"We just write what we think is newsy":
An Analysis on Newsworthiness Constructions in Malaysian Newspapers

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Abstract

Studies on newsworthiness have developed mainly into two ways of explaining how events become news. These approaches, which have been called object-driven and subject-driven news values, have contributed a lot in the quest for understanding news. Previous empirical studies on news have demonstrated that concepts used as abstractions of social practices, such as newsworthiness construction, suffer either from object-driven news values explanation about newsworthiness that seeks to locate news value in the news events themselves, or from subject-driven news values which see news making as being *exclusively* concerned with hidden motives that are often unbeknown even to the practitioners themselves. The practitioners are, therefore, forced to explain newsworthiness by invoking contexts that are already known; for example, in terms of editorial decisions based on political, cultural and/or organisational identities which are 'external' to immediate empirical encounters, because such identities are compositions of a range of contextual factors. Here, news studies have developed in a way that has created a rift between journalism theory and journalism practice, mainly because many researchers and theorists understand social actions only through modes of abstraction that have become disconnected from the practical intelligence of news making.

Influenced by the Actor Network Theory (ANT), this study attempts to study newsworthiness construction from 'intensive' contexts in order to understand whether or not newsworthiness in Malaysian newspapers is a culturally-specific phenomenon. Concepts of ANT are deployed to study a range of qualitative data gathered from observations and ethnographic interviews that serve as a supplement to the weaknesses of both the aforementioned approaches. The case of Malaysia should make clear the extent to which a focus on intensive contexts enables us to explore the specificity of news making in six Malaysian newspapers, namely the *New Straits Times* (the NST), *Berita Harian* (BH), *The Sun* (TS), *Sinar Harian* (SH), *Harakah* (Hh) and *XX* (anonymous).

The research reveals a heterogeneity in newsworthiness construction that it is more complex than simply assuming that newsworthiness is something 'out there' (such as newsworthiness criteria); instead, newsworthiness is an effect of accreditation of different interests. Thus, the collective identity of the newspapers is the effect of the critique on newsworthiness criteria. However, ANT allows identity to be scrutinised further by treating it as a virtual object. This study demonstrates that the distinct identity of the newspaper can be investigated by tracing the enrolment of the news angle. Besides identity, concepts such as readership remain important in studying newsworthiness construction and have also been scrutinised as a virtual object to retain its link to intrinsic contexts in order to explore the distance between the conception of readership and the actual reader. Although readership has mainly been examined under such abstractions, concepts in ANT allow the multiple associations with real readers to be traced. The heterogeneity and complexity of newsworthiness construction is also demonstrated in a case study about the smallest newspaper organisation in this study, which suggests that even the smallest organisations embrace complex associations of news practices that have global associations.

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INTRODUCTION

The question 'how do events become news?' is significant in understanding news because it enables us to explore the mechanics of newsworthiness construction, pertinent to the comprehension of news itself. However, in studying Malaysian news (within an English-Language thesis), another question should also be considered: 'Does the focus on Malaysian newspapers (as a non-Western case study) enable us to claim that newsworthiness is a culturally specific phenomenon?'

This is because the question about news and newsworthiness in Malaysia has been approached with a strong influence of the Western news studies tradition, and these studies demonstrate their own weaknesses and contradictions. Among the main defects is the way the Western scholars have asked these questions about news, which have been answered differently both by academics and journalists - creating barriers between researchers and the practitioners (Cole and Harcup 2010, Harrison 2006, Niblock 2007, Zelizer 2004, Zelizer 2005, Zelizer 2009). This phenomenon unfortunately has also spread to scholars in Malaysia, furthering the rift in understanding news in non-English speaking countries.

Object-Driven New Values

The rift between journalism and academics has been furthered by the emergence of news studies, which largely resolve the question of 'how events become news' into two types of answers. One of them can be called the *object-driven news values*, where academics tend to suggest that the question of 'how events becomes news' can be answered through studies that focus on the nature of news events that link the answers to the concept of 'newsworthiness criteria'. The proponents argued that the value of news is derived from the characteristics of the event. These characteristics are called *newsworthiness criteria*: what makes an event newsworthy is the event itself. Thus, from this view, newsworthiness could be explained from a list of newsworthiness criteria such as 'Frequency', 'Threshold', 'Unambiguity' and 'Reference to something negative' (Galtung and Ruge 1965: 65-71) and 'The power elite', 'Celebrity' and 'Entertainment' (Harcup and O'Neil 2001: 278-279).

To some extent, the classic analogy of "when a dog bites a man it is not news, but when a man bites a dog it is news" defines the way objectivists determine newsworthiness. In this instance, the rarer the event, the greater its possibility of becoming news. Thus, news can be predicated in terms of what makes news newsworthy depending on the rarity and unlikelyness of an event. From the criteria established, the event can be analysed as a set of distinctive criteria which can be deployed not only to predict what become news, but also to help journalists make more rational ('objective') decisions. This 'objectivity' is reinforced where the proponents believe that "it is the nature of event itself that determines newsworthiness".

Subject-Driven News Values

The second way of answering the question relates to *subject-driven news values* that observe news by focusing on the nature of the selection process. The arguments range from the personal bias of the 'gatekeeper' (Manning 1950/1997) to the 'social' factors that influence news making including political, organisational and cultural contexts that influence newsworthiness. It is due to this view that object-driven news values have been neglected, which is the context of news production. Every news organisation, for example, has its own 'objectives' that are distinctive to the nature of the event.

Subject-driven news values connect news processes with concepts such as ideology (Gramsci 1971, Hall et al. 1978, Herman and Chomsky 1988) and corporate identity (Bantz 1985, Breed 1955, Cottle 1993, Cottle 2002, Fishman 1980, Manning 1950/1997, Molotch and Lester 1974, Soloski 1989, Tuchman 1978). They argue that the value of news is derived from its function within the news industry, including its political, economic and ideological purposes. Thus, how events become news is determined based on the values of the news derived from these contexts.

This view also insists that academic studies of 'news values' inform decision making as derived from other forces than the story itself. To strengthen these arguments, news values are produced, it is asserted, by these diverse factors that can be independent from the 'event' covered by the journalists (although events can be 'staged' and then objectivist newsworthiness is actively produced).

Identity in Newsworthiness Construction

Often, these values are known as political identity, organisational identity, or cultural identity, or interests related to power, commerce and belief. These values derived from organisational, political and cultural contexts form the notion of 'identity' that implies 'sameness' in news practice among journalists in a particular organisation or/and in a particular political and cultural setting. This differentiates the views derived from object-driven news values and subject-driven news values in understanding news because of emphasis of the structural contexts that define how events become news.

Based on the subject-driven news values, identity is seen as a local articulation of something bigger, more abstract and more complex. From this view, identity is a way of explaining something based on the 'context', 'system' or 'structure' of the place it inhabits. I refer to this way of talking about identity as 'extensive contextualisation', which has been contradicted by Marilyn Strathern (2002) in *Abstraction and Decontextualization: An Anthropological Comment* with 'intensive contextualisation'. To Strathern, extensive contextualisation happens when ethnographic findings are put into the larger 'social' context (such as culture) to understand the particular meaning of human actions. What is lacking from this way of thinking is, it that it is unable to examine complex data and determine social actions based on merely the inherent external contexts.

Secondly, identity is seen as an effect of differentiation as a process of collecting or gathering (Tarde 1962, 2000) that echoes Strathern's 'intensive contextualisation'. Strathern added that ethnographic data are useful only when they are approached as such, where the data are not 'forced' to belong to any larger structural contexts, but rather 'decontextualised', while at the same time having self-description features, as if having a life of its own. This means, data should not be forced to be belong to certain contexts, but when they are able to self-describe themselves, they actually "enrol various social mechanisms that confirm its internal efficacy; thus it can evaluate the results of social processes without having to deal with the processes themselves" such as the activity of 'audit' (Strathern 2002: 306).

Audit is an example of activity where the interests of the auditor are not limited to the issue of 'measurement' to improvise a system, but also to achieve the 'level' the auditor aims for. It is here that Strathern sees that decontextualisation leads the audit indicators to have a life of their own. It is only when the data are decontextualised, that it enables the next approach to be taken: tracking connections of heterogeneous acts between people and the

narratives, rather than comparing different 'contexts' that simplify ethnographic data. Thus, the data are approached in an open-ended way, avoiding the tendency to jump to the conclusion (or reductionism) based on the context being pre-determined.

Here, the displacement of contexts becomes an important feature, that further suggests 'abstractness' is a crucial notion because (a) when contexts are decontextualised, the notion of 'virtual' becomes important because virtuality starts by referring to physical qualities of a thing and (2) the effects of the qualities such as the virtual heat of sunshine. This suggests virtual identity comes from 'internal' rather than 'external' efficacy (Strathern 2002).

In news studies, the allocation of news values itself can be considered as a process of 'collection' derived from 'internal' efficacy rather than 'external' effects of various contexts assumed as influencing news production. In this instance, identification is then a form of abstraction and constructs 'intensive contextualisation'. In contrast to 'extensive contextualisation', this abstraction is a form of sense making, of creating discourse, and of enabling imitation by the journalists within the news organisations to perform certain patterns in news making. These include similar patterns of actions and 'automatism' in deciding on news.

From these distinct ways of identifying, distinct perspectives of 'ideology' emerge. In the first instance of identification, or where identity is argued to be able to explain the local through the external context, ideology is derived from existing 'meaning systems'. These include systems or contexts which are assumed to already exist in reality, and that define a local ideology. This is when political, economic and cultural contexts that are assumed to exist already 'out there' are argued to determine what becomes news. From this view, ideology is very much driven by an 'extensive' and inherent meaning system.

On the other hand, when identity is a process of collecting or gathering (also described as 'grouping' (Latour 2005), the formation of ideology is much more local, when even actions to allocate news values in news selection are accounted as meaningful associations, and also taken into account in understanding ideology. Thus, ideology from this view is not something 'out there' or already existing and external to individual actions, but rather internal, local and a continuous process that gains its meaning from the performance of meaningful associations. Here, in contrast to the previous view, ideology is drawn from 'intensive' associations.

It is when identity and ideology are both scrutinised from the second (intensive) perspective, the second question raised in the introduction becomes at stake. If news is not limitedly viewed as influenced by the context or system where news organisations operate, how do we understand if news is produced differently (or not) in Malaysia? This is where the third position of studying news values in Malaysia becomes crucial.

Newsworthiness Construction in Malaysia

As stated earlier, the first position advocated by objectivists in understanding news is derived from academic studies of 'newsworthiness criteria' that argue that newsworthiness is derived from the nature of events. This position has influenced studies of newsworthiness construction in Malaysia, where scholars argue that there are distinct newsworthiness criteria that determine the First World and the Third World. Jack Lule (1987) said that the First World news can be explained by criteria such as 'timeliness', 'proximity', 'personality', 'unusual events', 'human interest', 'conflict', 'ideological significance', 'party concerns', 'social responsibility' and 'education', whereas 'development', 'social responsibility', 'education' and 'national integration' are commonly pertaining to the Third World newsworthiness criteria. Particularly in Malaysia, newsworthiness has also been explained from these criteria, for example as described by Masterton (2005) and Ramanathan (1995).

Murray Masterton (2005) found that newsworthiness criteria in Asian countries can be divided into Oriental, South Asian, Middle Eastern and Pacific criteria. Diversity in Asia itself suggests that even within Asian countries, there are distinct criteria that make news. Malaysia is included in the 'Pacific' region, together with Australia, Brunei, Fiji, Indonesia, New Zealand, Philippines and Singapore. General newsworthiness criteria for these countries include 'Consequence', 'Human Interest', 'Proximity', 'Novelty', 'Prominence' and 'Conflict' (Masterton 2005: 43).

Furthermore, based on content analysis of eight Malaysian newspapers and interviews with 91 gatekeepers from the NST, The Star, Utusan Malaysia (UM), Berita Harian (BH), Nanyang Siang Pau, Sin Chew Jit Poh, Tamil Osai and Tamil Nesan, Sankaran Ramanathan (1995) found that news in these newspapers highlights the least about conflicts, violence and rebellion in both domestic and foreign news. From here, Ramanathan suggests that this implies a more responsible way of reporting news practised by journalists in the East compared to their Western counterparts because of the tendency to publish development news rather than sensationalising bizarre events. Other newsworthiness criteria identified in

Malaysian newspapers in this study are 'what sells the newspaper', 'religious importance', 'cultural significance', 'social importance' and 'needs of the nation' (Ramanathan 1995: 20).

As the object-driven news values are considered rigid among the proponents of subject-driven news values, newsworthiness in Malaysia can be seen as very much influenced by the larger contexts (or identities) of where news is being produced. The proponents of the subjectivist perspective on identity argue that by studying the larger socio-political and cultural context of a particular country, one would be able to understand how certain events become news. This has been among the most dominant view in studying news in Malaysia, which is policy-oriented in nature (Zaharom 2000). They generally argue that political context including the concentration of ownership in newspaper publishing (Kenyon and Marjoribanks 2007, Wang 1998, Zaharom 2004) and controls from the state (Crouch 1996, Herbert 2001, Hilley 2001, Lent 1975, Means 1996, Mohd Azizuddin 2009, Shome 2002, Wang 1998, Zaharom 2002a) has shaped the way news is determined and examined in Malaysia.

Again, albeit their distinct contribution in understanding news in Malaysia, these studies also indirectly suggest that investigation is based on the subject-driven news values approach. Here, the political context of the country is seen as the dominant factor that determines newsworthiness in the country. This further suggests that, studying news in the context of Malaysia has also been influenced by the assumption that the external context determines what becomes news. This is one of the factors that continue to create the gap between journalism and academia because the data do not emerge from the practice of the actors involved in the exact process (Hemmingway 2007).

It is when news in Malaysia is studied through extrinsic contexts that it is insufficient to really understand what makes news in Malaysia. In fact, such a view is criticised as being Western-oriented and the findings are too influenced by the Western political, economic and cultural values (McQuail 2000). Also, journalism syllabuses taught in Malaysian universities are very Western oriented (Mohd Dhari 1995).

The Western dominance in studying newsworthiness construction shapes news studies in other parts of the world too, with many countries "dominated by the universal western news values that Kalinga Seneviratne, an Eastern journalism scholar termed as 'one size fits all'" (Seneviratne 2008a: 238). The problem is not only when the (general) notion of identity

has been scrutinised from the extensive contextualisation (for example the political context of Malaysia defines newsworthiness and news practice in the country), but also when knowledge from the West has been treated as the 'universal measurement' of the heterogeneity of news, such as in Malaysia. This then becomes the 'identity' of news studies around the world, based on the 'extensive' inherent meaning systems (of the West) that hamper the understanding of the actual complexity of newsworthiness in a particular country.

Therefore, there have been attempts to 'localise' approaches to studying supposedly non-Western developing countries, including the study of Asian media systems, which is known as 'development journalism' that is usually treated as the framework to understand the 'general context' of news production in developing nations (Daoreung 2008, Massey and Chang 2002, Masterton 1995, Mohd Safar 2005, Mustafa 2005, Petersen 1992, Wong 2004). This concept was created by a group of economists in the Philippines during a workshop held in the late 1960s (Xu 2009), and has been a popular way of explaining news values in Asian countries including Malaysia.

The normative paradigm such as development of journalism philosophy, proposes the ideal features of developmental philosophy, highlighting the fact that we are dealing with a normative paradigm, to include the following:

(1) That the role of the media should support the development in the developing countries.

(2) That the Government should support the role of media as a stimulant for social change.

(3) That the Government provides the funding for the media to operate, and actively engage in social problems, for example, through education.

(4) That media freedom should be upheld, where media are supposedly independent from Government control.

(5) As an exchange for the funding provided by the Government, the media should become the watchdog of the Government, promoting the country's culture to other countries and exporting media content that can simultaneously reinforce the sovereignty of the nation in the eyes of the international community (McKenzie 2006).

In addition to this, particularly in producing development news suitable for publications in a country like Malaysia, Masterton (1995: 1-2) summarises the principles of development journalism into three major ways of reporting:

(1) The story must stress the positive, not the negative.

(2) The story must encourage development, not discourage it.

(3) The story must be in the national interest or the people's interests.

Based on the ideal criteria of development journalism, it is quite clear that the label 'development journalism' acts as a grander context used to explain newsworthiness in Malaysia, thus the identity of what makes news in the country. Furthermore, the separation made between 'development journalism' and non-development journalism is also based on the extensive contextualisation point of view when news making in the East and the West is distinguished based on this.

This brings us back to the difficulty of answering the question 'Does the focus on Malaysian newspapers (as a non-Western case study) enable us to claim that newsworthiness is a culturally specific phenomenon?' When contexts are not treated as the framework to inform the meanings of human actions, local action of a journalist becomes important. It is the associations among these actions that give meanings to a particular action that determine newsworthiness, taken from the voice of the journalists themselves, rather than based on the given context. The advantage of examining news as such is that researchers are able to study news based on the practices of journalists and thus understand journalists' very own ideologies. From this vantage point, apparently researchers appreciate heterogeneity in understanding the complex process of news making, simultaneously avoiding the reductive approach of simplifying complex processes into generalised findings. This view could serve as the supplement of weaknesses of the aforementioned extensive contextualisation approach.

Taking up this approach, this also implies (to researchers) that although a journalist is writing for a newspaper published by the State, it does not mean that his or her news practice can be generalised as supporting the State's policies without questioning. This is one early step to bridge the gap between news studies from the view of the academics and journalists, because the researcher is now examining news closer to reality, that researchers realise the heterogeneity of practices carried out by *each* journalist every day that define the newsworthiness of every single piece of news.

Moreover, it is crucial not to assume the reality of Malaysian journalists' practices as being 'out there', as this is a sweeping hypothesis, necessitating an empirical study on how exactly newsworthiness construction in Malaysian newspapers can be investigated without falling into the first way of talking about identity. Thus, this study poses the general research question as the central question of the discussion: "*How is newsworthiness construction being achieved in Malaysian newspapers?*

Methodology

To study newsworthiness construction in Malaysia, I have first written application letters to eight Malaysian newspapers ranging from mainstream newspapers to tabloids and party newspapers. However, only six newspapers have granted me the permission to enter their newsrooms to interview the journalists and to observe the process of newsworthiness construction. These newspapers are of various political inclinations, some are partisan to the State, and others are non-partisan and partisan to the opposition party. The newspapers studied in this study are the NST, BH, TS, SH, Hh and XX. The profiles of these newspapers are attached in the Appendix.

The specific methods chosen for this study are interview and observation. These methods are to be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3. However, due to limitations of access to conduct in-situ observation, this study adopts 'ethnographic interview' as its main method to provide in-situ data about processes involved in newsworthiness construction in the newspapers. Data collection was conducted over the duration of three months in these six newsrooms, commencing from February 2009 until the end of April 2009. Research participants consisted of 29 journalists ranging from group editor, editors, sub-editor and reporters. They are involved in the ethnographic interviews and observations of this thesis.

This study is *influenced* by Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Callon 1986, Latour 1987, Latour 1988, Latour 1993, Latour 2005, Latour and Woolgar 1979, Law 2004, Law and Hassard 1999), which informs both the methodological and analytical tools of the research. In this study, ANT concepts are deployed to analyse qualitative data generated, to produce intrinsic contextualisation type of knowledge, and serve as the supplement of previous knowledge generated extrinsically. By investigating the data based on the concepts of ANT, I pose the four research questions that this study seeks to answer.

Research Questions

This study asks four research questions pertaining to newsworthiness construction in Malaysian newspapers. The first research questions asked in this study is: *What is newsworthiness and how is news value established?* In Chapter 5, I will demonstrate that newsworthiness is not autonomous, it is the result of the accreditation of various interests in specific cycles of credit in each of the processes of newsworthiness construction in each of the newspapers. The question asked is: *What is newsworthiness and how is news value established?* It is by learning various parts of the cycles of credit in each of the newspapers that enables one to understand that the collective identity of the newspaper is the result of gatherings/collection of the process of what makes news, rather than the identity of the newspaper that determine news values. Collective identity of the newspaper is the result of reification of practice of the journalists. Here, when news values are established from the various accreditation processes, the news values are not merely based on either object-driven new values to explain newsworthiness that ignores contexts of news production, or subject-driven news values that highlight contexts as external forces that makes news. It is in this chapter that it is necessary to supplement these views with a more intrinsic way of understanding the process of news values establishment, which is when news values are generated as matters of concern by the journalists. The degree of matters of concern is evaluated by the hybridity of news values established.

Based on the newspaper with the most hybrid news values, the next chapter (Chapter 6) discusses a distinctive way of performing identity, which is how news angle at Sinar Harian (SH) is stabilised. This is a discussion that highlights the identity of SH as a 'virtual object' (Law 1996, Mol 1998), which means that identity changes in every specific (discursive) practice. Here, the enrolment of non-human actors are important in stabilising the news angle at SH, while the interplay between human and non-human actors remains pertinent in the process of constructing news angle. Thus, this chapter seeks to ask: *How are news angles deployed as a means to trace 'identity'?*

Furthermore, the specific concept of 'virtual object' also enables us to further understand more complex associations of virtual objects. 'Readership' for instance, is the most popular concept stated by the journalists during the interviews in explaining newsworthiness construction. However, it remains a slippery topic for analysis because it remains to be studied in 'abstraction', in the sense that readership is usually examined in its

generic form. How links between readership in the newsroom and readership at home is connected remains ambiguous - whether there is an immediate or distanced objectification. Thus, still to be known exactly is "*How are readers taken into account in newsworthiness construction?*", the third question asked in this study and will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

If the three questions deal with news value as hybrid object in each of the newspapers in this study, then further examination of the identity formation at SH, followed by the examination of readership as a virtual object and its objectification, all have implicitly demonstrated the centrality of 'associations' in achieving intrinsic contextualisation, rather than merely depending on external contexts that make news. Thus, the last question posed in this study exclusively demonstrates how associations are made in one particular opposition newspaper in Malaysia by asking the question: *How are associations between an opposition newspaper and the state made, and to what extent do these interrelate with newsworthiness construction?* The analysis of the sub-question itself will take place in Chapter 8.

Thesis Outline

This study comprises nine chapters including the Introduction. Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the political, economic and social context of Malaysia, including its media system and general journalistic practices. Chapter 2 reviews previous literature on what I like to refer to as *object-driven news values*; followed by Chapter 3 with *subject-driven news values*. Both of these chapters provide the background of previous studies including their distinct contributions to understanding news.

Chapter 4 discusses ANT as a supplementary of the previously discussed paradigms. In this study, ANT concepts are deployed to analyse qualitative data in order to generate an intensive contextualisation form of knowledge that the previous paradigms have mainly neglected. The different ANT concepts used are further explored in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 discusses the accreditation process as a way of understanding the establishment of news values, arguing that newsworthiness criteria insufficiently explain the complexity of newsworthiness construction. Various interests are accredited to form the hybrid form of news value in each of the newspapers, and they can be examined in parts of the specific cycles of credit that the news construction is involved in. The news values become the collective identity of the newspaper.

Chapter 6 extends the notion of identity as a 'virtual object'. Here, identity of the most hybrid new value newspaper, SH, is further examined to learn how the stabilisation of SH identity occurs. The enrolment of non-human actors and the interplay between human and non-human actors are important processes involved in the construction of the specific news angle at SH, that enable the production of more distinctive news at SH than other newspapers in this study, thus its unique selling point.

Chapter 7 examines the different degrees of the objectification of a virtual object, where, in this chapter, the concept of readership is extended into a virtual object. It examines the actualisation and subjectification of virtual readership (readership in the newsroom) and actual readership (readership at home) in order to get the sense of immediacy/distance among them.

Chapter 8 provides a case study of Hh by highlighting the central tenet in ANT, which is 'associations', by examining the relationship between Hh and the State, and how a small news organisation has triggered such a threat to the State.

As a whole, this thesis demonstrates complexity in newsworthiness construction through heterogeneous news making practice among journalists in Malaysian newspapers. Analysis and arguments in the empirical chapters suggest that it is inaccurate to generalise a particular 'pattern' of news practice in Malaysia by assuming that it is merely influenced by the grander context of news production such as political, cultural and/or organisational identities. There might be a so-called pattern in newsworthiness construction in Malaysia, but it cannot be reduced to being caused by these contexts alone. Thus, to understand the complex process of distinct newsworthiness construction in Malaysian newspapers, it is useful to provide a supplementary view to understand various (individual) acts involved in news making in Malaysia.

CHAPTER 1

MALAYSIA: BACKGROUND AND THE PRESS

1.0 Introduction

Malaysia[1] is a Federal Constitutional Monarchy in Southeast Asia, divided into the Peninsular of Malaysia in the West, and Sabah and Sarawak in the East. It consists of 13 states and three Federal Territories (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan) and is headed by the current designated monarch Yang di-Pertuan Agong. The Prime Minister heads the executive branches of the country.

The population of Malaysia is approximately 28,700,000. Demographically, Malaysia is a multiracial and multi-religious country, with about 65% Malays and other Bumiputras[2] ethnicities, 25% Chinese, 8% Indian and 2% other ethnicities.[3] Most Malays and Bumiputras are Muslims, Chinese and Indians are either Buddhist, Hindu or Christian, while Islam is the official religion of the country. The three major ethnicities could be summed up as "tri-ethnic schema" (Boulanger 1993: 55). Other ethnicities include the Ibans, Melanaus, Kadazans or Bajaus in Sabah and Sarawak.

Malaysia models its government closely on the UK's Westminster Parliamentary system. In its constitution, it is stated that Malaysia is a democratic country. However, many disagree with this claim (Crouch 1996, Khoo and Loh 2002, Means 1996, Varma 2002), particularly in relation to the issue of freedom of the press, the relationship between press and state, bias in the news and the rise of alternative media. These issues will be discussed in this chapter, together with the political, economic, and social history of the Malaysian press.

1.1 Malaysia Before and After Independence

Prior to independence, the history of Malaysia had been turbulent, with colonisation by the Portuguese, British, Japanese and a period of rebellion by the Malayan Communist Party. Although the society is multiracial and multi-religious, the controversy of racial conflict is no longer so dominant. The main focus of the people has been restructuring society. Ganesan (2005) argued that the current structure of Malaysian society is shaped by the colonisation of the British and the immigration of the Chinese and the Indians. British

colonial policies encouraged immigration for the purpose of development, while the Chinese and Indians immigrated to escape from the economic turmoil in their countries of origin. Most worked as miners and estate workers, and began to develop economic power.

The policies of British colonial rule have formed a particular structure in Malayan[4] society; the Chinese largely own businesses and live in the urban areas, the Malays are largely farmers working in the villages and the Indians are mostly employed in the rubber estates (Furnivall 1939, Williamson 2002). This is associated with the segregation of ethnics in Malaya. In attending to this issue, and in consideration of the long-term impact on the multiracial society which has formed, the government urged that the economic dominance of the Chinese and Indians over the Malays should be balanced. Therefore, the Chinese and the Indians agreed to limit their political involvement and let the Malays head the government. The Malays, in turn, accepted Chinese and Indian control of the economy with modest government influence as a bargain for their citizenship (Means 1976).

It was the willingness and cooperation of ethnic leaders who had assisted in independence that formed the Malaysian federation peacefully (Hooker 2008). The independence of the federation was achieved on 31 August 1957, owing to negotiations held by the Malay, Chinese and Indian political leaders with the British colonial authorities. This is associated with the dominance of the Malays mainly because of the political power they have over other ethnic groups although it is based on the consent of all leaders involved in the negotiation at that time.

Today, the current executive power is the Alliance, which is a multi-ethnic party comprising of UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), the MCA (Malayan Chinese Association) and the MIC (Malayan Indian Congress). This Alliance is also known as Barisan Nasional (BN) (the National Front). BN has been the winning party of the national elections ever since independence in 1957. BN, comprising of the three major ethnicities in Malaysia, has been criticised as being dominated by Malays through the membership of UMNO, despite their ability to maintain the nation's economy.[5]

1.2 Current State of the Economy and Politics of Malaysia

Since achieving independence, Malaysia has started to grow as an agricultural country and become the world's largest producer and exporter of tin, rubber and palm oil. The country is also rich in natural resources such as gas and oil.[6] In the 1970s, Malaysia started to shift its economy into manufacturing by replicating examples of the Asian Tigers: The Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore (Schmidt 2009). One affirmative action taken by the government was the New Economy Plan (NEP) in 1971. The two-pronged aims of the NEP were to reduce poverty and to restructure the economy among the different races of Malaysia (Means 1991).

In terms of industrial development, Malaysia expanded its economy through industrialisation by manufacturing its own brand car, the Proton[7], in 1983. This was one of its earliest heavy industry projects. Proton is now the largest automotive industry in Southeast Asia. Also in 1983, Malaysia started its privatisation policy, by privatising less profitable state-owned enterprises. The first project privatised was upgrading the public road in Klang, turning it into a tolled road. This was followed by the privatisation and upgrade of the government telecommunication company in 1987 (Cho et al. 2007). Despite criticisms of the policy (Gomez and Jomo 1997, Lim and Hew 2007), it was successful overall.

In 1997, Malaysia and most ASEAN countries were hit by the worst economic downturn in their history. The Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) dropped from RM2.50 per US Dollar to MYR 4.80 per USD[8]. The government imposed capital control and pegged the Ringgit at 3.80 per USD[9], but at the same time refused the financial aid offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMR) and World Bank.[10] Although this refusal surprised many, it saved Malaysia from the economic problems in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines (who decided to accept the aid). After the economic turmoil, the GDP slowly increased to 5.6% in 1999 and Malaysia began to progress faster than its neighbouring ASEAN countries (Bozyk 2006).

By the early 2000s, Malaysia was among the five largest exporters of semiconductor devices (Saw and Richardson 2010). Despite the economic challenges faced at the end of 1990s, the country's GDP increased to 6.2 percent per annum from 1991-2005.[11] Current economics are determined by the Third Industrial Master Plan (IMP3)[12], which covers the period of 2006–2020. The aim is to establish Malaysia as a major trading nation and to

increase the country's economics and human capital. Overall, the strength of its economic policies has turned Malaysia into one of the world's fastest-growing economies.[13]

Despite the prosperity of its economy, Malaysia has struggled to balance the economic inequality left by British colonial rule, the concern being to reduce poverty among Malays by encouraging competitiveness among the main economic controllers in Malaysia, particularly the Chinese. Furthermore, the economic policies such as the NEP are seen by opponents as limited in serving to improve the economic state of the Malays in comparison with other ethnicities (Ganesan 2005). The implementation of the NEP informs other recent economic plans to correct imbalances among ethnicities, but some have argued that it only prioritises the Malays in many of its developmental aspects, in an ideology known as Malay Supremacy. Some examples of these forms of priority are given in the Terms of Employment in the government sector and in the prioritisation of entry to local tertiary education, although BN proponents argue that there is no such thing as Malay Supremacy, as measures are taken by the state to reduce economic imbalance among races in Malaysia.[14]

However, Malay Supremacy has been a controversial policy of BN, although indirectly this was agreed by the previous Malay, Chinese and Indian leaders in the quest to achieve peace after independence in 1957. Today, Malaysia is seen as a stable country on the surface, but underneath many of Malaysia's younger generation are dissatisfied with the policy and the priorities given to the Malays over other ethnicities. This has created racial tension in society. Ezhar et al.'s (2008) study of the level of ethnic tolerance and the influence of exposure to news on public affairs in local mainstream media on ethnic tolerance, suggests that to some extent, the harmony and unity of the younger multiracial Malaysia is superficial.

This superficiality is argued to be one of the effects of avoiding the debate about race after the racial riots that occurred in 1969 (Kia 2007). The most notorious racial riot in Malaysian history took place on 13 May 1969, mainly among the Malays and the Chinese, and is known as The May 13th Tragedy. The official records suggest that the riot was caused by inflammatory speeches by political candidates campaigning during the election (Zaharom 2002a). The riot was also said to have been a 'spontaneous' event by the voters after the first defeat of UMNO in the 1969 General Election. UMNO lost 17 of its parliamentary seats;

MCA only won 13 (Von Vorys cited in Ganesan 2005). The overall General Election results are summarised by Kia (2007):

> The Alliance [BN] edifice that had stood unchallenged since independence was completely demolished: the UMNO lost 17 parliamentary seats mainly to the PMIP[15] and won only 51; the MCA won only 13 seats, conceding 20 to the opposition; while the MIC won only 2 out of the 3 allocated to the party (40).

However, Kia (2007) argued that the riot did not spark spontaneously from these General Elections results. He examined the official records versus the classified records of the riot in the Public Record Office in London, and found that the riot was a planned action of the second Prime Minister Abdul Razak Hussein to overthrow the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. This conflict represents the modern Malay capitalist class and the old-fashioned Malay aristocracy respectively. The classified documents reveal that the riot was a planned rebellion, that later became the basis of the founding idea of 'Malay Supremacy' through the implementation of the NEP.

Although the two-pronged objectives of the NEP aim to reduce racial inequality, the policy is criticised as the reason for the widening gap among ethnicities and worse, increasing economic gain among Malays themselves by rapidly producing middle class Malays (Darity and Nembard 2000, Verma 2002). Other ethnicities do not benefit much from the policy, and many Malays remain poor. It seems that BN, which is seen as born from the situation of "ethnic conflict", is not rectifying the inherent gap, but is in fact multiplying the problem (Boulanger 1993: 56).

The impressive stability of the economy, combined with the dissatisfaction of some ethnic groups, might well characterise a one-party system in Malaysia. It is not unusual to see a country with a one-party system as more stable and developing faster than other types of authoritarian regimes (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010). Some even categorise this as "competitive authoritarian" (Levitsky and Way 2002), while others see Malaysia as sitting between liberalised authoritarianism and limited democracy with little change in political development since independence (Crouch 1996). Couch concluded that Malaysian politics can be summarised as a "repressive and responsive character" (Crouch 1996: 7); "repressive" being associated with the one-party system in Malaysia characterised by the BN since 1957 that has shown slight "responds" (responses) to the changing citizens' needs. However, the

longest serving Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad argued that some of the critics forget that in a developing country, economic and political stability are the main aims, rather than civil liberty.

This is mainly what the opposition does not agree with. The main rival of BN is an alliance called the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA) (or Alternative Front), formed in October 1999 and later known as *Pakatan Rakyat* (PR) (or People's Front). On the 1st of April 2008, the oppositional PR was formed by the *Keadilan* (or National Justice Party), the Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS). Keadilan is triggered from the *Reformasi* (or Reformation Movement) group who were against the sacking of the ex-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 for a sodomy allegation.[16]

The PAS is most powerful in the state of Kelantan.[17] In the 1999 General Election, PAS took over the state of Terengganu,[18] and remained predominantly powerful in Kelantan. In the 2004 General Election, PAS became weaker; it won only seven parliamentary seats compared with 27 parliamentary seats in 1999, lost control of Terengganu, but remained in Kelantan with lesser seats.[19] Although by 2004 PAS had reduced influence in the 12th Malaysian General Election, in the 2008 General Election PAS won back seats in Kelantan, winning 38 of 45 seats, taking control of Kedah and forming the coalition government with DAP and PKR[20] in Perak and Selangor. MPs' seats in parliament also increased from 7 to 23 seats.[21]

In the 2008 General Election, PR proved to be a strong opposition to the two-thirds majority election champion of BN. BN nonetheless returned to power and formed the government with a small majority (Martinez 2001a). This is recorded as the worst performance of BN since they came into power after independence, with only 63.5% or 140 out of 222 parliamentary seats contested. Other component parties of BN saw a decline in the number of state and federal seats by at least half.[22] This might signal a new wave in Malaysian politics, although Couch (1996) argued that it was difficult to predict the route of Malaysian politics, as it seems now, the country once described as authoritarian has been transformed into a "half-way" house of democratic systems (Cabarella-Antony 2005: 27), moving towards an ideal of Islam, which celebrates civil society.

1.3 Islam and Islamisation in Malaysia

Malaysia has been a leader of Islamic countries with its outstanding economic development. In fact, Malaysia is seen as a prime example of modernist Islam, in "developing the Islamic path for progress and development" (Stauth 2002: 207). This implies a success story for Islam, one strongly promoted during the incumbency of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who "holds ideas about Islam which are more suited to managing a modern society and economy" (Malhi 2003: 237). Asian values are promoted among Malaysians with a strong emphasis on local values over Western values. Asian values are seen as "representing a Third-World-ist" nationalism, critical of the West, while full of admiration for the technico-scientific and economics success of Western capitalism" (Stauth 2002: 213).

The emphasis on economic progress is promoted through a version of Islam advocated by the state. However, it raises more criticism than support. Many argue that this version of Islam is different from that of the PAS – the modernist Islam promoted by the state and the purist Islam of the PAS are at odds (Shome 2002). PAS, who views that an Islamic country should be based on the Shariah laws, argues that Islam should be the guiding principle of government and a fundamental part of Malaysian way of life, without halting material development.[23]

Mahathir is said to have formed the state's version of Islam within the dilemma of "religious purity" and "modern secularism", both founded by Islam. By accepting Western capitalism, Malaysia has chosen a more secular form of Islamisation (Shome 2002) further emphasised through various official state programmes that institutionalise Islam in Malaysia. The institionalisation has raised several criticisms.

Some have argued that Islamisation in Malaysia "is a concerted government programme of co-opting and sponsoring Islamic intellectuals from a strong socio-religious movement of anti-establishment groups into recently-founded state educational and cultural institutions" (Stauth 2002: 187). Among the early programmes were the Islamic Teachers Training College and the International Islamic University (both in 1983), Islamic Development Foundation (1984), Islamic Insurance Company (1985), Islamic Bank (1984) (Shome 2002) and various educational programmes and student exchange programmes (Stauth 2002). Islamic departments are placed in high-rise buildings and many administrative

buildings are inspired by Islamic architecture, together with various Islamic conferences and grand Quranic recitation competitions organised by the state (Shome 2002).

These efforts are seen by critics as official ways of institutionalising Islam in Malaysia, with at least two purposes; avoiding other forms of radical Islam established by non-state agencies (Stauth 2002), and politically undermining the version of Islam promoted by opposition parties such as PAS (Malhi 2003). Examples of eradication of non-state Islamic movements that have been banned by the state include the *Darul Arqam* (a dakwah/preaching movement) (Stauth 2002). To discredit PAS, there is a clear message that their version of Islam is not the one accepted by the state, and this is articulated in the programmes organised by the Malaysian Institute for Islamic Understanding (IKIM)[24] formed in 1992 (Malhi 2003: 248) with the main aim of promoting a clear understanding of Islam through various programmes. This serves to enhance the version of Islam promoted by the state and to avoid the image of terrorism and backwardness (Malhi 2003), thus retaining the stability and unity of the country to support the modernist version of Islam (Shome 2002).

Officially staged Islamic programmes by the state, such as IKIM, are criticised for creating two types of Muslims in Malaysia. The first group are those considered modernist, with rational interpretations of Islam, while the second have more narrow, traditional understanding of Islam. The PAS reject combining Islamic knowledge with secular knowledge (Malhi 2003), as secular knowledge is associated with capitalism (Kessler 1978).

This leads to different arguments about 'wealth' from the state and PAS. While the state practises material gain and wealth distribution to the people by almost any means, especially during elections and by-elections. PAS question the 'sincerity' of the state in offering lucrative material growth to citizens. It is doubted that the offerings, not only *haram* (prohibited) at source, are altruistic, but rather designed to gain political mileage and benefit the state (Kessler 1978). An ideology from the former PAS, PMIP, prevails: "We promise you not full stomachs but the sense of dignity that comes from knowing that what you do, even at the price of your own hardship and sufferings, is what Allah says is right" (Kessler 1978: 229).

Thus, there are contradictions between Islamic teachings and the implementation of Islamisation in Malaysia. Muslims cannot enter casinos as gambling is *haram* in Islam, but

investment in gambling is allowed. Muslims are prohibited from drinking alcohol in public, but Malay ownership of beer halls is allowed (Shome 2002).

With the modernist approach taken by the state, the government was alleged to be using a particular application of Islam as a way of marketing itself as a successful Muslim country (Van Der Westhuizen 2004), but which does not practise Islamic laws (Martinez 2001b). Due to this, some observers believe that there is little chance Malaysia will become a fully Islamic country, due to the instalment of Western liberalisation (Ganesan 2005) and the history of being occupied by various foreign powers including the British.

1.4 The Press in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the first newspaper was published by the British, entitled *The Prince of Wales Gazette*, in 1806. This circulated stories in English related to British policies (Mohd Safar 1996). The first Chinese newspaper was *Chinese Monthly Magazine*, published by William Milne, who worked for the London Missionary Society to promote Western religious activities in mainland China. It was later in 1876 that Malay and Indian newspapers were first published. The first Malay newspaper was entitled *Jawi Peranakan* in Malay language, and *Tangai Sinegan* in Indian language (both published in 1876; Syed Arabi and Latiffah 1988). Overall, these early newspapers are described as "heavily biased towards ethnic needs and concerns" (Syed Arabi and Latiffah 1988: 4).

Early Malay newspapers supported independence, while the Chinese and Indian press focussed on events in China and India (Mohd Azizuddin 2009, Syed Arabi 1988). In this period, it can be argued, there was no unity in publishing newspapers among the different ethnic groups. Instead, each pursued their own causes. Unlike the Malays, the Chinese and Indians focussed on the cultural proximity of their countries of origin, concentrating more on the development of business rather than political issues (Wang 1970).

Colonisation and multiracialisation have highly influenced the Malaysian press (Herbert 2001). Newspapers in Malaysia can be argued to be "product[s] of communal divisions" (Syed Arabi and Latiffah 1988: 19) published in four major languages that characterise the three main ethnics in Malaysia – Malay, Chinese and Indian, the fourth being

English. Malay newspapers mainly enjoy the highest circulation because national schools teach in Malay (Syed Arabi and Latiffah 1988).

At present, there are 14 Malaysian newspapers being audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), four Malay newspapers, five English newspapers (including two free newspapers,), four Chinese newspapers and one Tamil newspaper. Besides the mainstream newspapers, *MalaysiaKini*[25] is the first online newspaper that offers mainly oppositional political news, and remains influential and prominent today. Other online newspapers include Malaysia Today (http://www.malaysia-today.net/), Malaysianinsider (http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/) and mynewshub (http://mynewshub.my/).

Regarding the circulation of the newspapers in this country, the current circulation figures show that, as of December 2011, the total newspaper circulation audited was 4,106, 115 copies daily. The Malay newspapers including *Berita Harian* (BH) and *Berita Minggu* (Sunday edition), *Utusan Malaysia* (UM) and *Mingguan Malaysia* (Sunday edition), *Kosmo* and *Kosmo Ahad* (Sunday edition), *Harian Metro* and *Metro Ahad* (Sunday edition) make up a total of 2,088,023 copies per day, while Chinese newspapers, led by *Sin Chew Daily* account for 805, 053 copies daily. The leading serious Malay newspaper is UM with 172, 859 daily circulation, slightly above its main rival the BH with a circulation of 126, 777. However, among Malay newspapers, only *Harian Metro* has increased its circulation, while others keep shrinking. English newspapers audited by ABC include the *New Straits Times* (the NST) and the *Sunday Times* (Sunday edition), *The Star* and *Sunday Star* and *The Edge,* that combined constitute 805,053 of newspapers daily. The increasingly popular free newspapers *The Sun* (TS) and *Malaysia SME* publish 350, 531 copies daily.

Chinese newspapers such as *Sin Chew Daily* have increased circulation from 324, 333 copies in 2006 to 388,223 as of December 2011. Among the Malay newspapers, the only paper that has increased is *Harian Metro* and its Sunday edition, from 249, 575 in 2005 to 386, 742 as of December 2011. TS also showed steady increase from 174, 179 in 2006 to 300,531 as of December 2011. English newspapers have experienced a reduction in circulation. *The Star,* for example, went from 310,008 in 2006 to 287,204 copies as of December 2011. Recent development in newspaper publishing saw the publication of a new newspaper in 2007 named *Sinar Harian* (SH), which it has been reported (but not yet listed in ABC circulation audit figures) reached 160,000 copies of circulation (Hong 2011). Further

detail about the circulation figures of all Malaysian newspapers audited by ABC and the profiles of each newspaper examined in this study can be found in the Appendix section.

In terms of common issues pertaining to the press in Malaysia, it is characterised by academics as having close affiliation with the state (Brown 2005, Kenyon and Marjoribanks 2007) and concentration of ownership (Mustafa K Anuar 2005a, Wang 1998, Zaharom 2004). There are main newspapers in all major languages, such as the NST, BH and *Harian Metro* (published by the New Straits Times Press Group: NSTP) and other Bahasa[26] mainstream newspapers; UM is produced by Utusan Group, which is also closely affiliated with the government in power. NSTP also published *Shin Min Daily* (now discontinued) in Chinese. For the Indian readership there is *Tamil Nesan* and *Malaysia Nanban*, which also support the government in power (Mustafa 2005a).

Discussions related to ownership of the newspapers in Malaysia have raised an important debate (McChesney and Nichols 2003, Mustafa 2005a, Wang 1998). Many agree in describing Malaysia newspaper ownership as concentrated (Kenyon and Marjoribanks 2007, Wang 1998, Zaharom 2004). One example of this is the 80 percent acquisition by Perbadanan Nasional Berhad (Pernas or National Trading Corporation) of the *Straits Times,* which initially operated in Singapore. *The Straits Times Press* (NSTP) was renamed as *New Straits Times* press and published daily Malay, English and Chinese newspapers and magazines such as the NST, the *New Sunday Times, the Malay Mail, the Sunday Mail, BH, Berita Minggu, Business Times, Shin Min Daily News, Her World, Malaysian Business, Jelita, Information Malaysia* and more (Mohd Azizuddin 2009, Zaharom 2002b, Zaharom 2004).

Today, NSTP is owned by Media Prima, the biggest media conglomerate in Malaysia, which also owns several television channels, TV3, NTV7, 8TV and TV9, and the Malaysian pay-to view television, Astro. It also operates radio stations Fly FM and Hot FM. Since the implementation of NEP the state has had almost total control over media ownership in Malaysia (Mustafa 2002), and publishing stories is now under the blessings and "political endorsement" of the state (Mustafa 2002: 159).

The concentration of ownership goes further when it is not only associated with mainstream media but also privately-owned newspapers (Ramanathan 1995). TS, a widely-circulated newspaper in Malaysia, although published by a private company, is owned by

Vincent Tan, the multimillionaire Malaysian Chinese who owns the Berjaya Group. Tan is said to have close personal ties with Malaysian former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, thus suggesting certain bias in news stories, similar to the mainstream newspapers. In this complex relationship, TS attempts to promote critical and non-partisan news, however, it has not escaped receiving several warning letters from the Ministry of Information (Hilley 2001).[27]

The Ministry established itself from the Department of Publicity and Printing in September 1945. During the early years, the department's role was clarifying rules and regulations, and also providing information to the British related to feedback on public opinion, together with information related to the economic and social conditions of places in various states. In summary, the early role of the department was "to nurture understanding of the people and maintain the stability of the nation". After independence, the role of the department was "obtaining the support and participation of the people in ensuring the successful implementation of all government programmes. In the context of a plural society, the department has helped carry out various campaigns to instil harmony and unity between the races or ethnic groups".[28]

This is in line with the *Rukun Negara* or the national ideology that prescribes five beliefs (united nation, democratic society, just society, liberal society and progressive society) and five principles (belief in God, loyalty to king and country, upholding of the constitution, rule of law, and good behaviour and morality). All Malaysians should embrace these principles, and have also been applied to guide mass media as to what their contents should include (Lent 1979: 6). In the *Rukun Negara*, the emphasis is on religion, and so media content that includes pornographic or other illicit elements is banned (Mohd Azizuddin 2008). This is also the basis of the Malaysian version of 'Asian values'.

1.4.1 The Notion of Asian Values

Through political affiliation and concentration of ownership, state control is often associated with the notion of Asian values introduced by Mahathir Mohammad, Malaysian ex-prime minister. The notion of Asian values suggests a generic value between Eastern people that is reflected in local cultures. Although these are all labelled "Asian values", the

champions of their implementation are mainly Malaysia (Petersen 1992, Stauth 2002) and Singapore (Xu 2005). Specifically, in the Malaysian context, the notion of Asian values "stress(es) the role of culture, including religion in determining the identity and distinctiveness of the Asian peoples" (Mohd Azizuddin et al. 2009: 92).

The fundamental idea of 'Asian values' has been so powerful in Malaysia that it has been followed implicitly by Mahathir's predecessors. Besides introducing Asian values, the ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad also introduced the 'Look East Policy', modelled on the success of the Japanese, and campaigned to reject the Western route to modernity.

In terms of application, Asian values are however applied heterogeneously in Asia because of the diversity of the continent (Asad 1995, Massey and Chang 2002). For example, the root of Asian values from the Singaporean perspective is different from that of Malaysia. Islam in Singapore is Confucius-derived, while Malaysians stress community and family, respect for authority and emphasis on community rights over individual rights. There is also focus on the social responsibility of the press over press freedom (Xu 2005). Specifically, the implementation of 'Asian values' in the context of Malaysia, compared with Singaporean culture, could be summarised into three criteria:

 1.4.1.1 Against Western imperialism and rejection of the universalism of Western human rights,

1.4.1.2 A strong government in terms of politics and economic stability,

1.4.1.3 Protecting the community's culture, traditional customs and religious beliefs (Mohd Azizuddin et al. 2009) particularly from the Islamic perspective (Stauth 2002). Islam has been seen as a tool for the state to propagate the notion of Asian values, to campaign that both religious teachings and the values advocated are supportive of each other (Stauth 2002).

This suggests that a particular concept associated with a culture (such as 'Asian' and its 'values') should not be easily labelled homogenously among all parts of the Asian region. Similarly, specificity concerns how this thesis looks into understanding concepts and occurrences in newsworthiness construction. However, the concept of 'Asian values' is argued to be inconsistent with the values of modern democracy (Datta-Ray 1996, Lent 1979). It has also been used to inform actions of a democratic government, which must be "acceptable, viable and truly authentic in the Asian context," and, therefore, "provides the necessary foundation of the assertion of a broad 'Asian identity', a political identity that

facilitates the legitimisation of a particular form of 'democracy'" (Mohd Azizuddin et al. 2009: 92) that rejects the Western style of democracy.

It has become a point that Asian values are linked to the myth of 'triggering economic progress in the East by avoiding Western democracy and human rights', when in reality, some argue, total ignorance of the latter is ineffective. Nevertheless, 'Asian values' should improve on the weaknesses of Western democracy and human rights, without rejecting them totally. This is because earlier governance, which advocated similar notions of belief such as the "African traditions", opposing Western philosophies of modernity, had not been a success in terms of economic development (Thomson 2001).

Besides no guarantee of economic progress, Asian values are often related to the practice of authoritative regimes and, therefore, used to limit the rights of citizens to express themselves, including through the media. This creates a paradox in Malaysia that, at the same time, cannot be the root ideology in combating authoritarianism and establishing a civil society (Stauth 2002). State limitation of press freedom is implemented in the name of Asian values. Overall, the media are expected to report on developmental and positive news, while negative and hostile criticism of the state is almost prohibited, an important element highlighted in the philosophy of development journalism. Yet, the issue of freedom of the press in Malaysia is not taken as a serious matter by many Malaysians, due to the relative prosperity of the country (Mohd Safar 1996).

The tide changed significantly after the sacking of the former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998, and it is argued that this is the point when Malaysians started to question the freedom of the press practised in Malaysia (Zaharom 2002b). Biased reporting in the mainstream newspapers against Ibrahim encouraged his supporters to form "*Reformasi*". By establishing *Reformasi*, they did not only show full opposition to the sexual allegation against Anwar, but also formed *Adil*.[29] The effort paid off when *Adil s*tarted to gain more support from various ethnic groups, including the significant majority of Chinese and Indians. The trend suggests that many Malaysians sympathised with Anwar and they at the same time questioned the way Anwar's trial had been reported in the mainstream media (Chin 2003). These groups also questioned the lack of balance in news surrounding opposition parties during General Elections (Wang 2001). This incident was the catalyst for an issue that had fermented for so long, and which was further demonstrated in the 1999

General Elections. The poor results of BN triggered the dismissal and imprisonment of Anwar, and subsequent division among the Malay voters (Cabarello-Antony 2005). This further revived the people's voice.

Although there is no clear definition of 'Asian Journalism' (Masterton 2005), its fundamental ideology celebrates the differences in the way good journalism is defined. Universal journalistic skills can be applied to local contexts (Xu 2005). However, Asad Latif (1995) argues that there is no particular fixed notion of 'Asian values' because this relies on the over-generalisation of 'values' practised in the diverse nations of the Asian continent. Rather, the philosophy should be 'the values of the Asian' that emphasises the economic, politic, linguistic and cultural particularity of each Asian country in its implementation. This again suggests the need to understand a concept without homogenously universalising to understand the heterogeneous reality.

Nevertheless, among media observers, some argue against the implementation of 'Asian values' or 'Asian journalism'. To date, in Malaysia, the application of a particular version of Asian values has been used to justify strict regulations on media that curb the freedom of the press in the country.

1.5 Restrictions on Publishing Newspapers in Malaysia and the Freedom of the Press

Media laws wield political control on the media in Malaysia. This section provides an *overview* of the laws that affect media content in Malaysia. Media laws in Malaysia are described as "amongst some of the most stringent in the world" (Brown 2005: 40), with 47 laws and ordinances that have been effecting the Malaysian press (Syed Arabi 1988). Some of the most repressive media laws established were the Printing and Presses and Publication Act (PPPA)[30], the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the Official Secret Act (OSA) (Brown 2005, Crouch 1996, Mohd Azizuddin 2009, Wang 1998, Wang 2001).

These laws impose control on media in various ways including licensing consistent periodic publications, and annual renewal through the PPPA, allowing the arrest of people without detention (the ISA), and limiting investigative reporting and critical commentaries through the OSA (Herbert 2001, Mustafa 2002). Even more oppressively, if journalists are found guilty of investigative reporting, they can be convicted under the ISA (Mustafa 2002).

Two important historical events of media control in Malaysia suggest the reasons of such control. First, the communist subversive activities that encouraged the implementation of strict laws of emergency, where the state of emergency can be announced to the public at any time whenever necessary, if national security is considered under threat by the ISA. Second, the PPPA is still enforced to avoid dissemination of communist messages to the Malayan public though the control of ownership of the mass media (Mohd Safar 1996).

The second event is related to the 13 May riot (1969), after which the state started to enforce other media laws to ensure its power to censor media content deemed a threat to the security of the nation, including inciting racial hate among citizens (Zaharom 2002a). After the riot, all press publication was suspended for two days (Safar 1996).

However, critics observe that PPPA is irrelevant to modern Malaysian media because it was initially implemented to curb communist activities in Malaya (Lent 1975). Through this law, the Home Ministry could deny or suspend the license or permit any publications across Malaysia without excuse (Lent 1975). Thus, the PPPA has been described as draconian (Chandra 1986) and 'oppressive' (Lent 1975: 107) and amendments made in 1964 and 1987 suggest worsening restrictions by the government. Means (1996) argued that overall these laws impede the practise of democracy in Malaysia when newspapers are not the voice of the citizens, but are instead the voice of the government in power.

In addition, the ISA does not only allow the state to detain people without trial if they are found to threaten the security of the nation, but in practice it is also "used to block political challenges and intimidate critics" (Crouch 1996: 81). This includes criticism published in the mass media. The OSA further limits the issues that the opposition raise pertaining to any misconduct of the state, suggesting the media 'report responsibly' and placing emphasis more on the nation's development while being less critical of the state (Hilley 2001).

Thus, these laws are argued to be not only tools of political control but also tools of hegemony. Hilley (2001) stresses that through such restrictions, mainstream media in Malaysia manages events within the country through the controlled content of the media.

Through laws too, the media has to be supportive of the state (Shome 2002) and only report its positive news.

Reports also contain 'soft sell' (hegemonic) approaches by the BN; for example, giving the Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi the nickname "Pak Lah" (Uncle Lah), during the 2004 General Elections (Mustafa 2005a). This approach was used to camouflage more important political issues taking place in Malaysia during the election, and was further emphasised through the practice of disseminating news stories spun to promote BN's views on selected political issues. This has given an unfortunate image to mainstream newspapers, bringing media credibility into question (Wang 1998), and described as a "credibility deficit to mainstream media" (Mustafa 2005b: 45).

Besides rules and regulations that particularly control the media and the press, the Federal Constitution of Malaysia itself does not suggest absolute freedom of the press (Mohd Azizuddin 2009). Although it is stated that the freedom of the press is assured (part II of the Federal Constitution, Article 10) – freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of association – Section II of the same Article imposes discretional limits to this:

> (a) On the rights conferred by paragraph (a) of Clause (1), such restrictions as it deems necessary or expedient in the interest of the security of the Federation or any part thereof, friendly relations with other countries, public order or morality and restrictions designed to protect the privileges of Parliament or of any Legislative Assembly or to provide against of court, defamation, or incitement to any defence (Federal Constitution 1999: 11).

Post 'May 13th' 1969 Tragedy, a number of amendments were made to the Constitution in 1971, and several other laws implemented have either directly or indirectly affected the press since. The amended acts include the Sedition Act 1948, The Control of Imported Publication Act 1959,[31] Bernama Act 1967[32] and Finas Act 1981[33] (Mohd Azizuddin 2009). The Sedition Act is described as the most controversial media (Shome 2002), because anything published that can incite racial hatred or 'threaten national security' (as defined by the state) can result in conviction.

While various restrictions imposed on newspapers are argued to have started during the colonial era and were further enforced throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the most unforgettable moment that halted the operation of the press was the *Operasi Lalang*

(Weeding Operation), on 27 October 1987, realised through provisions in the ISA. During the operation, several mainstream and alternative newspapers such as *The Star, Chinese Sin Chew Jit Poh* and *Watan*[34] were revoked from publications (Brown 2005). The operation is seen as a way of avoiding similar racial riots from happening again (Milne and Mauzy 1999). Moreover, it also aims to prevent the press from being too outspoken.[35] The operation arrested over 80 journalists and media activists (Pang 2006).

1.6 Alternative Media in Malaysia

Due to restrictions in publishing print media in Malaysia, the development of alternative media, especially the emergence of the Internet, has been attractive to many Malaysians. Prior to the introduction of the Internet, alternative media in Malaysia comprised of newspapers and magazines published by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), activists and opposition political parties (Ling 2003). Due to the status of the mainstream media in Malaysia, different ways of constructing news could also be seen as an 'alternative' to the inherent state-owned press system. As outlined in this chapter, the mainstream media in Malaysia is mainly pro-government, with the aim of supporting 'national unity' and publishing positive stories on the nation's developments and achievements. Thus, the definition of alternative media in Malaysia is very much driven by the fact that any tendency to be 'different' from the mainstream can be considered 'alternative', a category which might embrace various definitions of how 'alternative' is defined in its Western counterpart.

In developing countries, it is harder to define alternative media within the heterogeneity of origins and dynamics of alternative journalism in the regions. Thus, the basis of defining might be "more by what it is not than by what is it" (Deane 2007: 206). For instance, alternative media emerge in a controlling government with concentration of ownership, leading to heavier sanction to alternative media journalists (such as being imprisoned) in Malaysia (Allan 2009). The lack of media freedom triggers forms of alternative media to balance accountability for the media by opening more opportunities for citizens to express themselves.

This scenario might be driven by the fact that the most established alternative voices (in terms of time of establishment) in Malaysia are *Harakah*, a newspaper of the Islamic opposition party, first published in 1984, and *Aliran Monthly*, an online magazine, first

published by an independent – and the oldest – human rights movement in 1987, and which aims to perform "A Reform Movement dedicated to Justice, Freedom and Solidarity" (Aliran Online: http://aliran.com/archives/more.html). These, however, are examples of voices that have not been seen as 'alternative'; they are not, argued Ling (2003), considered democraticising information flow in the country. Rather, they are assumed as dissenting publications. *Harakah*, for example, has faced certain restrictions on selling to the public except party members; the newspaper can only be sold in the PAS centres (not all news outlets) and can only publish stories about the party (Ling 2003).

Harakah can be cited as an example of an alternative voice that includes both Islamic and political news. Although generally the context is Islamic, political news always dominates the public sphere (Elliot and Greer 2010) (thus the assumption is a good reception of *Harakah* news). This, however, is not the case for *Harakah*, which, nevertheless, operates in an Islamic country. Some of the reasons can be associated with the tendency of *Harakah* to publish news opposing the status quo, adhere to news values different from the mainstream newspapers, angle the story based on a certain view and target different groups of readership (Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid 2007).

To some, such exclusion of an alternative voice, however, does have effects on the dominance of the mainstream media, although it is still insufficient (Brown 2005, George 2007). This was especially true after the sacking of the ex-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 for sex and corruption allegations (Brown 2005, Carabella-Anthony 2005 Chin 2003, Zaharom 2002b). After this incident, the 'emergence' and potential of the new media as the avenue to voice up alternative voices have been more dominant. This includes many bloggers sharing opinions that have long been 'fermented' by the mainstream media. For example, it is argued that *Malaysiakini*, an alternative online newspaper, legitimises alternative views in Malaysia, thus democratizes political discussions (Steele 2009).

Steele's ethnographic study of the newsroom at *Malaysiakini* demonstrates that the view of journalists can be associated with two goals: (1) 'to give everyone a voice' and (2) to give voice to the voiceless (Steele 2009: 94). This is done by covering stories marginalised by the mainstream media such as the rally by the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) and providing raw video of events to serve as documentary proof of a particular incident for the

audience to judge. This may be the reason for the widening readership of *Malaysiakini* (Steele 2009), compared with its early years of minority readers (Ling 2003).

This differentiates *Malaysiakini*, which can be seen as a traditional news provider (Steele 2009), compared with blogs, albeit both are providing alternative views. Blogs have proved themselves influential, especially when the ex-Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi admitted that BN's biggest mistake during the general election in 2008 was to ignore the influence of the Internet (The Straits Times 2008). He remarked, 'We thought that the newspapers, the print media, the television were supposed to be important, but the young people were looking at SMS and blogs'.

Thus, Ali Salman and Mohd Safar (2011) reminded the government in power of the danger of underestimating the strength of the new media in changing the political landscape of the country. This is mainly because, if the penetration of the Internet in Malaysia is compared with its neighbour Singapore (which is more developed), it is striking that despite the lower penetration, online activities in Malaysia are very much active, and most topics discussed online concern politics (George 2005). Moreover, although there are no specific laws regulating activities, blogging in Malaysia is monitored by the Malaysian Communication Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and 80 websites were shut down by MCMC in 2010 that featured sensitive content including pornography, anti government sentiments and racial hatred (Abdul Latiff Ahmad et al. 2011).

Besides these developments, alternative voices are also published in other 'newer' types of newspapers in Malaysia. Local newspaper *Sinar Harian* (SH) and the first free newspaper *The Sun* (TS) are examples of alternative local views from different states in Malaysia. Stories that are considered not newsworthy such as community gatherings and local problems such as drainage problems are now in the news. The latter highlights strong investigative reporting on political wrongdoings (see *Citizen Nades*, the column dedicated to this), which aims to reach urban and young readers. These distinct angles of news invite greater readership (see Chapter 7), public discussions on various aspects of subject matter they are not familiar with (when referred to the mainstream newspapers coverage).

However, this represents the strength of alternative media. On the other hand, the trend in development is observed to become more institutionalised and less hierarchical

(Allan 2006, Atton and Hamilton 2008, Fenton 2010, George 2007). Particularly in Malaysia, although the effects of alternative media are numerous, they are still highly influenced by inherent political forces (George 2007) that indirectly force the alternative voices to be confined to a more 'organised' news organisation. Even (generally) in blogging activities, there is an emerging trend of celebrity bloggers dominating online conversations (Allan 2006) that has started to 'organise' and dominate discussions.

One form of alternative media in Malaysia is non-partisan news. The tradition of publishing opposition news is older than publishing non-partisan news, mainly because the law allows opposition parties to publish their own newspapers within certain limitations, such as selling them exclusively to party members.[36] Non-partisan news has had a harder time distributing newspapers because business entity with no political affiliation can sell their newspapers to a wider readership than the partisan newspapers, thus posing the threat of an almost 'unlimited' readership. However, both non-partisan and oppositional news are attractive to Malaysian readers due to the media situation discussed earlier. Thus, the state uses such laws to suspend publications that are of threat to them. For example, in 2000 the Home Ministry revoked the permits of *Detik*[37] magazine and *Al-Wasilah*[38] and the weekly newspaper *Ekslusif*.[39]

Investigative journalism is also fundamental to allowing alternative views to be heard, especially when the subject of the investigation is related to politicians' wrongdoings. "The definition of investigative journalism is multifaceted. It is original reporting full of rigorous documentation and numerous interviews. It is fiscally conservative, probing waste, fraud, and abuse in government agencies. It is adversarial and populist, challenging the powers that be. It brings with it moral judgments" (Houston 2010: 139). Therefore, it is not unusual to see news organisations that adhere to investigative reporting under threat.

However, the future of investigative journalism is potentially overwhelming following the development of new media, online journalism and the rise of non-profit organisations. This type of journalism offers healthy public spheres and better informed citizens, with better opportunities for readers to participate in news construction provided by newspapers that run issues raised by its readers.[40]

The aggressiveness with which alternative views can be heard has turned Malaysia's Internet development into a paradox in relation to Singapore, the neighbouring country. Although Internet penetration in Malaysia is much lower than in Singapore, politically contentious journalism is highly visible in Malaysia in terms of the number of people accessing the Internet and the frequency of daily news updates (George 2005). George defined contentious journalism as "the tradition of the radical alternative press, [that] challenges dominant ideologies and attempts to democratize public discourse" (George 2005: 904).

It can be argued that the Internet in Malaysia is "the most viable alternative source to access information not accessible in the mainstream media" (Wang 1998: 75). The development of the Internet has been positively seen by the state as a tool to support Vision 2020,[41] realised through projects such as the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).[42] However, there is a reverse development, when the opposition forces have had unprecedented online success (Wang 2001). Abbot (2001) describes the emergence of the Internet in Malaysia as "vibrant societal group exist[ing] largely regardless of the regulatory environment" (Abbot 2001: 11).

One example of this is news blogging, a genre also seen as the birth of a new form of citizen journalism in Malaysia that allows greater participation by the masses. With the tagline "Your Source of Independent News", *Malaysia Today*[43] allows comments on the news published on the web without any censorship, regardless of its criticism of both state and opposition parties. This is an example of journalism activity that supports user-generated content. The strength of blogs in Malaysia is not only said to have influenced voters during the 2008 General Elections, but also broken the dominance of the elites when Jef Ooi, once a blogger, was appointed as Malaysian Opposition Member of Parliament due to his strong criticism of the system (Katz 2008). Another online newspaper, *MalaysiaKini*, also enjoys greater control over its non-partisan news content because of its existence online, which is not controlled through media laws applied to print media (Abbot 2001).

Nevertheless, although the Internet enjoys much less censorship from the state than its print counterpart (Abbot 2001), seditious and libellous content posted by web administrators and commentators could still be charged under print media law. Besides this insecurity, there is also no guarantee of how long minimal censorship of the Internet will continue to be

granted by the state (George 2005). George also argued that the rise of the Internet and the growing volume of alternative voices in Malaysia are insufficient to undermine state control of media industry. However, in terms of the state, the needs to censor remains, argued not as a tool of control, but to ensure beneficial information is filtered and used by the majority of users from various sources without fear of the content opposing Eastern cultural context (Samsudin and Latiffah 2011).

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the background of Malaysian politics and economy to provide the context of this study. After independence from British colonisation on 31 August 1957, the economy progressed, and its recent activity has made Malaysia one of the fastest growing countries in the world. However, because of its politics, some have categorised Malaysia as a one-party system, mainly dominated by BN, hence the stability of the economy despite the multi-ethnic make-up of its society. The press system is largely influenced by both the history of colonisation and the current multi ethnic population that comprises of three main ethnicities. It is generally described as having concentrated ownership and limited press freedom.

The one-party system and domination of the BN has barely been interrupted or questioned, alongside the issue of the lack of press freedom, until recently. Today, people have channels to voice their opinion questioning newsworthiness in the mainstream newspapers and the limitation of the freedom of the press. Both print and online versions are accountable to environments that characterise the Malaysian press, with various restrictions still imposed. These are all in line with the notion of 'Asian values', embedded in an 'Asian journalism'. Within this specificity of the Malaysian media landscape and its complexity, in order to understand newsworthiness construction in Malaysia, there is a need to consider the general news research conducted by scholars around the world and see whether it is useful to study news construction in Malaysia. In this light, in the next chapter, I will discuss literature related to newsworthiness criteria and news values from the 'objectivist' and 'subjectivist' points of view – the views that have dominated the way newsworthiness has been understood both by scholars and practitioners.

CHAPTER 2

OBJECT-DRIVEN NEWS VALUES

2.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed that the factors determining what becomes news in the Malaysian press are largely shaped by Malaysia's former status as a British colony and in particular its long-standing multiculturalism. Today, newspaper ownership in Malaysia is concentrated and affiliated to the state, and generally newsworthiness practices are influenced by the relationship between the development of journalism and so-called Asian values. Besides that, in Malaysia, the strict regulation of media is commonplace. However, the Internet has provided a space to balance the discourse among the state and its opposition, an opportunity long-fermented in the relationship between the state, the press and society.

In this and the following chapter, I discuss the literature of newsworthiness in journalism studies. This forms the background of further exploration into how certain events become news (and others do not) in the main part of the dissertation. Particularly, in this chapter, I examine how news values have been mainly studied by media scholars – which can be termed as 'object-driven news values'. Object-driven news values are derived from 'objects', which, in the case of news construction, may be referred to as 'events' that might become news. They are values extracted from the nature of an event (for example, geographical location, historical significance, certain quantities such as deaths, injuries, damage, loss or costs, i.e. all the so-called "criteria" referred to by Galtung and Ruge (1965)). The idea is that the value of the news item resides in the qualities of the event itself and are thus independent of the particular news medium or news organisation that 'covers it'.

From this perspective, the general assumption is that, the more an event succumbs to certain news values, the higher the possibility to be selected as news (Galtung and Ruge 1965, Harcup and O'Neill 2001, Schwarz 2006). Although this view is very useful in understanding newsworthiness in terms only of the frequency of certain criteria, it is not without criticism. Thus, this thesis argues that object-driven news values offer insufficient explanation for

newsworthiness construction; this only explains the shallow part of *why* events become news but not *how*. It also provides explanations that are decontextualised from the contexts involved in the news production process, and lacks clarification of real practice.

This chapter begins with the discussion of object-driven news values with emphasis on Galtung and Ruge's (1965) work, examining the strengths and weaknesses of the theory. There is also a brief consideration of online news values.

2.1 Object-Driven News Values and Galtung and Ruge's (1965) News Values Theory

In a rapidly-changing modern world, news does not necessarily contain 'new' information as it has usually been seen before. News can be about animals, places or weather, and often about people doing things, people saying things or somebody set to say something (Harcup 2004: 31-32). However, because there has been an interest among academics in determining what exactly has become news, many have attempted to study the 'values' that contribute to news selection and publication. This attempt is "regarded as an important area of exploration within journalism studies scholarship because it is a way of making more transparent a set of practices and judgments which are…shrouded in opacity" (O'Neill and Harcup 2009: 163).

It is because of the lack of transparency that many academics have attempted to study news, and one of these perspectives, to see what becomes news, is related to the nature of events or the strength of news itself. The earliest and major work on news values is of course the well-known, well-cited and the most influential study on news values carried out by two Norwegian scholars, Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge in 1965 (McQuail 1994: 270). This study has also been republished in many edited books (for example, Tunstall 1970, Cohen and Young 1973, 1981, and Tumber 1999). Because of its status in news values studies, I emphasise this discussion based on Galtung and Ruge's (1965) work as the cornerstone study and also the most well-known object-driven news values study. However, within the discussion, other related and recent news values studies are considered.

Galtung and Ruge's (1965) research is based on content analysis of international news stories in four Norwegian newspapers, examining the common factors and news placement

factors during the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises. They suggested 12 newsworthiness criteria with the basic assumption that the more a story satisfies the factors or news values, the more likely it is to be selected as news. The criteria in the scoring system are based on the criteria of the nature of event that becomes news:

1. *Frequency* – the time-span for events unfolding and becoming meaningful. For example, the murder of a soldier takes a much shorter time than the progress of a nation. The closer the event to the news/media time-span, the easier it will be to select as news.

2. *Threshold* – the amplitude of an event. For example, the more violent a murder, the bigger the headline it will receive.

3. *Unambiguity* – when an event is less ambiguous, it is more accessible.

4. *Meaningfulness* – this could be divided into (a) cultural proximity and (b) relevance. The more an event is close to one's culture, the more it is noticeable. However, at the same time, when an event is relevant it can be news from a distance-cultural proximity. The relevance makes the event noticeable.

5. *Consonance* – if an event suits one's mental pre-image as "expected" or similar to what an editor "wants", it has more potential to be selected as news.

6. *Unexpectedness* – unexpected or rare events are most likely to become news, but they must still be meaningful and consonant to the readers/listeners.

7. *Continuity* – once an event is selected as news, there is possibility of it being selected again.

8. *Composition* – an editor usually tries to present the page with a "balanced" whole. For example, when there is a surplus of foreign news, the least important stories will be replaced with local news. This suggests that the stories competing for space in media do not solely depend on news values.

9. *Reference to elite nations* – elite nations are influential. Stories about an elite nation like the United States will probably be selected as news because generally it is viewed to have more impact on other countries.

10. *Reference to elite persons* – politicians and celebrities will more likely become news than ordinary people.

11. *Reference to people* – stories containing personification or related to people more easily become news than stories that are not related to people. This is influenced by the fact that human interest stories are attractive to most people.

12. *Reference to something negative* – negative stories are more easily selected as news (Galtung and Ruge 1965: 65-71).

From the criteria listed above three hypotheses were formulated: (1) the more an event fulfils the criteria, the more likely is it to be selected as news (selection); (2) after the event is selected as news, it is then distorted to emphasise factors that will make the story newsworthy (distortion); and (3) the selection and distortion process happens within the string from the event to the reader (Galtung and Ruge 1965: 71). Overall, the scoring system and the hypotheses assume that when news construction is subsumed to certain criteria, what will become news is "predictable" (Schwarz 2006).

The predictability of news is supported by recent research across countries conducted by Shoemaker and Cohen (2006). They studied news from 10 countries with various political and economic orientation (Australia, Chile, China, Germany, India, Israel, Jordan, Russia, South Africa and the United States. Although this study is not based on Galtung and Ruge's theory of news values, the conclusion supports the argument that news around the world contains more similarities than differences, and is hence predicted. The content analysis of various media in these countries identified certain events that are usually found newsworthy in these countries, which are sports, international or national politics, cultural events, business, internal order and human interest. Furthermore, they found a significant level of agreement on newsworthiness among journalists, public relations and practitioners about what makes news. The findings demonstrate that, when news is examined in its final form (published news), it yields several predictable patterns of news values, when compared with highly different countries in the world. This might also lead some academics to conclude that "journalists evaluate news in very similar ways…and that the consensus has increased somewhat over the years" (Ghersetti 2009: 10).

News is predictable because not only the story selection is based on news values, but, in some situations, the news angle is also predictably based on its newsworthiness value. Since the news angle is the essence of newsworthiness construction (Tiffen 1989), how it is performed is pertinent and thus defines what becomes news. Zelizer and Allan (2010: 6) defined 'angle' in journalism as the chosen perspective, emphasis, bias or focus from which a news item is told. They added that, "news angle can be determined either from news values and newsworthiness

criteria, that then emerged in the news leads, headlines or even captions of the picture accompanying the story". This suggests that the usage of news values extends to the level of news angle construction, hence its popularity in explaining news especially in Western countries. It is also because news values are invented in the West, that it defines newsworthiness in the Western context.

Yet, Andreas Schwarz (2006) extends the applicability of Galtung and Ruge's theory of news values by examining the three hypotheses in the context of Mexican newspapers. The findings demonstrate that the news values theory postulated by Galtung and Ruge (1965) is able to predict news coverage in Mexican quality newspapers based on the analysis of foreign news. However, news values are found to have more impact on space allocated for a particular story than in influencing the overall process of news decisions. This suggests the limited usage of news values in terms of their applicability, because news values alone do not tell 'everything' about newsworthiness construction. Nevertheless, it contributes to a significant knowledge about some parts of the complex process of newsworthiness construction.

In this study, among the news values identified, 'controversy' is found to be the most influential news value followed by stories already published (reference to established topics), and stories that imply success and usefulness in the future. However, news values such as 'impact', 'personalisation' and cultural negativity are found less useful in predicting news space. This study is an example of Galtung and Ruge's theory on the "predictive power, a quality which is hard to find among approaches to journalism" (Schwarz 2006: 60). This is a significant contribution of the theory, mainly because when the general news around the world appears 'similar', or there are certain days that newspapers share a similar front page, that suggests the existence of certain shared values among the journalists that assist in news judgment.

News values theory is also applicable to the study of international news flow, rather than simply to a particular country. Weber (2010), for instance, deployed Galtung and Ruge's (1965) news values theory – instead of a world system theory as deployed by many others in similar types of research – because of the strength of assumption that larger nations are more likely to become news than smaller nations. This theory examines how the world system is affected by changes of ethnic groups and social classes within the system, and how it affects international

news flow, but it does not theorise on the size of the country and its relationship with newsworthiness. It is by using Galtung and Ruge's assumption that Weber can highlight that unconsidered determinant of newsworthiness such as issue-bound interest of some countries must be taken into consideration in establishing newsworthiness. Thus, this study expands Galtung and Ruge's news values as regards 'the elite nation' and its relationship with what becomes news with the general view of the usefulness of news values theory.

Additionally, Maier and Ruhrmann (2008) extended Galtung and Ruge's theory to television news in Germany, instead of newspapers. Study of newsworthiness in Germany has been heavily influenced by the work of Schulz (1976), who conceptualised 'news factors' that include time, proximity, status, dynamism, valence and identification (quoted in Maier and Ruhrmann 2008: 200) as determining newsworthiness. Following Schulz, Maier and Ruhrmann (2008) conducted a content analysis of 3,042 news items to demonstrate the higher order of news factors, in order to further explain the formal news factors suggested by Galtung and Ruge (1965). This study considers the usefulness of news factors theories "to add to the validity of the concept" (Maier and Ruhrmann 2008: 201) and show the combination of both formal news factors theories and the higher order news factors able to explain a wide range of news including television news. They found that proximity, celebrities and visualisation are the three most important higher order dimensions of journalistic selectivity in German news construction, and these factors influenced what became news between 1992 until 2004.

There is suggestion of the status of news values itself in understanding newsworthiness. News values can assist in determining generally why certain news get published. This is why in many content analysis studies, we find similarities of news values rather than differences, mainly because the general reasons for news publication are similar worldwide. Thus, the news values theory is actually meant to answer this question: "What is news?" By using a set of news values that we know in advance, we can explain the reasons for news publication. This 'prior sense of newsworthiness' (Braun 2009: 24) is helpful in identifying the criteria that make news in a simplified way. News can, therefore, be explained in this way: "News usually contains… and the list of the news values are…". Thus, from this point of view, news is predictable.

However, listing several or even a long list of (news) values is criticised as a too-simplified move to explain the complexity when we speak of newsworthiness construction. As a result, it is an inaccurate indicator to understand 'how exactly an *event* becomes news', and this is discussed further in the next section.

2.2 Weaknesses of Galtung and Ruge's News Values Theory

While there are a handful of positive reasons for applying the news values theory as discussed in the previous section, Harcup and O'Neill (2001) revisit these values, also by adopting content analysis method, when examining British newspapers. They study the relationship "between the news that actually appears in the press and the selection criteria discussed by Galtung and Ruge" (Harcup and O'Neill 2001: 266). They argue that their study of published news is distinct from that of Galtung and Ruge (1965), who examined the possibilities to predict how events become news. They also consider the possibility factors of the selection of the news. This difference is important to support the idea of the contribution and limitation of news values in the quest to understand newsworthiness, because news values can exactly examine news that is published thus through content analysis, but unable to explain the complexity of news-making process.

In an attempt to suggest a new and more contemporary set of news values, Harcup and O'Neill's (2001) enquiries are based on "problematic areas" of news values presented by Galtung and Ruge (1965). These are problematised as such:

Frequency: When the stories are not about events, but about trends, speculation or the absence of events.

Threshold: This is still open to various interpretations. For example, which is bigger: 20 deaths in ten road accidents or five deaths in a rail crash?

Unambiguity: Is this referring to ambiguity in the subject of the story or in terms of the journalist's interpretation?

Meaningfulness: What is meaningful is slippery because it changes over time and mainly relies on very subjective interpretations.

Unexpectedness: There is a possibility that we cannot tell if the journalist is taking an unexpected angle on an ordinary event.

Consonance: There is limited usefulness of this category because it is only possible to guess if and when it has been applied.

Continuity: This category does not reveal why a story has been chosen to become news because it was in the news yesterday.

Composition: We have limited knowledge of what was in the selector's mind when making a particular decision about news composition.

Elite nations: The lack of foreign news in UK tabloid newspapers implies that this category is not popular, but does that mean it does not apply?

Elite people: This category does not enable one to distinguish between the Spice Girls and the President of the USA.

Reference to persons: Is this based on the subject or the journalist's technique?

Reference to something negative: Negativity is meant for whom? Bad news for some people might be good news for others (Harcup and O'Neill 2001: 268-269).

These are great questions to ask, however, it is known that a category or a word will never capture the whole idea that it carries. For example, by taking an example of 'unexpectedness', many further questions can be asked: (1) How does a journalist define unexpectedness and how does this define news?; (2) What if unexpectedness comes from the top management? Will this stop a story from getting published? Is this considered as unexpectedness too?; (3) And if (2) happens, how can it be explained by news values theory? Is it fair to explain that the story is not published because it does not score high in terms of certain news values? When more and more complex situations occur when researching news, news values theory becomes too simplified to explain how events become news. However, it works well with published news, mainly because it deals with what is 'already there', examined with 'already determined' categories.

In addition, these questions are pertinent to be asked, because we understand that news values change over time (Brighton and Foy 2007, Stephens 2005). Thus, older established news values must be scrutinised from time to time. Logically, what makes the news value a value is related to the time of the publication. Only then can current news values be used to examine published news in the current settings. This implies that Galtung and Ruge's (1965) proposed

news values are useful, but it should not be the final say in understanding news (McGregor 2007) *over time*. Continous examination of recent news values must be conducted in order to study the trend of what becomes news.

Realising this, Harcup and O'Neill (2001) suggest contemporary newsworthiness criteria (as compared with that of Galtung and Ruge's period of research) that include "entertainment" and "reference to something positive". Elements of newsworthiness included in entertainment are the availability of pictures to accompany the story, references to sex, references to animals, humour and stories related to showbiz or television business. Positive stories are also included in recent news coverage, stories about elite organisations or institutions and moral agendas, promotions and campaigns run by the newspapers where the benefits could be extended to readers. This study is an example of a changing trend in what becomes news, thus highlighting the danger of clinging to fixed news values in order to understand news over time.

Thus, if news values keep changing over time, it can add to the difficulty of predicting news. Moreover, there are many different types of media, and to predict what different news media will produce becomes very challenging. So, although at first Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) assumed that newsworthiness of a news story is predictable, they found, surprisingly, that predictions of news selections for various newspapers based on their specific news values were no better than predictions for an average newspaper based on general news values of news factors (Kepplinger and Ehmig 2006: 37).

Kepplinger and Ehmig rationalise this finding according to four reasons: first, the possibility of the subjects in the study overlooking specific conditions of journalistic work in different media outlets; second, the tendency of the subject to stress the similarity in predicting the news stories because they were predicting stories for newspapers in the same region; third, since the subjects were asked to predict fake events, they might have confused the reality of newsworthiness construction with the experimental circumstance; and, finally, the subjects needed to predict three news stories for three different newspapers, and that might have affected the statistical analysis.

If the third and fourth reasons can be excluded because they deal with methodological issues, the first and second reasons are important for further discussion. The first reason relates directly to the organisational factor of news production. In a news production process, it is impossible to ignore such a factor, particularly in order to understand different types of media and how they define newsworthiness (see Chapter 3). The second reason resides on the issue of getting the practitioners involved in a study to produce data in line with their practice. Since in their study Kepplinger and Ehmig chose a group of students and not journalists, this hindered them from generating data based on what journalists really do in determining newsworthiness and producing news. It is only from journalists' distinct experience that researchers can reveal the heterogeneity of news production even produced in the same region.

Pertaining to the effectiveness of the measurement by news values theory, John Hartley wrote as early as 1982 that such a scoring system does not work if it intends to study news and its production in the newsroom. Galtung and Ruge (1965), Harcup and O'Neill (2001) and McGregor (2007), for instance, agree that the more an event or a story scores in terms of the amount of news values it contains, the higher the possibility of it becoming news. However, there are many instances when events become news, but they never score high news values scores. Sensational news or most human interest news will not score high, although they are still printed and readers want them. This leads to many other subjective factors of news production that will be discussed in Chapter 3, which suggest a weakness of news value theory because it is unable to recognise such subjectivity. Perhaps, it is because of this that there have been many attempts among proponents of this perspective to add and improvise the amount of values in the news value list.

This causes various arguments about news values among academics. McGregor (2007), for instance, argued that Galtung and Ruge's (1965) list is inapplicable in different types of media other than newspapers. Without empirical evidence, McGregor argues that news values must reflect the dramatic and changes in the media landscape. Thus, four 'new' news values were proposed: visualness, emotion, conflict and the 'celebrification of the journalist'. These are, however, she added, not a new set of news values, but rather the 'main' news values that help to explain newsworthiness, but have been taken for granted. The main values are then interrelated

with other news values, similar to Galtung and Ruge's (1965) and Harcup and O'Neil's (2001) hypotheses; the more possibility of an event becoming news, that explains the selection of (published) pieces of news.

This, however, raises another criticism of the increasing amount of news values that will never become a complete list (O'Sullivan et al 1983). The increasing list is related to the diversity of factors that influence newsworthiness construction; that an effort to list everything is almost an impossible task. It is also not a useful step to take especially if the researcher wants to know in detail how events become news. The list might be helpful, but it can only explain the reasons why certain stories become newsworthy, but this will always return to the fact that in-depth study of news is always of interest for researchers.

This brings us to the issue of the limited value of the theory. Mainly, the news value theory relies on the explanatory value about the general reason why certain events are news. However, it ignores various important aspects in the whole process of news production such as news gathering that involves various processes such as gatekeeping. This suggests that when news is understood through the news value theory, it already exists in the form that is reportable to the journalists. Thus, it exists 'out there' (McQuail 2000, O'Neill and Harcup 2009). In reality, this is not the case; it is an oversimplification (McQuail 2000) of what is really happening in the various stages of news production.

Besides the popularity of Galtung and Ruge's classic study, a large scale study on news values was recently written. Brighton and Foy (2007), in *News Values*, while appreciating the contribution of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) list of news values, extend McGregor's (2007) criticism of the limitation of applying these values to an understanding of news selection in different types of media including new media. The inherent list of news values, Brighton and Foy (2007) emphasise, suggest general agreement on what becomes news among journalists, while in reality this is not the case.

Thus, they argue, for an establishment of a new set of news values bearing in mind the weaknesses of Galtung and Ruge's list (1965). This, they continue, needed to be done to bridge

the gap within the study of newsworthiness, and that most of previous studies can mainly be categorised as focusing on news with the assumption that (1) the nature of events influence what becomes news (this is what this chapter is discussing) and (2) other contextual approaches to studying news including ideology, culture, technological determinism, etc. (see Chapter 3). The third approach, therefore, is needed to bridge this, which, according to Brighton and Foy (2007) recognises changes within an individual type of media and changes in terms of the relationship between journalists and audience.

Thus, Brighton and Foy (2007) propose a new list of news values that consist of:

Relevance – the significance of an item to the viewer, listener, or reader.
Topicality – Is it new, current, immediately relevant?
Composition – How a news item fits with the other items that surround it.
Expectation – Does the consumer expect to be told about this?
Unusualness – What sets it apart from other events, which are not reported?
Worth – Does it justify its appearance in the news?
External influences – Is the content of a news item pure, or has it been corrupted by pressure from outside, such as a proprietor, an advertiser or politician? (Brighton and Foy 2007:26)

This list, however, does not reflect the aim of meeting the third approach advocated in the book. Presenting another set of news values is just like returning to the first assumption that is being criticised. The difference is that Brighton and Foy (2007) suggest a different set of news values and examine them in various types of media. How can this then bridge the gap between news values theory and other paradigms in news studies? However, since this is among the most recent book-length publications devoted to a discussion of news values, it is important to discuss some of the findings.

In response to the limitation of the inherent news values applied to various types of media, Brighton and Foy (2007) conducted a content analysis of British newspapers, television, radio and user-generated content media. They found that television tends to follow the traditional news values, but they also noted that in terms of stories inclusion and prominence of television news, they are influenced by stylistic and aesthetic factors of news production. This is nothing new among the journalists, because if the study is based on practice, this is exactly what they will find out.

In their newspaper analysis, Brighton and Foy (2007) examined several British newspapers to test the newly-proposed set of news values. The findings demonstrate that several newspapers meet their expectations in terms of news values such as, for example, the *Daily Star*, the *Sun* and *Daily Mirror*. The *Daily Star*, a newspaper that avoids political coverage, published more news about the increasing size of women's breasts. Unexpectedly, the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*, which are middle-market newspapers, also paid attention to such stories. A more serious newspaper, the *Guardian,* emphasised education issues, while the *Daily Telegraph* covered a cricket story on the front page.

Assessing this using the new news value system proposed (Brighton and Foy 2007: 29), the expected format of a serious newspaper such as the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* suggests the predicted *composition* or pattern of news values. This is, to some extent, similar to the *expectations* of the readers, and thus *relevant* to them. Because *unusual* stories are usually interesting to most readers, they are of news value to tabloid newspapers. Stories about celebrities, although not so important to the public to know, become 'important' to certain newspapers if they feel it is *worth* publishing them. Some other stories were published because of their *topicality*. *External influences* in the news examined included the role played by public relations officers and the quality of pictures taken by photographers. News values among Sunday newspapers, they found, are more blurred than their weekday counterparts, but generally highlighted more soft news (Brighton and Foy 2007: 75-85).

Based on this newspaper analysis, what is defined as *worth* publishing is nothing more than what has been known as the economic imperative of news publication. There is literature about news and its readership (see Chapter 3) and how news is generally 'dependent' on its readers to be published. When a news organisation is seen as a business entity, scholars would argue that profitability is the reason for news selection, and that this governs the whole process of newsworthiness construction (see Allern 2001, Hamilton 2003: further discussion in Chapter 3).

Besides newspapers, Brighton and Foy (2007) examined television and radio news, and other user-generated contents. In their study of *Channel 4 News* and *Five News* on 15 August 2006, they found that Five News contained more human interest angle that "will make people relate directly to what is portrayed" (Brighton and Foy 2007: 72). Compared with radio news, they posit that the strength of the story might have more influence on news *selection* for television and radio, but stylistic features assist in the *positioning* of the stories (Brighton and Foy 2007: 115).

If this finding is scrutinised more carefully, it concerns the technical part of news production, rather than news values. Brighton and Foy found that the strength of the story in both media influences news selection, and this is exactly what Joachim Friedrich Staab stated in 1990 when considering the problems of the theory of news values. He noted that the news values theory assists partially in terms of the placement of the story rather than explaining the process of how an event becomes news. Again, this study presents nothing new about the news values theory itself. Thus, it is inadequate to claim itself as the 'third approach' or the more complete way of understanding news.

Perhaps, Galtung and Ruge (1965) missed the 'external' contexts of news production, if a more complete discussion about news production is to be produced. This aspect has been included by Brighton and Foy (2007), but the consideration of 'external influences' as one of the news values they proposed in the new list is unsystematic, when various literature on organisational, political and cultural influences have been documented (see Chapter 3). Placing all these different types of external factors into one category simplifies the major news research paradigms that will be discussed in the next chapter. The problem with Brighton and Foy is that, while most researchers attempt to examine each of the paradigm in more in-depth analysis, their investigation calls for oversimplification of understanding external forces in studying news, because the various external forces are now combined into one news category which is termed as 'external influences'. This would lead to 'uncritical' decontextualisation (McChesney 2000) because of the lack of insights into actual news practices (Braun 2009, Clayman and Reisner 1998) include subjectivity among journalists (Brighton and Foy 2007, see Chapter 3). Thus,

news value theory can be only a 'one-dimensional explanation' of newsworthiness (Harrison 2006: 24).

Therefore, Brighton and Foy's (2007) approach might not be the right path for the news values theory. As discussed, such attempt is insufficient; news values theory applied by Brighton and Foy to traditional news does not offer as comprehensive data about news. Thus, how far can news values theory assist the understanding of online news values?

2.3 New Values and Online News

Similar to its print counterpart, online news values can also be categorised as object-driven, when the valuation of newsworthiness is based on the nature of events or the strength of events that makes online news. This will only be a brief discussion of news values of the online news, as further discussion in Chapter 7 will consider newsworthiness and readership.

In terms of news values, compared with mainstream news printed in newspapers, online news such as user-generated content news including citizen journalism usually has a more 'bottom-up' approach to information gathering, and this is seen as newsworthy. Such an approach is possible when news is gathered from people's contribution including news reports, digital photographs, video footage, telephone shots or audio clips, and this has raised popularity among citizen where, Stuart Allan (2006) noted, online news increased. The birth of the BBC Online News and active blogging activities are examples of how the definition of news has been revised to accommodate a more 'personal form of journalism'. Such news is usually less newsworthy, but carries a more direct impact on people's lives. Thus, it is not strange to find that among blogs, the main news value identified is sensational scandals (Allan 2006).

For general news values of online news, the main emphasis of the online news value is 'relevance' (Jorge 2008) or what the audience is interested in reading (Curtain and Mersey 2007). These are news values applicable to print newspapers as well, because generally, relevant news is one of the factors considered as meeting readers' needs. However, in online news, it relates more to the preference of the readers. Readers now have an abundance of news that they can just choose with the click of a button. They do not even have to glance at other news

unrelated to the key words that have been typed. Other than relevance, credibility and utility are two traditional news values important among online editors (Gladney et al 2007). Some other criteria are valued more on the web than in print. Immediacy, ease of use, exclusivity and hyperlocal are important criteria among online news editors compared with print editors (Gladney et al. 2007).

As apparent again here, news values theory can merely explain some similarities and differences between online and traditional news. For instance, when comparing print and online news values, Jorge concluded, "the old and the new (news values) will continue to coexist in our lives for some time" (Jorge 2008: 67). Moreover, Brighton and Foy (2007) also concluded that the new media share a similar news values system as the traditional media. It does add to knowledge when one wants to know about what is usually covered by these media, but it does not explain anything about the mechanics of online news production. A major production context, which is the organizational context, remains untouched.

Similarly, in a study of online Brazilian and Argentinean news portals in the hard news sections called Ultimas Noticias in *uol.com.br* (UOL) and Ultimos Momentos in *clarin.com* (Clarin), Jorge (2008) conducted a content analysis of 675 news in terms of both news text and multimedia materials, and revealed that the most common news values found on both sites were: Celebrity, Exoticism, Human Interest, Sex, Conflict/Power, Love, Mystery, Money, Death/Crime/Violence, Leisure, Health, Beauty, Ecology, Education, Religion, the Arts and Work. This suggested that the "news areas on the web are guided by the same criteria of newsworthiness as in the printed product" (Jorge 2008: 68). However, from this long list, a question remains unanswered: how do these various online news criteria explain precisely the way in which certain events become online news and how does the readership take into account the construction of newsworthiness?

Nevertheless, in contrast with the many studies reviewed in discussing news values in the new media, Braun (2009), in his content analysis of popular political blog *Daily Kos*, found that news values are not really a useful explanation of newsworthiness if the intention is to compare news values in traditional media and the new media. However, he admitted that news values

constitute "one of the more common academic models of gatekeeping" (Braun 2009: 2), that suggests the popularity of the theory in explaining newsworthiness. But Braun also suggests (similar to print news values) that news values theory is limited in explaining newsworthiness in the new media because there are external forces that must be considered (see Chapter 3).

2.4 Conclusion

Thus, it can be argued that the main weakness of news value theory is the inability to explain news construction in different contexts. Although it has the ability to explain why certain events become news, to predict news (Schwarz 2006) and give a prior sense of newsworthiness (Braun 2009), it lacks explanation based on external contexts such as organisational, political and cultural from real practice. This is, however, imperative in understanding news and news making as news production is not produced in a vacuum. The whole process does interact with the context it is in, and there is no practice that can be relied on to support the explanations.

This is why discussions about news values are always done as if news values are 'neutral'. As discussed, this is actually the weakness of news values theory as it does not explain what is should explain, albeit a shallow explanation about newsworthiness. However, because news values theory provides a simplified version of the complex process of newsworthiness construction, and that is sought after by certain academia, often news values are perceived as neutral, especially among mainstream newspapers readers (Hall 1973). Hall emphasised that in reality these values are ideologically embedded, with the elite voices as the main sources of news. Hence, political explanations should not be ignored. This means that what becomes news is not always neutral as it is projected in news values theory, and as the list of news values appears to be. This could be the reason why news values theory is seen as 'isolated' from other branches of understanding news (Braun 2009).

However, among journalists, news values still operate unconsciously when they decide news (Bell 1991). However, the actual meaning of news values is still vague; as John Hartley (1982: 80) noted, "news values are neither natural nor neutral. They form a code which sees the world in a very particular (even peculiar) way". This is because, Hartley (1982) added, events and issues often become news without needing to score highly on any news value. This suggests

that newsworthiness construction is also mediated with subjective interpretation of journalists, as studies of gatekeeping reveal (Manning 1950/1997, Reese and Ballinger 2001, Shoemaker et al 2009). Such subjectivity may be associated with various factors besides personal subjectivity, such as organisational, political and/or cultural forces (See Chapter 3).

With the weaknesses of news values theory pertaining to lack of context and lack of real news practice, the attempt to rely merely on this theory in explaining newsworthiness construction can lead to the widening gap between journalists' definition of newsworthiness and that of academics (Cole and Harcup 2010, Harrison 2006, Niblock 2007, Zelizer 2004, Zelizer 2005, Zelizer 2009). This is apparent in Stromback et al's. (2012) study of Swedish journalists as regards the determinants of news content. They found that among journalists, whatever types of news published, the actual event properties are to increase knowledge. Thus, they conclude, "journalism practice does no equal journalism theory, which needs to be taken into account in further research on news and news selection as well as news values and standards of newsworthiness" (Stromback et al 2012: 9). If we continue to rely on object-driven news values to explain newsworthiness, the gap might widen, because we ignore the imperatives of what makes news. It is in the next chapter that I discuss other main approaches in examining news, that include external forces in news production, seen by many as a move among the academics to bridge such a gap.

CHAPTER 3

SUBJECT-DRIVEN NEWS VALUES

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed object-driven news values, and demonstrated that news values can be studied as an object, which refers to the nature of events that influence newsworthiness. There are strengths and weaknesses of such a view, and I argue that the main weakness is the ignorance of news production context and the lack of real news practice included as the basis of explaining how events become news.

In this chapter, I discuss other main approaches in studying newsworthiness, which recognise contexts of news production. Practice as the basis of understanding newsworthiness construction is further discussed in Chapter 4. For now, contexts of news production are pertinent in explaining how events become news. This is mainly because, according to academics, irrespective of the messy reality of news production, there must be certain 'rules' of news making that can be learnt. This is reflected in Phillips Schlesinger's (1978) view about studying news: "news does not select itself, but is rather the product of judgments concerning the social relevance of given events and situations based on assumptions concerning their interest and importance. The 'reality' it portrays is always in at least one sense fundamentally biased, simply in virtue of the inescapable decision to designate an issue or event newsworthy, and then to construct an account of it in a specific framework of interpretation. News must be assessed as a cultural product which embodies journalistic, social, and political values. It cannot be, and certainly is not, a neutral, impartial, or totally objective perception of the real world" (Schlesinger 1978: 165).

This indirectly supports my argument in the previous chapter, that studying newsworthiness construction cannot rely solely to explanations from object-driven news values. However, although studying news is complex and not so straightforward as the object-driven news values view, studying news is such a "necessary... aspect of the landscape of knowledge acquisition" (Zelizer 2009: 1). The necessity lies in the complex interrelations between news-making and its context of operation, that when certain contexts are deployed to a certain news-making process, it helps to explain why and how it is operated.

However, accounting for the strength of all major news paradigms that will be discussed in this chapter, the thesis argues, following Joost van Loon (2008), that this way of investigation has continued to create the gap in knowledge about news (Archetti 2010, Brighton and Foy 2007, Hemmingway 2004, Hemmingway 2007, Turner 2005, Van Loon 2008, Zelizer 2009). Nevertheless, in this thesis, it is not my intention to suggest that all studies reviewed in this chapter and the previous chapter are wrong, but both need a *supplementary* approach to complement what they cannot offer in explaining newsworthiness construction – which is to base the explanation about news making on the *practice* that makes the news (see Chapter 4).

For this chapter, I will discuss the prominent approaches of studying news, which are political-economic, cultural studies and organisational studies (Harisson 2006). I call these paradigms subject-driven news values, mainly because they are always mediated by various levels of subjectiveness faced by journalists, be it at individual, organisational, political or cultural level. Such subjectivities have been explored in the paradigms that will be discussed, and they offer some strengths and limitations in studying both traditional and online news. The discussion will also include some insights into alternative media with some references to these paradigms.

3.1 Subjectivity in Newsworthiness Construction

A subjectivist explanation of "how events become news" focuses on the pivotal role played by factors such as "insight", "personal interest", "experience" and "common sense" in newsworthiness construction usually taken from the views of the journalists themselves. When the question "what is news?" is posed to journalists, most would say that they decide newsworthiness based on their journalistic instinct ('nouse'). As David Randall (2000) observes, "…a lot of news judgements being made swiftly and surely and seemingly based on nothing more specific than gut feeling" (Randall 2000: 24). Some journalists also argue that events 'select' themselves, that the process of determining newsworthiness is influenced by 'what the events are'. Stuart Hall (1981) demonstrates an example of subjectivism:

> Journalists speak of 'the news' as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if which is the 'most significant' news story, and which 'news angles' are most salient, are divinely inspired (Hall 1981: 234).

However, although it seems that newsworthiness is determined by the subjectivity of journalists, some see the ability to 'know' news, which is gained from experience in the field. This is suggested by Gerry Dickert, editor of the *Silsbee Bee*: "We have a good idea of what's newsworthy based on our experience" (Gerry Dickert quoted in Lewis et al. 2010: 170. O'Neil and Harcup (2009: 48) call this a "fairly subjective process", difficult to be learned in a short period of time. The subjectivity and long period of knowing news is called "synthetic knowledge", "embodied in habit and custom" rather than formal body of knowledge (Park 1940).

Thus, the skill of knowing what makes news is seen as a craft because newsworthiness is a subjective endeavour, and that subjectivity "pervades the whole process of journalism" (Randall 2000: 23). Elsaka (2005) and Aldridge and Evetts (2003) found that journalists in New Zealand and Britain preferred journalism to be viewed as a craft rather than a profession. This is in line with David Manning's early study in gatekeeping, which concluded that news selection is "highly subjective" and based on the editor's experiences and expectations (Manning 1950/1997). Here, the subjectivity of a particular gatekeeper serves as a critique of the news values theory that ignores a journalist's personal interpretation and sentiments in news production (Brighton and Foy 2007).

However, studies on gatekeeping are still limited in terms of explaining news construction, because these are based on a particular gatekeeper's judgement rather than the collective emphasis of an organisation (Schudson 1989). Besides the individuality implied in studies of gatekeeping, newsworthiness construction among gatekeepers involved a "reasoning process [which] does not take place exclusively within editors' minds; it is worked out publicly, through concrete speaking practices embedded in courses of interaction within conference meetings" (Clayman and Reisner 1998). In short, even gatekeepers need to justify themselves and legitimate their decisions based on "reasonable grounds".

Thus, the general conclusions from gatekeeping studies suggest that editors do not rely on formal or fixed guidelines to determine newsworthiness. Similarly, this can be inferred when relating what becomes news and the process of angling, and how the readership plays a role in newsworthiness construction. For instance, many journalists would agree that the process of determining the angle of a story is subjective to a journalists' experience rather than objective qualifications. In terms of readership, Jackie Harrison (2006: 20) added that generally the

journalists' view that "[r]ather than working on a set of so-called objective standards…standards based on viewer preferences will be judged by ordinary people's tastes", implies the subjectivity of readership in newsworthiness construction. Other bases of subjectivity in newsworthiness construction are political and economic, cultural and organisational.

3.2 Paradigms of News Studies

This section discusses the main paradigms of news studies, which are generally categorised as Political Economy Studies, Cultural Studies and Organisational Studies. It is important to select these three paradigms because they best demonstrate three different types of contexts that are usually deployed by academics to explain newsworthiness. In Malaysian journalism scholarship, for example, the political economy approach has so far been the most popular, mainly because the context of news production is always seen as influenced by the policy of the state. The next discussion is followed by cultural and organisational paradigms. First, however, it is necessary to consider the contributions of political economy studies to the overall corpus of news making scholarship.

3.2.1 Political Economy Studies

Proponents of political economy studies suggest gatekeeping theories "do not provide any extended treatment of actual media performance and impact on ideology and opinion" (Herman 2000: 174). They believe that the political economy approach is the "cornerstone" of other approaches in communication research (McChesney 2000: 110). Instead, political economists explore "the question of dominant power structures and reduction of diversity in the news media, by addressing and analysing their structure of ownership and control" (Harrison 2006: 26). Herman (2000) stressed two important tenets of the political economy perspective in media studies with close links to the state and capitalism. Herman (2000) described this relationship as follows:

> The government is the legislator, licensor of TV and radio stations, and the executive enforcing the laws through its agencies, courts, police and army. Advertisers are the prime source of media revenues, and must be persuaded to do business with particular companies and advertise through individual programmes" (172).

The state regulates media through legislation and regulation, while capitalism works through business ownership, advertisements and marketing and finance activities. These power relations lead to the dualistic notion of media products such as news as tools for generative political power, including activities to gain support and set certain agendas to influence the public and commodities bought and sold in the market. For example, media organisations in Britain have historically demonstrated the shift from small and scattered independent organisation ownership toward increasing monopolisation and concentration of control (Murdock and Golding 1973; also see Curran and Seaton 2009). This includes concentration of ownership in local newspapers organisations and the tendency to turn the local newspaper industry into "A money-making industry" (Williams 2006: 89).

However, in developing countries, the state plays a stronger role in the media product; news is used as a tool for gaining and maintaining public support for the state (Chandra 1986, Mustafa 2005b, Zaharom 2002a) by controlling news production and ensuring its bias in favour of the state (Zaharom 2002a, Zaharom 2004, Zaharom and Wang 2004, Wang 1998). In a comparative study of five countries including the US and European states, Donsbach and Paterson (2004) found that UK broadcast journalists are the most neutral and passive in news reporting, while in Germany they are the most active in advocating the needs of the citizen. Such studies demonstrate that nationality of a journalist does influence the level of 'activeness' among its journalists. In most cases of developing countries, this can be associated significantly with maintaining the status quo in order to retain the economics and political strength of the nation, while in some countries in the West such as Germany, it celebrates the freedom of expression.

Thus, news practice influenced by the notion of 'development journalism' is usually seen as galvanising support and instilling nationalism through efforts that educate readers and contribute towards nation buildings (Nasser 1983). Here, the concept of nationalism is continuously cultivated among audiences through media messages, providing a powerful example of state hegemony. The hegemony of a dominant class is not merely rule over society, but also the exertion of 'moral and intellectual leadership' (Gramsci 1971: 57). Thus, political economy suggests "…the social processes through which they [media messages] are constructed and interpreted, and the contexts and pressures which shape and constrain those constructions" (Golding and Murdock 1978: 72), thus turning news production into ideologically loaded "maps

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of meaning" (Hall et al. 1978: 54). In developing countries, such an approach is mainly accepted, because they maintain that celebrating material progression is much more important than talking about rights.

Specifically in terms of economic inclination, ownership of news media demonstrates at least two phenomena pertaining to media organisations competition. A political economy approach suggests that when ownership is concentrated, competition can be reduced because media organisations are producing less diverse news; and competition becomes greater when big companies rely on circulation figures or high ratings from the audience. Competitiveness among media organisations over audiences or readers is 'contagious' because news organisations must succumb to 'market driven' journalism (McManus 1994).

In satisfying audiences, newsworthiness is dictated by the economic imperative of news organisations. Newspapers compete for mass markets and niche markets. Thus, editorial decisions are now based on what will boost sales, and whether the (target) audience will buy. Bob Franklin (2006) noted (echoing what studies of MTV had already revealed over 10 years before), that marketing logic influences news-making in free newspapers, when news is no longer aimed to be sold as a commodity to the readers; rather "[t]he 'buyers' (readers) are themselves transformed into a 'product' which is offered for sale to advertisers who, in their turn, become the new 'buyers' (Franklin 2006: 151).

Sigurd Allern (2002) added that studying newsworthiness can "be seen as efforts to combine journalistic norms and editorial ambitions, on the one hand, with commercial norms and market objectives, on the other" (Allern 2002: 137). The emphasis on economic factors must be taken into account in understanding news operation as news is always meant for sale. Thus, Allern characterised 'commercial news values' as imperative in understanding news. Commercial news values complement formal news values, and usually relate closely with the readers. Allern proposed those values:

-More resources such as time, personnel and budget is allocated to cover, follow up or expose and event.

- A more reliable new source has prepared a story for publication, and the costs are borne by news organizations.

-The more possibility for a story to have a byline, the more likely it will become news.

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-The more a story arouses sensations and entertains the public, the more likely for it to become news. (Allern 2002: 144)

These commercial values are, according to Allern, neglected in Galtung and Ruge's (1965) news values theory. Furthermore, Niblock and Machin (2007), in their study of a London based news agency, *Independent Radio News* (IRN), found that a particular target listener is identified through market segmentation research, in terms of opinions, beliefs, attitudes and preferences. These groups of radio listeners are now the 'market' of the media (thus its economic imperative in news making), and it is crucial to know what makes news.

This view, together with the emphasis on the impact of politics on newsworthiness, is presented by Herman and Chomsky's (1988) *Propaganda Model*. They do not believe in free media, but instead assert that the role of the media is to "inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state" (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 298). Media are biased because of the influence of politics and money (economics). Thus, the operation of the free media is considered a myth. They propose five *filters* that suggest journalists are passive actors in newsworthiness construction:

1. Size, ownership and profit orientation of media organisations; for example, through regulations or broadcasting licence. Since media organisations are largely profit-oriented, they will not publish news that could diminish their profitability. Thus, biased stories are published.
2. Advertisers: Advertisers are important sources of funding for media organisations. Thus, media organisations are mostly biased in favour of business corporations that are highly likely to serve as a funding source.
3. Sourcing news: It seems that media organisations rely heavily on news sources to construct news, allowing access to ordinary people. Therefore stories that quote politically and economically strong news sources are treated with bias by the editor, in order to bypass the gatekeeping process. Consequently, most newsworthy stories are those based on the voices of the powerful.
4. Flak: Flak is negative responses from the audience to a particular media statement or programme. This can range from letters from the public to phone calls from the White House and the practice is accepted as part of normal journalistic practice.
5. Anti-communism: '*Manufacturing Consent*' was published during the Cold War and the fear to certain regimes headed by Colonel Ghaddafi, Saddam Hussein, or Slobodan Milosevic was expressed in most mainstream media. The general view is that anti-communism should be treated as a good effort and vice versa. Thus, what is newsworthy is related to antagonistic relationship with these regimes and the bad sides of these regimes are often exaggerated.

Klaehn (2009) argues that the *Propaganda Model* can predict the overall patterns of media behaviour, as the 'fifth filter' is so general in nature and can be applied to much development in the media that includes studying bias in news. It enables the study of different angles taken by news organisations in determining newsworthiness by maintaining the assumption that journalists are submissive. In America, for instance, ideological production among news organisations is a form of power delivered by the media through technical frames. Ideology at a national level is delivered by framing the success and failure of a particular issue (Hallin 1994/2008).

Schudson (2003) also differentiates framing and bias at national level, and sees framing as replacing news bias, "open[ing] the discussion to examining unintentional and even unconscious, as well as selective presentation (Schudson 2003: 37). Certain representations by journalists from different countries enable certain 'identity' of journalists to be identified. For example, German journalists depend more on individual's *Weltanschaaung* in terms of their interpretation of the story, as compared with American journalists who celebrate objectivity, which, for them, is the main journalistic ethic (Rothman 1979 quoted in Donsbach and Patterson 2004). In terms of reporting, Aday et al. (2005) found that the toppling of Saddam Hussien's statue on 9 April 2003 was broadcast as a 'victory' frame by CNN and Fox News Channel (FNC), signalling the war had ended. These imply that different countries where news is produced (including the role of the politicians, political system and cultural background) can lead to deeper subjectivity in terms of newsworthiness construction.

However, such framing helps readers to understand news because what becomes news seems based on national consensus (Schudson 2003). When news published can be comprehended by the majority, it suggests that the news is in line with readers' knowledge of what is happening around them. Nevertheless, such national consensus is heterogeneous, because news can still be subjective to each reader's interpretation.

That said, generally readers are naturally attracted to sensational news. Thus, it is not strange to find that despite the various interpretations of news, the trend is towards tabloidisation around the world, as one of the reactions from news organizations to maintain the profitability of the news organization (Sparks 2000). Although tabloid news is usually associated with negativity (Gans 2009) and distrust among its readers (Grabe et al. 2000), and even has the ability to instil

racial hatred (Pickering 2008), it is not always bad in terms of the return publishers get from the publication.

Here, tabloid newspapers are seen to have the ability to widen the public sphere by offering alternative space for readers to discover alternative views from different news sources (Ornebring and Jonsson 2004/2008). Even at different times, tabloid news can raise serious issues including racial issues and immigration issues (Temple 2010). Temple (2010) also argues that tabloid news is part of the answer to Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model, which holds that mainstream journalists are passive but tabloid journalists are not.

Thus, most tabloid journalists increase their writing credibility by producing "ethnographic stories that invite readers into an experience that is simply not replicable" (Bird 2009: 49). Another approach is to attract readers through language used (Conboy 2006). Tabloid news are usually based on the main criteria, with little attention given to politics, economics and society, and obvious interest in sports, scandals and popular entertainment (Sparks 2000). This can be reasoned in terms of the nature of tabloid news, which is often manipulated to attract more readers for the sake of economics.

Similarly, discussing news published in free newspapers can also be related to the economic imperative of news production (Cepaite and Stur 2008, Franklin 2006, Hadwin 2006). Here, the role of the advertisers becomes much more pertinent than before, which could explain the supplementary role played by free newspapers compared with paid newspapers in terms of consumption (Bergstrom and Wadbring 2008), because of the tendency to publish stories to gain advertisers' attention.

Although there is specific research into tabloid and free newspapers, and it is not appropriate to position them under political economy studies, the nature of discussing the tabloids is always associated with the economic imperative of news production. This indirectly reflects the strength of the political economy approach, which lies in its ability to provide a general association between news production and its relationship with political and economic powers. This approach, as argued by Klaehn (2009), on the strength of *The Propaganda Model*, does not assume that news discourses exist within a vacuum, but explores media discourses in relation to historical and contemporary political-economic contexts. *The Propaganda Model*

makes historical and political economic elements directly relevant to the whole enterprise of media analysis, regardless of the specific approach one might take in relating and applying the model in a range of different ways, and it affords opportunities for a multiplicity of focuses. Fundamentally, the model suggests that the way issues and topics are treated by media will be bound to the interests of power (Klaehn 2009: 48). Thus, through the political economy perspective, we can determine 'how the media work, not how effective they are' (Harman 2000).

On the other hand, studies in the political economy of the new media remain scarce (Mansell 2004). However, previous studies revealed that its political economy is highly concentrated and similar to its traditional media counterpart, funded by advertising (Van Couvering 2004). The differences, particularly the search engines, Van Couvering notes, include the control of powerful actors such as *Google,* the various structures of advertising in the new media and competition among search engine companies in order to strengthen their position. All these then contribute to similar issues of media bias as the traditional media – albeit as a tool of democractisation – that the new media is also becoming commercially bias. Thus, similar questions can now be asked of the new media: how does such bias in commercial and popular sites benefit the public?

Political economy studies can lead to the understanding of political and economic power in the operation of the media including the new media. This is the strength of such studies, which means that the media can be scrutinised based on the external context it is operating. However, proponents of cultural studies criticise the political economy approach for disregarding both the content of media products and the active role played by audiences in establishing significance (see Hemmingway 2004, Van Loon 2008 – although they are not criticising this by limiting themselves to the cultural study point of view). Political economy focuses too much on the production of news making from a political and economy perspective, and the political and economic imperative of production process limits attention to media content. Political economists' arguments can imply that audiences are passive and accept media messages without critical probation.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *The Culture Industry* (1979), for instance, suggests that media products are being driven by the logic of entertainment and that this inhibits the development of democracy. The assumption is that media audiences are passive and

compliant to the uniform messages they obtain from media to satisfy capitalism. This view, to cultural studies proponents, remains for further analytical analysis, because audiences are active recipients of media messages.

3.2.2 Cultural Studies

Cultural studies suggest that media content is shaped by societal contexts in which media messages are produced and received (Hall 1980). The active audience are "the plural values of society", who can 'conform, accommodate or reject' media messages (Halloran 1977). This suggests that from a cultural studies point of view, "people actively and creatively make their own meanings and create their own cultures, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them" (Ang 1996).

Hall (1980) argues that the 'encoding and decoding' model suggests that, although a message has been sent, this is no guarantee that it will arrive to the recipients with the same meaning intended. Every moment in the process of communication, from the original composition of the message (encoding) to the point at which it is read and understood (decoding), has its own determinants and 'conditions of existence' (Hall 1980: 129). This implies that there are many factors that might impede media messages from reaching the audience with the actual meaning intact. Messages are cultural products delivered through language that depend on the subjectivity of the recipient to interpret their meanings.

Subjectivity is produced by the 'representation' of media messages. Representation is the usage of language for expressing meanings about the world, and is an essential part of a process through which meaning is produced and communicated among people within a culture (Hall 2003: 1). Semiotics explores the relationship between images or texts (anchorage) in order to create meanings. A photograph published in a newspaper is accompanied with captions "to tell us, in words, exactly how the subject's expression *ought to be read* (Hall 1981: 229; original emphasis). Similarly, news headlines convey implicit messages through linguistic connotations (Bignell 1997).

This leads to a second concept in cultural studies (besides the assumption that audience are active), that media constructions of reality are based on the dominant culture. In *Policing the Crisis*, Hall et al. (1978) specifically examine the issue of racism in the news and how this is

systematically produced in newsgathering routines. The study focuses on the phenomenon of 'mugging' in relation to racial stereotyping', and suggests that media texts are not merely 'texts'; they produce "'preferred meanings' which tend to support existing economic, political and social power relations" (Ang 1996: 138), and they are then interpreted by the audiences. It is argued that marginal groups are often stereotyped to "help reinforce dominant social and political norms" (Curran 1990: 138), thus promoting false consciousness. Cultural studies argue that the media are influential in instilling certain ideologies, and describe this as 'ideological effect' (Hall 1977).

Overall, the aim of cultural studies is to examine the subject matter in terms of its cultural practices and its association with power. Within journalism, Barbie Zelizer (2004) defined cultural studies in relation to news studies, as "an examination of the tension between how journalism likes to see itself and how it looks in the eyes of others, while adopting a view of journalistic conventions, routines, and practices as dynamic and contingent on situational and historical circumstances. These studies lead to the development of group identities and social change across cultures" (Zelizer 2004: 178).

This implies that the way news angle is constructed among news organisations can also be discussed from a cultural studies perspective. Newspapers with different identities and ideological affiliations angle news stories in different ways. Usually, the angles must attract the attention of the readers in a particular culture; only then can news be sold. This is how Chalaby (1996/2008) sees the differences between American, British and French newspapers when discussing journalism as an Anglo-American invention. Although journalism developed in Anglo-American countries, French journalism can still survive mainly because it operates within its cultural and political origins, as well as the economic and linguistic factors of society. These factors imply that the success of French journalism depends upon its particular way of emphasising news angle.

This is quite an obvious observation if it is seen from the cultural studies view, because news media operated through different national identities can be easily associated with different national cultures that indirectly dictate media products in such a 'formal' way (Ang 1996: 145). For example, as Ang noted, in 1989 the Malaysian government ruled that advertisements on Malaysian television should no longer feature 'pan-Asian' models because they are associated

with Western superiority. Instead, Ang added, 'local-look' models should be preferred in order to promote national identity. This suggests that cultural studies explores identity as a way of understanding what become news, and the competition to win the hearts of the target readers is always associated with national identity.

Similarly, Donsbach and Patterson's (2004) study maintains that cultural factors such as nationality can be associated with different ways of understanding newsworthiness among journalists. Journalists in Germany, for example, judge nationalism more newsworthy than American journalists. This suggests that culture, as an element embedded within the journalists' background, can become the factor that implicitly determines news, and thus they 'know' that such news is acceptable by the public (Schudson 2003).

Understanding the readership from a cultural studies perspective entails "the importance of not reducing reception [of media messages] to an individualized, essentially psychological process, but to conceptualize it as a deeply politicized, cultural one" (Ang 1996: 137). This leads to different conceptions of readership in cultural studies and these conceptions can be invoked by different means either explicitly or systemically, while others are more implicit and random. Therefore, newsworthiness construction is heterogeneous, when the readership that 'dictates' what is newsworthy is itself a heterogeneous concept. However, the literature has yet to show the complexity of the concept 'readership', rather than portraying its importance element in newsworthiness construction.

3.2.2.1 Readership and Newsworthiness Construction

Literature about readership and it relationship with newsworthiness construction mainly revolves around discussions about who the readers actually are, the importance of readership in news-making, how editors perceive newsworthy news as compared with the readers and, with the emergence of the new media, the difference between such perceptions in terms of online newspapers. Some of these scholars might never associate themselves with cultural studies, but they are included in this section as the subject of readership is closely related to the main subject of cultural studies.

In an early study of readership and newsworthiness, conducted by Gieber (1956), among wire editors, he found that most editors had little knowledge about readers' interests. Readers

(although how heterogeneously they can be defined) who are the 'final' destination of news are not, according to Gieber "perceived clearly by most of the wire editors; some were not concerned whether or not the output of the wire desk was read by the audiences (Gieber 1956: 431). Similarly, Gans (1979) who entered four newspaper and magazine newsrooms in the US, also concluded in his observations about such a relationship, that editors do not really know what the readers liked or disliked.

Although several tools are used by newspapers to determine what the readers really want, such as market surveys, conducting focus groups and basing decisions on the daily sales figures of the newspaper, journalists are mainly dependent on the generalisation that interesting and important stories assist them in selecting what is news (Burgoon et al. 1982, Gans 1979). According to Burgoon et al., interesting news is what the readers 'want to know', while what they 'need to know' is mainly in the minds of the editors. The combination of agreement from both views (editors and readers), Burgoon at al. added, has a significant influence on the overall presentation of the news.

In this vague relationship between newsworthiness construction in the newsroom and readership, it is usually assumed that newspaper content has a direct relationship with readers' satisfaction with a particular newspaper. A study conducted by Readership Institute at Northwestern University, in 2001, for example, found that, based on a quantitative analysis study, an effective way for the newspaper to succeed is to keep improving its content. Thus, the assumed readers' satisfaction will increase. It is only when the satisfaction of the reader increases that, it is directly assumed, will the circulation also increase. However, one question remains unanswered: how do editors base the assumption to improve newspaper contents if they do not really know their readers?

Therefore, it is not peculiar to find that a more recent study conducted by Tai and Chang (2001) reveals a moderate agreement between what editors think as newsworthy compared with what the readers assume as newsworthy. This study is about what editors and readers thought is newsworthy; in this regard, there is more divergence than convergence of perceptions between editors and readers. Readers want more stories about natural or human-made disasters, bizarre weather fluctuations, wars and terrorisms involving Americans. In terms of news covered by

media, the findings demonstrate that not all prominent news will attract readers' attention. There is no such guarantee in this context.

Specifically, in terms of the news editors feel is important, the findings show that the ranking is only moderately correlated with the actual local and foreign media coverage. In terms of using audience as an indicator to decide newsworthiness, the study reveals that editors also agree moderately with the audience in terms of the specific events that they feel is important, while editors mainly agree with audience's perception in terms of the types of stories they think newsworthy.

Thus, mainly the opaque relationship between readership and newsworthiness can be explained as "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006). To Benedict Anderson (2006), a nation exists within the imaginary of the people, and the people are connected by imaginary connectors such as newspapers. It is news about each other and being read together that binds the nation. In this respect, Anderson argues, it is the intrinsic feature of the nation itself that contributes to the creation of an imaginary nation.

Although audiences remain an 'imaginary' concept to most academics, John Hartley (1992) emphasises the relational aspect of a mass medium with other institutions around it in order to understand audiences. Television to Hartley does not exist based on its essence (intrinsic features), but rather the relational effect of other programmes, or/and political institutions, or/and critical institutions (academics and journalists). These institutions define television based on their own survival. For example, television will not air programmes that will lead to legislative action. Hartley describes this relation as the 'invisible fiction' (Hartley 1992: 105).

This suggests that audiences do not 'own' their voices in newsworthiness construction. Hartley (1992) observes that what is being aired is always related to imagined institutions (whether programmes aired will be lead to legal action, or will invite negative criticism) rather than include the real readers in (broadcast) journalists' newsworthiness construction. Real readers are only seen "per se as representations" (ibid 105). Here, real readers are treated as 'school children', who are assumed to watch programmes decided for them.

Hartley (1992) further adds that audiences are "rarely self-represented that they are almost always absent" (Hartley 1992: 105). Some prominent studies of television audiences, such as John Ellis's and David Morley's, use "method that is empirical, [but] not the audience he constructs for his research" (Hartley 1992: 107). The audience involved in Morley's study "are carefully chosen and sorted into class 'background' rather than being interviewed at home" (Hartley 1992: 107). This suggests that academic studies on *how exactly* readership is taken into account in newsworthiness construction remains scarce; it remains at the level of assumption among academics.

However, some researchers have found that imagined readership does have a significant influence on newsworthiness construction. For example, imagined audience in news production significantly assists in the process of producing children's news (Matthews 2008). In a study based on the BBC children's news programme *Newsround*, Matthews attempted to examine the missing link between audience and newsworthiness construction. The findings suggest that the imagined audience is an important group to be considered in the news-making process, that there is a clear relationship between imagined audience and news production.

Thus, Matthews added, the importance of imagined audience leads to the production of news which is personalised – relating issues that children are usually not interested in, such as politics, to their real lives. Besides this, news is also constructed with more emotional content than opinion feature in order to attract children's attention. This implies that what becomes news can be affected by the imagined audience, although, in reality, what the audience really want is somehow ambiguous to editors.

However, it can be argued, that because what the actual readers want is still vague among editors, the inherent perception might be inaccurate, and the specific needs of news by a particular group cannot be understood. For example, many young people in America read newspapers, despite the general assumption that they do not. However, they prefer hard than soft news, and they want more stories that cover health, money, politics and consumer issues (Schlagheck 1989). This is an example of how newsworthiness construction might not be based on readers' needs when there is a divergence in terms of newsworthiness perception between editors and the real readers. As Schlagheck concluded, young readers want to read newspapers, but sometimes they do not get what they want from the newspapers.

A different approach can also be taken in understanding news values and newsworthiness construction. This considers how audiences themselves interpret news. Again, although this is not categorised into cultural studies, it relates directly to readership. It is hypothesised by Venables (2005) that audience interpret news as a risk signal. He uses anthropology and evolutionary psychology to argue that the nearer dangerous news to reach the audience, the more signals it gives to them, and thus more attention. He takes uncertainty, unexpectedness, negativity and the awareness and perception of risk as elements that judge newsworthiness among audience. News (N) is a function of change (C) and security concern (Sc), or, N= f (C, Sc).

Besides trying to understand readership and newsworthiness construction in the traditional media, there are also attempts to examine the influence of readership on the online media. Cassidy (2008), for instance, compared print and online version of newspapers and focused on external influences (termed extermedia forces in this study, which includes 'audience') to examine journalists' conceptions of newsworthiness in America. Following gatekeeping theory and hierarchical model of news influences by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), Cassidy concluded that levels involved in newsworthiness construction include sources, special interest groups, other media organisations, advertisers and, of course, audience.

Through an online survey among editors of more than 200 daily newspapers, Cassidy (2008) found that both print and online editors agreed that extramedia forces examined only have moderate influence on what becomes news. However, the impact is more to online editors than print editors. He found that the online editors are more affected to external forces that affect newsworthiness on online media. For example, both editors ranked readers as the most important news decision element, but for online editors, readers are ranked the highest. This study suggests not only the importance of readers in newsworthiness construction, but also that the weightage is heavier in online newsworthiness construction than its print counterpart. However, the limitation of this study is the lack of ability to explain who these important readers are, and how these extramedia forces, especially the audience, are taken into account in newsworthiness construction.

More specific forms of the new media studies also demonstrate that audience is an important factor in news construction of alternative media (Atton 2002), community newspapers (Hadwin 2006) and tabloid newspapers (Conboy 2002). This suggests a closer link between online engagements with its audience compared with print newspapers; Mersey et al. (2010) argue for a direct relationship, thus a predictable phenomenon (Readership Institute 2001). However, these studies, again, do not answer a more profound and pertinent question in news making: how exactly is readership taken into account in deciding newsworthy stories? To date, literature is mainly limited to examining such discussed aspects, but how exactly readership is taken into account in newsworthiness construction is yet to be demonstrated empirically, and one of the reasons might be the weaknesses of object-driven news values in explaining the complexity of newsworthiness construction.

These are some examples that suggest the heterogeneity of readership in the context of online news production focusing on the need for information among citizens (Gans 2003, Lewis et al. 2010) and infotainment, as well as the needs of 'the masses' and the mobilisation of 'crowds'. Some conceptions of readership (as active, informed, independent consumers) justify populism (Fiske 1989), while others (as stupid, passive, ill-informed, easily manipulated) require propaganda and demagogy (Herman and Chomsky 1988). These studies suggest that cultural studies allocate much more time to study 'audience reception'.

Other strengths of cultural studies are summarised by Jackie Harrison (2006), in her review of dominant paradigms in news studies. The achievements of cultural studies are, "first, it locates the source of 'bias' and influence on news in an environment external to the news organization. Second, it recognizes that this environment is replete with different and competing views and expressive forms wanting to be read, listened to or viewed. Third, it moves away from understanding news consumption solely in terms of class or socio-economic determinants and has introduced ethnicity, gender and age as factors to be considered" (Harrison 2006: 29).

However, Simon Cottle (2003) and Harrison (2006) raise issues regarding the weakness of cultural studies including the failure to explore the mechanics of news production: "which often ignores the micro-sociocultural context in which it [newsworthiness] occurs… Assumptions about the production process are made through the interpretation of the texts and

the ideological messages found therein" (Harrison 2006: 31). Furthermore, Emma Hemmingway (2004), arguing from an Actor-Network perspective, asserts that cultural studies separate the understanding of news production; she takes the example of the work of Stuart Hall, and his colleagues, who "does not explore a cultural reading of microcosmic practical routines of news making" (Hemmingway 2004: 411). Thus, Cottle suggests future research on news production to understand the strength of organisational studies that cannot be achieved merely through the studies of news text deployed in cultural studies (Cottle 1993).

3.3 Organisational Studies

Organisational studies criticise both cultural studies and political economy studies for failing to consider the actual practices of news-making, arguing that both political economy and cultural approaches are conspirational (McNair 1994). In addition to that, "The political economy perspective has undertaken little systematic empirical investigation on the complex links between the ownership of media companies, corporate strategies, management forms, and the production and content of the news" (Eldridge quoted in Harrison 2006: 26). Hall et al. (1978) also recognise that rather than focusing on the external factors of newsworthiness, organisational studies propose a detailed analysis of news production processes that make news.

Simon Cottle (2003) describes procedures of news-making as inclusive of the news organisation, the bureaucratic organisation, news work as routine and shared values in the newsroom, collegial relationship among the journalists, the hierarchies of the journalists and the sources of news organisations. Such studies distinguish features that contribute to news selection and news production in a particular organisation and also enable comparative analysis of different news organisations. The crucial factor is the *identity* of each news organisation, which leads to various and unique ways of constructing newsworthiness, namely the organisational culture.

Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester (1974) viewed news as a way of presenting reality by those who hold power in society, such as journalists. Mark Fishman (1980) further observed that newsroom operations are highly similar to other processes in bureaucratic organisations and "manufacture" reality through the organised "news beats" in the newsroom, to obtain stories

such as news beat (desk), crime beat and entertainment beat. From here journalists have closer access to courts, political institutions, the police and large business companies.

Similar to Moltch and Lester and Fishman, Gaye Tuchman's (1978) seminal work produced a more comprehensive account of how events become news. For Tuchman, news is a product of constructed reality, rather than a picture of reality. News itself is an example of this; it is the product of journalists, a group of people invested with relevant powers. It further suggests that news is a social institution, which is developed to make information available to its audiences.

Tuchman coined the term "news net" (1978: 25), which means to wrap an event. The analogy is that when the "net" is tight, more fish can be caught. Therefore, when many reporters are allocated at places with potentially interesting events such as courts, police stations or ministers' offices, there will be more potential news for the news organisations. News relates to the social institutions of news organisations, which are allied to legitimated institutions and constructed by professional news workers who are based in news organisations. Thus, it is the allocation and concentration of resources that determine what will be seen as newsworthy. News is a product of negotiations between various cultural resources and it involves active negotiations of these resources. It is interesting Tuchman's (1978) implication that newsworthiness is 'made', not 'found'. What becomes newsworthy is not already there for journalists to discover. This makes Tuchman's work one of the best to explain news value. News organisations are not seen only as a business entity, but its journalists work in a world that has its own values.

Herbert Gans (1979) noted that his study of four news organisations (Newswork, NBC, CBS and Time) was not really about national news, journalism and journalists in general (Gans 1979: xii), but rather about 'national profession' (Gans 1979: xiv). In terms of news organisations and the relationship with what becomes news, it is revealed that journalists, like other workers in an organisation, are affected by the bureaucratic elements in the newsroom including politics, such as struggling for a better position, and other routinisation in the news organization. This leads to Gans's argument that news construction is not in the hands of the journalists, publishers or gatekeepers alone, but is embedded in organisational routines within the whole process. Thus, any attempt to understand news must not be separated from the

organisational context. This also serves as a negation for those who view news as the product of personal subjectivity (Manning 1950/1997).

In addition, Gans describes journalism as a national profession in terms of the values it embeds within the news construction process. These are called the enduring values. There are six enduring values that evolve around the work of a journalist in the context of American journalism: (1) ethnocentrism, (2) althuristic democracy, (3) responsible capitalism, (4) small-town pastoralism, (5) individualism and (6) moderatism. To Gans, when there is bias in the news, these six values can become influential factors, besides the partisan based on political reasons. This further suggests that the production of news requires journalists to work within the news organisation, and also compel to the power of the news organizations.

It is suggested by Gans that such bias, and other related news production issues, can be overcome through several recommendations he called multiperspectivism (Gans 1979: 321). Among the suggestions include more publication of news on wider stories besides government in power, more bottom-up news concerning ordinary citizens and more stories that are representative of the majority. Yet, in producing such news stories, there must be some control over resources inside the newsroom itself.

Warren Breed (1955/1997) observes that organisational policy is maintained by most journalists who also identify situations where policy can be breached in the newsrooms. At the same time, Breed found that journalists show high respect to superiors (in the context of the newsroom it is referred to the editors). The consequence is, Breed observed, become one of the reasons why a newspaper can smoothly print each of its publications the next day, albeit with various factors that may slow down the process.

Thus, policies are often seen as tools for controlling journalists, maintaining the survival of a particular news organisation. Soloski argues that news policies would be supportive of the professional norms of journalists to control the behaviour of journalists and to maintain harmonious relationship and stability of news organisation (Soloski 1989/1997). This implies the idea of organisational identity; that certain forms of control in a particular news organisation lead to the sense of belonging among its journalists. In terms of newsworthiness, this impacts the process through the familiarisation of certain policies distinct from other news media outlets.

In terms of angling a particular story, Tuchman (1978) observed that journalists are able to decide newsworthiness despite the difficulty of explaining the process clearly based on the 'invisible rules' within their organisations. This can be part of the explanation as to why certain news organisations define newsworthiness differently from others, Tuchman added. The different ways of looking at an event is then further influenced by the way the story is framed – the process of including and excluding in the story developed. As such, from journalists' point of view, in Tuchman's study, constructing a news angle will make the story look neutral to the readers. Here, Tuchman also noted the important role played by readers in news construction.

As Gitlin (1980: 7) noted, the concept of frames 'enable(s) journalists to process large amounts of information quickly'. An event can occur in a very 'messy' way, which means that journalists need to organise the data gathered about the event before presenting it to the readers. It is only when such a process is fulfilled, can a story then be written with certain type of 'organisation', that further emphasises a selected angle identified as important by the journalists. This is illustrated by Warren Breed (1955/1997), who observed how senior editorial staff use their authority to train younger journalists to produce stories in line with an organisation's interest. It is done by ignoring or changing a story, cutting the length or withholding a byline. Only then will a messy event have a particular direction. Thus, identifying a news angle chosen by a news media becomes important in understanding different angles frequently practised by different organisations. For instance, negative news frames are frequently identified in reporting mental illness (Paterson 2006), and such reporting orientation is increasing (Seiff 2003). Similarly, Boykoff (2006) also found negative framing among newspapers in the US in covering social movements such as Global Justice Movement during the World Trade Organisation protests in Seattle in 1999 and the World Bank/IMF protests in Washington, DC in 2000. Negative news frame is also identified in a particular issue such as women's reproductive justice (Jawarski 2009). Such angles can be produced based on organisational bias.

In terms of readership and newsworthiness construction in organisational studies, Gans's (1979) study revealed that journalists have little knowledge about what their audience really want, expect from accepting feedback (Gans 1979: 230). Similarly, Philip Schlesinger (1978) found in the context of British journalism, that there is a missing link between what is being reported in the media and what the audience expect. Journalists, it was found in this study again,

do not know their audience sufficiently. However, it is apparent from these empirical observation findings that news organisations compete among each other based on who they 'think' is the audience of their news product. This is a reminder of Benedict Anderson's (2006) concept of 'imagined community'.

Furthermore, readership can be analysed from the view of organisational studies to suggest that specific marketing strategies create bonds between supply and demand, or production and consumption. Simon Cottle (1993) contends that local news needs to promote a populism that is non-partisan but on behalf of (serving) the (imagined) community (Hadwin 2006). This, however, can suggest that the relationship between readership and newsworthiness is an on-going "readership making" process. Readership is always in the making. This also occurs in other types of alternative journalism such as activist journalism, as journalists themselves also acknowledge the process of producing news that encourages active citizenship in campaigning for better democracy, such as performed by the alternative media (Atton and Hamilton 2008).

3.4 Alternative Media

The best way to understand alternative media, according to Atton and Hamilton (2008: 21), is to see it "as a continual response and challenge to dominant practice". However, Atton (2002) realises that alternative media are not necessarily radical but should also include other types of cultural forms such as zines, fanzines and personal websites. Thus, alternative journalism is a broad term that embraces "journalism of politics and empowerment" and "those of popular culture and the everyday life" (Atton and Hamilton 2008:4).

Thus, alternative media is "a range of media projects, interventions, and networks that work against, or seek to develop different forms of the dominant, expected (and broadly expected) ways of 'doing' media" (Atton 2004). The term is also commonly used with "citizen journalism, citizen's media, community media, democratic media, emancipator media, radical media and social movement media" (Atton and Hamilton 2008: 1).

The development of alternative media is described by Joyce Nip (2006) as the 'second phase of journalism' that includes the fourfold model of (1) public journalism, (2) interactive journalism, (3) participatory journalism and (4) citizen journalism. Here, public journalism is

referred to as public contribution to the mainstream media, for instance, as practised by the BBC (Allan 2009). Moreover, interactive journalism extends the opportunity of readers to engage with news by allowing feedback through emails, live chat, online polls, surveys and online forums (Schultz 1998), which improve public deliberation (Manosevitch and Walker 2009).

Participatory journalism further provides readers with the ability to become involved in the news-making process. Readers themselves can produce their own bottom-up news because it is not initiated by news organisations. This is an example of what Dan Gilmoor (2006) observes is an alternative media 'conversing' with the public, rather than 'lecturing' the public. It is when the whole process of news production is in the hands of the public, that the practice is known as citizen journalism. The main advantage is that this enables more connection between the newspaper and the readers (Lewis et al. 2010).

Besides this model, a more recent typology of alternative media was introduced by Bailey et al. (2008) in *Understanding Alternative Media*. They propose that the definition of alternative media should extend beyond the comparison with mainstream media. This requires revisions of the identity of alternative media, so it can be understood from a wider spectrum. This redefinition of alternative media suggests the heterogeneity and fluidity in conceptualising the new and continuously changing media landscape. Bailey et al. suggested four approaches to understanding alternative media: (1) serving a particular community (for example, the use of diasporic media by migrants to create an alternative communication channel for the community), (2) an alternative to mainstream media (for example, the blogging phenomenon during the second Iraqi war), (3) alternative media in relation to other identities such as the mainstream media, or as part of a civil society (for example, the spontaneous forum that emerged on Indymedia-NL related to the murder of the Dutch populist leader Pim Fortuyn) (4) rhizomatic media: building on Deleuze and Guattari's (1988: 3-25) concept of the rhizomatic (non-linear, nomadic, connective) rather than the hierarchical, systematic and linear ordering of associations between different elements, Bailey et al. argue that this concept explains alternative media better than the rigid and organised system of mainstream media.

This brings us to a consideration of the various strengths and weaknesses of alternative media. The positive effects include fast public knowledge of an event where distance is not a hindrance. Pavlik (2008) found in a study of the news media that immediacy does not negatively

affect newsworthiness. For example, he demonstrated that email responses from readers make reporters write more news to keep up with the received feedback. This assists in democratising information flow among the public because of the active participation among the readers themselves (Cepaite and Stur 2008). Thus, the voice of the marginal can now be heard (Andrews and Caren 2010) with more avenues to various news sources (Pavlik 2008), leading to some achievements of social control.

These promises, however, do not guarantee improvement in all aspects of information dissemination (Pavlik 2008). The weaknesses of alternative media include disseminating fake and unreliable news, a tendency to quote inexpert news sources, lesser control over professionalism in journalism and deteriorating quality of news writing because everybody is now the producer (Atton and Hamilton 2008).

Both the pros and cons of alternative media led Atton and Hamilton (2008) to argue that alternative journalism produces "prevailing conditions in the wider society" (Atton and Hamilton 2008: 59), including both positive and negative development. Information flow is now much more 'open' because 'readers and writers may come together to make sense of them [produced knowledge] (Atton and Hamilton 2008: 96). Readers are now the 'netizen', who not only read news products, but also produce their own stories and publish them on websites, leading distinct cyberspace media logic than the traditional media (Dahlgren 2008).

This is mainly because the environment of news production is much more participative and non-hierarchical in nature (Atton 2002). Pavlik (2008) also found that the newsroom of TheStreet.com is less hierarchical than traditional newsroom; it is very decentralised but integrated. When more stories are produced from the masses via various alternative media forms, the top-down journalism is challenged (Dahlgren 2008).

Readers now can participate actively in producing alternative news as 'activist journalists'. 'Media activism', as suggested by Carroll and Hackett (2006), celebrates the strength of campaigning through news media and media related activities, mobilising ideas and action through the fruition of democratisation. Citizens are now more open to express what they feel to the public via alternative channels when their personal interests are at stake (Dueze 2006), such as improving the political state of a country, performed simultaneously in the publication of

alternative news where here, editors can also be seen as activists (Skejerdal 2011). Thus, the activist journalism realised through alternative media channels enables both journalists and the public to act as activists, and to express views that are ignored by the mainstream media (Atton and Hamilton 2008).

In the view of some, investigative journalism is a form of activist journalism. According to Houston (2010: 139), "The definition of investigative journalism is multifaceted. It is original reporting full of rigorous documentation and numerous interviews. It is fiscally conservative, probing waste, fraud, and abuse in government agencies. It is adversarial and populist, challenging the powers that be. It brings with it moral judgments". It is the issue of moral judgement that makes such reporting different from its tabloid counterpart. For instance, Ettema and Glasser (1989/2008) argue that newsworthiness among investigative journalists is driven by historically moral order that will have certain implication in the future. Thus, overall, "investigative journalism involved striking a delicate balance between the social responsibility, watchdog role of the media; human rights, including the right to free speech; the right interest...; commercial imperatives, and the ethical behaviour of journalists" (Bromley 2005: 326). In addition, due to a different 'level' of news production, investigative reporting is seen to be influential to policy makers and can be the cause of social change (Protess et al. 1987).

Despite investigative reporting, local news can also contribute to bringing changes especially to a particular community it serves. In this regard, a study has demonstrated that there is a continuous need for local news among readers, and similarly journalists share the same perspective (Churchill and Ubois 2009). Churchill and Ubois (2009) suggest that one reason is driven by the fact that the angle of the story is usually geographically determined and what is newsworthy is based on happenings around the neighbourhood, that the attachment is created by civic bonding through reporting and memory about place.

Moreover, local news highlights places that mainstream media found not newsworthy. With more space provided in the local newspaper, factors such as distance from the mainstream media newsroom and absence of local news services can be overcome (Tannock 2001), thus giving an alternative coverage of certain isolated groups of people. This offers an alternative view that the mainstream newspapers are not able to provide.

For example, *Nottingham Evening Post* editor Graham Glen illustrates how a local story is generated, but usually judged as not newsworthy by mainstream newspapers:

> No community activity can be a substitute for that… You can demonstrate you are part of the community, not apart from it. You can be the local champion… A preliminary Evening Post news list contained the item… *Vandals trash garden*. The facts? A favourite schoolteacher had died after an illness. In her memory, her inner city primary pupils had created a small garden. Vandals had wrecked it. We got hold of a local garden centre and suggested they donate a few items. We contacted some local conservation volunteers. All co-operated. It cost us little… other than imagination. The result was a positive 'fix it' story" (Glen 1998 quoted in Hadwin 2006: 145).

Other than good news that increases local engagement with production (Cepaite and Stur 2008), local stories also identified more provocative public events such as protest (Oliver and Myers 1999) and movement issues (Andrews and Caren 2010) as newsworthy. Oliver and Myers found that news values of local stories include the size of the events, conflict and the particular 'message' embedded in the event. 'Drama', events disorder, is another element that can increase newsworthiness. Generally, the findings suggest that the positive angle of local news is less newsworthy than stories constructed with negative angle. Andrews and Caren (2010) added that proximity is the main news value for local news, again, with an element of negativity to attract readers' attention.

This suggests that alternative media are also influenced by the commercialisation of the Internet such as what is happening in Malaysia and China (Abbot 2001). Although the Internet can be used as a tool for political reform, there must always be some links to economic profitability. In a more developed world, the development of alternative media are "aligned with the 'attractive wrapping' of commercial television" practiced by, for example, *The Times, Telegraph, Guardian, Sun* and *Trinity Mirror* produce online videos to increase readership and profit, suggesting the importance of economic factor of the new media operation (Fenton 2010, Gibbs 2003) such as *OhmyNews* in South Korea that depend on the advertising revenues to maintain its survival (Atton and Hamilton 2008).

A comparison of the motives of producing user-generated content in 10 different countries, leads to an economic explanation of the new media news production. Vujnovic et al. (2010) explored branding and user-generated content and profitability. They found that branding is important in any user-generated content publication as it makes the product familiar to

consumers, while profit is pertinent in sustaining the continuity of user-generated content and its public. This suggests that it is possible that the voices on the web "will be dominated by the larger, more established news providers that will duplicate the same commercial interests according to the same understanding of how news fits those commercial concerns…" (Fenton 2010: 14).

Even in terms of online hyperlocal and non-profit orientation news production such as *Long Beach Post* in Southern California, the founders realised that they had first to become a viable business in order to survive, before they could continue to provide the type of news they felt the community needed (Klien and Vazquez 2010). The steps taken to improve economic competitiveness was a very 'economic-based approach', which was to add the sports section, pay a fixed $300 to each contributor (which was a voluntary contribution before) and have a permanent 35 staff to produce and publish news on the website. This is an example of the opposing nature of alternative media that we have previously noted, and together with other related issues pertaining to alternative media raise the question concerning how far the Internet can really provide a democratisation platform to media users around the world, if the structure is becoming more like traditional media.

Overall, this section has discussed alternative media, and some relations with the previous paradigms. What we have seen generally suggests that the development of various types of alternative media is still bound to the most dominant, the economic imperative of news production. Other subjective factors including political and cultural are also embedded. What this suggests is that the study of the alternative media can also easily fall into a similar 'gap' mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, which thus supports the need for the supplementary approach to studying news (discussed in the next chapter).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed subject-driven news values, that generally demonstrates that news values are always under subjective interpretation, ranging from individual subjectivity (Manning 1951/1997), and organisational subjectivity (Gans 1979, Schlesinger 1978, Tuchman 1978), to subjectivity driven by political and economic factors (Golding and Murdock 1973, Herman and Chomsky 1988, Mansell 2004, McChesney 2000, McManus 1994) and cultural

subjectivity (Ang 1996, Hall 1980, Hall 1981, Hall 2003, Halloran 1977). I have shown that based on previous studies on news values, what becomes newsworthy is always mediated by various levels of subjectivity that are usually interrelated. In this chapter, I have argued that these perspectives offer explanations based on specific contexts as compared with object-driven news values that provide 'decontextualised' explanations about newsworthiness.

All these paradigms that have been dominant types of studies of news such as political economy studies, cultural studies and organisational studies have contributed in terms of providing empirical findings about how events become news from their respective points of views. Their main strength is to include external forces that make news. However, they share a main weakness, which is by emphasising on certain contexts of news production, they produce separate knowledge about news studies (Hemmingway 2004, Hemmingway 2007, Van Loon 2008). Thus, what is still missing is how to understand exactly this social action through what has been called by Marilyn Strathern (2002) 'intensive contextualization' (Strathern 2002: 309).

In explaining intensive contextualisation, Strathern argues that 'context' itself is multiple; it is not fixed as it is usually applied to understanding social phenomena. Thus, it is not important to contextualise a social action, but rather, it must be decontextualised. An example that best illustrates this is the activity of audit, where the interest is in the outcome of the audit used to improve a system. High scores are not only targeted at what is being measured, but also what is being aimed. Thus, an audit is an example where an object can have 'a life of its own'. An audit does not need to face any social conditions of what is being audited, but rather "enrols various social mechanisms that confirm its internal efficacy; thus it can evaluate the results of social processes without having to deal with the processes themselves" (Strathern 2002: 306). The social can still be understood from this perspective, but from a different way compared with studies I have already discussed in this chapter.

Furthermore, this approach also differentiates the way reality can be understood; reality is not simply 'out there' to be discovered by researchers. From this view (which is very closely related to the discussion in Chapter 2), reality is seen as 'found'. On the other hand, reality is made, as implies in Tuchman's (1978) thesis on newsworthiness. News values, instead, are 'made'.

Similar positions have also been taken when discussing the alternative media, arguing that they are being 'made' rather than 'found'. It is "a type of political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given" (Rodriguez 2001: 18-19). Hadwin's (2006) proposition on local news can also imply that the production of local news is made, in the sense that local news is always loaded with stories generated from its own readers. This suggests that news is not 'found'; it is an effect of a 'making' process.

Since nothing simply exists without being 'made', the question of how something is being made is crucial for further investigation, rather than limiting scientific exploration of how some 'invisible glue' can attach the 'found' pieces of reality such as the political, cultural and organisational contexts that, however, do not base the explanations on real practices among the journalists involved in news making. It is here that this thesis argues the importance of bridging the gap between journalism and academics, which is by allowing for more 'intensive' – rather than extensive – way of examining journalism. It is proposed that through this complementary role academics will understand the complexity of newsworthiness construction, which is 'made' of heterogeneous actors that construct reality, and is comprised of actual practices and other processes of mediation that cut across areas of newsworthiness construction. Here, an event becomes newsworthy because of its interrelations with real practices and processes, rather than contexts or identities that determine newsworthiness. In line with this argument, the next chapter will discuss the method that influences this study, which is known as Actor-Network Theory (ANT).

CHAPTER 4

EXAMINING NEWSWORTHINESS CONSTRUCTION INFLUENCED BY ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have discussed theories that have focused on subject-driven news values, which argued that newsworkers are influenced by a limited selection of factors of news production: political economy, culture and organisational structures that are assumed to exist 'out there' and ready to 'help' explaining social actions. These perspectives have become dominant and influential in understanding news in journalism scholarship.

Although their distinct contributions to understanding news are not to be ignored, theories associated with this paradigm suffer from obvious limitations stemming from the fact that they rely on extensive contextualisations that can cause segmented knowledge about what news is. Mainly, questions of how exactly news values are established, how angling is realised and how the readership is really taken into account, that is in short the process by which newsworthiness comes into being, have not yet been answered in sufficient detail because these perspectives have a tendency to focus on "the bigger picture", leaving the technicalities and real practices and processes of newsmaking to the newsworkers whilst ignoring their knowledge about what newsmaking is. Thus, a supplement of these inherent paradigms must be seen as important to the whole development of new studies itself.

In this chapter, I will introduce an approach that can serve as a supplement to the previously discussed paradigm. It is partly derived from Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and proposes a method for examining taken-for-granted and micro processes involved in the making of a news production. It is however, not intended to replace the subject-driven explanations of newsworthiness, but instead offers an empirical focus that remains closely attached to the everyday knowledge of newsmaking by newsworkers (see: Hemmingway 2004; Hemmingway 2007; Van Loon 2008). The chapter will start with a short introduction to ANT, then focus on its

contributions to news studies, and finally describe its implications for the methodology deployed in this research.

4.1 Background of Actor-Network Theory (ANT)

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) is a method of study introduced by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, John Law and others from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). However, the name Actor-Network Theory is perhaps confusing, because ANT it is not a theory. The confusion through the name "Actor Network Theory" has been raised by Latour himself in a workshop "Actor Network and After" that later resulted in the publication of a book "Actor-Network Theory and After" in 1999 (edited by John Law and John Hassard) whereby Latour noted that the words "actor", "network", "theory" and the hyphen did not describe ANT at all (ANT was originally written as "Actor-Network Theory"). However, later Latour (2005) countered himself by reintroducing the terms including the hyphen.

In *Re-assembling the Social,* which is one of the most important and authoritative introductions to ANT, Latour (2005) criticises what has been called 'the social', by arguing that there is no 'social' context 'out there' as such that can simply explain non-social activities, but rather, what exist are the *associations* of various actors that make up realities. It is, as Latour sees it, a different way of seeing reality that can bring about an alternative view of understanding 'black-boxing' phenomena. In ANT, the black box is the situation where all the detailed processes are rendered invisible and usually taken for granted but only the output is visible. Sociologists of the Social, as Latour calls them, refer to the social as a phenomenon as such. By shifting attention to the social as a substance, inputs (into processes of things becoming social) are hidden from the process by the final product of the output (the social as "always-already there"). As a result social reality is seen as something that inherently exists for social scientists to study and explain "socially". This is an example given to illustrate what the 'sociologists of the social' always performed in their 'social' studies, which is to deploy the 'social' to explain reality. As an alternative to this, Latour proposes to sociologists a "Sociology of Associations' which depicts reality as shaped by 'controversies' (rather than a notional reality that already exists out there, as shaped by external contexts such as the social structure). It is by studying controversies that we can explain how the social is being created.

There are five 'sources of uncertainties' (which generate controversies) which are key to the Sociology of Associations. In general, Latour (2005: 27) proposed five ways of deploying controversies: the nature of the group[1], the nature of actions[2], the nature of objects[3], the nature of facts[4] and the fifth and final controversy concerns the rendering of accounts[5], which themselves shape the objects of which accounts are being made.

Thus, ANT is interested in examining how objects come into being (See Chapter 5 when the object is events being worthy of news, i.e. the construction of newsworthiness at the centre of which is the process of evaluating news as a worthy matter of concern). The collective assembled together is the effect of stabilisation and objects play a major role in this because they are not easily explained away. However, the closure is temporary, because the network can always be interrupted by any other actant.

An actant is a concept derived from Greimas's actantial model of studying narratives and literary works. The identity of an actant is not predetermined, but rather 'collected' from what it does through a series of actions. Thus, the term actant is relational, because the identity of an actant must always include modifying another actor (whether human or non-humans). This suggests that scientific facts are constructed through the formation of networks, rather than through external forces ("context") that 'shape' objects.

The significance of such a proclamation by ANT proponents could be traced from the history of ANT and early writings about ANT. ANT was started by the establishment of the ethnography of science which was introduced by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar in 1979 through the publication of *Laboratory Life*. The authors observed arguments among the scientists in the Salk Laboratory in California without any prior knowledge about the scientists' works and routines. They observed new and invisible "social actions" and explained these, so they could be understood by outsiders who were non-scientists. Here, the notion of *cycles of credit* is introduced, by demonstrating that fact production should not be separated from the *product* itself. In this study, it will be shown that (see Chapter 5) newsworthiness construction too falls into similar situation.

In another influential book by Latour (1987) entitled *Science in Action,* he added that the study of science and technology should be conducted empirically when it "happens". Due to the

demanding complexity of science procedures themselves, there is a need to study the discoveries of science when it is "in action" or while it is "in the making" which explains the focus of "performativity" in ANT. The notion of studying action is pertinent and has benefited various empirical studies, including journalism, because it opens up new opportunities for researchers to discover the *exact* practices of journalists while constructing news. This is also crucial for the fact that the discoveries mean that journalism practices which are seen as "normal" or "ordinary" and have been taken for granted or long been "black-boxed", are opened again by the researcher.

The opening of the black box, from the ANT perspective, can be performed when scientists start to scrutinise a social action from the *processes of translation*. John Law (1994) defines translation as a

> ...process by which putative agents attempt to characterise and pattern the networks of the social: the process in which they attempt to constitute themselves as agents. Thus an agent is a spokesperson, a figurehead, or a more or less opaque 'black box' which stands for, conceals, defines, holds in place, mobilises and draws on, a set of juxtaposed bits and pieces (Law 1994: 101).

Translation is a central concept in ANT and also an important concept in this study because every change/transformation that occurs involves translation. Translation emphasises the importance of scientists analysing each moment involved in the series of translations. This means, each of the moments needs to be taken into consideration, thus nothing can be taken for granted. The moments of translations are identified by Michel Callon (1986) in his study of scallop conservation at St. Brieuc Bay in France. Together with three marine biologists, Callon discovered how scallops would enter the anchorage willingly so more scallops could be collected and preserved. Callon (1986) discerned four "moments" of translation which comprises (1) problematisation, (2) interessement, (3) enrolment and (4) mobilisation. Callon (1986: 1) defined these moments as:

> Problematisation (or how to become important thus needs to be researched): the researchers sought to become indispensable to other actors in the drama by defining the nature and the problems of the latter and then suggesting that these would be resolved if the actors negotiated the 'obligatory passage point' of the researchers' programme of investigation;

Interessement (how the allies are locked into place): a series of processes by which the researchers sought to lock the other actors into the roles that had been proposed for them in that programme;

Enrolment (how roles are defined in relation to each other): a set of strategies in which the researchers sought to define and interrelate the various roles they had allocated to others;

Mobilisation (actors transformed into manageable entities): a set of methods used by the researchers to ensure that supposed spokesmen for various relevant collectivities were properly able to represent those collectivities and were not betrayed by the latter. This is where the formation of a group occurs.

In the process of translation, actors can engage in the networks through these processes. A network, in Latour's (2005) words, is:

…a concept, not a thing out-there. It is a tool to help describe something, not what is being described… a network is not what is represented in the text, but what readies the text to take the relay of actors as mediators… whatever the word, we need something to designate flows of translations (Latour 2005: 131).

This involves the transformation of interests among actants included in the course of an event. At the moment of enrolment, a particular interest that wins over other interests 'wins' the competition and then later characterises the roles of particular actors and defines their identities (Callon and Law 1982). Within the process, whatever is being translated (and then mobilised) includes both heterogeneous human and non-human actors (Law 1987). Thus, what is being translated, the translator and the medium of translation all become both the 'practice' and the 'outcome' of a network (Latour 2005). A successful translation generates the shared space, equality and commensurability of a network. On the other hand, a failed translation makes the whole network weak or allows it to disintegrate (Callon 1991).

The idea of translation relates directly with Latour's (1988) objection to reductionism, where Latour explained, based on his observation of the process of scientific experiments during the pasteurisation of France, what he called the 'principle of irreducibility'[6]. Among ANT theorists, every action is 'always overtaken' as stated in the Second Controversy, thus the importance of recognising that a series of translations occur in the course of action, including in the process of the establishment of fact.

4.2 The Establishment of Fact

For ANT, the "matter of fact" is merely a product of black-boxing and how it is established is more relevant than the fact itself. To Latour (2005), the problem with the sociologists of the social is that they too easily accept a scientific fact 'as it is' (thus a matter of fact) rather than enquiring further about how the fact comes into being. Thus, to Latour (2004), a fact must always be placed under investigation (he refers to this as "undergoing trials of strength"), and researchers must always become suspicious of their own attempts to provide shortcuts, such as "social explanations", because "nothing guarantees…that we should be right all the time" (Latour 2004: 227).

Accepting a fact without investigating it further is a 'primary issue' (Latour 2004: 227) in ANT that needs to be realised by the scientists. This is because facts alone 'lack scientific certainty' (Latour 2004: 227), that for an object to become meaningful, it has to be 'gathered' from various things (Latour 2004) or grouped/associated (Latour 2005) and these gatherings are always traceable and thus accountable (Latour 2004). Latour (2004) added "a thing is, in one sense, an object out there and, in another sense, an *issue* very much in there, at any rate, a *gathering*" (Latour 2004: 233). What is gathered or grouped/associated is relational to each other, and that generates the explanations about a particular object. The collective consists of various things and values that include political values, ideological values and commercial values (Latour and Woolgar 1979).

How can we examine a gathering process? The process of gathering or grouping can be understood through the accreditation process in the cycles of credit (Latour and Woolgar 1979). According to Latour and Woolgar (1979), cycles of credit involve both internal and external forces in the process of fact establishment in the same breath. Thus, there is no separation between those in a process, and the whole process does not rely solely on objective skills but includes persuasive and rhetorical skills to gain credibility. A scientist gains credibility when a published article is cited positively, thus the article needs not only to be of high quality in terms of the empirical findings, but also persuasive.

Besides that, Latour and Woolgar observe that, among scientists, they talked about everything in the same breath and their talk travels in cycles of credit, thus the strength of the notion credibility within the cycles of credit:

> The notion of credibility can thus apply to the very substance of scientific production (facts) and to the influence of external factors, such as money and institutions. The notion of credibility allows the sociologist to relate external factors to the internal factors and vice versa. The same notion of credibility can be applied to scientists' investment strategies, to epistemological theories, to the scientific reward system, and to scientific education. Credibility thus allows the sociologist to move without difficulty between these different aspects of social relations in science (Latour and Woolgar 1979: 198)…it is clear that…scientists talked about data, policy and their careers almost in the same breath (Latour and Woolgar 1979: 192).

This generates the 'credibility' of an actor, rather than merely reflecting 'rewards' as a measurement of one's career success. In cycles of credit, scientists buy material resources with credibility and vice versa. It is within these cycles of credit that the process of accreditation happens, which is when everything, including political, commercial, ideological values and technical abilities, is taken into account when describing something. For example, in explaining how the success of a scientist is gauged, Latour and Woolgar (1979) found that it is not merely about personal achievement, such as papers being quoted by others, but also includes the ability to get research grants (commercial), to survive laboratory politics (politics) and to produce data using more than one method (technical).

This thus suggests that, in understanding a particular process, it is inaccurate to explain this by separating its micro and macro dimensions, but it is suggested by Latour and Woolgar that in the cycles of credit, scientists are involved in the whole cycle, entangled with ideological (e.g. beliefs), political and commercial interests. This echoes the notion of intrinsic contextualisation which Strathern (2002) has used in contrast to extrinsic contextualisation to highlight that, rather than defining context beforehand, we should see it as con-text, i.e. associated texts or links (the meaning of text is originally related to weaving). This means that what is relevant as context will show itself in relation to what we are focusing on empirically. In terms of cycles of credit, this means that credibility is not predetermined from an extrinsic, always-present context, but produced "from within".

This overall journey in the Salk Laboratory (Latour and Woolgar 1979) could be summarised as an investigation into the construction of facts by turning matters of facts (in this case scientific reports and personal facts assumed to contribute to a scientist's personal achievement) into matters of concern (re-opening the investigation about the scientists' scientific career on the *processes* of the facts and learning *how* they are established). Thus, the establishment of fact based on ANT is not to simply an acceptance of what is already presented as facts, but rather, further investigation must be conducted by the scientist by criticising and arguing until no more arguments can be made, as in Latour's words "objects are simply a gathering that has failed—a fact that has not been assembled according to due process" (Latour 2004: 245-246).

Specifically relating to the examination of newsworthiness construction, accreditation involves a series of translations of credit between news values, political values, commercial and entertainment values, moral and ideological values, as well as technical values related to the more aesthetic 'quality' of the newspaper. It is when all of these values are traced and established as an object in itself (we could call this "news value") that it becomes possible to understand how the newsworthiness of a specific news item has been constructed. This object "news value" is not a fetish of social explanations in which the process of accreditation is no more than a projection. Consequently, when this is accomplished the object actually explains itself, rather than being explained by the social scientists. This is related to Latour's (2004) critique of the tendency of many scientists to produce matters of fact that lead to misunderstandings of the position of 'object'. As he said:

> Objects are too much too strong to be treated as fetishes and much too weak to be treated as indisputable causal explanations of some unconscious action (Latour 2004: 242).

It is treating objects as a matter of concern, that, according to Latour, helps to "direct one's attention *toward* the conditions that made them possible" rather than, "moving *away* from them" (Latour 2004: 231). It is a different attitude to understanding an object,

> not a flight into the conditions of possibility of a given matter of fact, not the addition of something more human that the inhumane matters of fact would have missed, but rather, a multifarious inquiry launched with the tools of anthropology, philosophy, metaphysics, history, sociology to detect *how many participants* are gathered in a *thing* to make it exist and to maintain its existence (Latour 2004:245-246).

Thus, the existence of an object such as news value can be read as a matter of concern rather than a matter of fact. In examining the establishment of news value as becoming objective, the process of how an event becomes news through a series of translations of credits needs to be at the centre of the accounts to be drawn up. In short, the establishment of news value can be seen as a collective object resulting from heterogeneous gatherings of things that have been granted credibility. Thus, a news value is a hybrid object (Latour 1993), and its power to impose itself is the result of relations between actors rather than contained within the actors (Latour 1986). As such, power relations can be seen as the result of enrolment.

4.3 The Process of Enrolment

It is only when power is seen as relational that a scientist can concentrate more on the different interests one might have over an issue. Through the process of enrolment, for example, several interests can be proposed and any of them can become achievable (and some, or all, is not). In Callon and Law's (1982: 622) words, 'the theory of enrolment is concerned with the ways in which provisional order is proposed, and sometimes achieved".

In Callon's (1986) study on the conservation of scallops, he demonstrated that enrolment is considered successful if the three marine biologists could let the scallops voluntarily enter the collectors for conservation purposes. However, Callon also found that enrolment is never a sure process. The enrolment of scallops into the anchor net involves various factors that may hinder enrolment (thus a form of resistance), including sea currents, parasites and visitors who visit the bay. In order to measure the most effective way of scallop enrolment, a group of scientific researchers are enrolled into the conservation study process, and in this case, without social resistance from the fishermen because they are all aiming to achieve similar interests. They allow the experts to study the scallops without questioning, in order to achieve the same interest: to discover ways to increase scallop reproduction (thus the best way of scallop enrolment into the anchors and restocking them in the market). This stabilises the enrolment process, which means that the scallops willingly enter the anchorage and scallop production increases.

What can be learnt in this process of stabilisation is that enrolment does not imply pre-established roles or identities. Rather, "[i]t designates the device by which a set of interrelated roles is defined and attributed to actors who accept them" (Callon 1986: 10). Callon found that

each of the actors in this study was only able to identify their role after they understood what the other actors were doing. Thus, their identities were relational to the other actors' roles.

Besides that, in terms of determining enrolment, there is no prior assumption on what makes the scallop enrolment a success. Again, there is also no pre-determined hierarchy imposed on the scientists, the fishermen or the scallops.' In Callon and Law's (1982) words:

> The theory of enrolment is concerned with the ways in which provisional order is proposed, and sometimes achieved. One, but only one, of the ways in which such enrolment is attempted is via the category of interests. Actors great and small try to persuade by telling one another that 'it is in your interests to. .'. They seek to define their own position in relation to others by noting that 'it is in our interests to...' What are they doing when they so attempt to map and transform interests? Our view is that they are trying to impose order on a part of the social world' (Callon and Law 1982: 622).

Here, Callon and Law refer to the category of interests as different types of interests, such as political and ideological interests, and it is via these interests that an order can be (attempted to be) imposed. Applying this process to the study of news-making, the news angle is an important example that can be examined through this theory because constructing a news angle for a particular story can be based on various interests among journalists (Chapter 6). Besides that, in Chapter 5 we will see different tendencies of 'interests' in each newspaper in this study, which then become the collective identity of the newspapers. If this is seen from moments of translation, this is the stage when distinct interests (or newspaper identity) are being exposed to readers, telling them that 'this is what they should read' through specific ways of angling the stories that are distinct from other newspapers which they are competing with. By publishing stories with a certain slant of interest, newspapers are trying to impose 'order' for their readers. If they succeed, this suggests that the message of the newspaper 'enrols' into the life of its readers, by stating "it is in your interest to read this article or paper". For example, a newspaper that published community news can be seen as imposing on the readers to 'read this news as it will interest you'.

Thus, examining the process of enrolment further enables the 'unseen' process of the inclusion of non-human actants into social studies, by mapping and transforming interests among actants involved in a social action. This can only be executed when enrolment rejects the pre-determined conception that non-humans contribute less. Konopasek (2005) observed that the

success of communism in Eastern and Central Europe becomes 'real' when all humans and non-human actants are included together in understanding the process, including "family origins, church communities, special motives for joining the Party, professional achievements, old friendships, personal integrity, and other people's identities are challenged and mobilised to prove their "realness", and their "strength" (Konopasek 2005: 8).

This also suggests the status of non-human actants in ANT and is termed the principle of generalised symmetry. Associations are made both from the human and non-human actants. Callon and Latour (1992) define generalised symmetry:

> Our general symmetry principle is… to obtain nature and society as twin results of another activity … network building, or collective things, or quasi-objects, or trials of force (Callon and Latour 1992: 348).

Donna Haraway (1991) proposes that both human and non-human actors live together in a world called the "cyborg". Cyborg is a part cybernetic machine and part living organism which is both "a creature of solid reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 1991: 149). She rejects the dualism that exists in Western philosophy in explaining the relationship between human and non-human and the distinction, as she would call it, which appears only as an 'optical illusion' (Haraway 1991: 149).

It is the inclusion of non-human actors in the formation of networks that makes ANT a very different or 'radical' theory compared to what tends to dominate media studies. As Emma Hemmingway (2007) has emphasised:

> …what made ANT such a radical departure…lies in Latour's determination to recognise the construction of networks of *both* human and non-human actors, paying as much attention to the behaviour of technologies, machines, scripts and tools as to the human actors who use them (Hemmingway 2007: 16; original emphasis).

It is from here that ANT considers invisible objects as significant in understanding social actions, that such objects can affect a network, and this includes the 'virtual object'.

4.4 Accounts

Thus, when the position of non-human actants is assumed to have similar importance to its human counterpart, even a text can act (e.g. it can "tell a story") and have an impact in

understanding social action. From the ANT perspective, a text or what is termed by Latour (2005) as 'an account', such as a report of a study, is able to connect reality and what is being reported.

Consequently, an account can be seen as a 'virtual object'. The notion of virtual object suggests that the meanings of a particular object need to be fixed in specific (discursive) practices (Law 1996; Mol 1998). This renews the way representation is understood, when representation is "not about describing something which is already there…[but] it is about *making* the knower and *making* what is known (Law 1996: 283), hence emphasis (again) on the performativity of objects.

Examples of virtual objects have been discussed by Law (1996), Mol (1998) and Van Loon (2002a). John Law (1996) took the example of accountability in a particular organisational setting and learnt the heterogeneity of accountability could emerge from various performative actions by either a single actor or by various actors. Examples of accountability that emerge as virtual objects are "systems of tracking and monitoring, procedures of enhancing 'transparency', increasing calculability, evaluability and of course enabling judgment" (Van Loon, 2002b: 57). This accountability is not a single entity but defined in multiplicity by the actors in the organisation.

Annemarie Mol (1998) found that atherosclerosis is also a virtual object because there is always a gap between the diagnosis and the treatment of atherosclerosis and what is being said in the medical textbooks. From her observation, what is being written in the text book is just a singular reality been reported, while in reality the case of diagnosing arthrosclerosis can be much more multiple than the textual explanations. Generally, there are two ways of diagnosing arthrosclerosis, from the view points of the clinicians and of the pathologists. The former involves more discussion with the patient and the medical practitioner about the symptoms, while the pathologists focus on examining parts of the patient's body in the laboratory. However, the link between the clinicians and pathologists is only imaginary or as it is written in the text book, because the real link emerges only when there is a need to remove a body part from the patient. However, doctors are cautious about taking such actions just to stabilise the virtual object unless the patient is in extreme pain and no further treatment would be effective. Thus,

clinicians also perform extra diagnosis methods that include using stethoscopes and Doppler tests to reveal and order the atherosclerosis virtual object.

Similarly, Van Loon (2002a: 48) sees risks as virtual objects which exist performatively. Van Loon said "[r]isks are happenings, not of the bads or catastrophes that they refer to do, but of a 'coming-into-being' of a probability of harm, sometimes indeed in the form of anticipated annihilation". These studies lead us to conclude that entities do not exist 'out there' but they are actually enacted and performed into being through heterogeneous practices (Mol 2002), where "technology as ordering and revealing could indeed be seen as *a* form of constructing a reality, but never Reality as such" (Van Loon 2002a: 55; original emphasis). Multiple forms of objects enacted from virtual objects suggest that distinct realities emerge from distinct practices, thus, the generic Reality (with the capital R that suggests Reality appears as if it speaks for itself) (Van Loon 2002a: 55) is a disputable way of understanding the social.

Thus, the ontology of virtual objects supports the claim that nothing exists without relations, associations and networking that hold the entities together. It also suggests the importance of the emergent nature of different objects which can be shown clearly when reality is seen as associations (Latour 2005) and the main motive of representation is to hold the associations (Van Loon 2002b) rather than reality as simply existing "out there" and to be described with 'objective' social aggregates referred to as context.

Consequently, an account is also a mediator which plays its role as the connector within or between networks. "Mediators transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry" (Latour 2005: 39). Thus,

> [m]ediators, … cannot be counted as just one; they might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time (Latour 2005: 39).

This enables "a point-to-point connection…to be established which is physically traceable and thus can be recorded empirically" (Latour 2005: 132). This suggests that, because a mediator connects even the most trivial point with another point within a network, thus, it is now possible for us to record the empirical evidence of such connections. Here, mediators can also act as the connector between practice and recorded reality, or even what is not seen (imaginary, thus an account) and concrete practice. Hence, the distance between 'reality' and what has been

recorded can be determined, mainly because what is being recorded is the result of the stabilisation (and subjectification) of heterogeneous actors by the mediators. In examining these situations, the more mediators are found in a network, the shorter the chain of achieving the concrete actors. However, if there are more intermediaries, the distance is farther.

Latour (2005) also differentiated a mediator and an intermediary. An intermediary is what transfers meaning or force without difference, thus it can be ignored in a network. However, although it can be ignored, it is considered as slowing the process of reaching the 'final destination' in the network 'chain' because it still needs to be 'passed by' by the other actors that only later to be found has no contribution to the network—hence a longer distance to reach the final point in the network chain.

This then enables the examination of how an actor is really taken into an account. Taken into an account, from an ANT perspective, is not merely rhetoric. Latour (2005) explains how this can be done, which is by

"…externalise[ing] some elements and to internalise[ing] others to take them, literally, *into* the *account*, are going to follow nonetheless every little detail of the 'technical dispute' because explaining what is a profit, an exploitation, or a plus value depends entirely upon such niceties" (Latour 2005: 229).

Latour then gives an example of how the tracing process of taking into account can be made visible when the North American accounting format is changed to the European Union format. This is how different 'sites' can be connected. The sites referred to are the reality and the documented reality.

Thus, this view suggests that virtual actors can never become real actors. When different sites can be connected through a connector such as an account, how exactly a real actor is understood must always come back to an effort to trace the various connections. Latour (2005) added that to examine this, an actor needs to be 'subjectified', which is to be active; then only can they become a real actor. Such a statement can only be supported when the reality is assumed to be formed of associations, rather than the invisible wider social structure or context.

4.5 The Inherent Existence of the Wider Social Structure

From the ANT perspective, what should explain social actions are the associations between an actor and anything he or she encounters. As Latour (2005) puts it: "For ANT, if you stop making and remaking groups, you stop having groups. No reservoir of forces flowing from 'social forces' will help you" (Latour 2005: 35). Thus, the process of creating and holding an association always involve 'risk'.

To some who argue that systems have greater explanatory power than networks, such as Silverstone (1994), ANT argues that associations also able to understand relations because associations engage with processes of "realisation" (for example the production of news stories). This seems easier to accomplish because ANT often starts with descriptions of local practices rather than the connection between the wider social structure and social actions. However, Hemmingway (2007) argues that

> …you'd be mistaken. The mistake is dividing the world around you into small and big pictures; the micro and the macro; the observations that you make and the meanings that you then take from what you have seen; the description of a scene and the explanation you then construct from the description that you have made. We will attempt to eradicate this critical but misplaced division between these two sites; the humble description that must then give way to the grander explanation. Instead we will present a world where the micro reveals in and of itself the macro; where the description is at one and at the same time the fullest explanation; and where the tiny detail unlocks the farthest horizon (Hemmingway 2007: 15).

Here, Latour (1993) argues that "[t]here are no cultures" (Latour 1993: 103). Latour (1993) argues "[c]ultures – different or universal – do not exist, any more than Nature does. There are only natures-cultures…As soon as we take practices of mediation as well as practices of purification into account, we discover that the moderns do not separate humans from nonhumans any more than the 'others' totally superimpose signs and things" (Latour 1993: 104). Purification is referred to as splitting non-human nature and human culture into two separate ends.

Particularly in focusing on associations, ANT provides several concepts that include "panorama", "oligopticon", "plug-ins", and "connecting sites" to explain how associations are made and how they can be connected with a particular social action. Panorama is a concept to demonstrate a set of social actions that is performed continuously without much change from

time and time, and the changes are in fact very difficult to be realised. Here, actions are 'formatted' based on familiar practices. It gives the overview (global view) of social phenomena that includes ways to manage risk as seen from the perspective of a particular person or parties and how generally risks are managed. On the other hand, oligopticon is when a particular (local view) practice is specific enough to have a particular impact on a particular social action that formats irregularities in specific settings. It is here that the real power comes into being, which is by formatting irregularities (thus perceived risks) that emerge out of the usual formatted practices. In order to understand the risk-perceptions and risk assessments, actors need plug-ins. Plug-ins are the objects that act as the immutable mobiles that can be associated with an individual's actions, both in the process of globalising the local (through developing a panoramic synthesis) and localising the global (through establishing an oligoptic analysis). These two different states of affairs which are not yet formatted (oligopticon/analysis settings of realisation, for example in terms of power) and situations which are already formatted (panorama/synthesis of realisations as discourses) are connected, when both sites are connected. By connecting sites, these situations are *being formatted*, thus the associations between them could be examined. The deployment of these concepts is discussed in the empirical chapter, Chapter 8.

When there is no culture as a system or context but rather associations, we can follow Gabriel Tarde, a French philosopher who, in his *Laws of Immitation*, argues that imitations go from the inner to the outer, from the core to the surface, and not the other way round (Leach, 2010: 198). It has been shown by Tarde that the Renaissance Italians imitate the belief of those of different religions prior the imitation of rituals. To start from the small and more concrete and move to the larger, more abstract to understand that the smaller and more concrete is more complex than the larger and more abstract. It is the belief of the people that is more complex than the rituals related to the belief, not the other way round.

Latour (2005) further explains the principle of micro and macro from the ANT perspective:

> …we should not consider that the macro encompasses the micro, but that the micro is made of a proliferation of incommensurable entities…a 'façade of themselves', to make up a provisional whole. The small holds the big. Or rather the big could at any moment drown again in the small from which it emerged and to which it will return (Latour, 2005: 243).

The small holds the big is realised in the formation of networks. By now we should be able to see the importance of 'associations' or 'networks' over 'system' or 'structure' among ANT theorists. Through associations, different sites can be connected, thus avoiding many problems in social research, such as the blurring and confusing the aspects of 'what is being studied'. The advantages are seen by Nick Couldry (2008):

> …ANT offers fundamental insights into the spatiality of networks and into the nature of contemporary power formations, particularly the way important asymmetries of power get hardwired into the organisation of action and thought so that they become, precisely, difficult to see and articulate as power. This is a vital starting point for understanding the consequences of media for social and cultural experience (Couldry 2008: 104).

Thus, associations simultaneously avoid the separation between media and mediation. He said:

> Media institutions, whatever the pervasiveness of their reach and however responsive they are to their audiences, remain the beneficiaries of huge and lasting asymmetries in the distribution of symbolic resources. The idea of media *power* is, of course, a commonplace, but its analysis has been bedevilled by the complex two-way nature of the interactions between media institutions and the rest of the social world… It is ANT that provides us with the most precise language to formulate how this complex flow nonetheless represents a distinctive form of power (Couldry 2008: 99, original emphasis).

Therefore, in order to properly understand mediation without separating media and mediation, we must always come back to the notion of monads advocated by Tarde, because the principle of monads is that they are non-reducible and exist as singularities, thus the difference among them is also the smallest possible (Van Loon 2011). Joost van Loon (2011) also argues for the usefulness of the principle of monads, succinctly summarising the connection of this principle with the study of journalism:

> Through monads we are able to see small differences, which are like movements, and thereby processes. Monads make us think differently; they invite us to consider associations, differentiations, and indeed objectifications as processes. Forms are fluid because they only seem permanent when one can isolate an instant. Therefore, instead of forms we should focus on formatting: how do specific associations, differentiations and objectifications become durable…The same applies to studying journalists in newsrooms. (Van Loon 2011: 15-16).

Thus, ANT can contribute to the examination from Strathern's (2002) notion of intensive contextualisation which posits that reality is "imminent". From here, ANT has attracted the attention of media scholars to use it as a tool to understand media products such as news and its production processes.

4.6 The Contributions of ANT to News Studies

Albeit ANT has strengths, as discussed in the previous section, generally ANT is not yet widely-accepted in media studies, as Ursula Plesner (2009) observed. In fact, there are many media scholars who are hostile to using ANT to study media, and those who are interested have even experienced the rejection of their research proposal by the anonymous reviewer. In the reviewer's comment, he/she states clearly that the rejection is directed straight to the 'sin' of deploying ANT in the study:

> *ANT is clearly unsuited to the field of journalism studies; in fact, journalists themselves will find it strange… This theory is clearly out of place in trying to explain and explore the cut and thrust of newsroom dynamics* (anon 2009; quoted in Van Loon 2011).

This is an example of an a priori and dogmatic rejection of ANT within the domain of media studies in the UK. Van Loon demonstrates how ANT, as structuring a method of analysis, has been poorly understood by reviewers who misunderstand it as a theory. Moreover, Van Loon's own experience is that practitioners find it completely acceptable that their accounts of reality should be taken as the starting point of trying to understand the practices of news-making rather than an assumption that these accounts need to be translated into "social explanations". In this respect, Van Loon stresses the strengths of ANT as an approach for understanding media that is entirely empirical and practice-based. Indeed, ANT enables the study of complex realities (as constructions but not social constructions) by following the actors and by recognising the pivotal status of objects (not just technologies of production, but also, for example, news values as produced by cycles of credit) to study exactly what is happening in newsrooms.

To support his argument, Van Loon gives the analogy of journalists and social scientists who make their accounts stronger or durable by "virtue of the invocation of objects as providing support to associations" (Van Loon 2011: np). Thus, he adds, there is nothing immensely special about journalism that it cannot support the deployment of ANT's controversies to understand processes of news production, simply because the nature of journalism as "rendering accounts" and creating "matters of concern" (dressed up as matters of fact) is similar to what has been known as 'social science'. Indeed, what happens in the newsroom can even be examined as something similar to a science laboratory (Hemmingway 2005: 10). The editorial process also deploys trials of strength to test the objectivity (not as a value, i.e. the opposite of subjectivity,

but as the measure of resistance) of newsworthiness: i.e. does the story (as a fabrication) "stand the test" vis-à-vis the accusation of pure invention and speculation (without objects). In Van Loon's view, journalism will benefit from ANT because it enables it to provide detailed descriptions of the role of the human as well non-human actors in processes of news production.

However, Nick Chouldry (2008) looks at ANT's strength rather from a different point of view. He sees ANT as being useful in media studies as a general theory that provides insights on the general view about the media. By this, it might be influenced by the fact that ANT itself is a radical 'theory' that criticises the usual way the social has been understood (Latour 2005), which also is against the separation of the hard sciences and the social sciences (Latour and Woolgar 1979). In this sense, it makes sense that ANT can be taken as a whole, as a 'theory' that can be used to scrutinise the 'social' in general.

Ursula Plesner (2009), however, argues that ANT does not limitedly contribute to the general theorising of the media. It is rather "an analytical sensibility towards the complexities of actual practices and association" (Plesner 2009: 616). It is here that the complementary role of ANT in news studies can be appreciated. While most journalism studies explain news as the product of social actions whose sense is derived from the political, economic, cultural and organisational contexts of news production, there remains a lack of a sense of the density of practical concreteness: social explanations have to be "distilled" by purifying the empirical. While it is beyond doubt that understanding media through such contexts has strong merits (see Chapter 3), it is also crucial to comprehend media processes from a more 'intrinsic' perspective (Strathern 2002), that always take into account taken-for-granted actions. Thus, this thesis seeks to establish a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic contextualisations, and for the latter the inspiration from ANT remains highly relevant.

Besides that, ANT can also contribute to media studies by avoiding generalisation in its findings. In her study about the usage of ICT among journalists, Plesner (2009) observed that ANT does not lead to data generalisation. Rather, the meanings of social actions "…emerged from the empirical material and it is basically their very specific stories which are rendered into my account" (Plesner 2009: 611). This, Plesner continues, "avoids building explanations into the research design but gives actors a say regarding what is important" (ibid.).

It is here that we can see further how ANT assists in bridging the gap I mentioned earlier in the thesis, and sheds light on the understanding of the practice of the journalists in their real working world (see Hemmingway 2004; Hemmingway 2007; Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011; Plesner 2009; Turner 2005; Van Loon and Hemmingway 2005). Through intensive contextualisation that avoids generalisation, it is important to treat ANT as a useful method to be considered by media researchers to supplement the weaknesses of other research paradigms discussed in the previous chapter.

In a paper entitled *The Silent Heart of News* (which incidentally does not draw on ANT at all), Emma Hemmingway (2004) has produced an example of a more traditional form of media analysis, which nevertheless is fully compatible with ANT, by virtue of its intrinsic contextualisation. It can be seen as an early empirical analysis that is based on thinking similar to ANT. The study examined the relationship between an 'event' taking place 'in the world' and the production processes that enable events to become news by deploying Baktin's literary device of the chronotope. Such an approach if taken is driven by the observation that, in television news studies, cultural studies have not been able to explain how exactly an event becomes news.

By taking an organisational approach, Hemmingway characterised three different stages of the 'real' in news production that she termed "*world of the news", "world itself"* and *"world in news*". *'World of the news'* is referred to as the world of news production in a news organisation (in this study, the BBC), which includes the combination of the newsgathering zone and output zone. Mainly, the '*world of the news'* is where the events are still being processed in the newsroom, and are not yet available for the audience. On the other hand, the '*World itself'* is the event itself— the one that is "covered" by the journalist. This brings us to what she called the '*World in news'*, where it is here that the news is accessible by the audience and this is the one type of 'real' perceived by the audience (Hemmingway 2004: 413).

Thus, it leads Hemmingway to conclude that what audiences receive from television news may be presented as a 'single' reality, but this is only possible by virtue of it being a heterogeneous product of spatio-temporal arrangements whose differences are blended out by the technological competencies of news making. An example given which is illustrative appears in the conclusion of the study. Hemmingway observes that it is only when the nouse of news possessed by a particular editor in the newsgathering zone is known to the output zone that a

story becomes news. This is so trivial for the audience to know, and studies in other paradigms similarly do not acknowledge the importance of such an action. In this example, Hemmingway shows that the story will not able to go on air if the process of discussing what is newsworthy does not take place between these two important zones in the newsroom.

Besides that, Hemmingway also realises the complexity of time in news production. The multiplicity of time frame within a news production process appears when Hemmingway argues that such conceptualisations of what is 'real' already exist within the whole production process itself, and what is the importance of the real is subject to the 'temporal and spatial mutations' of the news making process (Hemmingway 2004: 414). It is here that Hemmingway further argued that it is not ideology that characterises news production, but "a recognition, a manipulation, and an acceptance of the spatial and temporal parameters of initial news production and eventual news production" (Hemmingway 2004: 414) that she further concludes, when the mutations happen among all the three stages of news production, they actually happen in three separate chronotopic situations of news.

If Hemmingway provides empirical data that can be closely related to ANT based on the British context, Fred Turner (2005) has become one of the earliest Americans to discuss the usability of ANT in news studies. Besides noting the fact that the dominant paradigms of news studies have the tendency to separate 'what is going on in news production' such as separating news and its makers, reporters and audience and news and the political context, ANT should be seen as able to bridge such gaps.

Turner took the example of Jim Romenesko, a columnist for Poynter Online who has become a high reputation blogger and who has impact on the news agenda of many large news organisations. Romenesko uses his own camera, gathers and reports news, and publishes the videos online. In this way he has become popular among professional journalists and his news can even start the spark for professional journalists to cover certain events. Here, Turner sees it from an ANT perspective, that Romenesko and his technology have able to translate news into something new, in a shape that was mainly thought of as 'impossible' before. In ANT, it views the new media "as human partners [that] collaborate in the creation of new socio-technical formations" (Turner 2005: 323).

Emma Hemmingway (2005) extends the status of technology in her news study on *PDP* entitled *The news Production Network and the Transformation of News.* Here, the article suggests that she has made her way into ANT by similarising *newsroom* for *laboratory*, and *news* for *scientific* (outputs from the laboratory). She contends that, by taking Latour and Woolgar's (1979) approach to the laboratory, ANT can "accurately inform the study of the news process as a network of actors all negotiating with and for and against one another in a complex network which is the newsroom" (Hemmingway 2005: 10). Thus, she adds, what is happening in the newsroom is better understood as 'associations' rather than being affected by the grander social context.

Hemmingway studied how innovations of technology had an impact on news. With the emphasis on the role of technology based on BBC Nottingham and BBC Newcastle, she found that the introduction of Personal Digital Production (PDP)—where all journalists and technical newsroom workers should find, develop and own their stories all by themselves—led to changes in news agenda among journalists. Albeit some of them feel that it is time to practice a more challenging newsgathering process, some obviously realised the emergence of tension between news making practice and what really should become news. Here, newsworthiness turns out to be more a question of its availability and the choices made by journalists, rather than what is newsworthy.

This then becomes a problem in defining news among journalists. News has become much more magazine-like, a lot more local but strongly focused on the genre of "human interest". This study thus demonstrates that the technological role is pertinent and does have an effect on journalism practice. Based on the data, she added, it is also clear that resistance to innovation happens in the newsroom. This study is an example of how ANT can be used as a supplement to tackle a lacuna in media studies that generally focus more on the external forces that shape news, rather than more intrinsic factors such as technology, but based on the practice of the journalists who really undergo innovations related to recent development and policy in their newsrooms.

This relates to Joost van Loon and Emma Hemmingway's (2005) analysis of technology translation when they combined McLuhan's Medium Theory and ANT to analyse the failure of newsroom innovation of Bi-Media (in this study it is referred to as the *Big Idea*, to distinguish it

from the general practice of Bi-Media in the journalism field which was introduced over 40 years ago) in BBC Nottingham. Bi-Media is a newly-introduced innovation in news practice, where journalists gather and write stories for both television and radio production. In this study, Van Loon and Hemmingway argued that the identity of the news organisation is the result of the reification of three elements: (1) media practices, (2) technology, and (3) actual organisation and identifications. It is from here that, they argued further, a news organisation begets a life of its own, because they are technologically mediated. The technological embodiment of the organisation and cultural engineering become the identity which each of the members in the organisation depends on.

Here, they identified three factors of the failure of the Bi-Media that relates with the practice involved. They found that news gathering and news writing for both types of media are different, and the logic of the medium itself must be taken into consideration by journalists. They cannot simply write a story to be published by both, like a 'factory' or a 'news mincing machine' (Van Loon and Hemmingway 2005: 312). Here, the medium of the message is particularly pertinent to inform the form of story generated and performed, because "the process of mediation is bound to the nature of technology" (ibid: 136). This suggests that radio and television have their own bias and logic of operation. TV news, for example, is more a magazine-like news. However, radio news is rather short and concise, thus emphasis is given more to what is important, rather than what is interesting. Here, mediation is seen as a result of specific forms of bias that determines the form of stories produced.

Secondly, Van Loon and Hemmingway (2005) also found that the organisation itself is a result of reification. To them, "what management mediates is the complexity of the networks and flows that make up 'the organisation'. What it reveals is 'reification', what it conceals is complexity" (ibid: 140). Here, they demonstrate that management is both the result of the reification of organisational practices and the flaw of reification. For example, they found that a journalist that has never been in management is not familiar with the reification of the organisation because they feel that every task given to them is only the consequence of managerial decisions. However, those who have been in the management team realise that they do not have the power to control everything done by each of the journalists.

Besides that, they also realised that the ways stories are gathered are different between television and radio. The work processes for radio are more individualistic, but to produce television news needs a great amount of teamwork. This difference, however, is not emphasised after the introduction of Bi-Media by BBC Nottingham. Van Loon and Hemmingway (2005) found this becomes a problem in establishing a successful innovation of technology because there is no space to establish *Cycles of Credit* for the journalists to learn the distinct techniques of both types of news writing.

The third factor, they found, is the raising of the issue of an identity clash among the journalists. Among journalists, their distinct identities are the result of their particular reification of practice in the different media type. Thus, the introduction of Bi-Media caused a clash because what makes good news is different in both media, while the idea of Bi-Media is to produce a good story that can 'fit' both types of the media. In terms of identity, the journalists feel that being a television journalist is at a higher rank than a radio journalist, so those who have been doing television news are reluctant to produce radio news.

Emma Hemmingway further attempted a comprehensive study on 'certain media practice' (Hemmingway 2007: 19) by the mechanics of ANT in her book *Into the Newsroom: Exploring the Digital Production of Regional Television News* in 2007. This study can be said to be the most comprehensive study relating to media practice that has deployed ANT. The research is based on newsroom ethnography and interviews at the BBC Nottingham newsroom. The study is developed from Latour's (1987) technogram and sociogram, and Hemmingway developed the third axis of positioning actors in a network that is called the 'chronogram'. If Latour explains technogram as the inherent technology capacity and sociogram as the relationship between technology and the human actor, chronogram is the specific temporal location of a particular actor in the network.

This detailed study starts with the exploration of an object which is the media hub in the newsroom, which is always seen as a silent object that does not have the ability to 'talk', hence the abandonment of their voices. In the exploration, Hemmingway shows that the media hub is an example of a black box that serves as the Obligatory Point of Passage (OPP) because all stories need to go through it before it can be processed and transmitted. This is where ANT becomes useful, because it enables complete descriptions about the processes to be made visible

and in the newsroom itself, as Hemmingway found, there are too many invisible nodes that link the production of news that researchers would have the tendency to ignore. It is by examining the media hub from the exact process involved that Hemmingway is able to demonstrate that such a media hub is not a 'smooth' output machine. Rather, there exists resistance among the media hub operators in terms of the usefulness and the practicality of the technology. This approach, which is coined as the "internal news episteme" (Hemmingway 2007: 41) echoes Strathern's (2002) intrinsic contextualisation that has been mentioned in the earlier part of this thesis.

The importance of such a discussion enables us to accurately define "the interiority of the network within the newsroom, and further interiorisation of that network by the different actors positioned within it" (Hemmingway 2007: 66). However, it also at the same time explains the 'external' because, in the case of the media hub, the external appears when the hub plays recorded material and digitised pictures. This echoes John Law's 'method assemblage' rather than the inherent existence of reality 'out there'. Thus,

> …we have just begun to describe the news network, to map out the complex configuration of actors, the positions that they occupy, and the social and technical contexts that make these positions stable or unstable (Hemmingway 2007: 68).

Here, the media hub, despite the resistance found from some of its operators, later becomes the black box again because all of the trials have been successfully stabilised and the translations are completed.

On the other hand, the case is very different in the next exploration that Hemmingway demonstrates. She studied the introduction of PDP as a new technology and argued that non-human actors also influence news production, which contributes to network translation. The PDP technology advocates that news is now a single-authored task rather than team work. Here, all levels of journalists, including technical staff, need to find stories, develop them and turn the story into news. In the early part of her empirical study, Hemmingway shows how a radical translation is introduced in a news network and how this is then accepted/rejected among the trainees, and what happen after the technology is brought back to the Nottingham newsroom. After that, she also discusses what happens after the implementation of PDP and how the technology redefines news.

The extended network of the newly-introduced technology is also examined. Here, Hemmingway expands the discussion by examining the multiplicity of realities through the production of live reporting, that the production of a live news report is an example of how multiple realities occur but what is transmitted is only the singular version of the world to the audience. In the final chapter, after discussing the relationship between technology and human actors in news production, she examines the intention of human actors, which she noticed has not been explained in detail by Latour. The emphasis in this discussion, however, is not on human subjectivity as in the previous studies, but on human motivation and intentionality that, she argues, differ from the intention of the non-human actors. Here, she followed one full day of the news production process.

If we come back to Hemmingway's early discussion on PDP, she first demonstrates how the PDP enters the news network at the BBC Nottingham newsroom, and shows that the introduction of PDP brings radical translations to the whole news production network because it causes disruption to the network that was once seen as stable and in the condition of the black box because it can keep producing news on time, without any problem. In demonstrating how PDP enters the network, she shows that from the translation process of its protagonist, Michael Rosenblum, a former CBS news producer, PDP is perceived as an immutable mobile (this concept will be discussed further in Chapter 8), that such a radical introduction will definitely become a success at the BBC because the translation will transform news production and what becomes news as a whole.

However, when the investigation was conducted at the PDP training centres among the trainees, Hemmingway found that when the translation was brought back to the Nottingham newsroom, the results were quite devastating. Many journalists felt that single-authored news was not a good decision, in fact, it decreased the different expertise needed in different stages of news production, thus failing to recognise the professional level required to achieve certain news production processes. This is an example of how a radical alternation occurs in a journalist's chronogrammatic axis in news production. Therefore, to stabilise the translation, the news grid is introduced in the newsroom, which is pasted on the wall so all journalists can write their ideas on it and how many stories they are planning to do. This is an example of an *inscription device* where it has the ability to translate other actors. It is from here that journalists know who is doing

what, and they do so based on what is written on the grid. However, after six months, the grid is not needed anymore, and all the journalists seem to know how to handle their own stories. This shows that despite various translations that happened, stabilisation is achieved in the introduction of PDP in the newsroom, but not without additional help!

Besides that, the translation of PDP continues when Hemmingway demonstrates the fluidity of the translation process, regarding how editors adapt to the new technology and how it translates news. In attempts to stabilise PDP introduction translation, there have been new actors enrolled into the network, that comprises the new news editor, to monitor the translation process, and other journalists adapt to sometimes working on the news alone, and sometimes in team work. In this example, Hemmingway shows that in the case of the media hub, the translations are rarely complete, because there always remain problems. However, even with problems such technological actors still tend to become a black box (that despite resistance from journalists, stories still need to be passed through the hub and thus conform to the required "form" of the technological process). As compared to the case of PDP, the translation is still continuing, and the network is yet to be stabilised because attempts to achieve stabilisation have been continuing.

Then, Hemmingway brings the readers to a different news network, where she demonstrates that the reality of live reporting is multiple, despite the singular version transmitted to the audience. For example, in a live interview from the satellite truck, when a news source accepts to be interviewed and then it is transmitted, it becomes a black box because all resistance has been handled, and all other actors have been aligned into the network to make it successful. However, when the news source rejects being interviewed straight away and suggests a different phone interview, yet it is still transmitted to the public, such singular reality is an example of how messy and multiple realities are not relevant to the audience, who only encounter the final product as part of other practices of reassembling the social. This, echoes Mol's view on multiple realities:

> There is never a singularity of presence that exists within a stable temporal or spatial framework, but rather the performance of multiple realities, at times made partially or fully manifest, or otherwise deliberately defined as other and absent, so as to preclude the possibility on the part of the viewer to witness a fragmentation of that perceived singularity (Mol 2002).

In discovering journalists' intentions and motivations and how they influence news production, Hemmingway demonstrates, following Law (1986), that power can be stored, and can be passed to other actors, in contrast to Latour's (1986) insistence that power is only the result of collective assemblage. To Law, power includes *power over* and *power to*. An example from Hemmingway's empirical findings shows that the usage of the news grid by an editor helps to control various situations occur in news productions and is able to handle the production meeting smoothly without debate. This can be read as power being stored by the news grid to secure the editor's sociogrammatic position over other journalists. Another example is given by Hemmingway when an editor did not agree with another editor's decision and then included herself (as a researcher) to help with the news production. This, in Hemmingway's view, is an instance of the exercise of human agency and the use of strategy that is unpredictable.

Emma Hemmingway and Joost van Loon (2011) further developed Latour's concepts of sociogram and technogram and introduced the concept of chronogram, where actors in a network can be mapped to analyse the specificity of its chronotopical position in a network and thus obtain stability. With Latour's (1987) concepts of the technogram and the sociogram, it became possible to separate the operational and functional aspects of work flows as the former refers to the description of technological and operational dependencies and relationships whilst the latter later refers to "social interactions" (functional associations) among actors. A network is tied together through a combination of these two systems, and includes both technological and human actors, and both are interrelated with each other to overcome each other's weakness, although usually they are explained separately.

The chronogrammatic process highlights the multiplicity of time-space "events" in newsmaking. Despite "the present of news" as always constructed as being identical for both journalists and the audience, there are always various heterogeneous instances of realisation operating alongside each other: the present/presence of news is not a unity of "being" but an association of moments, kept together by technologies of representation (standing in the place of) and re-presentation (making the same anew). What will the audience able to watch in live 24 hour news is the feeling that it is happening 'right there, at that moment', but this is only possible because of the connections of the here and now with invisible moments that are invoked by

processes that enable the stories to be "on air" in the first place (although it is 'live'). This is closely associated with Latour's (2005) point that "action is always overtaken".

In this study, Hemmingway and Van Loon specifically examined the release of Alan Johnston, a BBC reporter, after being taken hostage in Gaza. They showed that live news, as received by the audience, is usually perceived in its singular form. However, nothing really exists alone, or rather, nothing ever 'is' alone. 'To be is to be related' (Mol 2002, quoted in Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011: 158). Thus 'the 'live' technology remains a technological accomplishment and hence engages a multiplicity of time frames', i.e. the chronogram (Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011: 157).

Based on Hemmingway and Van Loon's observation, studies in media production paid less attention to study 'time' in the news production process, and if there are, they do not discuss time by recognising the multiplicity of temporal and spatial differences the processes are embedded in. Thus, using Latour's (1999) differentiation of presence (what already exists, such as an object), representation (includes the processes involved in producing a message) and re-presentation (what a receiver gets from the message) (These concepts are discussed further in Chapter 6). In analysing the live news, Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011) suggest that events, as they happen, are the product of assembling a "present-presence" (not "the" present or simply "presence") by a multiplicity of mediators in the process of production is representation, whilst the enactment of the news and the audience as co-present in a unity of space and time is re-presentation.

They also observed two producers in charge of the live news transmission. Producer One has a direct contact with the satellite provider and camera operator in order to set up the facilities needed for the live transmission. Here, the chronogrammatic position of the producer is multiple, because he is separated from other journalists located outside the newsroom and also those in Israel. On the other hand, Producer Two, who is in charge of the transmission of the news, is at a different and separate chronogrammatic position because he needs to ensure the transmission is on time, thus quick decisions need to be made, based on whatever is technically available. From here, they demonstrate that the success of the transmission is based on the removal of the spatial and temporal delay between the event first occurred and when it is transmitted.

These detailed studies by Hemmingway (2007) and Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011) are an example of the kind of research that Joost van Loon (2008) advocates in his book *Media Technologies*. For Van Loon, media scholars need to change the way they study the media, which has been continuously dependent on the separated research paradigms that produced segmented knowledge about media and its mediation process (such as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) derived from preconceived ideas of relevant contexts. According to Van Loon, media must be studied as "networked", or as he prefers to call it, mediation is a process of net*working*. In most paradigms, mediation processes are black boxed because they are usually (and limitedly) explained on the basis of political, cultural and organisational "point of views" (what Latour calls "social explanations"). Van Loon emphasises, however, that this view is not to denounce other types of media studies as wrong, but to identify there is a need for studies that pay attention to mediation processes, which are supposed to be at "the heart of media studies" (Van Loon, 2008: 4). Media Studies have been preoccupied too much with establishing abstract relationships between contexts and products, and have placed to much exclusive emphasis on the human actors that are supposed to be mediating between them, either as producers or as consumers. A process-oriented approach to mediation, however, focuses on translations (cycles of credit) between different "moments" of assembling media products, as objects of production as well as of consumption.

Deploying ANT, Van Loon demonstrates that McLuhan's Medium Theory that assumes media are extension of humans (and humans are extensions of media) can be empirically generated in much more detail, as ANT allows the investigation of how coalitions are created between humans and technologies in producing a temporary stable network. Thus, ANT shifts the emphasis to the *form* of media, and urges researchers to become more sensitive toward the phenomena under investigation rather than limitedly focusing on the content of the media, such as content analysis to find out which account will become *history*. Instead, with ANT every action can becomes a history as long as it is formed from traceable associations rather than pre-established social contexts. At the same time, ANT allows media analyses to become receptive towards the *culturally embedded* sensitivities of mediation because culture itself suggests that meanings are embedded in practices of sense-making and do not simply exist 'out there'. Finally, ANT urges media analyses to take account of *embodiment* and disembodiment. Media technologies are always formed as "objects" that manifest themselves in embodied forms, as well

as subjects that require practices of disembodiment. This helps us to identify which actants are involved and what are not actants. Non-actants are entities that do not make a difference because they do not act.

In her study *An Actor-Network Perspective on Changing Work Practices: Communication Technologies as Actants in Newswork,* Ursula Plesner (2009) analyses how new ICTs such as email work in the ever changing practice of newswork. While Plesner found that the state of 'normalisation' happened in the process (where journalists do not even realise how an ICT has changed their news-making approaches), what is interesting is the seamlessness of the network established by the new media. In discussing this, ANT posits that it is the object that assists in understanding how email can become an actant in a particular network—this means, how email can translate events to become news.

Plenser demonstrates that email is an actant because it enables the connection between other actants, such as the deadline and actuality. It is here that, Plesner added, email becomes the mediator by "changing their relations while connecting journalists and researchers" when it is from an email that a journalist gets suggestions from the news sources of when they hope the story will get published (deadline). The news source also explains what she thinks is vague in the story and then, after the story is reedited by the journalist, it is sent to the editor on the same evening (actuality).

Besides email, Plesner also found that Google is an actant in the news- making process because it connects ambiguous ideas with the exact news source. Google becomes the avenue for journalists to find concrete information about news sources that can talk about the story they are writing. When Google opens the door for further meaningful exploration, it then becomes an *obligatory passage point* in the news production network. Besides Google, the telephone is also another actant identified because without the telephone it is very difficult for journalists to be in contact with their news sources to develop stories.

Such performativity of actants, Plesner is arguing, is also emphasised when she discusses "media logic" in a subsequent article (Plesner, 2010). Here, she reflects on the notion of media logic from an ANT perspective. She argues that media logic should not be seen as already existing 'out there' as it is usually deployed by journalism studies scholars to explain how news

angles are related with what becomes news in different media organisations. This is an inaccurate attempt, Plesner argues, because media logic is only an abstract term that is unable to explain concrete practices. Plesner observes that journalists know how to choose the best angle not because they know or are aware of the media logic of a particular news organisation, but rather because they have gone through a process of accreditation of newsworthiness, which includes the techniques of angle construction. If this complex and continuous process of validating newsworthiness is only explained through the notion of media logic as always-already present, then we are explaining very little because it hides exactly that which it needs to explain: how. This "media logic" is itself indeed an abstraction of news making practices.

Plesner argues that the findings of her study suggest that media logic is important to newsworthiness, but researchers cannot use media logic as an explanation for journalists' actions. Instead, media logic is seen in her study "as a set of stories of how actors turn particular concepts into actants as they navigate within this profession" (Plesner 2010: 3). The findings demonstrate that a good debate produced in a radio production is not because of the media logic of the media but the results of negotiation among the journalists involved. In such negotiations, conflict is the most important news value because it turns the story into a more interesting story.

ANT has also been deployed to study convergence in newsrooms. ANT and the Communities of Practice (CoP) are deployed by Weiss and Domingo (2010) to explain the dynamics of online production in four American and Spanish newspapers. Specifically in this study, ANT is used to map the positions of members in the newsroom, their distinct roles and tasks in relation to innovation. They argue that ANT is useful to trace power relationships between different actors involved in an innovation in a newsroom, the conflicts evolving around the new technology and the tracing of the process of reaching closure. In this study, ANT is deployed to identify the role of the journalists in either hindering or contributing to the development of innovations.

To the journalists, small problems should not be made known to the developer as s/he needs to think of new features in the website, and that is more important to the success of the newspaper. However, at the same time, breaking news reporters feel that the production team are not helpful enough to them, and usually do not pay much attention to their suggestions. Such conflict led Weiss and Domingo to conclude that these hindered innovative ideas for both

parties, because both of them are the *obligatory point of passage* which are not heard in terms of (1) the ideas of the breaking news as often being neglected, and (2) web developers limit themselves to online editors' instruction rather than, for example, graphic designers.

A different situation is found by Weiss and Domingo at the news website of a public broadcaster (CCMA in Catalonia). There is a lack of communication between the online newsroom and the technical staff. In producing online news, members of the technical staff feel that their decisions are too much influenced by journalists. On the other hand, reporters feel that they are too rigidly influenced by the technical staff, especially to comply with the pre-decided designs for their stories. This suggests the usefulness of deploying ANT in such a study, which enables the identification of "conflicts and contradictions in the processes of innovation" (Weiss and Domingo 2010: 1168).

However, the approach of deploying ANT by Weiss and Domingo is contested by Joost van Loon (2011) in his article *How to be Mediatized? An Invitation to Metaphysics in Defense of Actor Network Theory*. Van Loon urges researchers with an affinity to ANT to ensure accurate ways of deploying ANT when demonstrating how translations happen. Van Loon contends that Weiss and Domingo "have merely provided a description of the tool [network]", rather than "using the concept of network to analyse and describe social practice" (van Loon, 2011: np). It is here that it was done inaccurately, Van Loon adds, because ANT is here used to highlight a particular technology and treated as an 'object of struggle' or a 'site of struggle'. What should be done, rather, Van Loon claims, is to consider conflicts in an innovation process because they are visible. This critique implies that conducting a study inspired by ANT needs to be done carefully, among other things, in terms of ensuring the accuracy of how objects are positioned and the processes involved in understanding the formation of objects. It is about what lets itself be traced by specific accounts: what differences are accounted for and by what means. In an attempt to realise this in the present thesis, I will explain in the next section why this study claims to be a piece of research 'influenced' by ANT rather than a purely ANT study.

4.7 Examining Newsworthiness Construction *Influenced* by ANT

This study involves six Malaysian newspapers, namely *The New Straits Times* (the NST), *Berita Harian* (BH), *The Sun* (TS), *Sinar Harian* (SH), *Harakah* (Hh) and *XX* (the newspaper

requested to remain anonymous) as well as their online versions. These print newspapers, together with the online versions of the newspapers, are in the first focal points of this study. The online versions are particularly important for understanding different configurations of readerships as part of the accreditation processes of the newsworthiness construction of online newspapers (see Chapter 7). Other objects include 'news' being studied in this research, including other heterogeneous actors involved in the news-making process, primarily the news angle, pictures, headlines and words.

In terms of newspaper selection, these newspapers are chosen mainly based on the availability and their willingness to grant permission for me to conduct this study. Two other well-known newspapers, although approached, did not grant their permission, hence they are not included in this study. In terms of the way of the first selection of the newspapers, it was not based on their inherent identity. Instead, it was based on the notion of *free association* advocated by Michel Callon (1986) that emphasises the rejection of pre-determination of the identity, size and scale of a particular actant that leaves the choice of the newspaper open and based on the permission granted and willingness to cooperate. By free association, Callon (1986) demonstrates that the roles of each of the actors in the study (researchers, scallops and fishermen) are the results of negotiating their roles with each other (rather than being pre-existent).

Identity should be seen as the *result* rather than the *cause* of social action. As this is apparent in Van Loon and Hemmingway's (2005) study, which suggests organisational identity is the result of reification of practice, Candea (2010) specifically scrutinised identity on the basis of the work of Gabriel de Tarde and demonstrated that the identities of Corsicans are a 'connection' rather than a 'category' because of the way "the" identity of "the" Corsican is constructed by the people themselves. Corsicans are mainly identified as being very attached to each other, and by refusing to accept strangers. By acknowledging themselves as closely connected, Corsicans deploy practices of "naming" to suggest that they are 'possessed' by each other. The possession of identity among French Corsicans also reflects the fact that the issue of identity is very much affected by the 'inside' as opposed to the 'outside'. The outside of "the Corsican" is another abstraction of externally attributed qualities that are usually associated with identity, such as "the general traits of the French". The practice of anonymous introduction is

thus seen as differentiating the Corsican from the French. The difference of "being Corsican" is thus actively performed over and over again. I want to suggest that this is similarly done by the newspapers who find it easier to articulate what they are not, than what they are.

Thus, from this standpoint, this study does not predetermine which newspapers will be examined, because to ANT this is also the result of the investigation, rather than fixed by the researcher in the first place. As Latour (1990: 56) has said, "the *scale* of an actor is not an absolute term but a relative one that varies with the ability to produce, capture, sum up, and interpret information about other places and times." Similarly, this study also does not predetermine the hierarchy of journalists in the news organisation that will be chosen for the ethnographic interview and observation. Those selected are based on the availability of the journalists and their willingness to cooperate with me.

Thus, the research methods deployed in this study are observations and ethnographic interviews. These were conducted in the six newsrooms of the available newspapers from February until April 2009. The newsrooms are located in Kuala Lumpur (the NST, BH, XX, Hh), Petaling Jaya (TS) and Shah Alam and Seremban (for SH, Seremban is one of the regional newsrooms). The main method proposed for this study was observation, where this was in line with what ANT advocates in studying "science while it is in action" (Latour 1987) and to follow the actors (Latour 1987; Latour 1999). As Latour states:

> ANT is simply a way of being faithful to the insight of ethnomethodology: actors know what they do and we have to learn from them, not only what they do, but how they do it and why they do it. It is us, the social scientists, who lack the knowledge of what they do, and not they who are missing the explanation of why they are unwittingly manipulated by forces exterior to themselves and known to the social scientist's powerful gaze and methods (Latour 1999: 19).

The ethnographic method becomes important in ANT because it emphasises studying an object while it is in action, or while the network*ing* is being performed. Networking is "continuous practice of enrolment, translation and redefinition" that "analyses actions" (Van Loon, 2008: 114). Thus, Van Loon added that ANT is rather radical because it does not provide explanations about the social based on beliefs or opinions. Its analysis is based on practical observations that suggest why ethnographic methods are important (Latour 1987). They make it easier to identify which entities make a difference and become actants.

However, due to resistance from many journalists, reasoning that they are uncomfortable being observed and asked questions while they are at work, and the hesitation of many newsrooms to allow for such (in-situ) observation, I have had to change the main method of the study to ethnographic interviews that emphasise the investigation of the interview based on the process experienced by research informants (Spradley 1979), as it is the closest method to gain insights about what journalists did when they were in action. This method also provides in-situ data about newsworthiness construction, both in terms of the 'place' of the interview, and the types of data collected—supporting this study which attempts to produce process-oriented data. This is also in line with the purpose of the study, which is to find the 'real voices' of the actors involved in newsworthiness construction.

This method, however, is argued to still help to achieve intensive contextualisation (Strathern 2002) rather than extensive contextualisation, because to achieve this a researcher needs to "track people's activities and narratives as *they* cross domains, and thereby unpack the heterogeneous social worlds people pile up for themselves" (Strathern 2002: 309). This proximity leads me to see this study as *'influenced'* by ANT, rather than to claim the status of a pure ANT study itself. This is mainly because this study presents data from ethnographic interviews which were in-situ in nature, but it does not reach the level of in-situ observation as it is done by ANT theorists (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 1987; Hemmingway 2007; Van Loon and Hemmingway 2005).

There is a huge difference when we are talking about data about practices that are derived from 'discourse' and those from 'actual practice'. The distinction has been mentioned by Tarde in describing his experience of examining social acts:

> When I enter into verbal communication with one or more of my fellows, […] this relation is the relation of one social element with other social elements, considered individually. By contrast, when I observe, listen to or study my natural environment, rocks, water, plants even, each object of my thought is a hermetically sealed world of elements which may indeed know or possess each other intimately, like members of a social group, but which I can only embrace globally and from the outside (Tarde, quoted in Leach 2010).

Realising this, as this study is "influenced" by ANT, there is no essential difference between this study and other qualitative analyses of media production. Through observations and ethnographic interviews, I still see these efforts as to gather narratives of the actors that can still

be unpacked and their heterogeneity revealed. The only difference that ANT makes to this study is that my ethnographic work attempts to work with intrinsic contexts only.

Pertaining to the standpoint of this thesis - treating ANT as a supplement to previous ways of researching news - this is significant not only to overcome the access problem highlighted just now, but also to provide a platform for ANT to be discussed in a less polemical way, as Latour always did. Such arguments by Latour can be associated with the fact that ANT has been harshly rejected by certain scholars even in the STS field itself, which has turned Latour into a scholar who has the tendency to defend ANT 'over' other research paradigms, rather than integrate it with other research methods/approaches.

As a start, this is an early study to provide such attempt, this discussion provides the advantages of using ANT concepts as the supplement to the inherent approach, but yet to provide the integration between ANT concepts with other research paradigms. Thus, by maintaining the ethnographic interview as the main method, and observation as the second method, I have observed some events and interviewed 29 of journalists and the list of journalists as attached in the Appendix. In this study, the strengths and weaknesses of ANT in news study are discussed in the next section, where the strengths are the basis of this study taking up ANT to influence its methodological and analytical tool.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the strength of ANT and suggested that it be utilised as a supplement in news studies, to counter the weaknesses of previous studies presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that mainly reside in the issue decontextualisation (Chapter 2) and of relying on invisible contexts to explain social actions and ignoring real news-making practice in understanding newsworthiness construction (Chapter 3). This thesis, however, is influenced by ANT in discussing its empirical findings, rather than providing ANT analysis, due to the limitations faced in the course of the fieldwork that meant I was unable to gather in-situ data from observations.

This discussion starts with the background of ANT that emphasises a different way of understanding 'reality' and which stresses that the universe is established from associations, rather than existing 'out there' as it is (Latour 2005). From here, ANT sees that reality can be

understood from five controversies that include the different ways of understanding the establishment of reality and that stress that an object does not already exist, but rather through the process of performative enactment comes into being; actions are not pre-determined by the actors, but can change unpredictably; objects also 'act' in the process of composing reality; that there are heterogenous actors (Law 1987) involved; facts must always be under investigation (matters of concern) and the rendering of accounts must take into account how the objects have been made.

It is from these ideas that I was led to the understanding that identity is never a pre-determined concept, but rather the result of various networks that do not depend on external forces to be formed (Callon 1986; Van Loon and Hemmingway 2005). This then becomes an important notion that ANT advocates, which emphasises the study of 'process' while it is in the making (Latour 1987; Latour and Woolgar 1979).

This process can be examined by investigating the moments of translation that Michel Callon (1986) identified as 'problematisation', 'interesessment', 'enrolment' and 'mobilisation'. Thus, identity is always 'in action' because it is in a state of 'emergence' and in negotiations. This can be related to Latour's (1988) principle of irreducibility which posits that a scientist can explain complex phenomena by a single account, not through a universal explanation. From here, Latour (1988) suggests that every piece of knowledge constructed is immersed in a network that is constantly making and remaking itself, that is, it can extend the network (Latour, 1988: 226). Thus, "Nothing is known--only realised" (Latour, 1988: 159) from a scientists' laboratory rather than investigating from nature (Latour, 1988: 214). Latour then describes the principle "nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else" (Latour, 1988: 158).

This suggests that societies are the result of a reification of 'practice' rather than existing as such. This can also be related to the philosophy of a French philosopher that has a heavy influence on ANT. Gabriel Tarde views society as being formed by irreducible entities that associate with each other to realise their existence. This is opposed to Durkheim's view that societies exist "as such" and are composed from fixed 'social aggregates'. Instead, we always need to be mindful of how associations are being performed and ask what allows them to become durable.

From these views, what is important to ANT is to understand how an object (which includes a fact) is established. Facts should not be simply accepted as already there, and capable of being trusted without further investigation. From the ANT point of view, how facts come into being will enable a researcher to come closer to the object and understand the object under investigation very well, as compared to simply accepting an object as it is (Latour 2004). Thus, an object is established from a series of translations that not only include personal achievements but also other external forces, such as political, ideological and commercial interests that happen in its process of becoming established (Latour and Woolgar 1979). This can be investigated through the accreditation process in order to change the state of affairs from matters of fact to matters of concern (Latour 2004; Latour 2008). Thus, the establishment of fact includes various series of translation processes that turn facts into a hybrid form of object, and which also take into account the non-human actors.

To further understand the role of non-human actors in the translation process, enrolment can be taken as a concept that is pertinent in making the translation process and changes that occur in a network visible for researchers to examine. Callon (1986) observes that enrolment is never a guaranteed success, but one way to understand successful enrolment is via assessing and collecting (assembling) different interests among actors (Callon and Law 1982). In terms of creating the collective identity of the newspaper, which takes place through enrolment, I want to show how newspapers impose their identity on their readers through specific practices of angle construction.

This suggests the importance of non-human actants in rendering accounts in the networks. Here, the account itself can also be considered as a virtual object (Law 1996; Mol 1998; Van Loon 2002) where the emergent nature of the object is emphasised rather than its existence as such. In understanding a virtual object and the link to the actual object where it derived, mediators, or the connectors within and among the networks become important actants to reduce the distance between them.

This thus turns ANT theorists to argue that the reality is made of *associations* and it is not contexts or inherent identity that can be used to simply explain the social. From this point of view, there is no separation between the micro and macro contexts. Rather, what really makes the associations should be seen as the source of understanding how something happens.

These are examples of the concepts of ANT that are found useful to supplement the weaknesses of previous news studies paradigms (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) which are able to demonstrate the exact, micro and taken-for-granted practice of news-making (Hemmingway 2005; Hemmingway 2007; Hemmingway and Van Loon 2011; Plesner 2009; Plesner 2010; Turner 2005; Van Loon 2008; Van Loon and Hemmingway 2005). This brings us into one of the important aspects that ANT advocates, which is the establishment of facts in news-making—that, in news study, I pose the question of how news values come into being.

CHAPTER 5

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEWS VALUES:
FROM MATTERS OF FACT TO MATTERS OF CONCERN
(AN INVESTIGATION INTO AN ACCREDITATION PROCESS)

"Everything is suspect… Everyone is for sale… And nothing is what it seems." (Hollywood film slogan, quoted in Latour 2004)

5.0 Introduction

Theories of newsworthiness criteria ever since the 1960s have identified factors such as Frequency, Threshold, Unambiguity, Meaningfulness, Consonance etc. (Galtung and Ruge 1965) to determine how events become news. The revised version of Harcup and O'Neil's (2001) study proposes a more contemporary version of newsworthiness criteria including 'Celebrity', 'Entertainment' and 'Good News'. However, such views that can be called 'object-driven news values' (see Chapter 2) have been criticised by the 'subject-driven news values' which state that processes involved in determining news involve various subjective factors that include political and economic, cultural and organisational factors (see Chapter 3). Thus, in Chapter 4, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) was introduced by arguing that it serves as the *supplement* of these research paradigms by highlighting micro-practices and taken-for-granted activities involved in news production (Hemmingway 2007) in order to provide intrinsic contextualisation (Strathern 2002) of news production processes.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the establishment of news value is a 'matter of concern' (Latour 2004 and 2008) that accredits various interests in the cycles of credit (Latour and Woolgar 1979). When newsworthiness is seen as a matter of concern, it does not comprise an isolated object, but rather interconnected things. Thus, facts (or in this thesis news values) do not exist in a vacuum. The existence of news values involves the whole process of its establishment, which includes both the producers and the products in the gathering process. Consequently, all arguments and critiques that create news values are also taken into account in understanding what makes news.

From an ANT perspective, a state of affairs becomes a matter of concern when what is stated is always questioned, critiqued and investigated to gain the evidence (Latour 2004 and 2008). Unlike matters of fact, no evidence is needed in order to produce facts. Object-

driven news value is an example of matters of fact, because it assumes that news value is 'reproduced' (see Chapter 2) rather than 'constituted'. For matters of concern, however, arguments and critiques that are based on investigations in order to provide evidence are pertinent in the production of facts. Here, 'matters of concern' become an important concept by which to distinguish 'good' and 'bad' journalism, mainly because news-making practices must produce facts that are based on evidence that needs investigation. Thus, in this chapter I will demonstrate that the constitution of news value is the result of reification of news practices among the journalists involved in news making in a particular news organisation that engages with specific cycles of credit.

Latour then elaborates how context is understood differently from the position of matters of fact to matters of concern:

> "While matters of fact exist without context, in an attempt to uncover the indisputable, matters of concern gather context(s) into themselves, disputing both the possibility and the efficacy of indisputability. What results is an approach that is constructive, rather than deconstructive; one that assembles the subject as richly diverse, historically situated, infinitely complex and engaged with its own inherent contradictions and controversies, a ''multifarious inquiry launched with the tools of anthropology, philosophy, metaphysics, history, sociology to detect how many participants are gathered in a thing to make it exist and maintain existence." (Latour 2004a: 246)

This is, from Latour's view, a position which is able to gather or group 'empiricism', but not by determining the context of social actions prior to investigations. Similarly, he also advocates a similar point about 'collective' in the Politics of Nature (Latour 2004b). Here, he calls for an alternative way of defining a collective or assemblage, where it should be done more democratically without separating the definitions of facts and values with the inherent attitudes about nature and scientific knowledge.

This is when concepts like accreditation and cycles of credit can add values to discussions about the establishment of fact (such as news value). In the cycle of credit, various interests are accredited, and this can only be done when there is no inherent identity/context determined in the process of the establishment of news values. Here, identity or context is seen as the result of the accreditation process, rather than determining what will be accredited in the cycles of credit. From here, then, the collective identity of the newspaper can be determined, that enables the establishment of different news values from one newspaper to another. In this approach, identity is seen as a virtual object that changes in

every performative (discursive) act of identification, as introduced in Chapter 4 (see Chapter 6 for brief introduction of a virtual object and more detail in Chapter 7).

It is from here that news values become a 'hybrid' or collective object resulting from the collective or groupings of various actors, both human and non-human. The establishment of a hybrid object, from an ANT perspective, does not highlight the causal effect between the 'external' factors (such as how context or identity is understood in Chapter 3) and social actions (such as newsworthiness construction). Rather, it stresses on associations of actors via post-hoc relationships (Latour and Woolgar 1979). Thus, the question this chapter seeks to ask is "*What is newsworthiness and how are news values established?*"

In illustrating this, this chapter argues that the accreditation process in the cycles of credit (Latour and Woolgar 1979) is useful in explaining the process of inclusion and exclusion that happens in the grouping process that constitutes news values. It is this approach that enables the matters of concern to be identified, that will show that newsworthiness does not exist alone, but is always accredited with a series of value translations, with a post-hoc relationship among different (news) values.

5. 1 Operationalisation

In this study, newsworthiness is seen as a *result* of the *accreditation process*. The establishment of a news value, which is seen as a *quasi-object* (or hybrid object) (Latour 1993), argues for the inclusion of non-human actors in explaining social actions, which refutes the tendency of many scientists to explain social phenomena by assuming the impact of objects is only generated by human actors. In this study, it starts from the process of gathering/grouping through the process of accreditation, which will include both internal and external forces in news making. When an object is seen as such, it can be further explored as a virtual object; I will demonstrate in Chapter 7 that readership can be examined as a virtual object. Particularly in understanding the establishment of a quasi-object, the external forces include, as Latour and Woolgar (1979) identified: political interests, ideological interests and commercial interests, in the *cycles of credit*.

In this discussion, however, these interests should not be seen as existing 'out there' and ready to explain the establishment of news values of the newspapers. Rather, they are interests that might *possibly* be accredited by journalists if they have deployed them in the process of newsworthiness construction in their newspapers. So, based on the journalists'

arguments on what makes news, that then enables one to show whether these interests are accredited (or not) in the specific cycles of credit of the newspaper. Thus, it is wrong to assume that these interests are deployed as 'already there' and the establishment of news values is explained from there. Then only, a quasi-object (news value) can be seen as the result of matters of concern.

Thus, to examine news values as matters of concern, every explanation of newsworthiness construction by the journalists should not be taken as 'fact' and easily accepted as it is because, as I have quoted Latour in the early part of this chapter, and I repeat it again here, *"Everything is suspect... Everyone is for sale... And nothing is what it seems."* (Hollywood film slogan, quoted in Latour 2004). When a state of affairs is treated as a matter of concern, really, nothing is what it seems. Everything must be considered from the real practice, and it is the practice that is then reified into an object, then only can the object fully explain itself. From here, journalists' practices reified into news values and the collective identity of the newspapers then emerged, which is the result of reification of practice among journalists. Identity is now not determined by journalists' actions in valuating newsworthiness, but it is the other way around.

In this chapter, the degree of matters of concern is evaluated by valuating the degree of 'hybridity' of credits in the reification of practice that makes Malaysian news. The more hybrid the news value is, the more events can become matters of concern. Thus, this chapter will demonstrate how a specific version of cycles of credit generates news value as a matter of concern. Cycles of credit of each of the newspapers in this study are demonstrated through various interviews conducted with journalists in the newspapers involved in this study. The quotes from the interviews illustrate the parts of cycles of credit that define newsworthiness, that generate news values of each newspaper. The explanation of news practice is extracted from the mode of abstraction about newsworthiness provided by the journalists through interviews and observations.

5.2 The establishment of News Values

The next section discusses the empirical findings of the establishment of news values in six newspapers in this study. The first discussion is the establishment at the NST and BH, followed by Hh, TS, XX and SH.

5.2.1 The Establishment of News Values at the NST and BH

I followed Journalist NST1 who worked mostly night shifts. I followed her during the newsgathering of the launch of the "*Kami Anak Malaysia*" (We are Malaysian Children) campaign on 19 March 2009. The event was held in Shah Alam[1] and the programme started at 5 pm, including a speech by Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said at 5.15 pm followed by the Prime Minister's speech at 5.45 pm.

After the event was over, Journalist NST1 and Journalist BH1 were discussing what was newsworthy about this story and what angle to take:

Journalist NST1	:	I am not sure (what is newsworthy in the story), there is not much in the speech though.
Journalist BH1	:	Yeah.
Journalist NST1	:	It is easier to write if Tun Mahathir (the former Prime Minister of Malaysia) is giving speeches. Pak Lah (the nickname of the Prime Minister) is always difficult since he has got no point in his speech!
Journalist BH1	:	Yeah, but just write something...

This is an example of how an event that is perceived as not newsworthy still needs to be written up in the form of a story and submitted to the editor. In this instance, the conversation between Journalists NST1 and BH1 of these sister newspapers suggests that both of them do not feel that there is anything interesting and important for them to write as a story because the speech does not contain anything valuable for readers to know. Here, the dialogue shows they have great difficulties to write a story because of an *absence of fact*. This is the point when the speech becomes a matter of concern, because it is not simply accepted as newsworthy and then reported.

However, in this case, we can easily acknowledge from this conservation that reporters, on many occasions, are tied to the assignments assigned to them by editors that they need to ensure are covered, written and submitted as scheduled assignments (Tuchman 1978). In the case of Journalist NST1, she usually covers events on the night shifts, so most of her assignments are assigned by the editors, and rarely initiated by her. This included the assignment for this event too, she said. For such an assignment, usually what is assigned is expected to be reported and published.

The explanation about the action is reflected in an interview with Journalist NST2, an important editor at the NST, who said:

"(The angle of stories in this newspaper is based on) what the newspaper stands for. In this case, we are pro-government, pro-BN, so using the same fact we can do the story as to promote the interests… Whether you like it or not… we are bound by our shareholders and the majority of the shareholders are linked to UMNO[2] but very rarely that we get this kind of order that they want this story to be played up. (But if they do) we have to listen to that…"

"Another role a newspaper should play is social responsibility. People always regard newspaper as a tool to shape the mind of the people, especially those days (before the emergence of the internet). But now the general public is so open to other avenues of getting news, especially the young people using the internet. But still the later role the newspaper play is still there, which is to shape the minds of the public. That means, this story can be done in 101 ways, how you angle the story, how you do the story. This is seen as shaping the mind."

This explains the accreditation of political interests at the NST. In the cycles of credit at the NST, political interests are accredited to support what is seen as a practice of social responsibility. That seems to be the most important external force that determines newsworthiness at the NST. This probably provides the explanation of the dialogue between Journalist NST1 and Journalist BH1, suggesting both the NST and BH derive news values from the status of officials, which prevents both journalists rejecting a story that they find not newsworthy.

In order to increase the newsworthiness of the story, Journalist NST1 and Journalist BH1 decided to include the element of 'safety' as the lead of the story. This is an example of how a non-human actor is included in the news-making process: 'safety' has become an 'actant' that translates the story from first perceived as 'not newsworthy' to a more 'newsworthy' piece of story in line with the newspaper's political interests. Based on the observation, it is from this decision (to make 'safety' the lead of the story) that both journalists can start writing the whole story. In this example, the angle of the story is a 'virtual' actant rather than a concrete actant as identified by Plesner (2009), which includes emails and telephones.

So what has been accredited in the construction of the news angle here includes both human actants (the direction from the editors assigning the assignment) and non-human actants ('safety'), which both explain the journalistic side of the news production, and the political interests of the newspaper as the external force involved in the process. It is only

after deciding the angle that both of the reporters started to write the whole story and Journalist NST1 sent her story as an email via mobile phone to the editors who were waiting at the headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

Here, the mobile phone is the example of a concrete non-human actant. Data from this study suggests that a mobile phone acts not only as an actant that enables the story to be sent to the editor from a different geographical site (Shah Alam to Kuala Lumpur)[3], but also constitutes what makes the story newsworthy, in the sense that it materialises the possibility for the story to be sent to the editor, then edited to a better version and proofed by the copy editor. Without the mobile phone with an internet connection, the story that was first considered to be not newsworthy by Journalist NST1 would never reach the editor on time, mainly because of the geographical factor and the time factor (the event started in the evening).

Then, Journalist NST1 produced this lead for her story:

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SHAH ALAM:. The Prime Minister urged relevant authorities to stress on the
aspect of safety and communication when organising the "Kami Anak Malaysia"
programme.
The programme was aimed to create awareness among Malaysian school children
of the nation's vast tourism products.
Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi tasked several ministries including
Tourism as well as Youth and Sports Ministries to ensure these two aspects
would be implemented.
He wanted children to feel safe and able to stay in touch with their
parents when they participate in any of the "Kami Anak Malaysia" programme.
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The story was then changed to this version, after being edited by the editor in Kuala Lumpur:

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SHAH ALAM: Safety and keeping parents informed must be the priority in the
"Kami Anak Malaysia" tourism programme.
Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he wanted the children participants
to feel safe and able to stay in touch with their parents during the
programmes.
"When they (the children) climb hills and explore the jungles, we have to
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make sure there are officers in-charge of their safety," the prime minister
said at the launching of the campaign yesterday.
Several ministries including Tourism and Youth and Sports Ministries are
involved in the programme designed to promote tourism to children.
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What is interesting, and also makes visible the political interest of the newspaper, is the way this story has been edited. This explains further, in a cycle of credit at the NST, that the editor (probably echoes what Journalist NST2 said in the quote earlier) can 'spin' the story although they did not witness the event for the purpose of 'shaping the mind of the public'.

I based this comparison with the actual speech I heard and the notes I took during the observation. What the Prime Minister said exactly in the speech, besides the importance of the safety and communication aspect involving children when they do outdoor activities held in Malaysia, was that two other ministries were also *urged* to assist in achieving safety - the Tourism and Youth and Sports Ministries. It was also his personal hope, he said, that the safety of children needed to be prioritised in all activities organised in this campaign.

However, if both versions of the stories are compared (thus enabling the identification of specific cycles of credit at the NST and BH), it is found that the tone of the story has been changed. Besides maintaining 'safety' as the lead of the story, the involvement of the two ministries was portrayed as 'they are already involved', although in the speech, they are called upon to get involved and help to ensure the safety of the children, or, as the word used by Journalist NST1 in the story - 'tasked'. When these translations are analysed from an ANT perspective, a strong political interest of the newspaper in determining newsworthiness in the NST can be detected. By changing the tone of the story, which is from a 'directive tone' to an 'involvement tone', this suggests an implicit message that the government is always united in organising an event such as this campaign directed at its people. This changes the actual meaning of what the Prime Minister really said during the event, and in this example, I argue that this is done by the NST to show readers the strength of the state. Through words, this is perceived as achievable because readers who do not attend the event will turn to the newspaper to find out about it. Since readers are not there to listen to the speech, news stories can be used as a tool to portray a good image of the government to its public, thus reducing the multiple effects of the event to the public, by producing a less risky object of news value.

In an interview with Journalist NST2, spinning the story is not a bad act in journalism as long as the meaning of the story does not change, thus, it is fine to spin the story according to the tendency of the newspaper and in line with its objective, which is to 'let the readers know what the government is doing, and the progress of the country'. However, as I have demonstrated, the 'spinning' theory applied at the NST seems to be too heavily directed towards the political interests of the newspaper than to upholding the ideal philosophy of developmental journalism (Herbert 2001), which mainly calls for turning developmental news values into matters of concern rather than matters of fact, but so far it has been rather difficult. As Herbert (2001) observed, the concept of developmental journalism in the Third World has not been able to function as it should (which is to become the watchdog of the government, and be non-partisan in news reporting), but rather it has become the supporter of the government, almost without question, similar to how Asian journalism has mainly been practised (Petersen 1992). From the interview and observation conducted, one of the ways this is done is through the way wordings in the news are constructed, such as the headline "*Selling Country's Charms to Schoolkids*".

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Selling Country's Charms to Schoolkids
SHAH ALAM: Safety and keeping parents informed must be the priority in
the "Kami Anak Malaysia" tourism programme.
  Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he wanted the child participants
to feel safe and able to stay in touch with their parents during the
programme.
  "When they (the children) climb hills and explore the jungles, we
Have to make sure there are officers in charge of their safety," the prime
minister said at the launch of the campaign yesterday.
  Several ministries, including the Tourism and Youth and Sports
Ministries, are involved in the programme designed to promote tourism
among children.

(copied directly from the online version of the news as it was published by the NST Online on
20 March 2009)
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In this final version of the news story, it suggests that there is a tendency for the NST to promote its political interests more than other interests through the construction of such a sentence that (1) does not connect with the news lead, thus a question related to journalism practice, and (2) implies Malaysia as having such tourist appeal that schoolkids must not disregard it. The main problem with this headline is, besides it does not say anything about what the lead has to say (which is element of safety among the kids), why suddenly the headline now highlights the country's charms when that was not even the strongest

suggestion from the Prime Minister? Here, such journalistic practice can be associated with the strong political interest of the newspaper I have been talking about earlier, which can be related to promoting the country's stability to the young generation.

Now, let's see the BH version of the story as it is published as news.

Program riadah pelajar perlu utama keselamatan

SHAH ALAM: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi menggesa kementerian dan penganjur program pelancongan dalam negara, khusus membabitkan pelajar supaya memberi penekanan terhadap aspek keselamatan dan komunikasi.
  Perdana Menteri berkata, selain tapak perkhemahan dan asrama, perjalanan program yang dirangka untuk generasi masa depan negara itu perlu dilengkapkan dengan kehadiran pihak yang mahir dalam kegiatan lasak seperti mendaki bukit dan meredah hutan.
  Beliau berkata, bagi memastikan perkara itu menjadi kenyataan, beberapa kementerian termasuk Kementerian Pelancongan dan Kementerian Belia dan Sukan dipertanggungjawabkan untuk melaksanakan perkara itu.
  "Aspek keselamatan wajar diberi keutamaan bagi memastikan ibu bapa lebih yakin untuk membenarkan anak mereka menyertai sebarang program pelancongan yang dianjurkan khusus untuk pelajar.

(directly copied from the online version of this news from BH Online on 20 March 2009)

The translated version:

Students' recreation programmes need to emphasise security

SHAH ALAM: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi urged the ministry and those organising travel programmes in the country specifically involving students to emphasise the aspects of security and communication.

The Prime Minister said other campsites and hostels' travel programmes designed for the country's future generations need to be complemented by the presence of a skilled trainer in vigorous activity such as rock climbing and jungle trekking.

He stressed that, to realise this, some ministries, including the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Youth and Sports were responsible for implementing the matter.

"Security should be a priority to ensure that parents are more confident to allow their children to participate in programmes related to tourism

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organized for students."
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What is striking in this news story as published by BH is that it maintains the exact tone of the speech as delivered by the Prime Minister. In the lead, it says that the Prime Minister urged organisers and ministries involved in tourism industries in the country to prioritise students' safety and communications aspects in their programmes. In the second line, the Prime Minister is recorded as saying that besides providing campsites and hostels to students, every outdoor programme organised must be attended by experts in such activities. In the next line, he went on to say that to achieve this, several ministries including the Tourism Ministry and the Youth and Sports Ministry were tasked to ensure the safety aspect mentioned. The direct quote then reported: "The safety aspect needs to be prioritised to ensure parents are confident to allow their children to join any tourism programmes organised for schoolkids."

The headline differs a lot from the one published at the NST, from an ANT perspective. What becomes news at BH involved translations in a more 'objective' way, in the sense that it reports objectively what the Prime Minister has to say in the speech. This specific cycle of credit at BH suggests that the role of the editor contributes to promoting good journalism, compared with the NST. The only problem that BH cannot challenge in their news practice, however, is the accreditation of political interests, as the ownership is similar to that of the NST.

Besides this, it can also be related with practices that reified as the collective identities of these newspapers. Pertaining to the collective identity of BH, as explained by a senior editor at BH - Journalist BH2 - he would describe the identity of BH as a 'neither here nor there' newspaper which covers almost every topic including politics, human interest and education and which includes all different ethnic groups in Malaysia. By this, it can also be related with BH's recent attempts to publish stories which are not too political (not publishing too many political stories). However, it still needs to report such stories (not even publishing too many human interest stories). Now, Journalist BH2 added, BH has even changed its policy to include human interest news on its front page. The change is important, according to Journalist BH2, because "the readers are now very bored with such [political] stories and they don't buy the newspaper any more".

Compared with the NST, it views itself as a newspaper which, having a 'strong conviction for a stable, progressive nation-building, brings to its audience a rich editorial content that has garnered huge following of movers and shakers, and key decision makers, paving the way to a united and progressive Malaysia'[4]. It is probably the intention to build a united and progressive Malaysia that moves some editors to edit the stories at the newspaper as discussed, so that some of them forget certain ethical aspects of journalism that would assist the process of becoming a progressive nation. Based on Audit Bureau of Circulation, the NST is audited as having one of the largest drops in circulation of all the country's newspapers. Further discussion about the readership in relation to the NST's circulation is discussed later, in Chapter 7.

Realising this, BH, which is used to be a newspaper that publishes a lot of political news, has taken a progressive step to translate what becomes news at the newspaper, by reducing its political news and making human interest news as newsworthy enough to be covered on its front page. Besides that, as we have seen in the previous analysis, BH also reports its news with a more objective approach, within the political interests accredited by the organisation.

It is this response that translates BH into a newspaper that can be said to accredit commercial interests rather than political interests alone. When Journalist BH2 said the change is a response to the decrease in BH's circulation, commercial interests are also accredited in the cycles of credit that create news value at BH and translate BH into not so much a "hard core political newspaper" compared to the NST, turning the collective news value of BH to become nearer to Journalist BH2's description as a "neither here nor there" newspaper.

If we return to both analyses of the construction of news with the headline *Selling Country's Charms to Schoolkids* (the NST) and *Program riadah pelajar perlu utama keselamatan* (BH), they provide examples of the accreditation of political interests in specific cycles of credit in the construction of newsworthiness. The NST accredits political interests while BH accredits both political and commercial interests. However, both newspapers do not really gain credibility from these credits, mainly because of the effects of practices related to political interests that influence the ownership of the newspapers. Thus, the issue of concern of Journalist NST1 and BH1 in the dialogue presented earlier is that there is *no story*, and yet, however, they still need to write a story for their news organisations that respectfully and

uncritically represents the political authorities. Thus the 'source of value' at the NST and to some extent BH is the authority.

Here, the analysis suggests that news read by the readers in such form in the NST and BH is not produced by the identity of the newspaper, rather, it is the reification of practice among the journalists that makes the news as it is, which in turn becomes news in these newspapers as though they are black boxes. 'Black box' from the ANT view is a situation when an object is understood in its final form (output), rather than trying to understand the complex processes involved in turning the input into such output (Latour 1987). Similarly, in this example, it is specific news practices that transform news in the NST and BH as such, rather than their inherent identity.

5.2.2 The Establishment of News Value at Hh

In a different network of establishing news values, in a very different political preference because Hh is published by an opposition party PAS, Journalist Hh1 explains the establishment of news values at Hh from his view as one of the senior editors of the newspaper:

> Our main consideration is in line with the establishment of Hh which is the party organ of PAS, so what is published must be from the view of PAS, from the view that will give political mileage to the party. The issue that we put on the front or back page must be able to increase our influence and simultaneously decrease the opponents. So that is the most important consideration that we use as a political newspaper and most importantly, we are a party newspaper.

These explanations about what makes news at Hh are examples of an important part in the cycles of credit of newsworthiness construction at Hh that accredits ideological interests. When Journalist Hh1 said that Hh is the official newspaper of PAS (party organ), the Islamic opposition party in Malaysia, this is where the accreditation of political interests becomes apparent. However, the political interests are very different from the political interests that have been accredited in the cycles of credit of both the NST and BH. In the case of Hh, the cycles of credit involve the accreditation of oppositional political interests, which include what PAS advocates.

This is when the ideological interests of PAS become an important interest that is always accredited and influences what makes news at Hh. For PAS, what is imperative is to follow Islamic teachings and thus it should not be separated from politics and good governance. In this way, it becomes a newspaper that publishes alternative stories, which are

mainly political news that is not provided in the mainstream newspapers. This part of the cycles of credit at Hh strongly influences newsworthiness construction at Hh, as stated by Journalist Hh2:

> We can say that Hh is a political newspaper that tries to report news that are not being reported by other mainstream newspapers in Malaysia. I think if the mainstream newspapers in Malaysia want to change themselves in terms of reporting, meaning that they report what is really happening, I think Hh does not need to exist because we won't sell. If we go back to history, Hh was first published because the party [PAS] was always discriminated against in the 1986 general elections... So the reason why Hh is established is not because PAS wants their own newspaper, but as a reaction from the unprofessionalism of the mainstream media. Since then, Hh develops, from a party newspaper to an alternative newspaper.

If this is read from ANT, the publication of Hh is a response to the mainstream newspapers and the coverage about PAS during the elections. Because of what had happened, PAS finally decided to have their own newspaper, so that their voice could also be heard. Here, the establishment of news value at Hh can be seen as being controlled by the *immutable mobile* (Latour 1987) of the newspaper, which is PAS as the party that owns the newspaper. The 'immutable mobile' is an object that can be moved around but it is still the same object, because it is stable and does not easily deform. In this example, PAS as a party that owns Hh acts as the immutable mobile that defines newsworthiness at Hh because what gets published in Hh is in line with the aims of PAS.

It can be traced back from the early years of Hh's publication, where it aimed to play the role of a party newspaper, which then turned out to be an alternative newspaper that continued publishing positive stories about PAS, and providing a counter-attack to mainstream newspapers' reports. Here, Hh can also be seen as a classic sense of agitation and propaganda for the masses to support the cause. Thus, to some extent, Hh also propagates propaganda to its readers, and persuades them to believe what is being reported. The difference with the NST and BH is that Hh publishes news that can support PAS with the intention of taking over the government, while the NST and BH support the status quo. However, Journalist Hh2 expressed the difference of the propaganda message that Hh delivers:

> Although the issue is human interest, for example the landslide at the Bukit Antarabangsa[5], we still report it based on the political side of the story. Maybe in the context of BH, the landslide is seen as caused by the soil movement or the current of the underground stream based on the views of the geologists, but to PAS, we look at it first, maybe this is related to the religion, (it is an example of) the curse from Allah

and secondly, maybe corruption had involved during the construction of the condominium on top of the hill that affect other bungalows located beneath the hill… if that is so, that is also wrong in Islam…

This quote suggests that the cycles of credit in newsworthiness construction at Hh are always accredited with ideological interests, which are in this example the teachings of Islam. This differentiates Hh from BH, for example, as in the quote, Hh would emphasise the role of religion in explaining and interpreting events. Thus, to some extent, the matters of concern to Hh are that every news event is seen as an opportunity to preach and anything that can give political mileage to PAS. These news values are generated from specific cycles of credit as illustrated. Here, good journalism appears if ideological interests are not embedded with political interests that transform newsworthiness construction at Hh to be seen as a form of propaganda deploying an Islamic approach (see Chapter 8). This collective identity of Hh differentiates itself from TS, a newspaper that accredits political interests too, but highlights more the commercial success of the newspaper.

5.2.3 The Establishment of News Value at TS

The establishment of news value at TS (the only free newspaper in this study) is derived from an interview conducted with Journalist TS1 on 24 March 2009 in the TS newsroom. This interview is based on the construction of newsworthiness of a particular story which became the front page of the TS headlined "*PNSB supported Balkis*[6] *'repentance programme' in Cambodia*" written by Maria J. Dass (please refer to the Appendix for the full text in Appendix IV). Although the data from the interview merely show and do not prove anything, this however enables us to illustrate that news value for the TS is constructed in a specific way.

Journalist TS1 described the newsworthiness construction process until the story gets published as news:

Actually there was no clear lead at all yesterday. We were actually expecting some announcements on the swearing in [of the new Prime Minister] and all that, the new PM but nothing came in. So we went with this, we went with the *Balkis* story because TS who was the one who broke the story on this *Balkis*. The transfer of funds, three days of the March 8 general elections. 10 million ringgit from *Balkis* fund was transferred to *Bakti*[7.] So, [two of TS journalists] who broke the story you see... This is the first time they held an inquiry in which the PNSB... and it was like a confirmation of what we have written before. About the abuses and waste of the public funds and all that. So that was the strongest story and sort out our own story. Other papers did

not give it much play. If you notice, the past two weeks, during the hearing, there was once using outside twice a day I think. This is a confirmation of abuse with the previous state government. So that was our one of our big stories, so we decided to use this.

This quote when analysed through ANT is an example of where, on a day when what the front page should be is unclear, every story can become a matter of concern to the eyes of the editor. In the case of the selection of this particular story, Journalist TS1 said that it was chosen because (1) the story was first broken by TS, (2) it involved a large amount of the use of public money, (3) the transfer happened three days before the general election, (4) it then became the strongest story of the day because it confirmed the previous stories written related to this story, and, (5) other newspaper did not see it as newsworthy.

This process as described by Journalist TS1 is an example of how an establishment of news value at TS can be described as derived from a matter of concern, particularly when there is no certainty on what story should be the front page of the day. It is a matter of concern because there are a number of haphazard, sometimes human constructed, sometimes non human constructed reasons or elements which all go into making associations with one another which all contribute to the contextualising of the decision that the story then becomes worthy of coverage. In this example, a more certain story that was expected to happen (swearing of the new prime minister) did not took place. This is when arguments about what should become the front page story become important.

In evaluating the newsworthiness of this story, the actors included in the process of grouping include the fact that news about *Balkis* and the misuse of public fund were broken by the TS. This is an example of how a journalistic force (thus internal force) can affect a network of what makes a story newsworthy compared with external forces such as political interests, commercial interests and/or ideological interests because the story is derived from the journalists within the organisation itself. This can be associated with the credibility of the TS as a newspaper that dares to publish such story, that in the case of Malaysia, the mainstream newspapers generally hesitate to cover such a story as the front page. In ANT terms, this is the situation where the newsworthiness construction is based on both the reward and credibility that the newspaper gains, because it not only portrays its credibility as a non-partisan newspaper that publishes stories that criticise people associated with the government, but also offers 'personal rewards' because it will indirectly attract a different group of readers

who will not get this news from mainstream newspapers, and who will pick the newspaper from the news stand.

After Journalist TS1 explained that it was the TS which broke the story, he straight away explained that the transfer of funds happened three days before the general elections - that an amount up to 10 million ringgit was transferred to *Bakti*. Journalist TS1 continued by saying that it was their investigative team reporters who broke the story, that made this the strongest story of the day, and also the strongest ownership of the story.

This narrative demonstrates that the inclusion of both internal and external forces at the same time in the establishment of facts is entangled with the political interests (Latour and Woolgar, 1979) of the newspaper. The narrative shows that the explanation from Journalist TS1 cannot be separated between internal and external forces - being the first newspaper that broke the story but also associated right away with the amount of public funds being misused by a body affiliated with the government. The establishment of news value in this instance is entangled with all the journalistic forces involved in determining the front page of the TS on this particular day and the political interests of the newspaper, which are to promote more stories on the good and bad deeds of the government and the people associated with it.

When political interests are accredited in the establishment of news values at the TS, we can see the difference between the TS and the NST based on what the journalists believe the political stand of the newspaper is. Journalist TS1 described TS as a 'neutral' newspaper, which he referred to as a non-partisan newspaper. Journalist TS2, however, elaborated about the political stand of the newspaper:

> We... (pause)... I like to say we are a bit left leaning... but I think it is safe to say that we try to be as balanced as we can. As fair as we can. I mean fair in the sense that, if the PM, let's say Najib [the Prime Minister] has got something good to say to the nation, I will play it up. But if Anwar has got something brilliant to say, I will go also. But if Anwar got shit to say, I won't play. Just because he talked to 10,000 people, I won't play it up. Does it make the front page? To me, no! But if he tells the crowd, I approve that Najib is a crook, and there is very strong proof, even pictures that show he has got certain things, can I ignore it? No.

Journalist TS1, however, has a rather different view about the political stance of the TS:

> We have no political stand. We are just neutral. The newspaper is not owned by any political party. So we don't have to worry [about] the political masters. We give

everybody a fair this one. Personal attacks we don't highlight too. Arguments in parliaments and all this, the by-elections and campaigns we do carry.

From these quotes one can understand that the political stance of the newspaper is itself a matter of concern. Journalist TS2 admitted that not everything said by the Prime Minister (Najib) and the opposition de facto (Anwar) would be the front page unless they (TS) get strong proof on the political statements. Here, the proof of the story can be seen as the non-human actant that mediates the publication of non-partisan political stories at the TS. Besides, the explanations are also examples of the entanglement of specific journalistic practice such as 'balance' and 'fair' with the political interests that affect TS. This brings 'credibility' to the TS as a newspaper, that they are aware of the needs of the readers who have been too often served partisan political news; the news contents provided in the newspaper thus become an attraction.

Here, Journalist TS1 also included the fact that the newspaper is a free newspaper, that what becomes news is also affected by commercial interests in ensuring that what is published meets the target of the advertisers, who act as the main funder of the newspaper:

> ... Our target is young people, I think from 18 to 35 that is the prime range the advertisers want also. So that's why we are zooming on that and reach educated people. People who want to read intelligent stories. We don't want to insult the intelligence by giving them all sorts of, they know be hash or being spin. We don't editorialize our stories, when we write, we just based on the facts, that's all. We don't try to put in what we think or try to interpret things. I don't do that. Because some stories in some papers you read they try to influence yours, this one by skewing the story by a certain angle, but we don't do that, we just report straight. The tag line says this la, we don't spin.

It is from this quote that we can further understand that the commercial interest is accredited in the establishment of news value at the TS through publications of stories that "do not insult intelligent readers". This group of readers is referred to as those between "18-35 years of age", and "educated", thus what becomes news includes these factors that can be related to the commercial needs of the newspaper, which is also entangled with the journalistic ability to produce news on a par with the needs of this group of readers.

This includes the publication of investigative news written by their well known investigative reporters. One of the investigative reporters, Journalist TS3, explained his planning state of investigative reporting at TS:

In planning, the most important thing is facts. Facts! The most important thing, you cannot run the story without facts. And of course documents that back the facts. Because when our lawyers go to the letter, they will go on our articles. Not all of the time, most of the time, the lawyers ask, where did you get this information from? Can this be substantiated? So we need the documents... All kinds of people call and give us all kinds of information. If no documents you see... So from facts and documents you know you can go further? Yeah, I know [from there].

This quote also demonstrates that the collective identity of the TS is not the cause of such publication of news, rather, when Journalist TS1 said that they report stories *as it is* and the tag line says so (the tagline of TS is "*Telling It As It Is*"), but Journalist TS3's explanation is an example of how within a newspaper, different types of news are constructed, that might differ from the official identity of the newspaper. This strongly supports ANT's view that collective identity is the result of reification of practice among journalists rather than causing it.

Besides, this quote also demonstrates that fact is a matter of concern for Journalist TS3. Instead, for a good journalist, facts are never a matter of fact but facts are treated as construct. They have to stand up in trials of strength, for which 'objective' proof is required and needs to be collected. Newsworthiness as a quasi-object thus needs other non-virtual objects to become stabilised, and facts act to stabilise what is considered as having news value for the TS.

This differentiates that it is from the process of accrediting both journalistic and commercial interests that only Journalist TS1 was able to conclude that they produce such types of news. It is through arguing the fact that the TS is different from the mainstream newspapers in this study (the NST and BH) because it does not spin the story, and the TS does not interpret stories on behalf of readers but rather based on facts, that we are able to understand that news value at the TS is established from a specific cycles of credit. In the examples provided in this section, it has been demonstrated that in specific version of cycles of credit at the TS, they generate a kind of 'source of news value' (thus its matter of concern) which is 'controversy' closely related to political stories, either on the newsworthiness construction on the front page of the TS or the investigative reporting, as this can generate popularity in order to maintain its status as a well-accepted free newspaper in the country and simultaneously able to uphold the interests of their advertisers. Thus, what become matters of concern to the TS are rather different than for the NST and BH, which also differentiates the TS from XX.

5.2.4 The Establishment of News Value at XX

If news value at the TS is expressed through the evaluation of political and commercial interests, news value at XX mainly accredits commercial interests. All the journalists interviewed described the news value of the newspaper as human interest, sensational and some with an emphasis on sex and superstitious stories. Besides that, this newspaper also encourages the development of investigative stories that can reveal social problems in society and is seen by most of the XX journalists as a form of 'social responsibility' to the public.

Journalist XX1 shared his experience in developing a story and through ANT, this can be an example to demonstrate how he aligns various actors to translate his story, starting with some vague information from what he called the 'informer' of the story until the story is strong enough to be written and published.

> As an example, before this, me and a colleague have written a story related to a night club in Ampang[8] that uses an ordinary business licence that is believed to also offer sexual and drugs services. Based on our informer, the night club also disturbs the neighbourhood, especially when the visitors are drunk and fight among each other. As soon as I received the information, we discussed among each other first to ensure the facts that we received are valid. After that, we went to the location and disguised as the customers. During the disguise, we took a lot of evidence to ensure enough proof before the story can be written - that includes pictures, audio and video based on our own initiative. One of the proof show that why such night club exist in that area is because of high demands from the customers, especially from foreigners. As soon as we saw one of the drunk customers were dancing with one of the ladies provided by the club, we immediately got the tagline to the story which is '*Goyang Lalok*' [Dancing while Drunk]. It is after we get the direction of the story and feedback from the authorities and nothing is vague anymore, then we informed the editor about the story. He will approve when he thinks readers will read the story.

This quote is an example of how various actors have been aligned in the newsworthiness construction network by Journalist XX1 and his colleague while developing the story. In this example, we can see that these reporters have invoked the issue of 'business licence' of the night club, which has operated 'illegally' because it uses an ordinary business licence, where legally they must use a distinct night club licence. This then becomes the controversy that needs further investigation, strengthened by the fact that the night club also disturbs the neighbourhood with its noise. Then, the 'fact' has been evaluated as to whether it is valid or not. Only when this is assured did these reporters align more non-human actors

such as pictures, audio and video footage as proof. Besides that, the human factor was also included, which is the high demand for such activities by foreign visitors. The feedback from another set of human actors, the authorities, then transformed the whole 'vague' story into a concrete story which can now be reported to the editor. Like the TS, this is also an example of the construction of a story that demonstrates how facts are treated as matters of concern, that facts are investigated further to provide evidence of the reporting. When the fact is proven, only then can it be reported.

Here, analysed through ANT, is an example of how the network is stabilised through various human and non-human actors, that then become the 'actants' that translate the story into a story that is valuable to XX, thus becomes a black box, which is, when the story is finally published as news at XX because of its commercial attractions, as most of the news at XX is. When all of the actants succeed in translating the story, it is later published as "*Markas Gelek Sampai 5 Pagi*" (A group of foreigners were dancing until 5 am - the full news report is attached in the Appendix V). All the inclusions of human and non-human actants in realising this story help in terms of establishing what is considered as a news value at XX and when the story is perceived to be read by the readers. This supports the accreditation of commercial interests, usually associated with newsworthiness construction at XX because of the tabloid approach being taken when readers are included in the network of newsworthiness construction.

Although such reports are seen as most journalists at XX as a form of "social responsibility to report social problems so that readers are aware of such immoral activities in our society", the fact that commercial interests affect newsworthiness is highly visible at XX, especially when observations are conducted in one of the editorial meetings, when an editor rejects one of the stories proposed:

Journalist XX2   :   I don't think people would want that,
                              that's too political.

When I asked Journalist XX1 about his decision not to place political stories as the lead story at XX, he said:

We always go for human interest stories. All political stories such as on government policies and announcement, we only use it as the second lead. This is because such stories will be placed prominently by the mainstream newspapers. Like the previous budget story too, we only make it into the second lead as we know the mainstream

will place it as their lead story. [This is] because we don't want our reader to say that 'oh, XX is now similar to BH.'

This is an example that demonstrates that political stories rarely become a matter of concern to XX because they do not help to stabilise the newspaper's commercial interests. When Journalist XX1 said that he did not want the reader to view XX as similar to BH, this indicates a stronger resistance to political stories than human interest stories. Such resistance then always becomes the black box of what becomes news at XX because it is always successful in resisting political stories.

However, the establishment of news value at XX that can be seen as strongly expressed through the evaluation of commercial interests is never fully accepted by all journalists at XX. Journalist XX3, for example, said:

> We can call publishing such stories a form of social responsibility, but I don't know... sometimes I feel guilty to publish them, but XX readers like it... So we just follow what the readers want.

This quote is also an example to show the accreditation of commercial interests in the news network of XX, although not all journalists agree with the stand. In this example, although it seems that only stories with commercial interests can be associated with what becomes news at XX, and all journalists seem to agree with the approach by striving to align as many actants as they can in order to produce such stories (such as the case of Journalist TS3), this quote demonstrates that not all journalists acknowledged the news value. Such resistance expressed by Journalist XX3, however, is backed up with an argument that can be associated with the commercial interests of the newspaper, which is following what the readers want. In the case of XX, the more sensational the story is, the higher the possibility that readers will like it. Thus, a continuous commercial credit is always used to argue about the establishment of news value at XX, although there is resistance to the establishment of such facts.

This has turned XX into one of the most successful newspapers in the country. To XX, competing within the market is of the utmost importance. In market competition, markets also offer a trial of strength (Latour 1987), that makes the issue of the collective identity of XX pertinent in order to distinguish itself from other newspapers.

For example, news practices within XX are not without resistance, especially when what becomes news at XX is questioned and undervalued by other journalists in other serious

newspapers. As expressed by Journalist XX3 about the perception of working as a tabloid newspaper editor (and previously a reporter in the same publication) from his colleagues in other newspapers:

> We are always suspicious with what is happening to the surrounding. At XX, we cover trivial, sensational and issues that are not developing the mind. My other friends in UM cover the prime minister. They said that I am doing useless reporting. But this is my job. I think if I were asked to do their job, I could, but I think they won't be able to do mine.

What this means to us, if analysed from ANT, is that the issue about how journalists from XX are viewed by colleagues from other papers suggests that it is a form of resistance outside the XX news network, that might have an effect on XX journalists. It is only after being able to resist such tests that news at XX is published in the same form, and on time. This demonstrates that the establishment of news value at XX becomes a black box that is stabilised in its editorial meeting and in its news practices and in most instances, if it is being challenged, the network is always strengthened again by accrediting the commercial interests. This suggests that through various trials of strength in the newspaper market place, human interests have the highest value as journalists at XX link value to commerce.

Thus, to some extent, XX does practise good journalism, because in order to accredit commercial interests, it turns its investigative stories into matters of concern and investigates facts prior to its reporting. However, in terms of the 'source of value', it is very much based on scandal. In the cycles of credit, this will give benefit to the newspaper in terms of generating 'interesting' news and serving as a 'choice' that serious newspapers cannot provide, but it also gives an ethical impact to what becomes news at XX. Why is it important for a newspaper to publish scandalous stories that have no relation to the readers' lives?

The distinct accreditation process of XX and TS gives the idea that, although in the case of TS commercial interests are also accredited, the major difference would be from the way the associations with other objects are done. In the case of TS, what makes news must be the newspaper's commercial interests that are seen as non-partisan political news and investigative news constructed by their journalists. In the case of XX, as we have seen, what makes a story newsworthy is when it can bring profit to the newspaper, and usually the approach taken is very commercially driven, which is through the publications of tabloid news. Thus, what becomes a matter of concern is always related to profitability at XX. This interest is then reflected in the news practice of journalists at XX, that is then reified into the

collective identity of the newspaper. To some extent, this commercial interest also affects the establishment of news value at SH.

5.2.5 The Establishment of News Values at SH

The establishment of news values at SH is a rather distinct case. This can be seen from the quote from an interview with Journalist SH1 below that described his experience on newsworthiness construction at a magazine and at SH which he is currently leading:

> In terms of selection of news, I feel that the most important one is to publish what can sell. But we don't simply publish all kinds of stories because as a newspaper, we do have social responsibility. Besides that, we also have laws and we must follow that to maintain the permit of the newspaper. So when a national leader is involved in a scandal, although that will gain attention from a lot of readers, as an editor, I don't think I will publish that. That story brings no benefit to the readers and we might have the risk of permit suspension.

This quote demonstrates the accreditation of both commercial and political interests in the establishment of news value at SH. As explained by Journalist SH1 pertaining to the survival of SH, "we don't have any [political] parties to fund our operation, unlike some other newspapers, so I rely very much on the acceptance [since SH is a new newspaper in Malaysia] of the readers for us to survive". This suggests the importance of commercial interests to be accredited by SH in its cycles of credit, but it is also linked to other interests, which are political interests.

This is evident when Journalist SH1 points that although he always considers what the readers want in selecting news, he must also remember the laws related to news publication in the country. However, although SH always associates its newsworthiness construction with commercial and political interests, they always code this in terms of 'localism', as apparent in Journalist SH2's words:

> SH specifically targets the community and that is why we call it *Your Community Voice*. This means that SH publishes stories that are close to the people, such as sewage problem, landslide, flood etc. In short, we can say that SH reports people's problems that are usually not seen as important by the local authorities. This makes our emphasis different than the mainstream newspapers, because they cover more on stories on corporate success and the success of government policies. They only take action on community problems when it is already published by the media. I don't deny that the mainstream newspapers do publish changes in the local community but this mainly highlights that a politician is helping the people and that is what is being covered by the newspapers... This is one of our strength and the reason why readers read us.

Here, localism shows itself as a matter of concern that, to some extent, can also be seen as ideological. To the readers, what is close to them is what they care about, and that is what they want to be represented in the news. In the case of SH, the 'local' element as a matter of concern is very significant, but it still links to the commercial and political dimensions of news value as shown above. Thus, mainly, what are matters of concern at SH are issues related to local communities, but what becomes news is also related to whether that will generate commercial success for the newspaper and not put it in a dangerous legal situation.

Journalist SH2 also shared his experience on how SH is able to play its activist role in society:

> Stories related to one's struggle in life should be emphasized such as the older generation who need housing, disabled people who are marginalized, sewage problems that cause floods that always happen. I feel satisfied when such issues are published that can benefit the people. There was a case of a reader who had faced a problem for seven years and nothing was done by the local authorities, who then got the problem solved when SH published it, after only nine days. Just imagine!

This quote illustrates how localism is a matter of concern at the SH. Compared with other newspapers in this study, mainstream newspapers for example highlight more the success of the nation at national level. Some marginal problems, however, are not reported, and if they are reported, these newspapers do not allocate much space for that purpose. At SH, however, they not only treat such local stories as important to the establishment of news value, but they also recognise the distinct local appeal of different states in Malaysia.

As Journalist SH3 explained:

> ... In Kelantan and Terengganu only stories like Nurin Jazlin[9] and very bad accidents can sell. Stories about the Prime Minister can't sell there... For Selangor, if Khir Toyo[10] is the front page, nobody will buy. Maybe the Selangorian don't like him. They like stories about the opposition. They are also more urban, so they like national stories, not necessarily stories about Selangor. Selangor news as the second lead is not a problem. There are also non-native people who live in Selangor. They are not born in Selangor and they prefer to know stories about other states as well.

This is an example of the localism approach taken by the SH that, however, has not been recognised by many newspapers in the country so far. What this shows is, in the cycles of credit at SH, that what becomes news is not limited to political stories (as the SH's front page usually covers national political news), but it also cares about specific issues related to a

specific group of readers. This then becomes the collective identity of the SH, as it is well-known as a community newspaper, for its amount of coverage on community news.

Its very own specific version of cycles of credit generates the kind of news value that determines newsworthiness at the SH. Thus, it has resulted in the formation of a hybrid news value that has accredited political, commercial and ideological interests, and become the newspaper with the most hybrid news value compared with the news values of other newspapers in this study. What this says about the SH is that a lot more stories that are defined as not newsworthy in other newspapers can be seen as newsworthy in the SH. This liberates the definition of news at the SH, that makes it a popular newspaper (thus some can argue that the SH approach is populist) in its relatively new lifespan of publication.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the establishment of news values of six Malaysian newspapers based on specific versions of cycles of credit that generate news values as matters of concern. It has argued that news value does not exist 'out there' but its existence is always circulated within the cycles of credit that accredit various interests such as political, ideological and commercial interests. When news values are seen as such, it is hard to argue that news values are merely object-driven (Chapter 2) or determined by external contexts or inherent identity (Chapter 3). Rather, news values are the result of specific (post-hoc) cycles of credit that accredit interests in distinct ways, reified as news practice among journalists of a particular newspaper, that then become the collective identity of the newspaper. Here, news values become quasi-object or hybrid objects that include all (human and non-human) actors in the accreditation process.

Among the six newspapers in this study, the NST generates its news values from the authority, while to some extent, the BH does as well. Here, both newspapers are identified to accredit political interests in the cycles of credit in their newsworthiness construction. However, the BH also accredits commercial interests as a response to reduce its partisan political reporting. Based on the observation of an event, the main matter of concern of the journalists at the NST and the BH is there is no story, as there is an absence of facts in developing the story they were covering. In both of these newspapers, although they share several similarities, the role of the editors at the NST differentiates its cycles of credit compared with the BH, as the editors are keen to fabricate newsworthiness in the process of editing stories.

In contrast, the Hh generates its news values based on very different cycles of credit compared with the NST and the BH. The Hh accredits both political interests and ideological interests but it differs from the former newspapers because it accredits oppositional political interests embedded in particular religious teachings: Islam. Thus, to the Hh, its matters of concern are any event that can bring political mileage to the party (PAS), and news is seen as an arena to preach Islamic messages.

In addition to that, the TS, as the only free newspaper in this study, accredits both political and commercial interests in its cycles of credit. This is mainly because the TS always associates itself with controversies related to political stories as a strategy to attract advertisers to advertise in this newspaper. Besides this, the TS also publishes non-partisan political news and daring investigative reporting as a way of valuing their young, professional and education urban readers.

The XX, on the other hand, accredits commercial interests in its cycles of credit and believes that its matter of concern is anything that can help increase the profitability and revenues of the newspaper. This is done by including various non-human actants in its news production process, in order to hold the news network together, and to 'win' the trials of strength in the competitive newspaper market. Although it seems 'easy' to assume that producing news at the XX is the easiest, as it reports so-called tabloid news, in reality they face various types of trials of strength within and outside the news organisation. Thus, publishing human interest news should not be devalued as they show that they are able to win over the competitive market.

Similarly, the SH, a local newspaper, accredits commercial interests, mainly because it is a pure business entity with no political affiliation that can help to generate money. Commercial and political interests are always embedded in its local news. As the newest newspaper in this study the SH has shown, however, that it accredits all types of interests into its cycles of credit, turning it into a newspaper that define its matters of concern in the broadest sense of newsworthiness. It offers the most hybrid form (quasi-object) of news values compared with other newspapers. What is newsworthy at the SH includes marginal issues in its local reports, and it cherishes non-partisan news because that is what is needed by readers to become literate voters (while commercial interests cannot be separated in any business entities).

It is here that the concept of accreditation, cycles of credit and matters of concern contribute to understanding news value deeper, because they show that newsworthiness does not exist alone, that everything that happens in the cycle of credit generates certain news values that enable newspapers to differentiate themselves from one another. Thus, it demonstrates that the establishment of news values is always useful to be supplemented with some concepts in ANT, because it enables the production of intrinsic knowledge that avoids depending on external contexts to explain social actions. This is apparently true, as in reality, practices are carried out first, and only then can the description of the practice follow. As in the establishment of news values, similarly, news practice must be the root of determining newsworthiness, which might include various interests in the process of establishing news value, and not the other way around. Thus, identity is formed based on practice, rather than identity dictating the meanings of actions.

This means that this chapter shows that one aspect in understanding news which is from news values can be approached in a way that is based on the practice of journalists in specific organisations, and (collective) 'identity' (which is a result of news practice) can be used to be the supplement of the previous approaches on understanding newsworthiness such as object-driven and subject-driven news values. In the next chapter, I will further demonstrate that when identity is seen as a virtual object, the specific way of formation of identity can be examined. Therefore, I will next discuss a stabilisation process of the SH's identity, as the newspaper with the most hybrid news values, with a focus on the news angling process.

CHAPTER 6

NEWS ANGLE: THE ENROLMENT OF NON-HUMAN ACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEWSWORTHINESS

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrates how identity could be deployed as a critique of object-driven news values. It has been shown that newsworthiness does not exist alone, but rather is a result of the accreditation process in the cycles of credit. This turns the object (news value) into 'hybrids' of credits in the form of objects derived from a reification of practices among journalists that are then realised as collective identity. On the basis of the findings of Chapter 5, I have concluded that the SH deploys the most hybrid construction of 'news value'.

If we want to show what the role of identity for a newspaper could be, we need to provide a more in-depth analysis of the way in which such a complex construction of news value affects how a specific event is turned into news. This is what is also known as 'angling'; that is, a specific perspective is being developed to create what one might call the newspaper's 'unique selling point' (USP)". The USP of the SH is that it presents itself as a 'local hero' but also that it does so by emphasising a specific 'factual' style of angling stories. It thereby creates a more accountable relationship between the event and its coverage.

Thus, in this chapter, the discussion is extended to the SH in order to examine how the news angle is produced and enrolled to become news. This can be done when the notion of identity is extended into what is termed a 'virtual object' (Law 1996, Mol 1998, Van Loon 2002) by ANT theorists. When the identity of the SH is seen as such, it enables the invisible process of enrolment to be revealed, shifting our understanding that identity is the *result* of news-making practices.

This chapter argues the importance of the enrolment of non-human actors in understanding the construction of a news angle, and particularly in examining how exactly the news angle at the SH is determined, which then stabilises into the identity of the newspaper. It is useful to quote Callon and Law (1982) again here, as this explains the relationship between enrolment and identity:

"The theory of enrolment is concerned with the ways in which provisional order is proposed, and sometimes achieved. One, but only one, of the ways in which such enrolment is attempted is via the category of interests. Actors great and small try to persuade by telling one another that 'it is in your interests to…'. They seek to define their own position in relation to others by noting that 'it is in our interests to...'. What are they doing when they so attempt to map and transform interests? Our view is that they are trying to impose order on a part of the social world." (Callon and Law 1982: 622)

Thus, in this analysis, I will show that a particular non-human actant, which is the news angle, can act to hold the durability of the news network together. This understanding leads us to the quasi-objective explanation between identity and newsworthiness construction (Latour 1993). Thus, this chapter asks: *How are news angles deployed as a means to trace 'identity'?*

6.1 Operationalisation

The news angle is an important part in newsworthiness construction (Breed 1955, Gitlin 1980, Tiffen 1989). However, exactly *how* this happens is still vague, particularly in examining specifically how certain events become news. Thus, in this chapter, I will discuss how certain events become news based on several interviews with SH journalists; two of them are at the Seremban newsroom (Journalist SH4 and SH5), and one is a Skuad Cakna[1] (Journalist SH6) based in Port Dickson[2], Negeri Sembilan[3].

It is when identity is seen as a virtual object that the performativity of the object can be examined. Thus, the identity of the SH in this study is an effect of the perfomativity act of identification which is focused on the act of constructing a news angle. In this study, how a particular journalist decides a news angle is examined from the notion of enrolment (Callon 1986). It is after the news angle of a story is enrolled, only then does the identity of the newspaper emerge. How enrolment is performed is based on the act of inclusion and exclusion in the process of choosing which actors will be retained or eliminated in the news network. Inclusion and exclusion is done via the different interests that an actor has over another. It is this translation process that enables the identity of the newspaper to be known by the readers.

Thus, what is important to be studied in understanding the enrolment of the news angle is the stabilisation of identity and how this is done. This is because when the news angle is enrolled

in a particular story, then that is the moment when the decision about what readers will read occurs. Here, it shapes what is meant by the identity of the newspaper, which actually says to its readers, "This is our news and that reflects what this newspaper wants you to read". If the stabilisation of identity does not happen, readers will not able to differentiate the SH from other newspapers and in terms of newsworthiness construction, it will be unclear among the journalists how to start and write the story.

In order to understand the stabilisation of the SH's identity, this study will discuss three ways that have been identified, which are through the inclusion and exclusion of actors at the moment of enrolment, the re-presentation of mediators and the role of non-human actants. Besides that, the discussion will also scrutinise 'community' as one of the main news values at the SH, and shows how it has translated and changed its meaning from the various different practices among the journalists. This suggests that the SH's identity is not like a context that determines what becomes news at the SH, but rather it is the practice of each of the journalists that changes the meaning of what is meant by community news at the SH.

Community news has become a very popular value at the SH and with its readers because it enables the newspaper to enrol itself in the life of the public. The SH reports various community news and solves readers' problems, and this is not something readers can get from the mainstream newspapers. When this happens, it strengthens the SH's identity among its readers. Thus, the whole process of enrolment of news angle that triggers the stabilisation of the SH's identity among its readers 'ends' when it translates the life of the readers based on community reporting.

Thus in this chapter, I will discuss the empirical findings of three ways of identity stabilisation that happens within the moment of enrolment of the news angle at the SH, which are (1) the inclusion and exclusion process in enrolment, (2) journalists as mediators of re-presentation and (3) the role of non-human actants, followed by the translation that happens to the value 'community' at the SH by comparing the interview findings conducted in 2009 and 2012, and the enrolment of SH community news that visualise the identity of the newspaper to the readers. The chapter is structured as such in order to demonstrate that in the process of

stabilisation of the SH's identity, the three processes are identified, and the translation that occurs to the value 'community' suggests the fluidity of identity and further on how the enrolment of identity happens to the readers. This provides almost a complete 'story' of the stabilisation of identity within the newsworthiness construction of news at the SH.

6.2 Stabilisation of SH Identity

The stabilisation of the SH's identity happens in the process of newsworthiness construction of each of the stories published in the newspaper. In this section, I will discuss the stabilisation process, which involved the most important action in news construction: constructing the news angle. It is when the enrolment of the news angle occurs that I have identified three ways of identity stabilisation, which will be discussed next.

6.2.1 The Inclusion and Exclusion Process in Enrolment

At the moment of enrolment, the inclusion and exclusion process is one of the most important occurrences that help to stabilise the network. In this analysis, whether the inclusion or exclusion is made is based on the different interests of the actor. In the case of examining the enrolment of news angle at the SH, I interviewed Journalist SH4 in order to reveal how inclusion and exlusion happen in the process of enrolling the particular news angle she has chosen for the news headlined *Belum Capai Tahap Sara Diri: Sektor Pertanian, Perladangan Belum Mampu Sumbang Bahan Makanan Negara* (Yet to Achieve Self-Sufficiency Level: Agriculture, Farming Not Able to Contribute to the Country's Food Supply) published in the SH on 26 June 2012. Besides the SH, the UM was the only newspaper that also carried this news (refer Picture 6.2) while other newspapers, including the *BH, Harian Metro, Kosmo, the Malay Mail* and *the NST* did not cover this story. These are the news reports published by both newspapers:

Picture 6.1 MAHA news as reported by the SH headlined *Yet to Achieve Self Sufficiency Level: Agriculture, Farming Not Able to Contribute to the Country's Food Supply* dated 26 June 2012.

Picture 6.2 MAHA news as reported by the SH headlined *Production of Agricultural Consumption in Negeri Sembilan is Being Fulfilled* dated 26 June 2012.

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I will discuss the difference of coverage in these two newspapers later, but for now I will first highlight the inclusion and exclusion process involved in enrolling the news angle of this story.

Journalist SH4 first explained how she derived the news angle:

> About MAHA, we know that it is about agriculture and a way to recognise the farmers. In the press conference, I am attracted to the fact that food production in the state is still insufficient to achieve self-sufficiency level. So this is interesting to become the angle because before this the Chief Minister[4] has spoken on some occasions before that he is trying hard to reduce the dependency on food imported from overseas. So this lead provides the latest development [on the issue], that the state government has yet to achieve their target. That is interesting to me.

This is an example of a news angle construction that did not involve the editor. At the SH, almost all stories constructed by the reporters are self-constructed; they are not coached by the editors before they start writing. The editing process only happens after that. However, based on Journalists SH4, SH5 and SH6, it is still minimal.

In the explanation, Journalist SH4 said that it was during the event that she felt attracted to the issue of insufficient food production in the state of Negeri Sembilan and this became important because it was said by the Chief Minister, not an ordinary person. In enrolling the news angle, the first inclusion of the human actor was made, who was the Chief Minister of Negeri Sembilan. At the same time, a non-human actor was also included, which is when she associated that this had become interesting because it was connected with the previous *statement* made by the Chief Minister. Only from these associations that enabled Journalist SH4 to decide that this was a new angle for this story would it become interesting for readers to read.

This is the example of the lead for this news as published in the SH:

Belum Capai Tahap Sara Diri: Sektor Pertanian, Perladangan Belum Mampu Sumbang Bahan Makanan Negara

SEREMBAN – Pengeluaran sektor pertanian dan perladangan di negeri ini masih belum mampu menyumbang kepada bahan makanan negara.

Menteri Besar; Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan berkata, Negeri Sembilan masih belum

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capai pengeluaran makanan pada tahap sara diri.


English translation:
Yet to Achieve Self Sufficiency Level: Agriculture, Farming Not Able to
Contribute to the Country's Food Supply
SEREMBAN - The production of agriculture and farming of the state is yet to
contribute to the nation's food supply.
Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said, Negeri Sembilan has not yet
achieved a self-sufficient level of food production.
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This lead and part of the news can be compared with what was published by the UM:

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Pengeluaran Produk Tani Negeri Sembilan Membanggakan
SEREMBAN 25 Jun - Hasil pengeluaran produk tani di negeri ini membanggakan
selepas langkah proaktif diambil oleh kerajaan negeri untuk memastikan
pencapaian optimum.
Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan berkata, pencapaian itu disebabkan
oleh usaha gigih pengusaha dalam sektor pertanian, perikanan dan penternakan
yang merancakkan aktiviti masing-masing untuk mengurangkan kebergantungan
kepada bahan import.


English translation:
Production of Agricultural Consumption in Negeri Sembilan is Being Fulfilled
SEREMBAN 25 June - The production of agricultural products in the state is
being fulfilled after proactive steps taken by the state government to ensure
optimum achievement.
Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said the achievement is because of
the struggle by those involved in agriculture, fishery and farming, who have
increased their production to reduce dependency on imported products.
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This is an example of how two different newspapers covered the same story. According to Journalist SH4, she sees her news angle as portraying the negative side of the story, but the UM is more on the positive side. To her, by angling the story as such, "there is a more important point to raise, although it is on the negative side". This is an example of how the interests of the

journalists and the newspaper can be associated with the news angle construction. To Journalist SH4, what is important for readers to know is that, although steps have been taken by the state government, so far there is still insufficient food production in the state, hence the dependency on imported products. In this story, she added, it is unimportant to highlight the success story of food production in the state, although the Chief Minister's speech was delivered at the 7th Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture & Agrotourism International Show[5] (MAHA International 2012) and would usually result in positive coverage. However, in this story, it is more important to highlight on what is important for everybody in Negeri Sembilan to know.

Such a difference can be associated with the tendency of most mainstream newspapers in Malaysia to report only on the positive side of the story if the story is related to the government's efforts. This is associated by some as a way of portraying the country as a developing nation, and that the government is doing all it can to sustain development for the people in line with the developmental journalism perspective (Herbert 2001). However, this is the opposite of the ideal philosophy that calls for journalists to highlight both sides of the story, which readers need to know and understand so that they can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the government, so that improvement can be made (Zaharom 2002a, 2002b and 2004).

A similar issue can also be linked with the ethical issues of the mainsteam newspapers in the country. The tendency to report only the positive part of the story and then develop it into a news angle that thus becomes the lead turns this story about MAHA into a rather different story than what was really said by the Chief Minister. Although comparisons with other newspapers that reported this story cannot be made, because only the SH and the UM were observed to publish it, this can be an example to support an assertion related to UM journalism ethical conduct that relates to how the story is angled and spun, which is associated by many with the ownership of the newspaper organisation, that is always affiliated with the ruling party and is said to have a tighter relationship with political interests than the main rival, the BH (Wang 1998).

Compared with the SH, it represents itself as an 'ethical' and 'socially responsible' newspaper and on that basis it deploys practices of angling that engage with creating a critical

distance between the event and its reporting. In the case of the story on MAHA, the speech of the Chief Minister presents itself as spoken words; and as such the report of the SH becomes a case of re-presentation, whereas the UM is more an example of representation.

Latour's (1999) discussion on *presence, representation* and *re-presentation* is useful to help understand this situation. To Latour (1999), presence is the situation of being present in a particular time at a particular place. This is usually how we understand 'present' in our daily life. However, Latour also differentiates representation and re-presentation, arguing that representation is more related to science, and that relates with the annulment of mediators. Mediators are reduced as much as possible in order to get the most objective outlook of a particular social action or in understanding hard sciences. On the other hand, re-presentation is like religion, where mediators multiply in the process of delivering religious messages such as in a sermon. Here, similar religious messages are delivered in various different methods by the preacher to make them new and fresh to the listeners, but the main gist of the religious teachings is maintained.

This might help to explain why the angle enrolled by Journalist SH4 is rather different. However, she argued that this is what the Chief Minister *really* said during his speech at MAHA. She has chosen a very different angle, not only different to the UM but also different compared with how the mainstream newspapers usually cover a story on agriculture. In Malaysia, Journalist SH4 said, based on her experience, the mainstream newspapers mostly report on the positive side of agricultural developments, mainly because agricultural activities are usually seen to have and to bring a positive impact on society, so readers will definitely expect big events like MAHA to be reported positively. Regarding the MAHA story, she explained her interest in choosing such an angle:

> When writing this story, I was worried that the story might affect MAHA and the state government. Because when a big function such as this happens, usually a positive angle is taken, but we have taken a negative side: "food production is still insufficient". But at that time, I thought why the Chief Minister said that… Because what I expect from MAHA is that, the agriculture industry [of the country] is increasing up to 80% and we also export food overseas. But after I went [to the launch of MAHA], the Chief Minister told a different story. So I was thinking whether to write about this angle, because I was afraid that the state government would be mad, because this would imply that they are not

doing their job! Because the issue to increase food production is an old story, but we still don't achieve that. So I think this is important to be covered and the readers must realise this [situation].

There are different interests that she needs to consider while deciding the angle of the story, as we can see in the quote. The first is her own interest as a journalist who wants readers to know this situation, and that, although the state government realised this for a long time, local food production is not improving. The second interest is that of the state government, whose interests are clearly the need to show that the government is good at governing. While, on the other hand, a reporter has to show that she is good at reporting. Here, the relationship between the two is also a part of a cycle of credit. As regards the SH, the government does not have direct influence, but it can still affect credibility, primarily by discrediting the newspaper as 'anti-government' and maybe 'anti-Malaysian'.

In relation to that, she said it happened more often when she wrote political news rather than other types of news. In the words of Journalist SH4:

> I am not worried about constructing the angle of certain kinds of stories. [But] what I am worried at is whether the story will have an impact on someone else. I have written many stories and many people called as well. Usually it is political stories. For example, the story was about football. At that time, the coach was Wan Jamak Wan Hassan, where he had been warned by the Chief Minister of Negeri Sembilan because the team was always losing matches. The Chief Minister said that he was giving a warning to Wan Jamak: if the team does not perform in the future, he will not hesitate to sack him. I wrote the story and it became big, it becames the front page [of Melaka and Negeri Sembilan segment] I got a call from the press secretary of the Chief Minister and he said: 'What a big story, why has it become like this?' So I said, 'I wrote a true story, that is what the Chief Minister said.' But he said only the SH had placed the story so prominently. There is no problem with that [placed prominently], but how does the press secretary answer the Chief Minister? To me, this is not a problem at all, because this is what the story is about.

This suggests some sort of 'intervention' by political interests after a news report is published. This is an example of how different interests occur between journalists and politicians. Although in this example, the politician did not really intervene in the process of news construction, there are always 'post-consequences' of what has been written. Although not much can be done by a politician after the news is published, journalists are aware that what they write is seen by politicians. Although this happens as well outside the context of Malaysia, where political intervention can be in the most subtle ways such as argued in the Propaganda Model

(Herman and Chomsky 1988), the continuous 'eying' activities by various politicians in the context of the concentration of media ownership in the country does affect the definition of journalism ethics in the actual practice of the journalists. However, in the case of Journalist SH4, writing non-partisan and balanced political stories is much more challenging and risky:

> The higher level of risk is when I need to write a story that has the possibility of impacting on other people. For example, when we get any information from a source about problems that are happening within the PR[6] alliance, based on the source, [we are told that] the distribution of candidates' seats declined. So I need to ask the secretary of the alliance, a person who really knows about this, whether this is true. So in this instance, we [the SH] are not partisan by reporting a story based on a biased source.

This is a very fundamental issue of ethics that must be the principle of journalism practice in almost all parts of the world. However, such an ethical principle has been breached at the UM, if this newspaper is still used to compare journalism practice with the SH, as criticised by the Centre for Independent Journalism[7] pertaining to the publication of a news report headlined Kristian Agama Rasmi (Christianity the Official Religion):

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Centre for Independent Journalism: Joint Media Statement (9 May
2011)

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, condemn the irresponsible
Utusan Malaysia reporting over an alleged call from Christian pastors to
change Malaysia's "official religion" to Christianity.

On 7 May 2011, Utusan Malaysia published a front-page story "Kristian Agama
Rasmi?" that relied on 'information' provided by the blogs, "Bigdog" and
"Marahku", without verifying it, nor identifying their authors. The blogs
themselves did not state how the 'information' was obtained – i.e., directly
heard at the meeting where Penang politician Jeff Ooi was present, or from
secondary sources who were there.

Utusan Malaysia also did not offer an explanation for not naming these
sources. The use of anonymous sources – usually, in consideration of the
sources' safety – must be publicly justified.

Notwithstanding this, Utusan Malaysia chose to run this as a front-page
report, no less, and in so doing, gave the unverified story the credibility
it did not deserve.

Further, the front-page story only quoted Ooi denying the allegation that he
had sponsored the meeting. The subjects of the allegation itself – the
pastors who allegedly made this call – were not interviewed. The Christian
meeting's organisers, which included the National Evangelical Christian
Fellowship (NECF), had already denied the allegations of such a call being
made in a statement published in the online media. Utusan Malaysia did not
refer to this statement at all, nor was there any indication that any
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attempts were made to seek clarification from the pastors, NECF or any other Christian organisations.

The denial was only reported on 9 May and even then, *Utusan Malaysia* continued to seek responses to the issue, from the prime minister, defence minister and home minister. Najib Razak called for "calm", Zahid Hamidi called for political parties not to politicise religious issue, Hishammuddin Hussein said if the allegations are true, this is very "serious", and PAS Selangor Youth said if the allegations were true, people should remember Islam's status in the Federal Constitution as the religion of the federation. These comments give further undue gravitas to the 'discourse' arising from what was a non-issue to begin with.

The fact that *Utusan Malaysia* is continuing to spin more stories from a completely unverified report implies mischief on their part, since there is a danger of various communities reacting further and inflaming an essentially emotive issue. Already, there are at least seven police reports lodged in response to what was mere rumour.

Accuracy and verification are an integral part of journalism. Sources must be named as a measure of accountability on the part of both sources and journalists, and to allow readers to judge for themselves whether the information provided is true.

In passing off unverified information as fact and failing to quote the pastors against whom accusations were being made, *Utusan Malaysia* has failed these basic principles of journalism. Not reporting NECF's side of the story was not only unethical and irresponsible but also deliberately misleading.

We call on journalists and civil society to speak up and reject unethical practices which cast journalism in a bad light and bring further erosion of public trust of the mainstream media. We must hold *Utusan Malaysia* accountable for these flagrant violations of media ethics.

From this analysis, we have seen that the interest of the SH is not to be known as the supporter of the kind of developmental journalism understood by the mainstream media, but rather, a new newspaper that attempts to uphold journalism ethics at a higher level without being distracted with the issue of ownership of the organisation (Hong 2011, Loovi 2008). This becomes the identity of the SH, which is known as a newspaper with transparency in terms of its political reporting, and can be said to be the most non-partisan Malay newspaper in the current market (Loovi 2008). What is included in the moment of enrolment of the news angle is of course both human and non-human actants in order to strengthen the news network, but the SH also maintains its ethical interests, which helps to sustain its identity as a non-partisan newspaper. When the identity of the SH is stabilised, the identity enrols itself to the readers and helps the SH to be known by the reader with such an identity. What sort of news at the SH

enrolled to the readers' lives will be discussed in the final section of this chapter. Before that, let us consider the second way in which the SH stabilises its identity, which is through the interplay between human and non-human actors.

6.2.2 Journalists as Mediators of Re-presentation

The success of communicating a message does not only rely on the content of the message alone but also on the constructor of the message. This is also true in the process of constructing the angle of news stories because it involves both the angle as the non-human actor and the journalists who are the human actors, and both are interrelated in the process of enrolling the news angle into developing the story. Here, again, Latour's (1999) concept of re-presentation is useful to help understand the interplay between human (journalists) and non-human actors (news angle) in the process of newsworthiness construction.

Thus, the act of constructing a news angle that determines the whole direction of the news is more accurately presented by the notion of re-presentation because it acknowledges the mediator (journalist) as also the factor that turns the story into a different story based on the news angle chosen, which usually contains new information and is distinct from the newspaper's competitors. However, the stabilisation of the SH's identity occurs differently when the presence of the journalists at the scene is taken into consideration.

Picture 6.3 The news report on the factory store fire headlined *A Factory Store on Fire* dated 26 June 2012.

Journalist SH5 explained how she angled her story about a fire that happened in a factory store in Nilai[8] in a different way from the journalists who were present:

Because I was not there when the fire happened, but I did get some information. But because I was not there, so I can't simply write [the story]. There was a report that there were two factory workers who were shocked to see their store was on fire. So if we have that kind of information, we can make it into statements from the witnesses. So those reporters who interviewed the witnesses, they could construct a different angle. Because they can talk to the workers, they can ask questions to them. But because I did not go, I cannot explain all that.

This is an example of the role of the mediator that turns a story into a different version from others written by those who were present at the scene. According to Journalist SH5, she could not write the story only based on information she got about the fire. There must be a verified source to be quoted in the story. She explained what she did to enable her to write the story:

So what I did was to call the Fire Department and talk to them. I introduced myself, and asked the operation leader to make some statements. I asked one by one, where it happened, what time, the exact place, what was on fire, what has been scorched, what type of factory, what the store keeps, how many firemen went to the scene. All the

questions can become news. With that information, it is easy to write [the story]. I have no problem.

Here, various non-human actors are combined in a news network to hold the network durable, thus enabling the process of newswriting to be started. It is from the interview, only a phone interview, that Journalist SH5 was able to get information about what happened in the fire and other important information that needed to be written up in the story. She then relied on another important non-human actant to hold the lead together:

> It is because once I know that it is a factory store [that is on fire], so I need to ask [the fire department] what it stores. When it is said to store alternative spare parts, there is the lead. Because we don't use information that is too general. A factory store must keep something in it and readers need to know what it is. So by knowing what is inside [the store], that can become the lead [of the story].

For the development of this story, because she was not atn the scene when the fire occurred, Journalist SH5 used a particular non-human actant and enrolled it in the story (the content of the store) and then turned it into the lead of the story. However, the lead could have been different if she had been at the scene. The possible lead can be based on the interview with the factory workers who witnessed the fire. This quote also suggests that constructing the angle of the story is not difficult if it is always based on facts. Facts here provide a clear example of letting non-human actors take the lead in stabilising newsworthiness, as if the news writes itself. Here, the matter of concern is the facts that will be used to develop the news story. By invoking facts as a matter of concern, this seems to mean that everything is kept concrete and thus accountable. This enables the angling process at the SH to be tracked and remain accountable, unlike at the UM.

This is also an instance of how a journalist can be seen as a mediator who contributes to the form of the message constructed. It is the journalist who has decided which angle to take for the story, and it is also based on how the information is gathered and what questions have been asked that enable the decision to be made. Only then can the new angle of the story be constructed, similar to Latour's (1999b) synonym of the role of a religious preacher who has the power to deliver the message 'anew' by keeping repeating the same message in different ways. Journalists too, can be seen as constructing news angles with similar intentions, which is to

report an event that is also reported by other media (thus repeated), but with a different view and way of writing it (a new message).

This stabilises the identity of the SH, which is known as a newspaper that reports stories in a straightforward manner compared with other tabloid newspapers. This is also admitted by a journalist who is currently working at the SH but used to work with another popular tabloid newspaper, who suggests even a minor non-human actor such as words can trigger changes:

> The way news is written is different here at the SH from the YY newspaper. I have worked at both papers and I can tell the difference. At YY, the news is written with more words, but wordy is seen as 'better' and 'beautiful' because by playing with words, the story sounds more literary. This may be because the YY combines its story with some criteria of feature writing. But here [at the SH], straightforward writing is the emphasis. The main aim is to get the facts straight to the reader, not to tell the reader a story like in a novel. In some ways, I think this differentiates our newspaper [SH] from other tabloid newspapers, if we are seen by some as a tabloid piece.

6.2.3 Words as non-human actants that differentiate a newspaper angle with another

Words are important actors, and the words used in writing a story help to stabilise the identity of the SH. It is the choice of words used in the story, especially in the lead (which will then possibly become part of the headline) that signals the different angle taken by a newspaper compared with its competitors. In fact, in ANT, words themselves have additional agency that exceed the intention of the one deploying them.

Journalist SH5 explained the different angle constructed by several newspapers on a national sports event:

> Usually the BH and the UM have more general news. I went to a press conference by the Chief Minister, he talked about the target [of the Negeri Sembilan contingent] in SUKMA[9]. He said that the NS contingent aimed for 36 gold medals this time. But he did not say that 36 is the ultimate aim, but he wants more than that. But I wrote that the Chief Minister *hopes* for more than 36 gold medals in the coming SUKMA that will be held in Pahang. But in Utusan, they said that the Chief Minister urged the athletes to grab an unlimited number of medals. They use different word, they use 'kaut'. You can see from Utusan online, they use 'kaut'. But we used 'hope' for more gold medals. That is in terms of the words used, the meaning is still the same, but the emphasis is different.

In this news, the UM headlined the news as *Kaut sebanyak mungkin kemenangan di Sukma Pahang – MB* (Grab possible victory at Sukma Pahang – Chief Minister). Here, 'grab'

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might not be the most suitable word to translate 'kaut' because mainly this is a Malay word, connected with the connotation of taking something in a large amount. There is no direct and easy translation of this word in English though, but in the Malay language context, it implies 'greediness', that only a greedy person would 'kaut' something; usually this can be imagined as using a large scoop and taking everything that can be taken away.

On the same story, I observed that Mstar online had taken the story from Bernama (news agency) and headlined the report *as Sukma 2012: Negeri Sembilan Sasar 36 Pingat Emas* (Sukma 2012: Negeri Sembilan aims for 36 gold medals) (Mstar Online, 21 June 2012). The words used in this news report are more objective, in the sense that it is nearer to the explanation given by Journalist SH5 who attended the event. The Chief Minister did talk about aiming for a certain amount of gold medals in the sports event this year, rather than urging the athletes to grab an unlimited number of medals. The use of words can differentiate one newspaper's news from another, but to some journalists this can also be associated with the way news is angled. Using different words in the lead not only serves as the angle of the story, but differentiates the story from others.

Since writing is the main element in constructing newsworthiness, the use of words makes the difference that can help to stabilise the identity of a newspaper. Journalist SH5 shared her experience in re-angling a story she received from an XX reporter:

> Recently there was an accident… where it happened I can't recall anymore. But I think it was two days ago. Somewhere in Nilai, I think. The motorcycle rider is at a junction and a Myvi car knocked him down. I got the story from the XX. The victim had just finished his night shift and wanted to go home. In the XX, it was reported that a factory engineer died when his Yamaha skidded early this morning. But when I got the story, I changed it into: the journey of an engineer after finishing his night shift becomes a tragedy after he was involved in an accident near Semarak Junction yesterday morning. In the XX, the type of motorcycle ridden by the victim is mentioned in the lead, but we mentioned it a bit later to differentiate our story from that of the XX.

This is an example of how words can make a difference in newswriting. Although in this example the change does not really change the meaning or the angle of the story, it suggests that differentiating oneself from other newspapers is a crucial act in newsworthiness construction. The SH writes news in a more straightforward way compared with the XX, so it is not that important to mention the name of the motorcycle in the lead. Besides, this can also be related to

the SH's general intention of trying to avoid putting the blame on any parties. By putting the name of the motorcycle later and not in the lead, this can be inferred as a move to avoid readers assuming that that particular brand of motorcycle is unreliable. Here, the SH tries to reduce controversy, compared with the XX which generally fancies controversial stories.

This can be seen as a way to make the news in a particular newspaper different from others, so that the newswriting style can be related to the identity of the newspaper. In newswriting, different ways of constructing sentences can make one story more distinctive than others. The additional words used by the SH, such as 'tragedy', turn the story into a stronger story: the accident is not merely seen as an accident, but a tragedy because it involved a fatality. Putting the detail about the motorcycle later in the news is also a step to create a different sense about this news report compared with its competitors.

So far, we have identified three ways of how the identity of the SH can be stabilised, which are through the inclusion and exclusion of actors in the enrolment moment, the enrolment of mediators in the newsworthiness construction process and the enrolment of words to differentiate news stories. This can be examined as such because identity has been seen as a virtual object, and thus its performative act that relates to the identification of the SH can be rendered visible. In the next section, I will demonstrate that one of the best known identities of the SH, which is famous for its community news, is also a virtual object and not a fixed identity that determines newsworthiness at the SH.

6.3 'Community' as a virtual object resulted from news practices at SH

At the SH, community is always associated with the identity of the newspaper, besides being a non-partisan political newspaper. However, it is argued that it is not the concept of 'community' that shapes the identity of the SH, but rather the news practices followed by SH journalists which have resulted in the definition of 'community' of which they have a shared understanding. In this section, I will show that community is not a fixed concept that determines the SH's identity, but rather a virtual object that is the result of the news practices among SH journalists.

This analysis is based on two sets of interviews conducted in 2009 and 2012. The data are gathered from the 2012 interviews, but the questions that emerged during the interviews are

based on the data gathered in 2009. This will enable the translation process that happens to 'community' which enables it to be examined as a virtual object that changes its meaning in every specific (discursive) act of identification. In the 2009 interview, almost all SH journalists including Journalist SH5 talked about the importance of constructing 'small' community news, which included the coverage of community functions organised by the local public. This included events organised by schools, community organisations, sports and local kindergarden activities.

In 2012, Journalist SH5, who was also interviewed in 2009, shared her experience in constructing news based on the different definition of 'community' advocated by the SH:

> We cannot write a lot of 'function stories' like before. Because if this is reported every day, readers will be bored. Almost every day, we have been reporting on cultivating unity. But all readers know that already, so we don't want that any more. So we must have a new injection to our stories, otherwise they won't buy the newspaper. The stories can be the same function stories all the time. Even like this story, a principal teacher has a ride on a tractor, if a similar story happens tomorrow, is it still interesting?

The quote shows that identity is not always a resource but sometimes a risk. This happens when too much of the same devalues newsworthiness and thus news value. This means that identity must remain fluid, and finding the angle becomes an interplay between providing continuity in terms of maintaining the unique selling point of the newspaper, and generating heterogeneity (which is to maintain the status of "news" rather than "olds").

Among SH journalists, 'function stories' are defined as stories that cover small functions and ceremonies held in villages or by a community group. This can be news about kindergarden activities, sports among the villagers in a remote area, school sports days and functions held by small local organisations. In 'function stories', the main news value is locality, and as long as the activities are organised by locals, they will have the chance to get covered and published. Thus, almost all stories can become news, although they do not contain any human interest news value.

However, the news value of 'community' becomes a changing virtual object when the definition of what makes community news is compared between the 2009 and 2012 data. The latter suggests that small local functions are defined as less important now at the SH, compared with in 2009. The change is due to realising that similar types of stories, if published every day,

will make readers bored. This drive can be associated with the commercial interests of the newspaper: as a purely business entity, it has to serve the needs of the readers by making improvements in news coverage.

Journalist SH6, a district reporter, also shared her experiences on the changes:

> Today, function stories can still become news, but it cannot become the first lead story. The first lead is usually stonger stories such as crime, court, fatal accident and human interest stories. Function stories can still be used but it can only be the second lead. So now, we have to ensure that we can balance that (first and second lead). While if there are functions that involve the Chief Minister, or a huge crime occurs in districts, that story will be taken into the Nasional or Sentral section.

In the words of Journalist SH5:

> The concept of community is different from before. We don't want function stories any more, we are using a different approach. Small events we don't cover any more. It must be human interest… like this… (Picture 6.4). In the functions that we attend, I interviewed the village leader, rather than the YB[10]. There, the concept of community is maintained. For example, every squad have their own page to be filled. When they attend a function, and a function usually goes as their third lead. First and second lead [story] will be on something else, like crime etc.

Picture 6.4 News coverage of a lady named Iswary, who has been bedridden for 20 years since birth up to the present and suffers seizures, headlined *Cannot be Carried Out* and dated 26 June 2012.

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Journalist SH4 added:

> Community has changed, but the concept is still in use. At the same time, we have to increase interesting stories to ensure that people continue buying the SH… community is a good value and even villagers can be on the news. But if every day we report the same story - drainage problems, community association efforts to eradicate dengue - it will make the reader bored. There are no hot stories in it. So today, we try to balance politics and crime news too [besides community news].

Compared with the previous version of 'community' news as defined by the SH, function stories are must-report stories for the district reporters to fill in their distinct district page. Previously, each district reporter had one page to be filled with community news that included small functions organised by the local residents and the head of residents in the district. But now, as explained by Journalist SH6, a district reporter needs to redefine community stories into a more human interest community story, and in terms of news placement they need to balance community stories with other types of stories such as crime stories (Journalist SH4). In fact, community stories are now considered of lesser importance than previously, which cannot become the first lead of the page any more. Crime news that happens in different districts has now become more important.

The status of 'community' as a value in newsworthiness construction at the SH is thus now a virtual object that changes its meaning according to the definition enacted by the practice of the journalists in the organisation. It changes from time to time; the meaning of 'community' value in the SH's community news is different from before. This echoes the intention of Annemarie Mol (1998) "to shift theoretical attention from objects that are represented, to objects that are *performed*" (Mol 1998: 150). The value of 'community' is thus an object performed rather than represented because it is from the news-making practice of the journalists at the SH that the virtual object is enacted. Here, community becomes the event that the SH creates.

Besides community news, at the SH, crime news has always been important and this is apparent in the 2009 interview as well as in the news coverage as can be read by its readers. However, today what makes the crime stories at the SH different to those in other newspapers in this study is that the paper carries crime stories from various districts that are rarely covered by other newspapers. This can be related with the intention to create an SH identity and to retain readership in terms of readers who buy the SH for its community news.

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So how does this transition happens at the SH? As the youngest newspaper in this study and among the youngest in Malaysia, SH reporters do not have a close rapport with most news sources such as the police, etc. When the definition of community news is redefined, the enrolment of the SH itself into the life of the news sources helps to develop the rapport that makes news construction faster and easier among SH district reporters. As Journalist SH6 said, "now it is easier to gather stories because *skuad* has more contact with the news sources including the police, fire department, immigration, SPRM courts, and community leaders". It is only by enrolling themselves with the news sources, and so far they have succeeded, that SH journalists have been able to support the transition made by the SH in terms of its reporting.

Besides the change to place crime stories more prominently than before, another change is related to providing entertainment news in the supplement of the newspaper. Before this, there was no separate entertainment news published in the SH. This is described by Journalist SH1 as follows: "The identity of this newspaper is to provide straight and transparent facts to the readers. We don't cover entertainment news because we aim to be a newspaper that covers important facts rather than trivial stuff." But now, this change is seen by Journalist SH5 as necessary, in order to follow the changes in the world around us:

> We need to change to follow the world around us. We didn't have an enterntainment section before, but now we have an entertainment supplement. This means fewer pages for the community news, and sometimes an editor combines stories from various districts on one page. So now, there are Alor Gajah[11], Tampin[12] and Rembau[13] on one page, it is compact. We still use community value but it is based on whether the community value is human interest or not. Example of human interest community news are sick people who need help, like today we have a teacher given a ride on a tractor (Picture 6.5).

Picture 6.5 News coverage on the school principal being paraded around the village on a tractor headlined *Ex-School Principal Given Ride on Tractor* dated 25 June 2012.

This also translates the meaning and understanding of 'community' news at the SH. While in the past entertainment was seen as unimportant, and readers needed more straight political news that had not been spun, today entertainment news becomes important because a newspaper that is full of community news cannot meet the role of a newspaper that includes entertainment.

So how do these changes affect what becomes news at the SH?

Journalist SH5 said:

> It is better this way. Because before this, we have various columns, a women's column, women in the district, school and community sports columns (and district reporters need to fill all the columns, plus filling their own district page). That is fine, but now we can put stories straight on to our pages. So now there are no other pages [that need to be filled], any story can be covered on our page. So this is less work for the squad, because they don't have to send stories for these different columns, and at the same time need to fill their own pages.

These changes have translated the way that SH journalists define 'important news", Journalist SH5 added:

Because of fewer pages now, we have to prioritize important stories. This means, when we have important events to cover, such as crime, that will be important. Others can be covered on different days because crime does not happen every day. Our advantange is to get crimes that happen in the district, that other newspapers don't get because they don't have district reporters. They usually get crime stories that happen in the capital city because that is where they are located. So crime stories are now important to the SH, and it can become the front page story. This opens our front page to stories other than politics like before. I think this is good because it's not every day that something interesting will happen in politics.

So the urgency to redefine what is meant by 'important news' becomes important among SH journalists mainly because of fewer pages being devoted to news, with some allocation given to entertainment news. In redefining entertainment news, what is meant by 'crime' becomes pertinent because crime news at the SH differentiates itself from other crime news reported in other newspapers by reporting district crime news which cannot be covered by other newspapers that do not assign a particular district reporter to get the news.

Here, since the SH can be seen as a campaigning newspaper and also an activist newspaper, the community value is generated by 'value' through creating news events that 'make a difference'. This is a different way of understanding newsworthiness compared with Galtung and Ruge (1965), as the latter never proposed such news values. This then makes it easier for the SH to enrol into the lives of its readers.

6.4 The Enrolment of SH in Lives of Readers

So far, we have seen that the identity of the SH is not the factor that determines what becomes news at the SH. Rather, it is the practices of each of the journalists that have stabilised the enrolment of various actors, especially the news angle in the news network, that then becomes visible as the identity of the newspaper. The most prominent value usually included by SH journalists is the 'community' value, which has translated from one different virtual object to another, redefining the definition of news at the SH compared with in 2009.

So how exactly has this community news been able to translate the lives of the local people to make the newspaper popular despite its relatively young age? Journalist SH6 shared her experience:

Based on my experience, I have written a story on a disabled person who works as a mangrove worm collector. We went to find this old man and asked him to tell us the story

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of his life. From the story, there will emerge interesting questions that can be developed into interesting parts in the story. When I wrote this story, this man did not receive any benefit from the Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (Community Welfare Department). The deparment then contacted me to get the number of the man. I heard that he later received some amount of benefit as the result of our reporting.

This is how a story published by the SH can enrol in readers' lives. Because of the lack of such stories in mainstream newspapers, which mainly highlight the news values of the elite and report about the nation but not about the poor and marginalised groups (Mustafa 2005a), such stories reported by the SH becomes close to the people's hearts. Furthermore, the people know that the authorities will take action on what is being reported by the SH, and this accelerates the process of the enrolment of the newspaper among its readers (Loovi 2008).

Besides this story, another story written by Journalist SH5 also gained attention from a similar department and action was taken to combat foreign beggars in Port Dickson. This story is about a Chinese man who begs around Port Dickson by pretending to be a cripple (in the photo: left), but according to complaints from the locals, some have seen him running without a stick. Journalist SH6 said that it was this coverage by the SH that attracted the attention of the Welfare Department, and this man was later caught.

Picture 6.6 News on the International Beggar in Port Dickson headlined *Tricky Foreign Beggars*.

Besides that, below is the example of the news that was reported by the SH that gained the attention of the Chairman of the Standing Committee of Plantation Affairs, Human Resources, Environment and Public Complaints, which carried out a test on a seawater sample that was found not to contain any toxic components. Part of the news headlined *Pencemaran Bakal Diatasi* (Pollution will be resolved) published on 10 March 2012 says:

> SH reported earlier about public complaints and apartment dwellers, including the Malaysia My Second Home from Germany, being disturbed by the pollution.
>
> The smell of the water and the condition of the beach is extremely dirty and they are very disappointed. A day after the report by the SH, Mogan came to visit the site with the assistance of Negeri Sembilan Department of Environment to investigate the report filed. A sample of the water was taken to the laboratory for further action.

Picture 6.7 News about the polluted and smelly sea in Port Dickson headlined *Polluted Sea, Smelly* dated 10 March 2012.

These paragraphs suggest that it was on the basis of previous reports in the SH that the Department took action. It is from the water tests carried out that it was learnt that the water was not toxic, despite its dark colour and smell. When such news is reported, readers who live around

the affected area will get information from the authorities and they will not have to worry about that any more. From this example, it can be concluded that the SH plays its role as an activist newspaper that helps locals to solve problems they have faced and which have yet to be resolved. Community news, which can be seen as an example of a non-human actor, acts by letting the public know something they would not be able to know if they did not read the newspaper.

Besides that, in some cases, the SH also gets comments from the authorities relating to public complaints, and publishes them on the the same day. For example, Journalist SH6 covered a story about the construction of floating chalets that would be developed at Mile 12, near Pekan Sungai Menyala, Port Dickson. Most fishermen interviewed in the story expressed their concern about the project, which was seen as affecting a strategic area of fish breeding. One of the fishermen was reported as saying:

> "The [fish breeding] area was gazetted as a protected area. If this is developed for building, it will interfere with the ecosystem and affect the catch of the fishermen. That's what we are worried about, when the catch of the fishermen is reduced, this will affect our income and then affect fish production for the needs of the people," he told reporters who met him recently.

On the same day, the SH also published a response from the Director of Negeri Sembilan Fisheries Department who was reported as saying:

> The project could not affect the breeding ground for fish, but will help the process. In the long term, the floating chalets' pile structure will become the new reefs and the fish breeding area will expand. "In the meantime, the government and the Department of Environment (DOE) are closely monitoring the project activities to ensure that no contamination or conditions may affect the marine ecosystems," he said.

This suggests that enrolment happens because if the news does not get enrolled, then no parties will react or take action on the reported problems. These are examples of how the SH, through its reports, enrols itself in the life of its readers, by taking care of marginal issues that are overlooked by the authorities. It enrolled itself by reporting such issues, so that when the authorities take action, readers are in debt to the SH and this increases the popularity and credibility of the newspaper to its public. Furthermore, the story will spread and more people will start buying and reading the SH. This simultaneously gives commercial milege to the newspaper, which cannot be separated from its commercial interests, mainly because it is entirely a business entity that is not associated with any political parties.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how enrolment of the news angle occurs in a particular newspaper in this study, which is the SH. In the discussion, I have identified three ways that stabilise the SH's identity, referring specifically to the process of finding an angle, which are (1) the inclusion and exclusion process in enrolment, (2) journalists as mediators of re-presentation and (3) the role of non-human actants. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to show that studying newsworthiness construction includes examining the news angle, but it must also pay attention to aspects of how determining the angle is done, that simultaneously include the taken-for-granted elements in discussing news. The question posed at the beginning of the chapter can be answered through the three idenfied ways of identity stabilisation, the fluid identity of the SH and the acceptance by readers of the new identity.

Through the inclusion and exclusion of interests, journalists are able to construct the angle of the story by including interests in line with their journalistic practices, accepted by the organisation they are in and politically safe. In the case of the SH, I have shown that determining the angle is done differently from the UM by referring to a story about MAHA, and how the UM's practice is seen to be related to the general practice of mainstream newspapers in the country, which is related to the understanding of (the Malaysian version of) developmental journalism (i.e., related to supporting the status quo and not be critical of the state). What differentiates the way the SH angles its story compared with the UM in this example is when Journalist SH4 explained that besides her own interest in the angle of insufficient food production and delivering the public's right to know about this, it is also accomplished through the enrolment of the Chief Minister's previous statements (the non-human actants) about the insufficiency, and how the state government has done its best to solve the problem that however remains. This assisted Journalist SH4 in deciding that the angle of the story needed to be 'negative' rather than 'positive', which differentiates its angle from the mainstream newspapers. Overall, in constructing a news angle, most journalists at the SH rely on facts that thus become their matters of concern.

The interplay between human and non-human actors can also be seen when a journalist tries to angle a story that he/she does not witness. To remain ethical, journalists ensure that the

gathering of facts is done through verified sources. Here, journalists are mediators of this re-presentation because they too, contribute to the constitution of the angle (re-representation), rather than representing (reporting) what has happened (Latour 1999). Different journalists will engage with the news angle differently, and thus write different stories even if they are sourced from the same event. Besides gathering facts, journalists also create the story 'anew' and differently from other stories, from the words chosen and constructed as news. This is a form of identity stabilisation at the SH because it keeps the readers 'knowing' them through a specific way of writing, which is straightforward. Words also are used carefully and straight to the point among SH journalists, with the fear that their reports might have negative implications for the reported parties. Besides that, words in news reports can also imply who can be seen as making mistakes and thus be to blame, and who is not responsible. In ANT, the agency of the words can reduce or increase the stabilisation of identity.

Besides the three ways identified in stabilising the SH's identity, 'community' (defined by the journalists as localism), which is identified as an important identity for the SH, translated itself when data in 2009 and 2012 are compared. Although a direct comparison is not made, a general comparison based on interviews done in 2009 reveals that the identity of the SH is not fixed. In fact, it is fluid. In 2009, almost all small functions and ceremonies held in small villages would get coverage in the SH. However, in 2012, that approach changed, and local news were published if they had human interest value, such as entertainment. That change was needed because the SH's previous identity had become a risk, when the SH realised that there were a lot of repetitive news that readers could find in the SH which could become boring to them. Here, when the SH's identity became a risk and not a resource, the SH changed 'community' into 'community stories embedded with human interests values'.

However, although the identity of the SH was transformed (and thus changed), readers still valued its identity. This is mainly apparent in the reporting of marginal issues such as news about a poor disabled man, tricky foreign beggars and sea pollution. Such reports are valued and enrolled into the readers' lives, through counter-reporting from related bodies, and thus actions were taken to help and solve problems, differentiating the SH as a form of activist journalism that differed from the traditional types of news (such as those cited by Galtung and Ruge 1965).

Here, the SH seeks to construct itself as an outlet of good journalism in its specific cycles of credit as newsworthy, so to speak, and reveal that choosing the angle shows how this is done in relation to the interplay between different (human and non-human) actors, regarding the role of facts as matters of concern, words as collectors of agency in terms of praise and blame, and community as performed by the news outlet. Altogether, they show how the SH profiles its USP as a means to justify its existence as performing "good journalism".

Nevertheless, the chapter has shown that adding more concepts of ANT such as enrolment and re-presentation is useful in demonstating micro-practices that involved various human and non-human actors in the process of finding the angle. In particular, the role of non-human actors has always been regarded as 'unimportant', and thus the interplay between human and non-human actors is usually seen as unimportant too. However, as we have seen, the interplay always exists, because it is impossible for a journalist to construct a news angle if they do not engage with the 'angle' itself and gather all the information (thus non-human actors) that can inform the construction of the new angle. In the process of creating the angle, we have also seen that almost in all cycles of credit in different newspapers in this study (see Chapter 5), journalists always involve news production practices with readership, turning us into the discussion about readership and newsworthiness construction in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE OBJECTIFICATION OF A VIRTUAL OBJECT: TAKING READERSHIP 'INTO ACCOUNT' IN NEWSWORTHINESS CONSTRUCTION

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discovered in more detail how a non-human actant, which is the news angle, is enrolled to enable the stabilisation of SH identity. The chapter has demonstrated that the enrolment of the news angle at SH has stabilised the identity of the newspaper and identity is the result of different interests among actors involved in constructing the newsworthiness of a story. It argued the importance of the enrolment of non-human actants (or objects) in understanding newsworthiness construction, discussing the quasi-objective explanation of newsworthiness construction. In both Chapters 5 and 6, we have seen that among all the journalists involved in explaining newsworthiness at their respective newspapers, readership has remained an important concept that has been included in determining what is news.

Thus, in this chapter, I will further examine the concept of 'readership', which, following Law (1996), Mol (1998) and Van Loon (2002), is seen as a virtual object in this study. Similar to the approach taken to 'identity' in the previous chapter, in this chapter, readership is seen as such, which enables the investigation on readership to be performed further, because readership is not merely a 'static' concept, but rather a virtual object of which the meaning changes in every specific (discursive) practice. If, in Chapter 5, there are explanations from journalists that demonstrate the importance of readership in the establishment of news values, that readership is embedded in various interests (mainly in commercial interests) in the cycles of credit that turn what makes news to a particular newspaper into a matter of concern; in Chapter 6 we have further seen that the readership is also mentioned by journalists at SH in the process of angling a news story. However, the readership or the public sphere (Habermas 1989) of news remains a virtual concept which is always in abstraction because the public sphere is immersed in idealist and normative political meaning.

However, journalists themselves are not sure who exactly their readers are, and if they do know, they remain 'imaginary' (Anderson 2006) and such a view about the public is considered useful among journalists (Matthew 2008). Within this view, journalists always associate the readership with sales. This may be read as: more sales mean a larger public. This suggests that it is easier to actualise such a view as compared to how Habermas understands the public.

Thus, what remains unanswered is whether the abstraction of 'public' is derived from anything concrete. This is an important question to understand whether newspapers do take into account the 'actual' readers in determining newsworthiness or everything remains an imaginary. If they do, it might be associated with being a newspaper that is concerned with actual readers' needs, while if they do not, it might suggest that newspapers only write for other interests. It can be assumed that such newspapers are less popular among the actual readers because publishing news is not based on the actual readers' interests.

Thus, this chapter seeks to answer the question, "*How are readers taken into account in newsworthiness construction?*" in order to examine how *exactly* the actual readers are being taken into account in newsworthiness construction. The operationalisation of this chapter is discussed next.

7.1 Operationalisation

Following some concepts of ANT, this chapter is about whether a virtual object is derived from anything concrete. This chapter attempts to show another added value of ANT, because it provides data on how a general concept, as in this chapter: readership, can be discussed in-depth and more critically, because it allows an investigation to examine whether it is derived from any concrete source or is just a virtual concept that is discussed in abstraction. Only when a concept derives from a concrete source can its existence be associated with real actors involved in the process of newsworthiness construction. Here, the readership is no longer discussed with ignorance of where it comes from.

However, this can only be done when the 'readership' is seen as a 'virtual object' (Law 1996, Mol 1998, Van Loon 2002), rather than merely a 'concept'. This is because, in ANT, a virtual object is seen to have performative agency that changes in every specific (discursive) practice. Thus, a particular virtual object can be scrutinised further to see how the performativity

happens. We can already get some sense in the previous chapters that readership is always taken into account in the newsworthiness construction process of each of the newspapers, but how exactly this is done remains ambiguous. The link between virtual readership (always referred to as readership in the newsroom) and actual readership (readers at home) remains unexplained.

It is through an *account* that the link can be established. An account is the connecting device between what is virtual and what is actual (Latour 2005). Here, account is not merely an abstract concept, but there are 'accounts' that contain reports about a phenomenon. When studying readership and to see the link between virtual and actual readership, reports about what makes readership (such as circulation figure reports) are important accounts for knowing whether readership in the newsroom comes from the actual readers. 'Taken into account' is not merely a rhetorical phrase any more, because how exactly a virtual object is taken into account in a particular process can now be examined.

This can be done by taking into account the role of mediators in a network. Within a good account, there are a lot of *mediators* that can help to translate and transform a process so it can make the distance to reach a destination (the actual readership) shorter. These mediators can be anything that has the ability to 'change' a particular moment in a process. However, in a bad account there are too many intermediaries that are just there, but are not able to transform anything. This will make the process slower, thus the chain to arrive to the final destination is longer.

If this view is applied as the operationalisation of this study and readership is seen as a virtual object, we can get a sense of the measurement in terms of the *distance* between the virtual readership and actual readership. The distance is farther if there are many intermediaries within an account (the connecting device between virtual and actual readership), while the distance is shorter if there are many mediators within an account. In the case of studying newspapers and online newspapers, the account that connects these types of readership includes circulation and readership figures (print newspaper) and unique visitors per month (online newspaper). Thus, in this chapter I will demonstrate the different degrees of objectification of a virtual object (readership) in six newspapers (*difference*).

The next question is pertaining to how this is done. It occurs when these mediators (or intermediaries) are activated and link the actual and virtual readership, or in ANT it is *subjectification* (Latour 2005). It can happen when mediators that exist in the virtual form are first *actualised*. When they are actualised and subjectified, actors are activated and start to 'act' and do something that can lead to transformation. It is only when the actors in an account are activated that we will get an idea about whether the virtual readership is derived from an actual readership outside the newsrooms (concrete source). The empirical data are presented in the next sections and I start with the actualisation of the readership of print newspapers, followed by online version newspapers.

7.2 Print Newspapers

7.2.1 Great Distance from the Actual Reader

This section discusses the empirical findings for six print newspapers in this study to understand whether readership is taken into account in newsworthiness construction at these newspapers derived from the actual readership. The distance between virtual readership and actual readership at the NST is explained here, through interviews with two journalists. According to these journalists:

Journalist NST 3:

> (About letters to the editor at the NST and how it can be news): This depends very much on the alertness of the executive news editor or his chief news editors to read the letters to see if these can be developed into news. As I am from the old school of journalism, I make it a point to scan the letters for story ideas. I cannot say if this is the current practice of those in charge of news gathering today although I must add that I have not seen stories based on letters for an extremely long time now. …decision making currently is top down. This has usually been the case, except for the previous 4 or 5 years when the desk editors were very much involved in decision making. As decision is currently top down, selection of stories and pictures is basically decided by the top editorial boss himself / herself.

Journalist NST 4:

> I have noticed over the years, that contrary to writing for my audience, I have been "tuned" to write what my editors in Kuala Lumpur (KL) want. When I first joined, there was a lot of emphasis on covering environmental stories, but at that time, I didn't know much about the environment, and the [XX] State Government had yet to go all out in its conservation efforts. At that time too, we were required to cover everything under the

sun, so on a typical day, I would go from a political function in the morning, to court in the afternoon, to a crime scene in the evening, to a charity dinner at night. Then when a new group of people took over, we were told to stop covering everything and to focus on human interest stories and special reports. At that time, we were encouraged to discuss our ideas with our editors. Then, when there was a change again a few months ago, it became a case of covering politicians and a lot of focus on the PM. So I am somehow not dictated by my audience, but by what my editors in KL want.

From the quotes above, if they are analysed from the ANT point of view, these indicate that readership mainly exists in a virtual form at the NST rather than being derived from concrete actors which are the actual readers. From Journalist NST3's explanations, based on his experience, recently constructing news based on readers' letters is not the practice anymore. Instead, what becomes news is mainly dictated by the editors through top down instructions. This is supported by experience from Journalist NST4 who always feels that she writes for the editors rather than for the actual readers. However, although following the editors' instructions, news is never in a stable network at the NST because newsworthiness construction policy is highly affected by the changes of people in the newspaper management. Although one of the examples here is given based on the journalists' experiences related to generating news from letters of the editors section, this is deliberately done, because it able to show the tendency of newsworthiness construction to be top-down.

Both of these experiences are useful in understanding readership as a virtual object. From Journalist NST3's view, (virtual) readership is performed through the instructions of the higher ranking editor and actual readers' voices are left behind. When letters from the actual readers are not seen as a source of newsworthiness, this can be read as ignoring the actualisation of virtual readership that can occur, that actual readers are now 'deactivated' from expressing their feelings and problems. Here, mediators are reduced and intermediaries increase when the editors decide newsworthiness *for* the readers. In addition, as for Journalist NST4, (virtual) readership is the effect of a policy change which is the effect of the changes in the management, rather than changes in actual readers' tastes. Again, newsworthiness construction at the NST is distanced away from the expectations of the actual readership.

Here, the chain within the news production network is long because journalists at the NST are preoccupied with internal processes of editorial decision making which are related

directly with the role of the editor. They serve the ruling party and the NST functions as an extension of the voice of the government (Mustafa K Anuar 2005a, Shome 2003, Stauth 2002, Wang 1998, Zaharom 2004). Here, ANT sees the NST as profiling themselves as an intermediary where information is by and large top down. This is reflected in the circulation figures, which are shown in the table below:

	01.07.05 To 30.06.06	01.07.06 To 30.06.07	01.07.07 to 30.06.08	01.07.08 to 30.06.09	01.07.09 to 30.06.10	01.07.10 to 30.06.10	01.07.11 to 31.12.11	Bulk Sales	Average Sales	Grand total
The NST	139, 468	139, 763	136, 530	120, 770	109, 341	100, 172	94, 661	32, 194	62, 467	94, 661
The Star	310, 008	309, 181	304, 904	295 479	286, 409	283, 714	287, 204	19, 213	267, 991	287, 204
TS	174, 179	256, 486	270, 506	287, 935	300, 550	300, 525	300, 531	-	Free distribution	300, 531

Table 7.1 Showing the circulation figures of the NST since 2005 until 2011 and its competitors, The Star and TS (Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation)

An important account that must be considered in analysing the readership trend at the NST is the circulation figures as compared to its competitors. The above table shows the circulation figures of the NST and its main competitor, The Star, and another prominent free English newspaper, TS, from 2006 until 2011. From these figures, we can see that the circulation figure of the NST declined by 32% until it sold less than 100,000 copies by the end of 2011. If the circulation figures are compared for 2011 and for 2006, the difference is a reduction of 44,807 copies. In comparison The Star, although it generally suffered from a decline of 7%, was nowhere near as bad as the NST. Among the three newspapers, TS is the only English newspaper audited by ABC that has shown an increase of distribution since 2005, which was a 73% increase.

The trend of decreasing circulation of Malaysian English newspapers has been the topic of discussions even among media practitioners. Generally in Malaysia, the trend in the circulation of traditional newspapers has mostly been decreasing since 2005 (Yow et al. 2012). Yow et al. (2012), in a report published in *Malaysian Insider,* interviewed journalists and actual readers to ascertain the factors behind such a phenomenon. Generally, it is stated that the

changing tastes among readers, competition with the internet and biased reporting in the mainstream newspapers are the reasons for the shift of readers' choices. Besides that, Mohd Nasir Ali, Chairman of the Malaysian Newspaper Publishers Association, is reported by Aznita Ahmad Pharmy (2010) in *The Edge* as saying that it is not easy to conclude why this happens, but generally there are many factors that contribute to this phenomenon, and the main reason is that Malaysian English newspapers are threatened by the amount of English newspapers from overseas that are now widely available online. Since they are English newspaper readers, they can easily change to other online newspapers. This is different if the issue of language and newspaper availability is associated with the Chinese newspapers in this country. Rita Sim (in Yow et al. 2012), the executive director of Sin Chew media, said that the trend of reducing English circulation figures does not affect Chinese newspapers because readers do not simply change to other Chinese online reading matter, like their English counterparts. Besides that, there are also many blogs that offer alternative reading for readers (Aznita Ahmad Pharmy 2010).

However, the figures also spark an interesting observation. Why do only the NST and The Star that generally suffer from declining circulation, while the NST with the lowest figure? In Mohd Safar's (2005) analysis of the Malaysian newspaper circulation figures from 1993 until 2002, he found that the circulation of The Star increased 5% at that time, and 4% (Sunday Star) with an overall increase of 63% for the whole decade (Mohd Safar 2005: 82). In comparison, the NST in the same decade showed a decrease of 24%.

It is noted that mainly English newspapers' circulation in Malaysia is decreasing (Mohd Safar 2005, Yow et al. 2012). However, TS has not suffered such a decrease in its distribution, although it is an English newspaper. Albeit there is some debate about the distribution issue of TS[1], the factor of being free can be one of the factors to affect newspaper choice by readers. In a study conducted by Synovate Malaysia, one of the leading market research companies, in 2005 in order to determine actual readers' perceptions about the NST and its competitors (The Star, TS and the Malay Mail), and whether the NST should change its size from a broadsheet to a compact newspaper, 5% of the readers surveyed said that they did not read the NST but read TS because it was free. It was only a small portion of readers who thought reading free newspaper was an advantage, and this might not be the main factor that triggered the increase of circulation up to 300,512 by mid 2011 from a modest figure of 174,179 in mid 2006. This will be discussed

in the section on TS later in this thesis, on how TS actualises its virtual readership, but for now, I will highlight the discussion about the NST and its main competitor, The Star.

In the same study by Synovate Malaysia, 12% out of 36% of readers said that they preferred The Star to the NST because The Star had more information and detail. Overall, in this study, The Star was seen as a more ideal newspaper than the NST which was nominated as the second best (after The Star) because The Star "meets almost all the attributes of an ideal newspaper: attractive main cover, colourful, detailed and in-depth contents, coverage of news that is of public interest, organises contests, lots of advertisements, interesting layout, expected Sections/Columns are present, easy to understand and provides updated news" (Compact Size Study Research Findings 2005: 27). According to this study, the readers defined an ideal newspaper as "colour and headings of the newspaper are the two most important features of an ideal newspaper" (the NST Compact Size Study Research Findings 2005: 26). What is ironic here is that content issue seems not to emerge in the quest for the ideal newspaper among the polled readers.

Here, it is important to note that both the NST and The Star are pro-government newspapers (Brown 2005, Kenyon and Marjoribanks 2007), which indicates why the issue of being pro-government is less important when discussing newsworthiness in these newspapers (only 1% of readers in the survey said that they did not read the NST because it was pro-government). This might influence the polled readers' perceptions about the newspaper because they are mainly categorising more or less 'similar type of newspapers'. This is because both newspapers have the tendency to cover the ruling party positively.

For example, the Centre of Independent Journalism[2] studies on the occasion of the 12th Malaysian general election in 2008 reported that it examined six dailies, including the NST, The Star, TS, UM, Malaysia Nanban and Makkal Osai. Among the three English dailies (the NST, The Star and TS), The Star had the most pro BN stories, with 63% as compared to 60% in the NST and 43% in TS. The biased coverage provides only a small space for pro-opposition stories such as 6% in The Star, 6% in the NST but a relatively larger space in TS of 16%. These findings suggest that the space given to the opposition is rather low in both the NST and The Star.

This sparks criticism from those readers who do not favour such an approach. For example, a reader commented in a blog named Uppercaise[3] which writes on the political development of the country including journalism that:

> The Star is a lousy paper as well. In fact, between The Star and the NST, the latter is a better read if we discount the political bullshit. Politics is not everything in a newspaper but the NST is definitely being punished for its political slant (*John John*, Uppercaise.wordpress).

This quote suggests a view from an actual reader who expresses a feeling on both of the newspapers. This view, however, should be seen as an individual view, and it does not represent the whole society. From the ANT point of view, this is only an example which is not representative of society, but it shows that, because of a lack of mediators to strengthen its view, this view is not able to prevail. However, the online avenue has enabled such views to have an immediate platform to be read.

This view is an example of how the NST is seen as unpopular among some groups of the actual readers. As John John's view shows, The Star suffers from the issue of quality. However, the question which remains is what makes The Star a high circulation newspaper?

Compared to the NST, The Star is perceived as more useful to readers because the newspaper can be associated with providing various 'facilities' such as organising contests, publishing loads of advertisements, publishing public interest news, providing expected sections; and the physical issue of the newspaper that includes an interesting cover page, colourful, layout and easy to understand (in terms of how the news is written). These could be the reasons that have kept The Star a more popular newspaper than the NST, albeit both are pro-government newspapers.

This has led some to argue that The Star is read not because of the news, but rather the extensive advertisements provided for those who are seeking jobs, buying houses and looking to buy vehicles. It is even read by those who are not regular English newspaper readers. In an interview, Yow et al. (2012) reported that:

> One Malaysian, who heads the local office of a Malaysian Multi National Company (MNC), said he has stopped subscriptions for *The Star* and *New Straits Times* at his office and buys one personal copy of *The Star* for the business coverage and the advertisements.

"There seems to be more propaganda than anything else," said the frustrated country manager who spoke on condition of anonymity. "A lot of people buy newspapers just to look at supermarket and job advertisements."

Similarly, the classifieds in The Star are perceived as much more attractive by readers because they are thick and perceived to have more content (Compact Size Study Research Findings 2005). In this study it is reported that the classified sections at The Star are an attraction of the newspaper:

> The classifieds in The Star are known for a wide range of jobs although at the low/medium level while the classifieds in the NST are associated with higher level positions. Hence, it is a common habit among job seekers to buy both issues of the Star and the NST on Saturday specifically for their classifieds. Even among job-seekers, there are strong claims that both the Star and the NST are bought during weekends for their classifieds – just to be aware of what is available in the market today. The Malay Mail was perceived to have the best classifieds a long time ago (among older readers) but this position has been attributed to the Star now (Compact Size Study Research Findings 2005: 51).

Yow et al. (2012) also interviewed a reader who is an insurance executive and attached to a motor workshop and he said that he buys The Star for its rich classifieds. This situation suggests that the partisanship of The Star is 'ignored' in order to get access to the advertisements.

Besides this, both The NST and The Star use bulk sales as an important marketing tool, where the newspapers are sold at a lower price or even given away for free to schools and government sectors. As we can see in the table, the bulk sales for the NST are 31,066 while The Star has 18,667. It can be inferred that, because of the lowering circulation figures, the NST is trying to reach the younger generation through wide distribution to schools where the newspaper is used as a learning material. This has also been confirmed by most of the NST journalists interviewed in this study. One of them explained that the problem with the NST now is that, as the oldest newspaper in the country, it is being read by mainly older generation readers. Thus, he added, reaching younger readers is a pertinent step to increase NST popularity among the younger generation, and to ensure its survival in the future.

But this marketing strategy has also been criticised by the actual readers. The same blog, *Uppercaise*, posted a post entitled '*NST now a kids' paper, sells below 90,000*' on 13 Sept 2010. The blogger argued that, among all English newspapers (The NST, The Star, The Edge) the

highest bulk sales were recorded by the NST, with 26% as compared to 9% for The Star and 1% for The Edge. One of the comments received from this post is from another actual reader who named him/herself as *nstman* and commented:

> Without the help of kids, I am afraid the NST has turned into a mosquito paper, the very epithet this once grand old dame used to describe the Star when it sold less than 100,000 in the eighties. I think the ABC was being too kind to the NST. If I am not mistaken, the 80,000 sales figure includes forced sales, meaning papers delivered to government departments which can reach 10,000. Be that as it may, the precipitous downward trajectory of NST's circulation is set to continue. I won't be surprised if circulation figures go down to 50,000 in a few years time.

This suggests that the reputation of the NST as perceived by some of its actual readers is only maintained by keeping to a particular virtual object, which is the circulation figure. In reality, this act becomes an issue among the actual readers, who are concerned about the circulation figures of the NST that actually includes the bulk sales, which means the actual newspapers bought by interested readers is much less than the figure released by the ABC. This concern is true, because as we can see in Table 7.1, the total circulation as of June 2011 is only 94,661 copies, which includes the bulk sales of 32,194.

However, although the figure is added to the bulk sales, the reputation of the NST is still very bad although backed up with such marketing strategy. Even when it is compared with other Malay mainstream newspapers, the record is still low because the circulation has been recorded to reach below 100,000 copies (Yow et al. 2012) and even in 2009, the NST was recorded as having the worst drop in circulation (decreasing 11.5%) while TS increased its distribution to 6.4% (Aznita Ahmad Pharmy 2010). From 2006 until 2010, the NST recorded a decrease of 27% in its circulation as compared to 10% for The Star.

Particularly in explaining the circulation figures of the NST, as compared to its competitors, it is seen by commentators that there might be a crisis within the newspaper itself (Zaharom 2000, Zaharom 2002a, Zaharom 2004). The oldest newspaper in the country should have experienced more than its competitors, thus it should be more experienced in handling problems and knowing it readers. Furthermore, among all the newspapers in this study, the NST, which is published by the NSTP Group, is the most stable news organisation. Reaching the actual readers must be one of its most important aims to overcome circulation and other related problems in newsgathering and distribution. As one of the editors said in an interview, the

company does conduct a market survey through surveys and focus groups every five years, while TS has never has a systematic market survey, as admitted by the circulation department of the newspaper.

Thus, the data suggests that the NST does not know its reader and do not learn from the decreasing circulation. Such marketing strategy and the act of the NST to reduce mediators in its newsworthiness construction, which is by ignoring the possibilities of letters sent to the editor and developed as news stories can be read as profiling themselves as intermediaries, that do not allow actualisation and subjectification of the actual readers in the process of newsworthiness construction. Thus, virtual readership cannot be objectified because mediators are literally ignored and this act leads to distancing from the actual readers.

To explain such distancing, many have associated the fact that the NST reports too much biased political news as the reason for its unpopularity. The report of The Centre for Independent Journalism in the Media Independence Survey 2008 reveals that:

> While most respondents got most of their information from the mainstream media, it did not translate into high approval rating for the performance of the medium of information. The mainstream media obtained rather modest scores from its consumers in terms of being truthful, fair, objective, ethical and in the variety of issues and opinions covered. The mainstream media did not manage to score higher than 34% favourability in aspects that constitute a healthy media environment in the eyes of the public (Media Independence Survey 2008: 6).

Yow et al. also reported the findings from the Merdeka Poll Centre: half of the polled Malay and Chinese readers did not trust mainstream media. Besides that, the Media Independence Survey also revealed that respondents, based on the General Election Report 2008, are aware of the impact of ownership on newsworthiness, and they know that most newspapers in the country are pro-government. They understand that being pro-government or pro-opposition both have impacts on what becomes news and can be associated with media credibility.

In both studies, the readers can be seen to be able to know what they want from the mainstream newspapers; hence the low percentage of trust towards government affiliated newspapers such as the NST. This is reflected in the findings of the same study, that 76% of the

respondents felt that the media should be independent in deciding newsworthiness, especially for government affiliated newspapers.

This is also obvious in the comments from actual readers who commented on Uppercaise's post on NST being a kid's newspaper[4]. The majority of the comments lingered around the issue of the political interests of the newspaper. One of the comments said that the NST "has turned into an UMNO mouthpiece and promoting government policies by cronies" (commented by *Anak Malaysia Lama*). Several other comments touch on the issue of journalistic professionalism that decreases due to politicians' interference in newsworthiness construction (commented by *John John, Nicolee, nstman*). This, to a certain extent, is reflected in the loss of support among the actual readership for the current ruling power, as can be seen in the general election results as shown in Table 7.2.

Edition	Year	Government			Opposition			Total seats
		Seats	% seats	% vote	Seats	% seats	% vote	
1	1959	74	71.15	51.7	30	28.85	48.3	104
2	1964	89	85.58	58.5	15	14.42	41.5	104
3	1969	95	65.97	49.3	49	34.03	50.7	144
4	1974	135	87.66	60.7	19	12.34	39.3	154
5	1978	130	84.42	60.7	19	12.34	39.3	154
6	1982	132	85.71	60.5	22	14.29	39.5	154
7	1986	148	83.62	55.8	29	16.38	41.5	177
8	1990	127	70.55	53.4	53	29.45	46.6	180
9	1995	162	84.38	65.2	30	15.62	34.8	192
10	1999	148	76.68	56.5	45	23.32	43.5	193
11	2004	198	90.41	63.9	21	9.59	36.1	219
12	2008	140	62.61	52.2	82	36.93	47.8	222

Table 7.2 showing Malaysian General Elections results from the first edition in 1959 until the most recent in 2008 (Source: Election Commission, Malaysia)

Lau (2011) associated the decrease of NST circulation to the credibility of Najib's (the current Prime Minister's) administrations which suffer from a credibility deficit. This is because, from his observation, Najib's administration is less friendly to media freedom as compared to the previous Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. He puts the problem with the NST and the government at the same, but the problem with both is that they are "looking for credibility without going the extra yard" (Lau 2011: np).

In this situation, because the NST profiles itself as an extension of the voice of the government, such lowering support for the government can be associated with the lowering support for the NST. Just see how, in the general election of 2008, the opposition won the most seats in history with 82 seats (37%) from only 21 seats in the 2004 general election (10%). In the eyes of the opposition and some groups in society, the ruling party has suffered from the issue of credibility because they are always associated with the abuse of power that leads to the problems of corruption and cronyism, being unable to deal with racial issues, propaganda in the media, etc. This has encouraged these groups to reject what is defined as news at the NST for the tendency to accredit strong political interests in its cycles of credit.

Among these groups, based on a survey conducted among Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia as reported in the Malaysia Chronicle, one of the respondents is reported as saying:

> "The denial syndrome is affecting leaders of UMNO at all levels. They will never admit their wrongdoings but use the media to deny almost every accusation levelled at them – from abuse of power to corruption.
>
> UMNO Baru is seen as a vehicle used to dish out projects and contracts to cronies and members. "In UMNO, all are scrambling to be in power to ride the gravy train. Failures of many projects dished out to cronies and incompetent bidders have resulted in wastage of the nation's resources."

Besides that, a report in Malaysia Today published on 3 June 2012 and based on a study conducted by the Merdeka Research Centre, an opinion research firm in Malaysia, reveals that 56% of Chinese voters are not happy with the government and feel that they are increasingly being alienated from the efforts of the government. The Merdeka Centre also found that 30% of Indians and 23% of Malays felt the same way. Only 37% of Chinese voters supported the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, in May, a drastic drop from February when it was at 56%

and this should signal an important message to the ruling party about its own position among citizens.

Furthermore, the *Malaysia Chronicle* also reported, from the same study, that the respondents from the survey related the loss of support for the government to the issue of media credibility. The reports said "The media propaganda is backfiring". The majority of Malays were found to have no faith in the government-controlled media and "they do not believe in what is being propagated by UMNO over the media". "No wrongdoings of UMNO leaders are mentioned in UMNO-controlled media as they are politically gagged. From the Altantuya's issue[5], the first lady's shopping spree, to the latest Scorpene scandal[6] being heard in the court in France, nothing is mentioned in these media." This is the reason that can be associated with the popularity of the new media in Malaysia, when the respondent continues to say: "We are not dumb and are now more inclined to accept the alternative media – Internet news and the alternative print media."

These are some reasons for why BN is losing popularity among the voters and it can be associated with the loss of trust of the NST readers in the newspaper. The falling circulation figures are the account that connects the relationship between the condition of the ruling party and the NST as one of the mainstream newspapers affiliated with the government. Although the circulation figure itself is a set of virtual indicators of a newspaper (not actual), at least it is generated from some concrete sources. Thus, the issue of declining circulation rates is interesting in so far as they signify a loss of credibility, as readership does play a key role in the cycles of credit of almost all newspapers, both paid and free newspapers.

In the case of the NST, it is when newsworthiness construction is dictated by the top editors that the NST is losing the mediators that can performatively translate the newspaper according to what the actual readers want. When the newspaper profiles itself as an intermediary, the lesser the mediator is in the new network and the more vague it is to connect the virtual readership (readership based on what journalists thought in the newsroom) and the actual readership (readers at home).

The danger of the NST being a newspaper affiliated with the ruling party is that, when the party is losing support, then this can connect with the performance of the newspaper as well.

Here, the function of a newspaper in a democracy is in question because readers can question whether the newspaper is able to provide them with information to become a wise voter to participate in democratic elections (Mustafa 2002, Zaharom 2004). In the case of BH, published by the same publication company as the NST, it will be discussed in the next section how particularly the actual readers are taken into account in the process of selecting letters to the editors, and how this situation shares some similarities with the NST, and offers some differences.

7.2.2 Double Understanding of Readership

For the purpose of studying readership at BH, I observed the process of the letters to the editor selection process at BH at the Feature Desk on 11 March 2009. Although this observation does not deal directly with 'news', it is essential in discussing newsworthiness construction because we are talking about how the readership is taken into account. Here, letters to the editor offer an explicit example about readership as it deals directly with exact readers, and this discussion is also followed by quotes from interviews related to newsworthiness in constructing news at BH.

At BH, I observed the work of the Assistant Editor of the Feature Desk, Journalist BH3, who was alternately in charge of deciding the letters for publication with the Editor of the Feature Desk, Journalist BH4. On that day, there were 18 emails received from the readers. Journalist BH4 said the average number of emails he received was about 15-30.

Most emails arrive when certain issues grab the attention of the readers, the least at national holidays such as Eid celebration. About 6-8 letters get published every day. This is the story of the selection process:

> For the selection, Journalist BH3 explained several main filters that he used to choose the letters for publication. "I choose this based on whether the issue is current and "who" writes it also has an influence on the possibility of the letter getting published. Academics, for instance, usually have the "point" of discussing an issue and we do not have to edit the letter too much. If we have many features to edit on the same day and the letter needs a lot of editing, we reject the letter all together. Besides that, we also do not publish letters that contain slander or defamation information".
>
> He showed several letters that he had chosen for the next day's publication and clarified, "Like this one (he was referring to a letter about support for using English in teaching

Mathematics and Science at schools), I choose this because this issue is recent, we are talking about the medium of instruction of these subjects now…the writer is also a lecturer and a PhD holder from a university in London and he has experience in making his point. Also there is no slander and seditious element in this letter". The letter published headlined "PPSMI mampu tingkat kemahiran, pemahaman Sains, Matematik" (Teaching Mathematics and Science in English increases skills, understanding in Science, Mathematics) on 12 March 2009.

Another letter that was given with prominence was entitled "Pekerjaan, Harga Barang Keutamaan Rakyat" (Employment, Goods Prices are Priorities) which was a response to the recent national budget announcement by the government. The letter argued that the government should ensure that the budget allocation for training and employment was opening opportunities to locals and not to foreign workers. Besides, the writer also raised the issue of the increasing price of food for the past six months in Malaysia. With the budget allocated at nearly RM700 million, he hoped the increasing prices could be controlled for the year to come. According to Journalist BH3, he also considered this is worth publishing because, besides being a response to the current budget announced by the government, the concerns were related to the majority of people in Malaysia. He said besides that, the name of the writer was also familiar to him. "He is quite active writing to us, so mainly I know the way he writes and what to expect…this also assists me in choosing the letters…The more active the person who writes to us, the easier for me to know what to expect from them.

As we can see, both lead stories of the day were pertaining to the public's comments about recent government policies. First, it presents the idea of opposing the subjects of Mathematics and Science to be taught again in Bahasa Melayu. Another letter chosen, the second lead story, is pertaining to the recently announced national budget. What these choices tell us is that there is a strong tendency for letters to be selected if they discuss government policies, as long as they maintain the *plug-ins* of newsworthiness construction.

The plug-ins here are the media laws. (Further discussion about plug-ins relating to newsworthiness construction is provided in Chapter 8, but in the distinct context of newsworthiness construction at Hh). In ANT, plug-ins are devices that link (and to some extent control) an object with social actions from a distance (Latour 2005). It is important to see the media laws as plug-ins in this case because they dictate what becomes news at BH—media laws define what type of letters are newsworthy at BH. In the example at BH currently discussed, both letters are chosen because they do not breach any laws such as the Defamation or Sedition Act that act as the plug-ins of its selection. This is one of the main similarities of BH and the NST. If journalists at the NST concern themselves much with the top down structure of the newspaper

rather than the actual reader, BH journalists are concerned with similar aspects (i.e. the media laws) that derive from the political interests of the newspaper.

This can be associated with the fact that this segment is considered as 'needed' by the readers, based on the BH Compact Survey conducted in 2008 before changing the size of BH from a broadsheet to a compact sized newspaper. In this survey, the Letter & Email segment is considered as 85% 'needed and read' by readers, which is categorised as 'high' demand by readers. Besides that, such a selection process involves stories written totally by an outsider (rather than journalists at BH), thus issues related to legal aspects become pertinent.

Thus, it justifies why the selection process mainly revolves around the issue related to government policies and feedback from the public on such policies. Both the lead letters selected in this example contain discussions on national policies that deal with issues on the level of providing individual opinion and suggestions about the policy, rather than criticising the policy (for example, the lead letter is headlined: Teaching Mathematics and Science in English increases skills, understanding in Science, Mathematics).

This can then be associated with the issue of the ownership of BH, which is published by the same publication company as the NST (Mustafa 2005a, Mustafa 2002). As reported in studies conducted by the Merdeka Research Centre and The Centre of Independent Journalism, there is a connection between the mainstream newspapers' credibility and the decision to buy newspapers. Based on the findings of the survey, when readers do not trust the newspapers and the publisher is always affiliated with the ruling party, readers tend to choose alternative options such as alternative readings in print and online forms.

Thus, we can see the loss of support from BH readers occurred between 1993 and 2002. When Mohd Safar (2005) compared the circulation of BH in this decade, he found that the decrease was large, with the circulation recorded at 314,240 in 1993 decreasing to 235,775 in 2002. This is a 25% decrease. In 2001 to 2002 alone, the circulation fell by 5% (Mohd Safar 2005: 81). Further observations in more recent years suggest that, overall, the trend in BH circulation dropped from 204,000 in 2005 to 155,000 in 2009. This is another 24% decrease. Overall, by mid 2009, all Malay newspapers suffered from a decrease of circulation with the exception of tabloid newspapers, *Harian Metro* and *Kosmo* (Aznita Ahmad Phamy 2010). There

will be some discussion of a tabloid newspaper in the next section, but the main issue for now is, why is an established newspaper such as BH, that once was the number one newspaper, now suffering a tremendous decline?

It is interesting to note that the main rival of BH, UM, is also facing a downturn in circulation. In 1993 to 2002, the circulation reached a plateau (Mohd Safar 2005: 90). The more recent circulation shows a decrease since 2006, with 213,445 copies, and reduced to 172,609 in 2011 with average nett sales of 165,897 copies. The bulk sales, however, are much less than BH, which is at 6, 962 copies. The table below shows the circulation figures of BH and UM from 2006 to 2011.

	01.07.05 To 30.06.06	01.07.06 To 30.06.07	01.07.07 to 30.06.08	01.07.08 to 30.06.09	01.07.09 to 30.06.10	01.07.10 to 30.06.10	01.07.11 to 31.12.11	Bulk sales	Average Nett Sales	Grand total
BH	203, 704	192, 917	192, 982	183, 187	160, 597	150, 750	126, 777	23, 075	103, 702	126, 777
UM	213, 445	197, 033	197, 952	181, 346	170, 558	172, 609	172, 859	6, 962	165, 897	172, 859

Table 7.3 showing the circulation figures of BH and Utusan Malaysia from 2006 to 2011 (Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation)

Some of the reasons for such a decrease are rationalised by Yow et al. (2012) as the changing of taste among readers, competition with the internet and the bias of mainstream newspapers in their reporting. Similar to the NST, as already stated, half of the Malay and Chinese readers polled by The Centre of Independent Journalism do not trust mainstream newspapers. In their interviews with the general public, Yow et al. (2012) found that readers reasoned why they did not buy BH or UM anymore was because "There is too much political news and I feel the coverage isn't very neutral" (Yow et al. 2012: np). In the same survey, some other respondents reasoned that they had shifted from UM to online because they did not trust newspapers that were controlled by the government. Azman Ujang, Bernama National[7] news agency editorial adviser in *Malaysian newspapers face challenge from online media*, associates the credibility crisis of the mainstream newspapers as the reason for the decline. To him, it is the issue of trust that has led readers to stop reading those papers, thus the issue of the mainstream media credibility (Wang 1998, Mustafa 2005b).

Realising this, an editor at BH explained in an interview that BH has attempted to start reducing its political news and taken into account human interest news even to be the second

lead of the front page in order to become closer to the actual readers. This is, according to him, such a drastic move because BH has longed been known as a daily Malay newspaper with heavy political stories. However, this is a response to what the actual readers want, he said.

The BH Compact Survey (2008) reflects this. In the survey, BH is one of the newspapers that faced 86% of readers stopping buying the newspaper and one of the reasons for this was the lack of credibility of news published. In the same survey, it was also found that the *Nasional* segment (containing mostly national political news) of BH was not so popular among the readers because of the biased news, and the way the news was written did not meet readers' expectations (BH Compact Survey 2008: 41). This suggests that being a pro-government newspaper also does get a negative response from some groups of readers (BH Compact Survey 2008: 83).

This can be further associated with the decision to include the commercial value of the stories as compared to maintaining political stories. One of the feature editors at BH admits that the selection of letters to the editor is also done on the basis of whether they will sell the newspaper or not:

> I always consider whether the letter is interesting and will attract readers to read and buy the newspaper. This is very important now, as our circulation is not so strong as before. We were once the number one [Malay serious] newspaper but not anymore… But the letters should be of benefit to the majority. If they are interesting but they are not giving benefit to the people, we don't publish because we know people won't buy [the newspaper].

This quote helps to explain more about the readership in newsworthiness construction at BH. If lead letters published usually relate to government policies, this can be associated with the editors' view that letters published must be able 'to benefit the majority'. From the ANT point of view, this way of understanding newsworthiness is a form of virtual readership, where the construction of newsworthiness relies on a strong virtual object – 'the majority of readers'. This means that newspapers construct an idea of readers as potentially "out there" and they act on the basis of assumptions about how these readers can be involved in constructing newsworthiness (what is it that they want?). However, who exactly these groups of readers are remains unclear because it retains its virtual shape and has not been actualised. Through such an assumption, a virtual object (i.e. readership) is not subjectified.

The decision to include human interest stories in the selection of letters (and newsworthiness construction as stated by Journalist BH5 in the following quote) also suggests that BH is still deciding what is in the best interest of its readers. In Media Prima Berhad[8] Financial & Business Review 2011, the target readers of BH are stated as "from all walks of life, working class to students, housewives, business people and decision makers" (Media Prima Berhad Financial & Business Review 2011: 22). Due to the heterogenous target reader and the influence of the political interests of the owner, BH might face some difficulty simply including human interest stories and interesting letters.

This suggests that BH is still deciding whether political interests or commercial interests are useful to actualise its readership. This doubles BH's understanding of readership as both actual and virtual. Actual readers are included in the news network by making human interest stories more prominent and publishing less political stories, and the virtual readership remains by maintaining the interest of the newspaper with the affiliation to the ruling party.

This double understanding has recently explained why more human interest stories can become the front page story of BH. In Journalist BH5's words:

> We can see the trend. Readers now are bored with national newspaper like BH [because we are] more likely to publish stories on the ruling party. Readers don't want this anymore. We do consider that [in newsworthiness construction]. That is why we are concerned with our news. We try to include human interest stories now, so readers will not only read political stories. Readers are bored with political stories nowadays. So, on the front page, we do publish crime, human interest stories and stories that relate to many people. That is how we do it. We don't publish political news only from back to back. For the front page, we usually use the approach of publishing a serious story as the lead story, and the second lead is a less serious story. Sometimes, we ask people's opinion and debate about a political issue. So that is less political although it is still politics. That injects the human interest element into the story.

As compared to UM, UM maintains heavily political stories and has never published human interest news on the front page. One editor at BH said that this approach has helped BH not to suffer from a worsening decline in its readership. However, another editor viewed this approach differently. Journalist BH6 said that it is such an approach that has made BH less popular than its main competitor UM because:

> We [BH] mainly carry serious news. We also carry human interest [news] but it is not that important. Examples of our news include about government policies, economic

stories, political stories and religion stories. But nowadays, I think the way we write is not so serious anymore, it is more on 'loose' news. The writing style is more flexible now. For example, in the past we could not use quotations as the introduction of the news because we didn't want to give the impression of being 'not serious' to the readers. But now, we can. But I don't know why they [the management] allow this. This has affected BH as number one serious newspaper… we are no longer number one.

From this quote, it can be read that the translation process, in which BH is facing and experiencing double types of readership, has caused different responses from its editors. Not all editors see this effort as a step towards actualising the virtual readership. Such efforts are seen by Journalist BH6 as lowering the popularity of the newspaper among readers because they change its identity (as a serious newspaper) to a less serious newspaper. In this case, this is also an example of the fluidity of identity, as discussed in relation to SH (see Chapter 6).

This effort of doubling the understanding of the readership makes the distance between the virtual readership at BH and the actual readership closer as this supports the marketing strategy of the newspaper, which is - similar to the NST - profiling itself as an educational tool to school children. Bulk sales of BH are 23,075, while the NST is 32,194 as of 31 June 2010 (ABC Circulation). Here, as we have seen, there is a great distance between the virtual readership at the NST, because the newspaper publishes too much partisan news, thus implying a fixed understanding of readership. As compared to BH with its double understanding of readership, school students might get news that suits their needs, other than political news.

Thus, in the case of BH and the NST, they can be taken as an example of a newspaper that profiles itself as an intermediary in determining news, whereas BH is a little more proactive in the process. BH objectifies what becomes news by including the concerns of actual readers, thus the shorter distance from its actual readers, while the NST remains persistent in objectifying its readership based on the virtual readership. At the NST, the actual readership is not subjectified because they cannot actively participate in the process of newsworthiness construction.

In terms of amount, more mediators are collected in the news network at BH mainly because of its orientation to consider actual readers' views about partisan political news. This can be seen as an example of where translation of what becomes news is still happening in BH newsworthiness construction and it is fluid, while at the NST, translation has become a black box

and most of newsworthiness construction practice is not revised by the editors. If these newspapers are related to the ruling party, Hh is a newspaper with an opposing story altogether, thus a distinct form of readership actualisation.

7.2.3 Actualising the Readership through Sales and Votes

Hh is the only newspaper in this study that can be associated directly with the opposition (Ling 2003). It is, in fact, published by the opposition party to serve as the party organ. There are some similarities in the case of the NST and BH, with Hh in terms of political interests—that all of them are affiliated with a certain political party. However, the main difference is that Hh is owned by a political party which is not in power, thus how Hh profiles itself and how it manages plug-ins is very different than BH and the NST. This will further discussed in Chapter 8. However, although it is apparently a political newspaper, almost all the journalists at Hh interviewed relate its newsworthiness construction to the readership. Journalist Hh3, in his explanation about newsworthiness construction at Hh, also includes readership to be taken into account:

In Journalist Hh3 words:

> I construct the lead page based on issues that can give benefit to our party (PAS), whether that story can increase the image of PAS or not. However, the story is not necessarily a political story, but can be stories that contain welfare elements that could give political mileage to PAS…For the front page, firstly, it has to again give benefit to PAS in terms of image construction. At the same time it should able to discredit other parties…I think that is what the readers want (from the Hh). We can see that independent readers will try to find alternative views rather than believe one hundred percent in the mainstream newspapers. Many of our reports are not reported by the mainstream newspaper so that is why people read us. That is also our strength.

This quote suggests the associations that exist between the newspaper, Hh, and the political party. Here, it is obvious that the newspaper is used by the party to improve the image of the party through all sorts of news, including political and non-political news. From the ANT point of view, this is an example of including various types of non-human actants (everything related to newsworthiness construction at Hh) to make the network durable (delivering the news to the readers, and to distribute the news to improve the image of the party). These inclusions are

important because it can translate other networks (the political parties of enemies) into a weaker position.

This has become the reason for publishing alternative news:

> People want alternative news nowadays, and they read us [Hh] because their hands have been tied by the controlled media for so long. We haven't got much alternative news so far. We can tell what the readers' want from our surroundings. I know what the readers want, [and] it shows in our circulation figures. [So] we are giving them what they want.

However, the quote suggests that what the actual readers really want remains speculative. Journalists at Hh only assume this because of the issue of newspaper ownership in the country, the lack of alternative news in the mainstream newspapers, rather than from a market survey. Based on the editor in chief, because Hh is a small newspaper organisation, they cannot afford to conduct a nationwide market survey to know what readers want. Because of this, Hh has little mediators that can help stabilise the virtual object (i.e. the readership). Only when circulation figures translate into money and when PAS increases its market share of voters will they know if its cycles of credit are turning in the right direction.

Besides that, religion is an important motivation for Hh, which is a type of mediator that makes it rather different from the other outlets. Hence, this too relates to the way in which its cycles of credit relate to the involvement of the readership: they are not simply entertaining, they are propagating and evangelising.

Thus, these are the platforms for Hh to publish alternative news, with alternative views, and also to gain support for the party which is also the opposition in its political interests as compared to the government in power. Here, news is used by Hh as a means of generating political credibility in the cycles of credit. It is used to discredit the other party (ruling party) by publishing stories that are not available in the mainstream newspapers.

This then becomes a two pronged strategy for Hh, where such an approach also becomes the marketing strategy of the newspaper. By publishing stories that are not available in the mainstream newspapers, it is providing readers with news with limited reach, especially political stories pertaining to the ruling party. Such strategy proved a success when, in 1998, after the sacking of the ex-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim for sexual and corruption charges, Hh

circulation reached 350,000. Hh became the source of information for readers who wanted to know about this story from the other side of the coin. From here, Hh learned that they could actualise their readership based on sales made by the newspaper, and what story would become the choice of the readers. Votes for the opposition party also became a pertinent element in actualising the readership at Hh because the increasing support in terms of votes for the opposition leader could be associated with the increasing support for Hh. Thus, the objectification of the virtual readership at Hh depends on the number of sales of Hh and votes to PAS.

This gives the issue 'what the readers will buy' great importance because, besides focusing its news construction to maintain the political aims of the party, Hh needs to fulfil the needs of the readers with alternative news. One of the Hh editors categorised the readers of Hh as those who are well-aware of the political scenario in the country. It is because of this that they need to have other news than only the mainstream news. This lacuna means that, in bridging the gap between the needs of the readers, Hh can take advantage by constructing news items that simultaneously increase the party's image. By publishing alternative news, and being unable to objectify its (virtual) readership, Hh is still able to achieve a high circulation. Hh claims that their circulation is on average 120,000 copies. This is, of course, a success if compared to other mainstream newspapers as discussed, such as the NST and to some extent BH.

However, despite its circulation figures, Hh suffers from the issue of quality among its reporters. If this is compared to the mainstream newspapers in terms of the quality of the final product and the quality of trained journalists, obviously it is expected that news at the mainstream newspapers is considered better and higher quality. An editor at Hh also stated his concern pertaining to the quality of journalists they are able to hire. At the moment, he said, most young journalists who work with Hh are not so competent, because most of the good graduates from universities will choose to work with the more stable mainstream newspapers. Hh is still lagging behind in terms of the layout and quality of the news written.

This happens, according to the editor, because of the economic pressure of Hh and being an opposition party newspaper. In terms of economic pressure, graduates feel it is less secure to work at Hh because of its being an opposition party newspaper where the ruling party can impose any laws at any time, so that the operation is always at the mercy of the state. Various

media laws could shut down Hh at any time without clear justifications, thus this is not an attraction to fresh graduates who aim for smooth sailing in their career path. At this point, this can be seen as part of a way of discrediting Hh in the eyes of potential young journalists, which is by indirectly instilling the fear that working with Hh is a bad decision as it is a small organisation, economically insecure and unstable.

Here, if the 'quality' of Hh is seen as a virtual object, it is an example of how 'quality' can be interpreted differently according to the journalists and the actual readers. The Hh journalists view the quality of the newspaper based on the competence of the reporters and the physical attractiveness of the paper. However, to the readers, quality is defined through the act of providing alternative news they cannot get from the mainstream newspapers. This is why the actual readers do not limit their decision to buying newspapers from the physical attraction of the newspaper alone. Rather, they hope to fill the gap of alternative news they so rarely get.

The support from the Hh reader is also reflected in the increasing support for the opposition in the national general elections, as we can see in Table 7.2. For example, the most recent national general election suggests increasing support for the opposition. This suggests that, although the virtual readership at Hh is not really derived from the actual readers, there is a strong connection to the newspaper from the actual readers which can be associated with the circulation figures and the voters' support for the party in the general election. The increasing support for PAS can be associated directly with the circulation figures of Hh.

On the other hand, XX has a different story, that it excludes political news to avoid jeopardising its commercial orientation of news production. However, the similarity of XX with Hh is that it shares 'sales' as the type of actualisation.

7.2.4 Actualising the Readership through Sales

Both the Hh and XX types of actualisation are the sales or the circulation figures. However, there is a difference in terms of virtuality. As compared to Hh, the type of actualisation at XX is generated by an external agent, such as statistics and audited circulation figures, which is the circulation figures and therefore more 'objective'. If we see the case of Hh, it needs the number of votes to help explain the support it gains for the newspaper.

In this study, XX is the only newspaper that admits straight away that they exclude political stories in their newsworthiness construction, which is generally how tabloid newspapers treat what becomes news (Sparks 2000). As a commercial interest driven newspaper, what the actual readers really want becomes an important factor for XX in determining news. This also resonates with what Hughes (1940) describes as human interest news, that such stories generally naturally attract an audience. Two journalists at XX explained about how they take readers into account in their newsworthiness construction:

Journalist XX4 – Entertainment News

> Every year AC Neilson issues data on the number of sales and readers of the XX. The editor usually explains who are the XX actual readers. The data demonstrate that readers of the XX are mainly ranged around 12-45 in age. My writing is based on this…That is why you can see we publish many crime and human interest stories and young artists/celebrities stories. This is because they are close to our main group of readers.

Journalist XX5 – Sports News

> Our technique in the XX is to get more readers by publishing more pictures and less text. In the back page, we put action pictures. There is no news at the back, we just sum up. If you realise our way is different from other newspapers' back pages. So to be different…During the Final League Cup, everybody wants to know about it, so that is important to us. Besides that I will see whether there are top teams in the match. And if the team has many supporters in Malaysia, we will make it as a lead story. The second lead is usually local sport [news]…I think our approach to sports news also helps the XX to maintain its position as the number one newspaper.

These quotes suggest a different way of understanding readership at XX. First, it relates directly to the reliance on external agents such as AC Neilson statistics on sales and the focus on human interest news. However, at the same time, Journalist XX5 also explained that readership is not always objectified at XX because they can 'assume' what the readers like based on the general assumption that human interest is liked by a lot of readers. This assumption is, however, backed up with the act of collecting many non-human actors like 'pictures' and less text to strengthen the news network at XX (see Chapter 5 for some more examples related to the inclusion of non-human actors to make the news network at XX durable). However, as stated by one of the reporters, not all editors provide the information about statistics of circulation etc. to be referred to by the reporters to guide their newswriting. Thus, in the case of XX, by including various non-human actors that are not published by the serious newspapers, they are able to learn

what the actual readers want, and when this is actualised in the number of sales, they can be based on how previous newswritings are performed.

The success of the previous stories then becomes the indicator of what should play next as news at XX. A study conducted to identify the position of XX with other Malay compact newspapers conducted from 2005 until 2007 revealed that XX is the most popular newspaper among the three newspapers in the study, *Kosmo* and SH. The majority of the polled readers admitted that, as compared to *Kosmo* and SH, they buy XX with no intention of looking at other newspapers. The most important reason for reading XX, among 63% of readers, was the interesting issues published. This can be associated with the development of a 'project story' (see Chapter 5) covered in the form of investigative reporting by XX reporters.

So what are the marketing strategies of XX which explain its success? According to one of the editors, the company conducted frequent market surveys every 3-5 years. Besides that, there is also the Circulation Daily Report that top editors can keep track of. These are more concrete examples of external agents that inform newsworthiness construction at XX. Thus, it makes the distance between Hh and its actual readers closer because the sales become the mediator in the construction of news at XX. When the circulation increases, they are clearer on what is newsworthy and that the actual readers want the news and will buy the newspaper.

This is an example of tabloidisation success in Malaysia. As compared to other newspapers in the country, XX is one of the most successful, with one of the highest circulations nationwide. Another reason why such news has become popular in Malaysia can be associated with the previous discussions in the NST and BH sections presented earlier, that readers are often bored with political news that is biased in favour of the ruling party and that the landscape of the media industry of the country has been controlled too tightly, and for some this curbs the citizen's freedom of expression (Mustafa 2005a, Wang 1998, Zaharom 2004). Mohd Nasir Ali (quoted in Aznita Ahmad Pharmy 2010), the Chairman of the Malaysian Newspaper Publishers Association, also realises that among the attractions of tabloid newspapers can be the publication of human interest stories, sports, entertainment and lifestyle, but less political and economic news.

This, however, brings us to a deeper question related to the crisis of democracy. Although XX is one of the most successful newspapers in the country, it is not without criticism. According to one of the editors interviewed, "many academics and parents are angry with us because we publish various stories including the social problems of the young readers and this is seen as sensationalism. Our reputation is not so good in their eyes, but we are popular because we publish what the readers really want". This is an example of how avoiding political stories and highlighting sensational stories is used as a strategy to increase readership in order to follow what the readers want, but it raises a lot of question on the role of the newspaper in democracy.

The success of XX and the slump in the circulation of the mainstream serious newspapers such as the NST and BH cry out for a deeper explanation about the crisis of democracy in Malaysia. Generally, the data suggest that a newspaper will become more successful in Malaysia if it contains less political stories. The issue of democracy becomes pertinent when this is the strategy deployed by a newspaper like XX in order to gain more attention from the readers and to increase circulation. In fact, based on an interview with one of the XX editors, the profits made by XX are used to sustain the survival of the NST and BH.

The increasing circulation of XX becomes clearer when the Circulation Daily Report of XX is monitored for the week from 2 February 2009 until 8 February 2009. It reveals that there is no single day in that week that the circulation fell. In the report, the current (per day) sales are compared with the average circulation as of July 2004 and the average sale as of February 2008. In all the seven monitored days, the increase of copies sold can reach more than 13% (Circulation Daily Report of XX on 2 February 2009). Overall, the general circulation of XX increased by about 100,000 copies from 2005 until 2009. In June 2010, XX circulation exceeded *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, a Chinese newspaper which is the best selling newspaper in Malaysia (Syarifah Dayana 2010). At many points including 2010, XX was one of the few Malay newspapers that could sustain an increase of circulation when others were slumping (Aznita Ahmad Pharmy 2010).

Therefore, if the success of XX circulation figures is the indicator of the success of the newspaper's news construction strategy, XX must be the newspaper that knows the actual readers more than other newspapers in this study. But they are not. As we have seen, virtual readership at XX does not actualise into actual readership, but remains virtual because it relies on

external agents. However, these figures also exist in virtual forms. This then serves as the virtual 'indicator' of what should become news for the next edition that is accepted by the readers of XX. Overall, it is commercial interests that have become very important in the cycles of credit at XX and the readership is actualised through the virtual indicator of the high success of circulation rates. The commercial interests of XX, however, are different from those of TS, the free newspaper.

7.2.5 Actualising Readership through Investigative Reporting

Overall, the economics of a free newspaper are different from paid newspapers (Franklin, 2006). This can be seen at TS which is the free newspaper in this study. This implies that readership is also objectified differently than its paid counterpart. Generally, the aim of a free newspaper is to gain attention from advertisers, so distribution of the newspaper can connect with the interests of the advertisers.

Specifically in the case of TS, it deploys an approach which is distinct from free newspapers in the West. As explained by one of the editors at TS, the free Western newspapers mainly highlight sensational celebrity stories, but TS has taken the approach of highlighting politicians' wrongdoings in one of its investigative reporting segments written by a TS writer known as Citizen Nades. Such writing is seen as in line with the aim of investigative reporting which is to become the watchdog of the ruling power (Houston 2010), to investigate wrongdoings for future moral implications (Ettema and Glesser 1989/2008) and to bring social change to the community (Bromley 2005).

Thus, it is not strange to see TS reported by the Malaysian Prime 2008 as being read by 70% of its readers because it is "credible, provides in-depth analysis and reflects the issues and concerns of discerning Malaysians". This trust can be also be seen as the result of the ability of TS to actualise its virtual readership in the construction of investigative news at the newspaper. According to Journalist TS3:

> …readers send letters to me, they send envelopes accompanying documents…Most of the time the stories come from the readers themselves. All kinds of people call and give us all kinds of information. For example, Ampang Jaya[10] sent through mail about this politician who took over state land and built shops, houses and everything else…90% of the investigative reporting stories are generated from our own readers, for things that they are

dissatisfied about but which are not investigated and reported in the mainstream newspapers.

From the quote, virtual readership is actualised through issues raised by the actual readers through phone calls and emails. This suggests that the subjectification of the readership is in the form of mediated communication, leaked information. That is why, as Journalist TS3 explained, in developing such reporting secrecy is very important. In his words:

Secrecy is very important. Readers give us information, we work on it. That's it. So Terrence and me are the first to know about it. Nobody, not even the other reporters know what we are working on. Nobody knows. It is a secret on this floor (newsroom). It is not that we don't trust anyone, but if we talk about it and somebody incidently talk about it with someone else, that is a trouble. So we prefer the two of us to know everything. When the story is about 80-90% ready, we brief Journalist TS1 what we have got. And we call the lawyers about our stories.

This is an example of how an investigative reporter at TS tries to maintain the virtual state of the reporting as long as he possibly can, in order to ensure that the information is not leaked to anyone outside the newsroom. It is managed by keeping the story to only limited mediators in the news network, so mediators can remain mediators of the story without risking themselves becoming intermediaries (if the story is leaked and it is not able to be published). Mediators can easily become intermediaries when they cannot function properly (Latour 2005), and in the case of the investigative story at TS, to achieve this, they maintain the network through its virtuality.

This echoes Woolgar's (2002) rules of virtuality, that one of rules says that 'the more virtual the more real'. In this context, the more virtual and the longer the story is kept as a secret and continues to be developed through consultations with the lawyer, the more real it is, in terms of the certainty of getting completed and published. However, Journalist TS3 also admitted that keeping the story up to 80 or 90% ready, only then can it be disclosed, is not a technique that can be used all the time. He said,

Sometimes at 40-50% we have to break [the story to others in the newsroom]. Cannot go any further. So we don't want to promise them coming [to the editors] but then we don't deliver.

Telling the story to other journalists earlier than it should be is an indicator that there is a possibility that the story will not be further developed and published. This is another form of

actualisation where, as in the earlier quote, actualisation only happens when completing the story is certain. However, when the story is perceived as not being capable of further development, then it is actualised to others as a signal that it will not be continued. This is when the state of actualisation becomes static, when the story will not be furthered and different stories can start to be developed.

So what is the impact of the first kind of actualisation? When the story is developed, completed and published, it has undergone several stages of actualisation. First, prior to the development of the story itself, it has already involved the subjectification of the readership when all documents pertaining to wrongdoings are generated from the actual readers. Second, the state of virtuality is retained until a story is almost certain, then it is actualised again to the higher ranking editor as a briefing for the top management to be aware of the kind of investigative stories the team have. Then, when the story is published, it again enters a virtual state while it waits for the readers to read it and to learn about the investigated issue.

When these different stages of actualisation happen in the process of newsworthiness construction at TS, it means that TS is trying to secure the publication of investigative news at the newspaper, because that is one of the unique selling points of the newspaper. If this is not done, it might affect the strength of TS in the eyes of the advertisers.

From this sophisticated attempt, it is quite easy to assume that due to several stages of actualisation having already happened in the newsworthiness construction of the story which is different from other newspapers in this study, the story will easily enroll in the lives of readers, because it offers something different from what the readers can get from the mainstream newspapers. The strength of the investigative reporting is that it can lead to some social changes (Protess et al. 1987). However, this is not the case at TS. As Journalist TS3 explained, nothing happened after almost all his writings were published. This can be seen in one sense, that the power of investigative reporting in Malaysia remains virtual because it has not yet been able to enrol in the life of the public and advocate social change. However, at the same time, this can be seen as an advantage for the survival of TS, because it might be because of the virtual state of such reporting that TS can still run critical investigative news. The more investigative pieces are

published in the future, the more 'real' the effect of the story will be, and the more impact it will have on the public in terms of initiating social changes.

This assumption is supported by the circulation of TS, which has increased from 174,179 copies in 2005 to more than 300,000 in 2011. Although there are criticisms about the accuracy of the figures, because some people have observed that there are those who pick up TS more than once and use it for other purposes than to appreciate its reporting, one of the editors at TS said that the printing amount is increased from time to time based on a close monitoring of the newspapers at selected distribution outlets, and this has become the indicator of the increased numbers.

Newspaper	01.07.05 To 30.06.06	01.07.06 To 30.06.07	01.07.07 to 30.06.08	01.07.08 to 30.06.09	01.07.09 to 30.06.10	01.07.10 to 30.06.10	01.07.11 to 31.12.11	Bulk sales	Average Nett Sales	Grand total
TS	174, 179	256, 486	270, 506	287, 935	300, 550	300, 525	300, 531	-	Free distribution	300, 531

Table 7.4 showing the circulation figures of TS from 2006 until 2011 (Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation)

Besides investigative reporting, TS is also known for its unbiased political reporting. This was reported by the Centre of Independent Journalism studies in the 12th Malaysian general election in 2008. They examined six dailies, including *the NST, The Star, TS, UM, Malaysia Nanban* and *Makkal Osai.* TS is reported to have covered the most unbiased political stories by giving the least space to the government (43%) as compared to the NST (60%) and The Star (63%). This could be another strength of TS, but how far the actual readers are actualised here is unknown, because (as explained by one of the editors) the political reporting at TS is similar to other newspapers; what differentiates the reporting is the space given to the ruling party and the opposition. This news is mainly scheduled events, reported as other types of news, and nothing really comes from the actual readers like the investigative stories.

So we have seen that the subjectification of the readership happens at TS but is limited to investigative reporting. So far, through several stages of actualisation in the construction of the newsworthiness of investigative reporting at TS, and because of the lack of enrolment in the readers' lives (social change), it can be argued that the state of virtuality of this news remains. Since investigative reporting at TS exists in a continuously virtual form, the actual readers

always want to know what is being investigated, and if there are follow ups, what they are. This encourages them to become one of the mediators in the news network, hence the act of sending documents to TS investigative reporters.

Here, the distance between the actual readers is close to the newsworthiness construction at TS. Indirectly, this helps to retain the unique 'selling' point of TS, which thus maintains the strength of the newspaper and the interests of the advertisers. The main challenge for TS at the moment is that it needs to accelerate the enrolment of the stories into readers' lives, including the ruling party, so then it can help to promote social change on necessary issues in society, such as what is done by SH, which can be seen as an activist newspaper in this study.

7.2.6 Actualising the Readership through 'Journalistic' Mediators

SH shares some similarities with TS in terms of publishing non-partisan political news. However, the main strength of SH is the wide coverage of local news, which reaches up to 60-70% in each of the editions of the newspaper (Loovi 2008). The popularity is reflected in the circulation figures. Since its first humble publication in 2006, SH circulation has increased to nearly double, from 35,000 at the end of 2007 (sold only in two states: Kelantan and Terengganu), to 60,000 in 2008 and 80,000 in 2009. SH also claims its current circulation reaches 160,000, higher than BH (average 130,000) and UM (average 157,000) (Hong 2011). SH is now considered the fastest growing newspaper in the country, as compared to the highest circulation newspaper which needed 30 years to reach the current position (Husamuddin Yaacob, quoted in Loovi 2008). So how exactly does SH reach its readers and actualise in the construction of newsworthiness?

> SH reaches its readers in a unique fashion – each reporter is given a Perodua Kancil car[11], a BlackBerry and a digital camera, and go to all corners to cover local news from clogged drains to village festivities. It has 250 reporters in Peninsular Malaysia, and publishes eight editions daily (Hong 2011).

Datuk Husamuddin Yaacob, the proprietor of SH, also articulated the unique selling point of the newspaper:

> Our unique selling point is that each of our papers is localised for the particular state—the Kelantan edition is different from the Terengganu one…We achieved this by introducing our *Skuad Cakna*, which are Kancil cars that have been equipped with

telecommunications systems so that they can operate as mobile offices. These compact vehicles operate in all districts, no matter how remote. This ensures that whenever there are any incidents, whether accidents, funerals or just clogged drains we are the first to be there (quoted in Loovi 2008).

This is an example of the role of local news that covers marginal people neglected by the mainstream media (Loovi 2008, Tannock 2001). Such events are not considered newsworthy in the mainstream newspapers, but to SH, this is the unique selling point of the newspaper (see Chapter 6). This too, has been seen by many SH editors as the strength of the paper as compared to the Malay daily newspapers. In fact, both BH and XX market surveys included SH as the newspaper they wanted to know. This implies that SH is considered as the competitor of both newspapers. Husamuddin continues explaining how the connection between the actual readers is done with the reporters:

> That is how we serve the people; sometimes I even think we serve them more than their wakil rakyat! [people's representatives]. This is how we have gained the people's trust; now they know our telephone numbers and contact our mobile teams whenever something happens…That is why we are their number one newspaper (quoted in Loovi 2008).

The actualisation of the virtual readership happens when the telephone numbers of the district reporters are revealed to the readers by printing them on the page allocated for their district. So far, SH is the only newspaper that publishes the mobile phone numbers of the reporters on the newspaper pages (others publish emails only). With this, readers who have 'stories' can easily contact these reporters, and tell them the problems they face in the village. By printing the telephone number and through the Kancil car visualised with an SH masthead, these are ways to actualise SH to the readers, by telling them that the reporters can be reached both via mediated communication such as the telephone and via face to face, which is by first letting the reporters know when an event will take place, and then they will come and cover the story.

Picture 7.1 Kancil car with SH masthead and the phrase 'skuad cakna'. The writing below the Kancil car reads "Make us your friend".

From the ANT point of view, these are ways to increase the number of mediators that can contribute to the news network at SH. By actualising the telephone numbers, establishing the SH Kancil car that is different an ordinary Kancil car, actual readers are connected to SH regardless of their geographical distance and communication barriers. Readers can tell anything about their 'stories' because they know that those 'small' stories are important to SH. Husamuddin also used the phrase 'Now everybody can be in the news'[12] (quoted in Karim 2008) when explaining the approach taken by SH to take its readers into account.

According to a Skuad Cakna, Journalist SH7, the facilities really help her to gather news based on what the organisation wants:

> The facilities really make the [news] gathering process faster…All the assignments given need to be covered using the car provided. The telephone number made visible for the readers is like an office number. Anybody, including the masses and any organisations, can contact us with the number without needing to think whether anybody will be in the office to answer the phone. So when we arrive at the event using the car, people easily know that we are there.

This is an example of how the virtual mediators are actualised from using the car and the telephone provided by SH to its district reporters. In the quote, we can see that the mobile phone acts to replace the role of the office number, but it is more flexible because it helps the actual readers to connect with the district reporters at almost any time. This makes both the reporter and the phone a combination of a mediator in a news network. That enables the subjectification of the readership by maintaining connection with the readers. Furthermore, when an event happens and the reporter arrives, their visibility is highlighted again by the car used. When the car carries

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the logo of SH and the phrase 'Make Us Your Friend', that is also a form of actualising the actual reader because it is a form of subjectifying the readership by encouraging readers to come to the reporters to share their problems and then have them covered in the newspaper. Thus, the Kancil car and the logo on the car and the mobile phone provided to each of the district reporters are the journalistic mediators used to actualise readers and to subjectify them in newsworthiness construction.

The mobility of SH journalists through the various non-human actors provided is a very important feature of news practice at SH that enables the journalists to gather as many mediators as they can in their news network. With continuous opportunities to do so, SH can always take actual readers into account in its newsworthiness construction, giving the chance to SH to produce news that is not produced by other newspapers. This then becomes the strategy of SH to differentiate its newsworthiness construction, and a way to increase its circulation.

Particularly for the Negeri Sembilan & Melaka edition, a recent revisit to the SH Seremban newsroom in June 2012 revealed the hope of the editors to increase the state's circulation figures from 8,000 copies to 15,000 copies. Journalist SH5 explained how the editors strategised the newsworthiness construction to achieve the target:

> In the meeting, the editor highlights that we have to publish stories that are not being published by UM, we cover that. What the NST does not cover, we do that. What *Bernama* has covered, we just take from there. We take opposition stories. Opposition stories are important and we try to cover both sides of the story. That is what the mainstream newspapers lack, so we publish that. They get different stories than the mainstream…He [also] said we have to be close to the community. This is the way to get stories that other newspapers don't get…For example, when there is a crime story that occurs in Tampin, we probably will get that more than other newspapers because their reporters are mostly in big towns such as Seremban[13]. That is how we can get different stories from other newspapers.

So it is the role of the non-partisan and local news that make SH a popular newspaper, but it is the role of the district reporters that enable the actualisation and subjectification of readership occurs at SH. By covering stories that are not able to be reached by ordinary reporters at other newspapers, by using the journalistic mediators provided by the newspaper organization, then only crime stories in Tampin can be covered, which is difficult to be covered by SH's competitors because of the accessibility issue. Journalist SH7 said:

Because we are everywhere, we always get stories that other newspapers don't get and if we don't share them, that will be our scoop!

The Kancil car, the telephone and the published telephone number serve as the mediators in the SH local news network. Without such mediators, the district reporters would not be able to easily reach the remote areas and get connected with the actual readers. The actual readers, too, would not be able to know who to contact if the telephone number was not published in SH and made public. Here, all these three actors become the actants that mediate the change in the process of newsworthiness construction at SH, enabling a shorter distance between SH and its actual readers. SH, because of the number of journalistic mediators identified in its newsworthiness construction, is the newspaper with the most mobility in this study, thus the closest distance from its actual readers.

The success story of SH has made the proprietor Datuk Husamuddin change his view on SH. In his own words:

When we first started, we saw ourselves just as a supplementary newspaper. Now, with the changing economic situation we reckon we'll become the only newspaper that many people will buy (quote in Karim 2008).

This is also how the actual readers mainly saw SH in the early years of the publication. According to a study conducted by the NSTP Group to study the position of their newspapers and SH in Malaysia, SH is a newspaper bought with other newspapers such as tabloid newspapers. Some tabloid newspapers, on the other hand, are bought alone by the readers. This suggests that SH serves as a supplementary newspaper especially to those who buy tabloid newspapers for their human interest reporting and buy SH for the political and community news. When the polled readers were asked about their habits when buying newspapers, 51% admitted that they bought SH as a supplementary paper.

However now, due to its strategy to actualise the readership, it aims to become the only newspaper read by people. This is an example of how a newspaper that is able to actualise its readership becomes popular and translates itself into a powerful actor that dominates the media industry in the country, where Malay newspapers are associated with only Malay readers. In the case of SH, because it is able to actualise its readership, it is read by all races in the country, changing the common trait of Malay newspapers. As Husamuddin said:

If we want to overcome racial problems we need to focus on delivering basic needs irrespective of race. SH is totally committed to achieving this. We have a lot of non-Malay readers (Husamuddin Yaacob, quoted in Karim 2008).

This is felt by a Malaysian member of Parliament from the DAP, Teresa Kok, who said that "SH is important because it's helped us to break racial barriers among the *rakyat* (people). The paper has given DAP elected reps equal opportunity and coverage in terms of our local activities" (Kok quoted in Karim 2008). This is an example of how a newspaper is able to translate the landscape of political reporting by locating more mediators in the news network, similar to the expectations we have to online newspapers which generally open different ways to actualise the readership than their print counterparts.

7.3 Online Newspapers

Internet penetration in Malaysia has been at the rate of 61 percent in 2009, increased from 7% in 2005 to 17% in 2008 (Open Net Initiative website[14]). This might be related to the uncensored nature of the internet in Malaysia, as compared to its mainstream counterpart. The Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor Corporation (MSC)[15] ensures there is no censorship of the internet under the Bills of Guarantee no. 7 which interprets the non censorship of the internet as follows:

> While the government will not censor the internet, this does not mean that any person may disseminate illegal content with impunity and without regard to the law. To the extent that any act is illegal in the physical world, it will similarly be outlawed in the online environment. Hence, laws prohibiting dissemination of, for example, indecent/obscene or other illegal materials will continue to apply. In this regard, relevant ministries and agencies will continue to take appropriate actions and enforce those laws that are under their respective purview[16].

With the penetration by the internet of 56 percent of the overall population, legally there is no substantial political censorship on the internet done by the ruling party. However, the emergence of the internet in Malaysia has been used as a tool to mobilise social change, particularly political change. Here, independent news sites and blogs were credited as supporting the victory of the opposition parties in the 2008 election, where the ruling party had the worst performance in history (Seneviratne 2008b). Nevertheless, there have been some arrests of bloggers and online users (Kelly and Cook 2011).

This might explain why Freedom House categorises Malaysia as partly free for the freedom on the net status in the Freedom on the Net 2011 Global Scores[17]. The total score (out of 100) is 41, similar to the 2009 report, with no change to the total score (Freedom on the Net 2011 report: 16), and the subtotal for several limitations are as follows:

Obstacles to access – 9/25 points
Limits on content – 11/35 points
Violations of user rights – 21/40 points

Besides that, Reporters Without Borders ran a campaign of World Day Against Cyber Censorship[18] on 12 March 2011 to "rally everyone in support of a single Internet without restrictions and accessible to all". Several countries have been named as 'Enemies of the Internet such as Bahrain, China and Iran, while Malaysia is categorised as 'Countries under surveillance' besides Egypt, France and Thailand and several other countries. It is also reported by the Nielsen survey that Malaysia is ranked as the tenth highest media consuming nation out of 52 countries (quoted in Xavier, 2012). Besides that, even in 2009 the Malaysian internet audience continued to grow (ComScore report, quoted in Aznita Ahmad Pharmy, 2010).

This explains the status of internet and online news production in the country. As compared to its mainstream counterpart, the status of online newspapers can be explained, among others, with the notion of *supplement* (Derrida 1978). To Derrida, the need to have a supplement reveals a gap, where something is missing. Therefore, it is what is called a 'dangerous supplement' (Derrida 1978: 151). In the case of online newspapers, internet circulation does affect sales of print newspapers (Bond 2012). An online can become 'dangerous' to the print version of the newspaper when it can cause the print version lesser importance to the readers, thus a void.

So in this discussion, several types of actualisation are identified to show the objectification of the virtual readership in online newspapers in Malaysia. The types of actualisation identified are (1) through the number of Unique Visitors/Browsers per Month, and (2) through Direct Comments in Online News.

7.3 Online Newspaper Types of Actualisation

If sales and votes are two types of readership actualisation identified in newsworthiness construction of the print version of newspapers in this study, unique visitor or unique browser per month is the third type, particularly in examining how the readership is taken into account in online newspapers. This is followed by another type of actualisation which is direct comments in online news.

7.3.1 Unique Browsers/Visitors (UB/UV) per Month

In Malaysia, according to the Malaysian Digital Association (MDA), the highest number of unique browsers is The Star Online with 2,221,763 unique browsers (UB) per month, which is listed as the second place in the top 30 local websites accessed by Malaysians. This is followed by *Malaysiakini* in the 6th place with 1,858,649 UB, XX Online in the top ten list and *Utusan Online* with 1,171,578 UB. Other news portals listed in the ranking are *Malaysian Insider, Kosmo Online* and *mynewshub.* BH Online is in 17th place and SH is in 28th place. The table below presents the unique browsers/visitors per month in 10 online newspapers in Malaysia with the newspapers in this study located in numbers 1-6:

No.	Online Newspapers	Unique Browsers/Visitors* per Month
1	BH Online	769,772 (Source: Malaysian Digital Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012[19])
2	NST Online	Approximately 500,000 per month (Source: NSTP Online Services)
3	XX Online	Approximately 1.5 million per month (Source: Malaysian Digital Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012)
4	SH Online	492,025 (Source: Malaysian Digital Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012)
5	TS Online	Approximately 400,000 per month (Source: TS Online Services)
6	Hh Daily	714,666 (Source: Hh Online Services)
7	Malaysiakini.com	1,858,649 (Source: Malaysian Digital

		Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012)
8	The Star Online	2,221,763 (Source: Malaysian Digital Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012)
9	Utusan Online	1,171,578 (Source: Malaysian Digital Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012)
10	Kosmo Online	963,367 (Source: Malaysian Digital Association, Malaysian website rankings for February 2012)

*Malaysian Digital Association uses Unique Browser (UB) instead of Unique Visitor (UV). Other sources use UV.

Table 7.5 showing the unique visitors/browsers per month for 10 online newspapers in Malaysia

Based on the table, the popularity of the online version is more or less similar to its print version, which means a popular newspaper in terms of the print version is also popular in its online version. For example, The Star Online has a high circulation of the print version, and the UB/UV is also high. Among the newspaper in this study, XX online has the highest circulation and the highest UB/UV. It is followed by BH Online and Hh Online. This can be associated with readers who have a tendency to read the alternative avenues when they do not have access to the print version. With the high penetration of the internet in Malaysia, this tendency becomes more apparent.

In Malaysia, although some observed that generally readers retained their interests in reading print newspapers (Ali Salman et al. 2011), the general tendency of a decrease in print circulation is apparent and the internet has been seen as one of the reasons that contribute to that situation (Yow et al. 2012). Yow et al. (2012) interviewed some readers and, from the random interviews, it was reported that one of them who used to read UM has now changed to the online version and this is associated with the dropping circulation of the newspaper. He said "I just pick and choose which stories I want and it's easier to go online". This suggests that the existence of online newspapers does affect the circulation and existence of print newspapers.

In the case of XX Online, both the print and online versions are highly circulated, and in this study it is also recorded as the newspaper with the most unique browsers/visitors (UB/UV).

Here, the UB/UV per month figures suggest that readership is actualised most at XX Online compared to other online newspapers in this study. From the interviews conducted, Journalist XX6 explained how XX used online avenues, such as SMS[20] service, to generate user-generated content in the newspaper:

> We do provide a SMS service for readers to lodge reports and a telephone line for them to call if they have anything to inform us about. Usually, useful information from the SMS will be used to develop stories. For example there was a reader who sent an SMS via 32728 about a group of teenagers who sniffed glue in the area of Pantai Dalam[21] Flats. I called the sender of the SMS to get more information and to go to the scene. When we know it is true, we can turn it into a story and get comments from related parties such as the police, NGOs, etc.

This is an example of how actualisation of the readership happens at XX Online. Here, the event reported by the actual readers that become newsworthy can be associated with the social problem raised—sniffing glue among teenagers—that is in important in the cycles of credit of XX Online with their emphasis on news values that contains scandal (see Chapter 5). In this example, when the newspaper reports about issues that gain a lot of attention, and with the online avenue provided, actual readers are interested to join, thus the actualisation and subjectification. It is when the actual readers are really involved as the source of news that the subjectification of the readership happens. Thus, the distance between the virtual and actual readership at XX Online is close. As we have seen in the print version, XX actualises the readership through sales, the online version actualises the readership through mediators available in the online platform, which is the SMS service.

In this instance, such news will probably give credit to both the print and online version of the newspaper. However, the success of XX Online can become 'dangerous' to XX when such news, although how popular it might be, such as *The Sun* in the UK that has recently faced decline in circulation such as reported by McCabe (2012). This suggests that, for so many reasons that can influence the readership of newspapers around the world, it can translate the readership of the newspaper and their preferences. When this happens, the online version that is usually free will become a threat to its own print version because everybody turns to the online newspaper at their convenience without needing to buy the newspaper.

The second highest rate of UB/UV per month among online newspapers in this study is BH Online. In the case of BH, we can see that the print circulation is decreasing, but the online

version is quite popular. This is an obvious example of a dangerous supplement as this can be associated with who the target reader of the newspaper really is. The question here is: what are the purposes of the readers in reading BH? The loyal readers might read the print version, but both those who are interested in BH Online news and those who are not can read the online version, whether they like the newspaper or not. Thus, this contradiction suggests that, overall, BH might be losing its readership, that is in terms of determining the loyal readers of the newspaper.

Realising this, BH has taken the approach of doubling its understanding of the readership as discussed in the previous part of the chapter. Due to such an approach of reducing partisan political news and including more human interest news, it might reduce the distance between the virtual and actual readership at BH. This might be appreciated more online, because the online version is usually read by the younger generation who generally do not like reading political news, and they can find a lot of human interest and educational news in BH Online (as compared to UM Online, the main rival of BH Online). Thus, the readership of BH Online can be among the younger generation that might like or not like the newspaper.

The third highest UB/UV per month in this study is Hh Online. In the case of Hh online, it is a daily online newspaper that is published alongside its print version, Hh, which is published twice a week. Here, the status of Hh Online, in principle, can be dangerous to the Hh print version, as the frequency offered to the readers is more than the print version. Generally, news must be something new, and if the newspaper only publishes twice a week, the most obvious gap is to provide new reports to the readers.

However, the print version of Hh can be seen as a success when the circulation figure is compared to some other more established mainstream newspapers in this study. The actualisation happens from two types of actualisation, which is through sales and votes. Here, both of these are the virtual indicators of the objectification of the (virtual) readership at Hh. As compared to the online version, lesser avenues are provided for user-generated content to prevail. For example, Hh Online does not provide an SMS services for its readers. This is an example of how the online version of the newspaper sometimes is not able to actualise readers and the print version is able to do more.

However, although the readership is actualised less in Hh Online than its print counterpart, the popularity of the online version can be due to the frequency offered by Hh Online and this is also admitted by most of the journalists interviewed. Here, Hh Online can become a dangerous supplement to the Hh print version as it generally bridges the gap of 'time' that is difficult to be countered by Hh due to laws imposed by the state. The frequency offered by Hh Online, although it does not actualise the readership as much as the print version, can become the most important mediator to translate the relationship between the print and online version of Hh. Furthermore, the target reader of Hh seems clearer than other newspapers, because it is aimed at the oppositional readers. Thus, a specific group of readers who read news at Hh frequently will definitely choose the online version of Hh rather than its print version.

For TS Online, as a free newspaper there is almost no issue of actualising the actual readers, as the online version is the exact digital format of the print version, thus readers can read the exact news as it is printed without updates or a reduced amount of text in the news. This is because at TS Online the issue at stake is to expose the print version to readers who do not live in the urban area. This is also to actualise the effects of its investigative reporting that have so far triggered very little action from the related parties. It is from such exposure that the distribution can be increased when more readers know the newspaper through its online version and what kind of reporting TS offers.

In contrast, for the NST, both its print circulation and online UB/UV per month are low. Here, the NST Online can take the opportunity to increase its mediator by providing more online services to produce user-generated content. However, as can be seen in Table 7.6, the NST does not offer any text message services to actual readers. Thus, actualisation of the actual readers is difficult to be achieved, and the great distance is maintained even in its online version. Here, it gives the signal to the NST to start thinking of what is important in its cycles of credit, so what is generated as the news value meet the needs of the actual readers.

SH Online suggests a different scenario. As it is the print version which actualises the most its virtual readership through various journalistic mediators, SH Online is not so popular among the readers, with only about 500,000 UB/UV per month, despite the good comments it gets for its online news (discussed in the next section). Here, SH Online is an example of how

the online version of a newspaper does not become a dangerous supplement to the print version, although it does provide a feature of user-generated content such as the text message.

Below are the online newspapers with a user-generated content feature as discussed in this section:

No.	Online Newspapers User-Generated Content Feature	Text (SMS) Services
1	BH Online	Yes
2	TS online	No
3	XX Online	Yes
4	SH Online	Yes
5	NST Online	No
6	Hh Online	No

Table 7.6 showing online newspapers that offer SMS services to the readers.

7.3.2 Direct Comments on Online News

Some online newspapers in this study do provide direct comments to be written by readers after they read the news. Here is a list of the newspapers that offer and do not offer such facilities:

No.	Online Newspapers	Comments on online news
1	BH Online	Yes (limited)
2	NST Online	Yes (limited)
3	XX Online	Yes (limited)
4	SH Online	Yes (more than other newspapers in this study)
5	TS Online	No
6	Hh Online	No

Table 7.7 showing the ability of readers to comment on online newspapers websites

From the table, we can see that only four online newspapers in this study offer the facility of commenting on the online news on their news sites. Of them all, the most extensive comments can be made on SH online. This is a new feature of SH, because based on my interview with the online editor in 2009 this facility was still a work in progress. It was only in the early part of

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2010 that SH enabled comments from actual readers. In 2009, when the interview was conducted, the SH online editor said that:

> This is our weakness at the moment [readers cannot comment on the news they read on the SH website]. However, a new web is to be launched at the end of October 2009. Here, the feedback is moderated. This is to avoid vulgar words [getting published], and obscene statements are deleted. We do provide a space for readers to discuss openly, but this has to be done in a proper manner.

This is in line with how the proprietor of SH sees the role of SH online at this time, which can be seen as merely an addition to the print version:

> We have our online version of SH, but it is not our emphasis. We have found that Malaysians still prefer the physical newspaper. While online is the future, I think especially in the places we focus on, the people aren't so keen on going online to read something – we still want to touch and feel the news… Advertising income also mostly comes from print, not from online news! (Datuk Husamuddin Yaacub, quoted in Loovi 2008).

However, when the facility is opened to readers, it has translated into a popular avenue of commenting on online news as compared to other newspapers in this study, the NST online, BH online and XX online. This is based on an observation made on 8 July 2012 when, among all the main news published in these four online newspapers, the mostly commented upon was the news at SH.

An online news headline 'AFC B-22 Cup: Malaysia will not protest, says Sultan Pahang' (Piala AFC B-22: Malaysia tidak protes, titah Sultan Pahang) that covered a story on the stand of Malaysia that Malaysia would not protest against Myanmar letting football players more than 22 years old play in the under 22 year old cup. After 5 hours, this news received six comments that mainly opposed this act, and most of them urged Malaysia to protest against this justice. On the same day, among the main news and compared to other online newspapers, comments from readers were very few, and almost none as shown below:

No.	Online newspaper	Online news	Comments
1	BH online	Pegawai SPRM kena 13 tahun, denda RM2.3j (SPRM[29] officer punished 13 years imprisonment, fined RM2.3 million)	(One comment received) *Sovo* commented: Hope this will be a lesson to others…

2	NST online	Azmin urged to apologise over racial slur	None
3	XX online	Ajal motor terpelanting (A biker died after their motorcycle was involved in an accident)	None

Table 7.8 showing online main news at BH online, NST online and XX online and the comments received as published on 8 July 2012.

This is an example of the translation of the role of SH online newspaper in terms of opening space for actual readers to comment on online news. If the facilities on SH online are compared with the other newspapers in this study in 2009, SH provides the lowest actualisation of the readership. No comments on news can be made online at all. The NST online, BH online and XX online already provide the service at this time. But now, when SH online widens the facilities and actualises its readership, the acceptance from the actual readers is overwhelming, which indicates closer distance of the actual readers and the virtual readership.

However, comments on online news are able to actualise actual readers, but the subjectification of the readers is limited. This is because there is a specific way of objectification applied in actualising comments on online news in Malaysia. Among online editors, moderation is the main language among them in explaining how far the actual readers can comment and how those can become newsworthy:

In the case of the NST for example, the online editor said:

> …this opens a wider opportunity for readers to post feedback to us. But in the latest revamp in July 2009, readers can post feedback to certain stories and articles only. This is limited to the main stories of the day and commentaries and editorial. The limitation is due to the policy of moderating comments in order to avoid profanities and potential libellous responses and because we don't have enough man power to vet all comments.

The online editor of XX added:

> We do monitor those comments we get from the readers. We ensure that there are no vulgar words used in the comments, or anything obscene. Because you see our stories tend to report on social problems, so we have to be careful in allowing comments.

The SH online editor said:

> We have to monitor comments from the readers because we don't want to publish anything against the philosophy of the newspaper. Firstly, the comments must not contain anything vulgar and the sentences must be decent. We also ensure that readers don't write anything that contains a slander element. After monitoring these, then only do we decide which comments can be published.

These quotes demonstrate that although the internet was at first established without censorship in Malaysia, recently the situation has changed. In 2009 and 2010, the government restricted online expression under the 1998 Communication and Multimedia Act (CMA), which guides Malaysian communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), as stated in Section 233, banning content which is "indecent, obscene, false, threatening, or offensive". CMCA regulates online speech, providing that 'no content applications service provider or other person using content applications service, shall provide content which is indecent, obscene, false, menacing, or offensive in character with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any person'. Those who violate this will be fined up to RM50,000 and/or a maximum of one year in prison.

There have not been any reports of online newspaper users being fined because of posting such statements, but there have been several cases of arrests of bloggers with mistakes that can be done by online newspaper readers. In 2009, for example, the first case took place of eight individuals who were fined by the CMA for insulting the Perak[23] royal family through their online comments. One of them pleaded guilty and was fined RM10,000 (US$ 2,700). In 2010, a blogger, Khairul Nizam Abdul Ghani, was charged with sedition for posting comments that insulted a dead Sultan. He faced a minimum penalty of one year in prison and a fine of up to 50,000 ringgits (US$13,500) (Kelly and Cook 2011: 236). This suggests that comments on online newspapers, social networks and other online avenues might end up being prosecuted.

Recently, a student, Mohamad Tasyrif Tajuddin, 25, was charged over comments he made on Facebook. He wrote that he was willing to attack the Batu Caves temple[24] for money and he had manufactured the explosives used in a series of church burnings. Later on, it was known that it was only a joke. However, Tasyrif was charged under Section 233(1)(a) for "knowingly using the application with the intention of threatening others" (Koh 2010). However, to what extent the government will monitor the internet users remains unclear. So far, there have been steps to require bloggers to register themselves before blogging (Kelly and Cook, 2011) and

this suggests that the government is starting to restrict the internet usage among online users and this might include those who comment on both online newspaper sites and social networks.

It is here that moderation can be seen as a specific form of objectification. This is because it is the moderation process that shapes the messages (objects) made by the actual readers. The more moderation is done in a particular newspaper, the more the messages are objectified towards the bias of the newspaper. Consequently, both the online news and the comments made by the actual readers are enacted as a single object that other online readers can read.

In the context of Malaysia, two reasons for moderation can be identified in the online newspapers. The first one is the moderation on the part of the political interest of the newspaper, and the second is on the language used by the readers. For the former, online newspapers like the NST online, BH online and Hh online can be categorised as such, because these newspapers maintain their political interest more than other online newspapers in this study (see Chapter 5). This is to say, these online newspapers objectify their online news as such and continue publishing news that will politically benefit the news organisation. For Hh, although the cycles of credit of Hh accredit political and ideological interests, they at the same time retain the oppositional political interests and do not publish stories that will have a positive impact on the ruling party.

The second type of moderation is of the language used in the comments. As we have seen, almost all the online editors interviewed for this study maintain the importance of keeping decent language as a requirement in publishing comments from actual readers for their online news. This is apparent from the quotes from SH and XX online editors above.

In the case of the other two newspapers that do not provide the facility for readers to comment on news, TS online and Hh online, they face their own challenges in establishing the service. For TS online, although they are yet to offer direct comments from actual readers on their news, they also have foreseen the need to have an online editor to monitor the language used by the commentators.

> We have no editors to vet comments before they can be posted. However, technically the system can support comments. We need those editors to avoid people abusing the opportunities as on other websites.

This is an example of how the readership cannot be actualised at TS online, although the technology is there to be used. The lack of personnel to work on it is an example of the lack of mediators that can help with the mediation process, thus enabling TS online to offer the service. However, this can be argued as not an urgent need for TS because, as a free newspaper, it is not the aim of the newspaper to use its online version to boost sales, but rather the online version is a form of exposure needed to make the newspaper known by those who do not live within the TS free distribution area as discussed earlier.

On the other hand, Hh online has experienced how a lack of mediator is the reason why the comments from readers had to be stopped.

> We had to stop it. It is not because we didn't want to do it, but when we opened that, I am also the moderator of the comments. These comments I need to read and we do filter comments that are prejudiced and negative. We had to edit [that]. For example, in one frame, there were 20 comments. If we have 20-30 frames, times 20, it [will be] hundreds. There was a time, we had 2,000 comments in a week. If that is the case, we can't manage to do it. We have to stop this because if we continue, we can't do anything else. We can't write stories and we can't upload stories. That is the problem… The main reason for this [being unable to vet comments] is we don't have enough manpower.

From the quote, insufficient manpower is an example of a lack of mediators in the subjectification process, making Hh unable to actualise its readership. Thus, when the service was stopped, this lengthened the distance of the actual readers to express their opinion about the news they read. This relates back to the issue of moderation of messages, that direct comments must be moderated in order to get published online. Thus, the only way for readers to be actualised at Hh is through letters to the editors, and very little online avenues because they do not offer a text message service for actual readers to be actualised (see Table 7.6).

From both discussions related to the actualisation of the readership in online newspapers, it can be concluded that online newspapers generally can be seen as providing different ways for actual readers to be actualised. XX Online, for example, utilises online avenues to actualise the actual readership and construct news from there. Here, the distance between virtual and actual readership is closer. However, as we have seen, the ways of actualisation provided online do not necessarily subjectify the readership. This is apparent in the case of commenting on online news, that although the distance between actual readers and the virtual readership is close, the actual readers cannot subjectify because of the application of moderation which is a specific form of

objectification. Thus, the distance between virtual and actual readership on online newspapers in this study has different degrees of objectification.

7.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the objectification of a virtual object, which is the 'readership', in a quest to understand whether the virtual readership is derived from anything concrete. ANT enables the investigation of (virtual) objects and makes visible how they are objectified. Objectification occurs when readership are actualised and subjectified into actual readers.

The objectification process of a (virtual) object is performed by an account, which acts as the connector between the virtual and the actual. In this analysis, examples of accounts are published knowledge that describes the virtual object (readership), which can be circulation figures and sales. Besides that, in the case of a newspaper associated with any political interests such as the NST, BH and Hh, the number of votes in general elections also contributes to connecting the virtual readership (readership in the newsroom) and the actual readership (readership at home).

Thus, to understand the objectification of the readership in the six newspapers in this study, how actualisation happens becomes important. If the (virtual) readership does not actualise, then the distance between virtual readership and actual readership is great, while if it actualises through various mediators, the distance is closer. Hence, the question posed earlier in this chapter is answered by providing discussions based on several types of actualisation in both print and online newspapers in this study. The overall analysis shows that, among all the newspapers, the most mediators that shorten the way to actualise virtual and actual readership are at SH, while the online is the XX. For SH, the journalistic mediators help to actualise and activate actual readers, while at XX Online, online avenues are utilised to increase the threshold of news in user-generated content.

In this analysis, it was found that the NST is a newspaper with the most distance from its actual readers, while BH is trying to keep itself closer to actual readers by doubling its understanding of the readership.

Other newspapers, such as XX, actualise the readership through sales. XX is a market driven newspaper and the most successful newspaper in terms of circulation figures in this study. It is assumed that XX has the most sophisticated way of objectifying its readership. However, it is found that XX uses various virtual indicators to help the newspaper to know what the actual readers want. Based on virtual indicators such as high circulation figures and statistics about readership from AC Neilsen, XX learns from previous writing success how to guide future news. Besides that, they also take advantage of being a tabloid newspaper to publish sensational news that they know generally attracts the attention of readers.

For Hh, as a party newspaper, it is the only newspaper in this study that actualises its readership through sales and votes. Sales act as the mediator to inform newsworthiness construction at Hh, and because Hh does not conduct any market research to know the actual readers and the sales, and therefore is not as successful as XX, the second type of actualisation becomes important, which is the number of votes the party has during elections. The vote suggests a direct link between the support of the readers of Hh and the support they give to the party.

For TS, as a free newspaper, readership is actualised through the publication of its investigative reporting news. From here, actual readers are taken into account in newsworthiness construction because they can provide facts about wrongdoings that are then investigated, developed into stories and published. It is here that actual readers are subjectified or activated into actants.

SH, which is popular for its community (local) news, connects with the actual readers by providing some 'journalistic' mediators to its district reporters, such as a mobile phone and a *Kancil* car, and by making visible the name of the reporter and the mobile phone numbers on the newspaper page so it is easy for the actual readers to call and let the reporters know what is going on in their neighbourhood. By adding more mediators in the news network, SH takes readers into account and the distance between readership and actual readers is subjectified and taken into the account in newsworthiness construction.

On the other hand, online versions of these newspapers were also examined, with the assumption that online newspapers allow different ways for a readership to be subjectified. Two

types of actualisation are identified, which are the UB/UV per month and the comments on online news. The online newspaper with the highest UB/UV per month in this study is the XX Online, followed by BH Online and Hh Online. Here, the analysis of all the online newspapers in this study demonstrates the benefit of deploying readership as a virtual object.

In different types of online newspaper, the distance between the virtual and actual readership is different, which suggests that even the same newspaper (but in a different version) deals with the readership differently. This is the different degree of objectification in different newspapers that can be identified only when the readership is examined as a virtual object, which in different (and specific) practice, implies that the meaning of the (virtual) object changes. For example, the analysis has shown that in the case of BH, the degree of objectification from the print and online version differs because the print version deployed a double understanding of the readership that attempts to close the distance with the actual reader in order to increase its circulation, while contradictorily the online version is quite popular (based on the UB/UV per month) among readers, but who really reads this online news is unclear (whether it is the target readers or not). Besides that, the analysis also shows that not all the facilities offered by online newspapers can subjectify readership. Comments on online news, for example, actualise the readership, but the actual readers cannot subjectify.

Thus this chapter means that, in trying to understand the readership in newsworthiness construction, it must be examined based on concrete sources and it has to appreciate the heterogeneity of practice associated with the (virtual) object. This is an important contribution, as otherwise the readership will continue to be investigated based on external contexts/identity. Usually, the common view is to argue that readership is determined by the identity of the newspaper, that it is also related with the contexts the newspaper operates in. However, in this chapter, I have demonstrated that examining the readership must be supplemented with the intrinsic contextualisation, so that more links and associations can be revealed, thus appreciating the heterogeneity of a complex network in the newsworthiness construction of different newspapers. With that said, the next chapter will demonstrate that associations are made from heterogeneous actors, and the relationship is never a simple macro-micro relation.

CHAPTER 8

THE ASSOCIATIONS OF AN OPPOSITIONAL NEWSPAPER AND THE STATE: A PRECARIOUS RELATIONSHIP

8.0 Introduction

So far, I have discussed the establishment of news values in six Malaysian newspapers through the process of accreditation (Chapter 5), followed by the enrolment of news angles at SH (Chapter 6). It is the extension of identity as a virtual object (Chapter 6) that enables the examination of how the news angle is used in order to stabilise SH identity. The case study of SH helps to highlight how a particular action that involved non-human actors occurs, after SH is identified as the most hybrid type of newspaper (Chapter 5).

In the meantime, almost all journalists in all newspapers in this study explained newsworthiness construction by including 'readership' as an important factor that affects news making processes. This has been discussed (Chapter 7) by including both print and online versions of the newspapers in this study, and by examining the objectification of readership as a virtual object and how it is actualised and subjectified.

In this chapter, I will present a case study at Hh to demonstrate how 'associations' are made, which is the central concept in ANT. This can be traced back to associations that occur in the relationship between the opposition newspaper and the ruling party, mainly because there are diverse associations made in this relationship as compared to other newspapers in this study. Besides that, Hh also accredits distinct interests (Chapter 5) and has specific ways of actualising readership (Chapter 7), making it a newspaper worth studying in order to understand its complex relationship with the state.

In addition, I will try to provide an example to support the ANT argument on the separation between the micro and macro, or between the local and global. By focusing on Hh in this chapter, this case study explains 'newsworthiness' as neither local nor global, nor indeed influenced by absent-minded[1] and invisible 'contexts', but rather a matter of 'rendering associations traceable'. The suspension case at the Hh permit[2] allows us to explore these associations, and is best suited because it shows both 'hyperlocal', as it is the smallest news organisation in this study[3], and 'global' because it relates to the worldwide phenomenon of oppositional Islam. As the smallest news organisation in this study, it is interesting to

know how and why a small-scale newspaper such as Hh seems to be perceived as a threat to the state.

This relationship is seen as an 'association' because the association between Hh and the state is never reducible to a simple, causal relationship such as 'the context of being in Malaysia' that turns Hh into a fragile newspaper. It is crucial to note here that the association in ANT is in line with the principle of irreducibility. Here too, Latour (1988) posits the existence of 'risks'. As Joost van Loon puts it: "Nothing is ever real or unreal as such, but everything is tried for its strengths and weaknesses – one could perhaps say risk" (Van Loon 2002a: 48). It is through associations with others that actants can increase their strength. Thus, identity is established through translated forces that are stabilised over time, and this whole process involves the continuous assessment of risks.

Through the notion of 'association' and the concepts related to associations such as 'panorama', 'oligopticon, 'plug-ins' and 'connecting sites' within the spectrum of ANT, we will examine the relationship between Hh and the state as a form of 'association' that simultaneously captures various crucial issues pertaining to the Malaysian press, including media laws and the idea of press-freedom. Thus the precarious relationship between Hh and the government in terms of power is suggested. Therefore, this chapter asks: *How are associations between an opposition newspaper and the state made, and to what extent do these interrelate with newsworthiness construction?* This chapter will try to answer this question by teasing out the connections between formatted (panorama) and unformatted (oligopticon) situations, based on an ethnographic interview with a journalist (Hh4). When they are connected (connecting sites), these situations are formatted as a means of explaining "how" something becomes news in Hh.

8.1 Operationalisation

Five concepts derived from ANT are used to operationalise the empirical findings of this chapter. Latour (2005) uses this term first to describe a form of social theory that seeks to present the whole of everything ("Society") in one overview. Thus, a panoramic analysis provides the overview data on 'formatted' social phenomena—occurrences that keep happening from time to time and are difficult to change.

Panoramas present an image of the whole "all at once". This concept is useful in describing the overall relationship between Hh and the state, that there are distinct ways for

the state and Hh to panoramically view themselves. This is because Islam is viewed differently by the PAS and the ruling party, causing some to view PAS as a radical party (Liow 2003). The language of moderate versus radical Islam enables the invocation of "national security", even though in this specific case of the Hh, this was not done. Here, a discourse of 'risks' emerges to qualify the relationship between the state and Hh, a discourse which can be held together by the panoramic view of both as oppositional ideologies.

This is when a panoramic analysis is useful, because panoramas are a particular way of handling risks; as Latour puts it: "They collect, they frame, they rank, they order, they organise; they are the source of what is meant by a well-ordered zoom. So, no matter how much they trick us, they prepare us for the political task ahead… [but] … they are misleading if taken as a description of what is the common world " (Latour 2005: 189). However, simply taking a panoramic view would thus have been very misleading. The links are only indirect and need to be made visible by other means. We will see later in the next section how panoramic views of Hh about the state also inform the way Hh sees how the risk should be handled, pertaining to the suspension of Hh in 2009, and panoramic views are employed to describe the events surrounding this suspension.

Although panoramic views provide an overview of Hh and their stand in a particular occurrence pertaining to perceived risk (suggesting the power of the PAS as an opposition party), the real power goes through 'oligopticons'. It is through oligoptic analysis that we are able to understand how real power travels during and after the suspension of Hh, which is seen as a risk by the state.

Oligopticon offers an analysis of specific, particular relationships between actors. Oligopticon is the opposite of panopticon because oligopticons "see much too little…but what they see, they see it well… From oligoptica, sturdy but extremely narrow views of the (connected) while are made possible—as long as connections hold" (Latour 2005: 181). The actors do not have control over what they are doing. The Oligopticon is always open for new interventions and unanticipated possibilities. Thus, an oligoptic analysis involves unformatted occurrences that do not have a particular pattern.

In the case of Hh it is arguable that, as an opposition political party, the real power is in the hands of the state. Thus, Hh is not well embedded in these oligopticons, whereas the government is. In the analysis presented in the next section, we will see how the state can use immutable mobiles such as legal documents and letters to invoke the power of law, and to

continue to isolate Hh. However, the power of the state is not everywhere, and simultaneously they do not see everything. Certain areas temporarily remain out of the reach of the government, and Hh can mobilise these for support. In the analysis, I will show how risk is played out between Hh and the state as a continuous exchange of risk perceptions and risk assessments.

In order to understand the continued risk-perceptions and risk assessments between Hh and the state, actors need plug-ins. The term plug-ins is borrowed from cyberspace language, where it means that in order to view something on the screen, we need to download certain software to gain access to something previously unseen (Latour 2005). These are devices that can be used to globalise the local. The main Hh plug-in is the Quran because it links Hh to Islam and thereby links oppositional politics in Malaysia to wider political forces associated with Islam as a critical force. This includes the perceived risk of radicalised Islam through the way PAS interprets Islam. This then increases the risk of Hh being perceived as a risk by the state.

Besides the Quran, another plug-in that can be used to evaluate risk perceptions and risk assessments is law. Law itself is also a plug-in that the state uses to contain Hh to being a newspaper associated with a political party, rather than having a space in the general public sphere. We have already discussed laws that control all press in Malaysia, particularly an oppositional newspaper, and later in discussing the findings of this study I will demonstrate how media laws have been used as a way to reduce the risk perceived by the state of the Hh.

Thus, associations enable demonstration of two different situations which are not yet formatted (oligopticon/micro-analysis in terms of power), and situations which are already formatted (regular repetition, i.e. routine; more suited for a panorama/macro analysis) are connected. By connecting sites, these situations are *being formatted* and the associations between them can be examined. The findings of this analysis are presented by globalising the local (panorama), localising the global (oligopticon), and connecting sites with plug-in devices to examine perceived and accessed risk, and the connection of these associations. From these concepts, I will provide an overview about the relationship between Hh and the state in order to get a general idea on the precarious relationship between them.

8.2 Overview of the Relationship Between Hh and the State

First published in 1987, Hh is published as the 'party organ' of PAS[4]. Within the legal procedure of newspaper publishing in Malaysia, Hh is classified as a political publication associated with the opposition and thus treated in a 'stricter' manner. Here I will go into more detail on laws such as the *Printing and Presses Publication Act 1984 (PPPA)* that impacted Hh, particularly relating to the issue of the permit suspension in 2009 and 2010. Under this act, all newspapers published periodically need to renew their permit annually, as approved by the Home Ministry, to enable the newspaper(s) to continue publishing legally. Other related laws are the *Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA), Official Secret Act 1972 (OSA)* and *Sedition Act 1948 (SA)*. The legal "formatting" of newspaper publishing in Malaysia is thus strongly coupled with the politics of national security and already signals that "press freedom" is closely associated with "risk". In the case of Hh, it will be clear that this is not an unconscious context, even though it has been primarily invoked through the PPPA rather than the aforementioned generic legal frameworks.

We will first discuss the PPPA because it is this particular law that was directly used to suspend the permit of Hh. For Hh, the permit has been refused for renewal by the state since its first publication, but for the first time on 23 March 2009 they received the suspension letter informing them that the permit would not be renewed, and Hh had to halt the publication for three months. The permit suspension of Hh goes together with *Suara Keadilan*[5]. The suspension is reported by *Malaysiakini*:

> The Home Ministry has suspended the organs of two opposition parties - PAS's Hh and PKR's *Suara Keadilan* - for three months, effective immediately…With the suspension, both newspapers will not be able to publish until the end of June, missing out on a number of crucial political events including the three by-elections on April 7.[6]

To the Hh journalists interviewed[7], this move is seen as a way to reduce the political impact of the opposition's messages through their party newspapers in the by-elections scheduled for 7 April 2009[8]. These, however, remain assumptions because there was no reason stated in the letter to justify the suspension (there will be more discussion about the letter later in this chapter), but the official line was that Hh has been continuously publishing 'sensational' and 'wrong' articles[9]. Nevertheless, the action of suspending the permit violates the human rights of the voters by the Human Rights Watch[10].

The suspension was lifted on the day Datuk Seri Najib Razak was sworn in as Prime Minister (3 April 2009—two weeks less than the formal duration of three months and still in time for the by-elections). This chapter focuses on the interviews conducted with Journalist Hh4, the Group Editor, on the day Hh received the suspension letter, together with another interview with him after the permit was unexpectedly lifted. However, this section will also provide a brief overview of similar events in 2010, when the renewal of Hh's permit was delayed by the Ministry.

On 8 July 2010, Hh received a show-cause letter from the Home Ministry to which they needed to respond within seven days. The letter related to issues of the publication of Hh, including the failure to submit eight copies of each edition of the newspaper to the Ministry. The permit ends on 7 July 2010; however, the Ministry did not renew the permit, as would be the routine case with other newspapers. Since the show-cause letter itself did not *ban* the publication of the Hh and *Suara Keadilan*, the acting Chief Editor Taufek Yahya said to *MalaysiaKini* that they will continue publishing as usual[11]. During the meeting between the Ministry and the acting Chief Editor, Hh was also asked about reports on sensitive issues including the Felda management, Jamaah Islamiyah, and the sports betting licence[12].

These occasions are very closely connected with the media laws implemented in Malaysia, and the PPPA defines 'newspaper' as "any publication containing news, intelligence, reports of occurrences or any remarks, observations or comments, in relation to such news, intelligence or occurrences, or to any other matter of public interest, or any magazine, comic or other forms of *periodical* printed in any language for sale or free distribution at regular or irregular intervals, but does not include any publication published by or for the Federal or any State Government or the Government of Singapore" (PPPA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 6; my emphasis). It is noted here that in order to be categorised as a newspaper, a particular publication has to be 'periodical' in nature.

In articulating the necessity for a newspaper to gain a permit, Part III of PPPA under 'Permit to Publish Newspaper' notes that:

> "[n]o person shall print, import, publish, sell, circulate or distribute, or offer to publish, sell, circulate or distribute, any newspaper printed in Malaysia or Singapore unless there has been granted by the Minister in respect of such newspaper a permit… [and/or] prints any newspaper in respect of which a permit has not been granted or in respect of which a permit has been revoked or suspended; or imports, publishes, sells, circulates or distributes, or offers to publish, sell, circulate or distribute, or has in his possession for any such purpose, any newspaper printed in Malaysia or Singapore in

respect of which no permit has been granted or in respect of which a permit has been revoked or suspended, shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or to a fine not exceeding twenty thousand ringgit or to both" (PPPA Laws of Malaysia, 2006: 8). This clause states clearly that in order to print a newspaper in Malaysia, the publisher needs a permit granted by the Ministry, and that, the power of the Ministry is absolute, "If, in any cases, the permit is suspended or revoked, the minister's final decision shall be final and shall not be called in question by any court on any ground whatsoever" (PPPA Laws of Malaysia, 2006: 15).

This can be done at any time: "The Minister may at any time revoke or suspend a permit for any period he considers desirable" (PPPA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 9). Whenever a minister feels that the newspaper's practice is harmful, based on the definition in clause 7 (1):

"If the Minister is satisfied that any publication contains any article, caricature, photograph, report, notes, writing, sound, music, statement or any other thing which is in any manner prejudicial to or likely to be prejudicial to public order, morality, security, or which is likely to alarm public opinion, or which is or is likely to be contrary to any law or is otherwise prejudicial to or is likely to be prejudicial to public interest or national interest, he may in his absolute discretion by order published in the *Gazette* prohibit, either absolutely or subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, the printing, importation, production, reproduction, publishing, sale, issue, circulation, distribution or possession of that publication and future publications of the publisher concerned" (PPPA Laws of Malaysia, 2006: 9-10).

The ministry also has the power to arrest any individual or party without warrant if "any person [is] found committing or reasonably suspected of committing or of having committed or of attempting to commit or of procuring or abetting any person to commit any offence under this Act" (PPPA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 17). These provisions, which obviously limit freedom of expression in Malaysia, are opposed by Kumpulan Aktivis Media Independent (KAMI), formed by a group of journalists from Malay language media. This group asked for the state leniency in terms of publishing more political news about the opposition, and thus greater press freedom (Iga 2009; Journalist Hh4 Personal communication).

Besides PPPA, there are other laws that could affect press freedom either directly or indirectly. The *Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA)* gives the police power to detain an individual or party without trial, as stated in Section 73(1), if "he has acted or is about to act or is likely to act in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia or any part thereof or to maintenance of essential services therein or to the economic life thereof" (ISA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 61). The act was historically drafted to combat the influence of communism

in Malaysia (Safar 1996) and is now implemented to contain activities which are threats to national security. Section 8(1) of the ISA provides that:

> "If the Minister (Home Minister) is satisfied that the detention of any person is necessary with a view to preventing him from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of Malaysia or any pan ? thereof or to the maintenance of essential services therein or to the economic life thereof, he may make an order (hereinafter referred to as a detention order) directing that person be detained for any period not exceeding two years," (ISA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 81)

This suggests that the definition of 'manner' that is considered threatening the nation's security is at the hand of the state. Thus, this can also include any message published and distributed to the citizen that the state regards as endangering national stability. In addition, the Minister also has the power to ban any publication if it:

> (a) contains any incitement to violence
> (b) counsels disobedience to the law or any lawful order
> (c) is calculated or likely to lead to the breach of peace, or to promote feelings of hostility between different races or classes of the population
> (d) is prejudicial to the national interest, public order, or security of Malaysia (ISA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 27)

These provisions are emphasised further in the Official Secret Act 1972 (OSA), an act which impedes any enclosure by government officials concerning national security, defence, and international relations to the public. However, at the same time, the act also provides that any official letter, information, or material classified by the Minister, the Chief Minister of State, or an appointed public officer as 'Top Secret', 'Secret', 'Confidential', or 'Restricted' (OSA Laws of Malaysia 1998: 277) should also not be accessible to the journalists. Thus, many government documents are unreasonably classified as 'official secret', seriously destabilising the right to information (Mohd Azizudin 2005: 348).

In addition to this, journalists must also be very cautious about reporting stories that might contain seditious information. The Sedition Act 1948 (SA) was tightened after the 13 May Tragedy, and amended in February 1971, enabling the state to prosecute anyone who questions the citizenship status of non-Malays, the status of the Malay language as the national language and other languages used by other races, and the special rights of Malaysians or other racial interests affecting the sovereignty of the Malay Rulers (SA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 5). This act has also been used to control publications by the opposition through Section 3(1) and Section 4(1), which enforce precisely the matters stated, whereby

these are the matters more likely to be discussed in the opposition publications. Section 9(1) further stated that anyone can be prosecuted for publishing materials classified by the Court as seditious (SA Laws of Malaysia 2006: 9). The state has often threatened to suspend the permit of the opposition newspapers such as the Hh and *The Rocket,* owned by DAP, for seditious reasons (Mohd Azizudin 2005).

The implementation of various media laws in Malaysia further suggests the question of the freedom of the press, and it remains under strict scrutiny (Lent 1979; Mohamad Azizuddin 2005; Mustafa 2005a, 2005b). *The Press Freedom Index* (PFI) published by Reporters Without Borders ranked Malaysia at number 141 of 178 countries, worsen than its place of 131st in 2009 in a "Difficult Situation" pertaining its freedom of the press[13]. Freedom House rate Malaysia as "Not Free", ranking them 143rd of 196 countries in 2010. In the PFI, the lower the score, the better the rank of a country in terms of the press freedom. In the Southeast Asian region, Malaysia is ranked below East Timor in 18th place, the Philippines in 21st, Indonesia in 23th, Thailand 29th, and Cambodia 30th, but Malaysia is above Singapore at 32nd, Brunei 34th, and Vietnam in 36th [14]. In 2011, the Press Freedom Index 2011/2012 increased, as Malaysia moved up to 122nd place, as compared to its 141th place ranking the previous year[15]. Despite this increase, there are a lot of democracy-related issues that need to be carefully and wisely handled. This makes the case clear to some who criticised Malaysia for not having 'full' democracy (Case 1993).

The basis of such criticism is the fact that there is a risk to "jump to the legal or national security context" without properly addressing a way to get there. In the case of press freedom in Malaysia, the security of the nation is always associated with limited press freedom, but how exactly that can be achieved has never been clearly explained. Each step (in the explanation) has to be "paid in full", meaning that everything related to achieving harmony and success has to be made visible and explained. In ANT, three concepts that help do that are panorama, oligopticon, and plug-in.

8.3 The Precarious Relationship Between Hh and the State

These concepts are useful in making visible the associations between Hh and the state. Based on the background information provided earlier in this chapter, it is apparent that there exists a precarious relationship between the opposition newspaper and the ruling party. However, what is yet to be discovered is how exactly these associations are explained, and how it affects what becomes news at Hh.

8.3.1 A Panoramic Analysis

The discussion starts with the panoramic analysis of Hh to the state, and the state to Hh. This suggests the peculiar and fragile position of Hh. In this section, based on the ethnographic interviews with Journalist Hh4, I will discuss the role of PAS, their discourses and claims, and how Hh is an extension of PAS. The panoramic analysis of the relationship between Hh and the state demonstrates that context appears 'all at once', where it can only be done if it is already formatted in a way that is recognisable. In this instance, it is crucial for a researcher to avoid replacing the context by the actor with our own imagined contexts. This makes a panoramic analysis distinct with studies that pre-determine contexts to understand social actions. Thus, this analysis enables us to trace associations by 'globalising the local'.

In global politics, some have argued that the phenomenon of Islamic radicalisation is the effect of misinterpretations of some Quranic verses, as the "[j]ihadis continue to use the same texts, quotes, and religious evidence as other Salafis, but they have developed new understandings about context and concepts such as 'belief,' 'defence against aggression,' and 'civilians'" (Wiktorowicz 2005: 76). Whilst the exact definition of jihad agreed among most Muslim scholars is the struggle for internal purification (of the soul), the jihadis interpret jihad as a duty of glory in war against powers that they define as 'infidels' or kafirs. According to the jihadis, this includes the violent removal of rulers who do not implement the Islamic laws (Wiktorowicz 2005). It is the following verse in the Quran that has been so misinterpreted by jihadis: "O prophet! Strive vigorously against the infidels and those who are inauthentic in their faith, and be very aggressive against them. Hell is where they are at home, and their strategies are evil" (Surah 66:9 The Quran).

Quintan Wiktorowicz, a former Rhodes College professor who has served in the White House since January 2011 as a member of the National Security Council and is thus strategically interested in a specific panorama, studied young British Muslims. He concluded that there is a tendency of attraction to radical Islam and becoming terrorists among youngsters who do not have solid religious grounding in Islamic teachings. Wiktorowicz (2005) concluded that because of the misinterpretations of the Quran by the jihadis (and the misinterpretations forming another, competing, panorama), there will be more possibility of attacks in the future because the idea that 'infidels that must be combated' contradicts the teachings of Islam.

Bringing the global story of Islamic radicalisation into Malaysia, PAS is an example that would perhaps best be suited to the 'localised' example of Islamic radicalisation, at least in the eyes of the state. The main substance of the party is "Islam", and PAS calls for the people to come back to the true teachings of Islam to disseminate *dakwah* (preaching messages) through oral, written and practice-based methods on the Syariat (command) of Allah and the Messenger Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him)[16]. Previous discussions on the establishment of news values of Hh in Chapter 5 have shown that ideological (religious) interest (besides political interest) are accredited in the cycles of credit of Hh, that every opportunity that makes news is also taken up as a chance to preach Islam to its readership. This is in line with the aim to create a country whose governance is cultured with Islamic norms that are 'blessed by Allah' (PAS website).

An example of the panoramic view of Journalist Hh4, pertaining to gambling activities and pictures published by the mainstream newspapers which contradict Islamic norms:

> XX for example publish gambling results but also publish half naked pictures and religious feature at the same time. This is strange to me because, how do the (Muslim) journalists feel when their newspapers publish such thing, sometimes up to half of the back page. Now, there is a text service for readers to get the number (gambling number)... We can find this in all Malay newspapers, UM and BH too, but not as bad as XX... I think it is because we are an Islamic party, so in whatever we do, including journalism, we have to follow the teachings of Islam. And personally I won't work in a newspaper that publishes good religious article but also publish gambling advertisements...I think that is a form of Islamic journalism too... that is what we [the Hh] are trying to do through our preaching messages, the party messages.

This quote suggests that the practices of gambling and publishing indecent pictures, which are forbidden in Islam, are also seen as sinister activities by Journalist Hh4. Furthermore, he makes an effortless connection between Hh, religion, and party politics, thereby asserting a rather different view on what this newspaper is. This is the work of panoramas: presenting a world-all-at-once without having to make the connections visible. It is a hugely effective device for not having to show the mediating steps. Thus (as another effortless move), Hh does not publish any gambling results, although this would have definitely become an additional source of income. This is presented as a "moral stance" which is *directly* (that is, without mediation), derived from the panoramic identification of the newspaper itself. As Journalist Hh4 said: "I do not understand why they [the state] do not have any humanity side in our case... if we demonstrate, they say that we are causing the

small stalls to close business. But when they suspend us, that means we are losing a lot of money [too] because we cannot sell the newspaper and we don't get advertisement for three months… and this makes it hard for me to ensure all my journalists are working in a stable company and they don't have to worry about their monthly pay".

Not publishing gambling results, however, is not related to the ban, but it suggests that although Hh does need money to operate and they can generate money by publishing gambling results, they do not choose to do so. The importance of financial support is apparent from one of Journalist Hh4's statements: "In the modern world now, we cannot only [live on] the spirit to oppose but also [need] money, so this suspension is a big trouble to us. I don't want to see my journalists working part-time because they don't get enough with us to support the family". Here, the quote suggests a peculiar relationship between the suspension of Hh and the economics of Hh, although it is an ideologically driven news organisation (see Chapter 5). The financial impact of the suspension seems to significantly become the major burden to Hh, but Hh still stands firmly alongside its opinion that revenues from publishing gambling results is *haram* in Islam, thus publishing them should also be prohibited, although doing so would help the company in stabilising its financial difficulties.

Overall, the Hh is a small news organisation, whose maximum advertising revenue, based on Journalist Hh4, would only reach up to RM250,000 a month. In this sense, it is obvious that the state has the power to destabilise Hh through suspension, and the suspension is not only a threat in terms of not being able to disseminate political messages to the readers, but also the risk of losing money and thus affecting the whole operation of Hh. The link between the precariousness and refusing to support gambling thus amplifies the moral texture of the panoramic view, indicating that we are dealing here with a radically committed and religiously motivated organisation.

From here, we can also identity that Hh is treated as an extension of PAS when Journalist Hh4 equates 'preaching messages' similar to the 'party messages'. The panoramic view of the practices of Hh is based on Islam, the Quran, and Hadith:

> PAS administration was changed to the Ulama leadership in 1982. From there, the Ulama leadership has started where the Ulama is the leader (of the party) but we maintain similar policies. Our policies are maintained based on the Quran, Hadith, Ijmak Ulama and Qias… Until today, the party evolves where there is a reduced number of Ulama leaders in the party but they are at least Ustaz (Islamic religious leader in a lower hierarchy than the Ulama). It is however still known as the Ulama leadership. The Hh readers want Hh because of this; it contains something that other

mainstream newspapers do not cover politics and Islam. In PAS we have politics and Islam. UMNO has the politics but not Islam.

Journalist Hh4 also stated Islamic elements this among his considerations in determining the front page of Hh. This interviewee also stated that they "need to be careful too, because what we [Hh] say is interpreted as what PAS says. So we cannot make any mistake on this because it will affect the party that we are supporting." From here, the panoramic analysis suggests that the formatted context of Hh is always related to PAS. This is when the propaganda, and evangelising role of Hh is apparent, when Islam is associated with a political party that needs support among the readers.

However, Journalist Hh4 also has his own panoramic view about the moderate Islamism of the state; to him the state has 'politics' but not 'Islam'. The labeling between the "correct" or "wrong" Islam between UMNO and PAS, and "who is more Islamic?" has dominated mainstream media in Malaysia (Liow 2003), cultivating the polarised arguments about Islam. Islam in Malaysia is to some extent viewed as 'moderate' (Shamsul 2003: 104), which has been one of the central criticisms of PAS. Thus, the 'Islamicisation' of Malaysia is performed by PAS through its organ party, Hh. Hh differentiates itself from other mainstream newspapers because it contains something that other mainstream newspapers do not cover: politics and Islam. "In PAS we have politics and Islam" (Journalist Hh4).

To the state, PAS's views are radical and thus contain a risk. On issues pertaining to the Islamic state, Syariah and Hudud laws, and even matters related to Islamic dress, the state seems to portray itself through the mainstream media as 'progressive' and 'moderate' and practicing 'correct' Islam. PAS are labelled 'conservative', 'radical', and 'deviationist'— even 'wrong' Islam (Liow 2009: 6). This is the panorama of the state to the PAS regarding the evaluation of 'Islam' and correct Islamic practices, that together with the contradictory panoramic view of Journalist Hh4 about Islam, the state and journalism practice form the panoramic overview of the peculiar and fragile position of Hh.

This suggests the state prefers to continue the path to modernity by maintaining moderate Islam in order to be able to play a role in globalised capitalism, not just with the west but also with China, Japan, and India. This was obvious when recently the Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin called for greater diversity in trading between Malaysia and China, including oil and gas, high-value agriculture, green technology, financial services, and information technology[17]. Here, the contradiction of panoramic views between Hh [thus PAS]

and the state suggests a process of 'localising the global', where PAS can become a vehicle for the threat of radicalised Islam, and 'globalising the local' when the state continues to indicate that Malaysia wants to remain a modern country to be able to play a role in globalised capitalism. Thus, although Hh is only a small news organisation in Malaysia, it is a risk and a threat to the state because it is able to bring in "global forces" (associated with radical Islam and jihadism).

Specifically pertaining to the suspension of Hh, Journalist Hh4 saw the move to suspend Hh (23 March 2009) right before three by-elections scheduled on 7 April 2009 (3 April 2009) as a populist move by the Prime Minister-to-be in order to gain support. He gave his panoramic view about the reason of the suspension:

> …we can see that Najib (the current Prime Minister of Malaysia) is trying to gain some political mileage (by suspending Hh)… because on 23 March he can suspend and after 2 or 3 days he can let us operate again, but the other day he can suspend again… we however have to face the loss, I thought around RM400, 000 when we can't publish three issues, plus the advertisements… This is a populist act (by Najib)… Hh and other alternative newspapers live on the compassion of state. If they are compassionate to us they will let (us to print the newspaper), if not they will suspend. Meaning that we are always in position of scared of what will happen… To me, this is a form of political games…

The word compassion is striking here. It signals absolute dependency both in terms of Hh as relying on the state, and the appeal to the state to embrace a moral imperative. Besides expressing his panoramic view about the new Prime Minister, this quote also suggests the role of law as the real power that determines newsworthiness at the Hh. This will later be discussed in the subtopic 'oligoptic analysis' after this section, but for now, it is crucial to identify Journalist Hh4's panorama of the prime minister's motivations, which he sees as driving the state's actions.

However, the view is not necessarily true, as for now, it remains a panoramic analysis and how the real power is channelled can only be revealed in the oligoptic analysis. To Hh, it is still a risk to Hh because they are never able to predict when and why they might be suspended by the state. We have seen that, through the PPPA, the state can suspend any newspaper even without reason, as long as they think it has the potential to threaten national security. Thus, again, Journalist Hh4 shared his panoramic view that this was the cause of the permit suspension: "It is unfair that, if Hh publishes a particular story about UMNO, then all of the news is wrong [thus a threat to the country]. Is it wrong to publish a story about a

corrupt politician where newspapers should be the watchdog to the state, in line with the teaching of Islam?"

This argument supports Janet Steele's (2011) findings that Malaysian and Indonesian journalists who work in the mainstream media (rather than Islamic media) generally argued their functions in journalism as the "same as the goals of religions: to seek justice, to help the poor, to promote equal distribution of wealth, and to fight against corruption" (Fathi Aris Omar[18] quoted in Steele 2011: 536). Although the main language of most of the journalists interviewed by Steele does include the Western practice of journalism, they do so within the Islamic discourse, which they believe indirectly influenced their journalism practice although they are not directly involved in publishing Islamic publications.

Journalist Hh4 also posits his panoramic view about how an Islamic newspaper should play the role in a country, suggesting the role Hh should play in Malaysian public sphere:

> In terms of being an Islamic newspaper, we are open to various interpretations. Some classified the Hh as a purely political newspaper, not an Islamic newspaper. I thought that in this issue, if our leaders only write their columns about the preached messages and do not touch on the political issues, the state wont' be furious with us. But we have touched issues related to their power, their survival… In terms of news published in the Muslim country like Malaysia, there is still a question whether it should cover only stories related to preaching, goodness, the history of the Islamic civilisation, *fiqh*[19] and *fardhu ain*[20]? Or, should it also include the wrongdoings of the politicians but without quoting any parts of the Quran? It should offer a check and balance (to the government).

The reference to checks and balances echoes frequently quoted citations from both the work of Montesquieu as well as many proponents of journalism studies who see news media as part of the so-called Fourth Estate (Schultz 1998). This complements the view that in Islam, forbidding wrong is particularly important and Muslims have the obligation to stop evil when they see it (Cook 2003). This, however, also suggests the extent of risk Hh poses, where if Hh continues to offer a sort of 'check and balance' from the view of 'radical Islam', it contradicts how the state believes the country should be governed. The specific moralising turn of the Islamist panorama is not very different from the western panoramic moralistic defence of democracy. Where for the one "preaching about wrongdoings" is the essential work of journalists, for the other it is "offering alternative viewpoints to those in charge". Journalist Hh4 offers a view on how an Islamic newspaper should play a role:

Some people said that Hh is a political newspaper, not an Islamic newspaper. But to me, if we only publish religious stories that have nothing to do with criticising the state, limiting ourselves to publish religious features, the state will not even care about our existence. But the thing is, we do touch about their [the state's] survival…but that is how an Islamic newspaper should be, we should always educate the wrong, even it if is the government in power…so I see Hh as complementing other newspapers in Malaysia, especially the mainstream, because the state can voice themselves through those newspapers.

It is by putting itself at risk of being a watchdog to the state that could explain the fragile position of Hh with the government in power. If they decide to publish Hh as merely an Islamic newspaper that contains religious stories but does not criticise the state, it could be argued that their relationship with the state is not so fragile. But Hh keeps publishing stories that are not in favour of the state, breaching the regulations stated in the permit, and putting itself (Hh) at great risk. Journalist Hh4 argued his panoramic view about this:

If at the very beginning someone who applies for the newspaper permit lets them know that it will be a political newspaper, he/she knows that he won't get it (the permit). So what I do is accept (the limitations imposed) and fight later (when the newspaper starts to publish). For example, why was *Detik*[21] banned? Because *Detik* published many political stories while the permit is for an education magazine. Fine, people will blame (me). Why did I publish political stories in an education magazine? But if I apply for a political magazine, they (the government) will not let me… So this is the way, it is not that I want to deceive them… As for me, I believe that in a democratic country, it should practice democracy. As a political party, we have the right to share our voices during the elections though the mass media.

The continuous breaching of regulations by Hh pertaining to what becomes news is very much related to Hh4's panoramic view about the 'formatted' situation of granting a permit to publish a newspaper or a magazine in Malaysia. If it is declared in advance that content will contain political stories (and worse, opposition political stories), the publication will not be allowed. Particularly in this example, I argue that the state has shown a bit of leniency in terms of enforcing the media laws by allowing Hh and other alternative newspapers to publish and disseminate to the readers, albeit continuously breaking the laws. This, however, to some, is still insufficient, because as a democratic country, the state should uphold greater freedom of the press. This is, in Journalist Hh4's view, a slip in practicing democracy in Malaysia. His belief in practicing 'democracy' is then very close to the way he articulates his panorama about press freedom:

To me, the issue that should be discussed is not that we are pursuing unlimited press freedom. That is a non-issue because as a Muslim, we are born with certain things that cannot be done as stated in the Quran. We do not want to be too free like the Westerners… The issue here is, we do not want to be constrained by the acts[22] that

suggest we do not have any right to say anything at all. This is not even Western, not even Islamic… I do not know what they [the state] use! They [the state] should at least give us the chance to bring any matters to trial before any decision [whether it is guilty or not guilty] is decided.

It is not ultimate freedom that Journalist Hh4 asked for, but tolerance from the state in allowing equal opposing voices. This echoes Steele's (2011) findings that most Indonesian journalists she interviewed admitted that they are after 'justice' rather than 'freedom'. Journalist Hh4 implicitly seeks 'justice' for the opposition in the media, but the problem is that it seems to be more than the legal definition of press freedom Malaysia allows. Otherwise, this contradicts the Islamic teaching that one's life be guided with certain *halal* and *haram* doings. Perhaps this is the crucial transition that the state does not want to happen; thus, the real power the state possesses is then channelled to hinder the influence of Hh and PAS.

8.3.2 An Oligoptic Analysis

This is obviously our most difficult time after the publication of Hh for 22 years. Although there has been lots of oppression and seizure, we have never been suspended. Even in Dr Mahathir's regime, which many describe as a dictatorship, we have never been suspended. We are limited to certain limitations…but not like this. This is a new record. But they [the state] can suspend the permit again, such as on the 23 March and they can do [suspend] it again in the future…we are at the mercy of the state, but we never have the right (Journalist Hh4, responding on the Hh first permit suspension by the state in 2009).

Oligoptic analysis discusses the way real power is performed by the state to reduce the risk they perceived instigated by Hh. It is indeed shocking, as expressed by Journalist Hh4 in the quote above, because the permit has not been suspended before, and he described it as a 'new record' in the history of Hh publication. Nevertheless, he admitted that he always thought of the laws and regulations when deciding newsworthiness at Hh, that he always needed to think of the impact of his decisions on the lifespan of Hh and how that might be affected by the media laws in the country. The various laws stated earlier are examples of the real power of the state that can, at any time, halt the periodical publication of a newspaper.

In this analysis, I will show how risk is played out between Hh and the state as a continuous exchange of risk-perceptions and risk assessment through what is described as features of oligopticon in the relationship between Hh and the state. Journalist Hh4 said:

…regulations that inhibit the sales [of Hh] to the general public (besides the party members). It is only allowed to be sold at the party centres and to the PAS party members. Those who are not (party members) could not buy [Hh]…Thirdly, the content of Hh could only contain activities about PAS… We do understand that… (However), Hh is a party newspaper, a party that is legal and approved by law. We also contest in elections and are able to collapse the state. We contest to plunge them.

The oligopticon of the state works to isolate Hh from mass readers in two main ways: first, by excluding the Hh from information flows, and by imposing the condition that Hh is only allowed to be sold to the PAS party members at the party centres. In both senses, the access of Hh to what Habermas (1989) has called "the public sphere" only goes through the tentacles of the state. This is also achieved through a third form of oligoptic intervention: by limiting the content to only cover stories related to PAS and nothing outside the party. These are obviously methods used by the state to contain the influence of Hh as a form of risk-management.

Through various laws, real power is spread. For example, based on the personal experience of Journalist Hh4:

> Home Ministry arrested me, and seized the publications. I have been in trials because of an article but I don't remember the title anymore. I needed to pay RM5000 at that time but when I appealed with the High Court, I won. The reason [of the arrest] was I published a newspaper without permit. I showed them that a one-off publication does not need any permit. But the magistrate court cannot decide on that matter, so they asked me to refer to the high court. Then the high court said I am not guilty. They [Home Ministry] go to shops and other places that sell those [one-off publications], although I told them that this kind [of newspaper] does not need a permit. This [the act of arresting] is to me just to make people scared. I know this because the Home Ministry once said "we have done everything, arrest, seizure etc., but nothing stops him. What we can do is to stop people from buying the newspaper… I have experienced this, but through PPPA anything decided under this act could not be taken to trial… They [the state] can ban at any time. If they want to suspend the permit, they can, without any reasons…

These are examples of how real power is implemented by the PPPA to inhibit the distribution of Hh to the masses. This includes the point when the state, through the Home Ministry, seizes the publications from the public shops and arrests Journalist Hh4. Journalist Hh4 shared his experience of publishing a one-off publication that is not safeguarded by the PPPA:

> Besides Hh, I have the experience making my own newspaper, a newspaper that publishes once and not periodically. I published 'Warta', 'Kritik'… The Act [PPPA] is very containing, but there is still weakness in the act, [because] they can publish a newspaper, a one-off publication, but not a periodical [without permit].

This suggests that PPPA contains a flaw, in the sense that it does not cover 'one-off publications' that might contain stories that disagree with the state. This flaw could be argued to be because the real power of the state is not everywhere (panopticon), thus they [the state] do not see everything. These areas temporarily remain out of the reach of the government, and Hh can mobilise its support. Even though the PPPA could be further tightened to block all one-off publications, the state would still struggle to keep everything under its control, including those that perform the control.

Besides the PPPA, another way the power of the state is applied to reduce the impact of the Hh is obstructing the access to news sources. Journalist Hh4 explained how the journalists of Hh have reduced access to certain events, or government documents are not accessible for news construction, and even state events are made inaccessible.

> In Malaysia, it is not only an opposition newspaper that faces various prejudicial allegations [from the state], but in general, being the opposition [itself] is seen as subversive, damaging the country, etc. So it is not strange when we do not get the *Bernama*[23] accreditation, the card from *Bernama* that enables our journalists to enter events. With the media tag from the Information Department, we still were not able to enter all events. Certain events such as the UMNO Assembly Meeting are not allowed. So our chance to get potential sources for news is inhibited…. Similar to the OSA, they won't let any information leak to us… so if we get something, the source usually requests to be anonymous.

This is the main way that news at Hh is constructed, especially in stories that rely on news sources outside the party [PAS]. According to Journalist Hh4, this has negatively affected the credibility of Hh as a newspaper, mainly because stories are continuously provided from uncertain sources. Although in some cases the sender will be more comfortable communicating sensitive information with the receiver by being anonymous, "the inability to identify the sender may lead receivers to question the sender's credibility and undermine his or her message" (Rains quoted in Rains and Scott 2007: 62).

A similar situation also affects news construction at *Malaysiakini*. It was reported in 2006[24] that the online newspaper had been denied access to UMNO assembly for not having the press accreditation card issued by the Information Ministry. In order to apply for the official pass, the newspaper needs to have the permit issued by Internal Security Ministry. In the case of *Malaysiakini*, this seems impossible because as an online newspaper, they are not subject to have the permit, thus enabling them to apply for the official media pass. *Malaysiakini* too, has been rejected a *Bernama* official press tag on similar grounds. In

2009[25], a similar occurrence happened, where the journalists were banned from the assembly, although in 2008, they received the Information Ministry's media tags.

In a narrower example pertaining to news source availability, Journalist Hh4 explains how an academic is also subsumed by the fear of sharing their comments on political happenings in Malaysia, despite being a political science academic:

> The culture of being afraid (*takut*) when making statements to the press [Hh]… Just imagine a political science university lecturer, such as a friend of mine, Dr Agus. Agus[26] is scared to make any statements to Hh although he is my friend… He once made statements about Batu Putih[27], and I quote the statement when he criticized the state and it was only one paragraph [long]. He received the warning letter [from the state]. Now he has got three warning letters and he does not dare [to give statements to the Hh] anymore…although [to give comments] about recent political situation in Malaysia. So just imagine, in my situation now, when my news sources are not able to make statements [for the news]… I am not accessible to so many people [news sources].

The culture of being 'afraid', as described by Journalist Hh4, refers to the potential news sources of Hh and by Mustafa K. Anuar (2005b), which found that the culture of '*takut-takut*' (fear) cropped up not only among the journalists of the mainstream media during press conferences with the politicians, but also in an implicit culture cultivated among journalism students in Malaysia by suggesting dominant news values that make news. Mustafa writes:

> "For example, a Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) student, Ali Bukhari Amir, was directed in December 2004 to get clearance from the university authority before publishing his news reports or articles in the media. Ali, a journalism student, was investigated by a university's investigation committee on the allegation that his articles that were published in the campus' student newspaper, *Berita Kampus*, and the organ of opposition party PAS, Hh, smeared USM's image" (SUARAM, 2005: 82-83) (Mustafa K. Anuar 2005b: 66).

This suggests that what becomes news has been very closely associated with the real oligoptic power of the state and has, through various laws and regulations, been applied to various levels of the public sphere including potential news sources and future journalists in Malaysia. Ali Bukhari, currently working with *MalaysiaKini* and a freelance writer at Hh, continued his journalism affinity by writing to the alternative online newspaper *MalaysiaKini*, which enables him to practice in line with how he believes it should function (Ali Bukhari 2009 Personal communication). Fathi Aris Omar, the Chief Editor of *MalaysiaKini*, in an interview with Janet Steele (2011) added that the state has been wary of the possibility of the younger generation being critical to the state and joining the opposition when he, based on his first-hand experience, "had…enrolled in a college of preparatory

studies, a special program for bright young people who hoped to study overseas. But the government switched the program," he explained, "to reduce sending many Muslim people, because one of the political realities is that those who went overseas then normally became critical of the government and joined the opposition PAS" (Fathi Aris Omar quoted in Steele 2011: 541). Steele's (2011) analysis found that the Quran has been the source of inspiration among the journalists in Malaysia and Indonesia in their definition of what is right and what is wrong in journalism, turning us to the subject of plug-ins.

8.3.3 Plug-ins

When context is realised through plug-ins and not already 'out there', this spells the difference between how context is understood from the social construction perspective, and from ANT. Contexts are never permanent, but they are continuously realised from the circulated plug-ins that do not determine a person's action at a distance, but that still make someone do something (Latour 2005). This emphasises the relevance of talking about 'intensive context' rather than 'extensive context' (Strathern 2002), because it is exactly the action of each individual that is later formed into collective actions. Permanent contexts such as political (collective) actions of a culture should not be seen as existing 'already out there'. Thus, plug-ins are devices that enable us to access perceived risks. In the case of newsworthiness construction at Hh, it is the maintenance of the Quran (Fischer 2009), but it is law that make the officers 'do something'. These factors initiate the acts of the officers at the Home Ministry.

These plug-ins are in line with Ernst's (2003) views when discussing the Muslim perception of the West, particularly in terms of political differences with religious positions that suggest there is a tendency of the state to label the followers of Islam as 'radical', opposing the views of the state. In this instance, it implies that what contributes to the realisation of the contexts of the precarious relationship between Hh and the state are both the Quran (to the followers) and the laws (enforced by the state).

Thus, the first plug-in is the Quran. The data suggest that it is the Quran that makes Hh journalists *do* something. The Quran is the religious script believed by the Muslims to be the final testament from Allah to the *ummah* (group of Muslims). At Hh, the Quran has been the main force that triggers the action of the journalists. Journalist Hh4 said the purpose of publishing a story should enable individuals to promote goodness to others and to prevent evil, or *amar makruf nahi mungkar*. This aim is clearly stated in the Quran, and to Journalist

Hh4, "this is achieved through the publications of news related to political wrongdoings such as corruption and the misuse of tax payers' money. Just imagine a politician is bribed for 5 million Ringgit for 50 acres of land … We publish this story, [but] are these [publications of these kind of stories] wrong [in the eyes of the state]? ... I believe that we [Hh] have our own followers, we have the voice, we have the say to push the state [to avoid such misconducts].

It can be argued that news becomes 'wrong' in the eyes of the state not because it is related with Islam. As in the case of other non-religious publications whose permits had been revoked, such as the newspapers '*Watan*' and '*Eksklusif*', both are said to have allocated a large space of news about the oppositions in their publications. Both newspapers were banned in 2000 for publishing political stories not favouring the state. Thus, the threat of suspension is very much related to the threat of the state. In the case of Hh and the strong plug-in such as the Quran, in a country where the majority of the population are Muslims, it is apparent that news published by Hh is a great threat to the state. However, although the banning of Hh is risky, because it claims affinity with a very strong ally that also consists of many international connections, the state will not be able to control it otherwise.

However, at the same time, the Quran is a plug-in of Hh that can also be seen as merely a political move of PAS to gain support from the party members. Some argued for the need to clearly distinguish between 'Islam as a religion, and Islam as a political ideal' (Steele 2011: 542). Steele quoted a journalist from *MalaysiaKini* Fauwaz Abdul Aziz, who has left *MalaysiaKini* because of the excessive reporting about the sexual misconduct of a Malaysian politician, explaining why he does not work or write for Hh. He answered by saying, "It's a party organ". This is because Hh belongs to PAS, and is thus 'politicised' (Fauwaz Abdul Aziz quoted in Steele 2011: 542). This suggests that the Islamiiczation of the public sphere by Hh is seen by some as merely political rhetoric. Justice in terms of news writing that is truly Islamic "cannot be controlled by political power, even an Islamic power" (Steele 2011: 542).

To Hh, to have the Quran (although can be used as both the political and ideological motivations) as an ally is thus not without a price. The state also has the potential to deploy the Quran as a plug-in, and also has powerful international connections that can turn against the Islamicisation of politics on the basis of Islam itself. Plug-ins always contain risks: risks that one gets more than one has bargained for as well as risks of chickens coming home to roost.

At the same time, laws are enforced to contain the influence of Hh to the readers, and thus the citizens. The various laws implemented (as discussed in the oligoptic analysis) suggest that the laws themselves create the particular context of what makes news in Malaysia. The enforcement of laws causes journalists to become cautious of their actions, whether this or that kind of reporting will have any legal impact on thems or their news organisation. Through laws, the context of 'social responsibility' journalism is created to maintain national development (Mustafa 2005b).

Although laws are the plug-ins used by the state to control Hh, it is also laws that 'make Hh do something'. Besides the way Hh chose to report their stories, Journalist Hh4 also added that it was in part because the PPPA is too restrictive to opposition publications:

> I call for all to initiate a movement to abolish this act. There must be a move to abolish this. If we already have GMI (*Gerakan Mansuh ISA* or Anti-ISA Movement), Anti PPSMI, it is the time now to have the movement of abolishing the PPPA. With the act, we [journalists] have nothing. Once convicted, we can't appeal for not guilty… Even without out reason, they [the state] can find us guilty.

This suggests that the confinement of journalists' actions established from PPPA do create a weak association between Hh and the state because in many instances, what matters to Hh is a risk to the state, thus a threat. The protest regarding PPPA does not stop here. Recently, on 16 September 2011, the Prime Minister made a promise to abolish PPPA so that there would be no need for newspapers to renew their license annually. However, amendments[28] were only made after the law was tabled in the Dewan Rakyat by Deputy Home Miniser Datuk Wira Abu Seman Yusof on 18 April and passed at 2.15pm on 20 April 2012. The amendments include:

> Firstly, the amendments removed the home minister's "absolute discretion" to approve, reject, suspend or revoke a newspaper's permit under subsections 3(3) and 6(1).

> The minister's decision can now be questioned in court under Section 13A(1). In addition, a newspaper must be allowed to be "heard" under Section 13B before the home ministry decides to suspend or revoke the licence.

> Section 12 was also amended to scrap the need for the print media to apply for annual permits.

> However, subsection 6(2) still provides the home minister the power to suspend a publication for as long as the minister considers "desirable".

In other words, a newspaper's publishing licence will remain valid until it is suspended or revoked by the home ministry once the amendments are enforced.[29]

In the same report, CIJ and NUJ had also commented on the development:

CIJ thinks the PPPA should be repealed entirely and newspapers should be free to publish without the need for a government permit.

It said there are sufficient laws in place to deal with newspapers that publish false news without the need for ministerial oversight.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) was reported to share CIJ's position that the need for a permit should be scrapped.

When nothing much can be done by media activists, thus the continuous control over what can become news to newspapers like Hh, it can be concluded that the situation with Hh is precarious because of its weak association with both plug-ins, the Quran and the laws. The use of the Quran as a plug-in has not been effective in terms of mobilising strength, although this is perhaps something that enables PAS to maintain a populist appeal. Similarly, in terms of the association of Hh with the law, the continuous perceived risk and threat of Hh to the state advocates the continued precarious relationship between them.

8.3.4 The Associations between Hh and the State: Connecting Sites Within the Precarious Relationship

It is when formatted (panorama) and unformatted (oligopticon) devices are both localised and globalised that the different sites (global and local) can be connected. Thus, connecting sites is a matter of 'formatting' these situations, and will enable us to understand a particular action based on 'localised' actions. Actions are *not* "mysteriously carried out and at the same time distributed to others" (Latour 2005: 45). To Latour, action "should remain a surprise, a mediation, an event". Thus, "[s]ince…what makes us act is *not* made of social stuff; it can be *associated* together in new ways" (Latour 2005: 45-46; original emphasis). This is exactly because "no one knows how many people are simultaneously at work in any given individual; conversely, no one knows how much individuality there can be in a cloud of statistical data points" (Latour 2005: 54). Consequently it is pertinent to argue that actor networks (or associations) are never 'just local', just as we can argue that contexts are never 'just global'. As we have seen so far, the situation at Hh is very real, and at the same time very local, yet it is entangled with forces that stretch beyond Malaysia.

The different 'sites' between Hh and the state are connected through the letters received: (1) the suspension letter and (2) the show-cause letter from the state to Hh. The suspension letter, dated 23 March 2009, as translated in the box below, however, does not contain any reasons for the suspension. The letters says:

THE PERMIT SUSPENSION OF THE PUBLICATION OF "HARAKAH"

The above matter is referred.

Unfortunately, the (Home) Ministry has decided to suspend the permit of "Harakah" for three (3) months effective immediately.

Thank you.

This letter is an example of how the different 'sites' are being connected, when the state worked out the letter as its 'immutable mobile' that controls the shape of Hh by containing the permission to publish. The immutable mobile here works as a 'form' that connects sites. "A form is simply something which allows something else to be transported from one site to another. Form then becomes one of the most important types of translations" (Latour 2005: 223).

The form that connects sites becomes very important because it demonstrates the double move of localising the global and globalising the local. From this example, it suggests that the publishing of Hh is not merely a small, local risk and threat to the state for the distinct way Islam is interpreted and its furious criticisms about the governance, it is now connected to the state itself, where Hh operates through various media laws that could be enforced to Hh at any time necessary from the eyes of the state (oligopticon). These laws do not only realise the context of the determination of news at the Hh (plug-ins), but also suggest the ways Hh handles risks (panorama).

Prior to receiving the suspension letter 'without reason', Hh received a show-cause letter dated 26 February 2009 with a list of content, that requested Hh to reply to the show-cause letter and justify three concerns related to the publication of Hh:

(1) Failure to submit editions of Hh to the (Home) Ministry for the perusal of the Ministry. These editions are however usually submitted in bulk for several editions. This has caused some of the editions to be submitted much later than the publication dates.

(2) Failure to follow the concepts allowed by the Ministry that the content published should be limited to news or features related to PAS only. On the contrary, the content frequently touches other current news and features.

(3) Selling Hh to the people openly is obviously contradictory to the Permit Regulations granted by the Ministry where the distribution of Hh should be limited to the PAS party members only and the distribution and selling of Hh is only allowed in the party's Management Office and PAS Party Meeting Spaces[30].

This show-cause letter, which is not the first one received by Hh, requested particular matters needing clarification from the Hh pertaining its publication. Besides the three main contents that form associations between the state and Hh, the letter also plays the role as an immutable mobile that controls Hh through the enforcement of laws sanctioned by the state, which thus turns the relationship with Hh into a permanent state of precarious existence. It is 'precarious' because, as Journalist Hh4 said, this is not the first show-cause letter they have received; they have in fact received hundreds. At the same time, he is also ready to receive more, because he knows that the state is never happy with what becomes news at Hh.

It is when the 'different' sites are connected, Hh is forced to make a choice: to either remain as a small oppositional, alternative newspaper or to become more mainstream by disassociating itself from PAS and the panoramic links associated with Islamic oppositional politics. Both the panoramic analysis and the oligoptic analysis suggest that the best way for Hh to reduce the precarious relationship with the state is by choosing this option (which is to become more mainstream). However, this is not the choice taken by Hh, even after the suspension.

The time during the suspension has been used not to consider a better relationship with the state, but as a period to continue publishing the voice of the alternative. However, without the formalised masthead of 'Harakah', Hh4 says "we will continue with my way, as I already have the experience; we will publish a one-off publication as a substitute to Hh, but readers know that that is our [PAS] publication. [This suggests] we already follow the laws, we will publish a newspaper named with anything but not Hh…publish once and then the

next will be with a different masthead… Because if we continue to publish the Hh [with the Hh masthead], we can get a greater punishment. That is one of our ways, but personally I am not submissive with this situation".

This was what Journalist Hh4 said on the day they received the suspension letter. However, the suspension was lifted much earlier than the stated duration (three months). He commented on this unexpected situation:

> We wanted to use the time to re-evaluate the weaknesses of Hh, but after they have lifted the suspension to us now, we will continue with what we already have. However, at the same time, we [Hh] also could not always depend on the market that is only open to us when other newspapers are closed. We can't continue publishing only stories that people want because they can't find them in other newspapers… Therefore, we can't solely depend on stories that criticize the state without providing suggestions for the people to consider. They [the people] can also reject us for that reason… If I am still given the mandate to lead Hh until the next election, I will widen the scope of Hh. Now we already have the Harakahdaily, we have Harakah TV[31] we will definitely upgrade TV PAS. We will go and meet the people to know their feedback on the changes that we make.

The latter interview took place the day the suspension was sanctioned and after the suspension was lifted. The plan to publish a one-off publication as a substitute to Hh is an example of the effect of plug-ins (the laws), where it is through the deficit of the law that such a publication is able to be published, but without legal harm to Hh and PAS. Based on Journalist Hh4's experience, because the definition of 'newspaper' in the PPPA is defined as a form of 'periodical that is published regularly', a one-off publication of the newspaper is not defined as a newspaper. Therefore, there is no need for the one-off publication of whatever newspaper that will be published as a replacement to Hh to have a permit and to follow PPPA sanctions.

How Hh wants to continue following the laws despite the containment is also an example that suggests that when a particular wrongdoing from the eyes of the state is performed, there are laws that can be enforced (oligopticon). This interview suggests that the suspension is not the closure of Hh, but the enabling of new forms of action, an enabling of innovation at least in terms of rethinking the weaknesses of what becomes news at Hh. Whether these changes are really performed at Hh is beyond the scope of this study, but the data here suggest a sense of innovation at Hh, which was triggered by the suspension rather than causing the journalists to become demotivated by the struggle.

8.4 Conclusion

The choice to discuss Hh in detail in this chapter is due to the fact that when radical Islam groups operate globally with certain interpretations of Islamic teachings, while Hh is also published by an Islamic opposition party in Malaysia, they interpret Islam distinctly from the state. It is also because Hh is the only opposition newspaper in this study, making it an important newspaper if we want to understand the association of a small organisation that opposes the state. In this precarious relationship, the state upholds a more 'moderate' version of Islam, which enables it to play a bigger role in the international capitalist market. This contradictory view has turned PAS into a risk that threatens the hegemony of the state, not only in terms of the interpretations of Islam, but also in furious and continuous attempts of disseminating opposition messages through its party organ, Hh.

This case study is relevant for the thesis, as it demonstrates the whole idea of examining the 'social' without pre-determined separation between the micro and the macro. This chapter has shown that newsworthiness construction at an oppositional newspaper such as Hh (micro) can be studied in terms of 'associations' with the state (macro context), rather than the causal effect (and pre-determined) of the macro over the micro, the central tenet of ANT. This is exactly what ANT tries to do, which is to show that even small associations (that are traceable) are the connectors that help the understanding of the social. Thus, it turns this case study into a clear example of how such investigation can be performed without the "absent-minded" approach. What has been shown in this case study is that 'everything' that connects Hh and the state is explained visibly and clearly, nothing escapes from detail explanations and becomes trapped by the invisibility of 'contexts'. The aim is obviously to achieve the 'intensive context' rather than 'extensive context' (Strathern 2002), that it is associations that make up the 'social'.

How 'associations' are being made has been demonstrated through concepts from ANT such as 'panorama', 'oligopticon', 'plug-ins' and 'connecting sites'. We have been able to see *how* associations between Hh and the state are made and how these are interrelated with what becomes news at Hh. As discussed, the associations are made not based on the inherent, 'already there' context that pre-determined newsworthiness at Hh, but rather describe all interrelated events—situations that are difficult to change (formatted situations), which are also the methods of Hh in handling risks (panorama). The panoramic analysis suggests that Hh handles the risk of being dominated by the state through maintaining the

plug-ins, especially the Quran, which is the basis of journalistic practices at Hh. Journalist Hh4 also handles the risk of being at the mercy of the state by maintaining the publishing of alleged wrongdoings of state, including bribery and misuse of the tax payer's money. To Journalist Hh4, that is how an Islamic newspaper could function in a democracy, by providing checks and balances, thus shaping the effectiveness of the governance of the state. The notion of freedom of the press, similarly, could also be practiced in line with Islamic teaching, in the sense that Hh would not be seeking ultimate freedom, but rather just to be allowed an equal voice. All these recommendations fit within a broader panorama of "democratic Islamic journalism" that can be seen as fitting quite well within the legal framework of the PPPA. The panoramic analysis has thus indeed demonstrated how the global is localised, but also how this will always remain an "idealistic" version of a reality that has already been formatted and thus "a perspective" rather than a practice, thus the associations exist remains questionable.

An oligoptic analysis, on the other hand, demonstrates how the local is globalised. This is where the real power comes in, when specific actions [of Hh] are contained by the state through the enforcement of certain media laws. Such laws, particularly the PPPA, provide direct power to the state to suspend the permit of any publications that it accuses of threatening to harm national security [and of course Hh is one of them], with the power to arrest the publisher and to seize the publications. The worst part is, once arrested, the publisher is considered guilty, and they are not eligible for appeal. Besides the PPPA, the OSA is another way for the state to channel its real power by cutting down the number of stories from reliable news sources. This could include include academic critiques of the weaknesses of state policies, cultivating a culture of '*takut-takut*' (fear), and limiting the definition of news to the dominant news values.

The fragile relationship between Hh and the state (thus the different sites) is demonstrated in the letters sent from the state to inform Hh about the suspension, and also a show-cause letter sent about a month before the suspension was sanctioned. These letters 'connecting' both the 'globalised local' and the 'localised global' in the associations between Hh and the state suggest that actor networks (associations) are never just local, and contexts are never just global. When we have seen the associations made in the relationship between Hh and the state, we can conclude that weak associations explain the failure of Hh to escape the precarious condition of being at the mercy of the state. This break in association keeps Hh

in a weak position because it controls its plug-ins (the Quran) but formats its practices as a newspaper.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The thesis has demonstrated that newsworthiness is so heterogeneous that the very idea of 'objective news values' can be rejected on empirical grounds. As shown, newsworthiness does not exist 'out there' but rather: it is the effect of accreditation processes in specific cycles of credit (Chapter 5); it includes the enrolment of non-human actants and interplay between human and non-human actors (Chapter 6); in newsworthiness construction it involves readership but there are different degrees of the objectification of readership in different newspapers (Chapter 7) and there exist complex associations although in the smallest news organisations in this study (Chapter 8). The main contribution of the thesis is that it provides an example of how ANT can be deployed as a supplement to a qualitative research project. Here, ANT offers interesting concepts that help to trace heterogeneity and highlight the role of non-human actors, but it has not embraced its polemical style which is always presented as a radical alternative (Hemmingway 2007, Latour 2005).

Why is such an approach important in the quest to understand news? This is actually an attempt to study newsworthiness to achieve what has been called 'intrinsic contextualisation' (Strathern 2002), where, in previous studies based on object-driven and subject-driven news values, this has not able to prevail. The problem of extrinsic contextualisation is that it has been the predominant form in studying news, in which media and communication studies have dealt with factors beyond the empirical aspects of their research. This happens when 'context' is being evoked as lying beyond the field of the actors themselves. In this case, the actors cannot see the context and thus need a social scientist to point it out to them. The social scientist does so on the basis of *a priori* concepts, because the context also lies beyond his or her own experience. This however has been the dominant approach in studying news as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, and similarly, these views, especially the political economy approach, have been the most dominant way of studying news in Malaysia (Zaharom 2000). Other contexts related to developmental journalism (Herbert 2001) and Asian journalism (Masterton 2005, Xu 2005) have also been the main ways of explaining newsworthiness in Malaysia.

Thus, as these approaches do not explain newsworthiness based on practice, they are not able to bridge the gap of knowledge generated from the academy and knowledge about how events

become news in the newsroom. Thus, this study has generally attempted to answer the general question 'How is newsworthiness construction achieved in Malaysian newspapers?' through the influence of ANT in its analysis.

In a more specific way, this study has presented the empirical findings of the question in Chapters 5-8 by posing these questions:

(i)   *What is newsworthiness and how are news values established?*

(ii)   *How are news angles deployed as a means to trace 'identity'?*

(iii)   *How are readers taken into account in newsworthiness construction?*

(iv)   *How are associations between an opposition newspaper and the state made, and to what extent do these interrelate with newsworthiness construction?*

However, these questions have generally been answered from the object-driven and subject-driven news values, which emphasise the importance of how the nature of events can determine newsworthiness (object-driven news values) and the influence of contexts in news making (subject-driven news values).

News Value Theories and Dominant News Studies Paradigms

In the study of news, there are mainly two ways to explain 'What is news?' which first, can be from the nature of the event and second, from the external forces that influence newsworthiness (Brighton and Foy 2007). Object-driven news values are derived from objects which are events or happenings that become news. It is the nature of events that determines newsworthiness, where the more qualities the event has, the more the possibilities it has to become news. Here, the qualities of the event are independent from the organisations and other forces that can influence newsworthiness.

The most influential study from this approach is by Galtung and Ruge (1965), and recently, a book-length study was conducted by Brighton and Foy (2007). The benefit of using this approach is that it has a strong explanatory power that is useful to explain the complex process of what makes news (O'Neill and Harcup 2009) and to know the pre-determined criteria that can become news (Braun 2009). By explaining news based on the set of criteria, explanations about news are easier to understand, and news becomes predictable because there are objective criteria which serve as the ingredients of news (Shoemaker and Cohen 2006, Ghersetti 2009, Schwarz 2006). With this strength, many recent researchers have deployed this story to study other types of media such as television (Maier and Ruhrmann

2008) and international news flow (Weber 2010). From here, journalists also use news values to determine news angles.

However, the main weakness of this approach is that news value theories are not able to explain in detail what a category of news value means. For example, the news criterion of 'elite people', as suggested by Galtung and Ruge, can be questioned in terms of its operationalisation, that this cateogry is not able to distinguish between a celebrity and a politician (Harcup and O'Neill 2001: 268-269). The criteria are also not able to capture changes of news values over time (Brighton and Foy 2007, Stephens 2005), such as the exclusion of 'good news' in Galtung and Ruge's list, where more recent news shows a large amount of good news (Harcup and O'Neill 2001). Besides that, news value theories are also unable to provide explanations about news values in different types of media because the list will become very long and endless (O'Sullivan et al. 1983). It is thus difficult to predict news (Kepplinger and Ehmig 2006) because not all events become news as Galtung and Ruge's hypothesis assumes the more an event contains news criteria, the more possibility it has to become news. However, in reality, this does not always happen (Hartley 1982) especially in publishing human interest news.

Furthermore, object-driven news values also depend too much on the nature of news until it forgets the influence of gatekeepers in news production, thus oversimplifying understanding of newsworthiness construction (McQuail 2000), as if news exists 'out there' and is ready to be reported by reporters (McQuail 2000, O'Neill and Harcup 2009). This makes explanations provided by object-driven news values decontextualised from the complexity of news production (McChesney 2000), uncritical (Braun 2009, Clayman and Reisner 1998) and a one-sided approach to understanding news (Harrison 2006).

Besides studies on traditional news, despite their weaknesses, news value theories are also used to study the new media (Jorge 2008, Gladney et al. 2007) but they also realise that the main weakness of the approach is that it is unable to recognise the influence of external forces in newsworthiness construction (Braun 2009), which is the main strength of subject-driven news values.

As compared to object-driven news values, subject-driven news values are an approach that take into account subjectivity involved in news production including subjectivity at individual, organisational, political and cultural levels. Various approaches are used to explain this subjectivity, for example in valuation among journalists, they always see

that newsworthiness is based on gut feelings (Hall 1981, Randall 2000) and depends a lot on experience (Evans 2000, O'Neill and Harcup 2009) and informal 'study' of how events become news (Park 1940) over time. These then become the factor of subjectivity among editors offered by the theory of gatekeeping (Manning 1950/1997). But this is also one of the levels of subjectivity that has not been examined by Brighton and Foy (2007) that has been criticised in Chapter 2, in their attempt to bridge the gap in understanding about news from object-driven and subject-driven news values.

What Brighton and Foy have also neglected is the existence of literature about subject-driven news values that explain newsworthiness from political economy, cultural and organisational perspectives. These dominant perspectives in news studies have been discussed in Chapter 3, and generally they share a similarity in terms of seeing 'context' (thus identity) in influencing the production of news. The political economy perspective for instance, sees political and economic influence in news production determine what becomes news. Besides that, (generic) culture and organisational culture are seen as influential in determining news based on cultural studies and organisational studies perspectives. Thus, these views generally argue that the external factors (contexts) of news production determine newsworthiness construction, which generate the kind of 'extensive contextualisation' data to explain newsworthiness.

However, each of these perspectives also has a distinct view about newsworthiness construction. The political economy perspective explains that gatekeeping theory suffers from lack of recognition of control from the state (political) and advertisers (economy) in the production of news (Golding and Murdock 1973, Harman 2000, Harrison 2006, Herman and Chomsky 1988, Klaehn 2009). The general assumption of this view is that the audience is passive (because the state and advertisers define what news should be published for them) (Herman and Chomsky 1988). When news is produced with such an assumption, it suggests that 'good journalism' cannot be practised, because the needs of the readers are not taken into consideration.

However, such an explanation about newsworthiness construction has been useful in explaining the operation of the media in developing countries (Chandra 1986, Mustafa 2005b, Zaharom 2002a) and the type of control that is related to developmental journalism (Nasser 1983). Besides that, the approach also explains that media operation is a business identity where this factor has been neglected in the explanation of newsworthiness by Galtung and

Ruge (Allern 2003, Niblock and Machin 2007). This is why in most news studies explaining newsworthiness in the context of Malaysia has been influenced by explanations from the political economy perspective (Zaharom 2000). Good journalism, however, should not be influenced too much by advertisers.

Such a view of newsworthiness construction also affects how news angles are decided. For example, bias in news angles is seen by some as in line with national consensus (Hallin 1994/ 2008, Schudson 2003), or news is angled with a tabloid angle to gain commercial benefits (Bird 2009, Conboy 2006, Sparks 2000). In the study of new media, there is still a lack of studies in political economy (Mansell 2004), but if such a study continues, besides its strength, political economy perspective will continue to see the audience as passive.

Thus, this is what the cultural studies try to counter, by arguing that audiences are not passive because each individual decodes information differently (Ang 1996, Hall 1980, Halloran 1977). Here, compared to the political economy perspective, the heterogeneity of readership is the strength of cultural studies. From this view, media is examined based on the dominant culture, which is that the dominant culture is assumed to dominate the lesser dominant culture, thus has the power to determine newsworthiness (Curran 1990, Hall et al. 1978). The strength of the dominant culture is also seen as influencing the way news angles are constructed, where it is based on the culture in which the media operate (Chalaby 1996/2008).

Therefore, the strengths of cultural studies in understanding media are the ability to study heterogeneous audiences and to find the source of bias in news so it does not limitedly highlight the socio economic factors. However, the weaknesses of this approach are that it often denies the autonomy of organisational practices and ambiguities of media as businesses.

From the organisational studies point of view, organisational practice and newsworthiness construction are unseparated issues, which is actually the issue at stake (Cottle 2003, Gans 1979). For example, the study of policy in the newsroom (Soloski 1989) and the views of journalists about the influence of readership on newsworthiness (Gans 1979, Schlesinger 1978) tell researchers what is happening in news organisations and how it affects what becomes news. Besides that, organisational influence also affects news angles (Tuchman 1978). What is interesting from this perspective as compared to the previous two perspectives presented, is that Tuchman's (1978) thesis implies that reality is 'made' because what

becomes news is based on the effort of journalists, not solely influenced by the organisational context alone.

Discussions on these three perspectives in news studies provide an overview of dominant news paradigms with their strengths and limitations. The strengths explain why a lot of researchers are interested in extending the studies based on a specific paradigm, while the weaknesses encourage the development of other paradigms to either supplement or replace the paradigm in order to counter the limitations. Thus, this study chooses to provide a supplement to counter the weaknesses of the inherent paradigms in news studies, and suggests that ANT can provide useful concepts to generate an explanation of newsworthiness that is based on intrinsic contextualisation (Strathern 2002).

Actor-Network Theory as a Supplement to Dominant News Paradigms

ANT is a branch of the study of STS introduced by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law. In Latour's influential book *Re-assembling the Social*, he questions the way social science has been conducted by the 'sociologist of the social', which mainly depends on external forces to explain social actions. On the other hand, the 'sociologist of associations' sees reality formed through controversies, which enable the study of how the social is created, mainly through the second controversy that is related to how action is overtaken.

Early writings that can be related to ANT written by Latour and Woolgar (1979) and Latour (1987) share a similarity in terms of the method deployed, which is the ethnography of science. Here, the writers examine the processes and actors involved in the production of a scientific product. In *Science in Action* (Latour 1987) for instance, Latour emphasises the need to study action while it is in action, which focuses on the performativity of action to enable studies on the exact practice to be conducted while scientific experiments are ongoing. Here, all related procedures that have been taken for granted are also taken into account, where the processes can be captured through what is known as a 'translation' process that has been identified with four moments of translation: problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation (Callon 1986). Through this process, activities of actors involved in the network can be examined.

The advantage of deploying ANT as a supplement to the discussed paradigms is that it is able to make political economic, cultural studies and organisational approaches more empirically viable. This is done by basing the study on the exact practice of the actors: that

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the actors demonstrate and describe what they have done and the associations it has with 'contexts', rather than researchers 'guessing' this for the actors. This is how intensive contextualisation is achieved. When knowledge is achieved through intensive contextualisation (Strathern 2002), it means that actors describe their own contexts. It is from here that the gap between the journalism industry and the academy can be bridged.

Thus, such a strength has attracted the attention of scholars from news studies, such as Hemmingway (2005), Hemmingway (2007), Hemmingway and Van Loon (2011) and Van Loon and Hemminway (2005), to deploy ANT to study newsworthiness. Hemmingway's (2005) study, for example, investigated technological innovation in news production and found that new technology translates and redefines news, where news is developed based on availability and not newsworthiness. Other than that, Van Loon and Hemmingway (2005) further examine the identity of news organisations that is argued to be the result of the reification of media practices, technology and organisation and identification. This study shows that identity is the result of practice and not the other way around, as it is always understood. Thus, what becomes news is based on the practices of news making experienced by journalists.

In a book on news production deploying ANT as the main method, Hemmingway (2007) argues understanding news must root from the micropractices of news making, and she demonstates this through investigation of a local news organisation. However, the limitation of these studies is the lack of study of how daily processes such as newsworthiness construction can be examined using concepts of ANT although without specific technological innovation happening in the newsroom. ANT actually enables such a study, because the definition of technology is not limited to 'obvious' technology but also computers, pens, etc involved in the production of news in a news network. In the case of innovation, the newsworthiness construction process is itself a form of innovation because every day journalists deal with different events, thus they actually deal with different 'innovations' every day.

Besides that, a comprehensive study such as Hemmingway's (2007) does not deal with news production, but is limited to studying news production processes. As this study has demonstrated, the study of merely the 'process' of news production has been extended by including news texts as the research object such as pictures, headlines and words from six newspapers in Malaysia: the NST, BH, TS, SH, Hh and XX. Thus, this study has examined

several aspects of newsworthiness construction such as the establishment of news values, the enrolment of news angles, the objectification of virtual objects and the making of associations in newsworthiness construction.

The Establishment of News Values in Newsworthiness Construction

This chapter discusses the empirical findings to answer the question 'What is newsworthiness and how are news values established?'. Some ANT concepts have been deployed in this chapter, which are accreditation and cycles of credit (Latour and Woolgar 1979), matters of concern (Latour 2004, Latour 2008) and hybrid/quasi objects (Latour 1993). These concepts have been used in this chapter because of their ability to explain establishment of an object: that an object is established from various actors both from internal and external forces of what makes the object. Here, it is only by explaining the post-hoc process of establishment that objects can be understood from 'within' rather than assuming the causal effect of the external contexts of the object that influence and shape the object as such.

In order to answer the question posed, I have argued that the *accreditation process* in the *cycles of credit* is useful to show how news values are established in different newspapers in this study. In the discussion in Chapter 5, I have demonstrated that there are specific cycles of credit in different newspapers that generate news values as *matters of concern*. Here, different interests are accredited differently as the results of distinct news-making practices among journalists in different organisations. Then, from here, the collective identity of the newspaper can be identified based on the different degrees of matters of concern. The chapter has shown that the most hybrid (thus *quasi-object*) news values are generated at SH.

Here, the findings demonstrate the heterogeneity of newsworthiness construction in Malaysian newspapers through the specific way of accrediting interests in its cycles of credit. For example, although the NST and BH are published by a similar publisher and generally accredit political interests, the role of the editor translates news in a different way. At the NST, the story is spinned to give a positive image to the ruling party that includes the words chosen in the news and the construction of the headline, while at BH, stories are reported more objectively as it maintains a similar tone to the speech of the Prime Minister in the newswriting and headlines. At BH, meanings of the speech are retained, although both reporters do not feel that the speech is newsworthy.

This is thus a typical example that reflects newsworthiness construction in developing countries. When the 'authority' is the source of value, news organisations have a tendency to assume that readers are passive. However, as we have seen, such an assumption is not accepted 'as it is' by the reporters involved in reporting the story. This is where the heterogeneity that has been identified, that, when most generalisations would say that the practice of maintsream journalism in Malaysia is dictated by political interests and thus homogeneous (Mustafa 2005, Zaharom 2002a, Zharom 2002b, Zaharom 2004, Zaharom and Wang 2004), in reality, it always involve 'trials of strength' (Latour 1987) in the exact practice. As has been demonstrated in Chapter 5, such a generalisation that reporters in both newspapers treat happenings as 'matters of concern' is inaccurate (Latour 2004, Latour 2008). However, when both newspapers still need to publish news, it implies that they do not really practise good journalism as it profiles itself as the mouthpiece of the ruling party.

The political interests accredited at both the NST and BH however are very different to the ones accredited at Hh. As an oppositional party newspaper, Hh also accredits political interests but from a very different position, as it accredits oppositional values in the news construction. The practices involved are distinct from those of the NST and BH, because to Hh, the political aim is to discredit the ruling party through its news. In terms of achieving its political aim, this is an example of propaganda, when journalism is practised to achieve the owner's interests. Here, objectivity and balance in reporting is difficult to achieve (Ling 2003).

Besides that, it also accredits specific ideological interests, i.e. Islam, because the party relates to itself as an Islamic party. Here, the matters of concern at Hh are anything that provide space for them to preach. In the case of Hh, it is good journalism to provide a space for readers to get access to Islamic news (thus an alternative to the mainstream), but it would be better if they were a purely religious organisation rather than embedded with political motives (Ling 2003, Steele 2011). The journalists at Hh view the establishment of news values at Hh as the effect of the dominance of mainstream newspapers and biased reporting towards the opposition during the election. It is generally when mainstream newspapers are affiliated with the state that the opposition party feels it should also have its own way of expressing its views.

On the other hand, TS is also a newspaper that accredits political interests, but this is in the publication of non-partisan news and investigative reportings based on wrongdoings of

politicians. Although the political interests accredited are in an effort to publish non-partisan political news, thus they are a more heterogeneous approach to accrediting (political) interests than other newspapers, the political interests among TS journalists are also heterogeneous. Some view that the newspaper does not have any political standing (Journalist TS1) while other journalists are on the opposition side (Journalist TS2). In terms of the development of investigative stories, the matters of concern at TS are 'facts', which suggests that in order to produce good journalism, newsworthiness construction as a quasi-object always needs non-human actors to stabilise it. This suggests that in explaining newsworthiness construction, making generalisations is difficult, as what becomes news is always associated with the individual practice of each journalist and how they engage with specific cycles of credit. A journalist that views the newspaper from a particular political standing constructs news differently from the others. An investigative reporter who enrols different non-human actors will produce different types of journalism (when more facts are employed the better the journalism). Thus, what becomes news at TS cannot be easily seen as a result of the identity of the newspaper that is always associated with being non-partisan, telling news 'as it is' while providing in-depth discussion on matters that advocate social change. Simultaneously, these efforts are also related to achieving high circulation (commercial interests), to retain the interests of the advertisers to support its publication as a free newspaper.

XX is also another newspaper that accredits commercial interests in its construction of newsworthiness. However, at XX the commercial interests are apparent through the profit-oriented type of journalism, where they associate themselves with tabloid news that is sensational in nature. Here, XX needs various non-human actors to strengthen the news network. The enrolment of non-human actors at XX however is different from that at TS because at XX, the non-human actors that make news are actors that can support and act as the proof of a particular social problem such as revealing the type of business license of a night club. Such non-human actors are probably of low value to TS, because it employs a very different type of non-human actor in its investigative stories, that mainly stabilises stories about the wrongdoing of politicians. Here, both XX and TS practise good journalism but to Hh, it can be problematic because the source of value is scandal.

Last but not least, SH is the newspaper that accredits commercial, political and ideological interests in its newsworthiness construction, thus producing the most hybrid form of news values. Thus, at SH a lot of events can become matters of concern and thus, newsworthy. By publishing non-partisan political news and emphasising local news, SH

offers a new way of getting commercial benefits from such a publication. Local news that is always termed by the journalists as 'community news' deals with the heterogeneous interests of the readership in different states in Malaysia. Through such news, it profiles itself as an activist newspaper.

The advantage of having the discussion about newsworthiness and news values in this sense is that it demonstates that newsworthiness does not exist alone, but is accredited by various interests in the cycles of credit in different newspapers. Thus, a critique of object-driven news values can be understood without the contexts of news production and subject-driven news values, as it shows that it is the contexts or identity of the newspaper that do not already exist 'out there' that determine what becomes news. This chapter has also shown that for journalists, what becomes news is always a matter of concern, thus discussions and arguments about newsworthiness suggest that nothing is accepted as matters of fact as presented by the object-driven news values.

In this discussion, as mentioned earlier, SH is the most hybrid newspaper, thus it is important to further examine how the identity of SH is stabilised so that it then becomes the unique selling point of the newspaper, particularly the interplay between an important non-human actor in news construction, which is the news angle and human actors.

The Enrolment of News Angles at SH in Newsworthiness Construction

This discussion in Chapter 6 discusses the enrolment of non-human actors, particularly news angles, to answer the question, *How are news angles deployed as a means to trace 'identity'?* ANT concepts have been deployed in this chapter which are *enrolment* (Callon 1986, Callon and Law 1982) and *representation* (Latour 1999). These concepts have been used in this chapter because of their ability to explain the interplay between human and non-human actors in a specific news network and are able to demonstrate the intrinsic contextualisation of the notion of newspaper identity. The analysis has identified three ways of identity stabilisation at SH through the enrolment of news angles which are the inclusion and exclusion of actors, representation of mediators and the role of non-human actants in the enrolment process.

Here, identity can be examined as such because it is seen as a virtual object, i.e. the meaning of the object changes in every specific (discursive) practice. The findings suggest that it is the interplay between human and non-human actors in the stabilisation of identity

that enable the enrolment process to occur. Here, the identity of SH is realised through one of the most important non-human actors in the process of constructing news, which is the news angle. When the process of inclusion and grouping in enrolling a particular news angle is done, it is by evaluating various interests that the journalist at SH is able to decide how a particular event is to be reported – her own interest and organisational interests. To some extent, she also needs to consider the interests of the ruling party, especially when the story is related to large events organised at the national level.

This differentiates the news angles enrolled at SH as compared to UM because UM usually angles its stories to show the positive side. SH tries to include more mediators by letting the exact message of an event prevail in the story covered. As compared to UM, the angling process is when it reduces its mediators, thus it merely 'represents' the event. SH, however, represents (Latour 1999) what is being reported by maintaining the meaning of the message through its simple but accurate reporting. Here, the practice of producing good journalism can be related to the maintainance of the *mediators*, rather than *intermediaries* (Latour 2005).

Besides that, the value that is always associated with the identity of SH, which is localism, or in the words of the journalists 'community news', can also be examined as a virtual object and the translation of what is meant by community news having changed can be investigated. If the data of the interview in 2009 is compared with the data gathered in 2012, community news has changed from what is defined as 'function news' that includes minor local news such as kindergarden activities, sports in the village and school sports. Now, however the definition has translated to more human interest stories that include local crime news and entertainment news. Here, community is a value and is an object *performed* rather than determining news at SH. Here, besides the news angle, the identity of SH can also be traced through the changes of the virtual object, that is related to the newspaper's identity.

Such discussion about the different interests that enrol news angles is also an example of instrinsic contextualisation in discussing identity as it discusses how news angles are realised and stabilised. This adds extra value to using ANT concepts in this study because angle is no more seen as merely an abstract object that the establishment is not able to be traced, but rather it acts as a non-human object that enables the tracing process of a particular identity, thus provides profound understanding about identity, and the benefit of discussing identity as a virtual object.

The Objectification of Virtual Objects in Newsworthiness Construction

This chapter (Chapter 7) extends the discussion about virtual object, in which (virtual) readership is seen as a form of virtual object, to enable the examination of whether readership is derived from anything concrete. Some ANT concepts have been deployed in this chapter which are *virtual object* (Law 1996, Mol 1998, Van Loon 2002), actualisation, subjectification, account and mediators (Latour 2005). It is through the actualisation and subjectification of a virtual object that it can be claimed to derive from real actants. Mediators transform and so give the appearance of immediacy. Thus, the more mediators there are in the network, the more immediate it is for a virtual object to reach its concrete form. However, when the lesser mediators are in the network, it gives a sense of distance. Here, the concept of account is used to link the virtual (readership in the newsroom) and actual (readership at home). Thus, this chapter attempts to answer the question *How are readers taken into account in newsworthiness construction?*

In this study, it is found that the newspaper with the most distance is the NST, when the circulation figures (an account) show decreasing circulation from time to time, and so rarely is news generated from the real readers that the mediators (actual readers) are not able to be activated. Here, the virtual object does not derive from anything concrete, as (virtual) readership is not actualised and subjectified even in its letters to the editor section. Here, it suggests that the more a newspaper reduces its mediators in newsworthiness construction, the higher the possibility it will become a less popular newspaper. To readers who reject the views advocated by the newspaper, this is seen as a form of bad journalism, as it impedes what readers should know.

BH offers a better situation as it doubles its understanding of readership by realising that partisan political news should be published less and follow what the actual readers want by placing more human interest news in its newsworthiness construction. This supports the marketing strategy of BH as it is used as an educational tool and students are provided with more types of news rather than political news. Although the circulation figures at BH suggest a decline in readership, it is not as bad as at the NST. This suggests that in the case of BH and the NST, both newspapers do have some distance with the exact readership, but the distance if farther at the NST than BH. Here, it is inaccurate to assume that all newspapers published by the same publishers exclude the readers, because if scrutinise further, it is heterogeneous.

In the case of Hh, it actualises readership through sales and votes. As an opposition newspaper and the smallest newspaper organisation in this study, it does not even conduct any market surveys to know its actual readers. Sales of Hh are relatively high as compared to the size of the organisation, its status as an opposition newspaper and its quality as compared to the NST and BH. However, to understand its (actual) readership from here is difficult as the sales are not too high if compared to other newspapers in the country such as XX. Here, the number of votes becomes an important account that connects virtual and actual readership at Hh. The data show that the increasing support PAS has from voters in the recent general election has a connection with the acceptance of the newspaper among the actual readers.

In terms of differentiating sales as a type of actualisation at Hh, this differs at XX as the way sales connect virtual and actual readership is much clearer as XX is the newspaper with the highest circulation in this study, and one of the highest in Malaysia. Besides that, XX also has its own market surveys and other statistics that help to inform a more concrete circulation figure. Here, virtual readership is not actualised from the actual readership because XX journalists mainly explain readership based on the success on what has been published as news and the success of the circulation figure, thus readership remains virtual because it relies on external agents to actualise readership.

So what can be learnt from the case of XX and Hh is that, although both engage with sales as a tool of actualisation of (virtual) readership, they cannot be generalised as similar, but are sourced differently. It is when there is no concrete source at Hh that votes become an important indicator. This suggests that when a newspaper is owned by a political party, there is a direct relationship between acceptance/rejection of the party and the newspaper it publishes. What becomes news is also always related to votes for the party.

TS, however, is a newspaper that actualises readership through its investigative reporting because the news is generated from documents sent by actual readers to the investigative reporter team and the actual readers are the mediators in the news network. The story then needs to go through several stages of virtuality, where, because the story is about political misconduct, it needs to remain secret until it is almost ready. When the news is ready, published and read by the readers, then only the state of virtuality vanishes. However, the findings also suggest that actual readers are not actualised in all parts of the newspaper.

This is an example of heterogeneity of newsworthiness construction within a newspaper. At TS, secrecy and maintenance of virtuality is not a big issue in constructing

other types of news. Only in the process of developing investigative stories at TS is the story revealed to particular mediators. Other types of news construction at TS do not need such stages of virtuality.

At SH, the actualisation occurs in a more intensive way, and perhaps has the most intense way of actualisation and subjectification of the newspapers in this study. The establishment of *Skuad Cakna* (literally 'caring squad') comprises district reporters located in the districts of various states who are provided with a Kancil car that carries the masthead of the newspaper and the phrase 'Make Us Your Friend' together with a mobile phone whose number is made visible on the newspaper. Through these journalistic mediators that mobilise newsworthiness construction to the actual readers, more actual readers are actualised and subjectified at SH. As a result, a lot of local news published is derived from the actual readers who call the reporters and inform them about events. This is the example of 'user-generated materials' produced with heavy association between news stories and actual readers in the process of newsworthiness construction.

This enables SH to publish stories about events and happenings that are generated from the actual readers. Thus, this becomes the strength of SH because it can generate a lot of 'hidden' events that are not usually covered by mainstream newspapers. By locating and providing suitable equipment to reach the readers, SH can easily get more potential stories that can be developed into news. This enables the production of news that is close to the readers, and readers feel that they are really reading about 'them'. Here, when the newspaper can offer more distinct stories than what are usually provided, it can develop its distinct identity and mantain its credibility through the publication of such news.

Besides the print version, the online version of the newspapers in this study have also been examined and the types of actualisation on the online version are the unique browsers/visitors (UB/V) per month and direct comments on the online news. The findings suggest that the different degrees of objectification are apparent when the distance between virtual readership and actual readership is smaller at newspapers such as XX Online and BH Online based on the high numbers of UB/V per month. For XX Online, other online avenues such as the SMS service are able to actualise and subjectify its readership and turn events from the actual readers into news. As compared to BH Online, although the online version is quite popular, the decreasing print circulation raises the question of who actually reads the online version. The online version is also not able to actively subjectify readership. As for the

facility to send direct comments on online news, SH Online has the most-commented news, as compared to others (the NST, BH and XX Online). Others such as TS Online and Hh Online do not offer such a service. Direct comments on online news however are not able to actualise and subjectify readership as there is a strong moderation process happening at all newspapers that offer this. Thus, this suggests that there are different degrees of objectification of different virtual objects, that also suggests that it is wrong to assume that generally, online newspapers actualise and subjectify readership better than their print counterparts. Through specific ways of objectification, such as moderation, not every online opportunity that enables actualisation enables subjectification.

Such analysis is able to reveal the heterogeneity of understanding a particular concept (readership) in different newspapers in this study. Now readership can be understood more objectively, and not merely discussed in abstraction. How readership is connected with the actual readers is rarely seen as an important investigation, thus it impedes achieving the intensive contextualisation of knowlege generated. This becomes an important discussion, because it shows that discussing a concept as a virtual object generates the exact meaning of what is happening from a concrete source, rather than assuming a simple relationship between the interests of the readership in the newsroom and at home. Another concern is to particularly examine how associations are made in a relationship that is usually seen as 'simple', but after it has been analysed with the concepts of ANT, a much more complex situation than perceived is revealed.

The Making of Associations at Hh and Newsworthiness Construction

This chapter (Chapter 8) presents the empirical findings to show the process of making associations, by using the case of permit suspension at Hh in 2009 in order to demonstrate the precarious relationship between Hh, an oppositional newspaper and the state and how it affects newsworthiness construction. This is a pertinent discussion because it demonstrates the heterogeneous associations in the relationship, that is distinct from other associations that exist in the relationships between other newspapers and the state in this study. It also demonstrates that discussions about news can be done in a less media-centric way, but still, it does not advocate the simple causal effect of external contexts (such as politics, as in the case of Hh) in constructing news.

Thus, this chapter seeks to answer the question: *How are associations between an opposition newspaper and the state made, and to what extent do these interrelate with*

newsworthiness construction? Some ANT concepts have been deployed in this chapter which are *panorama, oligopticon, plug-ins, connecting sites* and *associations*. These concepts have been used in this chapter for its ability to demonstrate that there is no separation between the local and the global, and the micro and the macro. Rather, these concepts are useful to show the different 'sites', and demonstrate how they are connected, and then become associations. Explanations through associations enable the heterogeneity within newsworthiness construction at Hh to be revealed.

Panoramic analysis provides an overview of the relationship between Hh and the state 'all at once', thus globalising the local. Here, the way risks are perceived by Hh journalists in newsworthiness construction is done without much effort, such as the publication of gambling results in mainstream newspapers, views about the relations between politics and Islam, the reason why the suspension of the newspaper permit is made, the view about what is an Islamic newspaper, and the issue of press freedom. All the views, generally were against what the ruling party advocates, and almost all actions by the government are seen as threats by Hh.

However, this overall view is not necesarily accurate unless one examines the association of the exact power behind the alleged actions. Here, exact power is in the hands of the state. It is through the oligoptic analysis that the real power can be discussed. The implementation of media laws such as PPPA and other actions such as seizure, arrest, reduced access to news sources, and limited access to the public sphere are ways how the real power of the state is imposed on Hh. This is related to the plug-ins that act as the 'contexts' of newsworthiness construction at Hh, which are the media laws and the Quran. In the case of Hh, the media laws play the role as the plug-ins of the state to control Hh, while the Quran is what controls the operations at Hh. These different sites (newsworthiness construction at Hh and the state) are connected, which is through letters sent by the state. Before suspension, the suspension letter was issued on 23 March 2009 while a show case letter was sent on 26 February 2009. The letters connect the different sites, thus demonstrate how associations are made in the relationship between Hh and the state.

Through ANT concepts, the connection between real power and Hh is connected through letters sent by the ministries to let Hh know that they face certain legal situations. This can also be seen as how a non-human actor 'acts', that although it is written by a human, it is the letter itself, in the form of a non-human actor, that consists of the information, and through the letter, the information about the suspension is maintain to be known by journalists

at Hh. It is also through the letter that Hh knows officially that they are suspended or any forms of legal action are taken against them.

This perspective of analysing the relationship between newspapers and newsworthiness provides a view about how associations can show that a particular relationship is not a simple causal effect between the newspaper and the state, and thus what makes news. When various assocations are examined, how real power is enforced in a particular case can be revealed. It is important to know this, as it shows heterogeneity in a particular relationship, that it always involves risk perception and risk management on unplanned circumstances, and that what becomes news is not merely the effect of the ownership of the newspaper.

Newsworthiness Construction in the Malaysian Newspapers

Thus, this section discusses the contributions of this study to understanding newsworthiness in Malaysian newspapers. There are three main contributions that will be discussed which show that (1) newsworthiness is an ever-changing concept, and that it changes in every instance of news production, (2) the contribution of deploying ANT concepts in a qualitative study, and (3) the specificity of news in Malaysia.

The empirical chapters have demonstrated that the concept of newsworthiness has to be created anew within every instance of news production. This can be related directly with the concept of translation advocated by ANT, that every moment involved in constructing news involves translations of various actors in newsworthiness construction. For example, in Chapter 5, the whole discussion on the specificity of cycles of credit of the six newspapers in this study suggests that the collective identity of each of the newspapers is the result of various individual practices of each of the journalists, that each of them generate distinct news values as matters of concern. At SH particularly, journalists that write for the national section relate themselves with distinct parts of cycles of credit, as compared to those who work for the local sections. Such heterogeneity suggests that although in a particular news organisation, newsworthiness is a flexible concept, it is defined based on individual understanding of what makes news, rather than a fixed concept of newsworthiness imposed by the (identity of) news organisations.

In understanding the enrolment of news angles in the stabilisation of SH's identity, it is found that the news angles at SH are not simply decided by the journalists easily. In

Chapter 6, I have shown that in deciding news angles for a particular story, Journalist SH4 needs to include and exclude various factors before finally deciding the angle. The enrolment of human actors that can be associated with one of the factors that translate the decision made, such as the speech made by a politician (the Chief Minister of Negeri Sembilan), is insufficient to stabilise the angling process. Although the story can become newsworthy at this stage, if the angle chosen does not provide anything new to the readers, it might not be newsworthy to the readers. Thus, the previous statements of the Chief Minister (non-human actors) are included, and connected with the current speech, that then enables the decision of the news angle is made.

This is another example that can demonstrate that newsworthiness is not a fixed concept, that it changes in every process of its construction. It is the interrelations of what makes news and interplay with various actors that contribute to newsworthiness. The event becomes more newsworthy only when the previous statements from the Chief Minister are included. Otherwise, if nothing new can be offered, the event might not be found newsworthy by Journalist SH4.

The changing concept of newsworthiness can also be seen in terms of the link between the virtual readership and actual readership (Chapter 7). This study found that, although readership is a very important actor in the cycles of credit in each of the newspapers in this study, every newspaper enrols readership in specific ways, and when this is related to newsworthiness construction, the analysis suggests that the meaning of newsworthiness differs not only from one organisation to another, but from one (individual) journalist to another. At XX for example, although it is a well-known tabloid newspaper with scandal as the source of newsworthiness, there is still resistance from its journalists in terms of what should become news at XX, albeit the high circulation figure when compared to its competitors. This further suggests that different journalists consider what is newsworthy differently. If this is not taken into account, then it will be too easy to accuse journalists at XX of doing such a kind of reporting, where in reality, the power of commercial interests is unable to resist translating the news network. This suggests that although generally tabloid newspapers share similar news values, it is inaccurate to assume that in terms of practice, the values are homogeneously applied among the journalists. The news construction process is much more complex than that, thus, explaining it through mere newsworthiness theories needs a complementary approach as this study has done.

Similarly, it is also easy to assume that newsworthiness at an opposition newspaper owned by an opposition party, such as Hh, can be understand through its ownership. However, in Chapter 8, what becomes news at Hh can translate itself when there are changes in terms of media laws and when there are improvements to news source accessibility. Such changes suggest that newsworthiness is a concept that is not static, not just within the level of a journalist's mind, but also at the level of news organisations and changes associated with political, economic and cultural forces.

Secondly, this study is also a form of qualitative study that is supported with concepts of ANT to support its analysis to achieve the intensive contextualisation of knowledge. Although in general ANT is different from other dominant news paradigms presented in Chapter 3, this study has shown that the concepts can be deployed in ordinary qualitative research, although without being from in-situ observation which is what Hemmingway, Latour, Van Loon and Woolgar, to name a few, did in their ANT studies.

This study is an example of how concepts in ANT can be deployed to study newsworthiness construction to serve as the supplement of dominant news paradigms, thus enabling the discussion and deployment of ANT in a less polemical way as Latour always did. This study demonstrates that although using data from interviews (and not in-situ observations), such data can generate intrinsic contextualisation forms of knowledge when concepts of ANT are deployed. This suggests that this study enables the weaknesses of the dominant paradigms in news studies to be supplemented, that simultaneously benefit from the strength of the paradigms and ANT.

The deployment of the concepts are useful and are beneficial to social science studies, because from here, the real practice of what is being studied can be examined. Although data from in-situ observation are proven more 'real' in terms of identifying real practice, at least interview data will not generate such a limited form of analysis as they usually are. With concepts from ANT, qualitative data can be analysed from a different perspective, thus providing researchers with intrinsic contextualisation. In social science studies, so far, there have been vast studies based on extensive contextualisation, thus, to benefit from other points of view, there must be initiating studies to encourage further research on intensive contextualisation, and this study can be seen as one of them..

The advantage of such integration is it enables the inclusion of real practice among journalists to explain newsworthiness construction, thus contexts are not seen as merely

invisible factors that cause certain ways of producing news, rather, it is the practice of journalists that shows, explains and reasons why they are acting as such. Here, the gap stated in the introduction of this work can be bridged, when the real practices of the journalists are taken as an important source to understand the mechanics of news production. Thus, the understanding of the academics about 'what is news?' becomes closer to what the journalists really experience.

The last point but not least, it that this study also explains the specification of newsworthiness construction in certain Malaysian newspapers. When the context of discussing what becomes news in Malaysian newspapers has been dominated by concepts like developmental journalism and Asian journalism, this study has offered the heterogeneity of practice, rather than generalisation. For instance, although the NST can be related as a tool to support developmental journalism and thus Asian journalism, the voices of its journalists show that it is not without resistance. Thus, realising this, BH translated its operation from a political-oriented newspaper into a more human interest newspaper, but retaining some serious political news. This is a rather new development in Malaysian journalism, as the ownership is usually concentrated on the state, the phenomena at BH offers a new scenario in understanding newsworthiness construction in Malaysian newspaper.

Besides that, XX which is published by a similar publication company to the one that publishes NST and BH, offers mostly tabloid news and avoids publishing political news. At XX, political news rarely becomes the lead news on the front page, with very little, or almost no political news inside the newspaper. This can be seen as a new development in Malaysian journalism as well, as XX is a relatively newer newspaper than the NST (as the oldest newspaper in Malaysia) and BH (launched in the year of Malaysian independence – 1957), while XX was established in the 80s. The rejection of political news, although it can be seen as a commercial move of XX as a tabloid newspaper, can also be seen as a response to what the readers want. When there has been too much political news in a concentrated news markeplace, a tabloid newspaper is seen by the readers as a form of 'escapism', although not everyone likes reading such news.

Besides that, TS, as a free newspaper, differentiates itself from its western counterpart by turning investigative reporting as their main unique selling point. Besides offering non-partisan political news, this free newspaper offers serious news, different from most free newspapers that are distributed in most western countries. Although TS is just a free

newspaper that might have little impact as one might assume, in the case of Malaysia, TS is one of the few newspapers that is recorded to show a high increase of its distribution figures. The theme to report news as 'Telling It As It Is' seems to be appreciated by the readers, who are mainly young professionals living in urban areas. Perhaps what becomes newsworthy at TS is also a new way of understanding newsworthiness in Malaysia, as it shows that the young readers want news that can challenge their intelligence.

Besides such a shift, another rather obvious change in terms of newsworthiness is the highlight on regional concerns. SH for example, as the youngest newspaper in this study, and among the youngest in Malaysia, however, albeit the age, is one of the fastest growing newspapers in the country. First to be on the news shelves in 2006 and limitedly sold in the state of Kelantan and Terengganu only, today, SH's circulation is claimed to be more than 160,000. This becomes interesting, because most newspapers in Malaysia face a reduction in circulation connected with various reasons such as being too partisan and the threat from the internet. Here, SH has shown that by accrediting specific interests and allowing the news values to become hybrid, with distinctive ways of stabilising its identity that supports the practice of good journalism, and allowing the actualisation and subjectification of the readers, it can become a commercially successful newspaper.

In terms of the development of alternative media in Malaysia, in this study, Hh is the only opposition party newspaper and also the most established print alternative media in the country. Owned by PAS, the Pan-Islamic Party which is now one of the members of the opposition alliance known as Pakatan Rakyat (PR), the newspaper is an example of a form of propaganda of the party to gain the support of voters. Although it also accredits ideological interests in its cycles of credit, it also accredits political interests with the aim of discrediting the ruling party. However, the situation of Hh and other newspapers affiliated with the state is rather different because Hh holds to different plug-ins as the state, turning their relationship into a precarious one. For Hh, their plug-in is the Quran, while the state plays around with the media laws and regulations to control Hh in terms of what is being reported and to lessen the risk of the state for being negatively reported by Hh. This analysis suggests the precarious relationship with the state as showing the limits of media-centric viewpoints.

Besides the specificity newsworthiness construction in each of the newspapers in this study, the overall analysis demonstrates the declining popularity of mainstream newspapers, such as the NST and BH, mainly because of their affiliation with the state and the way

newsworthiness is constructed. The main phenomenon identified is growing populism, such as SH (local news) and XX (tabloid news). TS, however is a good example of the increasing popularity of in-depth reporting, that is still lacking in Malaysian journalism.

However, this relates to a deeper issue in journalism and democracy. The mainstream newspapers will suffer worsening circulation if they don't change what they determine as news. The current marketing strategy to become the educational tool so far has not proven successful. Other newspapers might continue their populist approach, but it is still acceptable if they publish other than tabloid news. To some extent, this is also what the readers hope for. This becomes the supplement of the mainstream newspapers, while the tabloid news provides a form of escapism among readers to read other than partisan political news. These can be considered among media practitioners, academics and policy makers, in order to ponder the future of journalism in Malaysia.

Recommendations for Media Practitioners, Academics and Policy Makers

Recommendations to media practitioners

One of the major ideas presented in this thesis implies the necessity of the journalists in Malaysia to consider alternative news values as opposed to maintaining dominant news values. This recommendation is in line with the argument that the notion of development journalism being practised in Malaysia does not reflect its ideal philosophy. As I have argued in Chapter 5, newsworthiness is 'made' but it is the result of an accreditation process, thus, based on news practice in different newspapers, they generate distinct news values in its specific cycles of credit. Here, it is suggested that in order for a newspaper to maintain its credibility, it has to accredit more than one interest (such as political, commercial or/and ideological interests) so the news values generated are a kind of hybrid/quasi-object that is able to turn more events into matters of concern. Here, identity of the newspaper is not the 'cause' of newsworthiness of a newspaper.

This is apparent when I have shown in Chapter 6 that the stabilisation of the identity of a newspaper organisation comes from the practice of the individual journalist. It is when each of the journalists maintains an interest to achieve a more objective and accurate reporting, that only what becomes news in a particular organisation can become close to what the exact readers expect (Chapter 7), thus producing a form of 'good journalism'. It is when the (virtual) readership in the newsroom is connected with the (actual) readership at home,

that only a newspaper will have a clear vision of the types of news needed by the readers. This is an important point in the whole cycles of credit of all newspapers, as the more it knows the reader, the more it can 'survive' and play its role in democracy.

Besides that, media practitioners also can benefit from the analysis of the relationship of Hh and the state (Chapter 8), which suggests that in a particular relationship, there exist various associations and only when each of the associations are understood, then deeper understanding about the relationship can be gained. If the complex associations are not understood, practitioners would have the tendency to simplify the relationship as based on merely the 'context' of news production, where in reality it is much more complex than that. Associations show that in a particular news organisation, there are various links that need to be discovered in order to understand the 'reality' of newsworthiness construction.

Recommendations to academicians

One of the significances of this study is to bridge the gap between journalism knowledge than the real journalistic practice among journalists. What happens to the insufficient previous knowledge in journalism as presented in Chapter 2 is that it does not recognise the context of news production. In Chapter 3, however, although contexts are recognised based on different levels of subjectivity, they are merely able to provide extensive contextualisation of knowledge about journalism. What is still lacking is a more 'intrinsic' kind of knowledge, that includes the real practices as experienced by the actors involved in the network, so that the real happenings in the newsroom can be made visible.

Thus, in Chapter 4, I have recommended a supplementary approach to supplement the weaknesses of the dominant paradigms of news studies, which is known as Actor-Network Theory (ANT). ANT argues that in order to understand a particular social action, it should be based on the practice of involved actors. By this, it means that in understanding newsworthiness construction, such knowledge will enable the material to be used as teaching resources, thus acting as the basis of disseminating knowledge of journalism based on real practice. This can thus become the early step to bridge the gap between what has been learnt in the classroom and what is being practised in the newsroom.

Besides that, concepts in ANT also provide the tools for academics to think about happenings they observe or encounter during research. This means that ANT does not fall into the critique of the domination of western knowledge applied to non-western specific

situations. Since ANT never imposes anything prior to the study, researchers are open to exploring the meanings of each of the occurrences because they learn from the real actors. Again, I would recommend ANT to academicians outside the western world to study social phenomena such as news studies without any worries of 'being dominated' by western ideologies which are unsuitable to be universalised to non-western situations.

It is from here that academics can truly understand the reality of news making, that it is not only pertaining to dominant news values. This is indeed a transparency attempted by the academics to answer the call of shaping Malaysia and the future journalists to together embrace the aim of practising the ideal version of development journalism. When both dominant and alternative news values (Chapter 5 and Chapter 8) are emphasised to the students, then only they will have a better sense of how the real newsrooms look, and will have a better judgment of news in the future.

Recommendations to policy makers

For policy makers, it is crucial to consider the impact of certain media laws that impede the aim to achieve the true sense of democracy. Laws such as the PPPA and ISA for example (Chapter 8), need to be revamped according to the progression of the nation. Being one of the most developed and prosperous nations among its ASEAN counterparts, Malaysia should answer the call for a more transparent journalism, so that the version of development journalism embraced at the moment will not become the destroyer of the nation. The policy makers must start to realise that the emergence of alternative media blooming unprecedentedly in Malaysia implies the hope of the citizens. However, media laws that aim to retain the morality of people should be retained, such as provisions to ban pornography into Malaysian media content.

In this respect, too, policy makers cannot expect newspapers in Malaysia to only publish dominant news values all the time. The recent development of the journalism industries in Malaysia suggests that there is blooming popularity of alternative news values among the readers both in the print (such as Hh, Sh and TS) and online versions. To curb this with such untimely media laws suggests the insensitivity of the state to respond accordingly to such calls. Thus, I recommend certain allowances to the resistant voices should be taken into account of the state, if it wants to maintain Malaysia as a 'developed' nation, materially and ethically in line with the definition of development journalism.

Implications for Future Studies

Future studies can embark on studying news by deploying concepts in ANT with other dominant paradigms in news studies (see Chapter 3) to demonstrate the strength of both approaches and benefit from them. Thus, this study can be seen as the early step to approach concepts in ANT in a less polemical way, and allowing integration of ANT with other research paradigms.

Thus, from here, I would recommend future studies consider examining historical and long-term analyses of changes in newsworthiness construction. The advantage of conducting such studies is to provide in-depth historical analysis that is seen by some as a weakness of ANT. It is by deploying concepts of ANT and being influenced by ANT rather than purely an ANT study, that a study can get benefit in a different way.

Besides that, greater in-depth discussions can be done about newspapers other than SH and Hh in future research. This can be done by extending the time of fieldwork and by interviewing more related reporters and editors by referring to specific stories. By producing more intensive contextualisation forms of knowledge, more useful analysis can be used to support the inherent empirical findings about journalism in Malaysia. This will enable the findings to be used as supplements in the classroom to teach how exactly journalism operates, thus bridging the gap between journalism and the academy particularly in the context of understanding news in Malaysia.

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NOTES

Chapter 1 - Malaysia: Background and the press

[1] Malaysia was known as 'Malaya' prior to its independence in 1957, and changed its name to Malaysia in 1963 when the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo (now Sabah) and Sarawak formed a new societal structure that later became the root of racial tensions.

[2] Bumiputra (or sometimes spelled Bumiputera) is 'son of the soil' directly translated in English. In the context of Malaysia, this describes the Malays, who are indigenous people of Malaysia.

[3] Data taken from the Population and Vital Statistics, Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2011.

[4] Prior to Malaysia's independence, a 'Malaysian' was known as 'Malayan'.

[5] How Malaysia has able to maintained its economics achievement has been discussed by the ex-Prime Minister in Hard Talk with Mahathir Mohamed, n.d. Hard Talk [Youtube online] BBC, Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp-YwNZqiWA&feature=related) [Accessed: 17 January 2009].

[6] Malaysia Business and Investment Opportunities Yearbook 2007.

[7] Proton is Malaysia's first automotive company that produces national cars with 17 models including Proton Saga, Proton Iswara, Proton Wira, Proton Waja and Proton Inspira etc, which is still operating until today. It is the Malay acronym for **Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional** (English: National Automobile Enterprise). The website of the company is accessible at: http://www.proton.com/Corporate/About-Proton/Corporate-Information/History-of-PROTON.aspx).

[8] Economy of Malaysia, accessible at: http://www.amazines.com/Business/article_detail.cfm/1817129?articleid=1817129

[9] Malaysian Ringgit's peg to US dollar is justified, accessible at: http://www.emergingmarkets.org/Article/1016890/Malaysian-Ringgits-peg-to-US-dollar-is-justified.html

[10] The refusal is the idea of the ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, and Malaysia is the only country that faces critical economic problem that refused the aid.

[11] Ministry of Human Resources, accessible at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/7/37865470.pdf

[12] The Third Industrial Master Plan (IMP3) covers the period of 2006 until 2020. Further details about the plan are accessible at: http://www.miti.gov.my/cms/content.jsp?id=com.tms.cms.section.Section_8ab58e8f-7f000010-72f772f7-dbf00272

[13] Hard Talk with Mahathir Mohamed, n.d. Hard Talk [Youtube online] BBC, Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp-YwNZqiWA&feature=related) [Accessed: 17 January 2009].

[14] Hard Talk with Mahathir Mohamed, n.d. Hard Talk [Youtube online] BBC, Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp-YwNZqiWA&feature=related) [Accessed: 17 January 2009].

[15] Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP) *is the old name of* Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS). The history of PAS is accessible at, http://pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180&Itemid=426).

[16] Anwar Ibrahim was sentenced to six years imprisonment in 1999 for corruption, and in 2000 for nine years for sodomy. However the verdict was overturned in 2004, and he was released from prison. Currently, Anwar is on trial for another sodomy accusations, with Mohd Saiful Bukhari Azlan.

[17] Kelantan is a state located at the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The political history of Kelantan can be connected with PAS, as the country was governed under the PAS governance for two years after independence in 1957.

[18] Terengganu is a state located at the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, neighbouring Kelantan. The political governance can also be associated with PAS since 1959, with BN won the elections in 1999, (lost in 2004), but won again in 1008 until now.

[19] General Election 1999 Results, accessible at: http://www.ugmc.bizland.com/Malaysia-Elections.html

[20] PKR is the acronym of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (English: People's Justice Party). It is the new name of Adil (Peolpe's Justice), an opposition political party founded by the supporters of Anwar Ibrahim.

[21] General Election 2008 Results, accessible at: http://www.ugmc.bizland.com/Malaysia-Elections.html

[22] This was reported on BBC News, 8 March 2008.

[23] Pertaining to PAS's statement on "an Islamic country should be based on the Shariah laws", please refer to PAS website at: http://www.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180&Itemid=438

[24] Further information about IKIM is accessible at IKIM website at http://www.ikim.gov.my/v5/index.php?lg=2&opt=com_info&grp=5&men=40&key=1010

[25] MalaysiaKini is the first Malaysian online newspaper founded by Steven Gan and Premesh Chandran on 20th November 1999.

[26] 'Bahasa' in English is language. The Malay language (*bahasa Melayu*) is always referred to as 'bahasa' and in the context of this sentence, it refers to newspapers published in the Malay language.

[27] Similar points have been made by one of the journalists interviewed at TS in this study, but he requested for anonymity.

[28] Further information pertaining to this is accessible at the Ministry of Information website: http://www.penerangan.gov.my/index.php/en/organisation-profile/history.html, under the subtopic of Malaysian History.

[29] Adil is later renamed Pakatan Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) or People' Justice Party.

[30] Printing Presses of Publications Act (PPPA) 1984 is recently under comprehensive review, as reported at TS and accessible at: http://www.thesundaily.my/news/162154

[31] The Control of Imported Publication Act 1959 is a form of censorship in Malaysia, where printed materials need to pass the act first, before they can be sold in the market.

[32] Bernama is a news agency of Malaysia and formed in 1968. The Bernama Act 1967 is an act determining the power of Bernama as news provider in Malaysia. It can be downloaded at http://202.75.6.111/Akta/Vol.%209/Act%20449.pdf

[33] Finas is the acronym for Perbadanan Kemajuan Filem Nasional (English: The National Film Development Corporation Malaysia) is a major government agency for the film industry of Malaysia. The Finas Act is an act determining the power of Finas within the industry of film in Malaysia.

[34] *Watan* is a weekly newspaper in Malay language and was banned in 2000. (World Press Freedom Review, 2000).

[35] Chong Cheng Hai, 2009, Personal communication. Chong Cheng Hai is the Editor in Chief of TS.

[36] Some examples in the context of Malaysia is Harakah, being published by the oppositional party of PAS, Suara Keadilan (the voice of justive) by Parti Keadilan Rakyat and Roket (rocket) by DAP.

[37] *Detik* was a magazine published by PAS and was banned on 2000 because of publishing stories about the opposition in Malaysia (World Press Freedom Review, 2000). This event has also been mentioned in a personal communication with the editor in chief of Hh, Mohd Lutfi Othman in 2009 (Although we are carrying similar a surname, we have no family relationship whatsoever).

[38] *Al-Wasilah* was also a magazine published by PAS and later banned on 2000 for publishing stories about the opposition in Malaysia. Committee to Protect Journalists had written a letter to the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and the letter can be retrieved at http://cpj.org/2000/09/two-independent-magazines-suspended.php and this is also reported in the UNHCR Attacks on the Press in 2000 – Malaysia published in February 2001, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/category,COI,CPJ,,MYS,47c565f2c,0.html. The story about the ban is also available at http://members.tripod.com/media_alternatif/sept/b13septd.htm (Journalist body slams banning of 'Eksklusif', 'Wasilah') and reported at the World Press Freedom Review, 2000.

[39] *Eksklusif* is a weekly newspaper published by Kumpulan Karangkraf banned in 2000 for publishing stories about the opposition in Malaysia. Committee to Protect Journalists had written a letter to the Prime Minister Mahathir

Mohamad and the letter can be retrieved at http://cpj.org/2000/09/two-independent-magazines-suspended.php and this is also reported in the UNHCR Attacks on the Press in 2000 – Malaysia published in February 2001, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/category,COI,CPJ,,MYS,47c565f2c,0.html. The story about the ban is also available at http://members.tripod.com/media_alternatif/sept/b13septd.htm (Journalist body slams banning of 'Eksklusif', 'Wasilah') and reported at the World Press Freedom Review, 2000.

[40] Nadeswaran, 2009, Personal communication. Nadeswaran is the Investigative Reporting Editor at TS.

[41] Vision 2020 is a development target proposed by the Malaysian government, whose aim is to be an industrial country by 2020. It was introduced by the ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad.

[42] Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) is a program launched by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia (1981-2003). The aim of the project is to achieve a developed country by the year 2020 with the adoption of a knowledge-transfer society framework.

[43] Malaysia Today is Malaysian news blog, founded in August 2004 by Raja Petra Kamarudin, a Malaysian political blogger. It was launched two week before the release of Anwar Ibrahim from prison in September 2004. The blog is critical for both the National Front (BN) and the Alternative Alliance (BA.).

Chapter 4 - Examining Newsworthiness Construction Influenced by Actor-Network Theory

[1]This relates to the uncertainty of what has been gathered as a collective. The starting point is the axiom that there is no group without group-formation. That is to say, collectives are the product of work. In the sociology of the social, a group is formed around an essence or identity that creates the difference between members and non-members. Whereas for the sociologist of the social, this identity is derived from the social itself and is always-already there in essence, Latour asks us to consider how the process of identification of membership takes place, that is, the work of forming collectives. The sociologists of associations argue that groups are formed only through performative acts of gathering and linking objects. That is for groups to durably exist, they need to engage with objects (e.g. technologies, buildings, artefacts).

[2] Whereas for the sociologist of the social, action is derived from a subject who links motivations to intentions in consciousness, for ANT action is always overtaken. There is always something beyond the motivation that appears to be initiating conscious and intentional action.. This means, the second controversy generates questions of what is acting and what has made it possible for it to act? (Latour 2005: 60) rather than to determine the absolute cause or origin of action, as for example in terms of a predefined "context" that can be analysed independently form the particular phenomenon or event of action.

[3] The third controversy is perhaps the most famous in terms of popular understandings of ANT as it concerns the nature of objects. For ANT, objects play a pivotal role in the emergence and stabilization of networks This means that nonhuman objects can also act and perform; the capacity to act is not limited to human actors alone.

[4] The fourth controversy is the nature of facts. It is of huge significance not just for scientists but also for journalists. This controversy is generated by uncertainties over matter itself. When something is referred to as "a matter of fact" it means that one is being invited to take it for granted. The controversy is deployed to shift attention away from the product and back to the process of how facts come into being. The Latin root "Fact" refers to doing or making (as in factory), hence facts are 'made' and not given. It is for this reason that Latour suggests that rather than matters of fact, we should focus on, matters of concern. This point in turn relates to another famous and much criticized axiom of ANT, namely that there is no divide between the 'natural' and the 'social' (Latour 2005: 114).

[5] A good account for Latour, "will perform the social in the precise sense that some of the participants in the action—through the controversial agency of the author—will be assembled in such a way that they can collected together" (Latour 2005: 138). An account is thus the product of a gathering, and this controversy is thus connected to the first. However, the fifth controversy is also about method. Key to ANT is the statement that actors can articulate their matters of concern very well themselves. They do not need academics to replace them with "social explanations". Instead of social explanations an ANT method should work with the way in which actors themselves articulate their matters of concern and thus construct their social reality. For example, an interview should not be seen as a means to extract information from informants and distill a social reality as such, but a move towards rendering an account, by holding the actor accountable to his or her matter if concern. This is what Latour calls "risky accounts" because in the end, things might not add up and then the gathering will fall apart.

[6] This idea, which he raised in his 'principle of irreducibility' includes:

- No prior idea of what makes forces, the reducible and irreducible need trials, there are no other ways.
- There is no pre-determination of what is 'real' and 'unreal', 'real' and 'possible' and real' and 'imaginary'
- Nothing is already known, everything is realized
- Nothing is ordered or disordered, never by itself but always through the associations with others
- Number of actants involved (and will involve) is never pre-determined. Where actants to be found are also unknown.
- Actants are neither 'wholes' nor 'parts'.
- No external or internal references to the forces involved in the process of associations. (Latour 1988: 158-236)

Chapter 5 - The Establishment of New Values: From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern (An Investigation into an Accreditation Process).

[1] Shah Alam is the state capital of Selangor, one of the states in Malaysia.

[2] UMNO is the abbreviation of the United Malays National Organisation, the largest political party in Malaysia and a founding member of the National Front or Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition.

[3] The distance from AShah Alam to Kuala Lumpur is 25 kilometres.

[4] This information is accessible at: http://adtimes.nstp.com.my/pub_nst.html.

[5] Bukit Antarabangsa is an elite hillside residence area on Ulu Klang, Selangor. A landslide occurred in 2008 and four people were killed, more than 8 people and 14 bungalows are buried.

[6] Balkis is the abbreviation for Badan Amal Kebajikan Isteri Selangor and is a registered organization to take care of the welfare of the wives of the state legislative assemblies in Selangor.

[7] Bakti is the abbreviation for Badan Amal dan Kebajikan Tenaga Isteri-Isteri Menteri dan Timbalan Menteri and is a registered organization for the wives of the ministers and deputy ministers.

[8] Ampang is a district in Malaysia that is located in both the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the state of Selangor.

[9] Nurin Jazlin was an eight year old young Malaysian girl reported missing after she had gone to a wet market located near her house in Section 1, Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur to buy a hair clip on the night of August 20, 2007. She was found murdered and sexually harrased on the morning of 17 September 2007.

[10] Khir Toyo or the full name Mohamed Khir Bin Toyo was the former Dato' Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) of the state of Selangor in Malaysia from 2000 to 2008. His Barisan Nasional government was defeated at the 2008 general election, following which he served as the state's Opposition Leader until December 2010

Chapter 6 – News Angle: The Enrolment of Non-Human Actors in the Construction of Newsworthiness

[1] Skuad Cakna – Cakna means 'care'. Skuad Cakna is referred to the district reporter allocated to cover events in different districts in the state. The public can contact the Skuad if they have any problems in their neighbourhood.

[2] Port Dickson – This is a district in the state of Negeri Sembilan that is situated about 90 km from the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

[3] Negeri Sembilan – This is one of the 13 states in Malaysia, located on the western coast of Peninsular Malaysia and south of Kuala Lumpur.

[4] Chief Minister – this is the head of some states in Malaysia, including Negeri Sembilan. The Chief Minister heads the State Executive Council.

[5] 7th Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture & Agrotourism International Show - The MAHA Exposition biennial series is Malaysia's leading agricultural show. Hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries, it is definitely among the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in the region, if not in Asia (MAHA 2012 website: http://www.maha.gov.my/2012/about-maha-2012.html).

[6] PR – This is the acronym for Pakatan Rakyat, the opposition alliance in Malaysia.

[7] The link can be accessed at: (http://cijmalaysia.org/2011/05/09/utusans-unsubstantiated-report-irresponsible-endangers-interfaith-relations/)

[8] Nilai – Nilai is one of the districts in Negeri Sembilan, located about 40 km from Kuala Lumpur.

[9] SUKMA – SUKMA is the acronym for Sukan Malaysia, or in English, Malaysian Games. The SUKMA games are a sports event in Malaysia held every two years, and in 2012 it was held in Pahang state.

[10] YB – This is the acronym of Yang Berhormat, which is the title given to the representative of the state.

[11] Alor Gajah – Alor Gajah is located in Melaka, and it borders Tampin, a district in Negeri Sembilan.

[12] Tampin – Tampin is a district in Negeri Sembilan, and part of the town neighbouring the state of Melaka.

[13] Rembau – Rembau is located 25 km south of the capital of Negeri Sembilan, Seremban.

Chapter 7 – The Objectification of a Virtual Object: Taking Readership 'Into Account' in Newsworthiness Construction

[1] This is based on a personal communication with one of the TS editors who realised that some do criticise the accuracy of the distribution figures of TS by saying that a *nasi lemak* seller can take more than one copy of the newspaper and use it to wrap food.

[2] The Centre for Independent Journalism, Malaysia (CIJ) is a non-profit organisation that aspires to a society that is democratic, just and free where all peoples will enjoy free media and the freedom to express, seek, and impart information. The website can be accessed at: http://cijmalaysia.org/

[3] The full post can be accessed at: http://uppercaise.wordpress.com/2010/09/13/newspapers-lose-sales/. This is just an example of a view of one person among many other individuals. Thus this does not represent the public because the exact public is a collection of individuals. In reality, some would prefer the NST, others prefer BH etc. nevertheless, this discussion is offered as an illustration of how online news venues have made the distance between virtual and actual audiences more visible. At that moment, when someone publishes a reflection on the qualities of different newspapers (which is more easily done online, for example in blogs), a moment emerges in which the virtual object of the audience is being actualised in a specific discourse. However, the nature of online publishing is that it is extremely dispersed, and there are such massive differences in terms of circulation rates (varying from very few clicks to millions), so that every actualisation of the readership is at the same time merely decorative and is easily marginalised as an isolated case (merely one person's opinion). In this example, Uppercaise is taken as an instance because he was once a journalist, and serves as a reference to a symbolic form of "accreditation" since he is not able to deploy a large variety of mediators to strengthen his position. Thus, the views taken from the blog Uppercaise are, however, taken as examples in this study to serve as a means to illustrate that "mere online presence" or "mere options for feedback" does not at all automatically mean a more intensive involvement of the readership.

[4] This can be accessed at: http://uppercaise.wordpress.com/2010/09/13/newspapers-lose-sales/

[5] Altantuya was a Mongolian national, and was a murder victim who was either murdered by C-4 explosives or was somehow killed first and her remains destroyed with C-4 on October 18, 2006 in a deserted area in Shah Alam, Malaysia near Kuala Lumpur. Her death is associated by some with the current Prime Minister of Malaysia.

[6] One piece of current news about the Scorpene scandal can be accessed at: http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2012/06/26/scorpene-scandal-surfaces-to-trouble-najib/

[7] Bernama is the Malaysian national news agency and is the only local news agency in Malaysia.

[8] Media Prima Berhad (Media Prima) is a company listed on the Main Board of the Bursa Malaysia and is Malaysia's leading integrated media investment group. It currently owns 100 per cent equity interest in TV3, 8TV, ntv7 and TV9. In addition, Media Prima now owns more than 98 per cent equity interest in The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) (NSTP) Berhad, Malaysia's largest publisher which publishes three national newspapers; New Straits Times, Berita Harian and Harian Metro. The website can be accessed at: http://www.mediaprima.com.my/default.aspx

[9] One of the examples related to racism and bias is accessible at: http://mppas.wordpress.com/2008/05/28/boikot-akhbar-utusan-mingguan-malaysia-pakatan-rakyat/).

[10] Ampang Jaya is commonly known as Ampang. It is a suburb of Kuala Lumpur and located in the state of Selangor. However, in the context of this quote, Journalist TS3 is referring to the Ampang Jaya Local Council.

[11] Perodua Kancil is a national car produced by Perodua. It is a small compact car.

[12] SH took this motto by taking AirAsia, a Malaysian-based low-cost airline and Asia's largest low-fare: Now Everybody can Fly.

[13] Seremban is the capital of the state of Negeri Sembilan.

[14] This can be accessed at: http://opennet.net/

[15] Malaysian Multimedia Super Corridor Corporation (MSC) is currently known as MSC Malaysia. The programme was officiated by the 4th Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, on 12 February 1996. The aim of the programme is to accelerate the achievement of Vision 2020 objectives and to transform Malaysia into a developed nation by 2020 with the adoption of a knowledge-based society.

[16] Source: www.mscmalaysia.my

[17] The reports can be accessed at: http://www.ifap.ru/library/book497.pdf

[18] Reporters Without Borders run a campaign at http://march12.rsf.org/en/

[19] The full report is accessible at: http://www.digital.org.my/index.php/news/110-malaysian-website-rankings-for-january-2011-

[20] SMS is the acronym for Short Message Services, and it is a popular acronym used in Malaysia as compared to the word 'text'.

[21] Pantai Dalam is the residential area located south-west of Kuala Lumpur.

[22] Alexa.com is a leading provider of free, global web metrics.

[23] Perak is one of the states in Malaysia and is the second largest state in Peninsular Malaysia. The bloggers were charged for comments that insulted the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah, for his action in appointing the unscrupulous Barisan Nasional leaders as Mentri Besar and Exco members by using dubious means to wrest the State Administration while the legitimate Pakatan Rakyat Mentri Besar and the Exco Members had not resigned, which was in total violation of the State and Federal Constitution and the blogger is going to be charged in court for this conduct. The full report can be accessed at:
http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/3/13/nation/20090313130728&sec=nation

[24] Batu Caves temple is a limestone hill, and situated in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur. The cave is one of the most popular Hindu shrines outside India, and is a focal point of the Hindu festival of Thaipusam in Malaysia.

Chapter 8 – The Associations of an Oppositional Newspaper and the State: A Precarious Relationship

[1] I say "absent-minded" to highlight that extensive contexts always seem to "appears there but not really there". If there are clear traces that point to these con-texts, they are not extensive but intensive and cease to be means to "explain away" what takes place in the present and presence of what we are encountering as an empirical reality.

[2] Publishing any forms of periodicals in Malaysia needs a permit or licence that should be renewed annually, as stated in the Printing Presses and Publication Act 1984.

[3] Harakah is the smallest news organization in this study, it it is not listed in Bursa Malaysia and it also does not publish other newspapers outside its online counterpart, Harakahdaily. Besides that, financial problem is also apparent, as it appears in the interview with the editors during the permit suspension in 2009.

[4] Harakah as the party organ of PAS is not found in PAS official website, it appears in several book publications in Malay and sold in book stores related to PAS. However, all journalists interviewed in this study used the same language to describe the relationship between Harakah and PAS, so as written in previous studies such as Iga (2009) and Shakila (2001).

[5] Suara Keadilan is the newspaper published by Parti Keadilan Rakyat formed after the sacking of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

[6] Appeared in Malaysiakini , 23 March 2009 entitled 'harakah, Suara Keadilan banned 3 months'.

[7] Based on interviews with Journalist L, Journalist T and Journalist A of the Hh during the fieldwork in 2009.

[8] This is available at: http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/03/25/malaysia-end-ban-opposition-papers.

[9] 'Suara Keadilan, Harakh banned over 'sensational and wrong' articles, The Star 24 March 2009.

[10] 'Malaysia: End ban on opposition papers: Two newspapers shut down ahead of elections. Human Right Watch, 25 March 2009, available at: http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/03/25/malaysia-end-ban-opposition-papers).

[11] Harakah pula digantung? (Now Harakah is suspended?), Malaysiakini, 8 July 2010.

[12] These issues are examples given byTaufek Yahya 2010, reflexing about the suspension through a personal email communication. FELDA is the acronym for the Federal Land Development Authority. It is a Malaysian government agency that handles the resettlement of rural and poor people into developed areas. Jamaah Islamiyah is a Southeast Asian militant Islamic organization in Southeast Asia including Malaysia, Indonesia, Phillippines, Singapore and Brunei.

[13] Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders, Available at:
http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=1001.

[14] Freedom of the Press Global Ranking, Available at:
http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=560&year=2010

[15] Malaysia moves up to 122nd place in Press Freedom Index, accessible at:
http://www.thesundaily.my/news/301797

[16] Quoted from PAS website available at: http://www.pas.org.my/index.php

[17] n.a., 2010 Bernama news, Malaysia should diversify trade pattern and explore China's sectors, says DPM,
available at: http://web6.bernama.com/bernama//v3/news_lite.php?id=500392

[18] Fathi Aris Omar is the current Malaysiakini's chief editor.

[19] fiqh is an Arabic word meaning full comprehension of Islamic teachings.

[20] fardu ain is an Arabic phrase meaning compulsory Islamic principles that each Muslim has to know.

[21] Detik is a bimonthly magazine and the permit was not renewed in 2000. Related news pertaining to the ban and
the reaction from various parties can be reached at: Southeast Asian press body criticizes Detik's ban, accessible at:
http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/2132.

[22] such as PPPA

[23] Bernama is the Malaysian news agency.

[24] No access to Umno assembly, accessible at: http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/58986.

[25] New media denied passes by ruling party, accessible at: http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/100853.

[26] Dr Agus Yusof is an associate professor at School of History, Political and Strategic Studies at Facultyof Social
Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia. He is well known as an academician who is
critical to both the state and the opposition.

[27] Batu Putih is a small island that has triggered a crisis between Malaysia and Singapore. When the Malaysian map
was published in 1979, Singapore was shocked to find that the island is included in Malaysia, but Singapore has
longed handled the Batu Putih Light House without any complaints from Malaysia. The International Court Justice
(ICJ) in Hague, the Netherlands, however decided on 19 June 2008 that Batu Putih Island is owned by Singapore.

[28] PPPA Amendments to be tabled at current Parliament sitting, accessible at:
http://www.mmail.com.my/story/pppa-amendments-be-tabled-current-parliament-sitting

[29] PPPA: More Press Freedom?, accessible at:
http://www.selangortimes.com/index.php?section=insight&permalink=20120516151822-pppa-more-press-freedom

[30] The venue of PAS meetings are known as Markas PAS in Malay language.

[31] Journalist Hh4 was referring to 'TV PAS' that contains selection of videos of speeches from Pakatan Rakyat coaliation and religious talks, available at: http://tvpakatanrakyat.blogspot.com/2008/11/tv-pas-live.html.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS
Circulation Figures
Newspapers - West Malaysia Publications

Approved by Board on 19.04.2012

	01.07.05 to 30.06.06	01.07.06 to 30.06.07	01.07.07 to 30.06.08	01.07.08 to 30.06.09	01.07.09 to 30.06.10	01.07.10 to 30.06.11	01.07.11 to 31.12.11	Average net sales per publishing day at published rates	Average net sales per publishing day at reduced rate	Cover Price RM	No. of publishing days 01.07.11 to 31.12.11	Perlis	Kedah	Penang	Perak	Kelantan	Ter	Pahang	S'gor / Wilayah	Melaka	N Sembilan	Johore	Others	Grand Total
Bahasa Newspapers																								
Berita Harian	203,704	192,917	192,982	183,187	160,597	150,750	126,777	103,702	23,075	1.50	155	1,534	7,370	4,081	9,882	8,134	6,255	8,871	42,398	5,814	8,286	19,369	4,783	126,777
Berita Minggu	333,334	305,256	297,950	275,143	231,231	212,660	190,568	178,606	11,962	2.00	26	1,989	10,467	4,911	15,096	10,417	9,003	14,974	65,288	8,618	14,122	29,892	5,791	190,568
Utusan Malaysia	213,445	197,033	197,952	181,346	170,558	172,609	172,859	165,897	6,962	1.50	157	2,009	13,315	7,973	15,500	9,314	7,300	9,541	61,143	7,974	11,355	22,100	5,335	172,859
Mingguan Malaysia	483,240	459,793	458,296	413,727	372,163	369,560	362,635	357,800	4,835	2.00	26	4,206	28,092	16,987	33,762	17,931	14,721	22,438	131,592	15,977	26,057	41,758	9,114	362,635
Kosmo	-	100,798	115,967	129,633	172,252	196,653	208,331	150,296	58,035	1.00	157	2,288	17,154	14,011	17,576	9,898	8,647	11,157	93,792	5,678	12,530	15,600	-	208,331
Kosmo Ahad	-	109,892	120,848	130,375	176,116	205,840	217,497	214,036	3,461	1.00	26	2,040	18,856	13,832	19,356	10,239	9,077	12,088	96,288	5,961	13,724	16,036	-	217,497
Harian Metro	249,575	289,315	324,097	338,552	378,354	398,379	386,742	385,886	856	1.50	155	5,549	30,685	18,502	28,863	20,652	22,562	22,669	116,361	13,486	16,955	69,265	21,193	386,742
Metro Ahad	263,649	314,321	363,319	386,795	431,418	449,993	422,614	421,833	781	2.00	26	5,387	32,169	18,732	34,373	20,806	21,869	26,133	129,363	16,939	21,221	76,457	19,165	422,614
Total	1,746,947	1,969,325	2,071,411	2,038,758	2,092,689	2,156,444	2,088,023	1,978,056	109,967			25,002	158,108	99,029	174,408	107,391	99,434	127,871	736,225	80,447	124,250	290,477	65,381	2,088,023
English Newspapers																								
New Straits Times	139,468	139,763	136,530	120,770	109,341	100,172	94,661	62,467	32,194	1.20	155	711	2,953	5,441	5,847	1,735	2,093	5,057	50,294	3,478	3,962	10,390	2,700	94,661
New Sunday Times	152,575	153,409	156,910	141,986	129,554	118,669	110,660	84,778	25,882	1.20	26	361	3,282	6,535	7,716	1,978	2,106	3,203	60,680	4,268	6,121	11,615	2,795	110,660
The Star	310,008	309,181	304,904	295,479	286,409	283,714	287,204	267,991	19,213	1.20	155	566	8,022	31,709	19,862	1,827	1,450	6,346	178,007	7,683	8,689	14,714	8,329	287,204
Sunday Star	320,964	322,741	313,609	304,357	295,552	292,805	289,979	269,133	20,846	1.50	26	485	9,547	34,650	23,744	2,020	1,556	6,752	167,531	9,118	10,554	15,123	8,899	289,979
The Edge	21,864	24,043	25,041	23,369	22,729	23,301	22,549	22,395	154	5.00	26	-	17	1,933	572	72	48	163	18,039	269	193	614	629	22,549
Total	944,879	949,137	936,994	885,961	843,585	818,661	805,053	706,764	98,289			2,123	23,821	80,268	57,741	7,632	7,253	21,521	474,551	24,816	29,519	52,456	23,352	805,053
Chinese Newspapers																								
Sin Chew Daily	324,333	336,401	361,638	374,757	382,578	387,103	388,223	387,240	983	1.30	181	734	6,891	15,319	52,799	2,483	1,595	11,041	110,523	15,283	15,912	96,633	59,010	388,223
Sin Chew Daily - Night Sales	22,562	20,762	22,137	21,370	20,524	18,852	18,074	18,074	-	1.30	181	-	-	-	354	-	-	215	12,058	172	423	4,852	-	18,074
China Press	138,218	144,341	152,801	159,034	160,841	164,703	166,705	166,690	15	1.30	181	359	3,199	4,341	17,772	2,245	1,624	13,956	76,219	7,542	12,069	24,486	2,893	166,705
China Press - Night Sales	89,052	87,198	87,997	85,390	80,459	74,611	71,396	71,396	5	1.30	181	-	1,471	4,360	10,484	-	-	613	37,412	919	1,225	14,917	-	71,401
Guang Ming Daily	105,878	99,706	101,033	97,765	95,158	92,741	88,886	88,886	-	1.20	181	1,077	3,686	39,051	5,848	557	532	2,319	27,990	364	2,303	5,063	96	88,886
Guang Ming Daily - Night Sales	28,877	27,748	29,531	27,778	26,317	24,512	23,295	23,295	-	1.20	181	215	1,602	14,548	101	-	-	297	5,665	104	763	-	-	23,295
Oriental Daily News	97,567	102,500	100,505	97,882	103,827	105,576	105,924	105,353	571	1.00	184	99	1,461	1,414	8,364	-	-	1,240	79,398	1,098	700	12,150	-	105,924
Total	806,487	818,656	855,642	863,976	869,704	868,098	862,508	860,934	1,574			2,484	18,310	79,033	95,722	5,285	3,751	29,681	349,265	25,482	33,395	158,101	61,999	862,508
Tamil Newspaper																								
Makkal Osai	-	-	-	30,994	30,203	31,566	34,143			1.30	180													
Free & Control Distribution																								
The Sun	174,179	256,486	270,506	287,935	300,550	300,525	300,531	-	-	Free	128	160	2,700	37,060	9,533	826	458	1,230	223,172	5,820	3,527	16,045	-	300,531
MALAYSIA SME - THE SME PAPER				44,667		50,000	50,000	-	-	Free	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50,000	-	-	-	-	50,000
Total	174,179	256,486	270,506	332,602	300,550	350,525	350,531					160	2,700	37,060	9,533	826	458	1,230	273,172	5,820	3,527	16,045	-	350,531
Grand Total	3,672,492	3,993,604	4,134,553	4,152,291	4,136,731	4,225,294	4,140,258					29,769	202,939	295,390	337,404	121,134	110,896	180,303	1,833,213	136,565	190,691	517,079	150,732	4,106,115

LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW

Questions on the process of newsworthines construction have been asked to the participants in this study. The initiating questions are:

1. Based on your experience, how does a particular event become news in your organization? You can refer to a particular story that have been constructed recently.

2. How is the news angle of this story (referring to a particular news) is constructed? What are the considerations of the angling process? Why do you consider these factors? For this particular news, how is the process of constructing the news angle different from other newspapers that also cover the same story?

3. How are readers being taken into consideration in the newsworthiness construction at your newspaper?

4. Based on the recent suspension of the permit of your newspaper, in your opinion, why this is performed? What are the implicatons to your newspaper operation? What will be done by this organisation during the suspension? After the suspension was lifted: What do you feel about this? Why do you think this happen?

Chapter 1

Brief Profile of Newspapers

This section contains information on the background of the newspapers examined in this study. Each newspaper is discussed under four subheadings:

(1) Company Overview

(2) Company history

(3) Ownership

(4) Target reader

 (With the exception of XX which has requested anonymity. The discussion of the XX is executed without directly revealing its identity.

To be consistent with the arguments of this study, this section should not appear as an attempt to *impose a* certain identity on these newspapers, rather it should serve only to provide the history and current information on the six newspapers.

1.The New Straits Times (NST)

(a)Overview

The New Straits Times (NST) is one of the major English mainstream newspapers in Malaysia published by the New Straits Times Press (NSTP). It was founded in 1845 and is Malaysia's oldest newspaper still in print. It was originally known as the 'Straits Times' and in the 20th century established itself as the 'New Straits Times' (1965.) It has long considered itself a quality English newspaper[1].

The NST describes itself as

> '…the leading daily in the country. We have cemented our reputation as the commanding voice delivering ground-breaking and reliable news promptly along with sharp comments on the latest happenings in Malaysia. News has never been sexier and entertaining.'

The NST was published in broadsheet format until 1 September 2004. It changed its format on 18 April 2005. The current retail price is RM 1.20 (approximately 30pence). The online version can be reached at http://www.nst.com.my/ and the digital format of the newspaper is available via subscription that cost RM 20 monthly (approximately £4.00 a month).

Currently, there are about 330 journalists working with the NST with 136 Malay journalists, 58 Chinese and 140 Indian.

Among awards received by the NST are the Brand Laureate Awards 2011 as Best Brand-Media (Newspaper) Category, Outstanding Tourism Article in the Second Langkawi Tourism Industry Award 2009, two categories in National Film Development Corp of Malaysia (FINAS) Award, several categories in Anugerah Kewartawanan Pendidikan (Education Journalism Award) Universiti Malaysia Sabah 2009 and Best Feature in Anugerah Media (Media Award) Universiti Putra Malaysia 2010[2].

(b) Company History

The Straits Times was first published in Singapore in 1845. Later, 80% of the shares were purchased by Pernas (National Trading Company) which were later transferred to Fleet Holding, an UMNO investment. The company was later named New Straits Times Press or NSTP, and published mainstream newspapers and magazines.

The Corporate Vision of the company is "[t]o be the Best Media Company". As stated in its website, the goal of the company is:

> '…to be the preeminent provider of news, information and entertainment and to achieve total customer satisfaction through our professional and highly regarded workforce that values quality, integrity, innovativeness and personal service".

So far, the NSTP can boast the domination of 63% of Malaysian media market, with 600,000 copies of newspapers published by the NSTP distributed nationwide and about 3.5 million visitors of NSTP product-related websites.

The mission statements[3] of the NSTP is:

> (a) To meet the needs of readers and business partners with superior products and services
>
> (b) To be profitable and to maximize shareholders' returns
>
> (c) To attract and retain the best employees with rewarding careers in a conducive working environment;
>
> (d) To continue to be a caring and responsible corporate citizen.

(c) Ownership

Media Prima Berhad owns 43.29 % of the NSTP, alongside two television stations, TV3 (100%) and 8TV (80%). The NSTP provides several services such as editorial services through the New Straits Times Sd Bhd (100%), Berita Harian Sdn Bhd (100%), Internet based online services through NSTP e-Media Sdn Bhd (100%), Property development and management through The New Straits Times Properties Sdn Bhd (100%), and newsprint manufacturing through Malaysian Newsprint Industries Sdn Bhd (21.4%)The ownership of the NSTP is closely affiliated with the government in power[4].

(d) Target readers

The NST is generally read by "[p]?rofessional, managers, executives and businessmen" (NSTP website, http://www.nstp.com.my/wp/). A survey of its readership suggests that the NST is read by professional and businessmen (35%), students (19%), housewives (13%) and white collar workers (12%). In terms of age, more than 60% of NST readers are over 40 years old, mostly retired officers with English competency[5]. The second highest readership is among teenagers aged between 15-19 and 20-24 years old with 11% respectively. At the moment, the NST is trying to increase its younger readers[6], thus maintaining its identity as 'The Newspaper of the Nation' able to reach a wide range of readership[7].

The average circulation of the NST is around 100,000 to 120,000 daily based on the ABC survey from 2009 until 2010. The readership reaches 236,000[8]. To increase the circulation and to adapt to the popularity of the internet, the NST "strode well ahead of its competitors with the introduction of NST Live, an interactive interview session over the internet with opinion leaders and newsmakers. A revamp of the NST online was carried out in July 2009 which included the introduction of features such as seeking readers' opinion on articles carried in the New Straits Times. The icing on the cake was the launching of the NSTOnline fanpage on Facebook where fans are notified of interesting stories and photographs[9].

2.Berita Harian (BH)

(a) Overview

Another publication by the NSTP is **Berita Harian (BH).** The BH is the major Malay daily newspaper published since the independence day of Malaysia 31 August 1957. "Berita Harian" is literally translated as "Daily News".. The newspaper describes itself as "A

newspaper of the people, by the people, for the people"[10]. The tagline of the BH is "Sumber Ilmu dan Maklumat Mutakhir" (Source of Knowledge and Latest Information) and one of the priorities is given to stories related to education[11].

The BH was first printed in broadsheet format until 31st December 2007, and then decided to go compact on the 1st January 2008. Currently the BH is sold for RM1.50 (about 30 pence). The online version of the BH can be reached at http://www.bharian.com.my/ while the digital version can be purchased at RM 17 (approximately £3.40) monthly. The latest number of journalists working with the BH is 280 with 274 Malay journalists, 1 Chinese and 4 Indian.

Some awards received by the BH are winning two categories in the FINAS Award, two categories in Anugerah Kewartawanan Pendidikan (Education Journalism Award) Universiti Malaysia Sabah 2009 and three categories in Anugerah Media (Media Award) Universiti Putra Malaysia 2010[12].

Because the NST and BH are being published by a similar newspaper publisher, please refer to the NST **(b) Company History** and **(c) Ownership** above.

(d)Target Readers

The BH is read by a broad demographic. The NSTP website generalizes the BH readers as similar to the NST: "[p]rofessional, managers, executives and businessmen"[13]. Overall, the BH's approach to the readership is broad, "its readership can be described as knowledgeable and growing in affluence, in line with it aims to be "[a] newspaper of the people"

In the Ad Times[14], the reader demographic of the BH is detailed as comprising of 25% blue collar readers, 18% housewives, and 16% professionals and businessmen, white collars readers and students

The average circulation of BH since 2009 until 2010 is about 100,000 to 120,000 daily and the readership has reached 1,000,000.

3.TheSun (TS)

(a)Overview

TS was founded on 1 June 1993 as a profit-making daily and became non-profit in 2002. It was the only free newspaper in Malaysia until the Malay Mail went free as an afternoon

tabloid in September 2009. To date, The Sun is Malaysia's biggest English language free circulation newspaper (300,557 copies)[15]. The tagline "Telling it as it is" is in line with the culture of Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd:

> 'We believe in the democratic system of being neutral, non-political, equal and fair, in carrying both of a story, in focusing on all - friends and enemy, in giving our readers good, honest reporting on issues that matters most to them, and real, quality news. We believe in a culture of honest, open communications - beginning right here with our internal colleagues from bottom up'.[16]

Graham Brown (2005) describes TS as the "most independent English daily" (Brown 2005: 45) which "sought to push the boundaries of politically acceptable journalism, giving more coverage to opposition groups and eschewing the otherwise predominant tendency of reporting ministerial comments as fact rather than opinion" (Brown 2005: 44).

TS is published Monday to Friday and distributed mainly in urban areas in Peninsular Malaysia with the aim to fill the niche of investigative reporting which is lacking in Malaysia[17]. The online version of TS is known as the Sun2Surf, currently renamed as theSundaily[18]. The online version acts as a companion to theSun newspaper and to complement the print edition with a mix of original content and commentary. The Sun's ePaper, the online replica of the print edition, is available for readers who are not able to get a copy of the print edition in the morning[19].

The newspaper and its journalists have been awarded several regional prestigious awards in journalism. In 2005, the newspaper was awarded with 4As Kancil Award for public service journalism. In 2006, it was the joint winner for News Journalism awarded by Malaysian Press Institute (MPI). In the 2007 general national election, Jacqueline Ann Surin won the award for Excellence in Opinion Writing, followed by R. Nadeswaran and Terence Fernandez who won the Public Service Journalism award by the Society of Publishers in Asia (SOPA). In 2008, SOPA again awarded two awards to Terence Fernandez and R. Nadeswaran in Public Service Journalism, with honourable mentions for both of them and to R. Nadeswaran for his weekly Opinion Writing. TheSun's editorial team comprises of about 60 journalists[20].

(b) Company History

Berjaya Media Berhad was incorporated in Malaysia on 19 July 1991 under the name of Fikiran Abadi Sdn Bhd. On 8 December 1994, the name was changed to Sun Media Group Sdn. Bhd.and later to Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd (SMCSB) on 22 August 1998. In March 2008, Berjaya Corporation Berhad purchased a substantial amount of share of Nexnews Berhad, which subsequently made SMCSB its subsidiary. On 23 April 2008, Nexnews Berhad changed the name to Berjaya Media Berhad[21]. They claim that 'good journalism doesn't exist in a vacuum'.

(c) Ownership

TheSun is published by Sun Media Corporations Sdn Bhd and 57% of the share is owned by Berjaya Corporation Berhad. Berjaya business empire is owned by the multimillionaire of the Berjaya Group Vincent Tan Chee Yioun. Despite criticism about the relationship and news published by TS (such as the close personal relationship between Vincent Tan and Malaysian ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad), the newspaper has attempted to offer "more innovative and critical alternative to the other dailies" (Hilley 2001: 122) through critical investigative reporting. Besides media, other core activities of the Berjaya Group include financial services, consumer marketing and direct selling of vacation time-share, hotels and resorts and recreation development. The main listed companies under the Group are Berjaya Land Berhad, Berjaya Sports Toto Berhad, Berjaya Media Berhad and Berjaya Assets Berhad[22].

(d) Target reader

As an urban newspaper, TS "is widely read in the affluent, cosmopolitan market centres of the Klang Valley, Penang and Johor Bharu, as well as in the major capital cities and towns of Peninsular Malaysia"[23]. The general ABC audit found that TS is among the few newspaper in Malaysia has shown a significant increase in its circulation figure. The latest print reaches over 300,000 copies and distributed to office buildings, condominiums, Light Rapid Transit (LRT) stations, and fast food outlet especially 7-Eleven[24]. The readership is estimated at 2.9 readers per copy, read by 750,000 urban residents in capital cities in Malaysia such as the Klang Valley[25]. The success in terms of TS readership is associated with its balanced reporting, allowing the voice of the opposition to also be heard (Brown 2005).

4. Sinar Harian (SH)

(a) Overview

Sinar Harian means "Daily Light". It is a new venture of Karangkraf that was first published on the 31st March 2006. The SH is published daily in a compact format. The newspaper describes itself as:'

> the 100% regional newspaper in the Peninsula…The uniqueness of this newspaper is that each district within the state is allocated with a mobile reporting team (Skuad Cakna) to source for the latest news'[26]

The SH's identity is enforced with the tagline 'Suara Cakna Komuniti Anda" (to be concerned within the community). It was first established limitedly in the East Coast of Malaysia (Kelantan and Terengganu states) and has now reached almost nationwide readership including the state of Selangor, Pahang, Melaka & Negeri Sembilan, Utara, Perak and Johore. Besides prioritizing regional news, it is also described as political newspaper, differentiating itself with other mainstream newspapers by publishing non-partisan political news in the newspaper's main section[27].

The cover price of the SH is RM1.00, which is about 20 pence and it was increased to RM1.20 in 2010. The online version could be reached at http://www.sinarharian.com.my/ where the states editions of Sinar Harian are also available. The SH has the web presence but currently does not have any digital version or the exact version of the print version in the digital newspaper version, as the other newspapers in this study. The current number of journalists working for the SH is about 400 people[28].

(b) Company History

The SH is published by Akhbar Cabaran Sdn Bhd, a private company related to the Kumpulan Karangkraf & Ultimate Group of Companies, without any declared political affiliation[29]. Kumpulan Karangraf is a major magazine publisher in Malaysia that produced more than 30 titles of magazines since 1978. The magazines published include *Mingguan Wanita, Rasa, Bintang Kecil, Fokus SPM, Maskulin, Media Hiburan* and *Impiana.* The SH is the only daily newspaper published by Kumpulan Karangkraf although it also publishes

Bacaria, a tabloid format with mass appeal on a weekly basis that covers topics such as politics, entertainment, mystery, crime, social and religious issues[30].

The diverse publications of Kumpulan Karangkraf suggest the commercial emphasize of the company. This is embedded in the company's aim, and it is stated in the company's website: "[a]n established publication and printing firm and distributor of magazines, books and printed materials in South East Asia that meets world quality standards". The aim is to become a leading publishing company in the South East Asia implies the commercial target, that the various publications should able to reach a larger range of readers, not only in Malaysia but also in other Malay-speaking Asian countries such as Brunei, Indonesia (Indonesian language and Malay language hold similarities, thus comprehensible) and among Malays in Singapore.

The mission statement of the company is also not merely driven by profit but "emphasizing on a strong foundation in good basic human values" among the workers while at the same time discovering new opportunities in the publishing industry[31]. Human values are celebrated, with the emphasize of non-partisan news and balanced news coverage in Kelantan and Terengganu; which is mainly lacking by the mainstream newspapers. However, the attempt to fulfil these aims has been a bumpy road for Kumpulan Karangkraf. Previously, they had published "Watan" which was banned after the *Operasi Lalang* in 1987 and another controversial political tabloid "*Ekslusif*" which was also banned in 2000, both attempting to offer views of the oppositions (Iga 2008/2009).

Among the achievements of Kumpulan Karangkraf are: (listed in the Malaysian Guinness Books of Records) 'the Publisher with the most Malay language publications', and Fokus SPM, an educational magazine received the Journalism Award (Education) from the Press Institute of Malaysia in 2005[32].

(c) Ownership
Kumpulan Karangkraf describes itself as a private business entity, without any political affiliation with the state[33] thus justifying the commercial orientation of the newspaper. In order to manage its commercial operations, the partners of Kumpulan Karangkraf includes the Ultimate Print (the printing company), Media Network (handles the logistics related to packing, delivery and distributing media products) and Ultimate Edge, which manage bulk

mailing services to ensure the products are stamped, addressed and directed accurately to their final destinations[34]. The combination of all companies under Kumpulan Karangkraf supports the whole process of production and distribution.

(d) Target Readers

 SH claims it "is created to cater to the needs of readers according to their individual state" Thus, the main target reader is more local than other newspapers in this study. Abdul Jalil Ali (2009 Personal communication) added that the reader of the SH are readers that wanted to read political news from both sides of the story—from the state and the opposition parties. The average SH circulation since 2009 until 2010 is between 120,000 to 150,000. However it is not yet audited by the ABC. The readership is estimated to reach around 1 million readers[35].

5.Harakah (The Hh)

(a)Overview

> Prior to the introduction of the internet, the Hh was one of the most well-known alternative media in a print form, with wide accessibility despite state control (Brown 2005, Ling 2003).

Harakah is a party newspaper published by Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) since 1987. It is a Malay language newspaper published twice a week with 8 pages of English language to pull out, all contained in a tabloid sized newspaper. The Hh describes itself as the 'organ party' of the PAS[36] similar to PAS's 'Membangun Bersama Islam' (Develop with Islam). The online version of the Malay language edition of the Hh can be uploaded at http://bm.harakahdaily.net/ while the English version at http://en.harakahdaily.net/. Harakah Daily is updated on a daily basis[36] supplementing the inadequacy of space of a print version that appears only twice a week. The overall staff of the Hh is 70 with about 30 journalists and 10 state reporters. The editorial is headed by Mohd Lutfi Othman.

The history of the Hh could be related to its relationship with the state, albeit not always a pleasant one. In the case of the Hh, the publication is itself under the publication permit renewed annually, based on the Printing and Presses Publication Act 1984. The frequency of the publication increases after it gains popularity on the aftermath of Anwar Ibrahim's sacking in 1998. In March 2000, the frequency of the Hh from twice a week was reduced to twice a month. However, after the success of Pakatan Rakyat coaliation during the 2008

election, the frequency returned to twice a week (Zaharom 2002b). The permit of the Hh, together with Suara Keadilan (a party newspaper owned by PKR) was suspended for three months in 23 March 2009, but withdrawn less than two weeks later. Subsequently, on 8 July 2010, a day after the permit due, the Hh received a letter from the Home Ministry addressing the issue of the failure to submit the newspaper to the ministry prior to its printing. However, the Hh able to renew the permit on 15 July 2010.

(b)Company history

The Hh is published by PAS, currently the biggest Islamic opposition party in Malaysia. PAS was founded on the 23 August 1951 when a group of Islamic leaders (Ulamak) held a conference in Kuala Lumpur to form a society named Persatuan Ulamak Se-Malaya. The party then changed to Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya (PAS) on 24 November 1951. In 1973, PAS formed a coalition with Parti Perikatan (Alliance Party formed in 1951 and comprising of UMNO, MCA and MIC) and formed Barisan Nasional. But the coalition struggled with internal political crises as in Kelantan in 1977, followed by various divergences within 1978 until 1982. Thus, in October 1982, PAS restructured its aim by coming back to the Ulamak leadership which is more Islamic and based on the Quran and Hadith. The foundation of PAS is Islam and its missions are formed based on the Quran and Hadith. The main aims of PAS are to "strive for the society that follows the norms and laws based on Islam, and upholds the purity of Islam and the sovereignty of the country[37].

After the 1990 general election, PAS coliated with Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) (literally translated as the *Spirit of 46 Malay Party)* under a coaliation called Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah or APU with other Muslim parties that include Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Se-Malaysia (BERJASA), Parti Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia (HAMIM) and Kongres India Muslim Malaysia (KIMMA). However in 1996, they were in conflict and APU was dissolved[38].

(c)Ownership

Harakah is owned 100% by PAS, together with the online version Harakah Daily. Previously PAS also published several magazines such as *Muslimah* (Muslim women), *Tamadun* (Civilization), *Dunia Islam* (Islamic World) and *Detik* (Moment) but these have been banned by the state[39].

(d)Target reader

The print version of Hh is read mostly by its party members, including those who are over 40s in the villages that do not have the internet connection to read from Harakah Daily every day[40]. At the same time, Mohd Lutfi (2009 Personal communication) maintains that more than two third of the Hh readers are among the non PAS party members. General circulation of the Hh is around 100,000 to 120,000 (Wang 1998) and peaked at 300,000 during the 1998 Anwar Ibrahim sacking[41].

Harakah Daily, on the other hand is increasing its popularity among the younger supporters, and hasalso been listed as the best 100 websites in Malaysia[42]. Besides the increase of circulation among alternative newspapers such as the Hh, the internet has also become very popular among citizens although within a confined setting (Abbot 2001), therefore manyreaders no longer rely merely on mainstream media owned by the state (Chin 2003, Zaharom and Wang 2004).

6.The XX

The XX is the only newspaper that has requested for anonymity in this study. The growth of the XX is described as:

 '…phenomenal, from a mere 106,000 readers in 1993 to three million last year. Whether it is the makcik [aunties] in the kampong [villages] or young professionals in Klang Valley, our readers are loyal, ready-to-buy and eager"[43]. 'Currently, there are about 200 journalists working at that XX: with 190 Malay journalists, 1 Chinese and 4 Indian. In 2006, the XX launched its interactive portal to open the opportunities for readers to be the eyes and ears of their own community. The result of this portal is said to increase participation of the readers on various topics covered by the XX, because they can both respond to the news or report any problem and wrongdoing in the community to the XX for further investigation[44]. By 2009, the members of the interactive portal had increased from 110,000 in 2008 to more than 140,000[45]. The general readership of the XX suggests that it is read mainly by teenagers and young adults aged 15-29 years old, with circulation of around 350,000 and readership reaching 3 million readers.

Notes:

[1] Syed Nadzri Syed Harun, the NST Editor in Chief, 2009 Personal Communication.

[2] NSTP website, http://www.nstp.com.my/wp/#products

[3] NSTP website, http://www.nstp.com.my/Corporate/nstp/aboutus/aboutPhilo.htm

[4] Crouch 1996, Mustafa 2005a, Shome, 2002.

[5] Syed Nadzri Syed Harun, the NST Editor in Chief, 2009 Personal Communication.

[6] NSTP 2009 Annual Report

[7] Syed Nadzri Syed Harun, the NST Editor in Chief, 2009 Personal Communication.

[8] Nielsen Media Index Q4 2010 quoted in Ad Times website,

http://adtimes.nstp.com.my/circulation_readership/nst_cr.htm

[9] NSTP 2009 Annual Report: 31.

[10] Mahfar Ali, Executive Editor of BH, 2009 Personal communication.

[11] Mahfar Ali, Executive Editor of BH, 2009 Personal communication.

[12] NSTP website, http://www.nstp.com.my/wp/#products

[13] NSTP website, http://www.nstp.com.my/wp/

[14] Ad times website

[15] Jan 2009 to June 2009, ABC Report.

[16] Berjaya Media Berhad website, http://www.berjaya.com/berjaya-media/berjaya-media-our-culture.html

[17] Chong Cheng Hai, Editor in Chief of TS, 2009 Personal communication.

[18] Available at: http://www.thesundaily.my/about-us

[19] theSundaily website, http://www.thesundaily.my/about-us

[20] theSun corporate profile, n.d. unpublished.

[21] Berjaya Media Berhad website, http://www.berjaya.com/berjaya-media/berjaya-media-corporate-profile.html

[22] Berjaya Media berhad website, http://www.berjaya.com/operationoverview.htm

[23] Berjaya Media Berhad website, http://www.berjaya.com/berjaya-media/index.html

[24] Joehari Abdul Jabbar, TS circulation manage, 2009 Personal communication.

[25] Berjaya Media Berhad website, http://www.berjaya.com/berjaya-media/berjaya-media-corporate-profile.html

[26] Kumpulan Karangkraf website, http://www.karangkraf.com/v6/corporateWebsite/default.asp?menu=product)

[27] Abdul Jalil Ali, Group Editor of Kumpulan Karangkraf, 2009 Personal communication

[28] Hashim Anang, Public Relations officer of Kumpulan Karangkraf 2009 Personal communication

[29] Abdul Jalil Ali, Group Editor of Kumpulan Karangkraf, 2009 Personal communication

[30] Kumpulan Karangkraf website, http://www.karangkraf.com/v6/corporateWebsite/default.asp?menu=product

[31] Kumpulan Karangkraf website, http://www.karangkraf.com/v6/corporateWebsite/default.asp

[32] Kumpulan Karangraf website, http://www.karangkraf.com/v6/corporateWebsite/default.asp?menu=achive

[33] Abdul Jalil 2009 Personal communication, Sri Diah2009 Personal communication (editor of Kumpulan Karangraf), Hashim 2009 Personal communication

[34] Kumpulan Karangkraf website, http://www.karangkraf.com/v6/corporateWebsite/default.asp?menu=partner

[35] Hashim Anang, Public Relations officer of Kumpulan Karangkraf 2009 Personal communication

[36] Mohd Rashidi, Hh Online editor, 2009 Personal communication

[37] PAS website, http://pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=200&Itemid=439

[38] PAS website,http://pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=180&Itemid=426

[39] Mohd Lutfi Othman, Editor in Chief of Hh, 2009 Personal communication.

[40] Tarmizi Mat Jan, Editor of Hh, 2009 Personal communication.

[41] Abbot 2000, Ahmad Lutfi Othman 2009 Personal communication, Brown 2005.

[42] Mohd Rashidi, Hh Online editor, 2009 Personal communication

[43] the XX website – requested for anonymity

[44] Journalist A 2009 Personal communication - requested for anonymity

[45] Journalist A 2009 Personal communication - requested for anonymity

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

PNSB supported Balkis' 'repentance programme' in Cambodia

Teng Chang Khim

Hasniza

azmin

The Sun Daily
Maria J.Dass

SHAH ALAM (March 24, 2009) : Permodalan Negeri Selangor Bhd (PNSB) sponsored part of a "repentance programme" in Cambodia organised by Balkis -- the wives of Selangor elected representatives' charity and welfare organisation -- in August 2002, the Selangor State Assembly's Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency (Selcat) heard today.

PNSB CEO Datin Khairiyah Abu Hassan said PNSB paid RM82,227 for that trip, including more than RM19,000 for library books, RM25,000 for accommodation and transportation for

four people, inclusive of RM3,000 allowance for reporters and crew, and RM10,000 for the production of a video clip on Balkis.

Testifying before the Selcat on the second day of a public hearing probing into excesses of Balkis which obtained its funding from the state government and several state owned companies, she said the "repentance programme" involved the repair of a library, purchase of books and cash contributions to orphanages and families living in Muslim villages in Cambodia.

Selcat is chaired by Assembly Speaker Teng Chang Khim while its members are Bkit Antarabangsa state assemblyman Azmin Ali, Taman Medan assemblyman Haniza Talha, Ulu Kelang assemblyman Shaari Sungib, Bukit Gasing assemblyman Edward Lee, Dusun Tua assemblyman Ismail Sani (BN), and Permatang assemblyman Sulaiman Abdul Razak (BN).

Khairiyah: "This was a programme designed to make people repent."

Teng: Who repented?

Khairiyah: Both sides repented. Because when those who visited the country saw how much of suffering there was, they repented.

Teng: So those who were suffering saw that we were rich, and so they too repented?

Khairiyah then said she reserved her comment on the terminology used as it was one that was coined by Balkis.

Azmin: So, did you notice a change or a tinge of repentance in those who went for the trip?

Khairiyah: That is subjective.

Haniza:"Why did the company agreed to sponsor a programme in Cambodia. Is there a lack of poor in this country that you have to go all the way to Cambodia to help?"

Khairiyah: There were 40 other people on the trip, including Balkis members, non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives, corporate figures and the media.

Balkis president Datin Sri Zaharah Kechik headed the entourage, but PNSB only paid for four of them.

Khairiyah had earlier said that since 2002, PNSB had set aside RM1 million as annual allocation for Balkis every year.

Responding to a question on why PNSB had breached this allocation by giving Balkis RM1.6 million in 2003, she said: "We did not want to say no to a state programme. We have to support state programmes, as a state subsidary, we are devoted to this."

She agreed that PNSB supported Balkis because it represented the wives of the elected representatives.