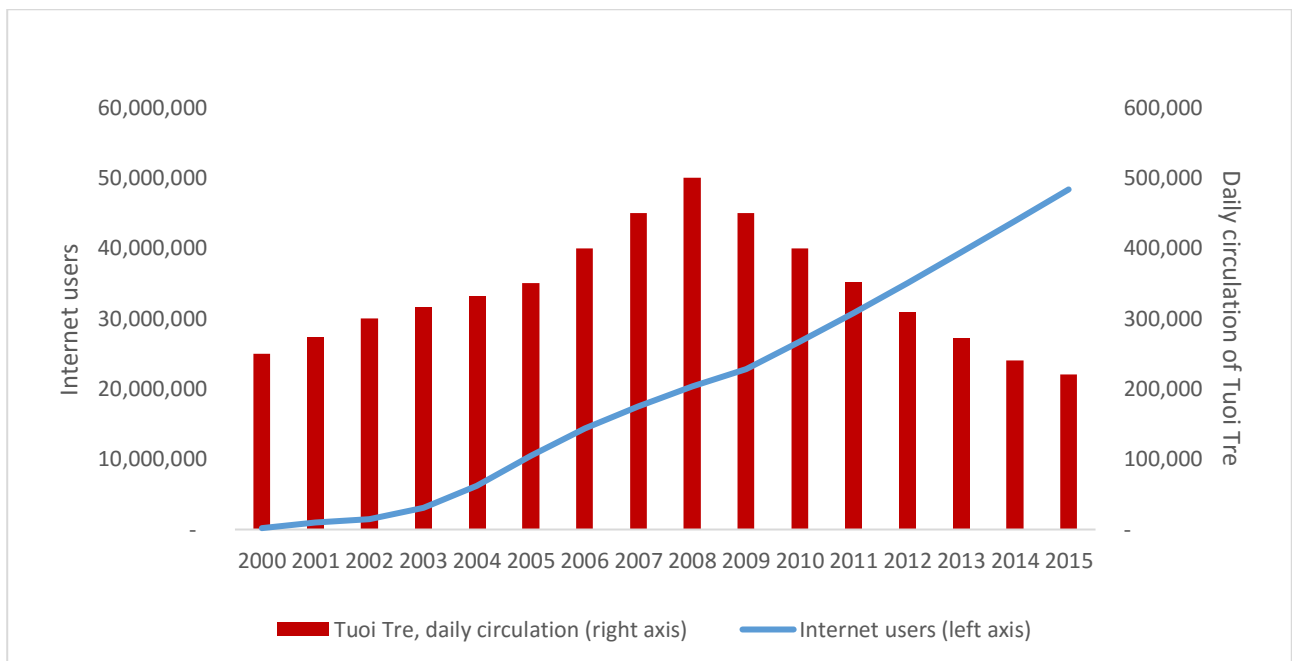
³¹ Figure was listed on their public LinkedIn profile under a description of the company and its revenues (Tuoi Tre No date).

Figure 6: Internet users and newspaper circulation in Singapore (1990-2015)



Sources: World Bank (Internet users) and Statistics Singapore (total newspaper circulation). The significant surge in newspaper circulation in 2001 can be explained by the breaking of the SPH newspaper monopoly and the following “newspaper war” with both SPH and MediaCorp launching free dailies.

Figure 7: Internet users and newspaper circulation in Vietnam (2000-2015)



Sources: World Bank (Internet users), Tuoi Tre, BBC and WAN-IFRA (Tuoi Tre average daily circulation). The figures from Tuoi Tre are based on estimates. Missing observations (the grey columns) have been filled in with estimated daily circulation calculated using compound annual growth rates between observations. Similar trend between observations have been assumed.

The television industries in both countries are dominated by state-run and/or government owned enterprises. Although foreign channels are accessible through pay-TV solutions, national channels are run by MediaCorp (free-to-air) in Singapore and by Vietnam Television (free-to-air), and Vietnam Multimedia Corporation (subscription).

In contrast to the newspaper industry, the television industry appears to be thriving in both countries. In Singapore, 85.5 % of local viewers tuned in to MediaCorp's free-to-air television on an average weekly basis in 2016, a 6 % growth from the previous year³² (Channel NewsAsia 2016b). Despite the fact that much of its factual programming “depends on government grants and subsidies” (George 2012, xii), MediaCorp could report an operating profit of 36 million SGD (25,87 million USD) for the fiscal year 2015 and a total revenue of 739 million SGD (531 million USD) (Temasek Holdings 2016). The industry is, however, also struggling due to competition from other platforms and though specific numbers are not available advertising revenue has dropped (Channel NewsAsia 2016a). In an effort to regain viewers, MediaCorp launched an online over-the-top service, Toggle, in 2013 with content only available through subscription. The service has so far been a success and MediaCorp plans to invest “aggressively” in the platform giving it the same priority as free-to-air channels (V. Tay 2017).

In Vietnam, the number of television viewers are even higher. According to a 2016 survey by Kantar Media³³ (Kantar 2016), 95 % of the Vietnamese population watch television daily³⁴ – primarily on traditional television sets but new platforms such as computers, tablets and mobile phones are gaining grounds. Even though, the Ministry of Information and Communications could report an estimated revenue from the broadcasting industry (radio, television and online) of 14,040 billion VND (616.7 million USD) in 2016 (Ngoc 2016), the national broadcaster VTV is also struggling with advertising revenues and viewer migration to other platforms (Tuoi Tre News 2015) – even if it is one of the only media institutions still receiving subsidies as it is wholly-owned by the state³⁵. With a growing pay-TV market and a variety of new platforms (with online video-on-demand services such as YouTube being particularly popular), competition is fierce. VTV has also launched an over-the-top service but it is far from the only player in a market, which is also challenged by illegally accessed over-the-top services (Dien 2014).

The fastest growing media industry in both countries is fuelled by the rapid spread of the Internet and mobile technologies. As is evident from figure 6 and figure 7, the Internet has gained a large reach in a short period of time. According to official figures, 79 % of Singapore residents used the Internet in 2015 (Infocomm Media Development Authority 2017b), while 62.76 % of the Vietnamese population used the Internet in 2016 (Ngoc 2016). Mobile penetration in both countries are way above 100 % with 149.8 % in Singapore (Infocomm Media Development Authority 2017c) and 131 % in Vietnam (in

³² Figures are from Nielsen's annual Singapore Media Index Report based on a representative sample of the Singaporean population (n=4,660) with data collected between July 2015 and June 2016.

³³ Figures are from Kantar Media Vietnam's Media Habits Survey based on a representative sample of the Vietnamese population between the age of 15-54 (n=8,528) with data collected concurrently.

³⁴ It is worth noting that television in Vietnam is often used as a backdrop for everyday activities – without people actually actively watching the screen. When it comes to using television as a news source, a recent study by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (2015) found that 64.8 % mentioned the national broadcaster VTV as one their three most important sources of news and information. See note 38 for more information on the study.

³⁵ State subsidies amounted to 901 billion VND (39.6 million USD) in 2016 with the newspaper industry receiving 147 million VND (6.5 million USD) whereas about 48 % (70.79 million VND (3.1 million USD)) was dedicated to publishing, printing and distribution, and the broadcasting industry (television, radio and online) receiving 754 million VND (33.1 million USD) (Ngoc 2016).

December 2016 according to the Ministry of Information and Communications as reported in Ngoc 2016).

In both countries, people are increasingly getting their news from online sources – not only from mainstream news media but also from new online media start-ups and social media. Nielsen's 2016 Singapore Media Index Report³⁶ showed that even though 91.7 % of adult Singaporeans read local print newspapers or watched local television broadcasts every week, 76.4 % had accessed online news or watched movies/TV/videos monthly (The Straits Times 2016). A recent report from Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Pothong and Kleis Nielsen 2016) showed that online media (including social media) were the most widely used sources of news among the population having access to the Internet (with 84% of Singaporean internet users³⁷ reporting to have used it within the last week), followed by television (62 %) and print media (57 %). In comparison, a similar study among the Vietnamese population from The Broadcasting Board of Governors³⁸ (2015) showed that although television continued to be the favourite news medium in Vietnam (with 95.8 % using it for news on a weekly basis), the Internet scored higher (with 37.9 %) than radio (21.3 %) and print media (19.3 %).

Despite the increasingly use of online media, local online media actors still struggle to survive in both countries. Finding sustainable business models continues to be a top priority for new online media start-ups and established legacy media outlets venturing into the online market a like. In Singapore, some of the biggest mainstream players like *The Straits Times* have experimented with different pay-for-access models but most news sites do not charge any form of payment, relying on advertising revenues instead. Many of the new media start-ups in Singapore rely on external funding from private citizens or foundations – although foreign funding is not allowed according to the Class License Scheme (Infocomm Media Development Authority 2017a). When it comes to online news sites, the mainstream media dominates the market with SPH and MediaCorp outlets ranking much higher than some of the newer non-mainstream media. Only Mothership.sg seems to be able to compete with the mainstream media with its 1.5-2.1 million visits per month (between September 2016 and February 2017), which is almost as many visits as the online version of *Today* with its 2.0-2.35 million visits per month (between September 2016 and February 2017)³⁹.

In Vietnam, nobody has experimented with pay-for-content models as the perception is that Vietnamese news consumers are not willing to pay for content. Most online media therefore rely on advertising revenue but it is difficult to become sustainable in a market that is dominated by big international players such as Facebook and Google⁴⁰. The online news market in Vietnam has gradually been consolidated through mergers and acquisitions by a few big players such as VNG Corporation (owner of the online news platform Zing.vn and social media Zing.me), FPT Corporation (owner of online newspaper VnExpress⁴¹ and other online services), VC Corp (owner of kenh14.vn and other

³⁶ Figures are from Nielsen's annual Singapore Media Index Report based on a representative sample of the Singaporean population (n=4,660) with data collected between July 2015 and June 2016.

³⁷ Based on a representative sample of Singaporeans having access to the Internet, n=1002. The data was collected using online questionnaires in April 2016.

³⁸ Based on a sample nationally representative of more than 57 million Vietnamese, n=1000. The data was collected using face-to-face interviews.

³⁹ According to digital market data monitor SimilarWeb: www.similarweb.com/website/todayonline.com and www.similarweb.com/website/mothership.sg. Data updated February 1, 2017. Accessed March 29, 2017.

⁴⁰ According to the digital marketing bureau Moore Corporation, Facebook and Google accounted for more than 70 % of online advertising revenue in Vietnam in 2014 (Moore Corporation 2015).

⁴¹ Although the licensing agency is the Ministry of Science and Technology.

lifestyle and celebrity oriented news sites), and 24H (owner of sports news site 24h.com.vn and other lifestyle news sites). Interestingly, most of the popular news sites belong to private companies. Although they on paper are affiliated with a state institution or organisation⁴², they are in reality run by private companies. They are still subject to the same rules that apply to all media in Vietnam but they have very little direct involvement with state organisations and institutions.

In the hands of the market and the public

The biggest difference between the media industries in Singapore and Vietnam is the market concentration. Whereas only two companies dominate the mainstream media in Singapore, more than 1,000 press agencies operate in the Vietnamese mainstream media. Although some would argue that the market in Vietnam is only dominated by one player, the Communist Party, in reality the Communist Party has very little direct contact with the different press agencies.

The media in both countries operate on market conditions (apart from a handful of publications in Vietnam such as the Communist Party's official newspaper, *Nhan Dan*, that all state institutions are required to subscribe to) and rely on sales and advertising revenue. As in other countries, the newspaper industry is struggling to survive faced with the competition from both television and the Internet. Television remains a dominating medium in both countries but it too is losing grounds to online and social media. With the widespread growth of the Internet, several new online players have emerged in the local media markets of Singapore and Vietnam – attracting both advertising revenue and people's attention. However, the online players are also to some extent struggling. Only some of the largest companies are able to keep their businesses afloat while minor companies struggle to find sustainable business models.

Even though political capital is crucial for the agents in the journalistic field, economic capital has as much – if sometimes not even more – to say. Professional journalists are dependent on sustainable media companies to secure a pay check and media companies are dependent on revenues to keep businesses going.

Profession-specific conditions

The journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam both find themselves in professionalization phases with institutions and practices customary of more professionalised fields having only recently been instated or still lacking. Singapore does, however, appear to be further ahead than Vietnam with unions, professional networking organisations and routinized socialisation practices. In both countries, the journalistic field does, however, qualify as a profession in its own right; differentiated from other professions dealing with communication and information. It requires a specific set of skills and a specific mind-set to be a journalist. As the remaining chapters in this dissertation will show, journalists in the two countries have a defined understanding of the profession's norms and ideals, responsibilities and roles. Equally, journalists in both countries have a protectionist impulse confronted with new competition and challenges. They have no intention to hand over the reins to new information providers (such as citizen

⁴² Either in the classical way as VnExpress that is licensed with the Ministry of Science and Technology; as news aggregative websites (*trang tin dien tu*) like kenh14.vn that in theory only can repost stories from other sources but in reality produce its own news and have them posted simultaneously on the webpages of licensed news media (T. T. T. Nguyen 2013, 21–22); or, as sub-publications (*dau nau*) of an already licensed publication (ibid., 23).

journalists or bloggers) who do not adhere to the profession's norms and ideals – even if the journalistic field is yet to become fully professionalised.

This section looks into the organisation of the profession and the people constituting the journalistic field. As the fields are still developing and rely on the state and government to set up its external boundaries, independent organisation of the professions has not been feasible in a similar manner as in other countries. But attempts have been made such as the introduction of journalism educations and the development of newsroom socialisation practices.

Organisation of the profession

In both Singapore and Vietnam, the profession was born out of rebellion against colonial forces and has been used actively as a nation-building tool. Concurrently with the nations finding their footing, the profession evolved with professional organisations, debates on norms and ethics and designated journalism educations. However, the journalistic profession in the two countries differ in their organisation compared to counterparts in the West.

Neither country has a press council or similar independent press organisations. Singapore's journalists are represented by the Creative Media and Publishing Union and can join the social networking organisation Singapore Press Club but none of them has mandate over the internal developments of the profession. Although Vietnam has the Vietnamese Journalists' Association⁴³, it is far from independent and journalists generally do not see the association as prioritising their interests. Instead, many journalists feel that it is more a political association adhering to the Communist Party than a professional association working on their behalf.

As for norms and ethics, both Singapore's union for journalists, the Creative Media and Publishing Union, and the Vietnamese Journalists' Association have issued codes of ethics that members are expected to adhere to. In both cases, the codes (see appendix 8 and 9) consist of 10 short articles describing journalists' responsibilities. The laws and regulations surrounding the profession are mentioned in both codes but the Vietnamese code goes a step further by describing the profession's responsibilities towards the state, Party and nation, the national culture, and national secrets. Only three of the articles in the Vietnamese code are related to best practices in news gathering and reporting compared to five in Singapore's code. Though the Vietnamese code try to tackle some of the profession's problems (like corruption and respect of sources) it appears more concerned with the profession's relationship with the state. Singapore's code seems more thorough in comparison but it too bears evidence of a profession that does not want to claim full autonomy from the state. Even if it encourages fraternity among members of the profession, it also asks members to take personal responsibility for everything he or she produces and not do anything that will discredit the union, the country's media institutions or the profession.

Deciding what good journalism is, is not something that is put in the hands of journalists themselves. When the profession celebrates itself in the two countries it is either media institutions or political organisations doing the judging. In Singapore, the two media companies (Singapore Press Holdings and MediaCorp) each has their own internal yearly press ceremonies celebrating good journalism. Judging from the latest's awards (see appendix 10 for a full overview), the companies typically

⁴³ According to the Ministry of Information and Communication, the association had about 18,000 members in 2016 (Ngoc 2016).

honour craftsmanship and long-term achievements. It is not necessarily scoops that win but stories that showcase solid work with high interest to the Singaporean public. The prizes celebrate comprehensive work that goes beyond desk research and requires elements of investigative journalism – while meticulously staying within the OB-markers.

In Vietnam, the Vietnamese Journalists Association is in charge of the National Press Awards, which is presented once a year on Vietnam Revolutionary Press Day (June 21). Looking at the eight winners of the A-category prizes from last year (see appendix 11 for a full overview), it is clear that journalism with a national agenda is held in high regards. The winners either celebrated the country and its sovereignty or sought to push the nation forward by exposing problems in society. Yet, none of stories deal with the country's political issues. The problems are, almost, purely of economic nature. Perhaps because these issues are accepted (and appreciated by the state) – or perhaps because choosing stories that touch upon more sensitive issues would send the wrong message about the purpose of the media and journalists' function in society to the authorities.

Though awards and prizes are always nice to get, journalists in both countries do not necessarily see the prizes coming from these sources as celebrating the best from the industry. It “is just kind of political”, as one veteran journalist turned blogger from Vietnam states (V3). As will be dealt with in detail in chapter 5, journalists' understanding of good journalism is less vocalised and more embedded in journalistic practices.

Though the journalistic fields in Singapore and Vietnam seem poorly organised, the field in Singapore does hold evidence of a stronger conservation. Being significantly smaller than the Vietnamese field and more geographically concentrated, journalists within the mainstream media often change positions from one media house to another, which creates more coherence and similar ideals, norms and values. In contrast, though similar exchanges happen in Vietnam among the top news outlets (for instance between the two competing progressive newspapers, *Thanh Nien* and *Tuoi Tre*), it is far from common practice in the field as a whole. Consequently, compared to the Singaporean journalistic field, the Vietnamese field is not characterised with a similar strong conservation. Whereas the smaller nature of the field in Singapore foster a tightknit environment with a common understanding of journalists' roles and responsibilities, the dispersed field in Vietnam has trouble finding common ground. There appears to be several fractions within the mainstream media and journalists generally agree that only a couple of the country's more than 1,000 press agencies practice what they would consider “good journalism”. The rest are either docile mouthpieces of the Communist Party or more concerned with economic capital than journalistic capital, having no problem sacrificing journalistic professionalism for profit. As so, the journalistic field in Vietnam appears to be divided into at least three different groups: a core group of journalists and media outlets that adhere to journalistic norms and values and try to push the profession in a more professionalised (and autonomous) direction, a political group consisting of media and journalists with the closest connection to the Communist Party, and a diversified market-oriented group made up of the many media that go where revenue is to be made and have little interest in politics.

Becoming a journalist

No formal journalism education existed in Singapore and Vietnam prior to the 1990s. Today, journalism (or mass communication) can be studied several places in the two countries on both BA and MA levels⁴⁴.

In Singapore, the education is similar to journalism educations in many English speaking Western countries with many of the same textbooks and subjects covered. The University strives, according to Duffy (2010, 41), to give students skills to work both within the Singapore system and anywhere in the world: “All the standard news values – accuracy, currency, relevance, and balance – are instilled along with an understanding of the Singapore system”, he claims.

In Vietnam, students are informed about many different types of press models but they are primarily being instructed in Marxist-Leninist theory on journalism and communication – creating the impression that the education serves an ideological purpose in line with the state’s understanding of journalism. Though more skill-based courses have been introduced, the education is not deemed sufficient by many working journalists and editors and the faculties do admit that it is a big challenge to keep up with the “rapid development in the media industry” (Huong 2015).

Since journalism educations were not introduced in either country before the 1990s, most journalists do not have a background in journalism. In Singapore, “an overwhelming majority” of journalists come from other disciplines (Hao & George 2012, 95). As a survey conducted among 447 journalists in Singapore in 2009⁴⁵ (Hao & George 2012) shows, most journalists do nonetheless have a university degree. 63 % of the respondents were holding an undergraduate degree, while 18.8 % had a master’s degree and 11.1 % had a secondary or pre-university education.

In Vietnam, no official figures on journalists’ backgrounds exist but as an example Nguyen (2008, 115) describes how only 9 % of the 154 staff members at the prominent newspaper *Thanh Nien* had a journalism degree. As in Singapore, many do, however, have university degrees. A survey conducted in Vietnam in 2007⁴⁶ (Loo and Hang 2007) showed that more than 90 % of the journalists surveyed had a university degree. Though the survey did not specify which field they had specialised in, it did show that most of the journalists had had some form of formal training in journalism – either during their educations, at workshops or in the form of on-the-job training (ibid., 16).

Similar patterns show up in my sample if you look at interviewees working or having worked professionally as journalists or editors, see table 4 below. All but one interviewee in Singapore (S1) and one interviewee in Vietnam (V3) had university degrees. As is evident from the table below a high percentage had a degree in journalism or media/communication studies but most of them were under the age of 40 (12 out of 16) whereas the older journalists and editors primarily had other backgrounds. It is also worth noting that six of the interviewees with a background in journalism (three from Singapore and three from Vietnam) had taken their education in another (typically English speaking) country.

⁴⁴ In Singapore, journalism (BA and MA) can be studied at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) but it is also possible to obtain a communication diploma from three of the country’s five polytechnics. Courses here are 3 years long and lead to a diploma in mass communications (Duffy 2010, 39). In Vietnam, four institutions are currently offering degrees (BA and MA) in journalism: Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration, University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Vietnam National University Hanoi), University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Vietnam National University Hochiminh City), and Hue University of Sciences.

⁴⁵ The survey was part of Weaver and Willnats (2012) large-scale comparative project of journalism, “The global journalist in the 21st century”.

⁴⁶ Albeit the survey was conducted with a far from representative sample of 63 journalists all working in Hanoi.

Table 4: Educational background of interviewees in Singapore and Vietnam

	Singapore	Vietnam
Total	17	18
University degree	16	17
BA	7	8
MA	9	9
Field of study		
Journalism/media studies	7	9
Political science	4	2
Business/economy	3	2
English	1	3
Other	1	1
Country of study		
Home country	8	12
Foreign country	8	5

To conclude, in both Singapore and Vietnam an education in journalism is by no means necessary to practice journalism. Though most have university degrees, journalists and editors stem from many different backgrounds, and a diploma in journalism is not seen as a prerequisite to be hired as a journalist. Furthermore, an educational background in journalism does not appear to be of importance for editors who are looking for future journalists. Intriguingly, editors in both countries seem to be more interested in hiring people with other educational backgrounds than journalism. As one Vietnamese editor from one of the country's biggest newspapers explains:

“Because, you know, journalism university only have 4 years to change the student to become a journalist. And they only know basic, basic matters, basic knowledge of journalism. [...] If they graduated from those universities maybe they can write a good story, a good paragraph in general but they cannot write about economic. They cannot write about law. So that's why our newspaper recruits people from law universities, economic universities more than journalism” (V10).

An editor from one of Singapore's largest newspapers is in agreement when he explains why he prefers to hire people with backgrounds in social sciences:

“Passion and commitment is very, very important but you need a good brain, you know? I need to give 100-page report at 6 o'clock in the evening and I need you to do at 10 o'clock. And it is not easy, you know?” (S17).

Yet, as the Singaporean editor admits, it can be difficult to attract people with these kinds of degrees as they will also be sought by other professions who might be able to offer better salaries. The same goes for Vietnam where the mainstream media even find it difficult to attract people with journalism degrees

who are also being pursued by private companies (A. Nguyen 2008). Both countries are struggling with recruitment and many of the people on management levels see this as one of the biggest challenges. Though journalism educations could be improved (not least in Vietnam where editors are far from impressed with the graduates), editors are more concerned with attracting talent that they can mould into journalists. Education is just the foundation as the doctrine in Singapore and Vietnam seems to be “learning by doing”. Journalism is a craft that can only be learned through practicing and through gradual socialisation into the journalistic field.

In both countries, some of the bigger news outlets have in-house training courses that all new staff members must participate in. Others expect new journalists to learn from more experienced staff by following them around. In Singapore it is quite common for journalists to start their career based on an internship – or after having been given a scholarship from SPH and working off a 4 or 6 years’ bond⁴⁷. Journalists will then be familiar with many of the newsroom procedures and the transition from graduate to journalist is not as abrupt.

In Vietnam, few have interned in a newsroom prior to being hired as journalists. Not only can it be quite difficult to find newsrooms that are interested in having interns (A. Nguyen 2008, 123), but many are also hired from other fields than journalism and therefore have little knowledge of the inner workings of a newsroom. Many media houses therefore work with “probation” periods of 6 to 12 months⁴⁸ where candidates have to undergo training and show their worth before getting a contract based on an understanding that either you have got “it” or you have not. A. Nguyen (2008, 116) cites an example from the newspaper *Thanh Nien* where 10 candidates were selected out of 100 applications and only three were given a full contract in the end – and none of them had a degree in journalism.

In a field perspective, the many different background journalists in both countries enter with could lead to the conclusion that the journalistic fields are characterised by a diversified professional culture with correspondingly diversified journalistic fields. With no dominant educational background, everybody enters on equal terms and no one is predisposed for the dominating positions in the field. Furthermore, the socialisation process into the field takes on different forms depending on the media institution. On the outside it could look as if each media house produces its own journalists, socialised within its own milieu. However, as previously mentioned, the Singaporean journalistic field is actually characterised by a strong conservation due to its size and only two dominating media houses. Though the same cannot be said about the journalistic field in Vietnam with its many competing fractions, there is nonetheless a capable conservation among the core group of the journalistic field.

Whether the field is marked by a strong conservation like in Singapore or by competing fractions as in Vietnam, it is nonetheless never easy for new journalists to enter the profession and go through its socialisation processes. In Singapore for instance, young journalists struggle aligning their perceptions of journalism, their ideals and ethics, with reality. Like one experienced editor explains:

⁴⁷ Each year Singapore Press Holdings offers a number of scholarships (available for both BA and MA students specialising in most fields) for people interested in pursuing a career in journalism. The company pays students’ tuition fees and in return students are required to intern during their holidays and serve with the company for 4-6 years upon graduation (Singapore Press Holdings 2017). In my sample, four people had entered the profession in this manner (S3, S5, S6 and S12). One (S3) had taken a BA in a media-related field while the other three had pursued degrees in English (S5), political science (S6) and economics (S12).

⁴⁸ Or sometimes more, according to V8, who experienced colleagues at a big national newspaper being on probation for more than 5 years.

“So they come in with a certain kind of mind-set with ‘I wanna change the world’ but you have to understand the kind of constraints you work in. And a lot of them don’t ask. A lot of them don’t ask because they find that maybe, you know, it is not what they would think it would be... So they really need to eventually understand how it is like to work in Singapore as a journalist (laughing). And the ones that stay on do get it – they do get it in the end” (S2).

These kind of struggles are common in both fields (as we will return to in chapter 7) and it appears as if only journalists that can accept the doctrines and *doxa* of the fields end up staying. Some of the senior journalists and editors would, however, wish that the younger generation dared challenge the status quo. For instance, regarding malpractices in Vietnam such as “envelope journalism” where journalists are paid to participate in press conferences or to publish flattering stories about companies or individuals. Yet, while some new journalists might want to transform the field when they start out, very few make actual attempts – at least in the mainstream media.

To sum up, although still on different stages of professionalization, the journalists of Singapore and Vietnam do their best to uphold the boundaries of their profession. Socialisation of aspiring journalists are preferred over education as the newsrooms themselves want to instigate best practices and a shared understanding of journalism in the candidates. Even if the fields are lacking important elements when it comes to autonomous organisation of the profession, they work with what they have. As will be discussed in the following chapters, journalists in the two countries have found different ways to work within their constraints and create passable roles and responsibilities that align with their interpretation of good and professional journalism. Even if they have to conform to external pressures and expectations they are still able to find value in their work and identify as professional journalists serving purposes similar to journalists in other parts of the world.

Positioning the journalistic fields

As was proposed in chapter 2, a reconfiguration of Bourdieu’s field model is necessary if we are to understand how journalistic fields with a strong state involvement are placed in social space. I presented a 3-axis conceptualisation where the fields could be placed in accordance to three dominant structuring forces, political, economic and cultural capital. Based on examinations of the forces surrounding the journalistic fields in Singapore and Vietnam, it can be concluded that the fields are conditioned by all three but with political capital being the most dominant.

Through laws and regulations, the states in the two countries have set up a series of roles, responsibilities and boundaries that they expect journalists to adhere to – with significant consequences if they fail to comply. In comparison, the Vietnamese state is more directly involved in the day-to-day management of the media than Singapore who lets the industry be in charge of interpretation and enforcement of rules and regulation. Although one would assume that the Vietnamese state’s active involvement in both the legislative, executive and judicial branch of the media system positions the country’s journalistic field closer to the political pole than in Singapore, I would argue the opposite. The Vietnamese state might have a more active approach to media management but as we will see throughout this dissertation, the approach is far from consistent – leaving journalists less clear on the value of political capital. While the state in Singapore has chosen a less direct approach to media management, journalists nonetheless know the state’s positions on the media making them fully aware of the prominence of political capital in the journalistic field. Both fields are situated in close proximity to the political pole but

whereas the Singaporean field's position is quite stable, the same, I argue, cannot be said of the Vietnamese field. We will return to this discussion in chapter 8.

Besides political forces, market logics – and thereby economic capital – also structure the fields. While the media in Singapore from the very outset has relied on market forces and free competition, Vietnam only fully gave way to economic interests after the implementation of the *Doi Moi* reforms in the late 1980s. Whereas Singapore has moved in direction of market concentration with only two dominant media (aside from some of the newer online media start-ups), the opposite has been the case with Vietnam. The media industry has grown tremendously since the 1980s with more than 1,000 different press agencies currently licensed in the country. All of them have to be affiliated with the Communist Party to secure a license, but in reality many (especially online media) are controlled by private companies who may align with the rules and regulations of the media but are not necessarily interested in getting caught up in struggles over political or journalistic capital in the field. Competition over readers and advertising revenue are fierce in both markets. The legacy media are struggling to keep afloat faced with competition from media appearing with the spread of the Internet and new communication technologies and many have ventured into new businesses, experimenting with new types of media to secure revenues. Both fields thereby also orient themselves according to the economic pole. In Vietnam's more dispersed journalistic field, I would argue, that some journalists almost exclusively align themselves in accordance with economic capital and tries to pull the field more in the direction of the economic pole.

Cultural forces unique to the journalistic profession are, however, also of importance for the fields in both countries. Even though they find themselves on different stages of professionalization, common ground has been found on ideals, norms and practices (which I will analyse in detail in the following chapters) – and not least in the belief that journalism is a profession in its own right. A socialisation culture based on “learning by doing” have guaranteed conservation, as the craft has been passed on from generation to generation, newsroom to newsroom. While the cultural forces, the journalistic capital, might not be as dominant in structuring the two fields in social space as political and economic capital, it is, however, of vital importance for securing the fields' legitimacy – and for the internal struggles over dominance. Particularly in Vietnam, where the core group have managed to secure its dominance over the field due to its ability to work with all three of the conditioning forces.

The media system(s) of Singapore and Vietnam

While this chapter primarily have looked at the structuring forces of the journalistic profession in Singapore and Vietnam through the lenses of Bourdieu's field theory, the conditions surrounding the profession could also have been evaluated with a comparative media system approach. As reviewed in the introduction, the concept of media systems can be traced back to the much contested *Four Theories of the Press* (1956). In 2004, Hallin and Mancini with their book *Comparing media systems* attempted a new approach with a conceptual framework for media system analysis (and three ideal-typical Western media models). To the best of my knowledge, the framework has not been applied in detail to neither Singapore nor Vietnam. Typically, the media systems in the two countries are described as “authoritarian” (Singapore in (Wong 2008; Goh 2015) and Vietnam in (Merrill 2006; Eek and Ellström 2007)), “neo-authoritarian” (Singapore in Merrill 2000) and “Communist” (Vaagan 2011) or “Marxists-Leninist” (Heng 1998). The labels are applied without much explanation and draws more on the political system

than the media system as both countries habitually are described as “authoritarian” or versions thereof⁴⁹. Though applying Hallin and Mancini’s approach does not provide any new labels, it does, however, give an indication of how the media’s relationship (in particularly with political forces) could be conceptualised. For a comparative overview of the media system characteristics in the two countries, see table 5 below.

Table 5: Media systems characteristics

	Singapore	Vietnam
<i>Newspaper industry</i>	High newspaper circulation; late development of mass-circulation press. High market concentration.	Medium newspaper circulation; late development of mass-circulation press. Highly competitive market.
<i>Political parallelism</i>	High political parallelism; little pluralism (but attempts or claims of internal) in mainstream media but evidence of beginning external pluralism with the presence of online media.	High political parallelism; little pluralism (but attempts or claims at internal) in the mainstream media.
<i>Professionalization</i>	Weaker professionalization; (political) instrumentalization; high degree of self-censorship due to self-enforcement of rules.	Weaker professionalization; (political and commercial) instrumentalization; high degree of self-censorship; no self-regulation.
<i>Role of the state in the media system</i>	Strong state intervention; state ownership/public service broadcasting.	Strong state intervention; state ownership; state subsidies; periods of censorship.

Based on Hallin and Mancini (2004, 67).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) used four different dimensions to compare media systems in Western Europe and North America: the development of media markets, political parallelism (meaning the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society), the development of journalistic professionalism, and state intervention in the media system. As Zhao (2012, 144) underlines, discussing the market first and the state last might be justifiable in a Western context but when looking at media systems in “postrevolutionary states” such as China she feels compelled to start with the state. A similar approach seems appropriate when going through the dimensions in Singapore’s and Vietnam’s media systems. As we have seen in this chapter, the state’s role in the media systems goes beyond intervention. Besides owning media outlets, being a key source of news (and even named “newsmakers” in Singapore, see chapter 5), providing media subsidies, contributing to advertising revenue, and setting up the media’s regulative framework, the states also, as explained previously, have stakes in the roles and responsibilities of the media and to some extent even in the idealistic foundation of the profession.

⁴⁹ Vietnam is typically seen as the most authoritarian of the two though both from time to time are described as “soft authoritarian” regimes. Some describe Singapore as an “illiberal democracy” (Zakaria 1997), others as an electoral or competitive authoritarian regime (Ortmann 2011; Slater 2012) – not least since the 2011 elections where the PAP won its smallest share of the popular vote (60.1 %) since 1959 and a transition of power in the future became more feasible. However, even though Singapore with its free elections and (on the surface) multiparty system appears to be closest to a full democratic transition of the two it cannot be regarded as a functioning democracy (B. S. Turner 2015).

The states' strong involvement in the media system also fosters high political parallelism in both countries. Though, with the same ruling party in power for decades in both Singapore and Vietnam and little or no competition from other parties, the political parallelism does not equal a pluralistic political media system. Some journalists claim that their fact-based, neutral approach to journalism results in something that could be described as similar to Hallin and Mancini's internal pluralism (see chapter 5) but it is rarely applied to political coverage and is typically associated with less sensitive issues where the people or the nation represent "the other side".

High political parallelism often results in political instrumentalization of the journalistic profession and that too is the case in Singapore and Vietnam. Neither country's journalistic profession can be said to have achieved high levels of autonomy – which thereby according to Hallin and Mancini (2004, 38-41) make them less professionalised – but journalists in both countries have achieved some authority over their profession and the content they put out. The Singaporean state has, for instance, given the profession responsibility over enforcing laws and regulations – although I argue that this has only fostered more layers of protective self-censorship. In that aspect, the more progressive media outlets in Vietnam appear to a certain degree more autonomous with fewer layers of control and self-censorship and thereby more autonomy in their everyday work.

Besides autonomy Hallin and Mancini stress the development of distinct norms as a dimension of professionalization. As explained above, organisations in both countries have developed code of ethics on behalf of the profession though the journalists pay little attention to them. Instead they have their own embedded norms and ideals passed on through socialisation within the industry and the individual newsrooms. As will become evident in the coming chapters, journalists in both countries have very clear norms, values and role orientations that they get to coincide with the expectations of the states (as well as other external forces, most significantly economic interests). They might lack internal mechanism to self-regulate these practices (such as press councils) but they see themselves as having clear visions of the journalistic profession.

Finally, looking at the development of media markets, both Singapore and Vietnam developed functioning press systems at an early stage but they did not have mass circulation newspapers (or other media reaching the masses for that matter) before well into the twentieth century. Vietnam was the slowest of the two with mass newspaper circulation not appearing before the late 1980s and peaking in the 2000s. When it comes to the structure of the media markets, Vietnam has, in part due to its size, a far more differentiated market with both national, regional and local newspapers, radio stations and television channels. Though all media have to be affiliated with the Communist Party, only very few receive subsidies (like state-owned VTV and the official newspaper of the Communist Party) and most rely on sales and advertising revenues to survive.

In contrast to Vietnam's large market, Singapore's market is much more concentrated with all media having national reach and belonging to only two companies, one state-owned (broadcasting) and one private (print). However, some media (newspapers, radio and television) serve specific language segments such as the Chinese majority or the Malay and Tamil minorities.

One could speculate that a large-scale regional and local press in Vietnam and a diverse vernacular press in Singapore could represent a version of external pluralism as these segments of the media serve specific groups in society but given that the regional and local press in Vietnam tend to be more closely connected to local governments and all media in Singapore belong to just two companies it would be difficult to see them as representing other political sides of society. However, with the widespread reach

of the Internet and the emergence of new online media actors, external pluralism in the media systems might be forthcoming and have perhaps, as will be discussed in chapter 8 and 9, in some instances emerged.

As is evident from the tentative comparative media system analysis presented here, Singapore and Vietnam share many (if not most) of Hallin and Mancini's characteristics. Both have strong state involvement, high political parallelism (bordering on instrumentalization), weak professionalization of the journalistic profession and late developed mass circulation presses. However, they do differ in terms of sizes, ownership structures and the degree of state involvement. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, as the analysis is based on dimensions conceptualised on Western, some not-included parameters vital for the understanding of media system in more authoritarian societies could perhaps tell another tale. Similarly, if we were to hold the characteristics of the media systems in Singapore and Vietnam up against Hallin and Mancini's ideal-typical models, frustration would ensure as there would not be an obvious good fit. But that is not surprising. As Voltmer (2012, 244) argues – though primarily talking about recently democratised countries – hybrid forms of democracies lead to hybrid forms of media systems: “neither the political systems nor the media systems that emerged during the recent wave of democratization fit easily into the concepts and models that have been developed for Western countries”. The system(s) that emerge(s) seem(s) perhaps more in line with some of the berated models from *Four Theories of the Press* than Hallin and Mancini's models. But rather than making a proper fit with an existing model, I propose adding new dimensions to the mix. As the remaining chapters of this dissertation will show, the journalistic professions (and the media systems) of Singapore and Vietnam have more nuances than they are typically getting credited for. Far from being instrumentalized puppets of the states (or governments and parties), journalists view themselves as professional information providers working in an intricate web of political, economic and self-assigned constrains. Following the analytical chapters, I will return to the discussion on media systems in chapter 9 with the intention of proposing analytical dimensions worth considering when dealing with countries and media systems similar to Singapore and Vietnam. Just as a reconceptualization of Bourdieu's field model was necessary to account for political capital as a structuring force of journalism in these countries so is the addition of new dimensions to Hallin and Mancini's media system theory to carefully scrutinise the complicated state-media relations.

Perceptions of journalism

“It is not important to differentiate between subjects. Important subjects are hot subjects. No matter what it is. The people in this country has the weakest voice and whatever they find to be [a] problem to them should be voiced. It is our job to make the different stakeholders in this problem understand the problem. Regardless of the topic” (V7).

The statement above by V7, a veteran journalist working the political beat in Vietnam’s capital Hanoi, would melt many idealistic hearts. The notion of a journalist who is interested in carrying all news relevant for the public regardless of the norms, values and practices typically guiding journalists and editors in their news selection sounds almost too good to be true. And it probably is in most cases. Though V7 might have noble intentions, he too is subservient to internal and external values, ideals, structures, and forces that guide the selection of news. He too is subservient to an interpretation of journalism significant for the journalistic field that he is part of.

This chapter will look into the ideals that guide the profession of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam and some of the practices that journalists apply to meet these ideals. It starts off by considering different perceptions of “good journalism” before seeing how these perceptions manifest into ideals and practices. Five different ideals, objectivity, facticity, social responsibility, credibility and autonomy, will be analysed – showcasing different interpretations and adaptations in each country. Following the ideals, two different aspects of journalistic practices will be discussed: newsgathering and news values. The first looks into where journalists in the two countries find their news and the second looks at the different parameters journalists use to evaluate whether an event is newsworthy.

The chapter draws on analysis of the different news stories journalists mentioned during interviews as examples of “good journalism” along with discussions on their perceptions of norms, values and responsibilities. All of these different elements have contributed to the analysis presented in this and the coming chapters.

Perceptions of “good journalism”

Press awards or journalism prizes are often used as indicators of the industry’s ideals and values. Through analysis of award-winning stories, researchers get a sense of what journalists deem to be high quality work: what journalists find to come closest to the ideals of the profession and how they determine who

excel in the art of journalism. Press awards have therefore been used to characterise quality journalism (O'Donnell 2009), to investigate the historic development of the profession (Lanosga 2015), to understand specific elements of “good journalism” (Hansen 1990; Wahl-Jorgensen 2013), to examine the journalistic population (Volz and Lee 2013b, 2013a), and, in comparative perspectives to study two or more journalistic fields (Ha 1994).

Press awards are, to sum up, used as a proxy to select the quintessence of journalism. However, in the case of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam, press awards might not be the best approach to uncover journalists' understanding of good journalism, as was also mentioned in chapter 4. Although press awards and prizes are being presented to journalists in both countries each year, it is questionable whether these awards are associated with excellence in journalism – from journalists' point of view. In Singapore, the two media houses have their own yearly award shows (for an overview of the latest's prizes, see appendix 10), and while some prestige is connected to receiving these prizes, it is not necessarily the same as peer recognition. A journalist working the political beat explains:

“I have gotten those awards. But I don't do it. I don't write stories in order to get awards. It's when they coincide with other people coming to you the next day to say ‘well done – that was a great story’. That's the kick that everyone seeks” (S5).

In Vietnam, journalism awards are even more contested. Here the Vietnamese Journalists' Association is in charge of the yearly awards and journalists (especially from the core group) therefore find the prizes to be mostly about politics and sending signals to the press (for an overview of the latest's prizes, see appendix 11). In journalists' view, the prizes may celebrate the industry but it is not necessarily the same as them awarding the best in journalism.

Journalists' view of “good journalism”

While the journalism awards may not tell something about the profession's views of “good journalism”, the answers may lie with the practicing professionals. When discussing good journalism with journalists and editors in the two countries, the same examples tend to come up. Just like *The Washington Post's* coverage of the Watergate scandal in 1976 is seen as an epitome of investigative journalism in the US (and in many other Western countries for that matter), so have Singapore and Vietnam their journalistic legends. These legends are, as Zelizer (1993) points out, essential for the journalistic profession as journalists use them to legitimise their profession and reinforce their professional identity.

On the whole, the respondents in both countries mentioned stories that have elements of a scandal and created some sort of impact – either in society or for the people involved. Journalists in both countries clearly place high value on stories that uncover problems, conflicts and corruption. Not surprisingly there is also an element of “the bigger the exposure, the bigger the story”. If a story brings down a high-ranking official, expose top-level corruption or create significant impact on people's life, it is seen as an example of good journalism.

In Singapore, the example mentioned most often by my respondents was the National Kidney Foundation Scandal, also known as the NFK scandal, from 2005. The scandal involved the exposure of a series of malpractices at the National Kidney Foundation (a non-profit health that among other things run dialysis centres all over Singapore) including misuse of funds by its former chief executive officer

T.T. Durai (Foo 2013). The scandal broke in 2005 when Durai sued Singapore Press Holdings for defamation after *The Straits Times* had published an editorial in 2004⁵⁰ mentioning a series of extravagant bathroom installations (including a gold-plated water tap) that he had allegedly ordered for his office. The lawsuit backfired and the organisation eventually had to admit to the allegations – along with a series of other misconducts that was revealed during and after the defamation trial. The scandal is, among journalists in Singapore, seen as a perfect example of journalism exposing wrongful behaviour by people in power and is therefore often highlighted when discussing good journalism.

In Vietnam, the PMU18 corruption case holds, according to my respondents, a similar status. In 2006, the executive director, Bui Tien Dung, of the Project Management Unit 18 operating within the Vietnamese Ministry of Transport was arrested on charges of embezzlement of more than 7 million USD of the unit's funds (Harkey 2006). As the scandal unfolded it became evident that several high-ranking officials were involved – perhaps even the Prime Minister at the time, Phan Van Khai. The scandal is notorious because the press initially was allowed to report on the case and for a couple of years it seemed like the media were assigned more freedom to operate without state interference. Though that came to an end in 2008 with a severe crackdown on the media where two journalists that had worked on the PMU18 corruption case were arrested on charges of “abusing democratic freedom” and “propagating false information” (McKinley and Schiffrin 2016, 128), the stories that helped to unravel the PMU18 case still stand as perfect examples of good journalism in Vietnam.

The legendary stories were, however, not the only ones mentioned by the respondents. Journalists also offered a variety of other stories that they had worked on themselves and were particular proud of or stories that colleagues had broken that they admired. In Singapore, the examples that came to mind among journalists can be roughly divided into three groups: 1) scandals, like the NKF scandal case; 2) stories that expose wrongdoings or problems in society such as stories that show “the common man” against the system or features focusing on low-wage workers or other overlooked groups in society; and 3) public service reports that help people understand new policies, laws and regulations.

In Vietnam, the examples also appear to fall into three categories that to some extent mirror the categories from Singapore: 1) scandals, like the PMU18 corruption case; 2) stories that expose wrongdoings and problems in society – or stories that expose *potential* problems in society that may be prevented with due diligence; and 3) public service reports or educational stories that inform people about issues relevant for their daily lives and the country's further development.

Instead of going into detail with the different examples, I will continue with the analysis that they fed into and discuss the ideological foundation of the journalistic profession in the two countries along with some of the routines and practices that guide journalists' work. Many of the examples will, however, come up at different times during the analysis - not just in this chapter but also in the succeeding chapters to underline certain points or descriptions.

Journalistic ideals

Whether described as “norms”, “ideals”, “values” or “epistemologies” there is in journalism studies a wide agreement about the existence of principles guiding journalists and the journalistic profession. As Singer (2015) explains, journalists “use normative concepts as definitional devices – and have done so at least since they began to see their occupation as a fledgling profession more than a century ago”. But

⁵⁰ The editorial was titled “The NKF: Controversially ahead of its time”, written by Susan Long (Long 2004).

such normative concepts or ideals are not just useful in terms of guiding journalists in their everyday work they also help to commit journalists to their tasks (Pihl-Thingvad 2015) and provide legitimacy for their choice of roles and practices. Seen through the lens of Bourdieu’s field theory, one could say that the ideals are part of the journalistic field’s *illusio*, the unquestioned belief that “the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing” (Bourdieu 1998). The ideals furthermore attribute to the journalistic *doxa* as guidance for the “presuppositions inherent in membership in a field” (Bourdieu 2005). That does, however, not mean that ideals will translate into practices. As Pihl-Thingvad (2015, 394) points out, while some ideals are close to daily practices, “others are abstract idealizations of work conditions that may never have and never will exist”.

Although, some have argued for the existence of a set of core values of professional journalism (Ahva (2012) believed to have traced five standards in the existing literature, autonomy, public service, objectivity, immediacy, and the democratic justification of journalism, and Hanitzsch (2007) advanced two epistemological dimensions of journalism, objectivism and empiricism), it would be difficult to claim that there exists a common set of ideals of relevance to journalists in all cultures, countries and regions. Just as I advocated for a departure from normative theories as the foundation for the study of journalism cultures (or journalistic fields) outside of a Western context, I have chosen to approach the ideals held by journalists in Singapore and Vietnam from a bottom-up perspective through analysis of conversations on routines, practices and interpretations of the profession.

As a result, I have identified five dominating ideals that guide journalists in the two countries and serve as a legitimising base for their profession. While journalists in both countries orient themselves around three similar ideals, objectivity, facticity and social responsibility, their interpretation and the consecration of the ideals differ. Furthermore, each country has a value unique to their journalistic field, credibility in Singapore and autonomy in Vietnam. While journalists in Singapore might recognise autonomy as an ideal and journalists in Vietnam might recognise credibility, they are not as significant for the profession as in their originating fields. The ideals are presented and summarised in the table below with the diverging interpretations emphasised between the two countries.

Table 6: Ideals in Singapore and Vietnam

Ideal	Singapore	Vietnam
<i>Objectivity</i>	Journalism is unbiased and presents all viewpoints of a story. Achievable through practices e.g. by avoiding adjectives.	Journalism is unbiased and presents all viewpoints of a story. Achievable through practices but not fully in Vietnam.
<i>Facticity</i>	Journalism is based on verified facts. Achievable through practices as journalists have access to information and the necessary fact-checking tools.	Journalism is based on verified facts. Achievable (among some groups) through practices but far from all journalists have the skills and the capacities to live up to the ideal.
<i>Social responsibility</i>	Journalism supports public discussion, facilitates self-governance and fosters harmony in society. Achievable through practices such as public service journalism and by avoiding language and framing that might disrupt the harmony.	Journalism supports public discussion, facilitates self-governance and helps move the nation forward. Achievable through practices such as public service journalism and development journalism – although not all topics can be discussed.
<i>Credibility</i>	Journalism is credible and professional.	Journalism is credible and trustworthy.

Autonomy

Achievable when living by the profession's ideals and sticking to professional practices.	Difficult to achieve in Vietnam but can be done through ideals and practices.
Journalism is free from external interest – but still responsible towards the nation.	Journalism is free from external (economic) interests.
Achievable when living by the profession's ideals and sticking to professional practices.	Difficult to achieve in Vietnam where corruption is everywhere.

Objectivity

The objectivity ideal is perhaps the most contested journalistic ideal with journalists and academics alike struggling to find a proper definition. Most attempts at describing the ideal ends with superficial phrasings similar to Schudson's (2001, 150) who describes how the ideal instructs journalists to report facts in a "cool, rather than emotional" way and take pains "to represent fairly each leading side". Not even the fact that it is generally viewed as the "cornerstone of the professional ideology of journalists in liberal democracies" (Lichtenberg 1991) has guaranteed a commonly accepted definition. Numerous attempts have been made to secure a widely accepted definition of the concept, but most end up, as Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel (2013) show, with a definition consisting of a variety of elements and dimensions. Nonetheless, commonalities, such as factualness, balance, and neutrality (ibid.), can be found among the different efforts – even if the distribution of the ideal's sub-elements remain unclear from definition to definition.

The problem with defining the ideal may be related to the elusiveness of the ideal. Even if journalists conform to the norm, most would agree that it is close to unachievable. Is it even possible for a journalist to be completely unbiased and emotionally detached while presenting all viewpoints fairly? Furthermore, as Maras (2013) showed in his breakdown of the ideal, objectivity needs to be considered in relation to the historical period it is situated in: "At different times it interacts with terms such as impartiality, transparency, accountability and accuracy, taking on different inflections". Similarly, Skovsgaard et al. (2013) found that cultural aspects also impacts the interpretation and acceptance of the ideal – which unfortunately is an area that has received very little scholarly attention.

Recognising that a universal definition of objectivity is neither achievable nor appropriate if we want to understand how the ideal manifests itself across times and cultures, some have come up with other ways of analysing and discussing it. Maras (2013, 8-9) suggests looking at three discursive dimensions of objectivity: values, process and language. Whereas the first deals with the epistemological foundation of the ideal (such as separating facts from fiction, presenting emotionally detached views and striving for fairness and balance), the second looks into the practice of objectivity (such as providing contrasting viewpoints, using supporting evidence and ensuring close attribution through quoting) and the third has to do with framing – in the sense that journalists through a "system of signs" will frame their reporting as objective to fulfil a moral contract between them and their audiences. Stylistically, as Maras highlight, "it plays to facts and not opinions" and it is "designed to give the impression of authority and trust, especially in core descriptions and information such as who, what, when, etc." (ibid., 9-10). Maras' deconstruction of the ideal is particularly useful when trying to understand the differing interpretations of the ideal and I will in the following draw on the three aspects to discuss the ideal in Singapore and Vietnam.

While journalists in Singapore and Vietnam agree to the objectivity ideal on an overall level (and many even mention it specifically when being asked about what constitutes good journalism), they hold their own interpretation and ways of securing its implementation in their news reporting. Most discusses

the ideal in practical terms similar to Maras' second aspect of objectivity. Securing neutrality through practices is a major component of their versions of objectivity. Stories and framings should be unbiased and the use of imbued adjectives and other elements of emotionality should be avoided. Or as a journalist from Singapore, frankly states:

“[I]n Singapore's tradition, we are very judicious with the use of registers. [...] We take out the adjectives. We would probably be very careful – not that we would take it all out – but you try to actually put in a lot of background information” (S12).

It is, however, not a matter of making sure to conceal the opinion of the journalist or the opinion of the media. Instead it is all about guaranteeing that no external forces skew the narrative. Being objective means showing all aspects (or as many as possible) of a story and presenting the viewpoints of all involved. The sources do the talking and present their views without too much interference from the journalist who stays unaffected and impartial in the background. This aspect of journalists' interpretation of the ideal relates to Maras' third dimension where journalists try to legitimise their authority through the framing of objectivity. Objectivity then becomes a shield of protection against critical voices. Interestingly, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam are more concerned about the objectivity frames being accepted by the states and governments than the public. Especially when dealing with potentially sensitive stories. Like a TV-journalist from Singapore explains:

“If it is something critical of the system, of the policy, make sure the authority running the policy has the right to reply as well. If, say, you are going down to a neighbourhood and you are interviewing residents and the residents are maybe critical about a certain thing, interview enough people so you have all the viewpoints” (S2).

More than in Vietnam, journalists in Singapore make great efforts to always include the official side in their news coverage (we will return to this when dealing with news sources shortly). Only by including this side have they achieved objectivity – or at least made sure to fulfil the moral obligations of objectivity they feel they have with the state. This reading of objectivity could be said to be in line with Carpentier's (2005) account of journalism in Marxist-Leninist and authoritarian media models striving for the “construction of a ‘new objectivity’, which is in line with the specific ideological projects these models propagate”. However, I would argue, that the construction of objectivity is more complex than that. While journalists clearly take the political circumstances into consideration when forming their objectivity-aligned practices and routines, they do not solely base them on the state's political ideologies. They do not just feel morally committed to the state but also to their audiences and the profession itself.

Journalists in Singapore are particularly concerned about objectivity in relation to other groups in society. They are often being accused of being subjective – as only presenting the state's view on things – and discussions about objectivity are therefore common in Singapore. Not just in the media sphere but also among the general public. The discussions have found renewed energy within the last 15 years after the arrival of alternative online media that claim objectivity by, in their own view, presenting stories not carried by the mainstream media. Journalists working for the mainstream media do, nonetheless, still feel that they are living up to the ideal – not least due to their routinized practices. The media environment

is therefore awash with claims of objectivity with all sides trying to legitimise their position. Like a young reporter from one of the new online media actors claiming:

“We report everything objectively and we report all voices. So that is something that people really appreciated. And it was a space that had no... there was no outlet that was actually doing this kind of proper reporting” (S11),

Her argument is however being retorted by a political reporter from one of the biggest mainstream media outlets in the country:

“What irritates me is that the public sees them [the new online alternative media] as balanced and objective and... and you know responsible, sort [of] the model of responsible journalism, when that’s kind of not quite the case. And often things like facts and viewpoints they kind of convey - they are quite skewed, I think”. (S6)

The ongoing discussions and claims to objectivity have, however, brought more attention to the matter and perhaps even, as S8, the editor of one of the most successful online media sites, argues below, created a more balanced and fair media coverage in Singapore. Especially when it comes to the political coverage during elections.

“I mean to the credit to our colleagues in mainstream media they have also done quite well. [...] I think the mainstream media they are quite aware that because of channels like *The Online Citizen* they too have stepped up the game a little and be a little bit more fair in terms of how they do their coverage” (S8).

In contrast, discussions about objectivity in Vietnam are mostly taking place within the media environment. While the public is aware of the allegiances held by especially the media outlets closest to the state and Communist Party, there are few discussions about objectivity in the public sphere. Instead journalists adhering to the dominating core group that strives for quality journalism debate the ideal in an effort to secure its legitimacy in the journalistic field. They are, however, fully aware of the obstacles in implementing and enforcing it – and to some extent perhaps more realistic than their colleagues in Singapore about the inadequacies of the ideal in a media environment heavily managed and conditioned by political forces. Like the editor from one of the fastest-growing online news sites in Vietnam states:

“The ideas of objectivity, I mean however controversial it is, I mean in terms of objectivity or you must have various voices to your reportings - you know that kind of norms and standards - they are not imbedded here” (V12).

That does, however, not mean that journalists do not want to try to work with objectivity. On the contrary, they will, similar, to their colleagues in Singapore work with practices that can give the impression of objectivity even if it is a delusional ideal. A former journalist explains:

“They say that we need to be objective in reporting but I don't think that there is absolute objective in reporting. The way we choose the facts, the way we choose the indicators or the way we present the information is subjective already. So I mean in every sense a news story is quite subjective but I mean - what do you say - but we need to keep it objective in the way that we use objective tools to report” (V17).

Despite Vietnamese journalists' attempts to implement the ideal, they are less convinced about their success compared to their colleagues in Singapore. With the core group of the journalistic field consisting of a couple of handfuls of media outlets, there is a long way to go before the ideal is commonly accepted. Though deliberated and vocalised, the ideal has not yet managed to fully secure its position in the field's *illusio*. In Singapore, the ideal is far more entrenched in the journalistic field with journalists from all positions participating in discussions about its relevance and legitimacy.

Facticity

Related to the objectivity ideal is the ideal of facticity that in some ways may resonate more with journalists in Singapore and Vietnam than the objectivity ideal – at least when it comes to translating the ideal into practices. Facts are of course key to journalism regardless of the culture (it is one of journalism's “god-terms”, as Zelizer (2004) puts it), but in these two countries facts seems to be idealised to a far bigger degree than in other places, promoting the reliance of facts to an ideal in itself. Whereas facticity is often described as a sub-ingredient of objectivity (Westerstahl 1983; Mindich 1998), it can be beneficial to look at it as an ideal in its own right. As Tuchman (1978) describes in her ground-breaking ethnographic book on news and journalism, facticity is essential to journalism as it is about finding justification for a news story through verification of facts. It is not enough to have witnessed or heard about an event, it must be verified by reputable sources.

In Singapore and Vietnam, it does, however, also go the other way around. Not only are facts necessary to justify the existence of a news story, they also provide journalists with a guarantee: facts cannot be questioned. They are unbiased and truthful and as long as journalists stick to the facts they cannot be accused of improper reporting or of imposing their opinion of an issue. With strict laws on defamation and libel, journalists need to protect themselves and their media institution from potential lawsuits – or worse. In Singapore, the Defamation Act (1957) even has a built-in motivator for journalists to always strive after the facts or to get all perspectives of a story, as a journalist or a media accused of libel will be in a bad position if it turns out that they have refused or neglected to let the plaintiff present his or her side of the story (art. 12, §2)⁵¹. While Tuchman (1978, 83-84) herself mention the threat of libel suits as a motivating factor behind the ideal, the motivation goes deeper in the journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam. Especially since other laws (see chapter 4) may also be applied to journalism. The practise of facticity has therefore become a key element of the journalistic fields in the two countries. Just as journalists in England in the 1870s adopted the ideal (along with the impartiality ideal) based on a “desire to improve the reputation and claim the right to belong to an elite occupation” (Waisbord 2013), so have journalists elevated facticity as an ideal to protect and legitimise their profession. However, as with the objectivity ideal, the entrenchment of the ideal varies among the two fields.

⁵¹ The clause can be traced back to the colonial libel law from 1915.

The ideal is far more routinized in Singapore. Again the journalistic field in Vietnam struggle with its inner division which makes it difficult for all groups to live by the ideal – even if the core group does what it can to promote it. In Singapore, on the other hand, the facticity ideal is pounded into journalists all over the field from the day, they enter the profession. S12 explains:

“I think in Singapore there is always this tradition that we want to separate reporting from comment. And... so we are very drilled in getting the facts right. And then it's actually a cardinal sin if you get facts wrong and it can be interpreted as integrity issue” (S12).

Journalists in Singapore have even routinized the ideal to the extent that it has almost been promoted to a distinct news value. A story loses value if it cannot be backed by reliable facts and identifiable sources. And one source does not suffice. Three sources backing the same fact is preferable and marks journalism of high quality. If that means that a journalist will have to give up on a scoop, so be it. Without facts, no story. It is not to say that it is not frustrating but as S17, the editor-in-chief of one of Singapore’s biggest publications, concludes: “But, I think, in the long run it is better for us”.

Though journalists in Vietnam would agree to the importance of facts, it is possible – and in some circles even acceptable – to produce stories based on a single source such as a government report or to even simply harvest information from social media or rumours spreading online. While the core group advocating for more quality journalism may accept stories that are based on a single source if that source is reliable, they have nothing but criticism for the media outlets that base their news on unverified information. Replying to a question on whether or not he thinks that the media in Vietnam are living up to the standards of the core group, such as fact-checking all information, V10, a managing editor from one of the country’s biggest newspapers reply:

“No no no. Not... that only happened for some big organisations like *Thanh Nien* or *Tuoi Tre* or *VTV* or something like that. Nowadays there are many, many small websites [and] they can publish everything that they have. They go to Facebook and they take someone's, some music star or some football star and they... they take that to their websites and they write a story they... they don't verify, they don't check the information. And that happen every day. Every day. We have thousands of websites like that in Vietnam”.

Again, this shows evidence of the consecration of the journalistic ideals in Singapore compared to Vietnam. Journalists in Vietnam might aspire to follow the facticity ideal but they are to a lesser degree practicing it compared to their colleagues in Singapore to whom facts and fact-checking routines are essential for the profession.

Social responsibility

The third dominating ideal in both countries can best be described as social responsibility. Although generally associated with social responsibility theory emerging after World War II with the Commission on Freedom of the Press (The Hutchins Commission) releasing their report *A free and responsible press* (The Commission On Freedom Of The Press 1947) and the subsequent social responsibility press model laid out in *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm 1956), the ideal in Singapore and Vietnam

has a more narrow meaning. Whereas social responsibility theory presents a range of obligations for the press due to its privileged position in society, social responsibility as an ideal among journalists in the two countries relates almost exclusively to their responsibilities towards society and the people in general – albeit in different ways.

According to social responsibility theory the media should, as summarised by Gunaratne (1998), 1) assist "the political system by providing information, discussion and debate on public affairs"; 2) enlighten "the public so as to make it capable of self-governance"; 3) "safeguard the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against government"; 4) service the economic system by connecting "buyers and sellers of goods and services through advertising"; 5) "provide entertainment"; and, 6) "maintain its own financial self-sufficiency so as to be free from the pressures of special interests". In Singapore and Vietnam, only the first two functions are seen as being relevant for the media's and journalists' social responsibilities. But there is more to the functions than expressed in the original version of social responsibility theory.

Whereas journalists in both countries are guided by ideals of serving the people and aiding them in their daily lives through dissemination of relevant information, their responsibility goes beyond assisting the individual. Though assistance for self-governance of the individual is important (as will be discussed in chapter 6), the well-being of society and/or the nation is equally important.

In Singapore, it is all about fostering harmony in society and not enticing to deconstructive or even violent behaviour that might disrupt the harmony or undermine the alleged fragile state of Singapore's multicultural society. Journalists see it as their responsibility to aid the state with its efforts for the sake of the country and its inhabitants. The editor-in-chief from one of Singapore's biggest newspapers gives the following explanation as to why he for instance would never even consider publishing something similar to the Muhammad cartoons that was published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 and resulted in widespread protests around the world and a consumer boycott in some Middle Eastern countries against Denmark:

"I consider myself a patriotic Singaporean as I am sure you are a patriotic Dane. Then I say to myself we have peace and order and stability and prosperity. I don't see it as my job to disturb that peace and order and stability" (S13).

The well-being of the people is equally important for journalists in Singapore but although good journalism should assist the public and create an impact it should do it in a responsible way that does not disrupt the current state of the country.

In Vietnam, journalists also interpret social responsibility as supporting public discussions and facilitating self-governance of the people but more than in Singapore, they feel a responsibility towards offering their assistance in the further development of the nation. They see it is part of their job to make sure that all areas of an issue are being discussed properly so decisions that might affect the future trajectory of nation are not being made haphazardly. V4, an editor from one of Vietnam's most influential online newspapers, exemplifies the ideal by describing how her newspaper provided the platform for discussions with "prominent economists" about a major development project that required Vietnam contracting loans from international donors.

“So we invited them to interview, to write analysis, articles for us about the efficiency of this project. And then we invited some members of the National Assembly to join with us. To tell the public audience how they think about this project. [...] So we need very cautious, sophisticated and objective analysis based on what the government boasted about this project” (V4).

Journalists thereby want to help move the nation and its citizens forward by providing stories that relate to the development of the country and to issues that might impact the lives and livelihoods of the people. Good journalism creates an impact on society – or at least on the areas where it is possible and accepted by the state (and Communist Party).

Credibility

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, each field also holds unique ideals that mirror some of the issues the journalistic profession faces in each country. In Singapore, journalists are increasingly concerned about their credibility and take great measures to live up to the ideal. A Singaporean TV-journalists elucidates:

“Maintaining your credibility is one big issue in Singapore because you have a group of people out there, in the online sphere, that basically think that we are crap. We are run by the government. [...] We are a government mouthpiece. Whatever we say you can’t believe. [...] That’s a huge challenge to maintain your credibility, to compete with new media – social media as well – and at the same time navigate a political landscape that I think has been a lot more strict with us ever since the last elections⁵²” (S2).

The ideal relates to the other ideals mentioned above as journalists want to be perceived as professionals that are able to produce unbiased, objective news relevant for all members of the public. Their stories should be spotless and thoroughly fact-checked so people know that they can trust them on all issues. A tear in your credibility and your career as a journalist is over. Or as S9, a young newspaper journalist, wittily puts it: “you have to protect your credibility, because once it is gone that’s it for you - unless you want to move to another country far, far away and start over again”. The ideal is, however, not as dominant as the other three. As long as you strive to live up to them, your credibility should be safe. But with the consistent pressure from online and social media, the credibility ideal might become an even bigger factor in the journalistic field in the future.

Autonomy

While credibility is also on journalists’ mind in Vietnam (not least the journalists from the core group), an autonomy ideal is more dominant. Örnebring (2010) describes autonomy as referring to the freedom to shape one’s own work without being controlled by internal or external forces and with that definition in mind, one might assume that it would be independence from political interests journalists in Vietnam were seeking. Even though that is to some degree true, the ideal is mostly discussed in relation to

⁵² S2 refers to the General Elections of 2011 as this interview took place in 2014.

economic interests as journalists, like most people in Vietnam, experience bribery on a daily basis. Receiving or giving small envelopes with money in exchange for services is quite common. While journalists know that it is a malpractice, all have stories of colleagues that have received envelopes with money in exchange for attending press conferences, printing or airing favourable stories or dropping critical stories that might hurt the reputation of a company or an individual. As V8, a freelance journalist with experience from some of the country's biggest media houses, states, journalists in Vietnam are to some extent being appreciated too much:

”Like if you come here at the national journalism day in Vietnam you will see - every [major company] having a party for the journalists. In some banks they give the gift, the credit gift, of about 20 million [VND] or 1,000 dollars for each reporter. They very, very [much] respect the reporters - especially in the business side” (V8).

It is by many journalists (not least the ones adhering to the core group of the journalistic field) seen as one of the biggest problems in the industry – along with access to information and press freedom. It is, however, not a problem that is easily solved and the autonomy ideal is thereby not an ideal that is fully achievable throughout the journalistic field. Some journalists advocate for code of ethics to resolve the field's corruption problems but most recognise that there is no quick-fix. With corruption and the “envelope culture” being a structural problem in the Vietnamese society more than just codes of ethics condemning the practices are needed. That does, however, not prevent journalists from championing the ideal and striving for autonomy in their own work – with the hopes that it might spread to the rest of the field over time.

Journalistic practices

As an “occupational ideology” (Deuze 2005), practices are key to the understanding of journalism. How journalists practice journalism is just as essential as the values that guide said practice. In this section, I will look into two elements of journalistic practices: newsgathering and news values. While I could have looked at a number of other practices such as genres and framing, I have chosen to look into practices that have the biggest impact on journalism in the two countries – how they find their news and how they chose their news.

Newsgathering: sourcing for news

News does not appear out of nowhere. Something has to happen and someone has to let the journalists know that it has happened. It can be either the journalists themselves who “dig up” a story or it can be sources that tip off the journalist. Sometimes the media know or expect something to happen and can prepare in advance and sometimes they will be informed of upcoming events, decisions and actions by individuals, organisations or institutions interested in getting their stories out to the public. Or to put it differently, journalists typically gather information that holds potential to become news “in a mix of ‘structured’ or ‘unstructured’ newsgathering techniques” (Lecheler and Kruijemeier 2016, 4). The structured techniques are based on scheduled, coordinated activities typically “arranged within press strategies developed by (political) actors, such as press conferences, interviews, and photo ops” (ibid.),

whereas the unstructured techniques are more spontaneous and require more effort on the journalist's part to "find" a story.

Judging by journalists' accounts in the two countries, journalists in Vietnam seem to rely more on "unstructured" newsgathering techniques than their colleagues in Singapore. At least when it comes to the journalists farthest removed from the government and state agencies. As will become evident throughout this dissertation, journalists in Singapore have to some extent struck a deal with the state where the media get access to information in exchange of becoming the state's key dissemination channel. This deal unavoidably makes journalists highly dependent on structured newsgathering. That is not to say that journalists do not pursue stories on their own (or seek stories from other channels than the official ones), but the state and government is undeniable the key news informer and the mainstream media are to some degree expected to cover whatever the state deems to be newsworthy.

While the media in Vietnam similarly to Singapore relies on the state and government as a key news informer, their relationship is less formalised. At least when it comes to journalists from the core group that seek autonomy from the state and work for news media where the affiliation with the state and party is less distinct. Journalists working for media placed directly under the Communist Party, or its associated organisations, are more inclined to reproduce whatever is coming from the state (as we will also discuss in chapter 6).

Although I recognise that there are a number of other sources informing the news in both countries, I will in this section pay most attention to the official sources. Not only because they are the most dominant but also because they offer reflections on the complicated relationship the media in both countries have with the state.

The importance of the relationship between the journalists and the state is most apparent in Singapore. Journalists in Singapore commonly refer to news sources as "newsmakers" without thinking too much about the expression. It is part of the *doxa*, the self-evident, unquestioned truths of the field, which is perfectly embodied in this quote by S10 who had not given the expression and its meaning much thought:

"I mean we use it very commonly in the newsroom but I think outside of the newsroom I think that it may not be such a familiar term. Well you got me there. (laughing) It is actually just one of those phrases that you use and just take for granted, you know? [...] Okay, now I'm gonna be more self-aware when I use that phrase - that I may not actually know what I am talking about".

Although the word is meant to encompass all sorts of news sources, there is a common understanding that "newsmakers" primarily refers to official sources – with the number one newsmaker being the Prime Minister. In fact, "newsmakers" are sometimes used interchangeably with government agencies and representatives.

The words "news" and "makers" may make up the title but that does not mean that journalists see "the newsmakers" as producers of news. Instead they produce events, actions, deeds, quotes etc. that is worthy of news. Or as V21, a former journalist in Singapore, who used to work with local news, cynically puts it when explaining why the Prime Minister is the number one "newsmaker":

“Wherever he goes; he plants a tree, he picks up some rubbish, he gives some gifts to the poor people or old people, ‘ang pao’ [*red envelopes with money which are distributed during holidays or on special occasions*] and all that, everything he does and says would be news. That's why he is a newsmaker. So newsmakers are basically leaders of the country. And even the dumbest things that they say can be news (laughing) because they are newsmakers” (V21).

V21 might not have the most positive picture of the “newsmakers” and the stories that they help foster in the news but journalists working for the mainstream media generally appreciate the direct access they have to these sources. They are under no circumstances interested in losing this access – especially not in the new media environment where they experience increasing competition from the online media sphere. Having access to “the newsmakers” give them an upper hand compared to their online colleagues working for alternative news sites or socio-political blogs. Mainstream media journalists get information before it is released to the general public, they get invited to press briefings and meetings, they have reserved seats at the parliament and in the courts and they get replies to questions and enquiries – luxuries that bloggers, citizen journalists and (most) freelancers do not have. They also know that they could lose those privileges if they overstep their boundaries and therefore there is an acute awareness of the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the primary “newsmakers”.

Though the “newsmaker” title is not used in Vietnam, the importance of the relationship between the mainstream media and the state is similar. Journalists from the mainstream media in Vietnam are also cautious about maintaining a good relationship with state agencies. But here it is more about connections on a personal level than an institutional. While a press card is necessary to get hold of official press releases and other forms of information from state agencies and municipalities, it does not provide access to everything. In contrast to Singapore, the Vietnamese state’s communication apparatus is not as efficient or consistent. A Vietnamese freelancer, with experience from two of the country’s biggest newspapers, explains:

”There is no limitations or no clear law or clear policy what kind of information you can approach, [and] what kind of information you cannot approach. Every time you go to local governmental office they just say ‘no we don’t have time. We don’t have time for you’” (V8).

Getting the necessary information for a story therefore typically relies on status – not just the status of the media, the journalist is working for (media closest connected to the Communist Party obviously have better access to official information than the ones farther removed), but also the journalist’s own status and personal connections, the journalist’s capital resources, one could say. With a less formalised (or perhaps professionalised) communication apparatus, journalists with the right amount of journalistic and/or political capital may circumvent the official information channels and go direct to sources – something that would be unheard of in Singapore, as S7, a journalist with experience from both countries, describes:

”[I]n Vietnam when there is something happen you just pick up your phone, you call officials, they talk to you. Sometimes they refuse but sometimes they just speak. And in Vietnam, you know, I have the feeling that the officials, the government officials, the

ministers, or prime minister or whoever, they are not well prepared to deal with media. So they just talk, sometimes they talk stupidly (laughing) Very cool, but very stupid” (S7).

The authorities are, however, not just the primary news source in both countries. The state’s role in the newsgathering process goes beyond just providing information, which is why there might be more to the Singaporean “newsmaker” expression than what journalists are cognitively aware of. When discussing the production of news stories, journalists (especially in Singapore) mention how stories are not complete without comments or quotes by relevant state agencies. If a story for instance regards a topic that would fall into the category of employment, a comment from the Ministry of Manpower is mandatory – and without such a comment the story would in many cases not be published. It is seen as “best practice” to get the comments – to get that side of the story as well. Or, one could speculate, to get the story legitimised by the state. If a story happens to be published without comments, the media could experience backlash for its decision – and be asked to publish a comment from the agency afterwards. The mantra is therefore often “better safe than sorry” and just as stories that cannot be solidly backed by facts, stories without viewpoints from the primary “newsmakers” tend to be disregarded.

As with many other practices, this practice of getting “newsmakers” on board when doing stories appears to be most formalised in Singapore. Whereas journalists in Singapore view this practice as part of the news production and something that should be “checked off” in the editorial process, it is not something that is as routinized in the Vietnamese journalistic field. Though journalists in Vietnam do consider getting comments from state agencies as good practice, they also know that it can be difficult to get replies. Even the journalists with good connections sometimes find it difficult to get the information needed. The state’s communication system is not as professionalised as the Singaporean and it slows down the process. However, due to the lack of a clear structure or word of command it appears sometimes to be easier for journalists in Vietnam to get information around of the system. As journalists in Singapore will explain, politicians and government officials rarely tells them anything “of the record”, whereas it is much more common for journalists in Vietnam, if they have the right connections, to get leads from people inside the political system. The Internet has, however, begun to impact the traditional newsgathering processes in both countries which, as we will discuss in chapter 8, might also impact the media’s relationship to the state as a primary news informer.

News values

Even though most professional journalists would say that you cannot put a good news story on formula, guidelines, routinized practices – whether deliberately used or spontaneously evoked – do guide journalists when deciding which ideas are worthy to become news. The guidelines that help journalists sort through information and find newsworthy stories are commonly known as news criteria or news values.

News values are described as “guidelines for decision-making” and something that is “invoked, unconsciously or explicit, at every step of the news process” (Cotter 2012, 67). The values help journalists and editors decide what makes the cut and what does not. They aid editors prioritising stories and create the structure and hierarchy of the news. The stories that are being evaluated as having the highest amount of news value are typically prioritised over stories with lesser value.

Despite the obvious importance of these values, journalists themselves might not be aware of their existence and discussions about them is typically reserved for journalism schools or in academic studies of journalism. There is no universally recognised checklist of news values or no commonly accepted hierarchy, as Cotter (2012, 69) showed with her breakdown of news values from five different prominent English textbooks on journalism. Even though some values tend to recuperate (timeliness, proximity and prominence), others (such as conflict, impact or human interest) were ranked differently from book to book. In some countries, such as Denmark, news values are formalised which means that all journalism students are taught the same five news values in journalism school: timeliness, relevance, conflict, identification and sensation (Willig 2009). Though other news values might also be enforced in the newsrooms, these five are known and accepted by journalists as being the most prominent.

This situation is, however, quite rare and neither the Singaporean journalistic field nor the Vietnamese has a set of commonly recognised news values that is being taught in journalism schools⁵³ or recited in the newsrooms. But news values do guide their work and when discussing the concept of “good journalism” lists of news values do emerge. Since news values by their very definition are not neutral, as Bell (1991, 156) points out, but “reflect ideologies and priorities in society”, analysing which news values are at play in the journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam might reveal more about the understanding of journalism in the two countries. The table below show the five news values that, based on analysis of the respondents’ view on best practices, good journalism and specific examples, appear to have most prominence in the two journalistic fields.

Table 7: Dominant news values in Singapore and Vietnam

Value	Singapore	Vietnam
<i>Timeliness</i>	Dominant. News stories must be based on recent events and present new information.	Dominant. News stories must be based on recent events and present new information.
<i>Relevance</i>	Dominant. News stories must be relevant for the audience and have the public in mind.	Dominant. News stories must be relevant for the audience and have the public (and to some degree also the government, see chapter 6) in mind.
<i>Impact</i>	Important. News stories should make a difference in society.	Dominant. News stories must make a difference in society.
<i>Identification</i>	Dominant. News stories should help give voice to the voiceless.	Dominant. News stories should help give voice to the voiceless and inform the state about problems from the bottom-up.
<i>Exclusivity</i>	Dominant. News stories are more newsworthy if they are exclusives.	Important. Being first with the news matters but it is not everything.

Journalists in both countries agree that a good piece of journalism is marked by at least five dominating news values: timeliness, relevance, impact, identification, and, exclusivity. If a story manages to be relevant for its audience, makes it possible for the audience to identify with the issues being presented or the persons appearing in the story, is first with the news, released at the right time, and, finally, ends up creating a visible impact in society, it has all of the accolades of an excellent piece of journalism. Of

⁵³ Even if Singapore journalism education scholar Andrew Duffy (2010) do mention four news values being taught in Singapore’s journalism programme, accuracy, currency, relevance, and balance, as accounted in chapter 4. None of them were, however, mentioned specifically by my respondents in discussions on news values.

course, few stories would live up to all of the criteria but journalists are still able to use them as guidance when deciding which stories to pursue and which to abandon. Needless to say, the values presented above are far from the only values at play in the journalistic field of Singapore and Vietnam. Proximity, currency and even accuracy (if we accept that journalists' facticity ideal may sometimes transcend into a news value, as discussed above) are to some extent also part of the criteria guiding news selection but they are not as dominant in journalists' minds as the other five criteria.

Timeliness and relevance are the most commonly accepted ideals among the two fields. Most agree that news stories should be timely – meaning that they need to be based on recent events – and be of relevance for the public and/or nation. Although journalists in the two countries might agree on the other three values on an overall level, they evaluate the importance of them differently. In Singapore, scoops, or the exclusivity criteria, are very dominating. Most journalists idealise scoops and place heavy weight on exclusivity when discussing examples of good journalism. A news editor explains:

”First and foremost it [a good piece of journalism] has to be a scoop. It has to be something that you've obtained that no one else had. And more importantly it's something that everyone wants, you know? That is the first thing” (S10).

Getting a scoop of course means that people might buy your newspaper over others or tune into your news broadcast but, as Schultz (2007) has pointed out, news values is also about positioning in the journalistic field and being first with a story no one else has, gives you, and your media, an advantage in the field compared to other media outlets/journalists. There is more recognition and thereby more journalistic capital to gain from getting scoops – despite the fact that audiences might be completely indifferent to whom actually broke the news. Of course, the scoop should also live up to some of the other criteria to really excel but without being exclusive it would be difficult to characterise a story as an outstanding example of journalism – regardless of how much it succeeded in fulfilling the remaining four dominating values.

In Vietnam, journalists are more concerned about creating an impact. Good stories have changed things in society. Whether it is policies or people's mind about something, good stories make a difference – for the better. Typically, long term efforts are mentioned. It is rarely a scoop or a one-off story. It is often a series of stories on the same topic (and with the same goal) that is testament of good journalism. The coverage of a major development project mentioned under the discussion of the social responsibility ideal is one example. Another is the following presented by V11, a Vietnamese editor of a prominent newspaper focusing on business and economics. He describes how his newspaper was able to overturn the implementation of a new law that required household businesses (such as street vendors) to register as companies if they wanted to continue to issue invoices before the start of the new calendar year:

“More than 200,000 household businesses in Ho Chi Minh City cried like hell. They said they don't have enough time to do that. That's only two weeks. They have a lot of difficulties. They don't want to spend more money in establishing companies and things like that. And we print the stories, we print the voice, we demand for an extension of the deadline. And only one day after the government says that they stop. They stop the regulation. They give them one more year to do that. So I think that we are doing our job of bridging the business communities with the policy maker. And we are glad that we can help - both sides”.

That does not mean that scoops are irrelevant to journalists in Vietnam. On the contrary, journalists also go after the scoops in Vietnam, but if the story has not altered anything or gotten people to discuss a certain issue then it is difficult to see it as an admirable example of journalism.

Though the identification criteria do not take a dominant position compared to the exclusivity criteria in Singapore and the impact criteria in Vietnam, it does, however, have a unique function. If invoked and used properly it may be used to cover otherwise sensitive stories and point to problems in society that need the state's attention. Typically, this value is associated with human-interest stories that in other (predominantly Western) countries are seen as a "softer" type of journalism (Patterson 2000; Curran et al. 2010). Although a somewhat contested concept with a variety of definitions (Reinemann et al. 2012), "soft" news is commonly described as being concerned with more entertainment-oriented stories that pay more attention to drama and sensation than hard-hitting political topics typically ascribed to its counterpart, "hard" news (Patterson 2000). With these characteristics "soft" news has been cast as inferior to "hard" news which has also had an effect on the status of human-interest stories that are not seen as fitting when covering "hard" news topics.

In Singapore and Vietnam, the situation is, however, somewhat different. Human-interest stories can just as easily deal with "hard" news topics – and they are perhaps even better suited at it. Having a face on a story not only gives the public someone to identify with, it also proves a point to the government and provides evidence of potential problems in society. Journalists in both countries explain how human-interest stories (see chapter 6) can be used to scrutinise even sensitive topics. In contrast to traditional hard-hitting coverage styles where policymakers and politicians are confronted with an issue, a human-interest story may succeed in raising awareness without causing conflict.

The approach seems to be more used in Vietnam where it is one out of several strategies applied to touch upon issues without confronting anyone directly. Though less acknowledged in Singapore the news value does, however, hold a dominating position and gives journalists the possibility of providing people (and the government) with a bottom-up perspective on society.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked into two dimensions of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam: ideals and practices. Common for both dimensions is the agreement among the two fields – even if both ideals and practices seem far better ingrained and routinized in Singapore compared to Vietnam. Journalists in Singapore and Vietnam to some degree hold similar journalistic ideals and have similar approaches to newsgathering and news selection. Interestingly, elements of the two dimensions even seem to be similar to what is found in other countries. But as Voltmer and Wasserman (2014) concluded in their study of journalists' interpretation of press freedom in six new democracies (Bulgaria, Poland, South Korea, Taiwan, Namibia and South Africa) "domestication" of Western ideals is not uncommon and typically shows itself through "(re-)interpretations that are shaped by specific cultural and historical worldviews" (ibid., 189).

The same could be said about the journalistic ideals in Singapore and Vietnam. While journalists ascribe to objectivity it is more a practical ideal translated into neutrality in an attempt to legitimise the profession in a highly regulated media environment where it can be unwise to choose sides. Facticity is therefore also promoted to an ideal in its own right and not just simply an element of objectivity.

Journalists claim professionalism by sticking to the bare facts. The ideal of social responsibility has also been domesticated to fit local conditions and concentrate more on assisting all of society without causing too much disturbance.

Journalistic practices have in similar ways been domesticated to fit local conditions. Journalists' interpretation of news values does for instance to some degree reflect their ideals of wanting to aid society while staying neutral and unbiased in the background (although they are also interested in more commonly accepted practices such as "being first with the latest"). Their reliance on the state as a key news informer (or "newsmaker", as journalists name state sources in Singapore), is also a sign of the different conditions, journalists have to work under. The state's presence is notable in both ideals and practices. As we will see in the coming chapters, journalists' attention to the state's expectations have in many ways not just seeped into the profession's ideological foundation and routinized practices but also into their role orientations – perhaps more so in Singapore than in Vietnam.

Journalists' role orientations

Adversaries, missionaries, watchdogs and mouthpieces. Journalists have been attributed many different roles over the course of the last 60 years with researchers trying to categorise and label (primarily Western) journalists' perceptions of their professional tasks and responsibilities. One of the first to develop a typology of roles was Cohen (1963) who, based on an exploration of the interplay of the government and the press in the field of foreign policy in USA, argued that journalists played either a neutral role or a participant role. Two similar roles, the neutral observer and the participant, were identified by Johnstone et al. (1972) in their survey of American journalists, and by Janowitz (1975), who distinguished between the gatekeeper and the advocate. Patterson (1998) went a step further and introduced two dimensions, passive-active and neutral-advocate, according to which journalists would be placed. In his view this approach would be able to “encompass nearly all of the role conceptions and metaphors found commonly in the scholarly and popular literature on the news media” (ibid., 28).

Other studies followed suit – not just in the US where the idea originated but also in other parts of the world with many basing their studies on some of the already established roles and typologies and others taking a more comparative approach as a tool to discover unique characteristics of country or culture specific roles. Köcher (1986) for instance studied the differences between British and German journalists and ended up with two country specific roles: the British journalists as bloodhounds, “hunters for news”, and the Germans as missionaries, who want to have “an effect on society” (ibid., 52). Similarly, Hanitzsch (2011) found four different roles or professional milieus of journalists, populist disseminator, detached watchdog, critical change agent and opportunist facilitator, based on an 18 country pilot study for the Worlds of Journalism Study. All were present in the 18 countries but in different degrees – with some countries clearly favouring one role over the others.

What is most apparent of the many different studies of journalistic role perceptions⁵⁴ is the variety of roles. Though some studies try to utilise previously studied categories, most studies tend to target different dimensions and end up finding, and describing, different roles. One example is “The global journalist in the 21st century”, an edited book by Weaver and Willnat published in 2012 with journalists from 31 different countries. Though some of the entrances use Weaver and Wilhoit's categories from their 1996 book “The American journalist in the 1990's” (information dissemination, interpretation, adversarial and populist mobilizer), many end up using different categories and labels to describe the set of tasks journalists see themselves performing in the studied countries and regions.

⁵⁴ For a thorough review of previous role studies and the historical settings they were conceived in, see (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Weaver 2017).

Recently, the Worlds of Journalism Study has made efforts to create a universal approach to study roles of journalists but their preliminary results reveal how difficult a task it is to create a universal set of roles that can be used to describe different journalistic environments (Hanitzsch 2011). Mellado, Hellmueller and Weaver (2017) agree on this and add that it is also, from a methodological standpoint, important to take into account that “not all dimensions that make up a particular role can be considered as the same (dimensional structure) in all organizational, political, and cultural contexts” (Mellado, Hellmueller, and Weaver 2017, 35). The understanding of a role dimension might be different from one culture to another. What constitutes “investigative reporting”, for instance, in one country might be different in another and quantitative studies utilising surveys might not capture these nuances properly. The three scholars therefore advocate for more qualitative studies to understand how role dimensions are qualitative different from one media system to another (ibid.).

In addition to this, Hanitzsch and Vos (2017) ask for clearer distinctions among journalists’ roles. As they argue, there are four different analytical role categories: normative, cognitive, practiced, and narrated that are all part of a shared discourse on the profession. Unfortunately, scholars are rarely aware of these distinctions and tend to “conflate the attitudinal and performative aspects of journalists’ roles, as well as their normative and empirical dimensions” (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). Although all of the role discourses are related and infuse one another, there is a big difference between discussing “what journalists think they *ought to do*” (normative ideas), “what journalists *want to do*” (cognitive orientations), “what journalists *really do in practice*” (professional practice), and “what journalists *say they do*” (narrated performance) (ibid., 30). Not only do the distinctions make it possible to create better awareness of what is actually discussed when studying journalists’ roles in a given society, the discursive perspective also “allows us to ‘de-essentialize’ the institution of journalism and situate it within the context of a discursive constitution and of renegotiation” (ibid., 129). Or to put it differently: it reveals the struggles and negotiations over journalistic roles with participation of actors from inside and outside the journalistic field.

The relational aspect of journalists’ roles will be the focal point of the next chapter where we will go into details with the internal and external struggles affecting the roles of journalists. But before we can go there, we need to pay attention to journalists’ role orientations. Following Hanitzsch and Vos’ example and showing awareness of the different discursive dimensions, this chapter looks into journalists’ narrated roles (meaning what they say they do) but, as will also become evident, these roles work in tandem with journalists’ cognitive (meaning what they want to do) and normative (meaning what they think they ought to do) roles. Wishful thinking is as much a part of journalists’ own accounts of their professional roles as their descriptions of their role performances. Although Hanitzsch and Vos (2017, 127) acknowledge this when they state that “narrated roles are filtered through journalists’ cognitive apparatuses and are ultimately reinterpreted against normative expectations and cognitive aspirations”, they claim that journalists in many Western societies will have difficulties admitting to the discrepancies between normative and cognitive roles and narrated and performed roles. As will become apparent, this situation does not seem to be the case in Singapore and Vietnam where journalists to a large degree shifts between normative, cognitive and narrated roles in realisation of the deficits of their role performances in restrained and contested systems.

The chapter will start by going through the role dimensions used to conceptualise the different role orientations that derived from journalists’ accounts of their tasks, responsibilities and purposes. While I did discuss specific roles with journalists (as the concept of roles is a very useful expository tool in an

interview situation), far more than the ones we touched upon emerged from the analysis. This is not to undermine the obvious, well-established roles with meticulously rehearsed labels and descriptions embedded through socialisation but to recognise that the unspoken, self-evident roles that journalists might take for granted as they are just a natural part of being a journalist.

As the chapter will show, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam ascribe to many of the same roles but with different characteristics and different outcomes that among other things can be explained by external factors encompassing the journalistic fields. Furthermore, as roles are not static entities but continuously emerge, evolve, and even perish over time, the chapter also discusses potential incoming roles. Specifically, it reveals a new role, the fact-checker, in both countries emerging from the *doxa* of the journalistic field. Though fact-checking is not a new element of journalism in the two countries, the role is emerging as a role in its own rights in response to the increasingly experienced competition from online and social media.

Role dimensions

When looking into journalists' role perceptions, conceptions or orientations, a series of questions or dimensions are typically applied to describe and categorise the different roles. Johnstone et al. (1976) for instance used 8 questions to formulate their two role typologies, while Patterson (1998) used his two dimensions, autonomy and positioning, to place journalists with. More recent studies have continued down this path but elaborated with more dimensions. As so Hanitzsch (2007) introduced an interventionism dimension (modelled on Patterson's positioning dimension), a power distance dimension (modelled on Patterson's autonomy dimension) and a market orientation dimension. Weaver and Willnat (2012), on the other hand, chose not to work with dimensions as such (at least when analysing the collected data in a global perspective) but rather had journalists ascribe value to a series of professional tasks and functions, which they then promoted to roles based on their prevalence.

As Mellado (2015, 599) concludes based on a reading of previous approaches to studying journalists' role conceptions, there appears to be very little conceptual equivalence but she does find three common perspectives to categorise roles with: "the level of presence of the journalistic voice in the news story", "the relationship that journalism has with those in power" and "the way journalism approaches the audience" (ibid.). These three levels have therefore funnelled her individual work as well as the Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe project launched in 2013 – although she remarks that these undoubtedly are not the only dimensions of journalistic roles.

Albeit inspired by previous studies on journalists' roles, I have worked with an inductive approach to the dimensions influencing journalists' role orientations in Singapore and Vietnam. Instead of working with already pre-established dimensions I have concentrated on journalists' perceptions of the dimensions constitutive of their functions as journalists in their respective countries. By analysing and categorising journalists' views on elements such as tasks, motivations and responsibilities combined with their perceptions on influential forces, restraints, and sender-receiver relations, I ended up with seven different dimensions I deem relevant for understanding and analysing role conceptions in Singapore and Vietnam: 1) tasks, 2) intentions, 3) qualifications, 4) direction, 5) positioning, 6) audience, and, 7) sender.

Table 8: Role dimensions

Tasks	Intentions	Qualifications	Direction	Positioning	Audience	Sender
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Primary function of the role: What journalists think the role does.	Primary purpose of the role: What journalists think the role serves of purposes in society.	The skills needed to fulfil the role: What should journalists feel they need to fulfil the tasks.	The direction of the information stream : From top-down to bottom-up.	Journalists' engagement with the produced work: From submissive over neutral to advocate.	The primary target group of the role: The public, the state/government and/or other groups in society.	The primary group enforcing the role: The government/state, the public, the journalists and/or other groups in society.
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While the first dimension is descriptive and deals with a role's tasks, the second and the third go behind the role and look into the perceived purposes and responsibilities and the skills necessary to fulfil said role. Both dimensions are relevant to catch nuances of the profession and help to explain why journalists in these two countries for instance feel that "good journalists" should be skilled in other disciplines than journalism. The fourth and fifth dimension touch upon power-relations and journalists' voice or presence in their work – related to dimensions also used in previous studies. In connection with the sixth and seven dimensions, that focus on the perceived audience and the underlying sender(s) of the messages carried by the role, the relation between sources, messengers and audiences are analysed to reveal patterns and variations in information streams and power structures.

The seven dimensions are by no means exhausting in terms of categorising role orientations of journalists in the two countries but they are the most dominant based on the journalists' perceptions of their functions and positions in their respective countries. A dimension that deals with market orientation or economic interests is therefore not present in this analysis as journalists pay little, if any, attention to roles that are guided by parameters. This is paradoxical given the current situation of the journalistic fields in the two countries where competition over readers and/or eyeballs is fierce but journalists do not acknowledge such roles as being part of their normative, cognitive or narrated role orientations however visible they might be for outsiders. A study looking into journalists' role performance, their practised roles, might reveal a completely different picture, as studies looking into the relationship between role perceptions and role performances have also shown (Van Dalen, De Vreese, and Albaek 2012; Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013).

Journalists' role orientations in Singapore and Vietnam

Based on analysis of the interviews with journalists and editors in the two countries and with the seven role dimensions as an analytical tool, I have identified nine distinct roles in each country (see overviews in appendix 12 and 13). These nine roles are the roles I evaluate to be of most importance to the journalists in the two countries. I do not claim to have made a complete list of journalists' role orientations in Singapore and Vietnam. Many more roles are probably in active use but these nine are the ones most prominent among journalists' normative, cognitive and narrated roles and the ones I deem to be most relevant for a discussion about the journalistic fields in the two countries.

The roles can be divided into three different groups based on journalists' positions and engagement: 1) neutral roles, 2) neutral to submissive roles, and 3) neutral to advocate roles. The three groups are perhaps a somewhat constricted view of the roles' positions as it is probably more accurate to view the roles on a spectrum from submissive to advocate. But for the sake of discussing the nuances between the three different poles on the spectrum, I have decided to stick with the groups.

As is visible from the tables in appendix 12 and 13, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam ascribe to many of the same roles. In fact, they only differ when it comes to the role that could be said to be the most submissive: the public servant (as I have chosen to name it for Singapore) and the mouthpiece (as I have chosen to name it for Vietnam). Though one could argue that the roles are identical, I find it necessary to separate them to account for the differences between the two fields' understanding of the role and its responsibilities.

The neutral roles

The first group consists of the roles that corresponds the most with the ideals of objectivity and facticity discussed in chapter 5. Journalists engage very little with their stories and try to be as neutral as possible when performing the roles. In addition, the neutral roles are the ones that connects with most of the discursive role categories. Being based on the profession's normative ideals, infused by journalists' cognitive orientations and highly available in journalists' narration, the roles are far less contested and negotiated than the remaining.

The disseminator

The disseminator is one of the roles articulated the most among journalists in the two countries. Its primary tasks are to inform the public about events, policies and issues that might affect their lives. Or as an editor from Singapore puts it: "We basically give them the information we think they need and will help them live their lives more effectively" (S3).

Though a primary role this is also seen as a simple role that most journalists can fulfil. What is needed is access to information and basic communication skills. However, it still qualifies as a journalistic role because the general public would not have the capabilities to find the information to begin with. A managing editor from Vietnam explains:

"So what we want to do is to give our readers the... the right information, the correct information, the correct analysis about events, about something happened that normally the public cannot know. They don't have the connections to know. But we have the privileges to approach some areas that the public cannot. So our responsibility is to bring something inside those areas to the public" (V10).

Typically, information is top-down – with the primary sources being the state, government (Singapore) and party (Vietnam). In this case, the key news informers (such as the state and government, see chapter 5) are therefore also predictably the senders of the information with the public being the primary audience. When journalists state that they just have to report facts and be objective it is usually in reference to this role. This is the most neutral position that they can take and the one, that is in most agreement with not just journalists' own normative scripts but also the state's.

The interpreter

If the first step is to inform the public, the second step is to help make sense of the information provided: to interpret or provide analysis of the news. In both countries this role, though associated with the dissemination role, is seen as a distinct role in its own rights. An editor with more than 30 years of

experience from Singapore puts it like this when explaining why context and background information is paramount for good journalism: “The news is not as important as to why it is happening, right? So I will differentiate the information from the knowledge. What I would like to do more and more is to give the knowledge” (S1).

In contrast to the dissemination role, journalists need more than just basic communication skills to fulfil this role. As explained in chapter 4, many journalists (and not least editors) are of the conviction that you are better off as a journalist if you have an academic background. Preferably in economics or social science where you have become accustomed to analyse and go behind text and numbers. The more context you can provide the better the story as a journalist from Vietnam explains:

“Because instead of reporting a single story and move on to the next if you can see the bigger picture you put your story in the whole landscape, in the whole context of the society, of the economy. It works much better even though it is just a short piece of a story” (V17).

As with the dissemination role, information is top-down with the state/government/Party being the primary sources – and senders. However, journalists have the possibility of taking a more advocate position, as they through their analysis and interpretation of information are more actively framing stories. Yet, not all journalists feel this way. Some would argue that it is still possible to be neutral and objective while providing interpretation of the news. A political reporter from Singapore for instance explains how he moved from an idealistic position wanting to infuse his own voice into his stories to realising the value of neutrality and objectivity when providing political analysis:

“You can feel like a human reporter that's passively recording facts... but over time you do appreciate that you insist in the profession where you need to actually present a certain angle to an occasion or even a news event. And that actually infuses your point of view” (S12).

In both countries this role appears to be almost as common as the disseminator role and journalists even tend to mention the two right after each other when asked how they see themselves and their roles and responsibilities in society. For Singapore, this correlates well with the findings from the 2012 study of journalists in Singapore by Hao and Cherian who concluded that journalists in Singapore overall value the role of the informant most, followed by an analytical or interpreting role (Hao and George 2012, 98).

The neutral to submissive roles

The second group consists of the more submissive roles – meaning the roles where journalists to a far bigger degree let themselves be guided by the normative scripts of others. Particularly the state, as we will see in the next chapter. That does not necessarily mean that they are in disagreement with the roles but they are aware that external forces are influencing their role orientations. This awareness is visible in the way they discuss the roles and frame the purposes, they fulfil.

The social educator

The perhaps least submissive role is the social educator. As this role responds to journalists' own high-held ideal of being social responsible, they feel they are more in control of this role than the other roles

on the submissive spectrum. The role is related to the interpreter role as information is flowing in the same direction and with similar audiences and senders. But this role takes interpretation to yet another level by applying a more pedagogical approach when analysing information. Or as an editor in Singapore straightforwardly puts it when describing the tasks associated with the role:

“But I suppose it's our job as well to dumb [the information] down, make it easy digestible so that people know what's out there and they know that there is help available and they can make use of it” (S2).

In Singapore, many journalists agree that this is how they are typically being portrayed by outsiders of the field. Especially the mainstream media with *The Straits Times* being seen as the key promoter of the role. An editor working at Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) explains:

“It's part of the ethos of actually... of actually the whole of SPH - every different... whichever paper... one of the missions is that we have to educate. To tell people about things that they need to know to... to live their lives as best as they can. So that's how we approach it” (S3).

Though journalists know this is how they are being perceived and even if they do agree to the role on some level it is not a dominant role in their mind. Whereas the role in Vietnam is evident in many different genres and media types (V8 for instance explains how she even finds the many women's magazines in Vietnam educational with their advices on lifestyle, relationship and family), in Singapore it appears as if the role is primarily associated with news dealing with official information. Similarly, the role in Vietnam also appears to be regarded with higher esteem than in Singapore. A Vietnamese journalist justifies the value of the role with Vietnam's development status:

“I would say that Vietnam has quite a low starting point in comparison with developed countries - and even with neighbouring countries - journalism should really have a big role educating people. I myself learned a lot from journalism. For example, when I first graduated from school, I read a lot and really learned a lot from the press, from the news outlets. And also to inspire people to gradually grasp more of their rights. 'Cause I would say that many people in Vietnam have not become fully aware of their rights. What their rights are as citizens, as human beings. So I think journalists really should that. Get people really aware of their rights” (V17).

In contrast, the role has another ring to it in Singapore. A seasoned editor from the country defines his ambivalent relationship with the role:

“I hate that word but I can't think of another word this moment - to educate the readers. I don't like to use the word 'educate' because then you become the teacher, the reader becomes the student. You are the authority and then this is a subservient to you, which is, I think, an unequal relationship” (S1).

Journalists in Vietnam do not seem to have any problems with taking on a teaching role. Not if it is beneficial for the audience, the people, the public. As so, in Vietnam the social educator role could be seen as being related to development journalism – at least when it comes to its attention to the people. As Xu (2008, 358) writes, one of the key components of development journalism is “to empower the ordinary people to improve their own lives and communities”.

The nation-builder

Another role that could be said to be close to development journalism is the role of the nation-builder. The attention of the role is the nation: its unanimity and its (prosperous) development. Similar to development journalism it is more about long-term goals than day-to-day revelations, which could also explain why some journalists find the adversarial approach to journalism unproductive and even harmful for society. Idealism bordering on patriotism is typically fuelling this role with journalists having a high sense of responsibility towards their audiences - the public as well as the state.

Whereas the social educator is focusing on development on an individual level, the nation-builder devotes its attention to the nation as a whole. It is about getting everybody on board with the problems at hand. Depending on which issues are currently on the national development agenda, the role will change topics and attention over time. As Singapore and Vietnam find themselves on different development levels, the role takes on different missions in the two countries.

As Singapore is a highly developed country with very few problems normally associated with countries practising development journalism or having journalists subscribing to versions of a nation-builder role, attention is more on social stability than development. Journalists feel responsible to help knit the nation tighter together through promotion of certain values. Like an editor in chief from one of the nation’s biggest newspapers puts it when describing his responsibilities towards the nation: “I am just saying it's my responsibility that people don't riot on the streets and get killed. So we are very sensitive about race and religion, you know?” (S13).

With Vietnam still being in a transitional state, the role is more observant of stories about infrastructure, healthcare and economy. Journalists prioritise these stories because they may help to contribute to the further development of the country. In contrast to other roles, journalists may also experience a higher degree of autonomy when producing stories under the banner of this role – at least when they are sticking to topics that are not seen as political sensitive. The state naturally also has an interest in the development of the country and they have no problem with criticism if it serves this purpose – and as long as it is delivered in the right manner. The example mentioned in chapter 5 with the media helping to frame a discussion on a big development project that could have serious consequences on the Vietnamese economy shows the role in action.

Similarly, to the social educator role, the nation-builder role appears to be more respected in Vietnam than in Singapore. In Singapore, this role also has a slightly more negative ring to it. Perhaps because it is also a role historically associated with the media and thereby something that is not always seen as positive and forward moving. An editor working for one of the popular online news media puts the negative feelings associated with the role into words:

“When I was younger, you know, met academic literature on Singapore, they always mention that the local media, or even Lee Khan Yew, the local media plays a nation building role. A nation building role in ensuring that the society continues to be harmonious and so on. I

think today the role hasn't changed much. It has a conservatist stance on things. It's pro-government, pro-establishment" (S4).

The role is thereby not ascribed with the same amount of autonomy as in Vietnam. Though it would be possible in theory – and some journalists would argue that it is being done with success when it comes to tackling some of the value-related issues in society – it is not seen as a role where you can scrutinise and criticise the state.

The public servant/The mouthpiece

Though related, Singapore's public servant role and Vietnam's mouthpiece role are not the same. What they do have in common is their proximity to the state/Party – which is why it is also interesting to contrast them to one another. These roles are the ones that are most submissive on the spectrum. Journalists in both countries are aware of their close connections to the authorities – yet some more than others. In both countries there is a certain hierarchy to the media outlets. Some are closer to the state/Party than others and their sense of responsibility towards the state therefore differ accordingly.

When the role is labelled mouthpiece in Vietnam it is because that is how the media are typically being described. Until recently the title was even being used in the law on media (Law on Media 1999) but journalists are also using the reference themselves. It is not perceived as negative as it would be in other parts of the world (even though many journalists are very well aware of the way the role is being portrayed elsewhere). It is part of the job to deliver information from the Communist Party to the people: sometimes it is necessary information (making the role not much different from the dissemination role) and sometimes it is more down the lines of propaganda. Regardless of the content it is the media's, and thereby journalists', responsibility to deliver the message. That is just the way it is, as is visible from the two quotes below from a former television journalist and an editor, respectively:

“It is most and foremost our task or roles [...] to disseminate information from the Party, to follow the guideline or policy of the government or something like that” (V18).

“Journalism is a very hard job, especially in Vietnam. We have the right to inform people, as all journalists in the world do, but not in all fields, neither in all kind of people and we must do, in lots of cases, the job with "directions" from The Party, via numerous state/governmental agencies” (V1).

That does not mean that all journalists are equally comfortable conforming to the role. For the media with the closest connections to the state, the mouthpiece role will be more natural whereas media (and journalists) further removed from the state apparatus can choose to approach the role in a slightly different way. Here, it is typically a matter of editorial decision when it comes to how much journalists are expected to adhere to the role. Furthermore, journalists from these media outlets also have the possibility to clearly signal when they are performing as mouthpieces and thereby circumvent the puppetry that is typically associated with the role. A young reporter working for an online publication explains:

“But what we are doing here in Vietnam, I have to confess, because we are still under the... the leadership and the regulation of the Party, of the government, we still have to work as a

mouthpiece. It's the way of verification for the public that we tell them that you can get 10 sources of information but this is the information from the government. We will tell you. So that's what we do - and what we have to do now because this is how the system works here" (V5).

Taking this stance on the role does, however, require insights of a certain kind and it is not always as easy as it sounds to avoid becoming a pawn in politics. But it is a way to signal autonomy – at least compared to the more Party loyal media outlets.

Although some media observers, along with some Singaporeans, would describe the media in Singapore as being a mouthpiece of the state, journalists themselves have difficulty recognising that depiction. That does not mean that they have full autonomy and never cover stories or deliver messages on behalf of the state/government. But their role is different from the mouthpiece role and more in alignment with the role of a public servant. The state rarely, if ever, dictates how a media should cover an issue. They might make suggestions and hold expectations to the coverage but they do not order it. A political journalist explains:

“[T]he government sometimes feel that, you know, maybe we should set the agenda or frame the discussion in areas that are maybe convenient to them but on other areas I think that they are less comfortable with that. (pause) I think that's why, I think, that a lot of the reporting, a lot of the political commentary, tends to be fairly restrained (smiling)” (S6).

Instead, the media enforce the role on themselves – based on what they think the government wants. Like an employee wanting to meet the expectations of an employer. Or as a seasoned editor with more than 30 years of experience bluntly puts it: “I think generally the journalists here are being brought up, you know, to be supporters of the government” (S1).

As in Vietnam, not all journalists are comfortable with this role. Especially in hindsight when they are analysing previous work like this TV-journalist who used to cover local news in Singapore:

“I have done stories that are as ridiculous as a minister goes out on a weekend to plant a tree. Or you know, do some grand opening, I don't know. Or gives out *hong bao*, basically the gift money to old people or poor families. I mean all this is good but you don't really cover it as news. It is not news. It's just government activities” (V21).

Despite the negativity towards this role, it is accepted. Perhaps because journalists in Singapore are not aware that they are conforming to it and thereby adopting the state's normative scripts instead of being guided by their own. Or at least they do not recognise that they conform to the scripts to the same degree, as outsiders critical of the media environment in Singapore would say. And they do certainly not see it as hindrance to do good journalism. As in Vietnam, this role is also just part of the job. In a discursive perspective, one could argue that the public servant role in Singapore as compared to the mouthpiece role in Vietnam is not as much a part of journalists' narrated role orientations because it clashes with their cognitive and normative orientations. In contrast, journalists in Vietnam are more aware of the normative scripts stemming from the state but have found a way to accept it by emphasising other aspects

of the script that are in alignment with their own scripts – such as the social responsibility aspect of the nation-builder role or the dissemination aspect of the mouthpiece role.

The neutral to advocate roles

The third group consists of the more advocate roles – the roles where journalists showcase more autonomy vis-à-vis the state and other external forces. Although journalists feel passionate about the roles, they are more difficult to perform due to the restricted media environment. The roles therefore mostly exist in journalists' cognitive role orientations. They want to adhere to them and perform them but find it difficult to do in praxis. They do, however, provide aspirations and guidelines for journalistic practices but as is evident from the way journalists frame the roles and the language they use to describe them, they rarely get enacted – at least not to the degree, journalists would want.

The voice of the voiceless

Most of the news in Singapore and Vietnam are based on information flowing top-down. One of the few roles that is clearly breaking that mould is the voice of the voiceless. While it might be in the advocate group it is close to the neutral roles as it champions some of the same ideals on objectivity and facticity. Journalists should not engage too much with stories but let the cases do the talking. As is also evident from the title journalists seek out people of the more vulnerable and marginalised groups in society to find information and material for news stories. Journalists adhering to this role feel a high degree of responsibility towards these groups in society and are of the conviction that they can help foster change in society.

Despite the fact that the role on the surface seems similar in the two countries there are some differences. Whereas in Vietnam, the role is clearly connected to the nation-building role, which means that it is a way to inform the state about issues in society – and perhaps even criticise badly functioning policies – it is more about seeking justice for the marginalised in Singapore. In short, the role appears to be powered by idealism in Singapore and by patriotism in Vietnam. As a young journalist from Singapore recounts when qualifying her determination to do human interest stories focusing on the marginalised:

“I think that for me that what I try to set out to do is, since I'm here, I want to give a voice to people who have no voice. To give a voice to the voiceless. And that is why I have so much interest in the migrant issues because I feel that they are very vulnerable. They don't have the means or the resources or the empowerment to speak up for themselves. So whenever their rights are being violated somebody has to speak up for them” (S9).

In both countries, journalists are advocating for change when taking on this role but just as with the social educator and the nation builder there seems to be more at stake with taking on the role in Vietnam – and thereby also higher regards for the role. There is a consensus in Vietnam that this role is needed to move the nation forward and that it has as much the interest of the state in mind as the people it is speaking on behalf of. The journalism it is producing is important and necessary – and more is needed. An experienced journalist and editor from Vietnam elaborates:

“Sometimes I [feel] that journalists and media in Vietnam can do quite a good job in disseminating the information from the top-down, you know? It means disseminating information about the policies, about the government officials say. But we need more features. We need more reflection. Bottom-up, right? And I hope to see those kind of journalism more regularly [in] Vietnam media” (V4).

The subtle critic

Being critical of the state, scrutinising organisations, businesses and institutions is something that is strived for among journalists in both Singapore and Vietnam. Just as their colleagues elsewhere, journalists (or some journalists) in the two countries want to uncover corruption and issues in society; doing checks and balances; criticising wrongful laws and policies; and, watching over the people in power on behalf of the public. Even though some journalists say they are performing a watchdog role it would be a stretch to label their most adversarial or advocate role a “watchdog” in “the long-established liberal conception of the news media as the fourth estate, an independent guardian located in civil society and counterbalancing the power of executive, legislative, and judiciary branches in government” (Norris 2014, 2). Or as an experienced editor-in-chief from Singapore admits:

“I don’t think in all honesty I can say that the press [performs] the watchdog role, the fourth estate role over government - that is exaggeration. You’ll never claim to be that. I don’t think that we are equipped for it. There are many rules in government that prevent us from doing that” (S17).

I have therefore instead chosen to label the role “subtle critic” since the criticism and scrutiny have to be delivered in a certain way to be accepted. An example from Vietnam presented by a former TV-journalist illustrates how the newspaper *Tuoi Tre* by choosing a positive spin on criticising a set of policies and regulations meant to limit the public’s access to social media ended up changing the government’s mind:

“But [*Tuoi Tre*] would run quite a lot of stories about elsewhere in the world how social media or digital information have pushed the economy forward or giving people more freedom, kind of. So they have some implications like they don't argue directly with the government or too... too strongly oppose that regulation from the government but they use a series of stories to tell – what do you say – to give kind of a feedback to that policy. So they do it in a very gentle and flexible way. They don't confront the government right away [...] but still the readers can get their message” (V18).

It is, however, also possible to be more openly critical and scrutinise issues – as long as the media do not overstep its privileges. In Singapore, where the boundaries are clearer than in Vietnam, journalists have a strong sense of what they can and cannot do in terms of criticism. While there are little issues scrutinising businesses and organisations, it is more difficult to go after the government and politicians. Though many journalists will say that it is because there is next to nothing to scrutinise (“there is a robust system of government in place where if somebody do something wrong there will be checks and balances on their own. You are not supposed to be a checks-and-balance system because there are laws in place,

you know?”, as S17 puts it), another explanation might be that it requires a great deal from the journalist. You must be absolutely certain that you have all your facts straight and that you are still delivering your criticism in a respectful and objective manner. Like a TV-journalist covering political issues puts it:

“It is not like I can’t tell certain kinds of stories or if I see something it’s not like I can’t write about it – it is not like that. It is just that I need to be responsible when I do that, I need to be intuitive and I make sure that when I write that story that it doesn’t come back to haunt me, you know what I mean?” (S2).

In a sense, the journalists feel that they have a big responsibility, which they have to live up to by also setting an example and not going after the government simply because they can. An editor with more than 30 years of experience clarifies by exemplifying how you would have to write a critical piece:

“You have to provide balance. You cannot be one-sided. But you can still take, in your commentaries, a stand, which is one-sided but you must give both points of view. And then you say ‘okay this is my final take on’. And then the reader knows there is this side and that side but the writer has taken this position” (S1).

Despite the difficulties, journalists do, however, feel convinced, that there is room for a critical role in the Singaporean media landscape – especially in the current media environment where online and social media are challenging the mainstream media with news and stories of sometimes dubious quality. But the state and media alike will have to figure out how to do it. As a political journalist argues it is a matter of negotiation:

“...the government needs the mainstream media to be credible as well. So you need to give us some space and scope to actually compete with the online media and also be a reasonable critic, right? Give us that space to be a reasonable critic. But of course it is a constant negotiable process” (S12).

In Vietnam, the boundaries are less clear and move more frequently which makes it difficult for journalists to know precisely how far they can go with their criticism, scrutiny and investigative reporting. Typically, it is a matter of topic. Areas that are prioritised in accordance to the national development agenda may be scrutinised in detail as the coverage will serve a purpose and help push the nation forward. An editor from a newspaper specialising in economic issues uses a current story on the national debt, his paper ran, as an example. He knew it was a sensitive issue as he was criticising the government’s interpretation of the figures but thought it was too important to ignore:

“I wrote a story two weeks ago about... how the national debt, the public debt is being miscalculated. Because of this, because of that. And the state's president read the article and he picked up his phone and said that this office is [to] report to him what is really happening. We have to make a full-length report whether the article is accurate or not. So... I think that we are doing our job and high-ranking officials are reading our newspapers. We are making an impact. I am glad that we can help” (V11).

Areas that are more politically sensitive, like corruption or conflicts within the Communist Party, are another matter. As Kerkvliet (2014) points out: “Authorities are generally more tolerant of criticism about particular government policies or programs or of particular nonsenior officials than they are of criticism about top national leaders, the form of government, or the entire political system”. When it comes to politics, the boundaries may change from day to day. In periods, the Communist Party will allow stories even on large-scale corruption to set an example, meet international expectations or perhaps clean-out among the ranks (like the PMU18 corruption case mentioned in chapter 5). The media (or rather the journalists that belong to the core group) stand ready to take on the role and investigate corruption when the opportunity comes along but they also have to make sure that they are not merely becoming pawns in a political manoeuvre. Journalists have in the past paid the price because they were led on by someone within the Communist Party and ran with a story that in the end proved untrue causing the downfall of other members from the Party – and the involved journalists. But even if the journalists themselves are not at risk they have to come to peace with the fact that they are maybe only able to uncover a story because someone benefits from the exposure. Vietnam might be ruled by one party but it is full of individual politicians competing to influence the policy making process as an experienced journalist and editor explains:

“And this competition generates a certain space for the media to play its role. Because they will rely, I mean, they will rely on the journalism if the... for example if the media report some bad behaviour or some scandal of the officials, other competitors will use it, right? To kick them out of the position. And that’s how the media and the politics interchange and operates in countries like Vietnam” (V4).

The boundary pusher

The role that aspires to be most advocate of them all is the role, that I have decided to label “the boundary pusher”. Far from all journalists ascribe to this role (particularly not in Singapore) as it is not without risks. It is, however, idealised as it is all about pushing the boundaries for accepted content and striving for more autonomy – something that journalists in both countries are well-aware of is romanticised in journalism. But in contrast to their colleagues in other countries that might be able to see themselves free of political and economic restraints (or at least have persuaded themselves that they can be free of such forces), they are aware of the limitations of the role and it therefore mostly exists in journalists’ cognitive orientations and rarely transcends into actual performances. Instead, journalists get support for this role from other places. Journalists might be the ones holding the normative scripts for the role but they are not always the ones performing it. Interestingly, in both countries, journalists increasingly get assistance with the performance of the boundary pusher from the online sphere – wittingly or unwittingly. The role does, however, qualify as being part of the palette of journalists’ roles in both countries as they are the ones constructing it through their cognitive orientations and striving to meet its ideals.

In Vietnam, journalists belonging to the core group do not only feel the need to perform the role as a way of legitimising the profession, they also feel that it is their responsibility to push the envelope for the sake of the country and people’s personal rights. As one editor from Vietnam underlines:

“The lines are moving and our job is to push the lines. Every day, every hour, every story. This week when we printed the story, I just told you about, the parties and the government, I am pushing the line. To test the limit. And if there is no reaction then next week I will print a stronger story saying that you have to act like parties in power like in all other countries. [...] That is pushing the line. The boundaries are not stable; the boundaries are not stationary. They are moving and it is our job to move them” (V11).

Not all journalists and editors are in a position to actually push the lines like V11. You need a certain status or amount of political capital to push with success – along with both persistence and courage as no one knows for sure whether you will be successful or not. Sometimes it is all a matter of timing. But there will always be a lot of attention and suspense from the rest of the media to see whether or not the attempt will prove a success – and thereby making it possible for all media to collectively follow suit over the previous line. A political journalist explains:

“it's a trial process. Fail and trial. So when... in front of a very sensitive story so the news outlet will publish it and everyone doesn't dare to publish it. Only one. They publish it and if they are not asked to pull it down - an online newspaper for example - the trial is successful so everyone else will jump in. So it's kind of interesting to see things. That one pushes the boundaries and he succeeds and everyone will follow. And from that point, from that angle it is no longer sensitive because everyone can do it now” (V17).

Though the audience for this role is the public, as journalists have an interest in securing absolute information dissemination to the public, it is as much for the journalistic profession. Especially in Vietnam where the lines are less clear, journalists need to test the waters to figure out what they can and cannot do. They need to understand the boundaries of their profession. But they do not always need to be the ones testing the waters. Increasingly, journalists rely on social media to do the actual boundary-pushing. One example is the recent case of the “6700 people for 6700 trees” movement in 2015. Briefly explained, the municipality of Hanoi had decided to cut 6,708 trees around the capital, which sparked a debate among people on social media about the effect on not just the environment but also the emotional life of the citizens (Bui 2016). The debates caught on, Facebook groups were formed and soon the protests hit the streets (Vu 2017). Protests like these are very rare in Vietnam and the mainstream media typically avoid covering them as to not being accused of inciting to opposition against the state. Yet, this time the media ended up participating – but only after the story has been widely spread through social media. A boundary had been pushed.

While journalists in Singapore have a very clear sense of the boundaries of their profession, boundaries are still pushed – although rarely by the professional journalists. Instead, citizen journalists, bloggers or social media users push them – sometimes even unknowingly but with consequences for the entire journalistic field. One example is the way elections are covered in Singapore – or more specifically election rallies. In 2006, a blogger posted a photo from an election rally organised by the opposition party, Workers’ Party, on his blog Yawning Bread. The image⁵⁵ showed the big crowd attending the rally from above. Nothing controversial – or at least from the viewpoint of an outsider of the journalistic field

⁵⁵ The image can be found here: http://www.yawningbread.org/arch_2006/yax-581.htm

in Singapore. But over night the image was widely spread and changed the way rallies have been covered for ages in Singapore. The blogger had pushed the boundary of a longstanding OB-marker: never show wide shots of opposition rally crowds – which are usually “more engorged and energized than the ruling party’s events”, as George (2010, 257) explains.

Even though this blogger was not aware of the consequences of his actions some citizen journalists try to move the boundaries deliberately – when they detect one. But given the increased institutionalisation or even professionalization of the online sphere it is beginning to become more difficult even for the online world to challenge the status quo. Not because they necessarily are being told that they cannot publish certain things or write in a certain way but because they too want to fit in and do what is expected of the media vis-à-vis the rules and regulations that are coming in place these years. We will return to this in chapter 8.

The emerging fact-checker role

As mentioned briefly in the introduction to this chapter, roles are not static but evolve over time. As an example Vos (2017) describes how the watchdog role in the US in order to survive “not only had to be handed down from one generation of journalists to another, it had to adapt to changing conditions” (Vos 2017, 45) and adopt new working means and methods in accordance with technological developments. Without these altercations the role might not have stood the test of time, as is also the case with other roles that lose their relevance and are replaced by new ones. But it is not just a matter of transformation and adaptation. It also comes down to the needs and demands of the profession.

Confronted with competition from the online sphere and having lost the ability to be first with the news, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam (as in other parts of the world) have had to find new ways to validate the existence of their profession. One solution has been the introduction of the fact-checker role. Though fact-checking in itself is not something new to journalism in the two countries, listing fact-checking as a role in itself is new. In a discursive perspective, the role is becoming a cognitive role having until recently been a normative role, comfortable placed (or hidden) in the journalistic *doxa*. The role is all about checking facts, verifying or debunking viral news and rumours. Being professionals with skills and abilities to separate facts from fictions and having access to information not available to the general public, journalists can make sense of the information and tell the truth. A Singaporean journalist explains:

“I think that the more there is information, the more there will be information about information and the more there will be a demand for good information about the original information. [...] You still need someone to make sense of whatever has broken. Whether it's a video, information, a release, words, text or whatever. You still need someone to ask more people what is happening, get reactions, get analysis” (V21).

As V21 also touches upon it is not just about confirming or debunking rumours. Journalists are putting all of their skills into this role. They will also have to analyse, interpret and perhaps even criticise the original stories and its sources to fulfil the role. An editor from Singapore describes how there is more judgment involved with this role than people might think:

”So, as a journalist you need to kind of weave through all of the stuff online and kind of know where... who is who online? Is it that, that person is biased because everyone is

anonymous? So there is a lot more judgment involved [...] you have to do it, experience it, get it wrong and then you realise 'oh okay maybe that's the way to go'. The basic skill set is still the same. You have to incorporate all the new cultural and technological changes into the mix" (S3).

Though there is an agreement that the profession in a way has lost the ability to be first with the news, journalists do not seem to think that they have handed over their agenda-setting function completely to the new online competitors. As a young journalist from Vietnam explains, the public still need the professionals to curate the news for them – even if it is becoming more and more difficult for the journalists to hold on to the task:

"So what kind of role we can do now, I think, from all the information, from all the sources, all the angles that the public can get easily from anywhere - what they like is [...] verification. Or the suggestions for them to not getting lost in that jungle of news. So that is what the media is needed" (V5).

The public is, however, not the only recipient of the fact-checker role. The state has as much need for the role as the public and the journalists. The state also needs help separating facts from fiction and therefore sometimes even tries enforcing the role on the media when rumours impacting the political agenda are floating around the Internet. This interest from the authorities also provides journalists with a new tool as they can use the fact-checker role to touch upon otherwise sensitive topics and areas. If a story is already "out there" even though it is sensitive, it might still be in the state's interest to set the record straight and have the mainstream media reporting the actual (or curated) facts. A political reporter from Vietnam elucidates:

"Because - and now I talk with people who work for the government - we can't deny that it's many kind of news on the Internet. You cannot hide it. Sure. For that reason, they have to explain that. If you do not explain that people will see the news on the Internet as correct" (V20).

This element of the role seems to be more evident in Vietnam than in Singapore. Though the Internet can play a role in pushing boundaries and opening up the possibility of discussing sensitive issues it is not something that journalists in Singapore explicitly see as a side effect of the role. They do not feel to the same degree that the role gives them the mandate to take an advocate stance like the Vietnamese journalists do. I have, however, chosen to position the role in the advocate end of the spectrum as it holds the potential for journalists to take less neutral stances.

The bridge-builder

Where the 10 roles listed above all qualify as role orientations in their own right there is yet another role worth mentioning albeit it is not as distinct as the others. Instead it is functioning in relation to the other roles and is dependent on their existence. The role of the bridge-builder is an ideal many journalists want to pursue through execution of the primary journalistic roles. It is, in a way, an overarching role, or meta-role, that only comes into play when the entire spectrum of roles is being performed. Only then can

journalists create a bridge between the different groups in society and become a platform for dialogue and discussion. This role encompasses all of the ideals held by journalists described in chapter 5 and is as much a normative role as a cognitive role. Journalists therefore above everything else strive to perform this role but as is visible they struggle with both the narrated and performative levels.

The role is most visible in Vietnam where journalists explicitly mention it as a goal for the profession. Like an experienced journalist from a regional newspaper puts it:

“Journalists channel information from the government to the people. But it also goes in the other direction – from the people to the government. We help people understand the world and we help the government understand the people and those issues that are important to them” (V7).

The role is not concerned with specific stories or genres but has the connection as its purpose and key goal. In Vietnam, it is mostly between the state/Party and the people bridges are being built, whereas journalists in Singapore tend to be more concerned about the polarisations among the people – although this is a very sensitive topic bordering on the OB-markers. One political journalist for instance describes how his newspaper tried to discuss current polarisations in society when covering the first anniversary of the Little India Riot⁵⁶:

“We did another piece on the first anniversary to kind of look at what’s changed and what’s... you know some of the tensions and fears that have surfaced [...] immigration has been a big issue. A political issue here as well. But then I think about it under a microscope because you saw a lot of racist remarks and towards foreigners as well... [...] I think my colleagues in those reports actually raised... took a harder look at some of the bigger concerns” (S6).

As is evident from the quote, S6 has difficulty even discussing the matter but though it is hard to talk about and might even cross the line of accepted content he does find it necessary. Singapore is a well-functioning, harmonious society on the outside but many people agree that there are a lot of unresolved conflicts underneath the surface, waiting to explode if left unattended. If journalists are to help promote the values of the country, that among other things pay huge attention to harmony, the bridge-building role is paramount – and journalists are well aware of this.

It is however not just journalists in Singapore that struggle living up to the ideal of the bridge-building role. As well-known and commonly accepted as it is, journalists in Vietnam too find it difficult actually creating the foundation for the role’s existence – or infusing the cognitive orientations into actual practices. As described above, the role relies on other roles to function. If for instance, journalists are only concerned with the roles delivering messages top-down from the state/Party to the people then the bridge-building role cannot be fulfilled like V4 also touches upon in the quote presented on page 129.

⁵⁶ After a fatal traffic accident in the area known as Little India on December 8, 2013, a riot broke out with people attacking not only the bus involved in the accident but also emergency vehicles arriving at the scene. The riot, that lasted for two hours, was only the second reported riot to occur in post-independence Singapore – with the first dating back to 1969. It sent chock-waves through the country and created headlines for many weeks. It also broke down another OB-marker making it possible to discuss migrant issues more openly than previously.

Help is however within reach, as some journalists have begun to realise. The Internet and social media provide an opportunity for journalists to create the foundation for the bridge-building role in collaboration with other actors. Though online media and social media cannot completely tip the scale in favour of the public they can help release information and led several voices be heard. A journalist from Vietnam shares her view of the situation:

“Because, as I told you before, like in my parents’ generation, newspapers is all about propaganda. It is what the government wanted to tell the public. But now with the Internet, it is where... They can find what the government want to tell the public, what the non-government forces want to tell the public, what the anti-government forces want to tell the public, what the public want to tell themselves, and even what nobody wants to tell” (V5).

This does not make journalists expendable as most still think that the journalists have to curate the news and the information stream but it does provide the possibility of a helping hand to pave the way of the bridge-building role.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked into the role orientations of journalists in Singapore and Vietnam based on a set of seven role dimensions that collaboratively tries to capture each role’s unique characteristics. The role orientations are the ones journalists in the two countries identify the most with – the ones that are most dominant among their normative, cognitive and narrated roles. They are however probably not the only roles being performed in the two countries. As an example one could question why there is no entertainer role among the listed roles? Why is there no role focusing on what must arguable be one of the key purposes of journalism: keeping the audience entertained so they will buy the newspaper, open the webpage, turn on the television and tune in on the radio again and again? Though one must assume that entertainment is a large part of journalism it is not necessarily a large part of journalists’ self-perception in these two countries. This study is not the only one arriving at this conclusion. Hao and George (2012) also found very little support for an entertainment role in their survey of Singaporean journalists. In their list of tasks journalists were asked to rate, the task of “Entertainment and relaxation” was ranked 12th out of 15 – just above “Being an adversary of public officials”, “Being an adversary of businesses” and “setting public agenda”⁵⁷ (Hao and George 2012, 98).

Overall, the analysis revealed 11 different roles (with nine roles to some degree being shared among the two countries) that could be divided into three groups, neutral, submissive and advocate, based on journalists’ positioning. Journalists in both countries are in general agreement about the neutral roles. The roles are part of both their normative, cognitive and narrated role orientations and correspond well with the state’s expectations and normative scripts.

When it came to the more submissive roles, journalists in Singapore struggle to find room for them in their own normative scripts – even if they agree to performing them. In contrast, journalists in Vietnam

⁵⁷ Interestingly, similar studies done in Malaysia and Indonesia found the same patterns. In Malaysia the task also ranked 12th out of 15 followed by the same three tasks in the bottom (Tamam, Raj, and Govindasamy 2012, 85). In Indonesia, journalists ranked the task of providing entertainment and relaxation 13th out of 17 (Thomas Hanitzsch and Hidayat 2012, 45).

have found a way to emphasise elements of the more submissive roles that can cooperate with the profession's ideal and thereby become part of journalists' own normative and cognitive scripts.

In a similar way, journalists in Singapore struggle with the more advocate roles even if they are part of their normative and cognitive orientations. But as we will see in the next chapter, they clash with the state's expectations making it difficult for journalists to conform to them. Again, journalists in Vietnam have found a way to make the roles part of their narrated role orientations by emphasising elements that even the state can accept – or perhaps due to the state's less clear normative scripts.

Another important finding was the emerging fact-checker role, that proves that roles are not static entities but constantly evolving and transforming. While not a fully conceptualised role yet, the fact-checker is currently emerging from the journalistic *doxa* in response to the increased pressure on the profession from online and social media. Whether or not the role will end up being fully integrated into journalists' narrated role orientations relies on the fields' continuing need of its functions and the legitimacy the role provides. Only if it proves itself indispensable in legitimating the journalistic profession can it find a position among the dominating role orientations in the journalistic fields.

Finally, as this chapter has tentatively touched upon, even though journalists hold a wide variety of role orientations, ranging from submissive to advocate roles, they are not prioritised equally. Not only do journalists place different emphasis on the roles depending on their own normative scripts, they are also influenced by other actors holding normative expectations to their roles. These expectations can have a huge impact on journalists' role orientations. As we will see next, that is not least true when it comes to powerful political actors that “are skilled at selectively activating journalists' cognitive scripts, encouraging them to see events in the light of a preferred normative role” (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017, 126).

Role expectations and role struggles

“We are being berated on both sides. The government hates us (laughing) and our readers think we are just mouthpieces – it means we are doing something right, right?” (S10).

There are debates, disagreements and conflicts aplenty in the journalistic field. Journalists argue with their editors, face critique from their audiences and fight for recognition among their peers. Some struggles do, however, go beyond mere disagreements about what to put on the front page or which framing to go with. Some struggles surround the very core of the profession; the roles journalists are expected to fulfil in society. Like the quote from S10, a news editor from Singapore, shows – journalists are surrounded by conflicting expectations.

Given that journalism is a very debated field about which people have strong opinions, journalists are also exposed to expectations as to what they should and should not do. In chapter 2, it was described how it is natural for position-holders to experience issues with the expectations they are met with. A position-holder will typically experience differing expectations from the various agents they are engaging with (the so-called norm senders) when performing their professional role(s). These differing expectations put the position-holder in a stressful situation, as it will rarely be possible to satisfy everyone simultaneously. Experiencing different forms of role strain is therefore common for most position-holders and may have, depending on the nature and amount of strain, serious consequences for the position-holder and his or her role performance. To cope with role strain, and thereby avoid experiencing dissatisfaction with one’s profession, stress and mal-integration in the work place (Biddle 1986, 82), a position-holder will have to decide whether to conform to expectations, negotiate with norm-senders or, perhaps, even withdraw from the situation and resign.

As was touched upon in the previous chapter, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam also express frustration over the expectations they are met with. In particular, if the expectations are in conflict with their own ideals or normative and/or cognitive scripts – or if they experience conflicting expectations among norm senders. In some cases, it is the lack of expectations or the vagueness of expectations that causes frustration. Based on analysis of journalists’ perceptions of the expectations they are faced with, I have identified three different norm senders that are causing issues with journalists’ role orientations: 1) the public, 2) media institutions and 3) the state. This chapter will look into the expectations that journalists in the two countries see themselves faced with from these three norm senders to understand the impact different forces have on journalists’ role orientations.

As will become apparent, journalists in Singapore experience conflicting expectations from the state and the public (as was also evident from the quote by S10), while their own norms and ideals

primarily are in conflict with the state and, in some cases, with media institutions. Journalists in Vietnam do not experience the expectations from the different norm senders being in conflict with one-another. Instead, expectations mostly clash with journalists' own norms and ideals. The public are not dissatisfied with journalists' current roles but would wish for additional roles. The state (and to some degree also media institutions as a proxy for the state) does, however, hold expectations that go against journalists' ambitions for the profession. However, given the vagueness of the state's expectations, journalists are to a large degree left with figuring out what exactly is expected of them – resulting in role ambiguity.

Despite the differences, journalists in both countries primarily end up conforming to the state's expectations (or their readings of the state's expectations) but, as we will see, in slightly different ways.

Expectations from the public

As is evident from the breakdown of journalists' role orientations in chapter 6, journalists in the two countries hold the public in high regards. Not just because they are their primary source of income but also because journalists feel a sense of responsibility towards the public and see it as their key purpose to provide people with relevant information and insightful analysis. Journalists therefore naturally feel disparaged when they sense that they are not living up to the public's expectations. That sentiment seems to be most evident in Singapore where many journalists working for the mainstream media often are frustrated to be considered a government mouthpiece. A political journalist from Singapore expresses how he feels the public is beginning to attribute lesser value to the job that journalists do:

“I mean in terms of the public we bear the burden of being seen as propaganda and also being compliant and... and that's one... That's the baggage that we have. But in the new day and age because information is so cheaply available - it's free - they tend to not think that the work you do is valuable” (S12).

Journalists in Singapore interpret the sentiments as if they are not doing enough critical or balanced reporting and are being scorned for their public servant and nation building roles. At least in terms of political coverage, they feel that the public is increasingly demanding more plurality in the news. It is not so much that they widely disagree with journalists' existing norms, it is more that they feel journalists lack additional norms that would secure a more pluralised political coverage and result in less submissive role orientations.

This understanding of the public's expectations to the journalists are backed by the new online media actors that get recognition from the public because they present perspectives that the mainstream media rarely cover. A freelance journalist from Singapore who has just succeeded in crowd-funding money for a new journalistic online media platform gives her reading of Singaporeans' increasing interest in online media:

“Singaporeans are aware of that. That there needs to be something else apart from *The Straits Times*. So you know it is not like ‘oh, I already subscribe to *The Straits Times* so I got the news I need’. They are kind of aware that ‘no, this is important work that you do because *The Straits Times* is not telling us all the stuff we need to know” (S14).

Another online media actor, an editor from one of Singapore's newer media start-ups, chimes in and adds that the mainstream media, in his view, are too passive in their news coverage which does not bode well with the public who wants help to make sense of things⁵⁸:

“And that is why Singaporeans are flocking online. Because they... they just... If you need to know about news you can get that one-liner, one tweet, but you want an interpretation of things, right? You want people who have been following this issue for a while to give their perspective. I think *Straits Times* is not doing a good job in that. I think they can do more” (S4).

S4 expresses great sympathy with the journalists working for the mainstream media that he thinks do not have an easy job but he still believes that they could do more. Or that is at least what he thinks the public wants from the media: “I think that they [the journalists] are pushing boundaries. It's just that they are taking baby steps and the public demands more from them” (S4).

While journalists in Singapore thereby might be trying to conform to the public's expectations, they are often choosing to conform with other, more powerful, norm senders. Though not fully content, the public still appreciate the mainstream media (and has high trust in them⁵⁹) which was also evident from the overview of the media market in chapter 4. But the public is increasingly beginning to use other news sources than the mainstream media and thereby showing their increasing dissatisfaction by employing their primary source of capital, economic capital. So far, the mainstream media have managed to dismiss the expectations from the state (or they have not been as vocalised as the public perhaps did not feel discontent), but the question is whether that strategy will be feasible in the future. Perhaps journalists in Singapore will have to take the public as a norm sender (and their economic capital) far more serious if they want to survive in a competitive media environment.

In Vietnam, the situation is somewhat different. Journalists do not feel that they are openly criticised for being mouthpieces of the Party as the journalists in Singapore or that the public necessarily wants them to abandon this role over another role. The public's normative scripts are not conflicting with the journalists' normative scripts. Instead it is a matter of adding additional roles, or broadening the normative and cognitive role orientations, to include roles that serve the public's other needs in a highly competitive media environment. It is a matter of catching their attention with something new and interesting. Journalists do not experience that the public wants them to be more critical or take more advocate approaches to the state or Communist Party. It is all about having information and stories that are interesting enough for the public to choose your media over any other. A managing editor from Vietnam lists some of the stories that draw the biggest crowds:

“[J]ournalists are still appreciated by readers in Vietnam, especially for those who do good their job, for example, in the case they have good reportages, good articles on some sensitive

⁵⁸ This corresponds well with the findings of Tandoc and Duffy (2016) who in their 2016 study of journalistic role expectations in Singapore found that people considered the function of “letting people express their views” as the most important one among 14 different functions. Overall, Tandoc and Duffy concluded that Singaporeans generally expected journalists to “serve the public, the nation, and the government – and in that order” (ibid., 3350).

⁵⁹ According to figures from the 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer, the media in Singapore are generally well trusted by the public. While trust in media was in decline globally (based on statistics from 28 countries), Singapore was among the five countries where more than 50 per cent of the population continued to trust the media (Edelman Intelligence 2017).

subjects, such as anti-corruption, abuse of powers, irresponsibility of official, smuggling, corrupting police” (V1).

However, it is not only the investigative stories that attract the audience. As a young reporter working for an online newspaper points out, entertaining or sensational stories also seem to be high on the public’s priority list. She has personally experienced how the public’s preferences have influenced her newsroom and developed into what she calls “one newspaper with two personalities” where one part of the newsroom continues to be “very serious” whereas the other part is acting “like a clown”. Though she knows that the changes have been necessary for the continuing survival of her workplace she still struggles to reconcile with the public’s demands for sensational news and the somewhat schizophrenic appearance of her newspaper:

“So it becomes more and more a desperation for hits and page views for the ways to attract more. Given the fact, that readers around the world tend to read tabloid more than serious news. So there is no other choice. So if we want to attract more readers we have to go this way. But how to keep the balance is very hard. It is also a struggle that... that... there is no limits to that tabloid. This year we think it is the worst. The craziest, the stupidest. Next year there will be another one. And even more even stupider. [...] there is no end. No winners. Only losers” (V5).

Not all chooses to see the public’s expectations as negatively as V5. Others such as this seasoned journalist working for a big regional newspaper sees it as an opportunity to strive for making better stories and work on the presentation of the news:

“The audience is much better informed and know many things already. It is therefore up to the journalists to provide them with something new. They are not listening in the same way as they used to – and that has made our jobs as journalists more difficult. We have to be more creative and find new angles on stories” (V7).

The demands of the public in Vietnam have not so much altered existing role orientations as they have added additional ones. In contrast to Singapore where journalists, or the journalistic field, to some degree have chosen to remain unmoved by the public’s demands, the journalistic profession in Vietnam has chosen to meet the needs of the public and negotiate a way to serve them as well. While journalists adhering to the core group advocating for a more professionalised journalistic field have not embraced these role orientations (as they go against their normative scripts), they can accept that other in the journalistic field have – as long as there is still room for the quality journalism that they think should be the profession’s first priority.

Expectations from media institutions

In the day-to-day practices in the newsroom, journalists are mostly exposed to expectations from their employers and supervisors, from their media institutions and editors. Given that they are employed to perform certain tasks to make the institution running they are confronted with expectations from this side constantly. Discussing sources, framing and presentation are common in newsroom all over. Although journalists are the ones producing stories, they are not the only ones having influence on a story. Copy editors will pick the story apart, change headlines and make corrections; the editor will perhaps request additional information, another framing or a rewrite. Producing a piece of journalism is a constant negotiation and an on-going process involving many different people – all of which are impacting journalists' role performance. As Hanitzsch et al. (2010) discovered in their comparative study of perceived influences on journalism in 17 countries, journalists attribute most prominence to the influences stemming from organisational, professional and procedural factors as these originate from the journalists immediate environment. "Journalists struggle with these limits almost every day; hence, the effects of these factors seem to be much more evident and tangible than external and more abstract influences" (Hanitzsch et al. 2010, 17), the researchers concluded.

The situation is no different in Singapore and Vietnam. Here journalists also take part in the daily negotiations over journalistic products and experience a variety of expectations to their performance. The expectations are usually most pronounced whenever there is a disagreement; when the journalist feel misunderstood, mistreated or their professional judgment disregarded. Again the conflicts have the biggest impact on journalists when they are revolving around what are considered the core values of journalism; when they cannot accept the normative scripts being enforced on them.

In Singapore, journalists feel that their media institution, typically represented by editors, expects them to be professional and responsible, stay within the boundaries of the laws and stick to the OB-markers (as could also be concluded based on the press awards, see chapter 4 and appendix 10). Most journalists seem to respect these expectations and have no problem conforming to them. Those who struggle are typically younger journalists or journalists not used to working within the local media environment – those who are still being socialised into the field.

As previously described, it is often difficult for newsrooms to hold on to new talent as many end up moving on to other jobs after a couple of years. S5 is one of them and she mentions the daily struggles with editors in the newsroom as one of the primary reasons for her departure. She felt that she had to compromise too often and ended up self-censoring:

"To give an example like I cover the opposition parties and sometimes we find stories or scoops that we want to report on. So we just pitch the stories. But sometimes later on it gets re-angled or maybe the coverage gets played down. Yeah. We try to fight and we try to fight through but it doesn't always work" (S5).

S5 could not get her own normative scripts to fit with the normative scripts of her workplace and instead of keeping on experiencing role strain, she decided to leave the profession. Others accept the system for what it is and might continue to fight for their ideals but will conform to expectations and rules in the end even if they do not win the battle. Another young journalist, originally from Malaysia and with working experience from Thailand, rationalises her experiences with editors enforcing the OB-markers

differently than S5. She was surprised that her stories were seen as controversial and edited in a way that made them “less forceful” but she did not find it to be unacceptable:

“...because I think in a place like this that is so tightly controlled it is small steps. You take small steps. You can't just like ball out and say: 'I'm a visionary'. You have to take small steps. So yes, I have in fact experienced it. I feel it. There is a lot less freedom here compared to a lot of countries - I mean the other countries that I've been in, including my own country. But it is not to the point that I can't do it anymore” (S9).

In Vietnam, the most apparent struggles and conflicts in the newsroom also transpire due to clashes between journalists' normative and cognitive scripts and their supervisors' and employers' demands and expectations. Although the editors and media institutions on a general level are expecting journalists to be professional and do good journalism in accordance to role orientations similar to the ones journalists themselves hold, they are also expecting journalists to deliver stories that will not hurt the enterprise – both politically and economically. This inadvertently leads to conflict when journalists feel that certain edits or constrictions violate their professional ideals and values. The struggles seem to be more common in Vietnam than in Singapore – especially for journalists working the political beats or in the more progressive newsrooms. One young journalist working the political beat for an online newspaper gives an example of a typical interaction over the content of a story:

“Just recently - it happens all the time - but just recently I can recall an example when I report a national assembly debate about an issue. And I finished my writing and I send it back to the newsroom and there was a reply from the newsroom that informed me that the opinion of the editor-in-chief is that I needed to add more positive factors into the reporting because my reporting is all negative. It was about the situation of the economy, not the corruption fighting. [...] I reported most of the remarks from the MPs, I quoted, is critical. So I had to add other quotes from other MPs that actually say good things about the same situation. So that's how the system work here” (V5).

Often journalists are not even informed when their stories are edited and changed. The copy editor, the editor and the board of directors will typically have the final say and change a story if they find it necessary – without including the journalist who's actually putting name to the story. For some journalists this is the ultimate violation of their professional integrity. They can accept that some things might be changed or even deleted but they cannot accept that it is happening without their knowledge. An experienced journalist who used to work for one of the country's biggest newspapers describe a situation where an editor changed the word “civil society” (which was considered taboo) to “civil organisation” in one of her stories – without informing her. The event ended up being one of the primary causes for her departure from the newspaper:

“Either I will write about the things I believe in and there's something that you may not like, I mean my editors may not like, you can cross it out, you don't use it. You don't use any of them. But you cannot change my words you cannot change my voice because then I look very stupid. Because the people who understand the issue will say 'why [did] she wrote this?’

It doesn't mean I am right in every issue, I write about, but it is not wrong in the very common sense. You cannot change it" (V2).

Journalists in Vietnam generally seem to be more frustrated with the demands than their colleagues in Singapore. The constantly changing boundaries make it difficult for them to comprehend which areas that are free to cover and which that are off-limits. In contrast to Singapore where the journalists have a better grasp of both the formal and informal boundaries of their profession, and thereby also have a better understanding of the expectations they are met with, journalists in Vietnam have to live with not knowing precisely what they can and cannot do. They have to accept that their employers' and supervisors' demands might change from one day to the next with no explanations required. It is not always out of politically concerns as with the case of the taboo word "civil society".

Yet, however frustrated journalists might be with their editors and media institutions they do know that their supervisors are often just the messengers and not the actual enforcers; not least when it comes to sensitive or politically charged topics. The media institutions are only acting as proxies for the state and the state's expectations. They are fully aware that the editors will be the firsts in line to lose their jobs or face persecutions if they step outside of certain boundaries. Especially in Vietnam, journalists are aware that it is the editors who are struggling the most. Despite the fact that they are jostling with their editors in the newsroom, journalists, for the most part, feel that the editors are on their side and try to take the battles to the upper levels whenever possible. Both V2 and V5 acknowledge that editors working in Vietnam have very difficult positions and face a lot of pressure. They have great respect for their editors and though they do not always agree with them they understand why they have to make tough decisions from time to time. V5 rationalises:

"[G]iven how hard it is to reporters, ourselves, imagine how it is for our editor-in-chief because he is the one that they [the authorities] will call, they will text the first place. So somehow I feel like it is such a pressure for an editor-in-chief. To work in this environment. As a reporter [I am] at least in my control of my stories. I can still write whatever I want and risk that it will be totally different when it is published but at least I can do that in my part - but for him it is not like that" (V5).

Yet, regardless of the respect for their editors, it is still seen as problematic if too many precautions are being put into place to live up to the expectations of the state. Just as journalists can find it difficult to figure out what their employers and/or editors want them to do it can be just as difficult deciphering what the state expects of them and their institutions.

Expectations from the state

The state and government have in both countries specific expectations to the media based on their normative ideas of the media's roles and purposes – and journalists are acutely aware of their relationship with the authorities although they are not necessarily in direct contact with these norm senders. As described above the direct contact (if it should take place) happens primarily at management levels but journalists recognise when the expectations are stemming from agents outside of their institutions.

In both countries, journalists feel that they are expected to live up to roles that are pushing the nation forward. This is not only in terms of development but also in terms of social cohesion. Journalists should be working with the interests of the nation as their primary guiding light. This means that the state expects the media, and the journalists, to cover stories that inform or educate citizens, create a sense of unity and get everyone on board with the national agenda. Though journalists have very few issues with these tasks and even in some cases identify with the roles that the tasks correspond to, problems arise when the roles come into conflict with some of the other roles journalists wish to perform like the more advocate roles and thereby also the overarching bridge-builder. Conflicts arise when journalists feel that the expectations they are met with are constricting their profession and asking them to disregard their professional ideals and standards. A young Vietnamese journalist finds the situation very frustrating at times, although she understands why the government wants the media to act in a certain way:

“It just mean that clearly this media environment and the mechanisms that is controlling it now doesn’t appreciate it and doesn’t encourage the journalists to do the best journalism that they can. They can do good journalism but the best journalism, that the readers, that the audience deserve, it is not encouraged here in the system. Do Vietnamese people deserve the same journalism as people around the world, as in Denmark? Of course they do. But it is not encouraged here. Because clearly, understandably, the ones with power, they don’t want anything to threaten them” (V5).

An experienced TV-journalist from Singapore agrees to the frustration but adds that one should not be surprised. This is how the system works and no one tries to hide it:

“So... if you talk about constraints we are not like the free media as you see in the Western world – we are not like that – and as a journalist when you go in to this industry in Singapore I think you go into it with your eyes open. It may be a bit frustrating at times having to navigate the landscape, and having to toe the line as well – having to be accountable to not just your bosses but also the government, right?” (S2).

Although it could appear as if the state in Singapore and the state/Party in Vietnam hold similar expectations to the media and journalists there are significant differences in their approaches to persuade the media of the legitimacy of their demands. The states choose fairly different strategies when communicating their expectations and trying to influence journalists’ cognitive scripts. While the state in Singapore relies heavily on the media’s own ability to interpret and enforce expectations based on laws and regulation (in connection with thoroughly adapted internal rules), the state (and Communist Party) in Vietnam has no issues with engaging directly with the media. Or as S7, a journalist with experience from working in both countries explains, the state in Singapore is much more sophisticated compared to the state in Vietnam. In Singapore, they trust the media to know what is expected of them whereas in Vietnam there is little trust and the state tends to, in her view, overreact.

Expectations through collaboration: The Singapore model

As mentioned in chapter 5, in Singapore, the close relationship with the government is seen as a trade-off. The government grants the media access to information and events and in return expects a certain

type of coverage. With this set-up, though, the media rely heavily on the state as an information provider. The state, in a sense, acts as gatekeeper of all official information. This can become problematic as many journalists agree that the state is very cautious with the information that it makes available to the media. As George (2012, 63) points out the state monopolises official data and “there is no right to information law with which facts and figures can be prised out of the hands of officials”. Combined with a zero tolerance for leaks and whistle-blowers (through the Official Secrets Act) journalists are heavily dependent on official press releases and statements. The state usually takes a proactive approach to information dissemination and holds press briefings in relation to events or when introducing new regulation and policies. The briefings will typically include suggestions on how the government would want the press to cover the issues with print and broadcast ready statements and messages. Furthermore, all ministries and government agencies have communication departments that are responsible for the direct contact with the press. “Because... actually the government tries to give you a lot of information... or the information that they want to have published. The other information, that you want to know more, it is very difficult to ask”, as S7 puts it. If a journalist needs information of any kind or have questions for the agencies, ministries or the ministers themselves they have to make formal requests through the communication departments and wait for their reply. When – and if – you get a reply depends on which media you work for, as some journalists working for non-mainstream media have come to realise. A freelance journalist recounts a situation where she, as a representative for a foreign news agency, along with a journalist from the international wire service AFP, a representative from the socio-political news site *The Online Citizen*, and someone from *The Straits Times* all were after the same story and requested a government statement:

“So *The Online Citizen* wrote - got zero reply. I wrote in as the [name of foreign press agency] and got a sting saying ‘oh, we will get back to you’. *The Straits Times* had a story at 7. My AFP friend got a statement at 8. And then at 9, I got a statement saying ‘sorry we cannot help you - you can get it from *The Straits Times*” (S14).

The seemingly direct access some media, like *The Straits Times*, enjoys does, however, not come without its own set of expectations from the state. A news editor from of the country’s biggest newspapers explains what the government would expect from the biggest media outlets when making major announcements:

“Let's just say on health insurance policy. That... they would expect [name of media], because it has a great impact on many people, they would expect [name of media], to give it prominent coverage. Give it balanced coverage and just cover it as extensively as possible. The way that they would not expect a smaller newspaper. So the smaller newspaper can go ‘my god this is so boring. I'll just have something short that can be a summary of everything and that's it’. Whereas for us we need to carry the main story. We probably have to do a commentary about it, we need to get profiles of people to illustrate how they are affected by these changes - there are things like that that you see as the responsibility of the newspaper” (S10).

Although most of the bigger news outlets accept this as being part of the trade-off for the access they get, some journalists are disgruntled about some of the stories that they have to cover – as the example provided by V21 in chapter 6 bore evidence of (see page 127).

Despite having to go against their ideals (such as the credibility ideal and aspirations to be social responsible) or their journalistic gut (like the highly regarded exclusivity news value), journalists do accept the trade-off more often than not and, wittingly or unwittingly, adopt the state's normative scripts. Even if the media on the surface have full autonomy to set the media agenda and choose which stories they want to pursue they are still relying on the state for information and access. In addition, the relationship with the state is also something that must be taken into consideration. Is a story worth pursuing if there is a chance it might cause damage to the relationship or even hurt the cooperation? An editor-in-chief from one of the country's biggest newspapers thinks the potential consequences for not following the expectations, which could result in losing the privileges that comes with the job, play a big part when the media and journalists end up conforming to the state's expectations:

”[I]t is a sophisticated government machinery, you know? The essence of it is co-option. You come to my side, I'll give you privileged information, and in return this is what we expect. And if you do it in another way then well we'll hit you where it hurts in your pockets and you are out of a job'. That is as simply as it gets. So we don't play a watchdog role - that's one reason” (S17).

S17 voices one of the concerns that the media and journalists typically have: the fear of repercussions if they do not live up to the governments' expectations. Though backlashes are rarely seen in today's media environment, the fear continues to exist and guide the journalists even though some question whether or not there would be any real consequences if they chose a different path. S17 himself also questions whether or not the media in Singapore should let go of their fears and be less compliant to the expectations from the state. As far as he sees it, it would also be in the interests of the state to loosen their expectations and have more trust in the media's ability to be responsible – especially in the current media environment where the mainstream media are increasingly being pressured by online and social media:

“The last thing they want is a situation like Malaysia when the... the print media there, nobody really even looks at it anymore because they know all of it is nonsense and then you have no outlet for your own information. The government needs us. Probably less than we need them. But they still do need us. So it is in their interest also to make sure that we have credibility and things like that” (S17).

A seasoned editor with more than 30 years of experience agrees. He believes that the key to change the system and give way to a more autonomous media environment where journalists are free to choose their roles lies with the state. Not just for the benefit of the journalistic profession but also for the state. Continuing to hold on to a dated understanding of the media with corresponding dated expectations will not be in their best interests, according to S1:

“I think the biggest player in the media here is not the reader, not the journalist, not the advertiser - it's the government. The government knows that it should relax... it has to come from the government. [...] And the government has to do it because the only platform that it has to get across its message is *The Straits Times*. And if more and more people is not reading *The Straits Times* then the government is not getting its message through” (S1).

The predictions of S1 seem to be not far from reality. Although some of the new online media outlets continue to experience difficulties getting access to information it has, nonetheless, become easier for them to get the attention of the government and state agencies – with what that entails as well. A journalist from one of the online news sites recounts how her media has begun building relations with the state, which has given them, the journalists, better access but not without some – potential – restrictions:

“...some agencies of government are trying to forge a better relationship with us but in that process there are all these compromises. You know, they go like: ‘Why do you need to go with this angle, it makes us look bad’. That kind of things. Or: ‘I am trying to help you here, can you help me?’. There is a lot of these kind of things” (S11).

Though the state seems to be interested in changing some of its practices it could look as if they are continuing seeing the relationship with the media as a trade-off between access to information and expectations to coverage. While rarely uttered, the expectations emanating from the state and government are very prominent in journalists' minds, consciously and subconsciously. In combination with the state's monopoly on information and meticulous gatekeeping practices journalists, and editors specifically, often find themselves conforming to the state's expectations or even adopting their normative scripts to reduce the risk of experiencing role strain and role conflicts. If their normative scripts mirror the state's normative scripts, they can continue working as journalists without constantly having to cope with stress or dissatisfaction with their profession. Conforming is, at the end of the day, easier than negotiating.

Expectations through examples: The Vietnam way

In Vietnam, the nature of the relationship between the state/Party and the media is of a different kind than in Singapore. Whereas the state in Singapore has tried to create a model that elevates the media to a more (perceived) equal position by offering information in return for coverage, the state in Vietnam has no intention of instating a trade-off with the media. The Press Law (2016, article 4 §1) clearly states that the media “is the voice of Party and state agencies, socio-political organizations, socio-politico-professional, social organizations, and socio-professional organizations”. Even though not all media see themselves as the voice of the Party or feel all that closely linked to the state, all journalists know that a certain amount of compliance is expected of them. A managing editor from a business newspaper describes it like this:

“We have the right to inform people, as all journalists in the world do, but not in all fields, neither in all kind of people and we must do, in lots of cases, the job with "directions" from The Party, via numerous state/governmental agencies” (V1).

The directions, V1 mentions, should, however, not be understood as direct censorship. There are no censors present in the newsrooms. Stories can be redacted and removed on Party officials' or government agencies' initiatives but it rarely happens before a story has broken. As in Singapore, the state in Vietnam (or rather, the Communist Party) also to some extent relies on the media to know what is expected of them. But in contrast to Singapore, they have no problem getting their hands dirty if they think the media have overstepped a boundary – despite the fact that those boundaries are far from clear. And perhaps not even clear for the state itself, one could add. Instead of giving clear directions, the state tends to communicate their expectations through statutory examples⁶⁰. If someone has done something perceived as being out of line, the state will make sure that action is taken to prevent others from making similar mistakes in the future. In October 2016, for instance, the news website PetroTimes⁶¹ was suspended and its editor-in-chief Nguyen Ngu Phong fired and stripped of his press card over “journalistic violations”. The violations have remained unspecified by the authorities but many believe the intervention happened due to an interview the website carried with the exiled writer Bui Thanh Hieu discussing the disappearance of a former senior Communist party official (CPJ, 2016; Pham, 2016). Stripping journalists of their press card, withdrawing licenses and removing editors are common ways to signal disapproval of certain behaviour but more drastic measures such as prosecuting and jailing journalists for different degrees of “propagandising against the state” are also utilised practices to enforce expectations. Yet, that does not mean that journalists can fully rely on these statutory examples as a tool to interpret the state's expectations. As many journalists point out, the expectations may change over time and with different subjects depending on the state's current situation and interests. A managing editor from one of the country's biggest newspapers tries to put words to the confusion:

“You cannot write what you want to write. You cannot openly talk about the truth. Sometimes. Not always. Sometimes. There are some truths that you cannot write. And sometimes you ask as [a] politician, not just as a journalist, because if you want to write something you must think twice if this... if the story has some impact on for example diplomatic relationships or have any impact on the party, on the government” (V10).

Journalists have to think ahead and try to predict what might be expected of them when it comes to a certain story. How should they report on this? Can they take a critical stance or should they rather stick to official statements, facts and figures? Especially when it comes to sensitive areas regarding corruption, diplomatic relationships, or political issues, journalists have to thread carefully and assess the current situation before deciding on an approach. As explained in chapter 6, the state accepts more critical stories on economic issues compared to political issues. In fact, they expect the journalists working the economic beat to scrutinise policies and actions to help push the nation forward. An experienced editor from one of the country's top economic newspapers describes the free reins he sees his publication having compared to other publications:

⁶⁰ Cain (2013) came to a similar conclusion and, with the help of Gainsborough (2010), came to the conclusion that the state uses “uncertainty” as an “instrument of rule” (Cain 2013, 92; Gainsborough 2010, 71).

⁶¹ <http://petrotimes.vn/>

“Like we can criticize economic policies that the government is proposing or we can look for expected figures. We can bring op-eds. [...] So our newspaper is well known for its critical tone of the government policy. How is it possible? That is because the government really want to know what is going on with the economy and what is really going on with the business circle. So they rely on us a lot. As the bridge. To know whether the policy is having an impact or not. Whether it is well-received. Whether it is creating negative consequences that are unintended. So I must say that we are fortunate in that aspect” (V11).

Similar to Singapore there are also variance in the expectations depending on the type and reach of the media. Not surprisingly, the media closely connected to the Communist Party (like the newspaper *Nhân Dân* published directly by the Communist Party and the public broadcaster Vietnam Television, *VTV*) are expected to carry all messages from the Party to the people in alignment with the mouthpiece and/or nation builder role, whereas media outlets further removed from the authorities have more freedom to choose their roles. But the freedom does not come without any caveats. Working for media outlets that have a reputation for being more progressive put journalists in the spotlight. Not just by the people but also by the state who, in the view of journalists working for these publications, is more attentive to the stories they produce. A young journalist working for one of the more critical online newspapers explains how they in her newsroom sometimes have to step more carefully (and self-censor stories) than other publications that are still flying under the Party’s radar:

“And there is even another ridiculous situation that among 100 newspapers just a handful of them are closely watched by the officers who are responsible for making sure that there is nothing crazy going on in the media. It is the same issues and there are some controversial issues that can be reported - it can be reported on this newspaper, on this side - but impossible in our site. Because somehow they only read my newspaper! (laughing) I don’t mean that we are big or something but among hundreds of newspapers just a handful of them [are] like blacklisted” (V5).

For the more progressive media it is therefore always a matter of evaluating whether or not it is worth performing some of the more advocate roles that might go against the state’s current expectations and normative scripts. Some also resolve to more creative ways of living up to the expectations while still maintaining a certain amount of autonomy. Given that part of the state’s expectations relates to disseminate messages from the government to the people, the journalists can choose to live up to that expectation and deliver the messages yet in a manner that shows their autonomy. S7, for instance, describes how you can choose to only present part of a statement, while V5 suggests concrete labels that clearly indicate when the state is the sender to preserve one’s professional distance.

The structure of the Vietnamese state’s strategy to influence journalists’ cognitive scripts with a shortage of clear expectations and communication through statutory examples leads journalists to believe that the state has very little faith in their abilities. Most government officials simply do not respect journalists. “They see reporters as some kind of tool”, as V20, a journalist working the international beat for a major online newspaper puts it. The situation does not do anything good for the relationship between the state and the media – leaving both parties with little trust in one another. With a system built on fear without clear guidelines, navigation is difficult. Not just for the journalists but also for the

information providers themselves. Whereas Singapore has built an effective information machinery where all government agencies and ministries have communication departments feeding the media, Vietnam has a far less institutionalised system with large variances in access to information. Many journalists working in Vietnam are frustrated with the little access to information they have. Since the government agencies themselves are not always aware of what they can and cannot give access to it is a constant hassle for journalists to get hold of reliable information, as was also discussed in chapter 5.

Especially in the current media environment, journalists hope that the state will change its practices and consider other means of managing the media. With unverified information roaming around on social media, the state needs media professionals to sort out facts from fiction. Only by opening up, giving journalists better access to information and trust in their abilities to report on issues in a responsible way can the system function properly in the new media environment. Some journalists do, though, report that changes are happening even if it is primarily due to individual efforts by more media savvy government officials⁶² and not something stemming from the top tiers of the Party. But for now journalists continue to be left with vague ideas of the specific expectations the state has to their roles and responsibilities. With little trust, limited access to information and the fear of repercussion forever wavering over their heads, journalists are kept in a limbo position where they might end up constructing a skewed vision of the government's expectations to their roles. Or as V20 puts it: "Sometimes people will fall to the trap - your own trap - like self-censorship".

In contrast to their colleagues from Singapore, journalists are not as much met with expectations that are in conflict with their own normative scripts as they are met with vague and ambiguous expectations. In fact, as we saw in the previous chapter, journalists in Vietnam have found ways to get their normative scripts to work in unison with some of the state's normative scripts by emphasising aspects of the more submissive roles that correspond with their ideals. Problems therefore arise when the state is not clear on what it expects of journalists. This leads (some) journalists to experiment with roles or test the waters with stories – with potential high risks if their gambles do not work. Although most journalists opt for the safest strategy and conform to the state's role expectations (however vague they may be), some try the negotiation strategy in an effort to push journalism forward and mark the boundaries of the journalistic profession.

Conclusion

The expectations, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam feel they are being met with by the three groups of norm senders, do, as described above, not necessarily correspond with one another. What one group expects of journalists can differ significantly from what another group expects – and all of them in one way or another go against elements of journalists' own norms and ideals. It is evident that journalists are in no position to satisfy all expectations simultaneously, which places them in stressful role positions. The strain may even lead to role conflicts when the values and norms attributed to one role, or one set of expectations, "violates the values in another" (Turner 2002, 250). To cope with these strains, journalists will have to decide between the conflicting norms and either try to negotiate with norm senders, conforming to them or withdrawing from the situation (Biddle 1986, 83).

⁶² Like the current Minister of Health, Nguyen Thi Kim Tien, who in 2014 set up a Facebook page to engage directly with the public (and the media). In 2015, the Facebook page was officially recognised by the authorities. The page can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/botruongboyte.vn/>

As is evident from the analysis of the expectations journalists from Singapore and Vietnam are met with by the public, their media institutions and the state, journalists on a whole in the two countries often end up conforming to the expectations of (the most dominant) norm senders – or find a way to work with them.

While the public and media institutions have an impact on journalists' role priorities, the state is clearly the norm sender with the biggest influence. Journalists in both countries led themselves be guided by the state's expectations, knowingly or unknowingly. A fear of repercussions overshadow what can be gained by conforming to their own norms and ideals or the expectations of other norm senders.

The journalistic field in Singapore has chosen the most straightforward way when it comes to conforming to the state's normative scripts and have to some degree even adopted its scripts in an effort to legitimise their choice of coping strategy. By accepting the norms as their own and embedding them in the field's *illusio*, the journalistic field need not worry that conflicts will continue to resurface whenever new agents enter the field. Socialisation processes will secure that the norms are being accepted and adopted. That does not mean that journalists are not aware of the state's impact. But they need to find a way to legitimise their choice to be able to continue working as journalists.

The journalistic field in Vietnam also conforms to the state's expectations but instead of adopting the scripts as in Singapore, journalists to a bigger degree chooses to emphasise other aspects of the more submissive roles to legitimise conforming to them. In other words, they find a way to work with the expectations without necessarily feeling that they have been forced to perform in a certain way. In contrast to what was hypothesised in chapter 2, journalists in Vietnam do not seem to be more prone to experience role conflicts than their colleagues in Singapore – or they have found a way to cope with the conflicting expectations that reduces the risk of conflict. Furthermore, given the fact that the state in Vietnam suffer from a lack of clarity and badly communicated expectations, journalists will often have to set up the boundaries of the profession themselves through a trial-and-error approach – which seem to be in alignment with what was hypothesised in chapter 2 about professionalising journalistic fields. Although far from all journalists engage in this “boundary work” (Carlson 2015), it does give journalists the opportunity to experiment more with their roles. Embarking on this endeavour does, however, require status and high amounts of capitals, as it is unsure what the consequences for overstepping a potential boundary might be. Most journalists therefore end up choosing safe strategies and conforming to readings of the state's expectations – with the risk of self-censuring far from what is necessary.

Not everyone is, however, able to conform to the expectations or find ways to legitimise conforming strategies. In both fields, some journalists do end up capitulating and leave the industry altogether. The conflicting expectations are putting too much stress on them and they find it impossible to compromise – especially when they have to sacrifice their own norms and ideals. An experienced journalist who used to work for one of Vietnam's biggest and most influential newspapers describes how she ended up losing all interest in the profession due to the constant pressure she faced:

“When you feel that your job is not creating impact or you feel frustrated with all the censorship then you'll lose all the pride you had in the job. You don't trust that you are doing something good” (V2).

But the journalists who continue in the industry eventually find peace with the situation and accept that they have to compromise. Being socialised – or assimilated – within the journalistic field means accepting

the paradox that constricts it and only the ones capable of accepting the situation become fully integrated members of the field.

The struggles experienced by journalists do, however, not only have consequences for the individual. As we will see next, the constant negotiations with conflicting (or ambiguous) expectations along with the internal battles for dominance also structure and position the journalistic fields but may and impact their future trajectories.

Discussion: Positioning the journalistic fields

Role struggles may not only have consequences for position-holders, their self-perception and job satisfaction it may also have repercussions for the trajectory of a profession. Although some uncertainty and disagreement about roles and responsibilities are unavoidable when dealing with a profession such as journalism that is in contact with many different external forces imposing ideals and expectations, too many struggles might provoke the entire field to reassess its basic foundations. Whereas the preceding chapters have dealt with the journalistic profession on a micro level and looked into journalists' understanding of good journalism, their role orientations and the role strain they experience when confronted with differing expectations to their roles, this chapter will discuss the consequences of the difficulties on mezzo and macro levels.

As explained in chapter 2, Bourdieu describes how fields are sites of struggles. Agents within a field compete for the dominating positions using their capitals as stakes in the game. Despite the fact that these struggles are commonplace, there needs to be a certain agreement about a field's fundamental elements among its agents. If, for instance, there is too much disagreement over *illusio* and *doxa*, or the roles and responsibilities of the field, it may cause irrevocable damage. But conflicting or ambiguous expectations to role behaviour or the arrival of new agents challenging the status quo and imposing new visions of the field might cause an episode of contention or, in grave situations, a field crisis (Fligstein and McAdam 2011) which can disrupt the field's stability and send it in new and transformative directions.

This chapter will synthesise the findings from the analytical chapters and discuss some of the more prominent difficulties, the journalistic profession is facing in Singapore and Vietnam. To start with, it will commence where the preceding chapter left us and discuss the consequences of role struggles on the fields' internal structure. Then it will look into the consequences of new agents – or competitors – in the fields fostered by the arrival of the Internet. With the challenges caused by these factors in mind, the chapter will examine the current status of the fields and the different capitals conditioning them before ending with a discussion of their future trajectories.

Strained roles – changing fields?

As discussed in chapter 7, journalists in both Singapore and Vietnam experience issues with their role orientations. The different expectations they are faced with put pressure on their understanding of their own roles and responsibilities and place them in a situation of constant negotiation over which roles to

conform with. Whereas journalists in Singapore have a far clearer understanding of their profession with more rules and regulations to guide them, journalists in Vietnam have to work with ill-defined but highly consequential expectations that leave them in somewhat uncertain positions. Role struggles are unavoidable in both fields but where it primarily takes the form of role conflict in Singapore, it is more common for journalists in Vietnam to experience role ambiguity. Although it is typically seen as the individual's own task to resolve these situations and decide on a coping strategy, the question is whether the conflicting and ambiguous manifestations might also have an effect on the professional field as a whole.

Singapore: entry level conflicts quelled by strong conservation

As described in chapter 7, journalists in Singapore tend to resolve their role conflicts through conformity – mostly to the state's expectations. The journalists that end up staying in the profession have found peace with the rules and regulations conditioning the field. Although new journalists entering the field might hold other norms and ideals and have ambitions about changing the status quo, they either end up conforming or quitting. Very rarely do they try to challenge the *doxa* or negotiate with norm senders' expectations.

The direct confrontations with the state belong to the past. The so-called “knuckleduster era” (mentioned in appendix 7), where journalists tested the waters with investigative stories of questionable government schemes⁶³ with serious repercussions from the state, is over. Instead the state and the journalistic field have reached a sort of settlement. The state granted journalists working in the mainstream media access to information under the pretext that they followed the state's unwritten guidelines for accepted behaviour. Today, the government rarely meddles in the media industry directly (at least not out in the open) but let the industry take care of enforcement of rules and regulations. The state trusts the industry with the task instead of getting involved – even if it still lingers in the background.

In contrast to what was hypothesised in chapter 2, the journalistic field in Singapore does not appear to have more autonomy vis-à-vis the political field compared to Vietnam. Even if the media are not solely owned by the state, the state still holds power over the journalistic field. The field orients itself in accordance to political capital but interestingly it appears to do it on its own initiative. The state has successfully achieved getting the journalistic field to adopt many of its normative scripts of good and responsible journalism. The state's interpretation of the media as serving national interests has to some degree found its way into the *illusio* of the journalistic field just as the unwritten rules, the OB-markers, have found its way into the journalistic *doxa*. Journalists in Singapore today see their responsibilities and purposes as serving the people and the nation. As was covered in chapter 5, they find value in stories that aid the public in their daily lives. Though not completely sold on the nation builder role, they do nonetheless identify with it.

Yet, that does not mean that all of the state's ideals have found way into the journalistic *illusio* or that journalists only let themselves be guided by these ideals. As all fields, the journalistic field in Singapore pursue autonomy from external forces and interests to set them apart from other fields. They

⁶³ Former Straits Times' editor-in-chief Cheong Yip Seng (2012) for instance recounts in his memoirs how a journalist from the now defunct publication *New Nation* in 1973 broke a story about the Singapore Armed Forces inviting Malays to enlist under the pretext of receiving a Singapore citizenship. The story ended up costing the journalist an enlistment notice – even though he had already completed four years of national service. Other examples include shutting down newspapers and firing editors.

need ideals that can give them belief in their field's uniqueness if they shall be able to continue to play the game. But to avoid conflicts while still legitimating the profession, the field has settled on ideals that do not oppose the state's normative scripts too much. Instead of emphasising ideal related to an understanding of journalism as the fourth estate or watchdog of society and the field has sought value in other ideals – the best example being facticity. With its attention to facts it appears neutral and objective and corresponds well with some of the other ideals of the profession. Being able to gather facts and present them in an objective manner becomes key to the practice of journalism in Singapore and something worth striving for regardless of topic, genre or media outlet. When it comes to news values, the field has in a similar fashion reached agreement on values that are not in direct conflict with the rules and regulations although still meeting generally accepted norms about serving the public and having social responsibilities. Chapter 5 showed how journalists tend to favour stories that fulfil criteria related to timeliness, relevance, identification, impact and exclusivity whereas stories with conflict, controversies and drama are admired but rarely pursued.

Role conflicts do occur but they are most evident on entry-level and often neutralised during socialisation into the field. "You work within your constraints", as S2 recounts her normally telling young journalists starting out in the industry. As a consequence, the field has so far successfully been able to secure strong conservation that change little about the field's position in social space. By adopting the rules and regulations originating from the state (and particularly from the founding father Lee Kuan Yew and his vision of the media), the journalistic field has accepted its position and even taken ownership of it. The field is not directly coerced into the position but chose to be structured in accordance to a combination of political and economic interests. With its deep-rooted rules and regulations and mandatory socialisation processes for new entrants, the conservation strategy is as strong as ever. Emerging role conflicts are resolved with journalists either conforming to the status quo and finding gratification by emphasising ideals they can relate to without disturbing the peace – or they quit the profession. Transformations stemming from the inside of the field thereby seem inconceivable and perhaps only severe exogenous shocks may alter the current trajectory of the field and inspire change.

Vietnam: ambiguity leads to diversity and incoherence

In Vietnam, the journalistic field might be positioned similarly to the field in Singapore but its trajectory has been quite different and with respect to its current struggles it may in the future deviate significantly from its counterpart. In contrast to Singapore, journalists in today's Vietnam have to work with far less defined boundaries. Before the *Doi Moi* reforms were introduced in the late 1980s, journalists had a clear vision of their roles and purposes. With all media being state-owned and financed through subsidies, journalists saw themselves as being something similar to government officials working within the communication and information branch of the state. Political capital was the prevalent currency in the field and few questioned the position of the field and the forces configuring it.

That changed after the reforms were set in motion and the state asked the media to seek other forms of revenue (Huong 2008). Economic capital challenged the dominating political capital and set the journalistic field on a new trajectory. All of the sudden, journalists and media outlets could no longer solely conform to the state's expectations but had to take other external forces into consideration if they wanted to survive in the new competitive media market. The state similarly found itself in a dilemma as it still wanted to reserve some control over the media but grappled figuring out how to navigate in the new media environment. In contrast to Singapore where there appeared to be consensus as to how the

media should be regulated and what should be deemed as acceptable journalism, the state in Vietnam was far less coherent and, as described in chapter 7, ended up with an inconsistent media management strategy influenced more by political conniving than clear visions of an ideal type of journalism for the country. The result has been ambiguity as journalists have struggled grasping what to conform with. Expectations have not just been incongruous or contradictory they have also, to some degree, been non-existent with journalists from time to time fumbling to figure out what was allowed and accepted and what was not. Compared to Singapore, the state was therefore not equally successful in instating rules and regulations in the journalistic *doxa* or dominant ideals in the field's *illusio*. Instead the profession's rules and ideals appear to have been developed more in tandem with the state through trials and errors. Journalists have to some extent had more to say in the development of the profession although the trial and error approach have taken its toll on them and created a more dispersed journalistic field.

In contrast to Singapore's tight-knit journalistic field where there is consensus about ideals and practices across genres and outlets, Vietnam's field is far more diversified. By journalists' accounts some media are much closer to the state apparatus pursuing roles similar to the ideals of the subsidised pre-*Doi Moi* era; some let themselves be steered by the market and economic capital staying clear of potential sensitive issues and idealise sensations; and, some try to elevate the standards of the profession and produce "quality" journalism inspired by practices and ideals upheld in other countries while still making sure to stay within the boundaries of the field. Each group has found a way to deal with the state's ambiguous expectations. Whereas the first group has stayed close to the state and government and more or less follow their bidding, the second group has simply avoided contact with the state by focusing on issues and topics the state has little interest in. The third group has, however, experimented with different approaches to deal with the issue in an attempt to secure more autonomy. By carefully concentrating on specific topics (such as economy, see chapter 6 and 7), using other approaches to cover an issue (such as choosing human interest stories instead of critical investigative approaches, see chapter 6) and developing thoughtful framing strategies (such as providing positive angles on sensitive topics, see chapter 6), the journalists from this group has managed to pursue other ideals while staying clear of potential repercussions. All three groups do, however, struggle to impose their dominance over the field and championing their version of *illusio* and *doxa*. While the first group seeks to draw the field towards the political pole and the second, knowingly or unknowingly, toward the economic pole, the third group tries to juggle both poles while simultaneously ordaining journalistic capital as a legitimate currency in the field. Currently, the group advocating for quality journalism, the core group, appears to hold the dominating positions within the field but their dominance depends on their ability to work with the other groups and balancing all three dominant forces influencing the field. The group has in the past experienced serious drawbacks whenever they have tried to move the field in a more autonomous direction by experimenting with sensitive issues or other news values which in effect has caused the field to move closer to the political pole for a period (such as the period following the PMU18 corruption case, see chapter 5). As of current, the field is not strong enough to distance itself from not only the political but also the economic pole. While journalistic capital has proven itself a legitimate currency in the field it is not as powerful as the other two capitals.

Due to the diversity of the field and the role ambiguity, journalists in Vietnam have to work with, the field cannot be said to hold a conservation as strong as Singapore. Though journalists manage to work with the ambiguity and the strong diversity, only little disturbance is needed to challenge status quo. Perhaps the field will be transformed as a result of one of the three groups succeeding in pulling it in

their direction, or, perhaps it will end up being divided into three separate fields with their own individual norms, ideals and roles. As for now, however, the field continues to uphold its boundaries and maintain its diversified members but the question is how long it can retain that trajectory. Not least if faced with an exogenous shock similar to the introduction of the *Doi Moi* reforms in the 1980s that forever altered the profession.

New actors – new trajectories?

A potential exogenous shock that may currently be testing both fields is triggered by the arrival of the Internet and the accompanying online information and communication agents. The Internet has brought about not just local competition in the form of online newspapers and news aggregative sites but also competition from international news outlets and social media. The new medium has already changed many news routines and practices but the question is whether it has also had – or will have – any major impact on the fields’ norms, ideals, roles and responsibilities? New agents have arrived in the journalistic field and as all newcomers, they will initially pose a threat to the dominating agents as they may hold other visions for the field and its future trajectory. New entrants will typically choose succession strategies to gain access to the field’s dominant positions (Swartz 1997, 125). They are not “bound by the conventions of the field and instead are free to bring new definitions of the situation and new forms of action” (Fligstein and McAdam 2011, 15). In both fields, some of the new agents have already caused a lot of stir and insecurity about the future prospects of the profession but whether or not they will be successful in actually transforming the fields or changing their current trajectories rely on a number of factors. Fligstein and McAdam (2011), for instance, point to the strength of the original dominating field agents (what they call the incumbent group), the defection of inside challengers (the original dominated agents) to newcomers’ side and the attitude of state actors toward the invading group (ibid., 15). I would argue that considering the three proposed factors do not suffice. The field’s degree of cohesion and capacity to endure exogenous shocks should also be considered along with the distribution of the different capitals positioning and structuring the field.

Singapore: harnessing new challengers

In Singapore, the arrival of new non-mainstream online media outlets and highly active social media users engaging in information dissemination and similar acts closely related to journalism has put pressure on the journalistic field. Though the journalists may not have considered these new actors a threat to begin with they quickly established themselves as a force to be reckoned with. The 2006 General Elections in Singapore was for many an eye-opening experience as the blogosphere began to participate in the political debate on whole new levels (Ibrahim 2009). After the election, the power of the new medium became apparent to everyone, “showing how ordinary citizens could create and share information not found in mainstream sources such as newspapers and television” (Soon and Samsudin 2016). New online media outlets were established and some, like the citizen journalism site *The Online Citizen* (established in 2006) and the *BuzzFeed*-inspired news site *Mothership.sg* (established in 2013), quickly gained large followings. Little by little the journalistic field got invaded by newcomers circumventing the traditional entrance points and thereby the socialisation processes normally being required of new agents to secure common agreement of the field’s norms, ideals and rules.

As described in chapter 6, journalists have already accepted the fact that they are no longer alone in controlling the information stream (or “information tsunami” as S12 aptly calls it). The realisation has forced them to find new ways of legitimating their profession and expertise. The emergence of the fact-checker role is one attempt put in motion to solve the issues. Although fact-checking is not a new practice in journalism – and especially not in Singapore where the ideal of facticity is seen as paramount – highlighting it as a role that can only be played by professional journalists is new. As journalists see it, only professionals who know the inner workings of the profession, its routines and practices, and who have been accredited with access to information, are able to fulfil this role adequately. Retrieving the role from the profession’s *doxa* can only be described as an attempt to visible mark the boundaries of the field and highlight the difference among the dominating and the dominated agents – the professionals and the amateurs.

Although journalists in Singapore feel the pressure from the new agents, they need not worry. At least not right now. With a very coherent field and agents that by and large agree on norms, ideals and practices, the intruders will find it difficult to create any major impact. Not least due to the fact that the journalistic field and its dominating agents have the state on their side. As Fligstein and McAdams (2011) suggest, state actors can yield a powerful influence on the outcome of field crises by imposing “conditions on the field as a condition of restoring order” (ibid., 17). In Singapore, the state chose to set up regulations for online sites dealing with political issues early on. A few years later, the regulatory framework was, as described in chapter 4, elaborated to include sites dealing with news dissemination. Through the different frameworks and licensing schemes introduced, the state has in effect managed to coerce the new online agents into conforming to the same rules and regulations as the mainstream media. Even if the new agents have not gone through the same socialisation processes as the original agents they are forced to consider and comply with the same written and unwritten rules if they want to continue their endeavours in the journalistic field. The new agents might have started out as intruders challenging the status quo but have in reality ended up cooperating in order to become recognised players in the journalistic field. Only by accepting the dominating rules of the games could the new agents get access to the field. As Fligstein and McAdams (2011, 14) point out, they might even be dependent on the continuation of the status quo to even be able to position themselves as “alternatives” to the mainstream media.

The new online media outlets’ attempts at positioning themselves as alternative voices with new approaches to journalism have therefore so far proved no match confronted with the field’s strong conservation and continuous state support. Though they did manage to shake the field, they have so far not succeeded in transforming it or changing its trajectory significantly. Order has for the time-being been restored but the confrontations are probably not over yet. The question is whether the field will succeed in upholding its strong conservation in the long run and whether the state will continue to offer its support to the field. Without assistance from the state in marking boundaries through laws and regulation, the field will be forced to find support from other forces – potentially requiring transformation and repositioning of the field. Due to the lack of serious competition, the journalistic field has for instance not been forced to conform to the public’s demands and role expectations. But they may need to pay more attention to this norm sender (and their economic capital) in the future if the competition increases with drop in revenues to follow. So far, though, the dominating agents can rely on political capital as the key power structuring and supporting the field, its current position and trajectory.

Vietnam: new entrants increase the pressure

Due to the later deployment of the Internet, the journalistic field in Vietnam have only just recently been truly confronted with the pressure from online and social media. Despite the country initially lagging behind compared to the development in Singapore, Vietnam have caught up and the situation journalists are facing here is even more insecure. The online media scene has exploded with thousands of outlets producing and aggregating news (see chapter 4). With continuously improved access to the Internet, the Vietnamese population is flocking online and social media sites such as Facebook are becoming increasingly popular – not just as social networking tools but also as means of communication, information dissemination and political action (such as “6700 people for 6700 trees” movement mentioned in chapter 6). In the beginning, journalists were mostly concerned about classic forms of competition with traditional types of media outlets setting up their business online such as *VnExpress* (established in 2001) and *VietNamNet* (established in 2003). Although they challenged the field and introduced new practices (mostly due to them publishing online instead of on paper), they did not alter the fundamental norms and ideals. In fact, they reinforced the core group’s dominance of the field by adhering to their interpretation of journalism. Today, they are even seen as key members of the core group and champion its ideals as much as its original members.

It did, however, not last long before other types of media outlets began appearing with divergent interpretations, values and ideals. A whole new industry emerged that most journalists from the core group describe as primarily consisting of tabloids going after sensational stories with little regards to journalistic values and ethics. These agents, along with citizen journalists finding audiences via blogs and social media platforms, are the biggest threat in the minds of the journalists. As in Singapore, journalists in Vietnam have experienced significant loss of authority over the news stream. They are no longer the only ones setting the news agenda or curating the news for the general public. Similarly to their colleagues in Singapore, the journalists have struggled to find ways to legitimate their profession confronted with the challengers – with the fact-checker role being one attempt at a solution.

Paying increasingly attention to the idealistic foundation of the profession, the *illusio* and the *doxa*, has however made journalists acutely aware of the diversity of the field which have resulted in even deeper trenches among the competing groups. The currently dominating group represented by the journalists that adhere to “quality” journalism seems, however, most concerned about the current situation. It is primarily their positions that are being threatened. If they lose their dominance, the journalistic capital that they have fought to instate as a legitimate capital in the field will be devalued and the other forms will take over.

In contrast to the journalistic field in Singapore, the journalistic field in Vietnam cannot rely on the state’s support. Even though the state has attempted to contain the different online information providers they have not been as consistent and successful as their counterparts in Singapore. Through a – for the Vietnamese state – typical manner, the state has opted for a strategy where Internet legislation is installed when a problem appears or a political situation needs attention (as mentioned in chapter 4). Whereas the Singaporean state early on adopted a strategy to rein in the new online media outlets in a fashion similar to the one being used on the mainstream media, the Vietnamese state has been less sophisticated. Although all media outlets still have to be affiliated with the ruling Communist Party to obtain a media license, it is possible to find loopholes and though not officially allowed private media ownership is in fact achievable (see chapter 4). As long as these media outlets stay clear of sensitive issues and for instance concentrate on entertainment news or celebrity gossip, the state pays them little interest. The state’s

attention remains with the media working in the boundary areas of the profession and engaging in negotiations over roles and responsibilities. Even though the state expresses an interest in sustainable quality journalism (especially the types dealing with the economic development of the country) there is little interest in supporting their attempts to become more autonomous of political interests and harmonising the journalistic field, its norms, ideals and practices. The state therefore continues its day-to-day media management practices much to the chagrin of the journalists trying to steer the field in a more autonomous and – in their view – professionalised direction.

With insufficient support from state agents and very little cohesion, the journalistic field in Vietnam finds itself in a difficult position. The current dominating core of the field is struggling to maintain its dominance. Even the strongholds of the profession (like *VietNamNet*, *Tuoi Tre* and *Thanh Nien*) have been forced to seek different types of revenue (or even close parts of their businesses like *Thanh Nien* folding their English language online newspaper in 2016 (The Thanh Nien News team 2016)) and journalists fear what the consequences will be for the profession in the long run. Economic capital is slowly eroding the capacity of the journalistic capital, that was built up in the wake of the *Doi Moi* reforms. For a time, the two types of capital worked in unison, pursuing the same goals, but with increased competition it became difficult for media companies to secure revenue without paying extra attention to economic capital (as V5 exemplifies with the description of her divided newsroom in chapter 7). While the journalists from the core group still hope that a market for quality journalism will continue to exist, they believe that without better access to information and more autonomy from political and economic interests they will not be able pursue stories of a sufficient quality that may reinstate journalistic capital as a dominant power, bring redemption to the profession and resolve the current field crisis. That does not mean that they think the profession will cease to exist but most agree that new business models are a necessity if a strand of quality journalism shall be able to withstand the ever-increasing pressure from new agents and the state's ambiguous attitude towards the media industry.

Currently the journalistic field in Vietnam can be said to be at a standstill. The three primary groups occupying the field hold each other in a deadlock – reinforced by their preferred type of capital. Only minor disturbances cause the field to change its trajectory and move closer to or further away from one of the three poles positioning it. The visit of a prominent international political figure (like US President Barack Obama who visited the country in May 2016) causes the field to move further away from the political pole and closer to the cultural (journalistic), a media crackdown (like the blogger crackdown in the fall of 2016⁶⁴) draws the field closer to the political pole and an ever-expanding media market incessantly tries to drive the field toward the economic pole. Given the current state of the field, the disparity of its competing agents and the lack of intervention from powerful external actors (most importantly the state) field transformation or perhaps even field rupture, with the field being partitioned into several, seems, according to the literature (Fligstein and McAdam 2011), to be the most likely outcome of the ongoing field crisis. Yet, so far the field has succeeded in upholding its boundaries and contain its diverse members – perhaps due to the lack of clear and consolidated directions stemming from both within the field and from the different forces conditioning it. A resolution of the crisis seems, however, inevitable. A continuation of the current situation will only result in even more conflicts and frustration – with consequences for the individual journalists as well as the field. It may be a power shift

⁶⁴ During the fall of 2016, several prominent bloggers (such as Ho Van Hai and Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh) were detained for propagandising against the state – presumably due to their involvement in the protests against a steel factory causing a big environmental scandal in four provinces in central Vietnam.

among the dominating agents that will finally prompt the end result and lead to complete transformation or the competing groups may prove equally successful and lead the field into dissolution resulting in several distinct fields. Or perhaps the field will find peace with its unrest and accept that each group serves distinct purposes albeit with the same target: providing information in exchange for capital.

Conclusion

The journalistic profession in both countries is in a state of change. The complex web of forces conditioning the fields makes for little manoeuvring and journalists have to consider a variety of factors, wittingly or unwittingly, to perform their tasks. Contention and field crisis resulting from not just conflicting understandings of the profession (internally as well as externally), but also from exogenous shocks, such as the arrival of new communication and information dissemination technologies, add additional pressure on the profession. Journalists in Singapore do, however, appear to be better prepared than their colleagues in Vietnam.

The journalistic field in Singapore is far more cohesive and stable – and thereby better at enduring shock and pressure. Ideals, rules and regulations originated by the state has through years of coaxing found their way into the profession's *illusio* and *doxa* and helped mark the boundaries of the field. Although newcomers in the field may try to challenge the dominating role orientations and try to enforce their norms, ideals and interpretations of good journalism, most end up either accepting and conforming to the status quo – or quit journalism altogether. The field is thereby dominated by a strong conservation which any new journalist will find difficult to alter. Not even the arrival of the Internet has succeeded in shocking the field to a degree where it has caused any significant changes. Aided by the state, the dominant logics of the journalistic field have even been enforced on the new challengers. Although they may continue to position themselves as alternatives to the mainstream media they are in fact coerced by the same logics dominating the entire media scene. Neither the presumable conflicting role expectations or the confrontations initiated by the new online media actors have succeeded in altering the current position or trajectory of the journalistic field. It maintains its position close to both the political and the economic pole. Even though the profession prides itself of high standards, journalistic capital has far lesser value as a currency in the field compared to the other two. That does, however, not mean that changes may not occur in the future. So far the field upholds its strong conservation backed by the state's support but if the state should choose to withdraw, the future trajectory of the profession might change altogether.

In Vietnam, the situation is nowhere near as predictable. Although the state, along with the Communist Party, has tried to impose rules and regulations to an almost similar degree as in Singapore, they have not been equally successful in achieving the same results. The journalistic profession has not adopted the state's normative scripts in quite the same manner. After the introduction of the *Doi Moi* reforms where the media were encouraged to seek other sources of revenue, new ideals and practices began entering the field. From having been almost exclusively conditioned by political capital, economic capital began having an increased influence which altered journalists' perception of their profession and purposes. They were forced to consider different means of attracting audiences' attention if they wanted to survive in a competitive media environment. Some chose to focus on journalistic ideals being championed in other countries (and in Vietnam in a recent past) and others chose to concentrate on less sensitive areas and followed more entertainment-driven strategies encouraged by economic capital. With

the arrival of the Internet, the fractions became even more clear and the trenches between the competing groups, structuring themselves around each type of capital, even deeper.

Ambiguous directions from the state has only made the situation more challenging for journalists. As the state has chosen to work with a day-to-day media management model it is difficult for the media to find the right path through a minefield of potential sensitive areas that can prove doom if treated wrongly at the wrong time but prosperous if all moons align. Few have therefore chosen to tackle the situation head on by challenging the state's expectations and experimenting with constantly varying degrees of autonomy. Most opt for more safe strategies and simply conform to the state's ideals or work under the radar by concentrating on topics that the political scene shows little interest in. Again, this result in an incoherent profession with very different competing interests. The agents' diverse orientations pull the field in opposing directions causing extreme tension within the field. While the field so far has managed to uphold its boundaries and contain all fractions – including many of the newcomers – it is questionable whether it will continue to be successful in the future. With little support from external forces and an ever-growing tension between the three main dominating groups, chances are slim. Transformation of the field or a complete rupture are perhaps the most likely outcomes of the current crisis. Yet with the crisis still undergoing and few attempts at resolving it, other solutions might show themselves in the future. For now, though, the profession continues to be strung out between political, economic and journalistic forces in a never-ending tug-of-war.

In a comparative perspective, the two fields appear to have similar positions within social space but whereas the journalistic field in Singapore has a stable position and rarely moves, the journalistic field in Vietnam often experience great fluctuations. Interestingly, and in contrast to what was hypothesised in chapter 2, it gives the field a more autonomous position vis-à-vis the journalistic field in Singapore – although it also results in major drawbacks from time to time. The professions share, however, more than just positions. As the next chapter will discuss, though the two fields have commonalities, the question is whether they share a similar version of journalism. And whether these resemblances connect to the two countries being within the same geographical region or whether it is more an expression of the close relationship between the media system and the state apparatus present in both Singapore and Vietnam?

Discussion: A Southeast Asian model of journalism?

“The system is different here. It is not that we don’t have press freedom we just have a different version of press freedom” (S2).

This dissertation set out to investigate journalism in Singapore and Vietnam from a bottom-up perspective with one of the objectives being to look into whether or not journalists in the two countries shared understandings of journalism and journalists’ roles and responsibilities. The underlying hypothesis was that shared understandings of journalism and shared perceptions of journalists’ role orientations could be evidence of a particular Southeast Asian model of journalism. Only through a comparative study, it was argued, would it be possible to uncover whether such a type of journalism existed.

As we have seen throughout the dissertation, the two journalistic fields do indeed hold similar views on journalism. But the question is whether these similarities are proof of a shared version of journalism in the region – and whether these similarities can even be ascribed to the countries being located in the same geographical region. Perhaps other factors can explain the conspicuous parallels; factors that have nothing to do with the fact that the two countries both are located in Southeast Asia.

As was made clear from the beginning of this dissertation, journalism in the two countries operates under vastly different conditions compared to journalism in Western countries – as the quote above from S2, an experienced journalist and editor in Singapore, also bears evidence of. External forces do not only set up the visible boundaries of the profession but do also seep into the idealistic foundation of the profession and condition practices and roles. The state-media relationship appears to be key to understand journalism in the two countries.

This chapter will delve more into the comparative aspect of the dissertation. Through an examination of the similarities and differences between the journalistic profession in the two case countries, it will consider to what extent the two fields are similar (or perhaps even share understandings on journalism and views of journalists’ role orientations) and discuss whether these similarities can be ascribed to a distinct version of journalism or a prototypical journalist unique to Southeast Asia. The chapter draws on the analysis presented in the preceding chapters. Micro level aspects of the profession will be appraised first before moving on to journalists’ role orientations and ending with a discussion on the resemblances of the two fields and their approach to journalism.

Finally, a deliberation of a media systemic approach that could be used to differentiate the conditioning structures in the two countries will conclude the chapter in response to the propositions raised in chapter 4. While this dissertation has primarily discussed journalism in the light of Bourdieu's field theory, a media systemic approach might also help to shed light over the forces conditioning the profession – not least the complicated state-media relationship. Just as it was argued in chapter 2 that better attention to political capital in a field theoretical perspective could be useful to map the journalistic fields of Singapore and Vietnam, so may a broadening of the media system approach help explicate the different levels of state interference at play in the two countries.

Journalistic ideals and practices

Journalists in Singapore and Vietnam appears to be sharing many of the same ideals and values when it comes to their understanding of good journalism. They agree on many of the criteria that guide the selection of news and marks excellence. They even, sometimes, find themselves being in agreement with their colleagues around the world. However, while they may classify some of the ideals and values in a similar fashion, their interpretation and application of them differ. Not just compared to other (Western) countries but also among each other. In addition to the sometimes different interpretations of otherwise seemingly similar ideals, journalists in each country emphasise ideals, values and practices unique to their own field, reality and challenges. With the journalistic field in Vietnam still doing boundary work and trying to establish the basic foundations of the profession, journalists' vision of the norms, values and practices is vaguer than their colleagues in Singapore who have managed to institutionalise their ideals and practices to a far larger degree.

Ideals

When it comes to the ideals guiding the profession, there is broad support for the ideals of objectivity, facticity and social responsibility, as showed in chapter 5. Journalists strive to stay neutral and unbiased, follow the facts, and serve the interests of the people and society at large. All three ideals are related and position journalists as neutral observers and information disseminators – even if journalists in both countries are aware that this is somewhat unachievable. Yet, the ideals remain key elements of journalists' description of their profession in both countries.

Besides the three shared ideals, each field has an additional dominating ideal. Journalists in Singapore ascribe to the credibility ideal while journalists in Vietnam to a greater extent strive for autonomy. These ideals hold evidence of some of the specific challenges journalists are facing in their respective countries with journalists in Singapore often being accused of doing the government's bidding and journalists in Vietnam struggling with corruption and "envelope journalism". These two ideals are, however, not the only ones that are testament of the differences between the two countries. Though the three shared ideals may appear identical there are comparative variance in journalists' interpretations of the ideals and the appropriation of the ideals between the two journalistic fields.

While journalists in both countries strive for objectivity and facticity in an effort to live up to the moral contract they feel they have with society (including the state and the public), journalists in Singapore are much more insistent. Their entire claim to legitimacy as professional journalists lie in these ideals and they have as a consequence developed specific practices and routines to secure their relevance (such as avoiding potential biased adjectives, extensive fact-checks and guidelines on the accepted

number – and quality of – sources). Though objectivity and facticity are important for journalists in Vietnam as well, they are aware of the ideals' deficits in their own media environment. Not everyone lives up to the ideals (or even recognise their importance) and few routinized practices to secure their enactment has been implemented by the profession. The ideals are far better integrated in Singapore than in Vietnam where the disparate field with its three distinct groups find it difficult to even agree on the necessity of a shared epistemological discourse.

The third shared ideal, social responsibility, is in both countries based on aspirations to support public discussions and facilitate self-governance of the people. But the translation of the ideals differs. Whereas journalists in Singapore are concerned about harmony in society and relates the ideal to a neutral journalist position, journalists in Vietnam interpret the ideal in a more advocate manner. Journalism should help move the nation forward by covering issues that is relevant for the country's development – even if they are controversial and sensitive. Although journalists in Singapore would probably not disagree with the Vietnamese interpretation, they oppose advocacy journalism that may potentially divide the nation and pose a threat to the harmony of society. As unbiased, neutral information disseminators, they have no interest in inciting to anything that may cause distress among the different cultures living in the country.

The difference in the interpretation could perhaps be ascribed to the different development statuses of the two countries. Although no longer a “developing” country, Vietnam still struggles with poverty, insufficient infrastructure and basic human rights – all issues that deserves attention and scrutiny if you ask the media professionals. Yet, just as with the other ideals, it is far from all journalists that adhere to the ideal – and even those who try know that they are not able to scrutinise all issues and thereby completely live up to their ambition of being social responsible.

It is interesting to note, that the ideals championed by journalists in Singapore and Vietnam actually do relate to the ideals originally promoted by the Asian Values debate initiated in the 1970s. As Xu (2008, 361) recounts, the values truth, objectivity, social equity, and, non-violence were singled out – not as universal values but as values that could guide journalists in Asian countries when being confronted with threats against their profession. While the values held by journalists today do differ from the manufactured values originally sponsored by the Asian states (with Singapore as one of the most active patrons), they nonetheless bear evidence of some sort of transmission. Both advocate objectivity, the interpretation of facticity relates to the truth ideal, and, social equity and non-violence can be associated with social responsibility. As discussed in the previous chapter, the states of Singapore and Vietnam can be said to have, with some success, managed to transfer their ideals and visions of the media's roles and responsibilities into the legitimating base of the professions, the fields' *illusio*. The state of Singapore has been most successful compared to Vietnam in transmitting its ideals through constant and consistent coercion resulting in journalists' acceptance and adaptation of several aspects of the original ideals. The state has, as Hanitzsch and Vos (2017, 126) put it, been able to activate parts of journalists' cognitive scripts that correspond to its preferred normative role. With a less coordinated effort, the state of Vietnam has only had limited success. The ideals are not as ingrained and journalists in Vietnam tend to deviate more from the them than their colleagues in Singapore. In both countries, however, journalists have taken elements of the ideals and refined them to fit their worldview. Social responsibility is more than just social equity and non-violence, facticity is a less demanding version of truth, and, objectivity can with its vague definitions be applied as seen fit. It is therefore safe to say that although one might detect residue from the Asian Values debate (or from related development journalism theories, as in the

way Romano (2005) presents them) in the idealistic foundation of the journalistic profession in the two countries, journalists do not fully adhere to these ideals but have managed to construct their own legitimating support system – even if they have been inspired or based on the states’ ideals.

Practices

Chapter 5 dealt with two different aspects of the practice of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam: sourcing for news and evaluating newsworthiness. Just as with the ideals, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam agree on many of the same journalistic practices – but with some variance. The state is a key news source in both countries but the states differ in their attitude towards the media which effects journalists’ access to information as well as their use of the state as a news source. When it comes to news values, journalists from both countries advocate timeliness, relevance, impact, identification and exclusivity but place different emphasis on the importance of them. As with the journalistic ideals, these deviations can, however, be attributed the different conditions the profession has to operate under in each country.

In chapter 5, it was explained how journalists typically gather news in a mix of structured and unstructured techniques (Lecheler and Kruikemeier 2016, 4). Whereas the structured techniques are based on scheduled activities, the unstructured are spontaneous and require more effort on the part of the journalist. Journalists in Singapore rely heavily on structured newsgathering techniques compared to their colleagues in Vietnam. As described in the chapter, the state in Singapore makes a lot of effort in prepping the media up to an event and providing them with all information necessary to cover it. While the state in Vietnam also has personnel to deal with the media, they are not as efficient or consistent in their media management and journalists have to rely more on unstructured techniques.

In both countries, the states show an interest in controlling the news stream but only Singapore has managed to construct a system where the media feel compelled to use the state as a news source in almost all stories that are even remotely related to state affairs or state agencies’ affairs. As explained in chapter 7, the Singapore media management model, that provides the media with access in exchange for extensive coverage, has proven so successful that journalists rarely question these practices. The state is the key informer of news and even described as the dominating “newsmaker” – a term used for all informers of news but in conversations often as synonym for the state or government. Some journalists admit that the trade-off to a certain degree has resulted in the mainstream media’s tendency to provide the state with too much news coverage and thereby disregarding the professions’ highly held news values.

In Vietnam, journalists explain how media management and access to information vary from state agency to state agency. In contrast to Singapore where the state has applied a common strategy across all state bodies, day-to-day management is much more accidental and access to information requires persistence and quite often also the right (political) connections. This makes it more difficult for journalists to live up to their ideals and they will to a larger degree have to settle for official statements that provide little to no relevant information, seek out other ways of covering a story, or, as is unfortunately also often the case in the Vietnamese media landscape, copy stories from media outlets that have more direct access to information.

The states are of course not the only news sources in the two countries but due to the media’s close relationship with the states, they are the most dominant and journalists have to find ways to work with them if they want to deliver any news to anybody. But the similarities end there. While one would think that journalists in Vietnam, where all media have to be affiliated with the ruling Communist Party,

would rely more on state sources than their counterparts in Singapore, the opposite appears to be true. Some media institutions in Vietnam almost solely convey messages from the state and Party (like the official newspaper of the Communist Party, *Nhan Dan*) but others seek information for their stories in a variety of places out of sheer need as access to (useful) official information is limited (see chapter 5). In Singapore, the mainstream media have, at least formally, direct access to all official information – for which the state in return expects extensive coverage. It furthermore expects journalists to live by their facticity and objectivity ideals and remember to include state bodies in all matters that relate to their jurisdictions. As a consequence, journalists in Singapore appears to have a much closer relationship with the state in news sourcing matters than their counterparts in Vietnam. Though journalists in Singapore may get information of a higher quality or be better at processing the information they receive based on their ideals, standards and routines, they are to some extent less in control of the information stream than their colleagues in Vietnam. I would argue, that journalists in Vietnam have more autonomy over their news sourcing, as the state still have not managed to construct an effective information apparatus. Perhaps because the state used to have full control over the information stream in the subsidised period pre-*Doi Moi* and did not account for the consequences entrusting the media industry to market forces would have on its abilities to manage said stream. Regardless the circumstances, the result is less control than in Singapore which on one hand has a positive effect on journalists' autonomy but on the other hand a negative effect on their access to information of a certain quality.

If sourcing for news is the first step in a news production process, the next is news selection. Again journalists in Singapore and Vietnam appear to share views and they agree that a good piece of journalism is marked by at least five dominating news values: timeliness, relevance, impact, identification, and, exclusivity. However, yet again they vary in their employment of the values. In Singapore, scoops, or the exclusivity criteria, have high importance. Most journalists strive for scoops and there is a lot of prestige (and journalistic capital) in being the one breaking a story. In Vietnam, journalists are more concerned about creating an impact. Connected to the social responsibility ideal, the impact value is fostering change and aiding the nation and the people.

The remaining three dominant news values do not take as obvious positions in the hierarchy as the others. Although important, they are not singled out in the same manner. The identification value is, nevertheless, fascinating as it can be employed to scrutinise otherwise sensitive issues. As explained in chapter 5 and 6, journalists in both countries use human interest frames as a way to tell stories that cannot be covered with more classic journalistic approaches. The identification criteria thereby may help to secure coverage on an issue that would have otherwise been rejected due to sensitivity. Although the criteria in its original form concerns itself with putting “a human face on straight facts” (Zelizer and Allan 2010, 55), it holds other facets in Singapore and Vietnam where it is in some regards elevated to a strategy. The approach seems, however, to be more used in Vietnam where it is one out of several strategies applied to touch upon issues without confronting anyone directly. Whereas this type of usage is less common in Singapore the news value does, however, hold a dominating position and gives journalists the possibility of providing people (and the state) with a view from below.

To sum up, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam draw on similar approaches and practices when it comes to news sourcing and news selection. Both rely on the state as a key source and use related news values to determine newsworthiness. Yet, the characteristic of journalists' relationship with the state do vary from each country due to the states' different approaches to media management which effects journalists' access to information and their reliance on the state as a primary news source. Furthermore,

while initially being in agreement on the dominating news values, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam place different emphasis on the values and thereby on what constitutes a good news story. Journalists in Singapore prefer scoops and journalists in Vietnam seek to make changes in society.

Conclusion: Related but not alike

Judged by the ideals and practices, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam ascribe to, one could argue that their understanding of journalism echo one another. They strive to be neutral and rely on facts while wanting to create an impact in society by assisting people to live their daily lives. They prioritise stories that are in the common interest while also seeking recognition among their peers and pursuing issues that legitimise the profession's existence. Yet, it would be a mistake to conclude that they have the same interpretation of journalism. There are noticeable differences. Not least in their awareness of the attainableness of the ideals and practices. Journalists in Vietnam seem to be far more realistic in their performance evaluation of the ideals and practices. Even if they ascribe to the ideals they know that most are unachievable. Journalists in Singapore, however, are confident that they are able to live up to their ideals if they stick to their routinized practices – despite the fact that they have to work in a highly regulated environment. They believe in their professionalism to carry them through.

As of current, Vietnamese journalists do not have the same faith which is mirrored in the weak adaptation and implementation of the ideals and practices. As was also discussed in chapter 8, the journalistic field in Singapore is far more unified with a common agreement on *illusio* and *doxa* than its counterpart in Vietnam. The lack of consistency in the Vietnamese field makes it difficult for journalists to secure agreement on ideals and practices which also influence their performance evaluation. The core group advocating for a more professionalised field try to enforce the ideals and practices and though they, to some degree, have managed to secure dominance over the discourse on journalism they are not alone with opinions on the profession. The competing discourses – that does not only come from the state and Communist Party but also from other dominating groups within the field – makes it difficult for the field to agree on its *illusio* and *doxa*. Even if the core group have managed to hold dominance over the discourse (at least in the context of their own group) so far, the question is whether they will be able to maintain their authority in the long run.

Journalists' role orientations and role struggles

Some would argue that the media's close relationship with the state in both Singapore and Vietnam can only result in a version of advocacy journalism where the media primarily express the views of the dominating party (Waisbord 2009, 374) or in the form of a collaborative role (Christians et al. 2009, 196-218) that leaves journalists with little or no autonomy. Journalists in Singapore and Vietnam do, however, position themselves in a variety of roles that goes beyond being mere messengers of the state and government. While they may find themselves having to perform roles or tasks that could be described as collaborative or even submissive, those are not the only roles they envision for themselves and feel compelled to fulfil – just as the state is not the only norm sender impacting role orientations.

Chapter 6, showed how journalists orient themselves around a range of roles related to their perceptions of good and responsible journalism and the external forces that condition their profession. On the outset, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam appear to agree on most roles. They share nine out of the 11 identified role orientations while the remaining two could be said to be related in some ways.

However, while the roles might appear similar just as with the ideals and practices there is variance and journalists not only have different interpretations of the roles, they also place different emphasis on the importance and dominance of the roles.

Journalists in the two countries find most agreement in the neutral roles such as the disseminator and interpreter. These roles correlate well with the profession's ideals in both countries and have, at least in Singapore, been confirmed by other studies (Hao and George 2012; and to some extent Duffy 2016)⁶⁵. The same can be said about the newly emerged fact-checker role that journalists have begun to identify with in an attempt to (re-)legitimise their profession confronted with new competition from online and social media. While fact-checking is not a new journalistic practice in itself, promoting the task to a role is – and journalists make great effort in highlighting the role and its capabilities in both countries. In contrast to online amateurs encroaching on the journalistic profession, journalists see themselves as having the skills and the routinized practices necessary to perform the high-quality fact-checking needed in a world overwhelmed by information tsunamis.

There is also some agreement about the more submissive roles such as being a social educator, a nation-builder and a public servant/mouthpiece but in contrast to the neutral roles the sentiments towards these roles are less positive. Especially in Singapore, where journalists agree to performing these roles but present a somewhat negative attitude towards them as they go against their visions of being objective and neutral. Though journalists in Vietnam are not outright enthusiastic about the more submissive roles, they are able to find value in them. Especially the nation-builder role that Vietnamese journalists, in contrast to their colleagues in Singapore, respect as it fulfils their ambition of impacting society and pushing the nation forward. Journalists in Singapore do not recognise these aspects of the role and instead feel the role deprives them of their professionalism and reduces them to puppets of the state. That does not mean that they cannot see themselves actually performing the role but they take little pride in doing so. It is not a role that is associated with prestige like in Vietnam.

The more establishment-critical or advocate roles such as the voice-of-the-voiceless, the subtle critic and the boundary pusher are highly regarded in both countries – even if journalists are aware of the rarity of their appearances. Being further removed from external forces, the roles are associated with high amounts of prestige – at least in the circles adhering to journalistic capital. The same goes for the overarching bridge-builder role that is idealised by journalists in both countries but difficult to perform as it requires a simultaneous performance of a variety of roles. Journalists want to create bridges between the different groups in society – whether it is between the state and the people in Vietnam or among the many diverse cultures living side by side in Singapore – to live up to their ideal of being social responsible and fostering a better society for the people.

The different emphasis journalists place on the roles in Singapore and Vietnam to some extent reflect the competing or conflicting expectations journalists are met with from norm senders with stakes in the journalistic profession – as well as their choice of coping strategy. Chapter 7 delved into the range of normative demands and expectations journalists experience from not only the state but also from the public and media institutions. It furthermore discussed the consequences of these often conflicting or ambiguous expectations on journalists' role orientations and reached to the conclusion that journalists in both countries primarily choose coping strategies that involve conforming to the state's normative

⁶⁵ These roles can also be identified in other Southeast Asian countries if we look at the latest wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study. As is evident from the comparison presented in appendix 14, the five countries that participated in the survey agree that the task “report things as they are” is one of the most important role dimensions.

demands. That does not mean that journalists necessarily are fully aware that they are following the guidelines of others. They might have been coerced into adopting normative scripts and over time accepted them as their own.

In Singapore in particular, that seems to have been the case. George (2012) labels the state's strategy "calibrated coercion" and explains how it succeeded to secure cooperation from the media by giving them the illusion of autonomy while still pulling the strings behind closed doors. Sometimes journalists readily admit that the state interferes, but mostly they assert that they have placed upon themselves to practice a version of journalism that they deem to be appropriate in Singapore. Journalists in Singapore may experience role conflicts and express negativity towards some of the more submissive roles in their role set, but they do nonetheless end up conforming to them. However, in an effort to uphold their professional standards and legitimise their profession they place most emphasis on the neutral roles that cast them in positions that are less associated with more collaborative or submissive roles.

In Vietnam, journalists are far more aware of the state's inferences. In contrast to Singapore, the state in Vietnam takes a more direct approach to media management. As described in chapter 4 and chapter 8, the state strikes hard if the media overstep. However, it can be difficult to predict when the state will strike and when it will ignore potential violations. While the state (or the Communist Party in particular) may have clear visions about the ideological foundation of the profession (as described in chapter 4 and 5), they are less clear on how that translates into practices and principles, which makes it difficult for journalists to align themselves with the state's expectations and normative scripts. Though journalists in Vietnam may experience role conflict they are much more prone to experience role ambiguity. Interestingly, this, in comparison with Singapore, gives journalists in Vietnam the potential to experiment more with their role orientations. Returning to the role orientations of chapter 6, journalists in Vietnam place more value on the advocate roles than their colleagues in Singapore. They even find ways to appreciate the more traditional submissive roles by invoking some of the elements from the more establishment-critical roles under the pretext of nation building or social education.

Conclusion: Different reflections of the same conditioning forces

Looking at journalists' role orientations in the two countries and the strain that they experience confronted with competing discourses and normative scripts on what journalism is and should be, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam to a large degree hold similar interpretations of journalism. They agree on a number of roles – even if they do not agree on all functions and purposes or the hierarchy among the roles. However, just as it would be a mistake to conclude that the similarities among journalists' ideals and practices showed evidence of a common understanding of journalism in the two countries, so would it be a mistake to conclude determinedly that the parallels in journalists' role orientations are testament of a prototypical journalist operating in Southeast Asia. To that their priorities differ too much. They might find agreement in the neutral roles but they place vastly different emphasis on both the advocate and the submissive roles with journalists in Singapore showing least interest in both groups compared to Vietnam. The submissive roles in particular, which they see being in conflict with the profession's ideals – even if they admit to practice them, wittingly or unwittingly. In contrast, journalists in Vietnam have found a way to live with the roles – or at least accept that they exist and that some media outlets adhere strongly to them.

However, it would be equally inaccurate to say that there are no signs of common interpretations of journalism or similar perceptions of journalists' roles. While they may not mirror each other they are

in some aspects related. I would argue that they to a certain degree could be said to be different reflections of the same conditioning structures and forces even if I cannot, in good conscience, conclude that I have found evidence of a particular Southeast Asian model of journalism. But I have found unique structures and elements that are worthy of further scrutiny. As this dissertation has shown, the journalistic profession in the two countries share, among other things, historical trajectories (not least when it comes to the development of their current media environments, see chapter 4 and appendix 7), weak professional organisation (see chapter 4 and 5), resembling threats to the existing market structures and business models (see chapter 4), struggles for legitimacy due to new intruders in the field (see chapter 4 and 8), and, most importantly, high degrees of state interference in media affairs (see chapter 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). The authorities – whether represented by the state, the government or a specific party (the People’s Action Party in Singapore, the Communist Party in Vietnam) – are present in most aspect of journalism in the two countries. Not just through laws and regulations but also as influencers of journalists’ ideals and enforcers of journalistic normative role orientations. It is impossible to talk of the media and journalism in the two countries without accounting for the state’s role. The state’s active involvement in both countries is alone worthy of more scrutiny and theorisation.

While it would be tempting to attribute all of these similarities to some sort of distinctive Southeast Asian media model, the question is whether the elements the two countries share in terms of media and journalism can be ascribed to the countries close proximity in the same geographical region or whether it is due to media systemic parallels stemming from a similar state-media relationship. As was discussed in chapter 4, the leading media system theory does, however, not account adequately for this relationship. Though it is not the objective of this dissertation to present a new media system theory to replace Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) or add another prototypical model to their three original models, I will in the final section of this chapter return to the discussion on media systems commenced in chapter 4 and, based on the findings in this dissertation, propose additional dimensions that are worth considering in future studies of countries with strong state-media relationships. Additional dimensions and parameters are necessary, I argue, if we want to understand how the relationship materialises and go beyond the normative evaluations based solely on laws, regulations, censorship, and clampdowns.

Suggestions for a media systemic approach

This dissertation has mapped some of the many levels the state regulates, interferes and interacts with the media in Singapore and Vietnam. The relationship between the state and the media goes far beyond classic interventions such as subsidising, ownership and regulation. To account for the distinctions in a media systemic perspective, nuances are needed to be added to Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) original “role of the state” dimension (which I also have chosen to rename “state intervention”). Most importantly is perhaps the degree of state authority in a media system. As has been evident in the analysis of the media in Singapore and Vietnam, the states have chosen two different approaches. While the state in Vietnam has chosen to involve itself on most levels – meaning that they not only make the rules, they also execute them and judge journalists if missteps happen – the state in Singapore has chosen to leave the execution part to the media itself. As has been discussed this may have resulted in journalists being coerced into collaboration and self-censoring more than necessary. In contrast, journalists in Vietnam have, with less clear boundaries, the potential to experiment more.

Another element worth considering is the state’s ability to infuse ideologies and normative scripts into journalists’ (and the media’s) cognitive orientations. As has also been covered extensively in this

dissertation, the states in both countries hold ideals on behalf of the media that they with variegated success have transferred to the journalistic fields. To understand the state's claim over the journalistic profession, it might prove useful to track these ideals as well as the state's attempts to get them legitimised in the journalistic field. To what extent is there correspondence between the state's ideals and journalists' ideals and what does that mean for journalists' self-perception and the autonomy of the journalistic field? In the case of Singapore and Vietnam, the state in Singapore has been far more successful in infusing its ideals compared to the state in Vietnam. With a less consistent media management approach, journalists in Vietnam find it difficult to decipher the state's ideals and expectations to their profession.

Other dimensions besides state interference should naturally still be included as they have as much to do with the structures conditioning the media and the journalistic profession. Based on Hallin and Mancini's (2004) original dimensions, I propose a reconceptualization of the "newspaper industry" dimension, renamed "market structures", to account for other sections of the industry than the printed press while still considering historical trajectories, market concentration and market segmentation. While the development of the newspaper industry might have been influential on the media systems in Western countries, the situation might be different in countries and regions with high levels of illiteracy or a later arrival of mass medium with other media types being preferred over newspapers. In some cases, the radio has for instance been far more influential in countries' nation-building efforts than the printed press (Barnett 1999; Hayes 2000). While the newspapers in Singapore and Vietnam are still seen as torchbearers of good journalism, the arrival of the Internet has fostered a growth in new media outlets catering to the needs of some of the younger audiences. As was discussed in chapter 8, their impact on the media industry (and journalism in particular) should not be underestimated.

Although connected to state intervention, the dimension considering political parallelism still deserves to be evaluated separately. Especially in markets where parallelism might manifest itself differently than originally conceptualised. In Vietnam, for instance, the media are not structured around competing political parties or ideologies. Instead, the market reflects the many associations, institutions and organisations that have ventured into the media industry. In Singapore, it is the country's vernaculars that divide the market.

In addition, online and social media might challenge the seemingly lack of pluralism that countries with strong state interference such as Singapore and Vietnam are typically accused of. Even if these media are not part of the mainstream media, and perhaps not even operated by professional journalists, they may be able to add pluralism to the media environment. That has to some extent been the case in both countries – despite the fact that the state in Singapore by and large has managed to rein in the new online media outlets through legislation.

Furthermore, when it comes to political parallelism in countries like Singapore and Vietnam with one-party dominance, it might be valuable to pay extra attention to potential revolving doors between politics and journalism. There might be more at play than just simple forms of state interference when politicians or government officials cross-over into journalism. Although it has been outside the scope of this dissertation to look at these transitions, revolving doors are observable in both countries and something that would be interesting for future studies to investigate in detail.

The fourth dimension, professionalization, looks, as Hallin and Mancini's original conceptualisation of the journalistic profession. Although it is still relevant to discuss levels of instrumentalization, autonomy and organisation, I would suggest also looking into the ideals, practices and role orientations guiding the profession. As this dissertation has showed, it is not just the ideals,

practices and role orientations themselves that provides insights into the profession, the degree of acceptance and routinisation of the ideals, practices and roles must be equally considered to fully comprehend the profession.

Finally, I would add yet another dimension, “civic engagement”, that accounts for other forms of information related activities and efforts undertaken by the non-professional media actors who in some countries have a significant role to play in the media environment. Though it might not be relevant to consider such a dimension in all media systems, in countries with a highly controlled mainstream media environment online dissidence can help push the boundaries and open up otherwise restricted areas. Whether it is as the blogger in Singapore who altered the way elections are being covered (see chapter 6) or the way social media in Vietnam can affect the media discourse (see chapter 8), Internet infused civic activism might have a great impact on the media environment. Elements worth considering under this dimension is the (political) influence and level of organisation of the civic field to understand to what degree the activities are naturally occurring from the bottom-up or organised from top-down. Furthermore, state interference and regulation is equally important to see how the state reacts to online civic activities. Again, it has not been the scope of this dissertation to look into these areas but as the few example that found their way into the chapters show, online activities are impacting the media – and in particularly the journalistic field.

In the table in appendix 15, I have, summarily, tried to plot the different dimensions in Singapore and Vietnam. Without it being a conclusive analysis of the countries’ media systems, I hope it can serve as an inspiration for future research of the media in the two countries – as well as in other countries with a complicated state-media relationship.

It is important to note, that the dimensions presented here are, as Hallin and Mancini’s original dimensions, most sensitive to the relationship between the state and the media and thereby to the more political aspects of a media system. In other countries (or if studying other forms of journalism or media than news journalism and news media), it might be relevant to include other dimensions and parameters. One could even argue that it is misleading to label the conceptualisation of the structures surrounding the media a media “system” as it clearly does not account for all media related aspects and structures. Nevertheless, the dimensions proposed above may be of help for future research of (news) media and journalism in authoritarian countries or countries with strong state-media relationships.

As this dissertation has proved, there is far more to the relationship in countries like Singapore and Vietnam than what can be accounted for with the original framework. The complexity of the state’s involvement in the media environment goes beyond its legislative, executive and judicial powers. The state may find ways to interfere with ideological underpinnings and routinized practices – and thereby implicitly infuse journalists’ cognitive scripts, their role orientations and finally perhaps even their role performance.

Sensitising the original framework to the different levels of state interference makes it possible to better distinguish media systems characterised by a dominant state. Whereas efforts in the past, as mentioned in chapter 4, have struggled to characterise these types of media systems (with many ending up simply labelling them based on their political system or ideology), an approach that explicate the different levels of state interference may avoid such static classifications and add extra depth to the media system theory. As all other conceptualisations, the proposed dimensions do of course need testing to prove their validation. This is by no means an attempt to put a lid on the media system discussion. Rather, it is an invitation to open it yet again and make room for more complicated state-media structures.

I remember turning off my digital voice recorder after yet another interview with yet another journalist in yet another café. The interview had been informative as always, the interviewee kind and accommodative. My head was buzzing with words and I was frantically trying to list some of the key issues we had gone through during our conversation before losing grasp of the mental notes I had taken. “What was her point about Twitter? Have I ever heard about double-barrelled leads? And are they even important? And what about the human interest stories? That is far from the first time that has come up. And does it mean anything that she has experience from Malaysia and Thailand? Can I use it or is it just unnecessary noise?”

By every interview it was becoming apparent for me that there was far more to journalism in Singapore and Vietnam than I had originally imagined. I started out with a vague idea about how journalists might frame things in a certain way or use different rhetorical strategies to overcome some of the limitations their heavily restricted media environments presented them with and ended with a myriad of puzzle pieces. Some were major with loud fonts scribbled across the surface claiming attention while others were significantly smaller with apprehensive words followed by question marks. But all of them belonged somewhere in the puzzle. “I just hope I do them right”, I thought to myself thinking about all of the journalists and editors who had taken time out of their busy schedules to help me understand their profession. “I just hope that I can paint a more nuanced image of their profession and explain why it would be a mistake to succumb to stereotypical depictions of journalism in the region. Why we need to think about media and journalism in countries with strong state interference in a different way instead of describing them in terms of what they are not”.

My hope is that this dissertation has fulfilled that goal. That I have managed to explain in comprehensive ways how the journalistic profession in Singapore and Vietnam is conditioned by different external forces and what that means for journalists’ self-perception, their ideals and practices. That we cannot (only) use normative theories deriving from the West when evaluating media and journalism in countries with completely different structures. That we need to start from the bottom-up if we are to understand how the profession operates before we juxtapose it against Western theories. And finally, that there is something unique to journalism in Southeast Asia that goes beyond the stereotypical depictions but that there is far from one type of journalism, one type of journalist and one type of state-media relationship at play in the region.

With a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu’s field theory and the sociological concept of role theory, the dissertation set out to investigate journalism in Singapore and Vietnam from a bottom-up

perspective. The combination of theories was chosen as the two frameworks complement each other: Role theory worked as both a discursive tool in conversations with journalists on their tasks and functions and as an analytical tool sensitive to agency processes on a micro level. Field theory added relational aspects and helped to connect the micro level analysis to macro level structures revealing the forces conditioning the profession.

A qualitative approach with in-depth interviews, where the researcher actively could engage with research participants and draw on past experiences as a journalist to position herself as an insider of a discursively constructed journalistic field, was deemed most useful to get journalists comfortable about discussing their roles, responsibilities and challenges. A total of 40 journalists, editors and citizen journalists, approached primarily through snowball sampling, were interviewed face-to-face⁶⁶ between July 2014 and March 2016. In addition to the empirical data collected during interviews, the dissertation relied on document research and past studies of the media landscape in the two countries to contextualise the journalistic fields.

This final chapter concludes the dissertation with an overview of the different findings, responses to the hypotheses and the main research question. It starts off by reflecting on the forces conditioning the fields in the two case countries before moving on to journalists' perceptions of their profession, their role orientations and the struggles they experience. Finally, it ends with some suggestions for future research on journalism – not only in Southeast Asia but also in countries that like the two case countries in this study have a complicated state-media relationship.

Conditioned by competing forces

As explained throughout the dissertation, it is impossible to discuss media and journalism in Singapore and Vietnam without including the state, government and – in the case of Vietnam – Communist Party. The journalistic profession is highly conditioned by political forces which is why I initially in chapter 2 proposed a reconceptualization of Bourdieu's field model to account for these. In Bourdieu's original conceptualisation, fields are structured around a basic opposition between economic and cultural capital. The dominance of the capital forms in a field will determine its position in social space and its relation to other fields. However, the model does not explicitly account for political forms of capital as structuring elements. I therefore suggested adding a third pole so the journalistic field could be positioned in accordance to all three structuring forces. In a similar effort, I, in chapter 4, argued for an expansion of Hallin and Mancini's (2004) original analytical media system dimensions to sensitise the approach to media environments with strong state interference.

The relevance of the political pole in field theory and the necessity of additional dimensions and parameters in media systemic approaches were solidified by chapter 4, 6 and 7 where it was described in detail how the state and government in both countries are actively involved on different levels in the journalistic field. To begin with, the state in both countries have set the regulatory framework (officially as well as unofficially) but whereas Vietnam claims both legislative, executive and judicial power over the profession, Singapore has left the executive part to the profession. Through an intrinsic scheme, the state in Singapore has struck a deal with the profession where the media are privileged with access to (carefully selected) information in exchange for collaboration. The state expects the media to behave responsible and follow recommended guidelines and if the state is not satisfied it has through its legislative powers

⁶⁶ With the exception of V16, who was interviewed over Skype.

the possibility to change management structures and even withdraw media licenses. The state in Singapore has in other words managed to construct a system, where the media are as much part of imposing restrictions as the state.

While the state in Vietnam has similar powers and may remove editors, withdraw press cards and media licenses, its media management model is not as sophisticated. Though the Vietnamese state (or the Communist Party) too expects some form of collaboration from the media in enforcing rules and regulations, it does not leave it solely in the hands of the media. As explained in chapter 4, it is common for the media to receive recommendations on how certain issues should be covered – just as it is common for the state to request the removal or withdrawal of stories. This approach, however, requires a great deal of effort and attention on the state's part which the state is not always capable of maintaining. As a result, there is little consistency in the enforcement of rules, regulations and expectations. This lack of consistency does not only undermine the power, the state holds over the profession, it also, as we will return to shortly, impacts journalists' role orientations.

There is, however, yet another level of state interference worth mentioning. Not only does the state set the regulatory framework for the profession in both countries it also attempts to infuse its norms and ideals of good journalism into journalists' cognitive orientations. In both countries the state makes no attempt at hiding the norms and ideals it holds for the profession. In Singapore for instance, ministers and government officials are very vocal about what they expect of the media and the journalists operating in the country (see chapter 4) and in Vietnam, the state is even involved in the yearly celebration of journalism when the national journalism prizes are awarded by the party-affiliated Vietnamese Journalists Association (see chapter 4). Through different forms of coercion, the state in both countries hopes to be able to influence the media scene and journalists' roles.

Political forces are, however, not alone in conditioning the journalistic field. In both countries, journalism is a commodity that relies on market forces. For Singapore this has been the case from the outset whereas Vietnam only recently, after the introduction of the *Doi Moi* reforms in the late 1980s, became dependent on sales and advertising revenue. As was explained in chapter 4 and 8, the transition altered the media industry, the number of media outlets exploded and competition over customers ensued. A diversified media market was created with a wide variety of media serving different audiences and even though private ownership is de facto not allowed (as all media by law still has to be affiliated with associations and organisations under the Communist Party), the system has loopholes which makes it possible even for private companies to hold ownership of media. Economic interests thereby play a major force in the Vietnamese media market and the intense competition over customers and advertisers have only increased with the arrival of the Internet and new communication technologies. The introduction of market forces has greatly expanded the journalistic field and given it reasons beyond political propagandising to exist but it has also caused major divisions among its agents and increased struggles for dominance.

In Singapore, economic interests are of major concern as well. But in contrast to Vietnam, the market has moved towards concentration with only two companies dividing the country's (mainstream) media between them. Yet, with the introduction of the Internet, the mainstream media have experienced increased competition and, as all over the world, the legacy media are beginning to struggle and is trying to find new ways to secure revenue. Although this new development might alter the current structure, the media market in Singapore has so far been able to contain the new competition – supported by the state and its devotion to secure legislation for all areas of the media market.

A final force to be recognised relates to journalists' own stakes in the profession, the cultural, or rather journalistic, capital. Journalists naturally have an interest in holding authority over their own profession and journalists in Singapore and Vietnam are no exception. The two journalistic fields do, however, find themselves on different stages of professionalization. Strong socialisation procedures and wide agreement on norms and ideals makes the journalistic field in Singapore appear better organised and more professionalised than its counterpart in Vietnam. The field is dominated by a strong conservatism that is difficult to rupture. As discussed in chapter 8, not even the new online media have managed to shock the field to a degree where it has caused any significant changes. Aided by the state, the dominant logics of the journalistic field have even been enforced on the new challengers. While the newcomers may attempt to position themselves as alternatives to the mainstream media or challengers of the dominant logics, they are, in the end, coerced to align themselves with the *doxa* of the field.

In Vietnam, the situation is quite different. Although, journalists in Vietnam in contrast to their colleagues in Singapore have a national association supposedly acting on their behalf, journalists have little trust in its ability to act in their best interests. Furthermore, the journalistic field in Vietnam is far more divided with several groups fighting for dominance. The introduction of the *Doi Moi* reforms caused a field rupture and resulted, by journalists' accounts, in at least three distinct groups fighting for dominance over the profession, its norms and ideals. One group orients themselves around political capital and consists of media with the strongest connections to the Communist Party, another lets themselves be guided by economic capital and pursue most eyeballs or advertising revenue, and, finally, the third group fights for journalistic capital and attempts to push the profession in a more autonomous direction by advocating for journalistic ideals and ethical behaviour inspired by their colleagues around the world. The last group, that has been termed the core group throughout the dissertation currently holds dominance over the profession's ideological foundation but the question is whether they will be able to maintain that position over time. So far, the field in Vietnam continues to be divided even if it has been able to contain the three vastly different competing groups.

Although the journalistic fields in both countries are organised around the same forces and even find themselves in similar positions strung out between political, economic and cultural capital, the internal structures of the fields are quite different. A strong conservatism characterises the field in Singapore while division and intense struggles over dominance is key to understand the field in Vietnam. The internal structures along with the conditioning forces all impact journalists' self-perception and their role behaviour.

Infused role orientations

The analysis of the empirical data presented in chapter 5, 6 and 7 showed that journalists in Singapore and Vietnam generally agree on most ideals, practices and role orientations. Though journalists in each country emphasise an ideal unique to their own field and challenges (credibility in Singapore and autonomy, primarily of economic interests, in Vietnam) there is wide support for the journalistic ideals of objectivity, facticity and social responsibility in both countries. Likewise, journalists share similar approaches to the practice of journalism with the state being a key informer of news in both countries (and even elevated to the position of primary "newsmaker", a term used to describe news informers, in Singapore) and the same news values (timeliness, relevance, impact, exclusivity and identification) guides news selection and determine newsworthiness. Journalists do, however, hold somewhat diverse interpretations of the ideals and prioritise the news values differently among the two fields. These

variances along with the divergent internal structures of the fields and the competing forces conditioning the profession in both countries infuse journalists' role orientations.

11 different roles were identified in chapter 6 with journalists in Singapore and Vietnam agreeing on nine of them. The roles could be tentatively divided into three categories placed in a continuum from submissive over neutral to advocate. The neutral roles consist of the disseminator, the interpreter and a newly emerged fact-checker role; the more submissive roles consist of the social educator, the nation-builder, the public servant (Singapore) and the mouthpiece (Vietnam); and the more advocate roles consist of the voice of the voiceless, the subtle critic and the boundary pusher. Finally, an overarching bridge builder role was identified that connects the different groups in society by serving everyone through the palette of role orientations.

The roles do, however, not have equal status among the two fields, neither are they conceptualised or narrated in the same manner. With the profession being dependent on and conditioned by competing forces, journalists are bound to experience conflicting interests and enforced expectations that, whether they like it or not, become part of their role orientations. The issues that arise with the competing expectations and the impact they have on journalists' role orientations are most visible when journalists recount their roles, as they shift between narrated roles (what they say they do), cognitive roles (what they want to do) and normative roles (what they ought to do). Yet, it is not only journalists' normative scripts that infuse their role orientations. Other's scripts – in particularly the state's – too find their way into journalists' role orientations which may result in journalists adopting and accepting other's ideals and interpretations of the journalistic profession.

The neutral roles are the ones there is widest agreement on and the ones journalists are most satisfied with. Not only do they live up to the professions ideals (normative roles), making journalists striving to perform them (cognitive roles), they are also the first ones, journalists mention in their accounts of their profession (narrated roles). Furthermore, the roles are the ones that are in least disagreement with the remaining role orientations – and, perhaps more importantly, with the variety of expectations journalists experience from norm-senders.

The submissive roles are also among journalists' narrated roles but journalists show less enthusiasm for these. While journalists acknowledge their existence, they are less comfortable with the ideals and values they represent. Especially because the normative scripts rarely stem from within the journalistic field but are adopted – in some instances with coercion – from the state. Whereas journalists in Vietnam have found peace with some of the roles, journalists in Singapore are more reluctant to accept them. That does, however, not mean that they do not conform to them but they find it difficult to include them in their cognitive scripts. Journalists in Vietnam have, in contrast to their colleagues in Singapore, found ways to get them to work alongside the profession's own norms and ideals. Like the nation-builder role which journalists have found value in by emphasising its relation to the ideal of social responsibility.

One should think that the advocate roles would be the ones that journalists in both countries orientate themselves around the most as they relate strongly to journalists' understanding of "good journalism". And though they are idealised and are clearly part of journalists cognitive and normative scripts, they are to a far lesser extent part of journalists' narrated roles. Journalists know that it is rarely possible (or even advisable) to perform the roles but that does not mean that they do not admire them. The biggest problem with the roles is that they go against the normative scripts of the state – and to some extent also of the neutral roles. They may even violate the high-held ideal of objectivity if performed unwisely. In contrast to what Hanitzsch and Vos (2017, 127) claim about journalists in other (Western)

countries, journalists in Singapore and Vietnam are clearly aware about the discrepancies between what they ought to and want to (the normative and cognitive roles) and what they see as being possible (narrated roles).

Whereas it is easier to accept discrepancies between the submissive roles and neutral roles, it is much more problematic between the advocate roles and the neutral roles. With the state holding enormous power over the journalistic field, journalists to some extent rely on the state's acceptance of their role orientations. While they may not feel completely comfortable with the more submissive roles, the state approves of them. In contrast, there is little support for the more advocate roles in the state's scripts which requires journalists to seek legitimacy for them elsewhere. While they could be able to find the needed legitimacy from within the journalistic profession (and thereby through journalistic capital) or in some cases from audiences (and thereby justify the roles with economic capital), it requires a lot of effort and capital (and guts) to take on the political forces structuring the field.

It is therefore perhaps not surprising that journalists in both countries tend to opt for conforming to the state's normative scripts when being confronted with conflicting expectations from norm senders or when deciding between conflicting role orientations. This is in line with theoretical assumptions on resolution of role strain and role conflict discussed in chapter 2. Through evaluation of the conflicting norms, a position-holder is most likely to conform to expectations from the most powerful norm sender. In the case of journalists in Singapore and Vietnam, that norm sender is, more often than not, the state.

Interestingly, journalists in Vietnam are, in contrast to what was hypothesised in chapter 2, less prone to experience role conflicts than their colleagues in Singapore. Even though the state has a much more hands-on approach to media management in the country compared to Singapore, they are less clear in their normative scripts. Or perhaps less clear in their enforcement of their normative scripts. This makes it difficult for journalists in Vietnam to interpret what is expected of them by the state and they are instead experiencing role ambiguity. This finding corresponds well with what was hypothesised in chapter 2 about position-holders from professionalising fields being more likely to experience ambiguity. With a field that is far more divided with weak agreement on norms and ideals, journalists in Vietnam have less defined scripts to work with and are in contrast to their colleagues in Singapore still trying to configure their profession. To some extent, the lack of clarity gives journalists in Vietnam the potential to be more autonomous and experiment more with their boundaries. While some journalists clearly want to do just that, it is far from a commonly approved strategy. It is still safer to follow whatever of the state's scripts that are available and then do boundary work in subtler ways.

Same-same but different

This dissertation set out to uncover the unique characteristics of the journalistic fields in Singapore and Vietnam with one of the purposes with the comparative study being to look for evidences of a distinct version of journalism in Southeast Asia. It wanted to investigate through a comparative study of journalism in Singapore and Vietnam if there was such a thing as a common interpretation of journalism and journalists' roles, functions and purposes in the region. While journalism in the region, along with media and journalism in other non-Western countries, in the past mostly has been understood as the West's "other" (Nerone 2004; Szpunar 2012) and thereby defined in terms of what it is not vis-à-vis Western norms and ideals, this dissertation has investigated journalism from a bottom-up approach with attention to local conditions. Though not disregarding existing theories on media and journalism (and instead proposed how these could be broadened to account for journalism in other settings), the

dissertation has by the means of a comparative approach located unique properties of the journalistic fields in the two countries that show journalism in Southeast Asia being far more than just a poorly executed version of “Western” journalism. In fact, journalism in Southeast Asia is just as complex as its counterparts in other regions with journalists ascribing to a variety of ideals, routinized practices and role orientations. The key difference is the conditioning forces and dominating states. But even if the two case countries in this study share these conditioning forces it is by no means safe to conclude that this is defining for all countries in the region – or evidence of a Southeast Asian model of journalism.

Although the dissertation has contrasted the different levels of the journalistic profession in the two countries in all chapters, chapter 9 paid particular attention to the comparative aspect of the study. Through consideration of all findings, it was concluded, that while the journalistic fields have a lot of commonalities, it would be a mistake to conclude that they are alike. The fields are conditioned by the same forces and hold similar positions in social space but their internal structures and field conservation strategies are nothing alike. Furthermore, journalists may hold similar ideals and employ similar practices of journalism but they prioritise and realise them differently. Finally, when it comes to role orientations, they again hold similar roles but place different emphasis on them which corresponds to the different role struggles they are engaged in.

Though I was not able to conclude that there exists a common interpretation or understanding of journalism in Southeast Asia based on this comparative study, I did find enough parallels between the two journalistic fields to conclude that they might be different reflections of similar conditioning forces or even of related media systems. Because, as chapter 9 equally questioned, it is difficult to determine whether the similarities between the two journalistic fields are due to the countries being placed within the same geographical region and sharing similar historical trajectories or whether they reflect the complex state-media relationship present in both countries. Without attempting to formulate a new media system theory to challenge Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) and without adding a new model to their original three, I ended chapter 9 with proposing a series of dimensions and sub-dimensions worth considering when dealing with media environments strongly affected by state interference. My hope is that these dimensions – along with the reconceptualization of Bourdieu’s field theory to account for political capital as a structuring force – might prove useful in future studies of journalism. Not only in Southeast Asia but in all countries with a dominant state.

Moving on: Suggestions for future research

The dissertation has showed that there is more to journalism in Southeast Asia than meets the eye. It has showed that journalism can be interpreted in many different ways even if it may look similar on the outset. But this dissertation has far from exhausted the topic of journalism in Southeast Asia. More qualitative studies of journalism in the region’s different countries are needed if we are to conclude anything definitive about the different types of journalism at play in the region – and continue further theorisation of potential Southeast Asian media systemic dimensions.

While this dissertation primarily has looked at journalism from practitioners’ point of view, given the state’s active involvement in the media industry in Singapore and Vietnam it might also be beneficial to scrutinise the journalistic profession in the two countries (and in the region’s remaining countries) from the states’ and governments point of view. In a comparative, cross-regional perspective it might be worth looking into how media legislation and regulation is approached and discussed under the auspices of ASEAN. For instance, as I have become aware of (yet not looked into), exchange programmes among

government officials have been instated through ASEAN as a mean to support capacity building within lesser developed member states. In short, government officials from lesser developed member states visit (or intern with) the administration of more developed member states (in particularly Singapore) to study practices of relevance for the further development of their own countries. It could be interesting to see if this scheme has had any consequences (or fostered any homogenisation) on media policies and legislation in the region.

Furthermore, while studies of journalists' normative, cognitive and narrated role orientations are important, we also need to connect these discourses to practices and see how (and if) the roles materialise. Because, as recent studies of journalistic roles (Mellado and Van Dalen 2013; Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos 2013) have pointed out it is "assumed, rather than convincingly demonstrated, that beliefs are strong predictors of journalistic performance and that they offer comprehensive explanations of actual practices" (Waisbord 2017, 171). There is much to learn from journalists' normative, cognitive and narrated role orientations (not least a better understanding of their own self-perception and of the ideals and norms guiding these perceptions) but to get a full picture of the profession we might need to include the performative aspect as well.

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Singapore

- Printers and Publishers Ordinance (1835) (obsolete)
- Defamation Act (1957)
- Internal Security Act (1960)
- The Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (1965)
- Undesirable Publications Act (1967)
- Supreme Court of Judicature Act (1969)
- Newspaper and Printing Presses Act (1974)
- Broadcasting Act (1994)
- Administration of Justice (Protection) Bill (2016)

Vietnam

The Press Law (1989/1999) (obsolete)

Ordinance on State Secrets (2000)

The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2013)

Civil Code (2015)

The Penal Code (2015)

The Press Law (2016)

Decrees and circulars:

Decree 97/2008 on management, supply and use of internet services and electronic information

Circular No. 07/2008 on the management, provision and use of Internet services and information on the Internet

Decree 02/2011 on the administrative responsibility for press and publication activities

Decree 72/2013 on management, provision, use of internet services and information content online

Decree 174/2013 on sanctions of administrative violations in the fields of post, telecommunications, information technology and radio frequency

Circular No. 09/2014 on management, provision and use of information on websites and social networks

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Factbox, Singapore and Vietnam

	Singapore	Vietnam
Full name	The Republic of Singapore	The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
History		
Colonial background	British colony (1819-1942), Japanese occupation (1942-45)	French colony (1858-1940), Japanese occupation (1940-1945)
Independence	Began after World War II with full self-governance achieved in 1959 that was quickly followed by a merger with Malaysia in 1963.	Began during World War II and continued with the First Indochina War (1945-1954) and the Second Indochina War (1955-1975) – also known as the Vietnam War.
Establishment	In 1965, after being ejected from Malaysia.	In 1975, with the victory of North Vietnam over South Vietnam followed by a reunification of the country.
Geography		
Location	Situated on the Southern tip of the Malay Peninsula in the Indian Ocean	Eastern coast of mainland Southeast Asia, bordering China, Cambodia and Laos
Area	719 sq. km	330,967 sq. km
Capital	Singapore	Hanoi
Demographics		
Population	5.54 million (2015)	91.7 million (2015)
Median age	34.3 years	30.1 years
Life expectancy at birth	82.6 years (2014)	75.6 years (2014)
Ethnic groups	Chinese (74.2 %), Malay (13.3 %), Indian (9.2 %), other (3.3 %)	Predominantly Vietnamese or Kinh (85.7 %) plus 53 other minorities
Languages (official)	English (36.9 %), Mandarin (34.9 %), Malay (10.7 %), Tamil (3.3 %)	Vietnamese
Religions	Buddhist (34 %), Muslim (14 %), Taoist (11 %), Catholic (7 %), Hindu (5 %)	Indigenous religions (45 %), Buddhist (8 %), Catholic (7 %), Hoa Hao (2 %)
Literacy	96.8 %	94.5 %
Government		
Chief of state	Unitary (dominant party) parliamentary republic	Socialist (Marxist-Leninist) one-party republic
Head of government	President Tony Tan Prime minister Lee Hsien Loong	President Tran Dai Quang Prime minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc
Economy		
Currency	Singapore dollars	Vietnamese Dong
GDP	292.7 billion USD (2015)	193.6 billion USD (2015)
GDP growth	2.0 % (2015)	6.7 % (2015)
By sector	Services (73.6 %), industry (26.4 %)	Services (39.7 %), industry (33.3 %), agriculture (17 %)
Income level	High income	Lower middle income
Povertyrate (1.9 USD/day)	-	3.1 % (2014)

Sources: General Household Survey of 2015, www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/GHS/ghs2015, World Bank Development Indicators, www.databank.worldbank.org, and CIA World Factbook, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

Appendix 2: Comparison of studies on journalists’ roles in Singapore

As mentioned in the introduction, two studies have previously looked into journalists’ role perceptions in Singapore: Hao and George’s (2012) contribution to Weaver and Willnat’s (2012) worldwide study of journalists’ perceptions of their profession and Duffy’s (2016) contribution to the Worlds of Journalism Study. In both cases, journalists were required to rate their profession based on pre-fabricated questionnaires to make it comparative to the other countries participating in the overarching studies they were part of. Though the two studies to some extent asked journalists to rate similar role dimensions and/or tasks, they ended up with vastly different results – which could lead one to ask whether one of the studies might be errored in some ways. While the two studies both claimed to have secured a representative sample of the journalistic population in Singapore, their sample sizes and their sampling method varied significantly. In the table below, I have listed these differences based on the information made publicly available by the two studies.

	Hao and George (2012)	Duffy (2016)
Sample size	447 completed questionnaires (39,5 % response rate)	95 completed questionnaires (25 % response rate)
Sampling method	Journalists working for Singapore Press Holdings and MediaCorp (95 % of all journalists in Singapore). All journalists from SPH was asked to participate (930), but the researchers only managed to distribute questionnaires to 200 people from MediaCorp.	Little information available, though “simple systematic sampling & other for newsrooms and purposively chosen based on quota for journalists within newsrooms” (ibid., 6). The report mentions a list of 250 names that was made available for the researchers by “the leading news organization” upon which it could appear sampling has been based.
Data collection	Printed questionnaires, data collected in 2009.	Telephone and online, data collected between January 2014 and June 2015.

As is evident, Duffy (2016) worked with a much smaller sample than Hao and George (2012). Furthermore, it remains unclear exactly how participants were selected for the study. A “leading news organization” is mentioned in connection with sample selection but it is unclear whether this organisation is a media company (which would probably be Singapore Press Holdings) or whether it is the country’s only union for journalists, the Creative Media and Publishing Union. In the first case, if the sample has only been drawn based on journalists from Singapore Press Holdings, most of the journalists working in the television industry is excluded. In the second case, if the sample has been drawn based on members of the Creative Media and Publishing Union, it would be difficult to claim representativeness as far from all journalists are members of the union (see chapter 4). Furthermore, members might have political motivations for answering in a certain way that is difficult to account for.

As mentioned in the introduction my concern is that something (or someone) has skewed the findings in Duffy’s study. As is evident from the table below where the findings on role dimensions

between the two studies are contrasted to one another, there is very little agreement on roles in Duffy’s study. In fact, the roles seem to be given almost equal value – or at least with very little variation as compared to Hao and George’s study.

2012 survey, role dimensions	Rated “extremely important”	Rated “extremely important” or “very important”	2016 survey, role dimensions
Informing public quickly	58,6	49,5	Report things as they are
Analyzing complex problems	45	45,7	Provide analysis of current affairs
Outlets for people on public affairs	40,1	49,5	Let people express their views
Investigating government claims	35,6	50,6	Monitor and scrutinize political leaders
Motivating people for public discussion	33,1	38,2	Motivate people to participate in political activity
Analyzing international development	29,4	47,9	Tell stories about the world
Discussing national policy	28,4	50,6	Monitor and scrutinize political leaders
Focusing on popular news	27,6	38,9	Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience
Developing public intellectual interest	26,3	46,8	Educate the audience
Staying away from non-verified stories	24,7	-	NO EQUIVALENT
Solution of social problems	24,1	41,9	Advocate for social change
Entertainment and relaxation	23,8	33,3	Provide entertainment and relaxation
Being adversary of public officials	10,7	39,1	Be an adversary of the government
Being adversary of businesses	10,5	35,5	Monitor and scrutinize business
Setting the public agenda	5,9	44,8	Set the political agenda
NO EQUIVALENT	-	46,7	Provide information people need to make political decisions
NO EQUIVALENT	-	44,6	Promote tolerance and cultural diversity
NO EQUIVALENT	-	40,2	Convey a positive image of political leadership
NO EQUIVALENT	-	42,6	Be a detached observer
NO EQUIVALENT	-	38	Influence public opinion
NO EQUIVALENT	-	36,7	Support government policy
NO EQUIVALENT	-	34	Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life

Journalists were to rate tasks by either labelling them extremely important, very important, somewhat important, little important or unimportant. The role dimensions written listed with red ink in the 2016 study only correspond to roles from the 2012 study on some levels. Similarly, as the 2016 study contained more role dimensions than the 2012 study, some did not have any equivalents in the original study. Finally, one of the original roles had no equivalent in the newest study.

As is evident, journalists in Hao and George’s place different emphasis on the role dimensions – with some obviously being favoured over others. While it is also possible to detect agreement in Duffy’s study, journalists are less in agreement – and that is despite the fact that the percentages shown from Duffy’s study are based on to reply categories, “extremely important” and “very important”.

The 2016 study does, however, not only disagree with the 2012 study but also to some extent with other studies from the World of Journalism Study. Compared to journalists in other Southeast Asian countries that also participated in the Worlds of Journalism Study, journalists in Singapore are again far less in agreement than their colleagues in other countries (see table below).

	Malaysia	Indonesia	Thailand	Philippines	Singapore
<i>Report things as they are</i>	79,3	94,1	88,7	95,1	49,5
<i>Educate the audience</i>	81,8	94,1		95,1	46,8
<i>Let people express their views</i>	71,8	85,6	76,3	83,4	49,5
<i>Promote tolerance and cultural diversity</i>	78,9	91,9		81,1	44,6
<i>Provide analysis of current affairs</i>	69,9	72,8	85,5	81,3	45,7
<i>Advocate for social change</i>	61,7	81	75,2	85,3	41,9
<i>Support national development</i>	66,8	75,1	77,4	73,5	41,5
<i>Provide information people need to make political decisions</i>	64,8	70,9	70,5	81	46,7
<i>Be a detached observer</i>	71,5	64	82,1	70,8	42,6
<i>Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience</i>	67,6	76,2	73,8	52,3	38,9
<i>Monitor and scrutinize political leaders</i>	50,3	56	73	80,7	50,6
<i>Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life</i>	63,7	52,3	68,5	45,6	34
<i>Influence public opinion</i>	57,5	49,5	60	67,1	38
<i>Motivate people to participate in political activity</i>	38,8	60,3	65,8	68,5	38,2
<i>Monitor and scrutinize business</i>	48,7	44,3	67,8	72,8	35,5
<i>Provide entertainment and relaxation</i>	50,3	54,2	60,4	27,9	33,3
<i>Set the political agenda</i>	33,2	28,3	65	44,3	44,8
<i>Support government policy</i>	51,7	30,4	57,1	24,9	36,7
<i>Convey a positive image of political leadership</i>	44,3	36,3	55,8	15,9	40,2
<i>Be an adversary of the government</i>	45,6	10,5	61,2	26,1	39,1

Note: Again, journalists were to rate tasks by either labelling them extremely important, very important, somewhat important, little important or unimportant. The percentages show the responses for “extremely important”.

This again leads to believe that there might have been something wrong with Duffy’s sample. With a sample size of only 95 people (and questionnaires mainly being self-administered online), the risk for bias caused by few responses are greater than with a sample size of 447 people – as was the case with Hao and George’s 2012 study. In all other accounts and studies of journalism in Singapore (mine included), the journalistic profession is described as being very united and in agreement about its ideals, norms and values – but Duffy’s study appears to tell a different story. Although, I do recognise that things may have changed in the five-year period between Hao and George’s study and Duffy’s study, I am more inclined

to conclude that errors have sneaked into Duffy's studies and caused some unfortunate biases. In my own study, I will therefore mainly contrast my findings to those of Hao and George, as I believe more in their validity than in Duffy's.

Appendix 3: Interviewees in Singapore

<i>ID</i>	Position	Age	Experience	Media type	Primary beat	Gender	Date	Data
S1	Editor, columnist	61-70	More than 30 years	Online	Local news, politics	Male	02/07/14	Tape
S2	Journalist, editor	31-40	16-20 years	Television	Local news, politics	Female	02/07/14	Tape
S3	Editor	41-50	11-15 years	Print	Local news, crime	Male	03/07/14	Tape
S4	Online editor, journalist,	31-40	0-5 years	Online	Local news, lifestyle	Male	05/07/14	Tape
S5	Journalist	21-30	0-5 years	Print, online	Politics	Female	07/07/14	Tape
S6	Correspondent, journalist	31-40	6-10 years	Print, online	Asia, politics	Male	21/01/15	Tape
S7	Correspondent, reporter	31-40	6-10 years	Print	-	Female	22/01/15	Tape
S8	Online editor, reporter	31-40	0-5 years	Online	Local news, politics	Male	23/01/15	Tape
S9	Journalist	21-30	6-10 years	Print, online	Local news	Female	24/01/15	Tape
S10	News editor	31-40	11-15 years	Print, online	-	Male	26/01/15	Tape
S11	Journalist	21-30	0-5 years	Online	Politics, society	Female	27/01/15	Tape
S12	Journalist, correspondent	31-40	11-15 years	Print, online	Asia, politics	Male	28/01/15	Tape
S13	Editor-in-chief	51-60	More than 30 years	Print, online	-	Male	30/01/15	Tape
S14	Freelancer, blogger	21-30	0-5 years	Online	Politics, culture	Female	01/03/16	Tape
S15	Blogger	61-70	16-20 years	Online	LGBT	Male	01/03/16	Tape
S16	Editor	31-40	0-5 years	Online	Local news, politics	Male	02/03/16	Tape
S17	Editor-in-chief	51-60	26-30 years	Print, online	-	Male	03/03/16	Tape
S18	Journalist, correspondent	41-50	11-15 years	Television	Asia, politics	Male	06/03/16	Tape

Appendix 4: Interviewees in Vietnam

<i>ID</i>	Position	Age	Experience	Media type	Primary beat	Gender	Date	Data
V1	Managing editor	41-50	16-20 years	Online, national	Economy, business	Male	22/06/14	Notes
V2	Journalist	41-50	11-15 years	Print, magazine	Business	Female	25/06/14	Tape
V3	Ex-journalist, blogger	51-60	21-25 years	Online, blogs/FB	History, politics	Male	25/06/14	Tape
V4	Editor/journalist	41-50	11-15 years	Online, national	Economy, society	Female	11/12/14	Tape
V5	Journalist	21-30	0-5 years	Online, national	Society, politics	Female	12/12/14	Tape
V6	Journalist/teacher	31-40	11-15 years	Television, national	Not known	Male	14/12/14	Tape
V7	Journalist	41-50	16-20 years	Print, regional	Local news, society	Male	14/12/14	Notes
V8	Freelancer	21-30	6-10 years	Print/online national	Int. news, local news	Female	16/12/14	Tape
V9	Blogger, activist	41-50	21-30 years	Online, blogs/FB	Society, politics	Male	16/12/14	Notes
V10	Managing editor	31-40	11-15 years	Online, national	Int. news, sports	Male	17/12/14	Tape
V11	Editor-in-chief	51-60	21-25 years	Print, national	Economy, politics	Male	19/12/14	Tape
V12	Journalist/editor	31-40	11-15 years	Online, national	Local news, lifestyle	Male	09/03/16	Tape
V13	Journalist/mentor	41-50	11-15 years	Print, national	Local news	Male	09/03/16	Tape
V14	Blogger, activist	31-40	6-10 years	Online, blogs/FB	Society, politics	Male	10/03/16	Notes
V15	Blogger, activist	51-60	Not known	Online, blogs/FB	Religion, politics	Male	10/03/16	Notes
V16	Editor/Deputy head	21-30	6-10 years	Television, national	Int. news	Female	11/03/16	Tape
V17	Journalist	31-40	11-15 years	Online/Print national	Economy, int. news	Female	14/03/16	Tape
V18	Ex-journalist, teacher	41-50	11-15 years	Television, Magazine	Local news, int. news	Female	16/03/16	Tape
V19	Journalist/editor	31-40	6-10 years	Online, national	Culture, film/TV	Male	19/03/16	Tape
V20	Journalist	31-40	11-15 years	Online, national	Politics, int. news	Female	21/03/16	Tape
V21	Correspondent	31-40	6-10 years	Television	-	Female	22/03/16	Tape
V22	Blogger, activist	31-40	6-10 years	Online, FB	Society, politics	Male	22/03/16	Notes

Appendix 5: Interview guide

Note: The questions were meant as inspirational. The interviewer would evaluate the situation and determine which questions would be suitable to ask. Especially the questions regarding press freedom and censorship was only asked if the interviewee brought the topics up themselves. See chapter 3 for more on the interviewing techniques applied.

Background information:

- 1) How did you become a journalist?
- 2) Did you always know you wanted to become a journalist?
- 3) Did you study journalism?
- 4) What is your current position?
- 5) What type of media do you work for?
- 6) Do you cover a specific beat?
- 7) Are you a member of any form of professional association?
- 8) How many years have you been working as a journalist?
- 9) Are you satisfied with your job?
- 10) Do you ever consider changing jobs? Do you plan to continue working as a journalist?

News values and ethics:

- 1) What is, in your opinion, a good news story? What does it consist of?
- 2) Can you think of an example of a story you find to have been particularly well-written or produced? What made it good?
- 3) Which skills do you need to practice this kind of “good journalism”?
- 4) In your opinion, are journalists in Singapore/Vietnam capable of producing this type of “good journalism”?
- 5) What would on the other hand be an example of a badly written/produced news story?
- 6) What is responsible journalism to you?
- 7) Do you – or your institution – has a code of ethics?
- 8) How do you employ these ethics in your daily work? Is it something that you think about on a daily basis?

Journalistic practices and routines:

- 1) Where do you typically find your news?
- 2) Who do you typically use as sources?
- 3) Do you have any policies regarding the use of sources?
- 4) How do you select news stories?
- 5) Do you have editorial meetings?
- 6) How do you interact with editors, other journalists, and photographers?
- 7) Do you work with deadlines? When will you have to hand in your story?
- 8) Who or what would you say influences your work the most?
- 9) Do you ever interact with your audience? If so, how?

Roles:

- 1) What are the primary responsibilities of journalists in your opinion?
- 2) What would you say are the most important roles of journalists in Singapore/Vietnam?
- 3) What is the primary function of journalism in Vietnam/Singapore?
- 4) What is journalism not, in your opinion? Or what should journalism not be concerned with?
- 5) Which kinds of journalism do you appreciate the most?
- 6) Which kinds of journalism do you on the other hand care the least for?
- 7) Do you feel you as a journalist have any responsibilities towards 1) the public, 2) the state, 3) your employer, 4) your fellow journalists, 5) your journalistic association?

Becoming a journalist:

- 1) How do you become a journalist? What is necessary to become a journalist?
- 2) What is your opinion on journalism education in Singapore/Vietnam?
- 3) Are new journalists equipped to join the industry?
- 4) How about online actors: Bloggers and highly active social media users. Are they journalists?

Being a journalist in Singapore/Vietnam:

- 1) What is the common opinion of journalists in your country?
- 2) Are you personally proud of being a journalist?
- 3) Do you feel journalists in Singapore/Vietnam are being appreciated for their work?
- 4) What do you think the journalistic profession in Singapore/Vietnam needs?
- 5) What would you change, if you could, about the journalistic profession in Singapore/Vietnam?
- 6) How do you see journalism in Singapore/Vietnam compared to journalism in other countries?

Constraints and difficulties:

- 1) What sort of difficulties do you meet in your job?
- 2) Do you ever feel constrained?
- 3) What is the situation on access to information in Singapore/Vietnam?
- 4) Singapore/Vietnam is from time to time criticised for having too much censorship/too little press freedom. Do you agree?
- 5) Why do you think Singapore/Vietnam is commonly ranked at the bottom of international press freedom indexes?
- 6) What is your opinion on these types of indexes?

The future:

- 1) What are the current challenges for the media in Singapore/Vietnam?
- 2) What are the current challenges for journalists in Singapore/Vietnam?
- 3) What has the arrival of online media and social media meant for the profession?
- 4) How do you think the journalistic profession is going to look in 10 years?
- 5) Do you see yourself working as a journalist in the future? Why/why not?

Appendix 6: Field account

This account was written after my return to Denmark from my last field trip in Vietnam to explain some of the obstacles involved in during field work in the country. It describes the circumstances following my meeting with a citizen journalist association on my last field trip to Ho Chi Minh City in March 2016. I had been interviewing (or rather talking to) four members of the association – three of whom agreed to be interviewed (V9, V14 and V15). During our conversations I was made aware of the presence of two plainclothes police officers that was monitoring our meeting. The members were used to this kind of surveillance but it was a new experience for me.

When I made attempts to leave the café, V9 escorted me out to the street and helped me get hold of a taxi. As soon as I entered the taxi, the two police officers also left. They made no attempts at hiding the fact that they were following me and my taxi. If you have ever been to Ho Chi Minh City, you will know that the traffic moves slowly – especially if you go by car. I therefore had no trouble seeing the two officers who tracked the taxi on motorbike. They were not so precautionous in keeping themselves hidden, but tried half-heartedly to hide behind bus stops and bushes, while they waited for my taxi to catch up with their bike.

When we arrived at the hotel, one of the officers jumped of the motorbike and followed me into the hotel. While in the taxi I had contacted my husband who (along with my baby son) had accompanied me on the field trip. Since I did not know what to expect when arriving at the hotel, I had him come out to the front door to greet me when I arrived. I did not expect anything to happen but I wanted to show them that I was not on my own but had brought my family with me. Maybe I wanted to show them that I was nothing to be afraid of – that I was no threat. The policemen clearly documented my arrival and took pictures of the three of us (me, my husband and my son).

The rest of my time in Ho Chi Minh City, I was under surveillance. Completely obvious surveillance. One plainclothes officer was assigned to the lobby of my hotel and one was standing outside waiting with the motorbike ready in the event that we left the hotel in a taxi. We even experienced receiving “wrong number” phone calls in our hotel room when we had not been seen for some hours which lead us to pull out the plug overnight as we did not want to have our son being woken up by the phone. That resulted in a visit from the front desk the next morning with the excuse that we had ordered a wake-up call but they could not reach us on the phone. We had not ordered any wake-up calls. That is not necessary when you have a 10-month old baby.

For that reason, I chose to keep a low profile for the remainder of my visit in Ho Chi Minh City. The meeting with the association took place late Thursday afternoon and we were scheduled to fly to Hanoi the upcoming Sunday. I was not afraid for my own safety as I did not think that they would do anything to harm either me nor my family. I had all of my paperwork in place (meaning my visa, an agreement with the National University of Vietnam and documents from the University describing my purpose in Vietnam) and had made no attempt at concealing the purpose of my field trip. But I did not want to compromise any of my interviewees. I did a single interview from my hotel room via Skype, but otherwise I did not meet with anyone in Ho Chi Minh City. The plainclothes policemen therefore only got to accompany me and my family when we went out for lunch and dinner - and when we visited a children's playground and the War Reminiscence Museum Saturday. Everything was documented with

photos. Even our departure from the airport was monitored with an officer, at a distance, making sure we checked in and went through the security check and into the terminal before he left us out of sight.

Fortunately, nobody picked up the trail in Hanoi. We stayed with friends in an expat neighbourhood and nobody showed any particular interest in my whereabouts in Hanoi. I did, however, take all necessary precautions when meeting with interviewees as usual but saw no signs of anybody following me.

Appendix 7: Historical trajectories of the media in Singapore and Vietnam

Note: This appendix serves as an elaboration of the short overview of the historical trajectories of the media environment of Singapore and Vietnam presented in chapter 4. It presents the four identified historical periods in details based on extensive desk research of existing literature, historical documents and law texts. I have chosen to include this account for the historical interested reader as little literature on the media history of the countries exist.

Based on analysis of the development of the media environment in Singapore and Vietnam, I have identified four different historical periods that well serve as a guidance for this account: the colonial period, covering the early years of the mass media where colonial powers governed both countries; the liberation/reunification period, during which the countries struggled for independence; the nation-building period, where both countries fought to construct and protect their new nations; and, the current transformation period, marked by the arrival of the Internet and new communication technologies changing not only the media environment but the societies as well. For a full overview of the four periods, the major events marking them and the different laws and regulations being introduced, please refer to the table on page 223 and 224.

The colonial period

The early years of mass media were in both countries marked by colonial rule. When the first mass media, the newspaper, was introduced, Singapore was a British colony (from 1824 to 1963) while Vietnam was part of French Indochina (from 1858 to 1945). The colonial period thereby provided a backdrop for the early developments of the press and the media system, which, in part, was modelled on the systems, legislations and regulations already established in the home countries of the colonial powers.

Singapore: cooperation through cohesion

In Singapore, or rather the Straits Settlements as the colony consisting of Singapore and what is today's Malaysia was called, no official law on media or printing presses existed in the early 1800s. However, the standards of the laws that came into place by the end of the 1800s are believed to have been modelled on the practices surrounding publications in other colonies where licenses and pre-publication censorship was mandatory (Anuar 2001, 140-141). This close relationship with the government is perhaps not so surprising given that most of the early publications in the Straits Settlement were published in English with the members of the colonial government and foreign merchants trading in the region in mind (Anuar 2001, 141). That was also the case for the first newspaper originating out of the Singapore region of the colony, the *Singapore Chronicle*, in 1824. It was originally a commercial newspaper but included official government notices and details of trade and shipping (Cornelius-Takahama 2001). Others followed shortly like the *Singapore Free Press* (first published in 1835) and *The Straits Times* (first published in 1845). Though the market appeared to flourish it was not before 1876 that the first newspaper targeted at the

local population, the *Jawi Peranakan*, published in Malay in Singapore, saw the light of day. Five years later, in 1881, the first Chinese language, *Lat Pau*, was launched, serving the Chinese population.

Although, an ordinance on Printers and Publishers (ordinance 2), requesting licensing of all printers and publishers, came into effect in 1835 (Straits Settlements 1920), most laws affecting the media scene came, as explained, much later – and perhaps as a response to the growing vernacular press. The Penal Code (ordinance 14 from 1871) demarked the boundaries for sedition⁶⁷, the Libel Ordinance (ordinance 149 from 1915) listed the punishments for slandering and for the printing of public apologies if found guilty, the Seditious Publications Ordinance (ordinance 151 from 1915) prohibited the publication and importation of seditious newspapers, books and documents, and, finally, and updated version of the Printers and Publishers Ordinance in 1921 underlined publishers' duty to obtain annual licenses to own printing presses and issue publications (Green and Karolides 2001, 513).

During the 1920's the radio made its way into the Straits Settlements. In the beginning, "amateur enthusiasts" dominated the shortwaves with several attempts at establishing radio stations, and even succeeding in obtaining licenses to do so (Chua 2016), but it was not before 1935 with the privately-owned *British Malaya Broadcasting Cooperation* truly got a foothold in the public.

On the wake of World War II, broadcasting in Singapore underwent significant changes as the British rulers decided to set up counter propaganda bureaus in the colonies and secure means of communication with the public in case of emergencies. Radio became a special priority and the Straits government eventually acquired the *British Malaya Broadcasting Cooperation* and transformed it into the *Malayan Broadcasting Cooperation* in 1940 modelled on the homeland institution BBC (Chua 2016). The printing press was also influenced with stricter censorship being enforced. Yet that did not stop the increase in vernacular publications. But the Japanese occupation in 1942 did (Anuar 2001, 144). During the occupation, the Japanese took control of all media, designating the media as the main tool of the Propaganda Department of the Japanese Military and even giving them new names (ibid.). The radio station became *Syonan Hoso Kyoko* (Mun 2014) and the Straits Times became *Syonan Shimbun* (Anuar 2001, 145).

Vietnam: a growing press, a growing public sphere

In Vietnam, or French Indochina, the art of publishing was not new when France began its colonisation of the country in 1858 but there was no such thing as a press system. The French quickly mobilised the construction of a Western inspired state administration system, which also meant introducing the indigenous people to the concept of newspapers. Three years later, in 1861, the first newspaper, *Bulletin officiel de l'Expédition de Cochinchine*, was established (Pham 2011, 184). As in Singapore, the first newspapers primarily served the members of the French administration and the Francophile Vietnamese intelligentsia primarily working within the administration, but in 1865, the landscape changed with the launch of the first Vietnamese language periodical *Gia Dinh Bao*⁶⁸ (Peycam 2012, 51). The newspaper was printed in both Chinese letters as well as the Roman transcription of Vietnamese called *quoc ngo*, which

⁶⁷ Chapter VI, §124A: "Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite feelings of dissatisfaction towards His Majesty or the Government established by law in the Colony, shall be punished with penal servitude for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with both".

⁶⁸ Although the newspaper is acknowledged in current Vietnam as the first Vietnamese language newspaper, there is a greater interest in the publication Thanh Nien (not related to the newspaper Thanh Nien still in print), which is seen as the first "revolutionary Vietnamese newspaper" founded by the anti-French rebellion leader Nguyen Ai Quoc in 1925 (Phu 2016).

in 1882 completely replaced the Chinese characters and was made the official form of writing apart from French (ibid., 16).

More newspapers followed but all was under strict control of the colonial rule⁶⁹. Even though freedom of the press was guaranteed under the French Press Law of 1881⁷⁰, these conditions did not necessarily apply to the colonies. As McHale (2004, 47) explains the main part of the Vietnamese areas of the colonies (Tonkin in the North and Annam in the centre) were considered protectorates and the law therefore only had the force of a decree and could be bypassed. With a decree issued on December 30, 1898, the administration took advantage of Article 14 of the Press Law and deemed all publications published in other languages than French as foreign press (Peycam 2012, 77). This decree forced all *quoc ngo* newspapers to acquire authorisation to publish, which could be withdrawn at any time. Furthermore, a 1908 decree commissioned “prepublication censorship” on all newspapers (McHale 2004, 47), and all publications were subject to a variety of criminal laws regarding “public order” such as article 91 of the Penal Code addressing the “attacks, plots, and actions seeking to disrupt public security” (Peycam 2012, 78).

During a short period with abolishment of prepublication censorship and fewer press restrictions in the mid-to-late 30s, following court rulings determining the legitimacy of French laws in the colonies, the media landscape saw a surge in *quoc ngo* publications⁷¹. But the euphoria was short-lived and ended by 1939. In fear of destabilisation in its colonies, the French administration reinstated tough censorship, raided and shut down several newspapers and annihilated a newly established journalist association⁷² (McHale 2004, 57). The situation moved from bad to worse leading up to and during the Japanese occupation where the French government collaborated with the Japanese to stifle any criticism of France or Japan (ibid., 59).

The radio had made its way into French Indochina in the 1910s, but it played little role in the life of the local population as “its function was primarily to facilitate colonial government and French business operation” (Marr 1998, 10–11). Although, some colonial officials discussed employing the radio in a similar way as the British administration in the Straits Settlements, “no one in authority was prepared to grapple with the various language, technical and logistical hurdles, much less allocate the necessary funding” (ibid.). As a consequence, no radio serving the Vietnamese population was put in place during the colonial era but the Vietnamese revolutionaries leading the August Revolution understood the power of the medium and with the broadcast of president Ho Chi Minh’s September 2, 1945 declaration of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) five days later on September 7, the first Vietnamese radio station, *Voice of Vietnam*, began to air.

The liberation/reunification period

⁶⁹ In contrast to Britain who tended to favour a policy of association, France followed a strategy of assimilation in its colonies (Betts 1960, 8). France wanted a colony to become “an integral, if not noncontiguous, part of the mother country, with its society and population made over – to whatever extent possible – in her image” (ibid.). Although, the country changed its tactics after World War I, and attempted to implement a policy of association with attention to native cooperation and respect for native institutions, the original strategy lingered on and had caused irreversible damage to the relationship with the natives.

⁷⁰ In France known as the “Loi sur la liberté de la presse du juillet 1881”.

⁷¹ As an example, David Marr (1998, 2) estimates that “fifteen million book copies were printed, bound and distributed in the two decades or so before 1945 – an average of eight or nine books per literate individual”.

⁷² The Association of Annamite Journalists of Cochinchine.

Following the colonial period was the period of liberation and reunification for both countries. After having endured a Japanese occupation, Singapore returned to British rule in 1945 and remained a crown colony until 1959 where it became a self-governed state within the Commonwealth. In contrast to Vietnam, power was “transferred by stages to the postcolonial leadership, rather than attained by revolutionary struggle” (Jianli and Lysa 2008, 4). After a brief period as a member of The Federation of Malaya in 1963 to 1965, Singapore finally gained its independence as the Republic of Singapore on August 9, 1965⁷³.

Although, Singapore had its fair share of struggles on the road to independence it was nothing compared to Vietnam, who had to endure two wars the First Indochina War (1945-1954) and the Vietnam War (1955-1975) that left the country devastated with massive civilian loss and irrevocable damage to land and infrastructure. After the surrender of the Japanese in Vietnam, the country was split in two with the French colonial powers in the South, who had no intention of letting go of their old colony, and the Viet Minh in the North who refused to acknowledge the French claim on Vietnam. After the defeat of the French in 1954 and following the 1954 Geneva Conference, Vietnam stood to become united after open elections in 1956. However, the elections never took place as the South refused to participate (out of fear of losing to Ho Chi Minh and his Communist Party (Cotterell 2014, 293)), and the country went through yet another war between North and South lasting almost a decade. The war culminated with the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 and on July 2, 1976 the North and the South was reunified as the Social Republic of Vietnam.

The struggles for liberation and reunification marked the development of the media in both countries. Propaganda, shifting ownership and allegiances influenced the reporting and the journalists operating in the media landscape and the authorities utilised different strategies to control and oversee the media during the conflicting times.

Singapore: continuing colonial control

In Singapore, most of the media established prior to the Japanese occupation resumed its operation after World War II with similar structures and legislation. The newspapers such as *The Straits Times* were still on private hands while the radio, now renamed *Radio Malaya, Singapore and Federation of Malaya*, was owned and operated by the government. Little changed in the media regulation during the liberation period as most of the ordinances from the colonial era was upheld and/or updated. All media were still expected to apply for annual licenses – both during British rule, self-governance and in the period Singapore served as a member state in the Federation of Malaysia.

A new medium arrived at the scene in the 1960s. Though talks of establishing a television station in Singapore began already in 1950s it took more than 10 years before Television Singapura, a public cooperation, began airing on February 15, 1963 with the purpose of breaking language barriers, fighting illiteracy, supplementing education and foster a Malayan culture (National Library Board 2014). The medium quickly became popular and where therefore a natural choice when the then Prime minister Lee Kuan Yew made history with the announcement of Singapore’s separation from Malaysia on August 9, 1965.

⁷³ It should, however, be noted that the leadership of Singapore originally had no intention of leaving the Federation of Malaya but was voted out by the Malaysian government.

Vietnam: two sides of control and censorship

In Vietnam, although governed by two different ideologies similar legislative and regulatory approaches impacted the development of media and journalism in both the North and the South during the liberation and reunification period. In the years immediately following the August Revolution, the laws from the colonial era continued to be upheld in both the North and South of Vietnam (James 1992, 463–64). After the Geneva Agreements in 1954 officially separated Vietnam at the 17th parallel with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the North and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in the South, the now two countries began implementing and enforcing their own media legislation – albeit with traces back to the same colonial predecessors.

Attempts to revive the free media scene of the 1930s in the mid-1950s in the DRV by writers and editors advocating a free press were promptly struck down with hundreds of intellectuals being sent to prison or labour reform camps. By 1957 all publications were nationalised and “tight censorship rules enforced until they became second nature to journalists, a form of self-censorship that persisted for at least three decades” (Marr 1998, 2–3). The radio too was operated by the state who saw it as an important medium to reach the masses and therefore installed loudspeakers “every few city blocks, or in front of village communal houses, to be able to relay Hanoi radio news, exhortations and patriotic music each morning and evening” (ibid., 12).

Similarly, in RVN in the South the government enforced tight regulations (based on the old colonial ordinances and emergency executive decrees restricting sharing and caring communications (Prugh 1975, 120)) and suspended or even closed down newspapers if they printed embarrassing stories or questioned current policies (ibid., 3) – however typically under excuses of shortage of newsprint (Stowe 2001, 2574). Though the newspapers were not nationalised as in the North, the censorship (and self-censorship) left journalists frustrated with very little editorial freedom (Treasters 1969).

In contrast to the newspapers, the domestic radio stations in the RVN were state owned and therefore heavily controlled. However, with the technology improving and American transmitters and Japanese transistor radios being imported to the South, the local population had increasingly access to foreign radio broadcasts (Marr 1998, 12). Listening to foreign broadcasts was not permitted as in the North but anyone “caught listening to communist stations risked arrest and jail” (ibid.).

During the 1960s, television was introduced to the Vietnamese in both the North and the South. It arrived first in the South with the help of the Americans who in 1966 set up two channels, a Vietnamese serving the local population and controlled by the state and an English serving the American troops controlled by the armed forces. In the North, the DRV began broadcasting with assistance from Cuba in 1970, “although transmissions were infrequent and reception limited to a few hundred officially designated sites around the capital” (Marr 1998, 14). In contrast to Singapore, it took the medium longer to catch on in Vietnam due to limited access for the general population and both the printed press and the radio outperformed television in popularity well into the 1980s. Though it had attracted a lot of viewers in the South during the first half of the 1970s, the development came to a screeching halt in 1975 with the Fall of Saigon. When the Communist forces entered Saigon, they shut down the local press and took control of the radio and television stations (Stowe 2001, 2574). The reunification of the country also meant a reunification of the press and the media based on the model developed in the North.

The nation-building period

The years following the independence and reunification of Singapore and Vietnam respectively can be seen as the nation-building period where both countries sought to unite their peoples after turbulent years and establish nations from the rubbles of colonial rule, occupation and civil war. Whereas the historical trajectory had been somewhat similar for the two countries in the preceding periods, they set out on different trajectories during the nation-building period with Vietnam focusing on Communist ideology and developing into a one-party Communist state and Singapore devoting its attention to economic and educational reformation. As will become evident the different political routes also heavily affected the press and the media.

Singapore: media as a nation-building tool

In Singapore, the government stood with an enormous task of creating a nation-state with a diversified population who until 1965 primarily had identified themselves as Malaysians (Suryadinata 2015, 102). Transformation of the school system became an effective way of integration of the population just as use of the English language over vernacular languages was encouraged (*ibid.*). The media were also employed in the nation-building process. Especially broadcast media (with the radio still being the most popular medium) that continued to be controlled by the state under the Ministry of Culture. In troubled times, “themes of multi-racial and multi-cultural society dominated the airwaves”, as radio scholars Freeman and Ramakrishnan state (2016, 37).

Though not under government ownership, the printed press was also enlisted with different laws and regulations, based on the colonial predecessors, being instituted over the course of a decade. In an address to the General Assembly of the International Press Institute in Helsinki on June 9, 1971 Prime minister Lee Kuan Yew clearly explained the vision of the government: “Freedom of the press, freedom of the news media, must be subordinated to the overriding needs of the integrity of Singapore, and to the primacy of purpose of an elected government”. Most importantly among the different laws being instituted in the period was the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974. Based on the colonial printing law which stipulated mandatory annual licences, the law innovatively introduced an intrinsic shareholder scheme (see chapter 4) that ultimately forced newspapers to become public corporations and gave the government power over the appointment of key shareholders (Green and Karolides 2001, 513). With the different laws in hand, the government struck down hard on the printed press and as a consequence transformed the industry and the understanding of good and acceptable journalism. At the end of the period (described by former Straits Times editor-in-chief Cheong Yip Seng (2012) in his memoirs as the “knuckle-dusters era”), all newspapers were public companies, steadily merging into one encouraged by the government, and journalists were coming to terms with their reality by setting up internal guidelines to follow (the more or less vocalised OB-markers, see chapter 4) in order to stay clear of any form of repercussions.

Vietnam: media as a mouthpiece

In contrast to Singapore, the Vietnamese government paid little attention to the development of the media in the nation-building period. Although they had recognised the potential of especially the radio in reaching the masses during the war, media development was not top-priority. Constructing a national narrative and rooting out all of what the Communist Party saw as the “decadent culture of the South”

(Nguyen 1978, 18) was seen as paramount. Focus was on the cultural and political education of the people and hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, former military personnel and government officials were sent to re-education camps “to integrate the former enemy into the new society”, as the Communist regime saw it (Sagan and Denney 1982). School curricula were standardised according to Communist Party guidelines, many publications from the South were banned and no foreign newspapers or journals were allowed anywhere in Vietnam (Nguyen 1978, 18; Stowe 2001, 2575).

In an effort to control the information stream (and in accordance with the action taken against all other companies in the country), all media outlets from North to South was nationalised and subsidised⁷⁴. The laws and regulations instituted during the reunification period in the North were enforced all over Vietnam in connection with strict pre-print/pre-broadcast censorship. The number of newspapers dropped dramatically and the further spread of radio and television stagnated. For many journalists in Vietnam today, the period is regarded with sadness as it caused a lot of damage to the reputation of the profession and reduced journalism to propaganda and one-way communication from the government to the people. As Huong (2008, 130) explains, the government “controlled the entire process of journalistic production, from the inputs – including salaries for journalists, paper and printing utilised – to the outputs, including distribution”. The changes did not go unnoticed by the audiences and the public perception of the media turned negative (ibid., 129). In a sense, the journalistic profession and its relationship with its audiences had to be rebuilt when things finally began to change in 1986 with the Sixth Party Congress and the introduction of the *Doi Moi* reforms.

The transformation period

The fourth and last period can be understood as the transformation period. After having established the foundations of their nations, both countries were faced with new challenges that required transformations and alterations. For Singapore, the period began when the founding father Lee Kuan Yew stepped down as prime minister of the country after 31 consecutive years in 1990 and the country entered into a period with many significant changes to both its political system and its media scene. For Vietnam, the implementation of the *Doi Moi* reforms in 1986 marked a change from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. For both countries the transformations transpired into the media system with consequences for the journalistic profession. In addition, the arrival of the Internet during the 1990s fostered, within a couple of years, the growth of a new media environment for both the governments and the mainstream media to work with. Still ongoing, the end results of the transformation period remain to be seen.

Singapore: from centralisation to beginning pluralisation

In Singapore, the centralisation of the media industry that was instigated in the nation-building period carried on into the transformation period. In 1994, the national radio and television broadcaster, Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, was privatised and reorganised as a wholly-owned company of the

⁷⁴ A couple of Southern newspapers were, nonetheless, allowed to continue operation for a period. The one lasting the longest (and the most independent of the bunch) was *Tim Sang*, that was accepted as long as “it toed the party line” (Abuza 2001, 132). However, it too was eventually forced to cease its operations in 1982 as the Party saw “complete unity of will and voice” as “absolutely vital” for Vietnam’s continuing development (ibid.).

government's investment holding company, Temasek Holdings (National Library Board 2014). With the acquisition of the Tamil-language newspaper *Tamil Murasu* in 1996, Singapore Press Holdings "secured a total monopoly of domestic daily newspapers" (George 2012, 32), and the media market was now dominated by only two companies: the broadcasting company MediaCorp Singapore (as it was called from 1999 and onwards) in charge of all radio and television channels and the publishing company Singapore Press Holdings owning all national newspapers.

In 2000 and 2001, the monopolies were broken when MediaCorp ventured into the publishing business with the launch of the free daily *Today* and SPH in the broadcasting business with two radio stations and two television channels. However, after only three years, the experiment was stopped and the businesses merged as the government declared "that Singapore was too small to have full-blown competition in media" (George 2012, 33). MediaCorp took over the two television channels (but with SPH continuing to own a 20 per cent share of them) but continued to operate the free daily *Today* but sharing the ownership with SPH (MediaCorp owns 60 per cent, SPH 40 per cent).

New competition was however beginning to materialise on the horizon with the arrival of the Internet in 1994. Within a short time – and due to the government's heavy investment in the new communication technology, several new media actors had started gathering online audiences of significant sizes. The mainstream media corporations had been quick to use the Internet from the beginning but new internet-based alternative media portals and socio-political sites found ways to attract attention by engaging in "contentious journalism" and "challenging the consensus" (George 2006, 3). The government was quick to move in with regulations and already in 1996, a Class License Scheme under the Broadcasting Act (1994) was introduced that required websites seeking "public attention" and dealing with "more sensitive areas, principally religion and politics", to register with the Singapore Broadcasting Authorities (*ibid.*, 110). In 2013, yet another scheme was introduced that required "online news sites that report regularly on issues relating to Singapore and have significant reach among readers" to apply for an individual license and put up a "performance bond" of 50,000 Singapore dollars (Media Development Authority 2013). The scheme caused uproar with one popular site refusing to comply and eventually shutting down⁷⁵ but most ended up registering. As a result, many of the existing and future alternative media sites became more professionalised entities similarly to their mainstream counterparts. The consequences of the online competition and the government's attempt at regulating the new media environment is discussed more in detail in chapter 8.

Vietnam: from subsidies to market conditions

After having suffered during the nation-building period, the Vietnamese media were facing rapid growth and extensive development in the transformation period. After the introduction of the *Doi Moi* reforms in 1986, the media landscape changed radically. With the introduction of a socialist market economy, the Vietnamese media suddenly became subject to market conditions when the government began to cease its subsidies, "and allowed journalistic organisations to seek other financial resources including those from advertisers and subscribers" and for the first time, "Vietnamese media had to serve two masters, the Party and the audience" (Huong 2008, 148). Following the reforms, the media were also encouraged by General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh to help foster change in society by exposing power abuse and

⁷⁵ The socio-political commentary website, www.breakfastnetwork.sg, founded by a former SPH journalist and editor Bertha Henson. She eventually ended up launching another online news site, www.themiddleground.sg, which complied with the authorities and registered under the License Scheme.

corruption⁷⁶ (Abuza 2001, 133). Competition flourished and a high number of new newspapers saw the light of day. Not least the number of tabloids (primarily published by local police bureaus) soared (Marr 1998, 4).

The more autonomous period did, however, not last long. Following the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the Vietnamese government once again saw the need to regulate information streams and a new Press Law, based on the preceding laws, was instituted. Private publications were outlawed and the government would have authority to appoint or dismiss editors. Though the print media had to take a couple of steps back, they did not recede to pre-1986 journalism. With less dependency on government funding, they could take some liberties – sometimes even with encouragement from high-ranking Party-members. A sort of cat-and-mouse game between the media and the government began where the media from time to time would test the boundaries of accepted media content - sometimes with success and sometimes with severe consequences.

The golden days of media and journalism followed in the 1990s and 2000s with an increase in the public's appetite for both print and broadcasting media. Television, however, saw the biggest growth. In 1988, only one in ten Hanoi households had a television (Unger 1991, 50) but already 10 years later the number was up to 87 households out of 100 (Thomas and Heng 2001, 290). The newspaper market had its most prosperous years in the 2000s and peaked in early 2009 where one of the biggest newspapers in the country, *Tuoi Tre*, could report a daily circulation of 500,000 copies – twice as much as in the year 2000 (An and Trieu 2009). Only radio appeared to struggle getting the public's attention, which could be due to the fact that it had been neglected in many years. In 1992, for instance, only 32 per cent of the population had access to the radio (Huong 2008, 141). Though the reach increased, the public was more interested in moving images than radio.

Even though the Internet arrived in Vietnam in 1997, it took some time before it caught on. Online news media such as *VietNamNet* was launched the same year, but it was not before the mid-to-late 2000s that the medium began impacting the media landscape significantly (Abuza 2015, 9–10). Socio-political blogs began appearing and the government issued a number of decrees and circulars to control the online activities – eventually earning them the title of “enemy of the Internet” by Reporters Without Borders (2006): A title it has held ever since. These repercussions have, however, not stopped bloggers and other dissidents from utilising the Internet for political discussions and in connection with the growth of social media and online news media the media landscape in Vietnam is forever changed – with substantial consequences for the journalistic profession (see chapter 8 for more). In contrast to Singapore, who were quick to instigate licensing schemes for online media, the Vietnamese government has not been as proactive. Instead, as will be discussed next, it uses a patching up approach, implementing regulations on the go when something seems to be out of control.

⁷⁶ Presumably because he needed the media's assistance with finding support and implementing the reforms but the media was quick to jump on board and explore their newfound responsibilities.

Period	Years	Major events	Media developments	Introduced legislation and regulation
Colonial period	Singapore 1824-1945	Capital of the Straits Settlements (1836-1867) Crown colony of Britain (1867-1942) Japanese occupation (1942-1945)	First newspaper, <i>Singapore Chronicle</i> , (1824) Establishment of <i>The Straits Times</i> (1845) First Malay newspaper <i>Jawi Peranakan</i> (1876) First radio station, Radio ZHI (1933) <i>British Malaya Broadcasting Cooperation</i> (est. 1935) Colonial administration of the radio (1940) Japanese control of all media (1942)	Printers and Publishers Ordinance (1835) The Penal Code (1871) Libel Ordinance (1915) Seditious Publications Ordinance (1915) Printers and Publishers Ordinance (1920) The Undesirable Publication Ordinance (1938) Broadcasting license ordinance (1926)
	Vietnam 1858-1945	All of Vietnam under French rule (1884) The union of French Indochina (1885) Japanese invasion of French Indochina (1940) Japanese takes control of Indochina (1945) The August Revolution (1945)	First newspaper, <i>Bulletin officiel de l'Expédition de Cochinchine</i> (1861) Birth of the <i>quoc ngu</i> press with <i>Gia Dinh Bao</i> (1865) Arrival of the radio (1910s) First revolutionary newspaper, <i>Thanh Nien</i> (1926) <i>BBC Vietnamese</i> is launched (1952) First Vietnamese radio station, <i>VOV</i> (1945)	The French Penal Code (1810, in effect from 1880) French Press Law (1881) Decree dated December 30, 1898, categorising Vietnamese language newspapers as foreign media Decree on prepublication censorship (1908) Various decrees during the occupation (1940-1945)
Liberation/reunification period	Singapore 1945-1965	Separate crown colony (1948-1955) The State of Singapore is established (1958) Singapore merges with Malaysia (1963-1965) Separation from Malaysia (1965)	British control of the radio, named <i>Radio Malaya, Singapore and Federation of Malaya</i> (1946) <i>Reddifussion</i> , a private, commercial radio (1946) Arrival of television, <i>Saluran 5 Television Singapura</i> (1963)	The Defamation Act, DA (1957) The Public Entertainment Ordinance (1958) The Sedition Act (1964) Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (1965) The Internal Security Act, ISA (1965)
	Vietnam 1945-1975	Ho Chi Minh declares independence (1945) First Indochina War (1946-1954) Chinese support for N. Vietnam (1950-1975) Soviet support for N. Vietnam (1953-1975) French defeat, Battle of Dien Bien Phu (1954) Partition of Vietnam (1954) Vietnam war (1955-1975) US support for S. Vietnam (1955-1973) Death of Ho Chi Minh (1969) US troop withdrawals (1969-1973) Fall of Saigon, end of Vietnam War (1975)	<i>Vietnam News Agency, VNA</i> is established (1945) <i>Vietnam Journalists' Association</i> is established (1950) <i>Nhan Dan</i> is established (1951) First radio station, <i>Radio Vietnam</i> in South (1955) Nationalising of all newspapers in DRV (1957) Arrival of television in RVN, <i>Truyền hình Việt Nam-TV</i> in Vietnamese and <i>Armed Forces Radio and Television Service</i> in English (1966) Arrival of television in DRV (1968) VTV begins airing in DRV (1970) The Communists take control of all media in the South (1975)	French colonial laws in the DRV and RVN until 1955, continuation of colonial press laws in RVN until 1975 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1946) Ordinance 47 in RVN with restrictions on sharing of and caring on communications (1956) Press Law, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1957) Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1960) Formal abolishing of press censorship in RVN (but no real effect on actual censorship) (1968)
Nation-building period	Singapore 1965-1990	The Singapore National pledge introduced (1966) Singapore co-founds ASEAN (1967) Singapore Airlines founded (1972) Temasek Holdings established (1974) National University of Singapore (est. 1980) Breaking of the PAP monopoly (1981) Singapore classified a "high-income country" (1987) PM Lee Kuan Yew steps down after 31 years (1990)	<i>Radio-Television Singapore</i> is established under the administration of the Ministry of Culture (1965) Closing of the <i>Eastern Sun</i> under the ISA (1969) Arrest of four editors of <i>Nanyang Siang Pau</i> (1971) License suspension of the <i>Singapore Herald</i> (1971) Full-colour tv-transmissions (1974) Partial privatisation of RTS, renamed <i>Singapore Broadcasting Cooperation, SBC</i> (1980) Formation of <i>Singapore Press Holdings, SPH</i> (1984) Restrictions on foreign publications (1986)	The Essential Control of Publications and Safeguarding of Information Regulations (1966) The Undesirable Publications Act (1967) The New Printing Presses (Application and Permits) Rules (1972) Newspapers and Printing Presses Act (1974) Singapore Broadcasting Corporation Act (1979) Amendment to the NPPA (1986) The Copyright Act (1987)

	Vietnam	1975-1986	<p>Socialist Republic of Vietnam announced (1976)</p> <p>Second Five Year plan (1976-1980)</p> <p>Politburo begins organising “socialist transformation” of the South (1977)</p> <p>Invasion of Cambodia (1978)</p> <p>Nationalisation of all private manufacturing and commercial enterprises (1978)</p> <p>Sino-Vietnamese border war (1979)</p> <p>Falling economy, inflation reaches 1000 % (1985)</p> <p>Party General Secretary Le Duan dies (1986)</p> <p>The launch of Doi Moi (1986)</p>	<p><i>Tuoi Tre</i> is established (1975)</p> <p><i>Voice of Vietnam</i> becomes national radio (1978)</p> <p><i>Saigon Giai Phong</i> gets, as the first newspaper, permission to publish adds (1981)</p> <p><i>Tin Sang</i> is shut down (1982)</p> <p>The number of (national) newspapers has dwindled to around 10 (1986)</p> <p><i>Thanh Nien</i> is established (1986)</p>	<p>Press Law, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1957)</p> <p>Constitution of Vietnam (1980)</p> <p>Criminal Code (1985)</p> <p>Doi Moi Reforms (1986)</p>
The transformation period	Singapore	1990-	<p>Introduction of the <i>Shared Values</i> (1991)</p> <p>Direct popular election of president (1991)</p> <p>First journalism education (est. 1992)</p> <p>Singapore joins founding of WTO (1995)</p> <p>Financial crisis in Asia (1997)</p> <p>SARS outbreak (2003)</p> <p>Lee Hsien Long becomes the third president of Singapore (2004)</p> <p>The landmark General Elections (2006, 2011)</p> <p>The Little India Riot (2013)</p> <p>Death of Lee Kuan Yew (2015)</p>	<p>Privatisation of SBC, now <i>SIM</i> (1994)</p> <p>Introduction of the Internet (1994)</p> <p><i>AsiaOne</i>, first online (mainstream) news portal (1995)</p> <p><i>Sintercom</i> internet community launch in SG (1995)</p> <p>SPH secures ownership of all newspapers (1996)</p> <p>Breaking of SPH’s newspaper monopoly with launch of <i>Today</i> (2000)</p> <p>Breaking of SIM’s, now MediaCorp, TV-monopoly with SPH launch of two TV-channels (2001)</p> <p>Re-instalment of MediaCorp’s TV-monopoly (2004)</p> <p>First online news site licensed (2013)</p>	<p>Computer Misuse Act (1993)</p> <p>Broadcasting Act (1994/2002/2012)</p> <p>The Class Licensing Scheme (1996)</p> <p>The Internet Code of Practice (1997)</p> <p>Computer Misuse and Cybersecurity Act (2013)</p> <p>Online News Licensing Scheme (2013)</p>
	Vietnam	1986-	<p>Liberal foreign investment code (1987)</p> <p>Implementation of two-child policy (1989)</p> <p>Collapse of the USSR brings end to Soviet-Vietnamese relationship (1991)</p> <p>The role of Marxism-Leninism reduced with new constitution (1992)</p> <p>Lifting of the US-led embargo on trade (1994)</p> <p>Vietnam joins ASEAN (1995)</p> <p>National Assembly elections include “self-nominated” candidates (1997)</p> <p>Vietnam’s first stock exchange (2000)</p> <p>Nam Cam corruption scandal (2002)</p> <p>Vietnam becomes member of WTO (2007)</p> <p>Vietnam “lower middle income” country (2010)</p> <p>South China Sea disputes with China (2014-)</p> <p>Vietnam signs TPP trade agreement (2016)</p>	<p>General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh promises less control over intellectuals and their work (1987)</p> <p>Journalists congress for press freedom (1989)</p> <p>Clash-down of the press (1989)</p> <p><i>VOV</i> launch second radio channel (1994)</p> <p>Introduction of the Internet (1997)</p> <p><i>VietNamNet</i> is launched (1997)</p> <p><i>Nhan Dan</i> goes online (1998)</p> <p><i>VnExpress</i> is launched (2001)</p> <p><i>VTC</i> breaks <i>VTV</i>’s TV-monopoly (2003)</p> <p>Press crack-down (2005)</p> <p>Launch of Yahoo! 360° (2005)</p> <p>Facebook becomes available in Vietnamese (2008)</p> <p>The <i>PMU18</i> corruption scandal break (2006)</p> <p><i>Khởi</i> 8406 (Bloc 8406) is established (2006)</p> <p>The Network of Vietnamese bloggers founded (2013)</p> <p>Independent Journalists’ Association of Vietnam established (2014)</p>	<p>Press Law (1989/1999)</p> <p>Constitution of Vietnam (1992/2001)</p> <p>Publishing Law (1993)</p> <p>Penal code (1999/2009/2015)</p> <p>Ordinance on State Secrets (2000)</p> <p>Law on Information Technology (2006)</p> <p>Law on the organisation of the government (2001/2015)</p> <p>Decree on Cultural and Information Activities (2006)</p> <p>Decree 97 on management, supply and use of internet services and electronic information (2008)</p> <p>Circular 07 on the management, provision and use of Internet services and information on the Internet (2008)</p> <p>Decision 20 on management of Pay Television (2011)</p> <p>Decree 02 on administrative responsibility for press and publication activities (2011)</p> <p>Decree 72 on the management, provision, use of internet services and information content online (2013)</p> <p>Constitution of Vietnam (2013)</p> <p>Decree 174 on sanctioning administrative violations (2013)</p> <p>Press Law (2016)</p>

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Appendix 8: Journalism ethics in Singapore

Code of professional conduct of the Singapore National Union of Journalists⁷⁷

1. Every member shall maintain good quality of workmanship and high standard of conduct.
2. No member shall do anything that will bring discredit on himself/herself, his/her union, his/her newspaper or other news media or his/her profession.
3. Every member shall defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and dissemination of news and the right of fair comment and criticism.
4. Every member shall realise his/her personal responsibility for everything he/she prepares for his/her newspaper or other news media.
5. Every member shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty.
6. Every member shall use only honest methods to obtain news, pictures and documents.
7. No member shall accept any form of bribe whether for publication or suppression nor permit personal interest to influence his/her sense of justice.
8. Every member shall respect all necessary confidence regarding sources of information and private documents.
9. Every member shall keep in mind the dangers in the laws of libel, contempt of court and copyright.
10. Every member shall observe at all times the fraternity of their profession and shall never take unfair advantage of a fellow member.

Source: Accountable Journalism, <https://accountablejournalism.org/>, accessed June 2017.

⁷⁷ As of January 1, 2015 named The Publishing and Creative Media Union after a merger between Singapore National Union of Journalists and the SPH Employees' Union (Heng 2015).

Appendix 9: Journalism ethics in Vietnam

10 regulations on professional ethics for journalists⁷⁸

1. Pledge full allegiance to the Social Republic of Vietnam and its process of building and protecting the country, under the leadership of Communist Party of Vietnam; for the sake of the country's benefit, the people's happiness and contributing to empower Vietnam's international position.
2. Strictly observe the Constitution, Press-Law, Copyright-Law and other legal regulations. Fully implement the principles, purposes; rules and statutes of one's serving press agencies.
3. Practice the profession in an honest, objective, fair and disinterested way. Protect the justice and fair treatment. Do not falsify, distort, conceal the truth, cause divisiveness, incite the society, destruct the great unity of the country and the international friendship with other nations and peoples.
4. Uphold the humane spirit, respect the human rights. Do not violate privacy, defame reputation, dignity and legal rights of organizations and individuals.
5. Take one's responsibility seriously when joining social networks and other communication platforms.
6. Protect state secrets, news sources' secrets under legal regulations.
7. Unite, support one's colleagues.
8. Proactively study, enhance one's political, professional and foreign language levels; strive for the democratic, professional and modern press.
9. Preserve the purity of Vietnamese language; protect and develop the cultural values of Vietnam; acquire mankind's cultural quintessence.
10. All Vietnamese journalists commit to implement the mentioned regulations, which are the obligations and principles for practicing the profession, as well as the conscience and responsibility of journalists.

Regulations on professional ethics for Vietnamese journalists will be adopted with the Press Law, starting from January 01, 2017.

⁷⁸ Translated from Vietnamese. The original version can be found here: <http://tuoitre.vn/tin/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/20161217/cong-bo-10-quy-dinh-dao-duc-nghe-nghicp-nguoi-lam-bao/1237714.html>

Appendix 5: Press awards in Singapore

Award	<i>SPH (2017)</i> ¹	<i>MediaCorp (2016)</i> ²
Journalist of the year	Christopher Tan, senior transport correspondent with <i>The Straits Times</i> . Has been a journalist for over 30 years.	May Wong, correspondent for <i>Channel NewsAsia</i> in Myanmar. Has been a journalist for over 15 years, covering mainly political and economic news.
News story of the year	<p>“Singapore public servants' computers to have no Internet access from May next year”, by Irene Tham. Published in <i>The Straits Times</i>, June 8, 2016.</p> <p>An exclusive story about the government’s decision to remove Internet access from all public servants’ computers due to security risks. https://tinyurl.com/straits1</p>	<p>Nepal Quake: Singapore Gurkha confronts destruction at home village of Barpak (Digital News). Published May 12, 2015 on <i>Channel NewsAsia</i>’s webpage.</p> <p>A human interest story showing the consequences of the Nepal earthquake. https://tinyurl.com/straits1</p>
Feature of the year	<p>”The ‘ISIS four’ stopped and sent back”, by Zakir Hussain; ”Secluded school believed to be home to ISIS supporters”, by Francis Chan and Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja; ”Indonesian duo guided online by leader of ISIS’ South-east Asia unit”, by Zakir Hussain. All published in <i>The Sunday Times</i> on March 6, 2016.</p> <p>A bundle of investigative stories about the background of four ISIS supporters that were stopped in Singapore on their way from Indonesia to Syria. https://tinyurl.com/straits2 https://tinyurl.com/straits3 https://tinyurl.com/straits4</p>	<p>“Sabah Quake: Heart of Courage” (Television documentary, aired on <i>Channel NewsAsia</i>). First broadcast June 23, 2015.</p> <p>A documentary about a group of Malaysian mountain guides who risked their own lives rescuing a young, Singaporean school boy caught on Mount Kinabalu, Malaysia, after an earthquake. https://tinyurl.com/mexv6x6</p>
Commentary / analysis of the year	<p>“Nothing routine about MRT cracks”, by Christopher Tan. Published in <i>The Straits Times</i> on July 14, 2016.</p> <p>An opinion piece about the government’s negligence of potential security issues with the MRT. https://tinyurl.com/straits5</p>	N/A
Documentary / special of the year	N/A	<p>”Mr Lee, One Year On” by <i>Today</i>’s news team. Published as a supplement in <i>Today</i> on March 23, 2016.</p> <p>A 20-page report marking the first anniversary of Singapore’s founding Prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. https://tinyurl.com/TodayMrLee</p>

¹Awarded at Singapore Press Holdings' (SPH) annual awards ceremony for its English, Malay and Tamil Media Group on March 22, 2017. For a full overview, see www.straitstimes.com/singapore/the-straits-times-wins-15-out-of-18-awards-at-sphs-annual-newspaper-prize-ceremony.

²Awarded at Mediacorp’s News Awards on July 28, 2016.

As described in chapter 4, the associations available for journalists in Singapore (such as the Creative Media and Publishing Union and the social networking organisation Singapore Press Club) have very little authority and have more of a social purpose than a jurisdictional or managerial purpose. None of the associations organise press awards or celebrate the industry in similar ways as their equivalents in other countries. Instead each media corporation has its own award show every year with prizes being awarded in house to the organisation's own journalists and media outlets. A selection of the prizes being awarded within the last year, from 2016 to 2017, can be found in seen in the overview above. While MediaCorp typically hands out five awards each year, Singapore Press Holdings has 18 prizes for its English, Malay and Tamil Media Group alone. The three most prestigious awards are however the same in both houses: journalist of the year, news story of the year and feature of the year. The title "Journalists of the year" is typically awarded to seasoned journalists with long careers. They are being awarded for their solid work and are rarely selected on the background of just one story. The award for "News story of the year" is perhaps the most interesting one of them all since it gives us a fairly good view of what the media corporations see as good journalism. Similarly, the award for "Feature of the year" tells us something about the priorities of the organisations as this award is being presented to stories that needed more effort and in-depth investigations.

If we look at the latest prizes, Singapore Press Holdings presented a *Straits Times* story about new Internet access regulations on public servants' computers with the "News story of the year" award while MediaCorp gave the same prize to an online news story about the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. For "Feature of the year", Singapore Press Holdings awarded another *Straits Times* story, or rather a bundle of stories, on the background of three ISIS supporters stopped in Singapore on their way from Indonesia to Syria. MediaCorp gave the award to a *Channel NewsAsia* documentary about a group of mountain guides that rescued a young Singaporean after the 2015 Sabah earthquake in Malaysia.

Whereas it could appear as if MediaCorp with its awards has a more international, or regional, focus both of the winning stories centre around a Singaporean national or resident. The story about the Nepal earthquake follows a Singapore resident returning to his hometown and the story about the mountain guides would not have been of interest was it not for them saving a Singapore citizen. Translated into news values (the parameters journalists use to evaluate a story's newsworthiness, see chapter 5), it is therefore safe to conclude that proximity (how close a story is to home) plays a major role.

Based on the four award winners one can furthermore conclude that MediaCorp tends to place more value on human interest stories (or the identification news value) where one or more persons drive the narrative. Although based on recent events, the main focus of the stories are not the natural disasters but the people whose lives have been altered due to these disasters. Singapore Press Holdings, on the other hand, have chosen to award stories that place more value on recency (how recent the event was) and impact (what the news story contributed with or may contribute with). The news story and the feature(s) take their points of departure in current events with consequence and relevance for many Singaporeans – with the news story winner focusing on new regulations effecting all public servants in the country and the feature winner following up on a big revelation of Singapore as a hub for Asian ISIS supporters on their way to Syria.

Interestingly, only one of the four winners, *The Strait Times*' story on Internet access, can be defined as a regular scoop. Even if the other three elaborate or present new information on developing stories, they are not breaking news. Clearly a lot of effort, time and money were spent on these stories but all are

follow-ups on events that had already been covered in the news. Similarly, *The Straits Times*' story is also the only one with elements of conflict driving the narrative. Yet, the conflict is displayed in a rather subtle way where the facts of the new regulations are presented first along with the government's motivation for its implementation before one source, an unnamed and unquoted teacher, at the very end in the final sentence is included to represent the difficulties some public servants will experience when the new system is implemented. Or as the article goes: "It will take time to convince users about the new system as the Internet is ingrained in most work processes. One teacher noted that he uses it extensively to develop worksheets and test papers" (Tham 2016). The story was, however, picked up by many other news outlets – including some major international ones – which seems to have had an impact on the jury's decision to award it news story of the year as this was also mentioned during the award ceremony to qualify the assessment (Sin 2017).

To sum up, the journalism awards in Singapore (at least based on this brief assessment of the latest prizes) pay attention to craftsmanship and honour long-term achievements. It is not necessarily scoops that win but stories that showcase solid work with high interest to the Singaporean public. The prizes celebrate thorough work that goes beyond desk research and require elements of investigative journalism. News values such as proximity, recency, relevance, impact, and – to some degree – exclusivity (scoops) seem to be the most prominent factors.

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Appendix 6: Press awards in Vietnam

Award	Winner ¹
News story, printed press	<p>A series of three articles under the headline: ”Tran danh lon’ mang ten FTA” (“A ‘great battle’ called the FTA”), by Trinh Thi Thuy Lien. Published June 11, June 12 and June 15, 2015 in <i>Dau Tu</i> (Investment, the newspaper of The Ministry of Planning and Investment).</p> <p>Three articles looking into the effects or the “lessons learned” of the Free Trade Agreement. Critical pieces that discusses the consequences for the local Vietnamese market.</p> <p>Part one: https://tinyurl.com/baodautu1 Part two: https://tinyurl.com/baodautu2 Part three: https://tinyurl.com/baodautu3</p>
Commentary, printed press	<p>”Loi ich nhom và ‘Chu nghĩa tu ban thanh huu’ – ‘canh bao nguy co” (“Risk warnings on ‘interests’ groups’ and ‘equity funds””), by Vu Ngoc Hoang. Published June 2, 2015 in <i>Tap Chi Cong San</i> (Communist Review, the official journal of the Communist Party).</p> <p>A commentary recommending precautions against interests’ groups and equity funds as both may threaten the development of the nation.</p> <p>https://tinyurl.com/tccongsan</p>
Reportage/ feature, printed press	<p>A series of five articles under the headline: “Dau tu cho nong nghiep” (“Investing in agriculture”), by Vu Viet Doan and Le Quang Nhung. Published October 7, 10, 14, 17 and 21, 2015 in <i>Nhan Dan</i> (The People, the official newspaper of the Communist Party).</p> <p>No online versions of the articles found.</p>
News story or commentary, radio	<p>“Tu dai thang mua xuan nam 1975 den nhung mua xuan dai thang trong thoi binh” (“From great wins in the spring of 1975 to the great spring of peace in peacetime”), by Nguyen Thi Hang Nga, Nguyen Thi Thu Hoa, Dao Thanh Truong, Nguyen Thi Hang, Nguyen Sy Khanh and Nguyen Van Cuong. Broadcast in April 2015 on <i>Voice of Vietnam</i>.</p> <p>A story about how the immediate aftermath of the victories in 1975 and the transition into peacetime.</p>
Reportage/ feature, radio	<p>No online version found.</p> <p>“Chong gian lan xang dau – Cuoc chien khong khoan nhuong” (“Petrol fraud - uncompromising battle”), by Nguyen Thi Thanh Hai, Tran Dinh Tuong Lam, Tran Thi Ngan Trieu and Can Xuan Luong. First broadcast August 25, 2015 on <i>Truyen binh Dong Nai</i> (Dong Nai Radio and Television).</p> <p>An investigative story about fraud and corruption among gas station owners in Dong Nai.</p> <p>No online version of the broadcast found but a transcript of the broadcast can be accessed here: https://tinyurl.com/DongNai2015</p>
News story, television	<p>“Lai them mot mon no” (“One more debt”), by Thanh Huyen, Le Hang and Mai Thanh. Unknown first broadcast date. First broadcast on <i>Dai Phat thanh - Truyen binh Nghe An</i> (Radio and Television Station of Nghe An).</p>

Commentary,
television

A story about the consequences of a new rural development program that makes citizens take up loans – much to their disagreement.

No online version of the broadcast found.

“Bien tuong kinh doanh da cap tai Viet Nam” (“(How to) Make multi-level business in Vietnam”), by Minh Huong, Huy Hoang, Bach Hoan, Thuy Lan, Duc Dung, Ngoc Minh, Trung Duy, Duc Tien, Thanh Thao, Dinh Hung, Quy Huy and Minh Hang. Unknown first broadcast date. Broadcast on *VTV24*.

An investigative piece uncovering a series of multi-level business scams in several big Vietnamese cities.

Television
documentary

No online version of the broadcast found.

A five part documentary series under the title: “Bien dao Viet Nam nguon coi tu bao doi” (“Seas of Vietnam – The origin”) by Nguyen Quy Hoa, Lam Thanh Quy, Truong Ba Hung, Tran Ngoc Hung, Pham Xuan Nghi, Nguyen Hoang Linh, Ho Tien Thao, Tran Thanh Trieu, Le Quoc Phong, Phan Van Hieu and Truong Van Minh. Unknown first broadcast date. Broadcast on *Dai Truyen binh TP.HCM* (HCMC television).

A five-part documentary showcasing Vietnam’s historic sovereignty over its islands and seas – with particular attention to the South China Sea.

No online version of the series found.

¹*Awarded at the 10th National Press Award on June 14, 2016. Celebrated at a ceremony on June 21, 2016. An overview of the winners can be found here: <http://vja.org.vn/vi/detail.php?pid=72&catid=73&id=38196&dbname=Cong-bo-ke-t-qua-Giai-Bao-chi-Quoc-gia-lan-thu-X-nam-2015>*

In Vietnam, the official journalist association, the Vietnamese Journalists’ Association, is in charge of the country’s press awards and has been so for the last 10 years. The only problem, in the eyes of journalists working for the more progressive media outlets, is that the association is closely tied to the Communist Party. “A lot of awards in this country is awarded because of [their] political sense”, as V2, a seasoned journalist, states. In journalists’ view, the prizes may celebrate the industry but it is not necessarily the same as them awarding the best in journalism. Instead, the more progressive journalists feel that the prizes come closer to being political awards than journalistic – which could lead one to argue that the capital received from being awarded with such a prize perhaps relates more to political capital than journalistic.

If we look at the prizes awarded within the last year, we get a clear sense of the values of the Association and thereby perhaps also the Communist Party. Every year on the Revolutionary Journalist Day (June 21) the association hands out prizes in a number of categories in three different classes, A, B and C. The best of the best, the A-awards, was last year in 2016 being presented to stories from eight categories covering print, radio and television. Among the prizes were awards for news stories, investigative pieces and commentaries. As in Singapore, recency and impact seem to be two of the more important news values but the stories’ themes are perhaps even more interesting to look into. Intriguingly, most stories share the same theme: the economy of the country. Or, to be more precise, issues that pose a threat to the development of the country’s economy.

The award for best printed news story went to a series in *Dau Tu* (Investment) about the consequences of Vietnam joining the Free Trade Agreement; the award for best printed commentary was awarded to a piece in *Tap Chi Cong San* (Communist Review) with risk warnings on interests' groups and equity funds; the award for best investigative story or feature went to a series of articles in *Nhan Dan* (The People) on investments in the agriculture industry; the award for the best televised news story was awarded to a story on newly introduced micro loans in rural areas from *Dai Phat thanh - Truyen binh Nghe An* (Radio and Television Station of Nghe An); and the best television feature went to an investigative piece uncovering a series of multi-level business scams from *VTV24*. Only the two radio awards, the award for best news story or commentary which went to a historic piece on the immediate aftermath of the victories in 1975 broadcast on *Voice of Vietnam* and the award for best feature awarded to a *Truyen binh Dong Nai* (Dong Nai Radio and Television) story on corruption among local gas station owners, along with the award for best television documentary, which went to a five-part documentary showcasing Vietnam's historic sovereignty over its islands and seas (with particular attention to the South China Sea) broadcasted on *Dai Truyen binh TP.HCM* (HCMC television), did not focus directly on economic issues. Another common theme among the winners is nation-building. Not only the economic stories relate to that theme, the two historic stories discussing the victories in 1975 and Vietnam's sovereignty over islands and seas respectively are equally centred around this. Both deal with the Vietnamese nation faced with difficulties – externally as well as internally.

Though the awarded stories can be said to be closely related to the government's understanding of the role and responsibilities of the media (as discussed in chapter 4), the stories are not submissive to the government and its policies. Several of the stories point to issues that needs the government's attention. Whether it is low-scale corruption among gas stations in Dong Nai, the growing industry of multi-level business scams or scrutiny of the consequences of joining the FTA on Vietnam's different industries, many of the stories show elements of criticism. Although they do not openly confront the government or the Communist Party, they do uncover some major problems in Vietnam – problems that will need to be solved if the country shall move onwards and upwards. That the stories mostly relate to the country's economy is no coincidence. As we will see in the coming chapters, this is actually an area where critical journalism is possible and even encouraged.

To sum up, the press awards in Vietnam clearly celebrate journalism that has a national agenda – stories that either celebrate the country and its sovereignty or stories that seek to push the nation forward by exposing problems in society. Yet, none of stories deals with the country's political structure or issues. The problems are, almost, purely economic. Attention is given to the country's businesses and economic well-being. None of them deals with issues related to human rights or politics. Perhaps because these issues are extremely sensitive and therefore rarely reach the media in the first place – or perhaps because choosing such stories would send the wrong message about the purpose of the media and journalists' function in society to the authorities.

Appendix 12: Journalists' role orientations in Singapore

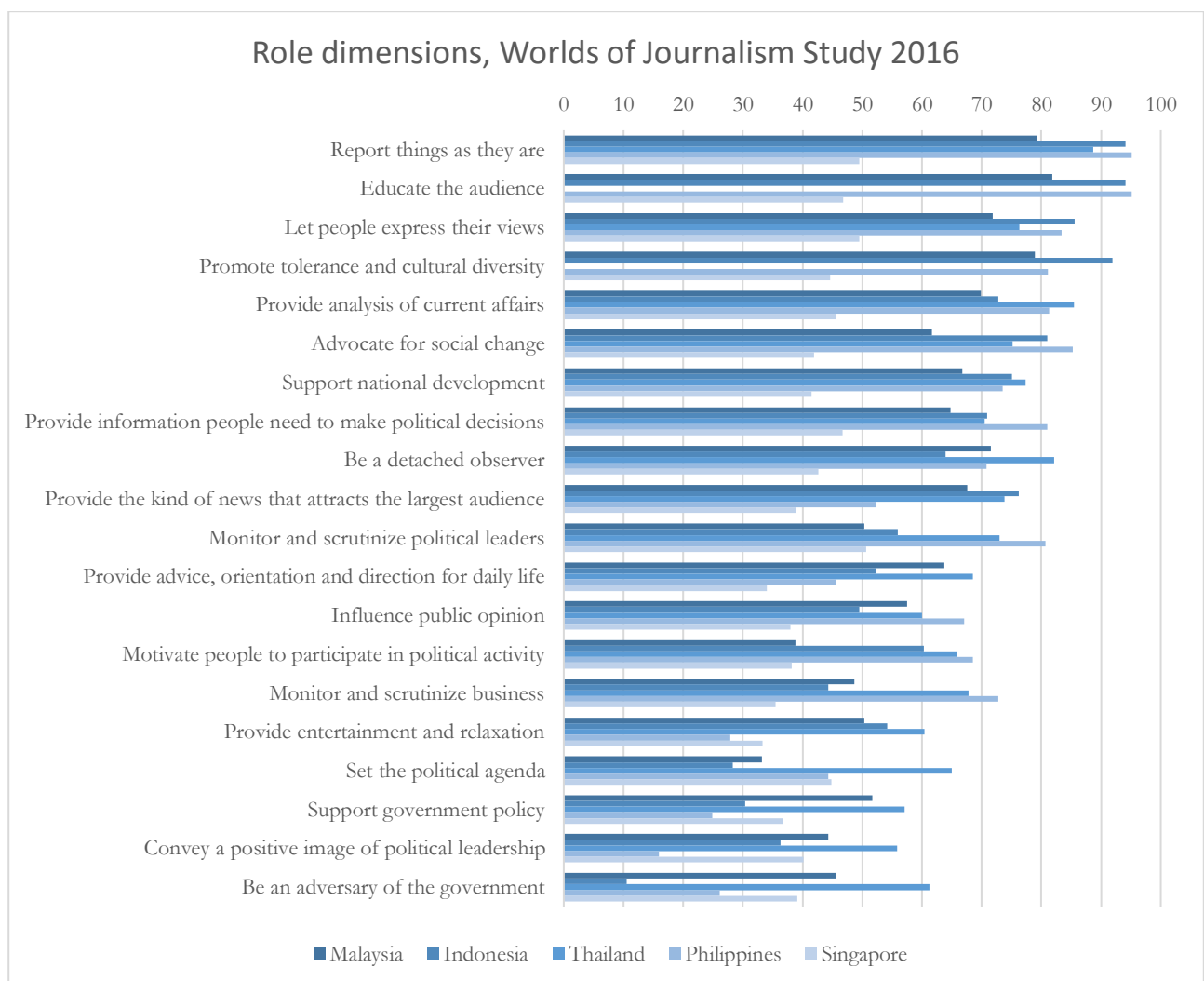
	Public servant	Nation-builder	Social educator	Disseminator	Interpreter	Fact-checker	Voice of the voiceless	Subtle critic	Boundary-pusher
<i>Role dimensions</i>									
Tasks	Conveying messages from the state; delivering public announcements.	Providing information to help develop the nation; spread the national values.	Teach; “dumb” news down and make them digestible.	Informing people about events, policies and things affecting their everyday lives.	Interpret information; provide analysis, context and background.	Checking facts; verifying/reject rumours and online stories.	Report stories from the lower levels of society.	Scrutinise policies and decisions; monitor and scrutinise organisations, businesses and institutions.	Produce news on sensitive topics; tackle difficult issues.
Intention	Do what the state expects (or what journalists think the state wants)	Developing the nation; get everyone on board.	Educate the people; help them to live better lives and understand their society. Develop the nation.	Help people to live their lives more effectively.	Help people live their lives more effectively.	Providing the facts; telling the truth. (Finding justification for the profession)	Speak up for the voiceless; advocate for change.	Uncover problems in society; uncover corruption.	Pushing the boundaries of accepted content; challenging the OB markers.
Qualifications	Access to information.	Access to information; patriotism.	Knowledge; communication skills; perspective; idealism.	Access to information; communication skills.	Analytical skills; (local) knowledge; access to information; communication skills	Access to information; knowledge; communication skills.	Investigative; idealism; contacts; communications skills.	Idealism; investigative skills; courage; persistence.	Access to information; connections; courage; lack of knowledge of the OB-markers.
Direction	Top-down	Top-down; Bottom-up	Top-down	Top-down	Top-down	Top-down; Bottom-up	Bottom-up	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
Positioning	Submissive →neutral	Submissive →neutral	Submissive →neutral	Neutral	Neutral (→advocate)	Submissive ↔advocate	Advocate	Advocate	Advocate
Audience	Public	The nation	Public	Public	Public	The public, state, journalists.	Government	The public; the state (the nation)	The public; the state
Sender	Newsmakers/ state	Newsmakers/ state, the nation.	Newsmakers/ state	Newsmakers/ state	Newsmakers/ state	Newsmakers/ state, journalists.	The people?	Journalists?	Primarily online media

Appendix 13: Journalists' role orientations in Vietnam

	Mouthpiece	Nation-builder	Social educator	Disseminator	Interpreter	Fact-checker	Voice of the voiceless	Subtle critic	Boundary-pusher
<i>Role dimensions</i>									
Tasks	Conveying messages from the state/Party; delivering public announcements.	Providing information to help develop the nation; spread information about national development.	Teach; spread knowledge about all matters relevant to create a better life.	Informing people about events, policies and things affecting their everyday lives.	Interpret information; provide analysis, context and background.	Checking facts; verifying/reject rumours and online stories.	Report stories from the lower levels of society.	Scrutinise policies and decisions; monitor and scrutinise organisations, businesses and institutions.	Produce news on sensitive topics; tackle difficult issues.
Intention	Do what the state/the party expects and the law dictates. (depends on the media outlet)	Developing the nation; create a national agenda on development.	Educate the people; help them to live better lives and understand their society. Develop the nation.	Help people to live better lives.	Help people to live better lives.	Providing the facts; telling the truth. (Finding justification for the profession)	Speak up for the voiceless; inform the government about issues in society; advocate for change.	Uncover problems in society; uncover corruption; doing checks and balances; being a watchdog.	Pushing the boundaries of accepted content; challenging the status quo.
Qualifications	Access to information.	Access to information; patriotism.	Knowledge; communication skills; perspective; idealism.	Access to information; communication skills.	Analytical skills; knowledge; access to information; communication skills	Access to information; knowledge; communication skills.	Investigative skills; idealism; patriotism; contacts; communications skills.	Idealism; investigative skills; courage; persistence; strong editors.	Access to information; connections; communication skills; strong editors.
Direction	Top-down	Top-down; Bottom-up	Top-down	Top-down	Top-down	Top-down; Bottom-up	Bottom-up	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
Positioning	Submissive →neutral	Submissive →neutral	Submissive →neutral	Neutral	Neutral →advocate	Submissive ↔advocate	Advocate	Advocate	Advocate
Audience	Public	The nation	Public	Public	Public	The public, government, journalists.	State/Party	The public; the state (the nation)	The state
Sender	State/ Party	State/ Party, the nation.	State/ Party	State/ Party	State/ Party	State/Party, journalists.	The people?	Journalists?	Journalists (social media)

Appendix 14: Roles in Southeast Asia

The figure below shows the role dimensions in Southeast Asia (or more precisely Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore) based on the World of Journalism Study (Hasim et al. 2016; Muchtar and Masduki 2016; Tandoc 2016; Duffy 2016; Banjarongkij and Boonchutima 2017). Looking across the five countries that participated in the survey (though not forgetting the reservations on the Singapore survey discussed in chapter 1 and appendix 2), it is possible to see a pattern of some sort. There is wide agreement about the dimensions “report things as they are” (appears in the top-two in all countries), “Educate the audiences” (appears in the top-four in all countries but Thailand who did not include the dimension in their questionnaire) and “Let people express their views (appears in the top-five in all countries). Furthermore, there is a similar agreement about the role dimensions with which journalists ascribe to the least. The dimensions “Be an adversary of the government”, “Convey a positive image of the government” and “Support government policy” all ranked in the bottom-five among four of the countries each.



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Appendix 15: Media systems characteristics in Singapore and Vietnam

<i>Dimensions</i>	Singapore	Vietnam
Market structures		
<i>Historical trajectories</i>	Laws, legislation inherited from colonial era. Late development of mass media.	Laws, legislation inherited from colonial era. Late development of mass media.
<i>Dominating business models</i>	Sales and advertising.	Sales and advertising.
<i>Market concentration</i>	High degree of market concentration.	Low degree of market concentration.
<i>Market segmentation and audience structures</i>	Television and newspaper in dominance, online media on the rise.	Television and newspaper in dominance, online media on the rise.
State intervention		
<i>Degrees of state authority (legislation, execution, judicial)</i>	Legislative and judicial powers.	Legislative, executive and judicial powers, though all applied arbitrarily.
<i>Degree of state support (subsidies)</i>	Subsidies to broadcast and support of others (print) through advertising.	Subsidies to broadcast and support for Party-affiliated media.
<i>Degree of institutional involvement (ownership, appointments)</i>	Owner of broadcast media, involved in appointments on management level.	Owner of broadcast media, may interfere in appointments on management level.
<i>Dominating (press) ideology</i>	Media should help develop the nation and foster a harmonious society.	Media should help develop the nation and promote Communism.
Political parallelism		
<i>Organisational connections</i>	Mainstream media connected to ruling party, alternative media to opposition.	All media connected to organisations, though some only pro forma.
<i>Cross-overs (politics and journalism)</i>	Some cross-overs on management level, politics to journalism.	Cross-overs on management level, politics to journalism.
<i>External/internal pluralism</i>	External pluralism, if any.	External pluralism, if any.
Professionalization		
<i>Professional norms and ideals</i>	Strong agreement on norms and ideals.	Little agreement on norms and ideals.
<i>Level of organisation</i>	Moderate degree of organisation.	Moderate degree of organisation.
<i>Level of routinized practices</i>	High degree of routinized practices.	Low degree of routinized practices.
<i>Role orientations</i>	Strong agreement on neutral roles, emphasising objectivity and facticity.	Some agreement on roles, although with variance among groups.
<i>Level of instrumentalization/level of autonomy</i>	Moderate-to-strong degree of instrumentalization.	Moderate-to-strong degree of instrumentalization but with great fluctuation.
Civic engagement		
<i>Influence (political)</i>	Moderate influence.	Weak influence.
<i>Level of organisation</i>	High degree of organisation.	Low degrees of organisation.
<i>State interference and regulation</i>	Strong state interference.	Sporadic state interference.