

**When going digital is inevitable:  
A multidimensional view of newspaper  
managers' responses to  
newswork change**

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## **Abstract**

This is an empirical inquiry about managing newswork change in newspaper organisations. It addresses a basic issue for the sustainability of newspapers: How do newspaper managers deal with newswork changes at a time of uncertainty and complexity? Media management focuses predominantly on the business and audience aspects of the newspaper's operation, with less attention to the professional and social aspects of managing newswork. Media management is not an established academic field, despite its growing popularity and progress in the past two decades. In the scholarship, there is a tendency to apply multidisciplinary knowledge to understand media change. However, many scholars simply 'import' organisational and management theory without questioning the relevance of the theory to their research on newswork.

Drawing upon case studies at three newspaper organisations, this research examines three characteristics distinctive of newspaper organisations — the newspaper as a business with dual goals, news organising as institutionalised and professionalised processes, and newswork as a time machine, so as to explicate the contexts, content and processes of managing newswork during strategic change. It develops Pettigrew's theoretical framework of understanding organisational change by incorporating the sensemaking and sensegiving perspectives, and offers a new perspective on the managing of newswork during strategic change.

The results show that there is a recurring story in the three cases — namely change is emergent, and people's views on change impact the strategic performance of newspaper organisations. Specifically, newspaper organisation is an emergent environment in which managing and doing newswork are parts of the same strategic processes, and that, therefore, they cannot be treated and studied as separate managerial entities. Applying the sensemaking and related process perspectives, the managing of newswork is understood as a social process of enactment in which both managers and journalists make and give meanings to their practices and in turn make the strategic change — which is emergent, incremental, and idiosyncratic in nature — meaningful and sustainable.

This thesis concludes that during the strategic change, sensemaking about newswork has positive impacts on strategic performances only when the social goal of newswork is addressed simultaneously with the business goal, the past experiences and lessons gained by strategy doers on the frontline are valued and backed up by strategy makers, and when managers give the time and space which allow quality journalism to be achieved. These findings and the novel research design employed contribute to journalism, organisational change, and media management fields of research.

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## List of Publications and Presentations Generated from This PhD Research

During the course of my PhD study, parts of my findings were publicly presented at a number of international and national conferences. All the submissions were peer-reviewed before acceptance. I benefited from the scholarly feedback and was able to improve my thesis accordingly. Below is a list.

Shao, W. (2014). Book Review: What Is Happening to News? The Information Explosion and the Crisis of Journalism, *Media International Australia*, 151(1): 196.

Shao, W. (2016) Book Review: Media Management and Economics Research in a Transmedia Environment, *Communication Research and Practice*, 1, 112-114.

Shao, W. (2014). Old journalism, new journalism: how Internet changes managerial and journalistic practice in convergent newspaper newsrooms? Paper presented at the ICA conference in Brisbane, Australia on September 28, 2014.

Shao, W. (2015). Shifting roles and blurring boundaries: the diffusion of management and journalism in networked newspaper newsrooms. Paper presented at the EMMA Conference in Hamburg, Germany on May 3, 2015.

Shao, W. (2015). Putting the management into news production studies: a meta-analysis. Paper presented at IAMCR conference in Montreal, Canada on July 16, 2015.

Shao, W. (2015). Doing a digital strategy in newspaper newsrooms: how the management team adapts to cope with ongoing journalistic changes? Paper presented at the JEANZ Conference in Wellington, New Zealand on December 17, 2015.

Shao, W. (2016). Managing strategic dualities: A comparative case study on three newspaper organisations at a time of uncertainty and complexity. Paper presented at the EMMA Conference in Porto, Portugal on June 5, 2016.

# Part 1: Introduction

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This is a story about change. In particular, this research examines *newswork changes* from the media management perspective. It deals not only with changes confronting news professionals who make news on a daily basis, but also with those facing managers who organise newswork in news organisations. While change 'out there' is the research focus, my epistemological stance on giving an account of it has changed accordingly in the research process. Two types of change — one 'out there' in the real world and the other in my mind and self-knowledge — are intertwined, and thus both are worth overviewing at the beginning of the thesis.

The thesis consists of five parts: Introduction (Part I), Theoretical Framework (Part II), Research Methods (Part III), Data Analysis (Part IV) and Conclusion (Part V). The aim of Part I is to set the stage for the development of this research. In this part, I firstly provide an overview of the research, including the research focus, design and methodology, the proposed contribution and the structure of the writing. I then draw a map of my journey conducting the research since the beginning of 2013. From the two overviews which are respectively objective and subjective in terms of writing style, it is evident that obtaining knowledge from everyday organisational life is a reciprocal process involving scholarship and the field.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

*No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.*

Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BC), Greek Philosopher

Being a traditional newspaper journalist nowadays is like being a fish in a drying pond. As more and more readers have defected to the internet, it becomes upsetting and meaningless to write a story for the print. Readership declines, advertisement revenue decreases, more journalists are made redundant. To survive, newspapers have to find ‘water’ outside. Many newspapers anchor their hope on the web and have developed multimedia publishing initiatives to reach as wide an audience as possible. This can be seen from the mushrooming of the websites of each newspaper and journalists' blogs worldwide since the 1990s. However, the current business model of online news is not promising for a newspaper’s survival, as online content is mostly free of charge. A few mainstream newspapers including the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* have had success in charging for online content (Arrese, 2016: 1055, 1060), but most of the others have discovered that paywalls do not work (Myllylahti 2014; Pickard and Williams 2014). Outside of a few growth markets, such as India, and some stable ones, such as Germany, the whole industry has fallen into a downward spiral and how to survive has become the biggest concern.

Managers are the vanguard of the newspaper's survival battle. However, they are struggling to make the right decisions at a time full of uncertainty and complexity. Here are some snapshots of challenges facing managers. A CEO of a regional newspaper in Sweden expressed her concern over the going-online decision of her newspaper. "It is inevitable to go online, but how? I am meeting a lot of managerial challenges," she said (personal interview). On the other side of the world, both companies in a newspaper duopoly in New Zealand made the decision to set news site paywalls about five years ago (Drinnan, 2013), but the implementation of the plans have stagnated. A newspaper manager explained: “We are paralysed in putting (online) content behind a paywall, as it means our readers will just shift to our free competitors.” Not only in the free markets, but also in China where mainstream

news groups are heavily sponsored and controlled by the central committee of the Communist party, endless change remains the top managerial concern. A manager in a Chinese national newspaper said that the higher a person was in an organisational hierarchy, the harder it was to recognise uncertainty and doubt. Managers, working in different newspaper organisations across different parts of the world with various media contexts, all face the pressing question of how to manage change which is ongoing, unexpected and probably the only constant in newspaper organisations.

The obscurity of the future for newspapers has driven me to start this research. One recurring element in the above interviews and my personal experiences as a senior journalist is a general concern about management. As felt and experienced by most news professionals, the problem for contemporary newspapers is *management*. This is well addressed by Deuze (2011) in his work *Managing Media Work*, as follows, "the challenge to the future of media work seems to be a uniquely managerial one. Yet this challenge all too often seems to go unmet by the people put in place as managers" (x). This thesis seeks to address the problem of newswork changes from a managerial perspective.

## **1.1 Study focus and research question**

Organisational change has been seen as a complex phenomenon. Understanding how this complicated and interconnected organising phenomenon works and its implications for management and journalism (newswork) are the central focus of this study. It aims to answer the following question: ***How do managers deal with newswork changes in newspaper organisations at a time of uncertainty and complexity?*** In order to address the question, three keywords — organisational change, newswork and managing — will be highlighted here and explicated in the following Literature Review chapter.

The interest of this study is the change in newspaper organisations, particularly the interactions between managers and journalists in the process of making change happen. Change is the perennial topic of organisational studies. "The study of change and development is one of the great themes in the social sciences. ... A recent tradition of

research in the various fields of the organisational sciences has also grappled with organisational change and development” (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Weick and Quinn, 1999; Woodman, 1989). Newswork is defined as the changing contexts of news as work (Deuze and Marjoribanks, 2009), which is both professionalized and institutionalised. Managing and other gerunds throughout the thesis, i.e. organising, strategising and structuring, entail a processual perspective which I have applied in this research on managing newswork changes, as a matter of ontology as well as an epistemological choice.

In practice, the connection among the three is like a chicken and egg problem, change in newswork — change in managing newswork. Searching for the evidence for their causal connection between the two is a recurrent issue in this thesis and a fundamental issue in the study of change across fields. The idiosyncratic and indeterminate nature of changes 'out there', "the patchwork nature of management theory" (Küng, 2007: 4), plus the messy and ineffable nature of the processual data, make this work interesting and challenging. In other words, the ways by which we study change 'out there', ranging from research design, then theoretical justifications and empirical applications, to theorising empirical findings, are a matter of ontological and epistemological stances. In the process of practising a process perspective in my own ethnographic studies in newspaper organisations, the recurrent back-and-forth between practice and theory raises a number of questions concerning the approach itself.

One is concerned with the integrity of the research process. Process scholars have employed certain adjectives to describe change which is 'out there' in the reality, the nature of the related data collected by observers, as well as the approaches to examine and theorise the data of organisational change as a process. Although a fuller literature review and empirical exploration will be expanded in the following chapters, its rough outline can be suggested.

So far I have argued that managing newswork changes has been the research focus, and the process perspective is the overriding rationale to examine changes and the subsequent managerial response in newspaper organisations. I can sharpen this focus by suggesting what this research is not.

The topic of change is not seen as a past deed. Instead, change, in professional or managerial work, is seen as something unfolding. Thus, a dynamic understanding of organisational change is needed. This research is not concerned with entities, but the state of becoming (Chia, 2010). Following this line of thought, the contents of change, strategy, structure and routine are by no means as important as the processes of changing, strategising, structuring and routinising, and their mutual impacts on the organisational context which necessitate sustained strategic performance.

This research does not focus on the business side of newspaper management. Management guru Peter Drucker<sup>1</sup> coined the term "knowledge worker" and contended that management is "by no means for business only". As he put it, "The centre of a modern society, economy and community is not technology. It is not information. It is not productivity. It is the managed institution as the organ of society to produce results" (Drucker, 1999: 39).

This research does not focus on one dimension of organisational change, but views change as a mixture of various factors at play. Thus, this research does not focus on testing, applying, strengthening or challenging a singular theory on change as the main research objects. It does not build on a singular theory about change. The pluralist approach applied in this research is not trying to unify them. On the contrary, a key tenet here is to exploit their similarities and differences, and to assess their theoretical and methodological strengths and limitations in understanding the research topic: strategy, and change in a big sense.

The research does not focus on the content of changes, strategy or any given organisational phenomenon. In a sense, the research findings will not be presented in "boxes and arrows" paradigms, as the boxes and lines are exceeded by the interactions and mutual shaping of the things within the boxes.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Drucker, known as "the founder of modern management" (Dennings, 2014), coined the term "knowledge worker" in 1959.

This research does not aim to explain the current journalism crisis from a journalistic perspective. Instead, it examines newswork changes from the management perspective, that is, managing newswork change as a dual process of institutionalising and professionalizing. The research does not aim to provide a cure for the ongoing newspaper crisis escalated by information overload. Instead, it aims to break the code of change in favour of the process perspective, in particular the scholarship which stresses people's mind-sets and their significance for strategic sensemaking and performance.

This thesis is not at all a 'how-to' book which aims to give some prescriptive instructions or suggestions to managers who are pondering ways to save newspaper organisations they work for. It seems unreasonable to theorise a model or formula of managing journalistic practice by simplifying and generalising data collected from three cases. Neither do I claim to find the answer to a seemingly simpler question: what is wrong with newspaper organisations?

On the contrary, this thesis is a type of memoir, a recount of my very personal quest as a journalist who has worked for broadcasting, print and digital news for over 10 years. It is more than a series of snapshots of the different dimensions of organising newswork changes in various newspaper organisational contexts, and a thick description of the mixture in which various factors, i.e. managerial sensemaking, tensions, structures, routines, time, space, together take effect in creating change. It also seeks to ask some much broader questions about the relations among these dimensions — to deal with the patterns and certain process aspects of change and strategic development, especially the role of managerial sensemaking in creating change and executing strategy.

This focus leads to an examination of change and change-related issues as interconnected processes instead of static objects and causal relations. In doing so, the focus enables me to capture change, and keep the study on organising change relevant and instructive for a certain period of time. I therefore did not focus too much on the specific content of organising change and executing strategy in the selected newspaper organisations, as they had already changed and will keep changing. I examine change by focusing on the patterns and processes

of change and organising change, simply because the processes are more persistent. Take managerial sensemaking for example, how media companies make sense of and respond to change are not going to change very quickly. This dilemma of studying change is perhaps best captured and described in Pettigrew's words as follows.

Change is ubiquitous. Or is it? ...there is the problem of perspective. ... Time itself sets a frame of reference for what changes are seen and how those changes are explained. ...The more we look at present-day events the easier it is to identify change; the longer we stay with an emergent process and the further back we go to disentangle its origins, the more we can identify continuities. ... Change and continuity, process and structure, are inextricably linked (Pettigrew, 1985: 1).

## **1.2 Research design and methodology**

With respect to the theoretical framework, this thesis is an attempt to reconcile a series of separate but influential threads in studying organisational change as a process rather than a static state or mixture. The theoretical framework is designed with reference to Pettigrew (1985, 2003), Weick (1995, 2005), Feldman (2000) and Tsoukas and Chia (2002). They all view organisational change, or any given organising phenomenon as a process, but focus on different dimensions of the issue, including context (outer and inner contexts), structures, routines (organisational, newswork/professional and cognitive routines), time, space and boundaries.

The application of multiple perspectives to decipher the observed change in newspaper organisations can clearly bring benefits. Given the nature of this approach as "inherently pragmatic and contextualised" (Spender, 1998), this research can provide a space to test processual viewpoints of change across fields, with various focal points and different units of analysis, and thus can provide a "rich, holistic, and contextualised purview" (Lewis and Grimes, 1999) of the research topic.

These theories are chosen not just for their influence on the study of organisational change but also because they examine the dynamics of changes, or seeing the processes of strategic change from different perspectives. In detail, Pettigrew's research addresses the importance of the contextual factors in undersigning change as it happens. Weick focuses on the cognitive dimension of creating strategic change, especially the processes by which managerial cognitions develop, also known as sensemaking. However, the works of Pettigrew and Weick are located in relation to two different domains of organising life, and they do not explicitly draw from each other. They both write widely about the management of strategic change, calling for capturing the emergent process through which organisations' strategies take shape. Feldman (2000) criticises the previous research on organisational routines as opposite to changes, and explicates routines as a source of continuous changes. Tsoukas highlights the importance of philosophy in understanding organisational change, adding some theoretical depth to this research. There are overlaps and distinctions in their viewpoints about organisational change, which will be further examined in Part II Theoretical Framework and tested in Part IV Data Analysis.

With respect to research methodology, a qualitative approach is applied in this research, since the processes of organisational change — being the research focus — do not lend themselves to quantitative measurement (Van Maanen, 1979, 1988, 2006; Schwartzman, 1993; Pettigrew, 1985; Kung, 2007).

The thesis is based upon three ethnographic case studies at newspaper organisations in Sweden, China and New Zealand. Although the selection of the cases was somewhat opportunistic, the multiple case studies provide me ample evidence to illustrate and appreciate the complexities and significance of organising newswork in newspaper organisations. The result is a detailed and pointed account of organising change in newspaper organisations that is intended to contribute to the scholarship of organisational changes and strategic management, particularly those focused on the role of managerial sensemaking in the dynamics of change. It accounts not only for interactions among managers and journalists, but also for interactions among what people think, what people say and what people do.

Multiple case studies provide a good chance to look at the topic from different dimensions, (epistemological) perspectives and levels of analysis (as well as in different contexts). In contrast to longitudinal observations which observe change as it happens (Pettigrew 1990), multiple case studies can well address the research question — how newspaper managers deal with the changing journalistic practice (newswork changes) — across different dimensions. In particular, in the complex, dynamic and interconnected processes of organising news work, how managers balance the tensions and dualities, re-structure and refine routines, and re-draw the boundaries between management and journalism, have been sequentially investigated in the selected newspaper organisations. In doing so, this research explores the interlinked facets of organising (strategic) change, namely, what people think, what people say and what people do when a strategic change is unfolding, even when it is emergent and contested, and the interactions among managerial cognitions, sensemaking and sensegiving, as well as strategic performance. The latter research objective deals with the internal dynamic of organising change in newspaper organisations.

The rationale for selecting the three newspaper organisations in Sweden, China and New Zealand is that they all have a clearly stated strategy to go digital. It is a comparative study, representing a "most different cases" approach (Peters 1998). The process of how I gained access to the newspaper organisations is itself a complex and fascinating story, discussed in Chapter 4, Research Methods.

With respect to data collection, ethnography has been applied as the research method in order to obtain insiders' accounts of change and strategy, namely, the conceptual lenses that the managers and journalists of the newspaper organisations use to see and interpret their experiences. There is no universal answer to what constitutes a 'true' or 'best' ethnography (Smith 2001), and organisational ethnographers have often employed a variety of ways to collect data from work places, including sustained immersion and participant observations, intermittent, partial and disrupted observations, interviews, and document analysis. In my study, direction observation, formal and informal interviews, and document collection have been employed for data collection. In other words, daily work practices in the newsroom were observed, managers' and journalists' perceptions of change and strategy were the

subjects of interviews, and second-hand material related to such change and strategy was collected. With respect to data analysis, techniques from grounded theory and narrative analysis are the main research methods. The researcher attempts to avoid implicit hypothesis testing, and instead allows inductive reasoning to prevail.

### **1.3 Contribution of this research**

By observation, analysis and reflection on three newspaper organisations in Sweden, China and New Zealand, and by centring on the processes of newswork changes, I examine how managers deal with newswork changes, namely the interaction between management and journalism, at a time of uncertainty and complexity. Whereas both newswork changes and newspaper organisations have been widely studied across fields, my focus on these two familiar topics is distinctive, in the following terms.

This study incorporates different perspectives of organisational change across fields, including journalism and communication studies, media management scholarship, as well as general organisational and management studies. It provides a thick description of managing newswork change, with a zooming-out-and-in examination of the cognitive, sensemaking and performative factors, as well as their interplay in the processes of organising change. For organising scholars, we have three "cannots" and three "musts": we "must act when we cannot foresee consequences; we must plan when we cannot know; we must organise when we cannot control" (La Porte, 1975: 345 cited in Weick, 2016: 333). In a sense, the main task for organisational research in general is to "prepare people for what they don't see and don't know" (Weick, 2016: 342). By describing the unfolding of an emergent, multi-faceted change, and by showing up the meanings of the change and change-related issues, this research aims to advocate a new way of thinking, which is elaborately summarised by the process scholar Robert Chia (2010) as the following.

We are living in an era of unprecedented change; one that is characterised by instability, volatility, and dramatic transformations. It is a world in which the seemingly improbable, the unanticipated, and the downright catastrophic appear to occur with alarming

regularity. Such a world calls for a new kind of thinking: thinking that issues from the chaotic, fluxing immediacy of lived experiences; thinking that resists or overflows our familiar categories of thought; and thinking that accepts and embraces messiness, contradictions, and change as the *sine qua non* of the human condition.

This is a re-thinking of journalism from the management perspective. This thesis aims to contribute to management theory, following Lucy Küng (2007, 2008). Drawing upon the pluralist approach, this research incorporates different processual viewpoints across fields and tests their applicability in the multiple case studies. By doing so, it underlines the distinctiveness of newswork — an institutionalised and professionalized mixture which is deeply embedded in the organisational and social contexts. It addresses the fundamental question of journalism and the news industry as a whole — namely, the social role of news organisations and the connections with organising newswork.

For example, two well-known processual scholars — Andrew Pettigrew (i.e. 1985) and Karl Weick (i.e. 1995, 2012) — have examined organisational change from different perspectives. Pettigrew focuses on the contextual factors in organisational change, while Weick stresses the significance of managerial sensemaking in making change happen. However, the two key processual scholars have not explicitly drawn upon each other (Beer and Nohria, 2000).

The study is theoretically integrative. Using Pettigrew's theoretical triangulation of content, context and process, I also incorporate Weick's viewpoint of sensemaking into the triangulation, respectively managers' and journalists sensemaking of the content of change (i.e. strategies, structures, routines, tensions and daily activities), the context (the context of change, the organisational context as well as the industrial context), as well as the process (managers' and journalists' assessment of the changes and the contexts). In doing so, I am able to examine the interactions between management and journalism in newspaper organisations from different dimensions — people's sensemaking, accounts and activities about change. By identifying the links between the three dimensions of organising newswork change, I am able to examine the issue — organising newswork changes in newspaper

organisations — from a process perspective. Following the approach of Pettigrew and the like who contend context is the key in change research, this study pays more attention to sensemaking, interacting and language, which are unique while being unconventional areas for contextual examination.

Moreover, this research aims to make a contribution to newspaper managers at work. Given the "three cannots" and "three musts" of organisational inquiry, the practical construction of this research is to "prepare people for what they don't see and don't know" (Weick, 2016: 342). In other words, it aims to show newspaper managers in this research what they cannot see, know, or control in the processes of changing. Both theoretical and practical contributions will be further discussed in Section V Conclusion.

## 1.4 Structure of the work

Prompted by a series of key scholars<sup>2</sup> who have suggested one should beware the myth of the singular theory of social or organisational change, this research is an (alternative) attempt to apply multiple perspectives into qualitative studies. Unlike a single case study with longitudinal observations on organisational change, the research applies the multiple case studies to examine the same topic — *organising newswork change* — from different perspectives, including internal and external contexts, sensemaking and sensegiving, tension and conflicts, routines and structures, as well as boundaries (of time and space).

Similar to Küng's (2007: 3) work — one of the first multi-lens investigations in media organisations (Krumsvik, 2009: 23), the structure of work is both polyphonous and elastic in terms of moving back and forth between theory and (process) data (Langley 1999).

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<sup>2</sup> Key scholars in the fields of organisational change and media management have suggested young scholars apply a multi-disciplinary approach to study changes and innovation in media organisations (i.e. Pettigrew, 1985; Küng, 2007; Picard and Lowe, 2016; Achtenhagen, 2016). For instance, Andrew Pettigrew (1985) initiates an approach to management research that combines multiple levels of analysis – not just economic, but also social, political and sector-based – with both historical and current data to provide an accurate long-term analysis of change and strategy. Lucy Küng (2007) is one of the first scholars to conduct a multi-lens investigation on innovations in media organisations.

The constant shifting of focus from practice to theory and back again to some extent destroyed the sequential order of the work — multi-lens analysis is stubbornly resistant to the architectonic requirements of scientific writing — but it can also be argued that the result reflects the messy nature of organisational life... (Küng, 2007: 4)

With respect to polyphony, I am not just interested in how changes are unfolding in the researched newspaper organisations, but also in the ways in which we learn and understand the organisational and social changes, especially the practice, process and sensemaking perspectives. As Pettigrew (1985: 2) put it, “For the analyst interested in the theory and practice of changing the task is to identify the variety and mixture of causes of change and explore some of the conditions and contexts under which these mixtures occur”.

Therefore, two core narratives develop simultaneously in this work. The first concerns the findings from the multiple case studies, which aims to identify the factors underlying the dynamics of change (context, sensemaking, tension and identity, structure and routine, time and space in (re)drawing boundaries), illustrate the mixture of the causes of change (how these factors correlate with each other and result in change), and explore some of the conditions and contexts under which these mixtures occur (Pettigrew, 1985: 24). The second, more complex narrative concerns the issue of reconciling different theoretical approaches to examine change as an emergent, multi-faceted process.

Process scholars have examined different dimensions (i.e. cognitive, discursive and performative) of changing processes, to unpack the black box of strategic management. Here, however, elasticity sets in. Given the architectonic requirements of scientific writing, each chapter in Section IV Data Analysis focuses on one dimension of organising newswork change. This does not necessarily mean the anomalies of practice (referring to the process data gathered from a single case) and theory (referring to a specific theory of changing process). On the contrary, each case raises one fundamental query towards change study, and can be expanded to other cases. The reason for focusing on one dimension of organising change in one case is to underscore the most salient findings from the data and abstract them

on the basis of the existent literature, so as to improve our understanding of the dynamics of changes. Therefore, in the Conclusion, I unite the two narratives and respond to Pettigrew's call for "develop(ing) knowledge in the image of science while also contributing to the practice" (Pettigrew, 1997; Pettigrew et al., 2001).

The thesis is structured into five parts: Part I Introduction (Chapter 1), Part II Theoretical Framework (Chapters 2 and 3), Part III Research Method (Chapter 4), Part IV Data Analysis (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) and Part V Conclusion (Chapters 10 and 11). This thesis has 11 chapters which address the following issues.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the whole thesis and clarifies the research topic, research design and methodology, and the proposed contribution of this research to the related scholarship. In the last section of this chapter, seven key elements of the research process are reviewed.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the theoretical framework for the research. In particular, Chapter 2 contains the review of change literature across fields, including media management and journalism, as well as general organisational and management studies. Despite their variety, there is one commonality among the applied perspectives in this study on managing newswork in newspaper organisations: the processual approach. Following that argument, Chapter 3 focuses on the sensemaking perspective — the study of the processes by which managerial cognitions develop. After incorporating the sensemaking perspective with other processual viewpoints discussed in Chapter 2, the general research question is specified and sub-divided into three small questions which are targeted to each case study. The general question is: How do managers deal with newswork change in newspaper organisations at a time of uncertainty and complexity?

Chapter 4 discusses the research methods of this multiple case study. It also addresses the practical issues of data collection and analysis.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 are concerned with data analysis. These chapters examine different dimensions of managing newswork change in the researched newspaper organisations. In detail, Chapter 5 reviews the internal and external contexts in which strategic changes are unfolding in the three newspaper organisations in Sweden, China and New Zealand. Chapter 6 examines the cognitive dimension of managing newswork change, including managers' and news practitioners' perceptions, attitudes and emotions of change and strategy that were emerging in the organisations, as well as the metaphors they employed to describe the change and strategy.

Drawing upon the Swedish case, Chapter 7 investigates dualities in managerial practices and addresses the identity issue of middle managers. Chapter 8 presents the key findings of the Chinese case and investigates the role of structures and routines in organisational change. Chapter 9 examines the issue of boundaries in the strategic change process in the New Zealand case. Drawing upon the discussions on dualities, identity, structures, routines and boundaries in the three cases, I found certain patterns of sensemaking and sensegiving in the strategic change which constituted shared responses in the three organisations.

There are some changes in the way in which confessional tales of ethnographers have been valued. Van Maanen (2010) reviewed the development of ethnographic research in organisational and management studies, and found that, "...confessional accounts are now rather routinely attached to the ethnography itself rather than reduced to appendices, turgid and one-off method chapters, or separate, follow-up monographs apparently intended to humanise the initial ethnographic report" (p.9). In line with Van Maanen (2010, 2011) who sees ethnography as both a methodological approach to and an analytic perspective on social research, I value my confessional tales 'in and out of the field' as an integral part of this research and as part of the accounts of different research phases, ranging from research design, fieldwork preparation, the fieldwork, and data analysis after the field. Therefore, the confessional accounts embedded in other sections of this thesis, including Sections I Introduction, III Research Methods, and IV and V about data analysis.

Chapter 10 provides the conclusion of this thesis. It revisits the fundamental question of applying the pluralist approach to the change study: why study different dimensions of change as a process? In doing so, it reiterates the research objective, that is, to understand newswork changes from *the management perspective*, which is the research gap in the existent literature of media management. It also summarises the key findings of the multiple case studies, highlights the scholarly and practical contributions to the news field, and suggests future processual research on change.

## **1.5 A Little Confession of my studying journey**

Moreover, the outlines of this chapter and the next visualise my 'not-so-straightforward' trek through the multidisciplinary literature to sharpen the research focus, ferret out the 'right' theories and address the research gap. The trek, consisting of a total of seven steps, was a tough process of tightly aligning my ontological and epistemology stances, which in turn allow me to answer the research question in a meaningful way.

### *Step 1: Initial motivation: from my past personal experiences*

It is almost axiomatic that I chose the research topic — managing journalistic changes — because of my earlier personal experiences as a print journalist. During my work at a national newspaper in China, I experienced endless changes coming from all directions of the organisational environment: technological advancement, news production, strategy and managerial decisions, just to list a few. My gut feeling about the chaos and frustration brought about by the endless changes was: a grassroots journalist is probably never going to be able to figure out a smart way to cope with these overwhelming changes, and unpacking the uncertainty and complexity surrounding news work needs a management perspective. With this intuition, I started my research, with the following question: How do managers deal with the changing journalistic practices at a time of uncertainty and complexity?

### *Step 2: Seek help from a familiar territory: journalism studies*

To answer the research question which covers multiple disciplines, I firstly reviewed the literature on journalism and news production, especially on newspaper organisations, with a focus on how the topic — uncertainty and complexity surrounding journalistic work — has been examined in these studies. I learned that there is a common assumption among journalism scholars that newspaper managers play an important role in coping with changes, and managerial practices are closely related to journalistic practices in terms of responding to the dynamic of changes. However, few studies have investigated change 'head-on' — how does change in management affect journalistic practice and vice versa? The two research objects, namely management and journalism, in a conventional journalistic view, reside at two levels and spheres. One exists on the top of a press firm's hierarchy and at the industrial and organisational level, while the other happens on the ground floor of such hierarchy and deals with trivial, hustling and bustling work at the micro level. The interactions between management and journalism are few, partly because managers see the newspaper organisation they work for as a business, while journalists see it as the site of the profession.

### *Step 3: Turn to the unknown territory: organisational and management studies*

Since the journalism studies literature did not allow me to fully answer the research question, I decided to 'import' some theories from the organisational and management field. I turned to the organisational and management studies, with special attention to two topics: change (such as organisational change, strategic change, change in workflow) and strategy (i.e. strategic management, emergent strategy and the 'Strategy-As-Practice' (SAP) perspective). I attended the summer school on media management theories organised by EMMA at the Business School of the Jönköping University (JIBS) in 2014. It was a great opportunity for me to gain a systematic overview of both the general organisational and management studies and the media management scholarship. However, I have a love-hate relationship with organisational and management scholarship. The upside is I am greatly intrigued by the relevance of organisational and management theories to my research topic, especially regarding the micro-level organisational changes and decision-making and strategy (the SAP perspective). They not only provide me with a new way to examine change and its recurrent implications, but also match with the turn to practice in journalism studies which is increasingly interested in studying journalistic practices and conducting newsroom ethnography. But the downside is I was quickly lost in the massiveness of these theories: they all seem relevant, but at the same

time, detached, from my research. This is discussed further in Section 2.3: an overview of the media management scholarship.

#### Step 4: Fieldwork at three newspaper organisations

With the hope of finding out the answers from the field, I conducted my fieldwork research at three newspaper organisations directly after the summer school. Drawing upon the SAP and strategic change literature, my research design aimed at focusing on *practice*: managerial practice, journalistic practice and their interaction. My intended research methods for data collection were newsroom observation and semi-structured interviews, and I divided the interview questions into two parts: change and strategy.

I met a number of challenges in data collection and data analysis. However, a serious problem loomed during the fieldwork: access. Compared with the difficulties in accessing the newspaper organisations, it was far more challenging to access managerial and journalistic practices, especially the managerial ones. It is these empirical difficulties in applying the practice-based approach into case studies that have directed the research differently. This will be further discussed in Chapter 4 Research Methods.

#### Step 5: Data analysis and generalisation of case studies

I finished the fieldwork research at three newspaper organisations at the end of 2014 and collected a total of 74 formal and informal interviews with managers and journalists at work. The challenges I faced in terms of data analysis will be further discussed in Chapter 4 as well.

In July 2015, I presented my initial findings at the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) conference in Montreal, Canada. After my presentation, Dr. Arne Krumsvik from University of Oslo suggested that I conduct a comparative study on the three cases. His PhD research is a comparative study of NRK and CNN, representing a "most different cases" approach (Krumsvik: 2009: 6).

It seemed unreasonable at first sight to conduct a comparative study on the selected newsrooms (Jönköpings-Posten, *The Press and China Daily*). The three newsrooms are located far from each other and there are so many differences between them, such as national geography, political economy, as well as people and culture. However, having taken the suggestion from Arne, I focused on the dissimilarity of the three cases. This is in line with the micro-level focus on managerial and journalistic practices, as well as the micro-discursive and ethnographic data I had collected from the field.

### Step 6: A loop

The three case studies gave me rich data about change and strategy. After sorting out the initial findings, I received an overall impression in the *practical* field that not only journalists, but also managers, the exact people who make decisions to go digital, are uncertain about such decisions, and resistant to consequential changes. This finding is striking as it gives a simple, crude answer to the research question: how do managers deal with the changing journalistic practices at a time of uncertainty and complexity? The field 'informed' me that: No, managers did not adapt their managerial practices or styles to the change, and what's worse, they did not intend to do so<sup>3</sup>.

My solution to fix the misalignment between the research design in the *academic* field (managerial practice and whatever I believe can be known) and the data collected from the practical field (whatever I could know and observe, but they happened no matter whether I knew or not as a researcher) was to give advice to managers. I started reading some management theories (i.e. management agility, networked society and networked management), and worked out a long list of proposals for managers to improve their work.

This was inadequate, because my ontological stance was not in line with my epistemological stance. With respect to the ontological stance — my view on the form and nature of reality, I was an outsider of the practical, organising field in which change and strategy happen. With

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that they get little training except of that received on the job, newspaper managers in the three cases showed the ability to adapt their managerial practices and styles in front of uncertainties and complexities. It is evident in Part IV Data Analysis.

respect to the epistemological stance — my intentions, relating to my relationship with what can be known and the type of knowledge I want to produce, I was using my language and my preconceived concepts to explain the other's behaviour and the organising field in which such behaviour was embedded<sup>4</sup>.

This is a tricky question related to the philosophy of science: What is our position as a researcher in the studies of any given organising phenomenon? An outsider or an insider? Should we use our language or use the practitioners' language? Putting all these thorny questions<sup>5</sup> aside, what I (as a young scholar who has little knowledge about general organisational and management theories) see as very important is that since what I got from the field is different from what I believed I could get, and the knowledge I obtained from others in the practical field is different from the knowledge I want to produce in the academic field, how could I get the most out of the practical field and make a real contribution to the media management scholarship? I was stuck.

#### Step 7: Go back to my data

In February and March 2016, I was studying as a visiting scholar at the Media Management Transformation Centre (MMTC) at JIBS in Sweden to finalise my thesis<sup>6</sup>. I gave a presentation at the MMTC, and Professor Leona Achtenhagen and the Dean of MMTC Matt Ots were there. After I presented the last presentation slide about 'A Model for Network Management' (in which I wrapped up my thesis in the same way as described in Step 6 by proposing a network management model for struggling managers), Leona asked me a question: "How long do you plan to take finishing your PhD study?" She identified a gap

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4 This is based on media management scholar Leona Achtenhagen's interpretation of ontology and epistemology. As Achtenhagen (2016: 118) puts it, "... we, as media management scholars, should make clear our worldview (i.e. what is our view on the form and nature of reality – our ontological stance) as well as our intentions (i.e. our epistemological stance, relating to our relationship with what can be known and the type of knowledge we want to produce)."

5 These philosophical questions are raised and explicated by organisational theorist Haridimos Tsoukas in his works, i.e. *Philosophy and Organisation Theory* (2011), *Process, Sensemaking and Organising* (2013), *Managing the Future* (2004)). In a workshop on Practice and Process Perspectives in Organisational Studies held in Brisbane in March 2017, Haridimos Tsoukas, as the keynote speaker, introduced himself as "not a philosopher but can't help but see everything from a philosophical point of view", and stressed the importance of philosophy for young scholars to understand organisational phenomena.

6 The period during 2016 that I spent at the MMTC was of great value in allowing me to share and test my ideas with Professor Leona Achtenhagen and Mat Ots.

between my initial findings and the network management model I proposed at the end. The data I collected are *accounts* of change and strategy given by people who are involved in the changing and strategising processes, while the conclusion I intended to draw was about *practice*, i.e. what managers should do to improve their managing and strategising work, and the changing *context*, in which the organising and strategising work happens. She said if I were in a hurry to finish my thesis writing, I could conclude my writing in the "problems listing and troubleshooting" format. But if I could spend more time, I could make my research meaningful by tightly aligning the empirical data with the research question and the management theories. She suggested that I go back to the data, listen to what the data told me, and use Pettigrew's triangulation to link my research topics: what people say, what people do and the organising context. In an afternoon after the presentation, we met again and read the field notes together, and found that the collected data were related to the interpretations of people's sense-making and also to the development of the strategy. I took her suggestions and extended my study.

Achtenhagen's suggestion to 'let the data speak' reminds me of the description of writing by the American author E. L. Doctorow: "Writers are not just people who sit down and write. They hazard themselves. Every time you compose a book your composition of yourself is at stake." The loop I alluded to above is an inevitable step of the re-composition process, in which I not only examine the others' world — organisational change and any given organisational phenomenon, but also re-position myself as a researcher in the academic and practical fields. In this process of sticking to the research, or in Achtenhagen's words, tightly aligning "the ontological and epistemological stance" with "the methodology chosen and research design developed", I immerse myself in the data, remain open and listen to the exact people who are involved in the organising and strategising work, and write through many temptations that arise from the data, some obvious, some insidious. The more I listen to the data from the field, the more I can experience what the people in my study experience, which in turn makes me more able to understand that what I am studying here is a *management* issue — it is not only an intellectual exercise, but also an emotional reality.

*Step 8: Here is the 'right' theory: sensemaking perspective*

The sensemaking perspective, a relatively recent concept in the managerial cognitions theories, is relevant and useful to my research, for at least three reasons. First, it examines the organisational environment from the enacted, insider's perspective. Second, it underlines sensemaking and its implications as social process. Third, sensemaking is retrospective in nature, which is consistent with the unit of analysis of this research — people's accounts of change and strategy. The reasons are further discussed in Chapter 3.

To make the research design including the research question and methodology more aligned, I build up the theoretical grounding in the following three steps. First, I trace the origin of the sensemaking concept and explore its advantages and drawbacks as a relatively recent concept in the managerial cognitions theory. Second, I review the sensemaking studies on strategic change, and identify a research gap: most of the studies have focused on exploring the who and the what of managerial sensemaking, while ignoring the associated conditions — where, when and why they occur. By doing so, I call for a distinction between the content of cognitions and the processes by which they develop. Thirdly, I specify the research question as three small questions, with different emphasis on the sensemaking properties: retrospective, social and ongoing (Weick, 1995).

### Summary

During the trek, the research object has changed from what people do (practice) to what people think and say (sensemaking and discourse). My ontological stance has shifted from the objective to the enacted view. In a sense, instead of giving prescriptions to newspaper managers, I am more interested in probing people's minds, so as to figure out how and why people's experiences change in varied ways. Also, my epistemological stance has changed accordingly from attempting to explain the issue from the journalistic perspective, to vacillating over the practice and process perspectives in the general organisational and management studies, and finally reaching acknowledgement and confirmation of the sensemaking perspective and managerial cognitions theory. Ironically, the only thing that has remained unchanged from the beginning to the end is my initial research inquiry into changes in newswork and their consequent implications for management and vice versa.

Over four years of PhD study, three case studies, over 80 interviews and follow-ups, four EMMA conferences and summer school, one ICA, one IAMCR, one scholarly visit to MMTC, several seminars within and outside New Zealand, all these efforts have directed the changes in my ontological and epistemological stances, and engendered the theoretical grounding of this research. Without help from the scholars in the field, I could never have gone forward fearlessly with my thesis on change. And I know that more changes are still on the way. To conclude this little confession of my study, I would like to cite E. L. Doctorow again: "It's like driving a car at night. You never see further than your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way." For me, it is being always open and listening and writing that can make the whole trip.

# Part II: Theoretical framework

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In the following two chapters I develop the theoretical framework for this study. The theoretical framework is organised in a way that helps to sharpen the research focus of this study and clarify the different concepts this study puts forward — namely, managing newswork during strategic change in newspaper organisations, show what the extant literature from multiple disciplines reveals about the issue at stake, explore the gaps that this research might help to fill, and formulate the research questions and explain how they will help to address the gaps in the literature.

In order to accomplish these tasks, Chapter 2 reviews the literature on newspaper organisations, newswork and organisational change from multiple disciplines, and pinpoints a scholarly gap in the related research: media management scholars have paid scarce attention to journalistic issues when examining ongoing changes and emergent strategy in newspaper organisations. Pettigrew’s theoretical framework to study organisational change provides the theoretical grounding of this research on managing newswork during strategic change — that is, to explore the contexts, content and process of change together with their interconnections with time.

Chapter 3 focuses on a popular, relatively new concept in organisational and management studies — sensemaking. It reviews the main concepts of the sensemaking perspective, and the previous research that has applied this perspective in understanding change in cognition, practice and process respectively. This chapter offers an interpretative summary of the theoretical framework which incorporates the sensemaking perspective into Pettigrew’s theoretical framework for understanding and representing the complex organisational phenomena, and specifies the research questions that will be addressed in the three cases.

## Chapter 2: Media management study on the changes in newspaper organisations

*Beware the myth of the singular theory of social or organisational change. Look for continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncrasies, the actions of individuals and groups, the role of contexts and structures, and processes of structuring. Giving history and social processes the change to reveal their untidiness. ... For the analyst in the theory and practice of changing the task is to identify the variety and mixture of causes of changes and to explore some of the conditions and contexts under which these mixtures occur.*

Andrew M. Pettigrew (1985: 1-2).

Change is a modern-day buzzword — everybody knows about it, but not everyone knows what to do about it. Dramatic changes have overtaken the newspaper industry. As the consumer market has changed to be more niche-savvy and fragmented, the traditional business model of newspapers serving for a mass audience is outdated. News professionals are required to be multi-skilled and work across multiple platforms (i.e. Cottle and Ashton, 1999; Quinn, 2005; Deuze, 2009; Erdal, 2009). In academia, scholars seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge. They are always exploring something new, and nothing is newer than change. However, the study of change goes out of date easily, as the clock of the press business is ticking faster than ever before.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I am interested in the interactions between journalists and managers in newspaper organisations — a relatively stable institutional context. More specifically, I am interested in the *managing* of newswork during strategic change. It is about what actually goes on inside newspaper organisations, viewing organising actors as human beings — who think, speak and work rationally and emotionally. It is the interactions of human actors, their work practices, and embedded institutional context — that I would like to bring into focus in this thesis. I chose the print sector because it is experiencing unprecedented changes at this time. So, if journalistic practices are seeing an unprecedented transformation at this very moment, as most media scholars have contended, how does the management team deal with these changes? As work practices are enacted by human actors

and embedded in the relatively stable institutionalised context, how does change in the management affect journalistic practices, and vice versa? What are the roles of the institutionalised context and human organising actors in fostering and hampering the evolution of changes?

These are questions that I frame in my theoretical perspective and around which I structure my analysis. In this chapter, I review the key concepts related to newswork as an institutionalised process and a professional process. The next chapter is dedicated to the sensemaking perspective, a relatively recent concept in change literature with a strong emphasis on the enacted ability of organising actors, and, in particular, to my understanding of micro-level changes in newspaper organisations — as a reciprocal, interactive, enacted process in which managers' and journalists' cognitions, accounts and actions flow and play a part.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Firstly, I examine the literature on the newspapers *status quo*, and show uncertainty and complexity as the main characteristics of the contemporary newspaper environment. I also review the literature on media convergence — a main research focus in newspaper studies — to sharpen the focus of this research from convergence to newswork. Secondly, I take stock of the newswork literature from organisational, management and journalism studies, and highlight three specialities of newswork in newspaper organisations, namely newspapers as a business with dual goals, newswork as institutionalised, routinised and professionalised processes, and newswork as a time machine. Thirdly, I review the literature which takes stock of the media management and business literature in the past two decades, and identify the shortcomings of the scholarship as a young, popular, but yet-to-mature academic discipline. I focus on the literature which directly examines newspaper organisations, especially the managing of newswork, from the media management perspective, and show a research gap between the complexity of managing newswork in practice and our patchwork understanding of organisational change and organising. Fourthly, I review the future research directions proposed by key scholars in the field, in particular that media management should concentrate on management issues (Küng, 2007) and that more studies should be conducted on the future (innovation, creativity commitment, audiences, perceptions) than the past

(investment and income) of newspaper organisations (Picard, 2016). In the last section, I clarify the theoretical framework that is employed in this research on managing newswork during strategic change: a multi-dimensional, process-oriented, empirical approach to examine the content, context and processes of change in newspaper organisations.

## **2.1 Newspaper organisations' *status quo*: full of uncertainty and complexity**

Dramatic changes have overtaken the newspaper industry. Digital technologies have inspired uncertainty and problematised the complexity of the newspaper industry. Considering the pace and complexity of ongoing changes, how to change the business model is only one of many riddles to be solved by newspaper managers. The best way to manage newspapers which are fundamentally changing is a perennial debate. In this uncertain and complex environment, managers have experienced intensive pressure in making sound organisational choices. As Singer (2008: 122) put it, a major management challenge for newspapers has shifted from “overcoming cultural resistance” among journalists working at different platforms to handling “fluidity and flux” within and out of news organisations.

The impact of uncertainty and complexity on management, especially decision making has been underestimated. In a study on the relationship between innovative performance and environmental contingencies, Tidd (2001) proposes differentiating between uncertainty and complexity<sup>7</sup>, “as they appear to have different management requirements” (175). However, some intra-organisational management issues, especially managers’ perceptions of environmental uncertainty and how that influences the ways they make organisational choices, have rarely been systematically studied. It is a limited understanding that simply attributes the failure in providing clear and consistent findings or coherent advice to managers to the argument that “innovation management ‘best practice’ is contingent on a range of factors” (Tidd, 2001: 169).

The world is changing unprecedentedly and media is in the centre of these changes. As Deuze (2007: 13) has put it in the masterpiece *Media Work*, “Media have come to be part of

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<sup>7</sup> Tidd (2001) defines uncertainty as the rate of change and complexity as technological and organisational independencies.

every aspect of people's daily lives, facilitated by the worldwide proliferation of the internet and similar services that connect subscribers to a global, always-on, digital information and communication network". Deuze (2007) has framed this statement using Zygmunt Bauman's notion of "liquid life" to great effect, painting a picture that media professions are undergoing massive changes in the face of globalisation, convergence and digitisation. Individual media professionals are situated in a uncertain, changing situation, with a blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure, public and private, global and local, mediate and direct experience — in which change is the only constant. Thanks to the increasingly ubiquitous nature of computing and communications, we have entered an era in which media are everywhere, and the changes in media landscape are both constant and uncertain, not static or teleological.

The media ecology *status quo* was described simply and eloquently by Picard and Lowe (2016) as a VUCA environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. As they put it: "It is an environment in which platforms multiply, channels proliferate and markets fragment" (62). When 'convergence' was a buzzword in the media industry in the 2000s (i.e. Jenkins, 2001, 2006; Boczkowski, 2005), VUCA has now become a trendy managerial rhetoric. A series of recently published articles have underlined this acronym as the biggest challenge for decision-making, strategy, leadership and organisational development (i.e. Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Mack, and Khare, 2015; Sarkar, 2016), and hence call for managers to differentiate the four elements of VUCA to get ready for and respond to events in each category.

Convergence was the main research focus in a series of prominent publications in media studies in the 2000s, i.e. *Digitalising the news: innovations in online newspapers* by Boczkowski in 2005, *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide* by Jenkins in 2006, and *Media, technology, and society: theories of media evolution* by Neuman in 2010. However, complexities and paradoxes around the notion of convergence and its practical implications have made it a challenging research topic. Since the first treatment of the notion of media convergence by Ithiel de Sola Pool (1983), media convergence has been "one of the themes persuasive but less empirically examined notions in discourse about new media" (Boczkowski, 2005: 179). Jenkins (2001: 93) identified it as one of the contemporary terms generating "more buzz — and less honey".

Despite the fact that convergence has become a buzzword in people's casual talks around news media and journalism (Gordon 2003; Storsul and Stuedahl 2007) and has commonly been equated with the internet, new media and media change (Flew, 2005), convergence is still an unsolved problem in the media industry. Without a commonly agreed definition or a successful exemplar for other newspapers to learn from, convergence has been executed in many newspapers as a strategy to survive anyway. At this stage, convergence is more like a background to the current chaos in the newspaper industry. Although it drew my attention on and off, the notion of convergence is not helpful for me to make sense of strategic change in newspapers and people's response to the change. In other words, convergence is too inclusive and broad, and does not just refer to people's everyday practices related to change. My on-and-off focus on convergence will be further discussed in the Section IV Data Analysis and Section V Conclusion.

To be clear, convergence is not the focus of this study. This is because convergence could refer to organisational changes at different levels — convergence in industry, i.e. media conglomeration at the macro level, and convergence in products and production at the meso and/or micro level. I am more interested in the changes in newswork, especially the interaction between managerial and journalistic practices. This is complicated and overrides convergence as the nature of today's newspaper industry. In other words, I do not assume convergence is the future of media changes. There is a debate over whether news media converge or diverge across nations (i.e. Singer, 2009, Boczkowski et al., 2011). In order to get a useful theoretical toolkit to address the research question, I am not going to limit my theoretical analysis to the past scholarship regarding convergence only, as some of these scholarships have an implicitly, prescribed assumption that convergence is or is not the final end of news media change. Rather, I intend to extend my analysis to the key studies regarding new media and media changes in a wider context, to learn the ways in which they measure technology-driven media changes, including convergence, and to situate 'reasonable' analytical perspectives and research methods into my study.

## **2.2 Taking stock of newswork literature from multiple disciplines**

### **2.2.1 The newspaper as a business with dual goals: to gain money and increase influence**

News organisations have had inherent dual demands to fulfil: to inform the public and to make money at the same time. Newspaper, the oldest media outlet of information publication and dissemination, is at the frontline of meeting challenges and opportunities. The drive to go digital has brought managerial challenges to newspaper organisations, and has raised concerns over quality journalism. As the consumer market has changed to be more niche-savvy and fragmented, the traditional business model of newspapers serving a mass audience is outdated. News professionals are required to be multi-skilled and work across multiple platforms, but with stagnant salaries. Newspaper managers have to explore alternative methods to bring in revenue, and at the same time pay for the quality journalism which is so important to society. This reflects what Zygmunt Bauman (2005, p. 55) has called "a perpetual casus belli"— the never-ending struggle between news professionals who crave creative freedom and public good and news managers who are pressured to manage news work in a commercially profit-oriented way.

In the book *Surviving in the Newspaper Business Newspaper Management in Turbulent Times*, Jim Willis (1988) took a combined theoretical and practical perspective and stressed the importance of the Total Newspaper Concept in successful newspaper management for the 1980s and beyond. Willis (1988) described the dual goals of the newspaper industry as “the market ethic” and “the service ethic”. The market ethic, which rests on the concept of identifying, addressing and supplying the feasible desires of the consumer, has been welcomed by newspaper managers in charge of advertising and circulations. The service ethic, on the other hand, has been valued by editors and journalists who state that the public good takes precedence over making a profit. As Willis (1988) noted, “no polarity should exist between the two ethics” (p.2), as managers of the news, advertising and circulation departments basically fulfil the same mission, that is, “to provide a quality newspaper to the breadth and depth of the newspaper’s geographic and demographic market” (p.3).

Focusing on the challenges facing newspaper managers, Willis (1988) identified the isolation among advertising, news and circulation departments which “have for so long been at each others’ throats instead of operating in a more coordinated way” (p.98). The isolation is mainly caused by the classic pyramidal management structure, which separates departments into neat units and develops tunnel vision about their mission and how to achieve it. Therefore, to respond to the managerial challenges, Willis called for managers to take a more enlightened concept — the Total Newspaper Concept — to complement and even take the place of the classic pyramidal structure. The new structure proposed by Willis (1988: 9-11) can be briefly summarised as integration and balancing. The Total Newspaper Concept stresses the importance of communication, cooperation and coordination between various departments of a newspaper, in order to balance the needs of four external target groups: its readers and non-readers, advertisers and non-advertisers.

There is an increasing research focus on dualities in organisational studies. In the classic large-scale research on innovative forms of organising, Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) noted that dualities have become the feature of contemporary organisational life and practice. When examining the practice and process of innovative performance, Pettigrew and Fenton (2000) found that many of their selected companies were exposed to a range of dualities, such as their simultaneous attempts to encourage dependence as well as independence from the centre, to build a hierarchy while encouraging horizontal coordination, as well as standardising and customising (297). They criticised that some scholars assert the trend in new forms of organising by borrowing terminologies from popular theories such as “federal” (Handy, 1992), “network” (Castells, 1996) and “cellular” (Miles et al., 1997). They call for scholars to apply a holistic and dynamic approach to “systematically follow changes through time” (281), rather than to claim “half-revealed and understood trends (which) are conveniently and crudely captured as ideal types” (279).

Scholars in organisational and management disciplines have shown a different understanding of organisational tensions and use a variety of conceptual languages to describe them, including paradoxes, dilemmas, dialectics, competing goals and values, and dualities. In their research into competing organisational, managerial and strategic tendencies in organisations, Sanchez-Runde and Pettigrew (2003) argued that duality is more appropriate as the building

concept of their research, as ‘paradoxes, dilemmas, dialectics, competing goals and values can be seen as dualities, but not the other way around’ (245). They define dualities as ‘opposing forces that need to be balanced’ (245) which may seem to be contradictory but in fact are complementary. Evans and Doz (1992) identified some misconceptions of the term. The two extremes of a dualistic continuum are not exact opposites, but “related though different, almost incommensurable terms that do not easily mix” (88). They also pointed out the danger of making sense of the dualities in a negative way. On the contrary, “dualities should be viewed not as threats to consistency and coherence, but as opportunities for creative organisation development, learning and renewal” (96).

Some scholars in organisational studies, such as Lewis (2000), Sanchez-Runde and Pettigrew (2003), Achtenhagen and Raviola (2009), to name a few, call for applying a bimodal perspective to understand organisational practice, as the dualistic phenomenon has become so “perpetual, inevitable and endemic” (Sanchez-Runde and Pettigrew, 2003) and accommodates much of what is problematic and challenging in organisations. However, it is a challenge to study, make sense of and interpret dualistic phenomenon in organisational life and practice, thanks to its cyclical nature. As Lewis (2000) described it, when researchers learn to comprehend a duality, they may discover other, potentially more intricate dualities, and eventually find they are “getting stuck in these paralysing and often vicious cycles via greater cognitive and behavioural complexity” (p. 761). Achtenhagen and Ravioli (2009) saw media companies as an ideal research subject as “striking examples of companies inherently facing conflicting dual demands” (32). They categorised dualities and the resulting organising tensions into three groups: of structural, procedure, and cultural, and noted that organisational and management scholars have limited understanding of duality management in media companies and its impacts on organisational change. Moreover, this research gap reflects a lack of theoretical and methodological framework in the young, interdisciplinary field of media management and economics (MME) as a whole (Albarran, 2013). Within this complex, evolving field of enquiry, media economics and media management are “in fact related and interdependent with one another”, and functioning as a duality, as Albarran (2013: 8) put it, with the latter being less studied and understood by both academia and the industry.

It is no surprise that journalistic professionalism has been challenged, as previous news consumers have become prosumers, and the legitimacy and monopoly of doing journalism has been questioned. However, as the main method to control the behaviour of journalists and editors in news organisations, scholars have paid little attention to the embedded duality between professional control and discretionary behaviours with the management model of news organisations. There are some exceptions. Aldridge and Evetts (2003) used the journalism occupation as a case to illustrate the changing meaning of professionalism from a checklist of ‘traits’ to a discourse, and noted that journalists are ambivalent about the idea of professional as a means of occupational change and control (548). Professionalism as a discourse, which is “constructed and utilised as much by managers in news organisations as by journalist practitioners themselves” (549), facilitates occupational change and intensifies control at a distance. Örnebring (2009) examines the declining journalism within the wider context of organisational changes, and notes two different forms of professionalism — organisational and occupational professionalism at work. He argues that news practitioners’ concern over the decline of journalistic professionalism stems from two dualistic ideas and factors. On one hand, some internal factors, such as a journalist’s increasing ignorance of their professional role and weakening commitment to journalistic professionalism, cause the decline of journalism. On the other hand, external pressures imposed from “profit-hungry media conglomerates, government spin doctors, convergence of media technologies and so on” (Örnebring, 2009: 2) make journalists lose their confidence in the future of journalism.

When focusing on the dualistic phenomenon in newspaper organisations, scholars from the two disciplines show a different understanding of organisational change and practice. From the organisational and management perspective, dualities are the feature of contemporary organisational life and practice, which is pervasive in organising content, structure, practice and process. Scholars characterize the nature of dualities as a moving target, and thus call for a dynamic, bimodal approach to study dualities and their impacts on organisational and management performance. From the journalistic point of view, journalists have exposed themselves to a range of dualistic issues, and professionalism is one of them. Journalists have shown ambivalent attitudes towards it. The two extremes of this professionalism dualism are occupational control (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003) and creative freedom (Bauman, 2005). Along with the decline of journalism and constant change in the field, journalists, on one

hand, cherish a self-image as socially marginal, while on the other hand, aspire to conventional professional respectability (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003; Örnebring, 2009).

Drawing upon the above literature, I am going to examine the managerial challenges from a dualistic perspective in the Swedish case in Chapter 7. Instead of listing the challenges confronting senior managers and middle managers, I will explore the temporal patterns and underlying mechanisms in the processes of making sense and respond to the ongoing changes and challenges. In doing so, I am able to question the way in which managers address the market and service ethics at a time of uncertainty and complexity, and examine the significance of managerial sensemaking in strategic performance.

### **2.2.2 Newswork is institutionalised, highly routinised and professionally controlled**

To understand how an organisation operates, structure and process should be considered beforehand as they are "the two of the most basic dimensions of any organisation" (Cheney *et al*, 2004: 18). Organisational structure has three components: hierarchy, differentiation and specialisation, as well as formalisation. According to Cheney *et al.* (2004: 21), hierarchy refers to the vertical levels of an organisation, representing the distribution of authority among organisational roles or positions. Differentiation and specialisation mean the division of labour in an organisation, especially referring to the divided labor in various units, departments and divisions. Formalisation refers to the degree to which interactions are characterised by rules, regulations and norms.

Scholars have reiterated the importance of taking both structure and process into account when examining how an organisation operates. For instance, Kenneth Burke (1969) described the relation between structure and process in a metaphor of "the containers and the things contained". Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984) argued that structure is both an outcome and a resource for integration, and is both enabling and constraining. In the same vein, Cheney *et al.* (2004: 24) stressed that "structure only makes sense in relation to process, what we might describe as the ongoing flow of integration. Structure is like the 'figure' for the 'ground' of process". These works all reflect the two-sided effect of structure on organisational life: too

little structure will make an organisation difficult to shape and standardise, while too much structure might kill creativity and result in alienation and boredom.

News is both an individual product and an organisational product (Becker and Vlad, 2009), despite the uncertainty over how long news organisations and newsrooms will continue to be the workplace of news production. Some scholars (e.g. Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009; Kateřina et al, 2014) criticise the “newsroom-centricity” of the news production ethnography tradition. They argue that the reliance on the locality of the newsroom limits researchers in their understanding of news production processes and cultures, as the material space of journalistic labour has disappeared and “liquid media” are the order of the day (Deuze, 2007). I disagree with the criticism and I argue that the newsroom provides ample evidence for studying journalistic change in newspaper organisations, especially with process-oriented perspectives. The reasons will be explained in Chapter 4 Research Methods.

Schudson (2002) reviewed the research on news construction and summarised that the research has been conducted from three main approaches: the political economy perspective, the organisational and occupational perspectives and the cultural perspective. With respect to the organisational perspective, the seminal works of Tunstall (1971) and Tuchman (1972, 1973, 1978) set the cornerstone for studying newspapers from the organisational perspective (Becker and Vlad, 2009), and have provided great inspiration for the following studies including this research. Elena Raviola (2010) and Akhteruz Zaman (2013) followed the line of Tunstall's and Tuchman's studies which shed light on the way newspaper producers work, with the newsroom as their site. Tuchman's (1973, 1978) studies, in particular, which view newswork as highly routinised, professionally controlled, embedded and entangled in the social organisation, are “particularly close to” (81) the viewpoint of Raviola (2010) who did a thorough investigation on the interactions among work practices, technologies (or objects), and organising in an Italian newspaper. In the same vein, Zaman (2013) applied Tuchman's viewpoint into his investigation on newswork, newsroom and space, and criticised that: “Tuchman’s seminal study treated space as an important element of news work. Yet, her cue has basically been ignored by the subsequent scholarship” (820). Zaman's (2013) research will be further discussed in the following section.

For a number of reasons, both Tunstall's and Tuchman's works have provided me with great inspiration. First, Tunstall (1971) made a distinction between news organisations and media organisations. News organisations are defined as editorial departments employing primarily journalists, while media organisations refer to larger entities that contain more than one news organisation, plus other types of communication units, such as magazines and publishing houses. News organisations differ from media organisations in terms of goals and bureaucracy: the first have fewer routines while the latter are more commercially oriented. In her overview of the research on media management, Mierzejewska (2010: 14) argued that the distinctiveness of media organisations — producing information products rather than tangible products, with "extremely high social externality value" — makes the media management study both distinctive and challenging, or goes beyond economics and applied management, to borrow Ferguson's (1997) way of expression. However, given the importance of news organisations for our society, especially the public good, the distinguishing of news organisations from media organisations in general has not been directly addressed in the media management scholarship. It will be further discussed in Section 2.3.

Second, both Tunstall (1971) and Tuchman (1978) started their work by presenting a view of newspapers as "loci of tensions", resolved at least temporarily, by various coalitions. This tension is obviously manifested by the commonly existing 'wall' that exists between journalists and managers in the newspaper organisations.

Third, Tuchman's (1972) work was most likely the first to discuss routines in the context of journalism (Becker and Vlad, 2009 : 61) and suggest a fundamental tension in newspaper organisations. On the one hand, journalism deals with unexpected events on a daily basis, which are idiosyncratic in nature. On the other hand, the construction of news heavily relies on routine procedures for "processing information called news, a depletable consumer product made every day (1972: 662)." Tuchman (1973) elaborated the tension by arguing that newsmen use typifications to distinguish among events-as-news and thus routinely process unexpected events. The discussion of routines by Tuchman is important for this research, because it suggests that newswork could be better understood from a broader perspective, and that researchers should focus on the construction of news rather than news as an end product.

In other words, Tuchman's work is particularly close to my viewpoint as we both focus on the processes and organising of newswork.

Feldman (2000) challenged the dominant understanding of organisational routines as stable and unchanged, and proposed a performative model to demonstrate organisational routines as a source of continuous change. Feldman (2000) started his four-year observation on organisational routines as "repeated patterns of behaviour that are bound by rules and customs and that do not change very much from one iteration to another [*italics in the original text*]" (p. 611). His initial idea of organisational routines is in line with the preponderance of attention to organisational routines as stable and unchanging. For instance, Cyert and March (1963) define routines as standard operating procedures, and Cohen et al. (1996: 684) define them as "an executable capability for repeated performance in some context that has been learned by an organisation in response to selective pressure". Interestingly, this is similar to how news routines are defined and understood in journalism studies — viewing routines as stable and unchanging. For example, 'news routines' in the International Encyclopaedia of Communication (2008) are defined as "repeated practices and forms that make it easier for journalists to accomplish tasks in an uncertain world while working within production constraints". In *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (2009), routines in news organisations refer to "the repeated activities of journalists who go about their work" (p. 59).

Feldman's (2000) perspective underlines the internal dynamic of an organisational routine, goes beyond viewing routine as either behavioural or cognitive, and takes both of these aspects into account. As he puts it, routines are "flows of connected ideas, actions, and outcomes. Ideas produce actions, actions produce outcomes, and outcomes produce new ideas. It is the relationship between these elements that generates change" (613). Feldman's understanding of routines as emergent accomplishments rather than mindless efforts, and as works in process rather than finished products is in line with Weick's (1979) sensemaking perspective which views organisation (or organising<sup>8</sup>) as an ongoing accomplishment. Both Feldman and Weick shift our focus from organisation as a thing to organisation (or

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<sup>8</sup> I shall explain in Chapter 3 why organising not organisation is used in this research.

organising) as a process. As Feldman (2000: 613) proposed, "As we move toward a notion of organisation (or organising) as an ongoing accomplishment we need a notion of routine to match. The performative model of routines that I propose in this paper provides an image of routine as an ongoing accomplishment."

Gilbert (2005) unbundled the structure of organisational inertia into two distinct categories: resource rigidity and routine rigidity. Resource rigidity refers to the failure to change resource investment patterns. Organisational underinvestment in resources relates to external resource providers (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), customers (Bower, 1970) and market power (Arrow, 1962; Gilbert and Newberry, 1982). Routine rigidity refers to the failure to change organisational processes. Even when incumbent firms invest, the persistence and inflexibility of firm routines can cause organisational inertia. Gilbert (2005) defined the organisational routines as "repeated patterns of response involving interdependent activities that become reinforced through structural embeddedness and repeated use" (742).

Pablo Boczkowski (2004) applied multi-disciplinary perspectives of science and technology, communication, and organisation studies to address the connections between technical, editorial, and work facets of new media. In the study of how daily newspapers in America have developed electronic publishing ventures, Pablo Boczkowski argued that new media emerge not just in a burst of revolutionary technological change but also by merging the structures and practices of existing media with newly available technical capabilities. The multi-disciplinary perspectives of science and technology, communication, and organisation studies allow him to address the connections between technical, editorial, and work facets of new media. This approach yields analytical insights into the material culture of online newsrooms, the production processes of new media products, and the relationships between offline and online dynamics.

To fully understand how newspaper managers grapple with journalistic change, it is necessary to examine the organisational control systems of reporters and editors. Soloski (1989) studied how journalistic professionalism affects news gathering and reporting, and argued that a news organisation has two ways to control the behaviour of reporters and

editors: professionalism and news policies. Soloski's study in 1989 on news professionalism belongs to the professional study in the second phase of study trend of journalism. Soloski grouped the vast literature in professionalism into two different approaches: one attempting to define what a profession is, mainly based on the historical analysis of the rise of medicine and law; and the other examining the relationship between professionals and their employing organisations. Soloski argued that the bureaucratic form of administration (mainly controlling employees by elaborating rules and regulations) is inefficient to control and manage non-bureaucratic news profession, as which has "a highly unpredictable environment — news", and whose journalists spend most of time out of the newsroom and thus have more opportunities to work discretionarily.

Focusing on the relationship between professionals and their employing organisations, Soloski noted that journalistic work, mainly dealing with news—the unexpected, is usually unpredictable and discretionary. But the bureaucratic rules, which are prescriptive and try to cover all possible solutions, would kill the journalists' ability to deal with the unexpected. Thus, professionalism, "an efficient and economic method by which news organisations control the behaviour of reporters and editors" (Soloski, 1989: 207), is necessary, as "professionalism makes the use of discretion predicable" (Larson, 1997:168).

Soloski pointed out two ways that journalistic professionalism affects the gathering and reporting of the news: setting standards and norms of behaviour, and determining the professional reward system. In terms of professional norms, journalists and editors within different news organisations are controlled and managed within a *trans*-organisational control mechanism, in which professional norms and standards are commonly shared and recognised in the news industry as whole rather than being established separately by each news organisation. Take objectivity for example, the key professional norms of journalism not just shows in news stories themselves, but also influences the way in which journalists select and produce the news (Roscho, 1975: 55). In addition to specifying professional norms and standards for journalistic behaviours, news professionalism also establishes a reward system for journalists, offering an alternative way of administrating its professionals, especially those dedicated ones who are necessary for the success of the organisation. Different from "the management ladder" which rewards the top professional employees by greater managerial

authorities, “the professional ladder” offers an alternative measure of success: successful journalists are rewarded by increased salary and “greater freedom to engage in their specialties” (Kornhauser 1963:205). However, it is important to realise the “negligible increase in authority” of the professionals who moves up from “the professional ladder”. According to Goldner and Ritti (1967: 497-501), the “professional ladder” is actually a “cooling out” method for organisational authorities to “placate its dedicated professionals”. Through the “professional ladder”, news authority can control the promotion of top news professionals, and keep them loyal to the organisation without providing decision-making opportunities.

As Soloski stressed out, news professionalism is a double-edged sword, which on one hand effectively and efficiently controls journalistic behaviours; on the other hand, relieves the heavy-handed, direct interference in the news-making process from the managerial authority of news organisations. As mentioned in the paragraph above, professionalism is independent of any one news organisation: professional norms interferes journalistic behaviours within a *trans*-organisational control mechanism, and the “professional ladder” is established out of the specific news organisation where the rewarded is working for. The independency of professionalism provides journalists more freedom and opportunities to confront the management of news organisations.

To further limit journalists’ discretionary behaviour, news policies have been established by each news organisation, forming the *intra*-organisational control mechanism over journalistic behaviours. Through participant observation in a US medium-sized daily newspaper, Soloski (1989: 219) gives thick description of the editorial meetings, story assignments, reprimands, and overseeing on news production in the newsroom, and argues that these are the methods to make journalistic follow the news policies and to minimise conflict within the news organisation. More importantly, Soloski lays his focus on the editor’s work when analysing the relationship between management and journalist employees. The editor in the newsroom, as he writes, is a position with underlining tension between management and the professional employees. On one hand, editor functions to protect professional employees from interference by management and, on the other hand, to direct the work of the professional employees according to the goals and interests of the organisation (Kornhauser, 1963:60).

The editor, who resides between news professionals and news management committee, is the key to effective and efficient media management: “editors must walk a fine line between management and news professionalism” (Soloski, 1989: 223). Both the research methods and study objectives of Soloski’s study give some insights for this research and will be the primary concern of this research. In addition, Soloski notes that *intra*-organisational control mechanism interplays with the *trans*-organisational control mechanism, determining the “organisation nature of news” and helping to “establish boundaries for the professional behaviour of journalists” (226). As he put it,

These boundaries are broad enough to permit journalists some creativity in the reporting, editing and presentation of news stories. On the other hand, the boundaries are narrow enough so that journalists can be trusted to act in the interest of news organisation. (226)

However, with the disappearing and transforming of these boundaries (professional norms, and news polices), Soloski’s professionalism model for news management seems outdated and incompatible. The boundary issues between journalism and management will be further discussed in Chapter 9 about the NZ case.

Following the same line, in Chapter 8 about the Chinese case and Chapter 9 about the New Zealand case, I am going to examine the interactions among organisational structure, news routines, and organisational changes. Specifically, I will examine how news routines are continuously changing and result in managerial sensemaking and strategic performance. Incorporating Feldman's performative model of routines as a source of continuous change and Weick's sensemaking perspective, I propose conceptualising news routines as "a source of connections and understandings" (Feldman and Rafaeli, 2002) among organising members and a cycle of cognitions, accounts and actions. Drawing upon the case of a Chinese newspaper, the chapter aims to answer the following two questions: 1) When a strategic change is unfolding, are there any substantial changes being undertaken in news routines and organisational structures? 2) What is the role of cognitive elements, such as cognitive bias, emotions, and managerial sensemaking in the processes of strategic change? The first question is to respond to the call by the preceding scholars who examined change and change-related issues as processes, while the theoretical and methodological justifications of

the second question will be elaborated in Chapter 4 Research Methods. The research design for the New Zealand case will be discussed in the following section.

### **2.2.3 The newspaper is a time machine and the newsroom is the battlefield**

Time has been an ignored issue in current literature in organisational and management studies (i.e. Ancona et. al, 2001; Lawrence et. al, 2001), news and journalism research (Schlesinger 1977, 1978: 1999), as well as the media management field (Schlesinger and Doyle, 2015). However, time is essential to newswork. Schlesinger (1977) argued that news professionals are obsessed with duration and sequence, which is a feature of journalistic work that cannot be ignored. The time factor plays "the structuring role" in news production cycles, but is "rarely singled out for separate analytical treatment" (Schlesinger, 1978: 1999: 121). Focusing on the journalist's emphatic bias towards immediacy, Schlesinger (1978: 1999) interrogates "the systematic links between the newsman's time perspective and the demands created by the organisation at work"(131). In this sense, the individual, journalistic perspective towards time has been differentiated from the temporal dimensions of organising newswork, including news value, news process and professionalisation, and a mutual-shaping trajectory between the journalistic and the organisational time-perspective has been vividly described.

Das (1991, 2004) examined the role of time in strategy making. Das (1991, 2004) criticised that the notion of clock-time is too simple to conceptualise the importance of time in strategy making, and advocated adopting a more sophisticated concept of time — namely, treating it as psychological and subjective — to reveal the hidden dimension of strategic change. As Das (2004) sharply described it, "Strategy necessarily involves the dimension of time. ...However, the literature on strategy has thus far failed to recognise the significance of the temporal dimension beyond acknowledging the different implications" (59). According to Das (1991), the notion of actual time misleads researchers on strategy making, as they tend to ignore the subjective, psychological views of time by the strategy makers. In other words, the scholarly conceptualisation of strategy with a linear, clock-and-calendar time reference "may be too reductionistic for the strategy-making process" (Das, 2004: 59) in practice. Since Das's (1991, 2004) research highlights the role of time in affecting individual and

organisational behaviour during strategic change, in Chapter 9 about the NZ case, I will undertake the temporal research in strategic management and bring forth reasoned arguments to establish the premise that time constitutes a fundamental dimension of managing newswork during strategic change and thus deserves a comprehensive study. Specifically, I am going to explore how managers and journalists understand and make sense of time related to their daily work practice, and then analyse the role and effects of subjective, psychological time on the process and content of strategising and managing newswork.

Time is “central and ubiquitous” for studying organisational change with the process perspective (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010: 11). Langley and Tsoukas (2010) pointed out that process researchers may study organisational change and other organisational phenomena with different temporal orientations — “by tracing it backward into the past (history, retrospective studies), by following it forward into the future (ethnography, longitudinal case studies), by examining how it is constituted, or by doing all these at the same time” (11). Leonard-Barton (1990) pointed out that different temporal orientations in process-oriented studies on organisational phenomena may generate some important tradeoffs. Pettigrew *et al.* (2003) stressed time as “a crucial enabler” of their analysis on organisational change and its innovative outcome, as “trends in the emergence of innovative forms can only be assessed in the light of a temporal analysis” (4). In their illuminating article which calls for sharpening the temporal lens in organisational research, Ancona *et al.* (2001) demonstrated that the temporal lens can stand on its own, with “its own set of variables and relationships, its own view of specific phenomena, and its own set of parameters to guide managerial action” (644). The temporal lens encourages researchers to “think more explicitly about the time lag between X and Y” (655). “When will Y occur?” is a fundamental question at any level of organisational analysis, and across different levels of analysis.

The three case studies in this research, to different degrees, have a retrospective and real time component. Managers’ and journalists’ accounts of their change experiences are retrospective and so are the secondary data collected from industrial conferences, organisational archives and statements, while my ethnographic observation on the processes in action and wondering what would happen next are real-time data about the change. My choice of temporal orientation in examining organising changes in the selected newspapers will be accounted for

in Chapter 4 (cf. 4.4 Generating Empirical Material), and the implications of such choice will be discussed in Chapter 10 Conclusion.

Similarly to time, space is another “structuring” factor for conducting newswork and organising newswork change, but has basically been ignored by the related scholarship. Küng (2011: 46) identified “time shifting” and “space shifting” in managing media work, which raised the issues of media overload and multitasking. Zaman (2013) criticised that the issue of “space” in newswork has generally been overlooked. Zaman’s (2013) study focused on the relationship between journalism and space, especially on journalists’ descriptions of the newsroom “as a prime space of their work”. Zaman (2013) argued that the journalists’ descriptions of newsrooms allude to conflict and contestation themes, and make the metaphor of “battleground” a fitting characterisation of it.

The introduction of new communication technologies inevitably raises questions about the space where newswork will change as a result. Broadly speaking, the digital space is immense and somehow outreaches the control of journalists and news organisations which mediates relations with owners, advertisers and audiences. Scholars have identified the mysterious nature of the digital space and attributed it to the difficulties in making cross-platform news. Jean-Gustave Padiolau (cited in Schlesinger and Doyle, 2015: 306) described the internet and mobiles as “original and often enigmatic spaces of communication”. Jane Singer (2005) argued that the blog platform adopted by political journalists affiliated with mainstream media outlets is “highly interactive and participatory”. Despite this participatory nature of the blog platform, J-bloggers mostly held fast to their traditional functions as gatekeepers by “normalising’ the blog as a component, and in some ways an enhancement, of traditional journalistic norms and practices” (273). Hermida (2010) introduced the concept of “ambient journalism” and defined Twitter and Twitter-like digital platforms as being omnipresent, often fragmented, and a collective effort involving the audience and journalists. He viewed new media forms of micro-blogging as “awareness systems”, which have not replaced established platforms controlled by traditional, content-oriented media, but an add-on layer of communication which enables both journalists and audiences to be connected and aware of connectedness (Hermida, 2010: 5).

Deuze (2007, 2008) showed a similar concern over the role of media work playing on the growing complexity and uncertainty in today's liquid modernity. In his in-depth analysis on the changing nature of journalism as a profession, Deuze (2008) argued that the workplaces of newswork, which "tend to look a bit chaotic: papers everywhere, cell phones and regular phones scattered across the desk, with a constant hum of desktop (and, increasingly, laptop) computers in the background" (14), affect the newswork performance, especially the work routines and pressures within news organisations. Deuze (2008) also argued that media works are liquid, seamless and generally taken for granted in everyday life and "have become such an integrated part of our lives that most of the time we are not even aware we are using media" (2007: ix). Following the same line, in Chapter 9 about the NZ case, the issue of space, especially the managerial and journalistic sensemaking of newswork as a prime space of their work, the space shifting in people's cognitions, and the subsequent impacts on strategic performance will be discussed in detail.

This section reveals the status quo of the newspaper organisations — full of uncertainty and complexity and takes stock of the literature about newswork in organisational and journalism studies. As discussed above, the newspaper as a business with dual goals, news organising as an institutionalised, routinised and professionalised process, and newswork as a time machine and newswork as a battlefield constitute the specialities of newspaper organisations. These specificities of newspaper organisations, together with the unprecedented uncertainty and complexity they are experiencing, have put newspapers organisations under the spotlight of scholars from journalism and communication, business and management schools. The overview of newswork literature in organisational, management and journalism studies takes the call proposed by Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016) to employ a cross-disciplinary, pluralist approach to examine complex organisational phenomena. As Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016: 23) put it, "Scholars at communication school realise that it could be fruitful to more deeply investigate operational, organisational, managerial, financial, technological, institutional and economic contexts as these impact both opportunities and limitations for the production and development of media content. Similarly, scholars in business administration and economics realise that the media industries represent a fascinating context characterised by a number of specificities that are conducive for exploring and testing the contingencies, boundaries and limitations of existing theory and lend itself to the development of new theory".

## 2.3 Media management study: a young, popular but not-yet-systematic body of literature

Media management and media economics have been closely allied and studied together (i.e. Küng, 2007; Albarran, 2013; Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska, 2016; Picard and Lowe, 2016). Albarran (2013: 5) traced the earliest investigations in the media management and economics (MME) field back to the 1940s, and claimed the MME scholarship had an approximately 75-year history until 2015. Küng (2007: 22) asserted that the field of media economics emerged in the 1970s, and compared with it, media management is a young discipline. The disagreement on the origin of the MME scholarship reveals at least two points. First, there is no commonly agreed definition for media management or media economics. As Alan Albarran (2008, 184), the then editor of *the International Journal on Media Management* (JMM), put it, [he could] "not claim to have any answers as to how to define the field of media management". Robert Picard (2006), the founding father of the field of media economics<sup>9</sup>, held a similar view by writing "in a technical sense, there is no such thing as media economics"(23). Second, it is clear that media management has gained increasing popularity in the past two decades. In other words, media management is the direction in which the MME field has grown. According to Robert Picard (2016), the field of media management is "no longer in the toddler stage in which learning how to walk is a challenge enough", but "at a stage of maturation that challenges us to run". In this section, I am going to review the articles that took stock of the *media management* scholarship at two different times — 'in the toddler stage' and 'in the maturation stage' — in order to reveal the evolution of the scholarship and provide an overall map of the field. Although media economics is beyond the focus of this research, the close connections between media management and economics cannot be ignored.

Compared with general management theory which began near the start of the 20th century, media management is a young, interdisciplinary field. The field of media management has

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<sup>9</sup> Robert. G. Picard is former Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. He founded the Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS) and the Journal of Media Economics (JME). At this stage, there are a total of three journals in the media economics and management field: the Journal of Media Economics (JME), the International Journal on Media Management (JMM) and Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS). He is the author and editor of 32 books and numerous peer-reviewed journal articles.

seen fast growth since the end of 1990s. Stemming from organisation studies, research and inquiry in media management have expanded across journalism, media and mass communication, business and economics, management and other disciplines. During the "frenetical" growing period, as Küng (2007) described it, two journals were published, including *The International Journal on Media Management* (JMM) in St. Gallen, Switzerland in 1998, and the *Journal of Media Business Studies* (JOMBS) in Jönköping, Sweden in 2004. Two key academic associations have been established: the European Media Management Association (EMMA) in 2003, and the International Media Management Academic Association (IMMAA) in 2004.

As a young interdisciplinary academic field which has gained increasing popularity in the past two decades, the scholarly state of the art in the field of media management has been critically examined. A few scholars reviewed the brisk development of the scholarship in the first decade, i.e. Cottle (2003) and Küng (2008), and found that: the field of media management during that time was neither fully explored nor adequately theorised (Cottle, 2003: 14, 22; Küng, 2008: 9). As media and communication scholar Simon Cottle (2003: 14) remarked in his edited book *Media Organisation and Production*: "In between the theoretical foci on marketplace determinations and play of cultural discourses, there still exists a relatively unexplored and under-theorised 'middle ground' of organisational structures and workplace practices." Lucy Küng (2008: 9) from a management background made a similar criticism — namely, media management was still "in its infancy", neither clearly defined or cohesive.

In 2012, for example, Cardiff University in the UK joined its business faculties with its media and communication counterparts, commencing the first MBA in Media Management in the country. This indicated a growing interest in the interdisciplinary topic. However, as the name of the course also implies, studying media management upon the MBA model lays more stress on management in traditional terms rather than in humanistic terms. According to Deuze (2007: x), management in traditional terms is about designing business models, contemplating finance mechanisms, and structuring strategic partnerships, while management in humanistic terms refers to the management of media practitioners and their daily work in media organisations. Deuze remarked that "the problem of contemporary media work, as felt

and experienced by its practitioners, is management." Hence, Deuze (2007) has called for more critical research on the work of media managers and its impacts on day-to-day organising life, and more emphasis on management in humanistic terms rather than traditional terms.

Küng (2007, 2008) stressed that the field was largely neglected by mainstream management scholars, thus future research should concentrate on *management* issues, rather than adjacent relevant fields, such as media and communication studies. According to Küng (2008), the research in media management has largely addressed media organisations as businesses rather than organisations, at a macro rather than micro level, and with more focus on "exogenous changes", i.e. technology, policy and consumption, rather than internal ones. For example, changes in the strategic environment, as one of the key topics in the media management studies, have been approached from diverse perspectives. As the strategic environment in the 1980s and 1990s was characterised by liberalization, deregulation and globalization, media managers and scholars focused particularly on the issues such as industry structure, the growth of conglomerates and its implications, as well as transnational management. However, along with the fast pace of technological changes in the new millennium, the strategic environment, coined by Küng as "the emergent environment", has shifted media managers' and scholars' attention to convergence, business models and organisational adaptations. Despite the diversity of perspectives to study the strategic environment and other management issues, as Küng (2008: 13) suggested, "there is considerable scope for investigation into the processes and practices of strategy, into internal firm phenomena and dynamics and their relationship with broader performance outcomes".

The shift of research focus has been more evident along with the field's development. Picard and Lowe (2016) summarised that the media management scholarship has shifted from the macro-level, or from an industry-as-a-whole-focus to the case-by-case, company-centric approach. The scholarship at the toddler stage was dominated by industrial organisation analyses and primarily at the macro level, focusing on "tactical choices" and "the perceptions and activities of senior managers", while the scholarship at the maturation stage has shifted the focus from industries at the macro level to "investigate specific companies" and case studies. Thus, current research mainly applies a company-centric approach, broadens the

focus from senior managers to mid-level management, and "is more often between macro and micro levels with attention devoted to developments in strategic management, operational management, business models, and organisational architecture" (61-2). Moreover, Picard and Lowe (2016) highlighted some nuanced perspectives in examining managerial decision-making and behaviours, which are "no longer confined to rationality and rational approaches to explore irrational attributes that are rooted in cognitive and cultural perceptions — that is to say, organisational cultures and dominant logic". The two nuanced perspectives will be further discussed in the next chapter<sup>10</sup>.

Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016) took stock of the media management literature and found that despite its increasing popularity in the past two decades, the field has not yet reached maturity as a systematic theory and body of literature. This is agreed by other key scholars in the field, including Robert Picard, Greg Lowe, Lucy Küng, and Alan Albarran. For instance, in his landmark work about media management and economics research in a trans-media environment, Alan Albarran (2013) identified that in media management and economics research, especially media management, there is lack of scholarly consensus in terms of definition, theoretical framework and research methods unique to the field. In the keynote speech at the EMMA 2016 Annual Conference<sup>11</sup>, Picard and Lowe (2016) both stressed that in the past two decades of development, we have seen a shift in terms of media management research focus from industrial development to wider fields, i.e. management, business models and organisational behaviour. However, researchers need to look these issues in a broader way. Media management scholars tend to take all the theories as having equal value, and thus are not critical enough about the theories we applied into our research.

Media management is not an established academic field, despite its popularity and progress in the past two decades (Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska, 2016: 37). To draw this conclusion, Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016: 37 - 40) benchmarked the media management and

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10 Chapter 3 is mainly about the sensemaking concept — a relatively recent concept in organisational and management study. The general assumption of the sensemaking concept and the managerial cognition theory as a whole is that reality and our knowledge of the 'environment' do not have an objective or absolute value — or separate objective 'environments' simply do not exist (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 726). Organisational culture is out of the scope of this research, and Chapter 3 will explain the reasons for excluding it.

11 The full name of the conference is the Annual Conference of the European Media Management Association. It was held in Porto, Portugal from 2-5 June 2016, with the theme of "Creativity, Cooperation and Uncertainty".

economics scholarship against Whetten (1989)'s proposal of the four building blocks of theory development. According to Whetten (1989), a complete theory must constitute four essential elements: *What* — referring to what factors should be considered as part of the explanation of the phenomenon of interest, such as variables, concepts and constructs, *How* — namely how identified factors are related, *Why* — the underlying psychological, economic, or social dynamics that justify the selection of factors and the proposed causal relationships, and *Who, Where and When* — namely the conditions that place limitations on the propositions generated from a theory or model.

Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016: 37-40) found that few explicit attempts at theory building have taken place in media management research. There is a lack of theorisation in the media management per se, as more of its literature explores questions of *what* than *how*. Given the scholarship investigating the what in favour of the how, there is so far relatively little evidence of work that address the *why* issues to provide robust explanation, or logic, of studied phenomena. Moreover, they found that when scholars cited previous empirical research in their own research, they had little consideration of temporal and contextual factors of the cited research. These criticisms about the media management and economics literature as a whole are consistent with those about the sensemaking and sensegiving study, a relatively new concept in organisational and management field. For further details please see the following chapter.

In addition, a surprising result arises from Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska's (2016: 36) analysis and is worth highlighting. Less than 15 percent of the articles use qualitative methods, although they are verified to play an important role in exploring media phenomena for inductive theory building, and developing theoretical constructs and propositions (i.e. Schwartzman, 1993; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This research applies qualitative methods, including case studies, organisational ethnography, interviews and observations for data collection, and grounded theory and narrative analysis for data analysis. The reasons for this choice of qualitative research methods will be further discussed in Chapter 4 Research Methods.

In order to explore the scholarly state of the art in the field of media management and economics, Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016) reviewed the field's three leading academic journals from their varied beginnings to 2013: the Journal of Media Economics (JME), the International Journal on Media Management (JMM) and Journal of Media Business Studies (JOMBS). From the lists of the 10 most-cited articles in the three journals, a total of eight articles focus on the news industry and journalistic work. Among them, three focused on newspaper organisations specifically. Split by covered media sectors, 14 percent of the total of 276 articles<sup>12</sup> studied newspaper organisations.

In detail, in the ten most-cited articles published in JME, three articles focus on the news industry, with one focusing on newspaper organisations specifically. These articles are: 'Competition between the internet and traditional news media: The gratification-opportunities niche dimension' written by Dimmick, Yan and Zhan in 2004; 'Competing with whom? where? and how? A structural analysis of the electronic newspaper market' by Chyi and Sylvie in 1998; and 'An explorative study on the market relation between online and print newspapers' by Chyi and Lasorsa in 2002. In the ten most-cited articles published in JMM, three articles focus on the news industry, with two focusing on newspaper organisations. These articles are: 'Second generation net news: interactivity and information 68 accessibility in the online environment' by Bucy in 2002; 'Online newspapers in the US: perceptions of markets, 50 products, revenue, and competition' by Chyi and Sylvie in 2000; and 'Free daily newspapers-business models and strategies' by Bakker in 2002. In the ten most-cited articles published in JOMBS, two articles focus on the news industry. They are: 'Journalistic work: a profession under pressure?' by Witschge and Nygren in 2002; and 'Implications of technological change for journalists' tasks and skills' by Phillips, Singer, Vlad and Becker in 2009. As reflected in the top-10 cited article lists, scholars pay little attention to the management of newswork. The topics they have discussed are mainly about the economics and business aspects of newspapers, including value chain and business model characteristics, consumer/audiences behaviour, and impact of technological trends and convergence (Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska, 2016: 35).

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<sup>12</sup> Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2016) reviewed a total of 276 articles which have been cited more than ten times in the three journals.

In this section, I compared the articles reviewing the media management scholarship at the toddler and the maturation stages, to map out the evolution of the field and highlight the progress achieved in the past two decades. It has been found that, despite the increasing popularity and broadened research scope, the field is still not systematically theorised and investigated, and unfortunately, most research lacks theoretical grounding, or simply applies a theory or model without expanding on it or challenging it. This has been quite characteristic of the research specifically on newspaper organisations. Specific to the newspaper organisations, there has been only limited research into creative work and managing journalistic practices. Drawing upon the above literature, it is learned that media management scholars have paid scarce attention to *journalistic issues* when they examined ongoing changes and emergent strategy in newspaper organisations. In the coming section, I shall review the future research directions proposed by key scholars in the field and show how they might be helpful for the theoretical grounding and design of this research.

## **2.4 Directions for the future media management research**

At the EMMA 2016 Annual Conference, Robert Picard and Greg Lowe (2016) used four parables to reveal a number of things that can be done to improve our understanding of media management. Among these, the parable of "the Savannah elephant" mostly drove my ambition for this research and encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone by re-thinking the conceptualisation of the object and subject of my research (3) and devoting more effort to developing management theory rather than only applying it (10).

According to Robert Picard and Greg Lowe (2016), what happened to the Savannah elephants is similar in certain respects to the current situation of legacy media. The Savannah elephant, the largest creature on land and one of the most intelligent and social of all species living on the grassy plains and bush lands in Africa, has seen a sharp 85 percent decrease in its population in the past 75 years. The primary reason is human encroachment: humans take up the resources, such as open woodlands, grass and water which are necessities for the elephants to live off. In the face of the conflict with humans, the elephants are "showing signs of stress, insecurity, and anxiety" and have changed their behaviour in an effort to survive (Bradshaw cited in Picard and Lowe, 2016: 4).

The Savannah elephants and legacy media share much in common. Similarly to the elephants, legacy media used to have few competitors but rich resources on which to thrive. However, thanks to the changing environment and disruption by the internet and digital technologies, the numbers of legacy media have dwindled, their dominance over the market has shrunk, and their competitors have increased in recent decades. These parallel the decreased population of the elephants, their changing environment and loss of resources. To confront the changing environment and new competitors, quite similarly to the elephants' response, legacy media are firstly "anxious" and then "dwindling": they are desperate to "maintain their firm's way of life" and "lash out against digital competitors who are seen as the source of their despair", and are highly reluctant to "adapt to a rapidly changing and stressful environment" (4).

After describing the elephant parable and paralleling it with the legacy media *status quo*, Picard and Lowe (2016) raised two questions which push me to re-think the theoretical grounding of this research. The first question is: "Are we pursuing preservation or conservation?" In their view, preservation and conservation reflect two different approaches or researchers' stances to 'save the elephants' and/or "to save legacy media". The preservation approach could "imply efforts to protect legacy media to carve out a habitat that is off limits to competitors due to protectionist policies or special subsidies", while the conservation approach is "about ensuring their sustainability in the context of a rapidly changing environment — a process that can be managed, but not stopped".

As a media management researcher with a print journalist background, I would have more intention of taking the preservation approach, namely, to lobby the importance of print to policy makers and investors to gain policy and financial support for them. However, as Picard and Lowe (2016) noted, the facts do not support either approach (5). The main task of media management scholarship is to not simply describe the situation to give advice to managers, but to explain the underlying dynamics to contribute something useful for the industries and society. In other words, as researchers of media management, we are suggesting not only looking at the Savannah or describing the elephants — namely, describing a given organisational phenomena and the organising environment, but to explain

the underlying dynamics by interpreting and clarifying the underlying factors that influence such dynamics.

Having reflected on this point, in this research on managing journalistic change in newspaper organisations, it is my aim not to simply describe the uncertainty and complexity of change in the newspaper organisations to be studied here, but rather to interpret and clarify the underlying factors that influence the dynamics of complex change. These factors include 'the elephants' — referring to newspaper organisations, 'the riders' — who are managers and organisational members at large<sup>13</sup>, and 'the Savannah' elephants habitat — that is, the changing environment in a time of uncertainty and complexity.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (cf. 1.5 A Little Confession on My Studying Journey), it is almost axiomatic that I chose the research topic — managing journalistic changes because of my early personal experiences as a print journalist. However, this initial intention or research motivation does not engender sustained interest in the topic, nor guarantee the theoretical contribution of the work to the field. The multiple case studies provided me with far more than enough data to 'give a vivid description' of what is actually going on inside the newspaper organisations, such as discrepancy, hostility and conflicts between managers and journalists in the dynamic of changes, so that I could make a loud call for managers to change their mindset, transform their way of managing, and become more aware of the journalistic work. However, such bombastic rhetoric fails to give the theoretical grounding but rather "the semblance of science" to this research. This is also the reason that I did not expand the discussion and only gave a brief account of the newspapers' specialities in Section 2.2.

As Picard and Lowe (2016) correctly pointed out that, it has been quite characteristic to date for media management scholars to "simply 'import' theories and concepts, ...without sufficient critical thought or making their relevance clear" (63). In order to avoid this characteristic shortcoming in the previous research, I apply the multidisciplinary approach as Picard and Lowe (2016) suggested, including journalism study, news production literature, organisational studies (such as newswork as an institutionalised process discussed in 2.2),

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<sup>13</sup> The role of managers as riders of an elephant will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

and management theories (such as the sensemaking concept and managerial cognition theory which are discussed in Chapter 3). It is no surprise that change has been a permanent topic in multiple disciplines and has been examined from a complicated and diverse assortment of perspectives. It is therefore not difficult to discover the relatedness and shared interest among these theories. However, identifying the relatedness and shared interests among different theories does not engender theoretical grounding. In other words, it is still a challenge for me and other young scholars to give "sufficient critical thought" and "make their relevance clear" when applying these theories into our empirical research.

This challenge has been identified by Achtenhagen (2016) in her commentary on Picard and Lowe's essay. Achtenhagen discussed her reflections on Picard and Lowe's (2016) analysis, and provided some hands-on suggestions for what researches could do to develop media management scholarship. The following is an excerpt from her reflection on the elephant parable:

One of the learnings which Picard and Lowe suggest ... is that we, as media management scholars, should make clear our worldview (i.e. what is our view on the form and nature of reality – our ontological stance) as well as our intentions (i.e. our epistemological stance, relating to our relationship with what can be known and the type of knowledge we want to produce). While I could not agree more that these reflections are crucial precedents for choosing an adequate research methodology and developing a robust research design, ... Instead, I would like to argue that we need better research designs that are carefully aligned with our ontological and epistemological stances, and that make sense to answer the research question at hand. ... What I see as very important, however, is that the methodological question is carefully addressed – how can the researcher go about finding out whatever she or he believes can be known? (Achtenhagen, 2016: 118 - 9)

Leona's (2016) suggestion for building up theoretical grounding is more practical and helpful to this research, directing my focus to the research question and data collected in the field — to see the alignment of the two. This will be further discussed after I have discussed the second question raised by Picard and Lowe.

This second questions raised by Picard and Lowe are: "Where do we stand? What is our worldview? What are our intentions?" Picard and Lowe (2016) stressed that the debate on this question is fundamental but "overdue" (65) in the field. Therefore, they suggest future research should take note of such questions, and treat them as "significant themes in our discourse as a field". As Picard and Lowe (2016: 65) explained it, "If we are trying to conserve legacy media, careful and highly competent management will be required to sustain renewable and non-renewable resources and to balance competing interests and needs. If our purpose is mainly only to document legacy elephants before they become extinct, we have to ask to what useful effect and what should we be focusing upon?"

With respect to the second question — my intended role as a researcher of organisational change, my stance is the 'enacted view', which studies change from the point of view of insiders — people who are involved in the organisational changes, and understand the change or any given organisational phenomenon not as objective, but enacted by human actors. In other words, the varied changes, experiences, behaviour in the organisational environment, in the enacted perspective, are understood "not only an intellectual exercise, but also an emotional reality"(Picard and Lowe, 2016: 66). The research focus — the interaction between management and journalism — happens not only in the practices and activities which are observable by researchers, but also exist in managers' and journalists' minds and accounts which are both embedded and socially constructed in the organising environment. When examining change as an enacted process, three factors — the rider, the elephant and the diminishing habitat of the Savannah, and especially their interaction, need to be carefully considered. This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

At the end of a critical assessment of the media management scholarship, Picard and Lowe (2016) identified the directions for future research<sup>14</sup> and stressed that: "Our scholarship needs

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14 At the end of the critical assessment of the media management scholarship, Picard and Lowe (2016) identified the directions for future research. In short, researchers in the field are called for to be aware of four different, but interrelated areas for improvement in the media management scholarship: "(1) benefitting societies as well as media industries, and thus more carefully considering our intended role as researchers and educators, (2) building theory that is multidisciplinary and of broader relevance in the social sciences, (3) broadening the methods we employ in research, and (4) challenging ourselves and our students to be more ambitious in our commitments and intentions."

to be far more multidisciplinary" (63). It seems contradictory to Küng's (2007, 2008) argument that future research should concentrate on *management* issues, rather than adjacent relevant fields, such as media and communication studies. However, they address the same issue: a common drawback in the media management scholarship, namely, we simply 'import' theory without questioning the relevance of the theory to our research. This drawback has been identified by a series of scholars in the field, i.e. Achtenhagen and Mierzejewska (2015), Krumsvik and Ots (2016), Ots, Nyilasy, Rohn, and Wikström (2015). In the following section, I will explain how I avoid this drawback and build up the theoretical grounding of this research.

Besides, at the 2016 EMMA Conference, a keynote speaker Alfonso Sánchez-Tabernero from Navarra University proposed another direction for the future media management research. He said since media managers need to 'measure the future', media management scholars need to focus more on the future (i.e. innovation, creativity, commitment and audience's perceptions) rather than the past (i.e. income and investment), in order to provide research tools for managers to measure the future.

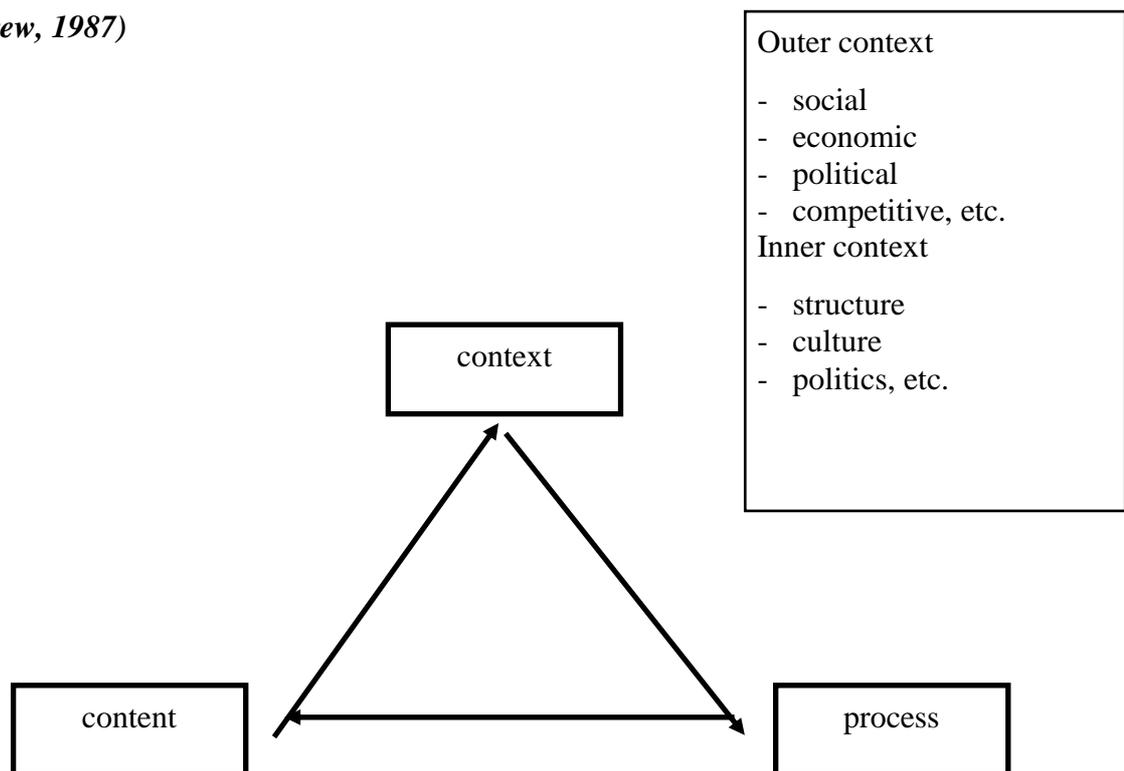
## **2.5 A pluralist approach to study the content, process and context of change in newspaper organisations**

Change is a perennial topic in organisational and management studies, and there is a long-time debate over the approaches to organisational change — planned or emergent (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Weick, 2000; Pettigrew, 2000; Burnes, 2005). The planned approach, originating with Kurt Lewin, dominated the field of organisational change from the 1950s until the early 1980s (Burnes, 2005). This approach, which views change as planned and the outcome of change as predicable, is precisely summarised by Kanter *et al.* (1992: 10) that: "Lewin's model was a simple one, with organisational change involving three stages; unfreezing, changing and refreezing ... This quaintly linear and static conception — the organisation as an ice cube — is so wildly inappropriate that it is difficult to see why it has not only survived but prospered." Karl Weick (2000) took a very different view and stated that change is emergent which does not occur in a rational, top-down, linear fashion. As

Weick (2000: 237) noted that, “Emergent change consists of ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alterations that produce fundamental change without a priori intentions to do so. ... Much of this change goes unnoticed, because small alternations are lumped together as noise in otherwise uneventful inertia.” Pettigrew (2000) argues that organisational change scholars should discard established dichotomous concepts such as planned and emergence processes, and seek to link change actions with change outcomes with a contextual and processual standpoint.

Drawing upon his longitudinal case study on organisational change, Pettigrew (1985) pointed out that the literature on organisational change was largely “acontextual, ahistorical and aprocessual”. Since then, many more studies have sought to link the context, content and process of change (Pettigrew, 1987). In order to conduct theoretically sound and practically useful research on change, as Pettigrew *et al.* (2003: 348) suggested, researchers need to explore the contexts, content and process of change together with their interconnections with time, as the exploration of the context, content and process will enable the researcher “to catch reality in flight” and “elevate embeddedness to a principle of method”. Pettigrew (1987) proposed a theoretical framework to examine organisational change (cf. Figure 2.1 as below).

*Figure 2.1: A broad framework for understanding change (Pettigrew, 1987)*



Beer and Nohria (2000) stressed the complexity of change itself and claimed that an integrated theory or framework for understanding change does not exist. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) reviewed the literature of organisational change with an aim to classify and integrate this literature. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) made a similar call to Pettigrew that researchers should focus on three factors — content, context and process — which are key dimensions in shaping employees’ reactions to change efforts. Devos, Buelens and Bouckennooghe (2007) noted that, although many more studies have sought to link the context, content and process of change, “they have rarely assessed the three factors simultaneously as they relate to organisational change” (608-9). This research draws upon Pettigrew’s theoretical framework for understanding change. The focus on the three change-related factors — context, content and process — indicates the process-oriented understanding of change as changing, organisations as organising and strategy as strategising. This is in line with the sensemaking and process perspectives (which will be discussed in

Chapter 3) in understanding change as interconnected interactions evolving in an emergent environment.

To study change in newspaper organisations, especially how people respond to it, many scholars have adopted a pluralist approach (i.e. Pettigrew 1985; Küng 2007), and this research is no exception. Siles and Boczkowski (2012) described the present situation of the industry as "a 'crisis' that threatens the survival of the newspaper in the near future" (p. 2), echoing a series of scholars in the journalism field (i.e. Blumler, 2010; Curran, 2010; McChesney and Pickard, 2011; Meyer, 2009) who use the same term. Siles and Boczkowski (2012) gave a thorough analysis of the recent research on the newspaper crisis from seven aspects: sources, manifestations and implications of this crisis, the proposals to resolve it, the main spatial and temporal contexts that scholars have studied, the theories and methods that authors employ, as well as the analytical tropes they have deployed to make sense of the crisis. Building on this assessment on the previous research, Siles and Boczkowski (2012) claimed that there is a largely under-theorised dimension — the process and history of a newspaper's culture. They proposed to analyse the crisis from a historical perspective and their analysis gives some insight for this research, such as trying to go beyond the traditional approaches embedded in journalism and mass communication studies and to combine them with other disciplines.

Siles and Boczkowski (2012) are not alone in deploying a boldly innovative, multi-disciplinary approach to studying journalistic work and the newspaper industry status quo. An increasing number of scholars have applied an inter-disciplinary approach to better understand the current newspaper crisis. Among which, the work of Jim Willis (1988) on newspaper management in turbulent times, Sylvie and Witherspoon (2002) on time, change and newspaper, Boczkowski (2004) on the evolution of digital newspaper, and Fuller (2010) on the innate human reasons behind the news(paper) crisis are remarkable and relevant to this study. In brief, Willis' (1998) work underlines the dual goals that newspaper organisations need to achieve — to gain profit and to serve for the public, which intensifies the discussion on dualities in the Swedish case in Chapter 7. Sylvie' and Witherspoon's (2002) research sheds light on the link between time and change in newspaper organisations, and thus provides insights to the empirical discussion of time and duration in the New Zealand case in

Chapter 9. Boczkowski (2004) applies multi-disciplinary perspectives of science and technology, communication, and organization studies to examine changes in daily newspapers in the digital age, and this research applies the same approach. Fuller (2010) studies newspaper changes from the perspective of affective neuroscience — the science of emotion, which overlaps with this research which studies managerial cognitions and sensemaking.

In the following chapter, I am going to focus on a popular, relatively new concept in organisational and management studies — sensemaking. After listing the key literature studying the content, context and processes in managing newswork during strategic change, I am going to combine different perspectives and approaches to study organisational change together and raise the research questions for the following case studies.

Data analysis of the three cases is around some empirical puzzles and hunches<sup>15</sup> (the two words are often mentioned by some key organisational ethnographers, i.e. Martha Feldman, Jennifer Howard-Grenville and Paula Jarzabkowski). For example, I am studying changes in newspaper organisations, especially the changes which evolved along the correlation between managerial and journalistic practices — which is what I started out with. After months of data analysis after the fieldwork, I identified the issues of changes are not merely in the sphere of what people do, but are more related to *the sensemaking*, that is, what people think and what people say. Sensemaking is an enactment. In other words, although this study has been conducted in a way which is close to organisational ethnography and grounded theory, the consequent analysis has guided a selection of sensemaking concepts, which are useful for constructing a theoretical framework for this thesis. The concept of sensemaking as termed by Karl Weick provides an encapsulating perspective for understanding organisational change (as a process of enactment) in people's minds, accounts and actions.

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<sup>15</sup> The discussion about empirical chances and hunches can be found from the interview with Martha Feldman, conducted by Charlotte on November 10, 2014, from <https://projectscrib.org/2014/11/10/go-where-the-energy-is-an-interview-with-martha-feldman/>

## Chapter 3: Making sense of organisation and sensemaking in organising

*How can I know what I think until I see what I say?*

- Karl Weick (1995)

In his own review of the seminal book *The Social Psychology of Organising* (1979), Karl Weick (2015) summarises the frame of the sensemaking concept as coming from his hunches regarding one question — "How do you organise to enact order into streaming ambiguity?" His answer remains the same: "Beats me!" As he puts it, "I do have hunches. But they are not discipline-specific". It is no surprise that within the extensive literature in the organisational and management field, there are many answers to this question. Weick's inquiry into and interpretation of organising is more about processes than structures. Among the organising activities, "saying was enacting, seeing was selecting, thinking was retaining" (190).

Drawing upon the sensemaking perspective, the organisational environment is enacted, and this provides a distinctive perspective to understand organisational change, especially a strategic change which is emergent and contested. However, this is not to say, the sensemaking perspective enables us to depict the full picture of an organisational change or any given organising activity. The combining of what people think, what people say and what people do still remains the most obscure part in the field of organisational and management studies.

Organisational change is a perennial topic in organisational and management studies. To study organisational change which keeps changing, researchers ought to study stability as well. As Weick (1993: 10) points out: "To explain how microstabilities are produced in the midst of continuing change" is the key problem in organisational studies. Weick proposes an examination of "a prototype of sensemaking in organisations", and demonstrates how the small structure of sensemaking, or "committed interpretation" in Weick's term, has had huge consequences for "the body of work on behavioural commitment".

This chapter is structured into five parts. First, the concept of sensemaking proposed by Karl Weick is reviewed and two key concepts related to sensemaking — enactment and process are elaborated. Second, the previous literature which applies the sensemaking perspective to study organisational change and strategy is reviewed. After the review, I note an important gap in our knowledge of sensemaking and sensegiving, an extension of the sensemaking concept. In general, the previous studies have focused on exploring the who and the what of the sensemaking and sensegiving issues. However, we know little about the where, when and why they occur, despite the fact that they do matter to organising and strategising. Hence, I propose to draw a distinction between the content of cognitions and the processes by which they develop, in our study of sensemaking and its impact(s). Thirdly, given the fact that sensemaking and sensegiving are derived from symbolic interaction theory (Küng, 2007: 142) and are relatively recent concepts, the literature of the role which managerial cognitions play in an organisational change is reviewed. To be clear, they are the studies on *the content of cognitions* (i.e. managers' perceptions, attitudes, emotions and tacit knowledge in daily work), and *the effects of language*, in particular metaphors, in managers' daily communications. Fourth, a selection of keywords is explained in detail, including organising and strategising, retrospect, as well as sequential interdependence and pattern. They are crucial for my understanding of the sensemaking perspective, and in particular, for my shaping of an analytical framework that informs my analysis of strategic change as enactment. Finally, I present the two 'specified' research questions by applying the sensemaking perspective into this study on change, perhaps all that remains unchanged in organisational life.

### **3.1 The concept of sensemaking**

In recent decades, the sensemaking perspective has gained increasing prominence in organisation and management studies. Karl Weick (1995), the sensemaking guru, defines sensemaking as "the placement of items into frameworks ... constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding, patterning" (5). As Weick argues, "the basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs" (1993: 635). Sensemaking is a critical organisational activity (Weick, 1995; Maltlis, 2005: 21).

### **3.1.1 An ongoing conceptualisation of sensemaking: from seven distinguishing characteristics of sensemaking to eight central features of sensemaking**

Weick devised the concept of sensemaking in 1969, and has kept explicating and updating it. Weick (1995) clarifies that there are at least seven distinguishing characteristics that set sensemaking apart from other explanatory processes such as understanding, interpretation, and attribution. According to Weick (1995: 17-62), sensemaking resources, or our ability to deal with the unexpected, can be summarised by the acronym, SIR COPE, which comprises interaction and conversation (Social setting), clearer frames of reference (Identity), relevant past experience (Retrospect), neglected details in the current environment (Cues), updating of impressions that have changed (Ongoing development), plausible stories of what could be happening (Plausibility), and actions that clarify thinking (Enactment).

In 2005, Weick, Kathleen and Obstfeld took stock of the concept of sensemaking and restated sensemaking in ways that "make it more future oriented, more action oriented, more macro, more closely tied to organising, meshed more boldly with identity, more visible, more behaviourally defined, less sedentary and backward looking, more infused with emotion and with issues of sensegiving and persuasion" (409). They claim that the re-statement of the concept of sensemaking by "pinpointing central features of sensemaking" can provide a foundation for building further studies on the sensemaking perspective.

They updated the conceptualisation of the SIR COPE sensemaking resources that Weick proposed ten years ago. In particular, Weick, Kathleen and Obstfeld (2005: 411-3) pinpoint eight central features of sensemaking, which include: 1) sensemaking organisational flux; 2) sensemaking starts with noticing and bracketing; 3) sensemaking is about labelling; 4) sensemaking is retrospective; 5) sensemaking is about presumption; 6) sensemaking is social and systematic; 7) sensemaking is about action; 8) sensemaking is about organising through communication.

There are overlaps between the SIR COPE resources and the eight central features of sensemaking. However, it is much more important to identify their differences, or what Weick and his colleagues did to further scrutinise the concept of sensemaking and re-evaluate its position in organisational theory. In general, the re-evaluation of the sensemaking perspective is a response to the increasing interest in applying the sensemaking perspective in organisational and management studies, especially to the criticisms and concerns raised by Gioia and Mehra (1996) and following sensemaking and sensegiving scholars. The debate over the sensemaking conceptualisation will be discussed in Section 3.2.

### **3.1.2 From a sensemaking standpoint: an organisation and its environment are social enactments**

Before I review the previous research on sensemaking and note an important research gap in our knowledge of sensemaking, one fundamental question needs to be addressed: What is the view that sensemaking scholars hold to understand the organisational environment? Change, strategy, and any given organising activity ... they are happening in organisational environments. Prior to our research on any of these organisational phenomena, we label and define them first based on our overall understanding of the organisational environment. For instance, prior to executing a strategic change, in our minds, we already have had an expectation of what the change would be.

There is a debate within strategic management about organisational environments — are they objective, perceived, or both? One perspective views organisation as an open social system that processes information from the environment (Thompson, 1967), while the other sees organisation as "socially constructed systems of shared meaning" (i.e. Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Pfeffer, 1981; Weick, 1979, cited in Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 723), in which organisational members actively form (enact) their environments through their social interaction.

Smircich and Stubbart (1985) focused on the debate and wrote an article on how the second perspective — enactment, derived from interpretive sociology, enriches and expands the theory, research, and practice of strategic management. To show this, Smircich and Stubbart (1985) identified three different models in the literature of strategic management that represent ideal types for explaining how organised participants know their environments: an objective environment, the perceived environment, and the enacted environment. They note that our understanding of the organisational environment has moved from the objective, through the perceived, and now moves toward the enacted. In detail, the conception of "the objective world" assumes that "an 'organisation' is embedded within an 'environment' that has an external and independent existence", namely that there is a dichotomy between the words 'organisation' and 'environment'. The task of strategic management in this view is to "maintain congruence between environmental constraints and organisational needs" (Lawrence and Dyer, 1983, cited in Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 724). The second view assumes that the world is perceived. The difference between the objective and perceived environments lies in strategists, who are permanently trapped by bounded rationality<sup>16</sup> (Simon, 1957). Hence the task of strategic management in this view is to minimise the gap between the reality of the 'environment' and the strategists' incomplete and imperfect perceptions of the 'environment' (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 726). The third view assumes that "the environments are enacted through the social construction and interaction processes of organised actors". Derived from an interpretative worldview (Schutz 1967), the enacted view assumes that reality and our knowledge of the 'environment' do not have an objective or absolute value — or separate objective 'environments' simply do not exist (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 726). As Smircich and Stubbart (1985: 726) precisely put it: "In an enacted environment model the world is essentially an ambiguous field of experience. There are no threats or opportunities out there in an environment, just material and symbolic records of action. But a strategist —determined to find meaning — makes relationships by bringing connections and patterns to the action." The sensemaking perspective sees organisation as an enactment. This view of the organisational environment and of the reality as a whole is not

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16 The notion of bounded rationality, coined by Herbert Simon (1957), has occupied an important place in "the decision-making approach" which studies organisations as information processing brains (Morgan, 1997: 78), and in the cognitive school of strategic management which sees strategy formation as a mental process (Mintzberg, et. al, 2005: 354-360). It denotes "the type of rationality that people (or organisations) resort to when the environment in which they operate is too complex relative to their limited mental abilities" (Dequech, 2001). For Simon, individuals and organisations can never be perfectly rational in decision making, thanks to their limited mental capacity, the complexity of the decision environment, and the time available to make the decision.

unique to sensemaking scholars. Theories of management cognition, the so-called interpretive school of management, have explored the interpretive elements in organisations and their impacts for much longer periods (Küng, 2007: 138).

To sum up, enactment theory sees the 'organisational environment' in a different way: the organisational environment is not a dichotomy in which 'organisation' and 'environment' are real, material and separate. Instead, organisation and environment are created together by organisational members who "actively create or enact the reality they inhabit" (Weick, 1997). An environment of which strategists can make sense has been put there by strategists' patterns of action — "not by a process of perceiving the environment, but by a process of making the environment" (Smircich and Stubbart, 1985: 727). Differently from Simon and March (1958) who attribute the non-rational, intuitive decision-making to the "bounded rationality" of individuals and organisations, Weick (1979, 1995) and other 'enactment theorists' (i.e. Brunson, 1985; Starbuck, 1985) have pursued the non-rational dimension by revealing how thought is imposed on action retrospectively (Morgan, 1997: 393).

After identifying the shift in our understanding of the organisational environments, Smircich and Stubbart (1985) argue that the enacted view of the organisational environment has three major implications for strategic management theory and practice. First, it encourages scholars to abandon the prescription that organisations should adapt to their environments. Second, it puts constraints, threats and opportunities under the spotlight. Third, it underlines the primary role of strategic managers to be the management of meaning. This is echoed by Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (2005). They emphasise that different views of the organisational environments — the objective, the perceived and the enacted — give rise to the competing schools of strategic management theory. In detail, the objective view is clearly favoured by the prescriptive schools<sup>17</sup>. The perceived and enacted views represent, respectively, the two wings of the cognitive school whose main job is to "probe into the mind of the strategist", in order "to get what this process means in the sphere of human cognition"(150). Although both the objectivist and subjectivist wings see strategy formation as a mental process, they are

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<sup>17</sup> The prescriptive schools include the design school which sees strategy formation as a process of conception, the planning school which views strategy formation as a formal process, and the positioning school which understands strategy formation as an analytical process (Mintzberg, et al., 2005).

wholly different: "What the one sees as the basis for distortion, the other takes as the opportunity for creation" (Mintzberg et al., 2005: 170).

The enacted view of the organisational environment also has implications for the way I design this study and write up the data analysis chapters. In line with the enacted view, I honed my research focus during the data collection as I came to an understanding of the issues, people, and contexts regarding strategic change. For example, at the beginning, my research focus was on managerial change and journalistic change, especially on the correlation between the two. My research design was mainly about practice, and I expected to collect data about people's actions, such as strategic formulation and implementation, and managerial challenges. However, this is not what the sensemaking scholars and enactment theorists advocate. My previous research design attempts to approach the strategic change issues with an underlying assumption: the organisational environment is "objective" and "separate" from the people's perceptions of it. The effects of people's perceptions on actions as well as accounts of actions would be somehow ignored. The more I stayed in the field, the more I realised organisation and organising are enactments, which therefore need to be examined, interpreted and understood from the standpoint of the insider — the exact people who become involved in the organisational environment.

### **3.2 Previous research which applies the sensemaking perspective in understanding organisational change and strategy**

In general, sensemaking is about probing the mind of managers and strategists to see how information is scanned, interpreted and responded to (Weick, 1995), and then how others can make sense of, that is "comprehend, accept, and act upon" it (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 444). Sensegiving, as an extension concept of sensemaking, is "a fundamental leadership activity within organisational sensemaking" (Maitlis, 2005: 22).

Scholars have shown an increasing interest in the role of sensemaking in organising and strategising and proposed different models of sensemaking to make the sensemaking processes more visible. Most of the studies have focused on exploring the who and the what

of sensemaking and/or sensegiving, such as the actors who engage in sensemaking and sensegiving and the strategies they use to do so. A few scholars<sup>18</sup> have examined the conditions associated with sensemaking and sensegiving in organisations: where, when or why they occur, although they are assumed to be critical to the sensemaking issues and our understanding of such issues. This is an important research gap in sensemaking research.

### **3.2.1 Sensemaking: scanning, interpretations and responding**

Managerial sensemaking comprises three processes — scanning, interpreting and responding (Bogner and Barr 2000; Milliken 1990; Thomas *et al.* 1993). Based on Daft and Wick's model of environmental interpretation, Milliken (1990) clarifies that managers have three tasks in the processes of noticing and interpreting environmental changes — scanning, interpreting and responding, and each of the three tasks is "extremely complex and likely to generate considerable uncertainty"(p. 43). Thomas *et al.* (1993) note that scholars have developed a number of models to describe the managerial sensemaking processes which are clearly critical to organisational performances and survival. However, scholars have paid scant attention to the relationship among cognition, action and organisational performance. Thomas *et al.* (1993) chose the Milliken's model as the theoretical framework for their research, and to test the direct and indirect effects among these elements of the sensemaking process and performance outcomes.

In detail, scanning deals with information gathering and scanning activities can serve as activators of the following two sensemaking processes, namely interpreting and responding (Dutton and Duncan, 1987) . Managers, who have access to far more information than they can actually use (Mintzberg, 1973), select information about actual or potential changes. It is important to note that, "cognitive frameworks affect what is noticed by making some stimuli more salient than others". From a strategic perspective, the information scanned and selected by decision makers is primarily from the external environment, but also from the internal environment, especially those elements that might have a bearing on future development (Cowan, 1986). The next stage is interpreting, which involves analysing and comprehending

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<sup>18</sup> For the conditions associated with sensemaking in organisations, a few scholars including Lanir (1989), Westley (1990), Orton (2000), examined the issue. For the conditions associated with the sensegiving, Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) firstly identified the enablers and triggers of the sensegiving in organisations.

the meaning of the selected information. In this stage, decision makers tend to use particular labels to describe a given strategic issue, and "opportunity" and "threat" are the two most salient strategic issue labels (Thomas et al., 1993: 241). Here, cognitive structure or mindset provides the rules for decision makers for what is noticed and interpreted. The last task is responding, that is, implementing the decision made after the scanning and interpretation of the strategic issues. The three key sensemaking processes will be examined in the three cases in the following data analysis chapters. As scholars have suggested that interpretation might hold the key to a strategic change, I am going to test the relationship between managerial interpretation and firm action.

### **3.2.2 Sensegiving: information seeking, meaning ascription, and action**

Sense-giving is an extension of the concept of sensemaking. It was coined by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) and defined as "the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organisational reality" (442). In the seminal work of sensegiving, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identify a range of sensegiving strategies used by a university president to effect change, such as meeting frequently with important stakeholders, holding meetings to "espouse his vision" and disclosing intentions through "hypothetical scenario presentations" (442-3). They note that the sensegiving in the strategic formulation comprises four phases: envisioning, signalling, re-visioning, and energising.

Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) study has prompted a number of studies of sensegiving, which address its reciprocal link to sensemaking and its significant impacts on organisational change. Focusing on the reciprocal link between sensemaking and sensegiving, Corley and Gioia (2004) describe how attentive leaders experience a sensegiving imperative and take steps to promote collective sensemaking about the company's altered identity (173).

Following the same line, Balogun, Bartunek and Do (2015) argue that senior managers are "distinctive interpretive communities" who occupy a complex dual recipient/change role. Their sensemaking and sensegiving of a change initiative "are subject to local as well as broader corporate contexts" (960). This finding is different from the previous change literature which typically portrays senior managers as one homogeneous category of change

agents. Balogun et al. (2015) criticise our view of the role played by senior managers in organisational change as overly simplistic, "ignoring the fact that in many organisations there are multiple senior teams, who are differentially affected by change, occupying differing change roles". They also suggest clarifying the dual roles of the senior management team in an organisational change, "which are significant for its sensemaking about change, and its subsequent sensegiving of change to others (975)".

Maitlis (2005) argues that the sensegiving is a multi-party process, in which not only leaders but also stakeholders engage and attempt to influence others' understanding of an organisational issue. She points out that our understanding of sensemaking and sensegiving is limited to senior managers: viewing them as the main source of creating meaning of, and giving sense or ascribing meaning to organisational events, so that others can make sense of them. Instead, we should take stakeholders, such as middle managers, grassroots employees, into account when we study sensemaking and sensegiving and their impacts on organisational change.

Others also address the role of middle managers in sensegiving and its impacts on shaping organisational accounts. Dutton et al. (2002) focus on the sensemaking required for issue selling, one type of discretionary managerial action, and examine how middle managers gain top management attention and influence organisational action.

Similarly, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) explore middle manager practices, especially those of strategic sensemaking, in an organisation in change situations. Drawing upon "narratives of practice" (956), also called work life stories of middle managers, Rouleau and Balogun (2011) identify two discursive activities which are crucial to the accomplishment of middle manager sensemaking — "performing the conversation" and "setting the scene". They highlight that middle managers need not just be aware of the use of language, but also obtain "an ability to devise a setting in which to perform the language". By taking advantage of language and "verbal, symbolic, and social-cultural" settings, middle managers are able to "draw people from different organisational levels into the change" and thus enact their strategic role in organisational development.

This study follows the same line. In the data analysis section, I am going to examine how sensemaking and sensegiving efforts are made by senior managers, middle managers and grassroots journalists in the researched organisations, and how sensemaking and sensegiving efforts are involved with each other.

### **3.2.3 An ignored part: conditions associated with sensemaking and sensegiving**

Together, the above-mentioned studies provide a rich description of both sensemaking and sensegiving and make the sensemaking and sensegiving processes more visible. However, little research has been conducted to reveal the conditions associated with sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005) and sensegiving (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). These conditions which explain where, when or why sensemaking and sensegiving occur are critical to our understanding of sensemaking and sensegiving, as well as their impacts on organisational change.

With respect to the conditions associated with sensemaking, a few scholars including Lanir (1989), Westley (1990) and Orton (2000) have examined the issue. Drawing upon their research, Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) categorise the situations that instigate sensemaking, and note that sensemaking tends to occur under one of three conditions: "situations involving the dramatic loss of sense (e.g., Lanir 1989), situations where the loss of sense is more mundane but no less troublesome (e.g., Westley 1990), and unfamiliar contexts where sense is elusive (e.g., Orton 2000)" (cited in Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005: 415).

With respect to the conditions associated with the sensegiving, Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) firstly identified "sets of conditions that *trigger*<sup>19</sup> sensegiving" and "sets of conditions that *enable* sensegiving". In detail, stakeholder sensegiving is likely to be triggered in the following two sets of conditions: when stakeholders perceive the issue as important — to

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<sup>19</sup> Italics in original texts.

themselves, to a stakeholder group whom they represent, or to the organisation at large — and when they perceive there is a lack of leader competence with respect to a given issue. Their data also shows that stakeholders are more likely to engage in sensegiving in the following three sets of conditions: when they possess expertise relating to an issue, when they are given legitimacy to engage in sensegiving, and when they have the opportunity to engage in such behaviour.

At least two lessons can be learned from the above research on the conditions associated with sensemaking and sensegiving. Theoretically, the processes by which the meaning of any given organisational phenomena is made, created, and given to the others are not fully explored. Previous study has shown that sensemaking and sensegiving are reciprocal, and in the reciprocal processes of sensemaking and sensegiving, multiple organisational members get involved. Thus methodologically, when we conduct an empirical study on organisational change and strategy, we need to take managers, middle managers and grassroots employees into consideration, and pay attention to their accounts. The reason for the latter will be discussed in the following section.

#### **3.2.4 A shared concern in the two streams of studies: narratives and its effects**

Sensemaking scholars have focused on the effects of language on sensemaking. Weick (1995), for example, shows his concern with the effects of language on sensemaking almost throughout the book (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 1228). Patriotta (2003) also finds that narratives play a key role in organisational inquiry and knowledge work. After examining the narrative-based processes of sensemaking and knowledge acquisition, he identifies a distinctive mode of investigation conceptualised as ‘detective stories’. Sensegiving scholars have the same focus — the role of narratives played in sensegiving activities. Dunford and Jones (2000), for example, stress that language is heavily implicated in the processes of strategic change, and storytelling has gained prominence as a form of sensegiving. Snell (2002) highlights the importance of narrative in top-down sensegiving which in turn facilitates a company's attempts to become a learning organisation.

The two streams of study on managerial cognitions and the processes by which they develop (sensemaking and sensegiving) have both highlighted the significant impacts of what people think on organisational change and strategy. Despite the diversity in addressing a wide range of research topics, the studies on managerial cognitions, sensemaking and sensegiving have highlighted the effects of language on what people think and their recurring effects on what people do.

By extension, I am going to examine the role of narratives in sensemaking and sensegiving, as well as in the consequent organising and strategising activities. Why this preoccupation with language in both previous research and my own? Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991: 1228) give an eloquent answer:

Put simply, because 'sense is generated by words.' It is language that arrests, abstracts, and inscribes the otherwise evanescent behaviours and utterances that make up the stream of ongoing events that swirl about us. And it is these inscriptions — not the events themselves — that serve as the stuff of the sense-making process.

### **3.2.5 Metaphors and symbolic communications**

Under this constructionist perspective, strategy formation takes on a whole new color. Metaphors become important, as do symbolic actions and communications (Chaffee, 1985:94), all based on the manager's total life experience (Hellgren and Melin, 1993).

- Minszberg et al. (1998: 170)

Sensemaking perspectives and management cognitions in general attempt to understand organisations and organisational life by looking at important issues from the inside. Much research on managerial cognitions has proved that organisations are far less rational, logical, and objective, especially in a changing situation. A growing field within the management cognition literature concerns the symbolic aspect of managerial cognition, that is, how

managers use metaphors to frame the meaning of a strategic change in order to foster understanding and seek support for the change.

Metaphor as defined by Morgan, is "*a way of thinking and a way of seeing*" (1997: 4). It is "the outcome of a cognitive process"(Grant and Oswick, 1996: 1). By using metaphors, people transfer information about a relatively familiar subject (often referred to as the source or base domain) to a new and relatively unknown subject (often referred to as the target domain) (Grant and Oswick, 1996: 2). Marshak (1993: 44) defines it as "a form of symbolic, rather than literal, expression". In the book *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) give a detailed description of how metaphors influence people talk and think about their everyday experiences.

Schön (1979: 254) describes the working of metaphors as "a process by which new perspectives on the world come into existence", and therefore metaphors have a "generative" quality as he terms it. According to Schön (1979), metaphor refers not just to a perspective, a frame, or a way of looking at things, but also to a process — "a particular kind of SEEING-AS, the 'meta-pherein' or 'carrying over' of frames or perspectives from one domain of experience to another" (254). In the following section, the generative quality of metaphors employed by newspaper managers will be further discussed. More specifically, and in the following case studies, I am going to exemplify how their generative quality has been used to bring new perspectives on *a strategic change* into existence.

That metaphors have been widely used in organisational activities is not new, and has drawn increasing scholarly attention, especially from those with a constructionist perspective. In his classic article about managing the metaphors of organisational change, Marshak (1993) points out that metaphors of change, as "the manifest expression of a deeper, sometimes preconscious, symbolic construct that informs and maintains 'reality' for the speaker" (45), can have "subtle, sometimes insidious" influences on listeners. Following this line, a group of scholars have explored the role of language, especially symbolic discourses given by managers, in organisational changes, such as in producing intentional change in organisations (Ford and Ford, 1995), transforming organisational identities (Fiol 2002), and coping with

uncertainty (Merry and Kassavin, 1995; Brashers, 2001). Meanwhile, metaphors are widely used in the study of organisations. Among the very best is the Gareth Morgan's book, *Images of Organisations* (1998). He demonstrates how two metaphors — organisation as a machine and as an organism — have dominated the study of organisation and management.

Despite their pervasiveness in organisational life and organisational study, the value of metaphors, particularly for organisational practice and science, has been slightly questioned. With respect to organisational practice, metaphors cannot only open up thinking, but can also oversimplify and narrow the managerial choices (Schwenk, 1988). After reviewing the literature on metaphors and organisations, Grant and Oswick (1996) summarise that there is little dispute about the pervasiveness of metaphors in organisational life and organisational study, nor about their having a generative quality. However, there are two key types of debate concerning metaphors' usage in organisational analysis.

The first revolves around the role of metaphors in the generation of organisational knowledge. As Tsoukas (1993: 324) puts it, "there is a necessary gap between metaphorical and scientific languages" and he questions the impact of metaphor in understanding the reality of organisational life. Morgan (1997) shows a similar concern over the relevance and appropriateness of what a metaphor generates. Based on a simple premise that all theories of organisation and management are implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see the organisational life in a distinctive, but biased, partial way, Morgan(1997) calls for researchers to re-consider "the implications of different metaphors for thinking about the nature of organisation"(6). The second debate surrounding metaphors centres on the types of metaphors. In order to provide an understanding of their significance and of the main issues surrounding them, scholars have put metaphors in organisational research and practice into different typologies. For instances, Grant and Oswick (1996) break the metaphors *in organisational research* into two groups: hierarchical and non-hierarchical. Tsoukas (1993: 324) classifies the metaphors that have been ascribed in organisational knowledge generation into three perspectives: metaphors as ways of thinking, metaphors as dispensable literary devices, and metaphors as potential ideological distortions.

With respect to metaphors employed by managers in organisational practices, Marshak (1993: 47-48) identifies four typical metaphors of change employed by managers in their daily organisational communication, including the "fix and maintain" imagery, "developmental", "transitional" and "transformational" metaphors. Cornelissen et al. (2011) divided metaphors of *organisational practices* into two groups — relational metaphors "that convey a system of connected counterparts and underlying causal relations" between the source and the targeted change, and those that "are based on common attributes or superficial similarities" (1703). They argue that the relational metaphors are more likely to have persuasive effects on fostering understanding and creating legitimacy for change. The typologies of metaphors in *organisational practices*, proposed by Marshak (1993) and Cornelissen *et al.* (2011), will be separately tested in the three cases in Chapter 6.

We can see that metaphors are a blend of theory and practice and an inevitable part of our everyday life and our understanding of that realistic life. By extension, in Chapters 6, 7, 8, I shall not be applying the metaphorical theories into the case studies, but instead shall exemplify how metaphors are used by managers at work and their subsequent implications in making change happen. In other words, I am taking a constructivist view in understanding strategic change in the field: metaphorical reasoning employed by me as a researcher does not help to unlock the black box of a strategic change. Instead, metaphors employed by the people involved in that change do that.

In this section, I review the previous research which has examined organisational change and strategy from the sensemaking and sensegiving perspective. Drawing upon a series of writings which take stock of the massive literature on the sensemaking and sensegiving concept (i.e. Gioia and Mehra, 1996; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Weick, Kathleen and Sutcliffe, 2015; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007), I highlight an important research gap in the related studies — the processes by which the meaning of any given organisational phenomena is made, created, and given to the others are not fully explored. The previous studies suggest to me a view of sensemaking and sensegiving in organisations as unfolding processes in which multiple organisational members are at play. They also provide a clear methodological direction to this study: narrative analysis — an examination of the accounts

given by the people who become involved in a strategic change which is perceived and constructed by the same people.

### **3.3 Position of the sensemaking perspective in organisational theories, especially the theories of managerial cognition**

As mentioned in 3.1.2, the sensemaking perspective sees organisation as an enactment. This view of the organisational environment and of the reality as a whole is not unique to sensemaking scholars. That is to say, sensemaking and sensegiving, derived from symbolic interaction theory (Küng, 2007: 142), are relatively recent concepts. The cognitive school has studied for a much longer time managerial cognitions and the influence they have on how strategic issues are perceived and acted on.

Despite being described as a school of thought, theories of managerial cognition are "both heterogeneous and extensive", and lack cohesion (Küng, 2007: 137). It has gained great popularity, but remains a "terra incognita" in organisational and management studies. Similarly, Minszberg et al. (1998) describe the managerial cognitions theories as "the cognitive school". They open the discussion about the theories in the following way: "The body of work that we shall be discussing forms not so much a tight school of thought as a loose collection of research, which seems, nonetheless, to be growing into such a school" (150). In this section, I am going to review the studies on the role that managerial cognition plays in organisational change. To be clear, they are the studies on *the content of cognitions*, including cognitive base, perceptions, attitudes, emotions and tacit knowledge in daily work.

After the review, I propose to draw a line between the content of cognitions and the process by which they develop — also known as managerial sensemaking, in order to improve our understanding of managerial cognition and its impacts on organising and strategising. Scholars from various schools, i.e. the interpretative school, the cognitive school, as well as sensemaking and sensegiving perspectives, do so by focusing on the effects of language on what people think. This overarching concern permeating throughout the related research is

because "sense is generated by words", or to borrow the probably best known account of Weick, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?"

### **3.3.1 Cognitions biases and labelling**

Researchers have shown that managerial cognitions are biased and distorted and some of these results have been summarised in a book by Spiro Makridakis (1990), a leading expert on forecasting. For instances, managers promote a search for evidence that supports rather than denies existing assumptions. They favour more easily remembered recent information over earlier information, and tend to see a causal effect between two variables that may simply be correlated (Makridakis, 1990; Mintzberg et al., 1998: 152; Küng, 2007: 152-3).

Both wings of the cognitive school — the objectivist and subjectivist — focus on the cognition biases and distortions, but in opposite directions. For the objectivist view, the mental capacity of individuals and organisations (because organisations are viewed as information processing brains — this is discussed in 3.1.2 sensemaking and enactment) is limited, thus managers and organisations settle for "a bounded rationality" and make "good enough" decisions based on rules of thumb, conventional wisdom and a limited search for information (March and Simon, 1958; Morgan, 1997: 78-9; Mintzberg et al, 1998: 151, 155-7). In the information-processing view, these limits on human rationality are institutionalised in the structure and models of functioning of our organisations. Namely, organisational departments and divisions do not just "define a structure of work activity", but also "create a structure of attention, information, interpretation, and decision making that exerts crucial influence on an organisation's daily operation" (Morgan, 1997: 79).

On the other hand, for the subjectivist view, cognition is not a reproduction of the external world, even if information flows in people's minds through the filters of distortion, bias, and simplification. Instead, information flowing in people's minds through those filters interacts with cognition and is shaped by it. "In a sense, the mind has a mind of its own — it marches to its own cognitive dynamics" (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 165). Managers and decision makers impose some interpretation on the organisational environment, i.e. thought is imposed on action retrospectively (Weick, 1979: 1995). Mintzberg et al. (1998) praised this view for its

radical implications: the proponents of this view "break decisively with the pervasive tendency to accept what people see as a given, to ascribe to the status quo a logical inevitability. To them, reality exists in our head (165)".

No matter which wing, there is an underlining assumption in the theories of managerial cognition: organisation is like a brain, and what is inside the brain, including biases, rules of thumb, conventional wisdom, and dominant logic, plays an important role in people's seeings and doings. Organisations get locked into set ways of doing things, based on set ways of seeing things, and then spiral downward as the world around them changes. Mintzberg et al. (1998) give a precise summary of the cognitive school's motto: "I'll see it when I believe it".

More broadly, a large amount of research literature has focused on labelling, a particular way that managers frame an issue and initiate a cognitive categorisation process. In Thomas, Clark and Gioia's (1993) sensemaking study that was discussed previously in 3.2.1, they identify that labelling is a key managerial sensemaking activity especially in the phase of interpretation. They believe that it is top managers who have primary influence over how strategic issues are labelled, and 'opportunity' and 'threat' are the two most salient strategic issue labels used by decision makers. Labels, which invite cognitive categorisations, have a ripple effect on how strategic issues are perceived and acted on.

Focusing upon how adversity affects the adaptability of multiple layers of an organisational system, Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981) found that labelling a perceived environmental development as a threat can serve to either reduce or intensify the threat. The labelling is "a mixed blessing". Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981) suggest the source of a threat may change the response it engenders.

Similarly, Gilbert (2002) identified that threat framing in incumbent organisations may have paradoxical impacts: helping building impetus and commitment for disruptive projects, and invoking a set of rigidities that prove maladaptive in the face of disruptive change. Gilbert's (2002) research links the resource allocation and threat rigidity literatures, and suggests that

the role of structure goes beyond resource allocation. Similar results are found in the China Daily case. The managerial framing of a disruptive change, the source of a threat, as well its interplay with resource allocation and structural rigidity will be further discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7.

### **3.3.2 Tacit knowledge and instructive talks**

When studying the impacts of managerial cognitions, scholars focus on practices, as practices are social, discursive and material. Namely, what people do may reflect and embody what people think to some extent. In the related studies, tacit knowledge has been a popular topic since the middle of the 1990s (Mintzberg et al, 1998), thanks to the publication of Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) influential *The Knowledge-Creating Company*.

Polanyi (1966) first introduces the idea of tacit knowledge, noting that "we may know far more than we can tell". Based on Polanyi's definition, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) appropriate the term in management studies. They refer to tacit knowledge as what we know implicitly and inside. By and large, the knowledge buried deep in our subconscious minds differs from explicit knowledge — what we know formally. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), "Tacit knowledge is personal, context-specific, and therefore hard to formalise and communicate. Explicit or 'codified' knowledge, on the other hand, refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language" (59). They argue that the conversion from tacit to explicit knowledge is crucial for strategic performance, and middle managers "play a key role" in it. In the conversion process, middle managers "synthesise the tacit knowledge of both front-line employees and senior executives, make it explicit, and incorporate it into new products and technologies" (16). In this conversion, middle managers tend to use metaphors to make tacit knowledge explicit (71). It is important to note that, for Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), tacit knowledge can be 'captured', and thus managers need to "get out of the old mode of thinking that knowledge can be acquired, taught, and trained", and "pay more attention to the less formal and systematic side of knowledge and start focusing on highly subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches that are gained through the use of metaphors, pictures, or experiences" (11).

Tsoukas (2005) disagrees with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) understanding of tacit knowledge as "not-yet-articulated" knowledge awaiting "translation" or "conversion" into explicit knowledge. In other words, tacit knowledge cannot be 'captured' or 'converted'. In Tsoukas's (2005) view, the conception of "translating" or "converting" tacit to explicit knowledge "ignores the essential ineffability of tacit knowledge". To examine tacit knowledge which is ineffable in nature, Tsoukas suggests that researchers "stop insisting on 'converting' tacit knowledge" and take note of "how we draw each other's attention to things". Namely, as tacit knowledge can only be displayed and manifested in what we do, researchers need to focus on "new ways of talking, fresh forms of interacting and novel ways of distinguishing and connecting".

A particularly insightful paper has delved specifically into this notion of how middle managers play a key role in fostering a strategic change by drawing on their tacit knowledge. Rouleau (2005) conducted an empirical study in a top-of-the-line clothing company, and found that middle managers, via routines and conversations, draw on their tacit knowledge to make sense of change and share it with others. Middle managers, being in the front line of change, draw on their tacit knowledge, make the strategic change explicit, incorporate it with the interests of stakeholders and clients, and sell it to them. Rouleau's (2005) findings highlight the importance of tacit knowledge in strategic sensemaking and sensegiving processes, and suggest a close examination of middle managers to understand it.

One question to be derived from the above competing conceptions is: What are the implications of tacit knowledge for making a strategic choice and executing it? To explore this question, in Chapter 5, I am going to focus on tacit knowledge, as it has been verified in the previous studies as a part of strategic management processes. Special attention will be given to the way in which tacit knowledge is displayed and manifested in what we do. The two competing views about tacit knowledge, advanced by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Tsoukas (2002), will be tested in the three case studies.

### **3.3.3 Emotions and vision**

Emotions have been surprisingly neglected in strategic management studies, despite the fact that emotions are important to day-to-day organisational activities. Brundin and Liu (2015) reviewed the related research, and found that only 13 articles explicitly examined how emotions generated at the micro level influence strategic processes or outcomes at the macro level. These articles either view emotions as socially constructed, situational, and context-dependent, or draw on the field of cognitive psychology.

Brundin and Liu's (2015) review shows that top managers are still the researchers' focus. Only a few (i.e. Brundin and Nordqvist, 2008; Liu and Maitlis, 2014) go beyond the focus on top management teams and investigate the emotional dynamics constituted by multiple organisational members. Brundin and Nordqvist (2008), for instance, investigate the role of emotions when board members interact to perform the board's control and service tasks. Their empirical research illustrates how emotions work as power energisers and status energisers in boardroom dynamics. Liu and Maitlis (2014) examine how emotion affects the discursive processes through which strategy is constructed. After analysing strategic conversations, Liu and Maitlis (2014) identify five different kinds of emotional dynamic, with each associated with a different type of strategising process. For Brundin and Nordqvist (2008) and Liu and Maitlis (2014), the process and outcome of strategising are not shaped by the emotions displayed and experienced by a single strategic actor, but influenced by the collective emotions displayed and experienced by multiple organisational members in a dynamic and cyclical manner over time.

Authentic display of emotions has been one of the shared focuses among the studies on emotions and their unintentional effects, and is related to this research. In Brundin and Melin's (2006) study, they found causal links between the ways of displaying emotions and strategic change: emotions that are displayed by two CEOs in an authentic way drive change, even if they are negative emotions, whereas emotions that are displayed in an inauthentic way do not promote change. However, Brundin and Nordqvist (2008) make an opposite claim in their empirical research on board members. Their results challenge theories that propose that authenticity of emotional displays is necessary in order to achieve positive strategic outcomes. Based on two social cognition experiments, Masuda et al. (2008) found that there are East–West differences in contextual sensitivity: Easterners are more influenced by the

surrounding people's emotions than Westerners; thus Easterners (only Japanese in the experiments), more than Westerners, incorporate information from the social context. Since my research is about three cases in both Eastern and Western countries, I am going to probe whether there are different scales of emotions displayed and experienced in the researched organisations.

Not just strategic management scholars, but sensemaking scholars have also raised concerns over the impacts of emotions and thus call for more academic investigation. For instance, Gioia and Mehra (1996: 1230) criticise that in Weick's conceptualisation of sensemaking, there is a simple, passing acknowledgement of affect as an element of sensemaking. In other words, in the view of Gioia and Mehra (1996), the role of affect in sensemaking is under-explored. In 2005, Weick and his colleagues responded to Gioia and Mehra's criticism about his little consideration of the implications of affect, or emotions of sense-makers and sense-givers. They suggest a couple of ideas to examine the role of emotion in sensemaking, but they still recognise it as a conundrum which really can confuse sensemaking schools which try to account for it (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obsfeld, 2005: 418-9).

In the studies of strategic management, especially those in the entrepreneurial school<sup>20</sup>, emotions are recognised as one of the key attributes of a visionary leader. The most central concept of the entrepreneurial school is vision — a personal, mental representation of strategy, created or at least expressed in the head of the leader (Minszberg et al., 1998: 124). The proponents of this school value leader and manager differently. As Bennis and Namus (cited in Minszberg et al., 1998: 137) put it, "The leader operates on the *emotional and spiritual resources* of the organisation, on its values, commitment, and aspirations. The manager, by contrast, operates on the *physical resources* of the organisation, on its capital, human skills, raw materials, and technology" (italics in the original). This view of strategy is consistent with that of Chip Heath, a leading expert on organisational behaviour, who calls for strategy makers to "make the emotional case for change" (2000). Moreover, in the view of

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<sup>20</sup> In the view of the entrepreneurial school, strategy formation is viewed as a visionary process. Mintzberg et al. (1998) give a detailed discussion about the entrepreneurial school (p.123 — XXX). By and large, the entrepreneurial school examines the strategy formation process by exclusively focusing on single leaders, and stresses "the most innate of mental states and processes—intuition, judgment, wisdom, experience, insight" (124).

the entrepreneurial school, vision can be articulated by the strategist in words and actions, and what is more crucial for visionary leaders is "their profound ability to use language in symbolic form — as metaphor" (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 138). By using metaphors to describe the vision, it is not only strategists who can 'see' things from a new perspective, but others can see them too. Following the same line, in the following data analysis chapter, I am going to examine emotions which are influential in the sensemaking process as well as the overall strategic process, and the processes in which these emotions develop in the researched organisations.

### 3.3.4 Distinguishing between cognition and culture

A few scholars (Marshak, 1996; Mintzberg et al., 1998; Küng, 2007) have drawn attention to the blurred boundaries between organisational cognition and organisational culture. The respective literatures of the two fields overlap, and a number of scholars have mixed the two fields together, often under the umbrella of cognition. For example, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) "refer to an organisation's cognitive 'pillar' which entails the taken-for-granted beliefs and values that are imposed on, internalised by, social factors." The mix of concepts has raised great scholarly criticisms. As Suddaby (2010: 15) puts it, their famous "iron cage" paper was "quickly taken to stand for the erroneous idea that 'organisations are passive recipients of elements and pressures from their institutional environments'.

Mintzberg et al. (1998) elaborate the respective strengths and limitations of the cognitive and cultural schools in the strategic management literature. In general, the cognitive school views strategy formation as a mental process, while the cultural school understands it as a collective process. The two schools are both descriptive<sup>21</sup> in nature, which "have been concerned less with prescribing ideal strategic behaviour than with *describing* how strategies do, in fact, get made" (p.6). However, the first deals with "what took place in the minds of managers" (p.

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21 Mintzberg et al. (1998) review the 10 schools in the strategic management literature and divide them into three groups: the prescriptive group in which scholars are "more concerned with how strategy should be formulated than with how it necessarily does form"; the descriptive group which is "concerned less with prescribing ideal strategic behaviour than with describing how strategies do, in fact, get made"; and the configuration group which scholars, "in seeking to be integrative", "combine the others".

150), while the latter tries to explore a set of "taken for granted assumptions" in organisational behaviours, which are "protected by a web of cultural artefacts" (Johnson, 1992: 30). Managerial cognitions, including their "knowledge structure and thinking processes" (150), are individual rather than a collective process (173). Organisational culture is always associated with collective cognition (p. 263), represents "the soul" (246) of the organisation, and much of it "exists below the level of conscious awareness".

The two schools make different contributions to our understanding of "resistance to change" — a particular period in the strategy processes. The cognitive school suggests paying equal attention to the human mind and the human brain when we are attempting to understand strategy formation, which in turn gives a boost to the creative side of strategy making. On the other hand, the cultural school attributes "the inertia of established culture" to the resistance to change, which in turn can discourage necessary change (261). In other words, the cultural school shows "a restricted view of strategic choice" (297), since an organisational culture has been perceived as lacking awareness, hard to build in the first place, and even more difficult to reconstruct later, let alone to destroy.

Following the line of the cognitive school, this study reads resistance to change as individual processes of thinking, which have great potential to be changed or boosted. The cognitive school, as precisely summarised by Mintzberg et al. (1998), "is characterised more by its potential than its contribution"(172). Although the question of how concepts form in a manager's mind has yet to be answered, the cognitive school has at least recognised the importance of the thinking itself and bringing it to the fore so we can understand the strategy.

Küng (2007: 147) calls on researchers to 'disentangle' the two areas of scholarship in order to fully analyze the factors underlying a strategic change. Following the line of Mintzberg *et al.* (1998)'s seminal work, Küng further clarifies the similarities and differences between the two fields. The two areas of scholarship share a base premise, that is, organisational behaviour is driven by sets of governing beliefs. However, they are different in terms of the nature of beliefs, research accessibility, focus, and the possibility of being changed. With respect to the

cognitive perspective, the beliefs can be individual or shared, thus they are "mutable" in nature. Cognitions can be accessed and changed relatively easily as they "work at and immediately below surface level" (147). The focus of cognitions is "predominantly external", dealing with organisational inputs from the environment. With respect to the cultural perspective, the beliefs are always collective, and develop from many different types of social groupings (i.e. national, societal, and industrial), thus they are "intractable" in nature. They are difficult to access and people are always unaware of their existence. In the words of Mintzberg et al. (1998: 265), "culture eludes conscious awareness". The focus of cultural assumptions is "predominantly internal", dealing with "the way we do things around here".

By extension, in this study, organisational culture is not the research focus. The data collected in the field are about the content of cognitions, i.e. perceptions, emotions and resistance towards a strategic change, and the processes by which they develop — the sensemaking and sensegiving processes in the strategy process. They are individual cognitions, sometimes shared and/or in conflict. They "work at and immediately below surface level" and are accessed in a relatively easy way but are "mutable" in nature. In the following case studies, the interviews with the people involved in strategic change revolve around the focus of cognitive phenomenon — "how we (managers and journalists) deal with the environment".

### **3.3.5 Limitations in the epistemology of management cognitions**

Every perspective of understanding strategic change has its limitations, and management cognitions are no exception. At the end of their review of the massive literature on strategic management, especially the cognitive school, Mintzberg et al. (1998: 172) remark:

As noted at the outset, this school is characterised more by its potential than by its contribution. The central idea is valid — that the strategy-formation process is also fundamentally one of cognition, particularly in the attainment of strategies as concepts. But strategic management, in practice if not in theory, has yet to gain sufficiently from cognitive psychology. Or, perhaps more accurately, cognitive psychology has yet to

address adequately the questions of prime interest to strategic management, especially how concepts form in the mind of a strategist.

I have at least three reflections on the cognitive school's shortcomings identified by Mintzberg et al. (1998). First, the limitations of appropriating cognitive psychology in organisational and management studies are reflected in the scholarly ignorance over the conditions and processes in which managerial cognitions develop. When drawing on the cognitive psychology, it is easy to claim that bad decisions, poor strategic performance and inaction result from people's mindsets, including the limitations of people's conscious perceptions of the organisational environment, also known as the bounded rationality, and the ineffability of people's subconscious activities, i.e. tacit knowledge, memories and emotions. However, as an applied science, the prime interest of strategic management is to suggest pragmatic solutions to managers who are struggling with organising and strategising. In other words, what managers at work want most from researchers is to be informed of ways to unpack the cognitive dimensions of organising and strategising in order to boost strategic performance. However, the how-questions about managerial cognition and the process by which they develop, also known as sensemaking, are yet to be fully explored.

Second, the study on managerial cognition is insufficient to account for change. This is similar to the cognitivists' claim that the study of behaviour is insufficient to account for change. Organisational change, as a perennial focus of organisational and management studies, happens in at least three spheres: people's behaviours, minds and discourses. Tsoukas (2005) astutely summarises that there are at least three ways to make sense of organisational change and its management: the behaviourist, the cognitivist, and the discursive. When summarizing the basic tenets of the cognitivist view, Tsoukas (2005: 97) puts it in this way:

Cognitivists move beyond behaviourists in arguing that the study of behaviour is insufficient to account for change. While we may observe people behaving differently over time, the important question is why. This question cannot be answered unless we make sense of how people make sense. What is missing therefore, is the study of the mental processes underlying what people could be observed to do, the way they represent the world.

Differently from behaviourists who view change as being "modelled on motion" and thus "episodic" (96) and treat managers as black boxes, cognitivists delve into the black-boxes — the individuals' minds — and see the working of the black-boxes. However, the discrepancy among people's behaviours, minds and discourses in reality encourages researchers to link the cognitive perspective with other perspectives, such as the practice and process perspectives, as well as the discursive perspective. The congruity of the three perspectives is derived from a common research focus: the exact people who are organising and strategising under a researcher's observation, and whose behaviour is "active and intentional" (97).

Third, the strengths of the cognitive management studies, especially the one derived from the subjectivist wing, cannot be undervalued. Following Tsoukas's categorisation of the perspectives of organisational change and its management, both wings have answered the *why-questions* about poor and strange strategic behaviour, including the "strategic lethargy" of overwhelmed managers who simply give up trying to develop strategy. The *how-questions* have hardly been answered, such as how the mind distorts, but is sometimes able to make remarkable, creative progress out of the complexities. However, differently from the objectivist wing which attributes the mind's distortion to the "bounded rationality", the subjectivist wing at least "has recognised them, bringing front and centre phenomena that may help in these explanations". The subjectivist wing, which views organising as an enactment, has given a boost to the creative side of strategy making, which is indwelling in people's minds.

To sum up, in this section, I examined the position of the sensemaking perspective in the managerial cognition theories, strategic management and organisational change studies. To do so, I discussed the overlapping research topics of sensemaking studies and other research streams in the organisational and management field, including cognition biases, tacit knowledge, emotions and culture. Based on this discussion, I am able to identify the strengths and limitations of the sensemaking perspective in contributing to our understanding of organisational change.

I therefore call for drawing a distinction between cognitions and the processes by which they develop, also known as sensemaking. This provides the theoretical framework to structure my data analysis. In detail, focusing on the content of cognitions, Chapter 6 examines the why-questions about poor and strange strategic behaviour observed in the three cases. Chapters 7, 8, 9, divided on a case-by-case basis, focus on the processes by which the cognitions develop, as well as the processes of organising and strategising, which are closely interlinked with managerial cognitions and their evolving processes.

### **3.4 Keywords of writing, putting before data analysis**

There is a selection of words to highlight before I put forward my 'specified' research questions by applying the sensemaking perspective, and start data analysis. These keywords include: a batch of gerunds viewing organisations as processes rather than states, ambiguity, patterns, mutual interdependence and sequential interdependence, as well as retrospect. They are crucial for my understanding of the sensemaking perspective, and in particular, to my shaping of an analytical framework that informs my analysis of strategic change as enactment.

#### **3.4.1 Gerunds: organising, managing and doing a strategy**

The use of gerunds in my data analysis is in tune with Weick's (1969: 44) call for organisational researchers to "become stingy in their use of nouns, generous in their use of verbs, and extravagant in their use of gerunds". For Weick, organisation is the dynamic process which evolves everyday along with the day-to-day interactions of its members. Thus, structure is "nothing more than a frozen moment in the life of the organisation" (Nijhof and Jeurissen, 2006: 317), and the gerunds such as 'organising' and 'strategising' permeate Weick's writings.

The verb form suggests that the sensemaking perspective views organisational phenomena as processes rather than states, i.e. organising rather than organisations, strategising rather than strategy, managing rather than management. It is not only sensemaking scholars who prefer

gerunds to nouns, the verb form is widely used among scholars who advocate the practice perspective on strategising and organising (Whittington, 2003: 117). According to Garud and Van de Ven (2002), "the verb form has helped establish processes of strategic decision-making and strategic change as central issues within strategy and organisational research".

### 3.4.2 Retrospect

Retrospect is a key sensemaking resource. When the sensemaking resources are mobilised, managers are able to "spot the significance of small, weak signals of danger implicit in the expected" (2012: 7), and "create order out of chaos" which is agreed as the first and fundamental task of managing (Chia, 2005: 1092). Sensemaking is retrospective in nature. This is a point clarified and highlighted<sup>22</sup> in Weick's (1995) third book about the sensemaking concept (Gioia and Mehra, 1996). In 2015, he reiterates the role of retrospect for managers in making sense of the chaos, and for researchers in making sense of the making sense of chaos. As he puts, "I think retrospect is a big deal and hindsight for me is less a bias than normal functioning" (2015: 91).

However, Weick's argument that sensemaking is retrospective in nature has aroused scholarly criticism. For example, Gioia and Mehra (1996) criticise that Weick inexplicably lays aside forward-looking sensemaking in the whole sensemaking processes. They note that Weick somehow shortchanges "the phenomenology of everyday experience by ignoring the possibility that sense sometimes also is made prospectively" (p.1229). In 2005, Weick, Kathleen and Sutcliffe (2005) took stock of the concept of sensemaking, and re-evaluated the position of the sensemaking concept in organisational theory. In the discussion about "sensemaking is retrospective", they restate that sensemaking is retrospective in nature (411-2). At the end of the discussion, Weick and Obstfeld (2005) conclude that sensemaking is a "mixture of retrospect and prospect" (413), and analyses of sensemaking provide "a balance between prospect in the form of anticipation and retrospect in the form of resilience" (419).

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<sup>22</sup> Gioia and Mehra (1996) review the three seminal books written by Karl Weick: *The Social Psychology of Organising* (first edition) in 1969, *The Social Psychology of Organising* (Second edition) in 1979, and *Sensemaking in Organisations* in 1995.

However, they did not differentiate between the retrospective and prospective elements as Gioia and Mehra criticised and suggested.

By extension, I agree with Gioia and Mehra's (1996) criticism that Weick somehow downplays the prospective elements of sensemaking in everyday organisational life. I take their suggestion for expanding the domain of sense making by including both retrospective and prospective elements (p.1230). With respect to this study, most of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews are retrospective — managers' and journalists' talks about what they thought, what they said, and what they did in a strategic change, in the past. However, there are some prospective elements in those accounts. The distinction and relationship between the retrospective and prospective elements of organisational sensemaking will be tested in the following case studies. In other words, I am going to find out whether the data I collected from newspaper organisations can show ways to solve "the lingering puzzles in separating prospect and retrospect" as Weick (cited in Gioia and Mehram, 1996: 1230) recognises. Also, in Chapter 4 Research Methods, I am going to explain how I draw upon Weick's retrospective definition of sensemaking and then turn the retrospective accounts into 'sensemaking stories'.

### **3.5 Pulling different research threads into the theoretical framework**

This whole chapter brings some widely varied literature to bear on a rather simple but important problem: How does what people think influence what people do? I first reviewed how strategic change has been studied through the sensemaking perspective, and then investigated how the same topic has been studied in other research streams, in order to assess the strengths and limitations of the sensemaking perspective. Compared with practice and process perspectives which examine people's daily practices and routines, the sensemaking perspective is involved with something insightful but "somewhat cryptic" (Gioia and Mehram, 1996: 1226) and "transient" (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005: 409). Given the retrospective nature of sensemaking, the accounts given by the exact people who become involved in a strategic change provide a window for tracing the invisible and transient matter that unfolds in people's minds.

Given the strengths and limitations of the sensemaking perspective, I therefore call for drawing a line between the study on the content of cognitions and that on the processes in which the cognitions develop, also known as the sensemaking, and incorporate sensemaking studies with other perspectives in organisational change study, including process and practice perspectives and the discursive perspective. The interaction between managerial and journalistic practices does not only happen in the day-to-day activities of managing news work. It is central but not restricted to the *managing* of newswork, and is not limited to it, because management is not only about the managing of newswork, and not all journalistic practice is directed to news production.

**Table 3.1: Dimensions of managing newswork during strategic change**

| Selected papers               | Short description of particular contribution   |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Organisational context</b> |  |
| Weick (1979)                  | The organisational environment is enacted.   |
| Smircich and Stubbart (1985)  | Our understanding of the organisational environment has moved from the objective, through the perceived, and now toward the enacted.   |
| Tidd (2001)                   | Uncertainty and complexity are the key environmental contingencies that influence organisational structure and management process for innovation.  |
| Killebrew (2005)              | Convergence has been a worldwide movement in media industry since the late 1990s and Killebrew is the first author to look at this issue through a managerial lens.  |
| Deuze (2007)                  | The problem of contemporary media work is management (p. x), and more critical research need to be conducted on the work of media managers and its impacts on day-to-day organising life.  |
| Küing (2008)                  | The strategic environment is “the emergent environment” (p. 13), and there is considerable scope for investigation into the processes and practices of strategy, into internal firm phenomena and dynamics and their relationship with broader performance outcomes.   |
| Singer (2008)                 | A major management challenge for newspapers has shifted from “overcoming cultural resistance” among journalists working at different platforms to handling “fluidity and flux” within and out of news organisations (p. 122).  |
| Picard and Lowe (2016)        | The media ecology <i>status quo</i> is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.  |
| <b>Organisational change</b>  |  |
| Pettigrew (1985)              | Organisational change researchers need to adopt a pluralist approach to study change and focus on the conditions and contexts under which the mixture of causes of change occur.   |
| Weick (1993)                  | To study organisational change which keeps changing, researchers need to explain how microstabilities are produced in the midst of continuing change. Weick proposes an examination of "a prototype of sensemaking in organisations", and demonstrates how the small structure of sensemaking may have huge consequences for "the body of work on behavioural commitment" (p. 10). |
| Weick (2000)                  | Given the fact that organisations are constantly evolving, change is more emergent than planned. “Emergent, continuous change forms the infrastructure that determines whether planner, episodic change will success or fail (p. 223).   |
| Pettigrew (2000)              | In order to underpin effective practice in change management, change researchers need to discard “established dichotomous concepts such as planned and emergent processes”,  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | and look at the bigger questions about “the relationship between change and organisational performance” (p. 244).   |
| Corley and Gioia (2004)   | A case study of organisational identity change revealed previously unreported aspects of organisational change, including organisation members’ collective experience of “change overload” and the presence of temporal identity discrepancies in the emergence of the identity ambiguity (p. 173).   |
| Hernes (2014)   | Organisational dynamic is endogenous per se.  |
| <b><i>Dual thinking in organisational theory and its application in understanding managerial challenges</i></b> |   |
| Pettigrew and Fenton (2010)   | Dualities have become the feature of contemporary organisational life and practice.   |
| Janssens and Steyaert (1999)  | Dichotomies, paradoxes, contradictions, and dualities...these various bipolar theories have slightly different meanings.  |
| Achtenhagen and Ravioli (2009)  | Media companies are an ideal research subject as “striking examples of companies inherently facing conflicting dual demands” (p. 32).   |
| Willis (1988)   | The newspaper industry is a business that has great social impact. It needs to address “the market ethic” and “the service ethic” at the same time, and “no polarity should exist between the two ethics” (p.2).  |
| <b><i>Players, factors and contexts that affect strategic change processes</i></b>                              |   |
| Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991)  | Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identified a range of sensegiving strategies to effect change, and stressed the reciprocal link between sensemaking and sensegiving and its significant impacts on organisational change.  |
| Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)  | Conversion from tacit to explicit knowledge is crucial for strategic performance, and middle managers "play a key role" in it. In this conversion, middle managers tend to use metaphors to make tacit knowledge explicit (p. 71).  |
| Tsoukas (2005)  | To examine tacit knowledge which is ineffable in nature, researchers need to "stop insisting on 'converting' tacit knowledge" and take note of "how we draw each other’s attention to things".  |
| Feldman (2000)  | Organisational routines is a source of continuous change. As he puts it, routines are "flows of connected ideas, actions, and outcomes. Ideas produce actions, actions produce outcomes, and outcomes produce new ideas. It is the relationship between these elements that generates change"(p.613). |
| Gilbert (2005)  | Organisational routines is defined as "repeated patterns of response involving interdependent activities that become reinforced through structural embeddedness and repeated use" (p. 742), and routine rigidity is one of the main causes of organisational inertia.                                 |

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Boczkowski (2004)            | New media emerge not just in a burst of revolutionary technological change but also by merging the structures and practices of existing media with newly available technical capabilities.   |
| Maitlis (2005)               | Our understanding of sensemaking and sensegiving is limited to senior managers, viewing them as the main source of creating meaning of, and giving sense or ascribing meaning to organisational events, so that others can make sense of them.                   |
| Maitlis and Lawrence (2007)  | Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) firstly identified "sets of conditions that trigger sensegiving" and "sets of conditions that enable sensegiving".   |
| Brundin and Nordqvist (2008) | Brundin and Nordqvist (2008) examined how emotion affects the discursive processes through which strategy is constructed.  |
| Rouleau and Balogun (2011)   | Rouleau and Balogun (2011) explored middle manager practices, especially those of strategic sensemaking, in an organisation in change situations.  |
| Liu and Maitlis (2014)       | Liu and Maitlis (2014) identify five different kinds of emotional dynamic, with each associated with a different type of strategising process.   |
| Balogun et. al (2015)        | Our view of the role played by senior managers in organisational change is overly simplistic, "ignoring the fact that in many organisations there are multiple senior teams, who are differentially affected by change, occupying differing change roles" (975). |

Table 2.1 pulls different research threads together and put them into four categories: 1) organisational context, 2) change, 3) managerial challenges, and 4) players, factors and contexts that affect strategic change processes. The literature in the table applied the process perspective to explore the various dimensions of the research topic — managing newswork during strategic change — and helped me build up the theoretical framework of this research. The categorisation is in line with the research design as an inductive, empirical inquiry of the interaction between management and journalism during strategic change. Literature in the first two parts throws light on the importance of the ontology and epistemology of the change study, and the literature in the last two parts demonstrates the strengths and limitations of applying the process perspective into empirical studies. In particular, these empirical researches evidenced the interconnectedness of what people think (managerial cognitions, emotions), what people say (sensemaking, sensegiving and metaphors) and what people do (balancing the dualities, confronting challenges, restructuring, routinising and accounting for identity at the organisational, meso level), and illustrated the conceptual results that the process perspective enables researchers to develop — patterns, mechanism and meanings.

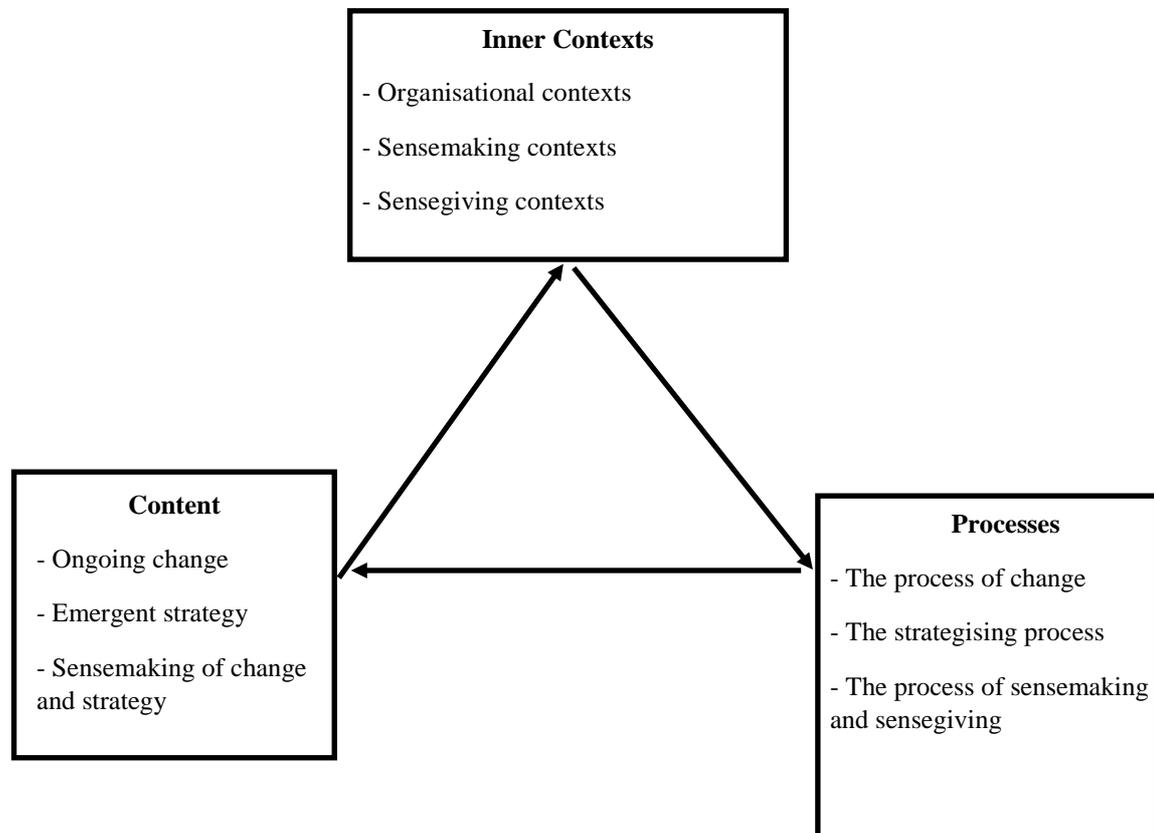
Table 2.1 is not a stocktaking of the related research studying strategic change as a complex social process. Some literature has been left out of the table, i.e. the practice perspective in understanding organisational change, the overlapping of the practice perspective with the process perspective as “two sides of the same coin”, and the literature studying newswork changes from the journalistic perspective. The reason for pulling the above-mentioned research threads together into the conceptual framework of this research is to take the call proposed by James D. Thompson, the founding editor of *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ) over 60 years ago. As Thompson (1956: 102) put it,

The unique contribution of science lies in its combination of deductive and inductive for the development of reliable knowledge. The methodological problems of the basic sciences are shared by the applied fields. Administrative science will demand a focus on relationships, the use of abstract concepts, and the development of operational definitions. ... Research must go beyond description and must be reflected against theory. It must study the obvious as well as the unknown. The pressure for immediately applicable results must be reduced.

At the ASQ's 40th anniversary, Weick (1996) cited James D. Thompson and argued that the proposal "foreshadows values that stand up well as a framework for renewal that both accepts mutation and creates analogy" (302-3). They both stressed that organisational studies should focus on relationships which are often assumed rather than demonstrated, and organisational researchers should move beyond concrete events and research organised around "ad hoc hypotheses" (Thompson, 1956: 106) and put more efforts in bridging concepts and raw experience. Developed on Thompson's proposal, Weick (1996) called for organisational researchers to "drop their heavy tools" as otherwise "they will be overrun". As Weick (1996) put it, "To drop one's tools is simultaneously to accept mutation and to modernise remembered values or to believe the past as well as doubt about it" (302). Taking the call, I dropped the network journalism literature and networked society theory (cf. Step 6: A Loop in My Confessional Story in Chapter 1), to avoid "expend(ing) too much effort compiling incidents that support rather than test particular points of view" (Weick, 1996: 303).

After putting the research threads into the four categories, some issues related to the application of the process perspective into empirical studies come to the surface. Views on routines and the related impacts on change are contradictory. For example, Feldman (2000) argues for routines as a source of change while Gilbert (2005) contends that resource and routine rigidity are the main cause of organisational inertia. Sensemaking and sensegiving have drawn increasing scholarly attention, but the contexts and situations in which strategic sensemaking and sensegiving lead to good strategic performance are not specific. In other words, how strategic sensemaking and sensegiving have developed positive effects on strategic performance needs to be further explored. Moreover, there are some overlaps between organisational studies and journalism studies in terms of dualities, time and workspace and their impacts on (managerial and journalistic) practices, but how to incorporate the two fields of knowledge to answer the question is still challenging and needs to be explored in my case studies.

*Figure 3.1: A theoretical framework for understanding different dimensions of managing newswork during strategic change*



The process of pulling the above-mentioned literature together revealed the “double hurdles of scholarly quality and relevance” (Pettigrew 1997; 2000) for organisational change researchers. As Pettigrew (2000) sharply describes it, “we need to address the power of ‘ands’ — not only in recognising and managing dualities present as organisations seek simultaneously to build hierarchies and networks, but also as we tackle the double hurdles of scholarly quality and relevance” (262). Specific to this research, the research topic — managing newswork during strategic change — is a complex, multi-dimensional social phenomenon out there to be studied. On the one hand, I need to address the research question about interaction by capturing the what of change and clarifying the why and how of changing in newspaper organisations. On the other hand, I need to test the theory of change, which is of massive amount and complexity and thus difficult to find common ground, in the practice of change.

Figure 3.1 visualises the discussion so far by depicting the theoretical framework applied in the research. It is based on Pettigrew's (1983, 2003: 311) theoretical framework, as shown in Figure 2.1, for studying organisational change, and incorporates ideas from a group of process researchers on the role of contexts and structures, sensemaking and sensegiving, as well as the processes of accounting for identity, structuring and routinising in strategic change process. The selected concepts, lens and empirical studies are separate but influential threads in studying organisational change as complex, dynamic and interrelated processes rather than a static state of mixture. According to Pettigrew (2000), the double hurdle for management research "means moving the agenda on from studies of change processes and beginning to master questions about relationship between change processes and change outcomes" (262). Given the reality that management of performance is at the centre of organisational life, the application of the sensemaking perspective into the three case studies focuses on the relationship between strategic sensemaking and strategic performance, namely in which context, situation and way strategic sensemaking drives a newspaper organisation towards change or impedes it. This is also why the sensemaking perspective is incorporated into the three boxes in the theoretical framework shown in Figure 3.1, instead of standing out as a separate dimension of managing newswork during strategic change.

As shown in Figure 3.1, the framework, answering the research call from Pettigrew (1985), adopts a multi-dimensional approach to study change and focuses on the conditions and contexts under which the mixture of the causes of change occurs. It excludes the outer context factors in Pettigrew's framework, but focuses on the inner context only. In particular, with respect to context, it examines the organisational, sensemaking and sensegiving contexts. Following the same line, with respect to content, the content about ongoing change and emergent strategy, and the content (of change and strategy) made sense of by managers and journalists in the field will be studied. The processes specifically refer to the process of change, the strategising process and the process of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving.

The reasoning for the exclusion of the outer contexts is threefold. First, given the unit of analysis of this research — people's accounts of change and strategy, the outer contexts of organisational change, which include social, economic, political and competitive factors, do not usually have a direct impact on individual accounts of ongoing changes at the

organisational level. Instead, the inner contexts, which include the organisational, sensemaking and sensegiving contexts, are more relevant, accessible, and visible for organisational change researchers who are unable to conduct longitudinal fieldwork research and investigate the implicit links between individual accounts and the above-mentioned external factors. Second, this research studies three very different cases, making external contexts at the macro level out of the focus of the research. In other words, the research focus is not on the differences of the three newspapers in which external contexts are apparently different. It aims to draw some overall conclusion about management of digital strategy. This becomes the tension of this thesis: external contexts allow me to see how things happen in different places and contexts, but through these differences, I can also see the same challenges facing managers and journalists at the researched cases. The similarities is the focus of this research and they put the thesis together. The cases are very different, but the difference itself is a strength in terms of tightening the plot of the thesis. Third, the exclusion of the outer contexts from the theoretical framework does not mean to ignore the importance of the external factors to strategic change processes. In Chapter 5, external contexts which are related to the strategic change unfolding in the researched newspapers are further discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks reviewed so far, an interpretive summary is offered here to the reader showing the complexities of the interaction between management and journalism in newspaper organisations in a strategic process.

- A dynamic strategic change is endogenous per se (Hernes, 2014), and this research focuses on people — those who actually engage in a strategic change in a newspaper organisation. This focus is in line with the practice turn in social sciences (Cetina, Schatzki and Savigny, 2001), and examines the tacit, idiosyncratic, mundane practices — including what people think, what people say and what people do — with a dynamic, process-oriented perspective. In other words, it aims to not only provide a thick, multi-dimensional description about how things work in strategic change processes, but also investigate the underlying patterns, mechanisms and meanings that could explain the strategic change in the making.
- The interaction between management and journalism occurs in newspaper organisations. However, two long lasting debates in organisational and management

field complicate the empirical inquiry of the organisational issue. Is change planned or emergent? Are newspaper organisations – the place where this research on strategic change was conducted and the interaction between management and journalism during strategic change occurred— objective, prescribed or enacted for an elaboration of the academic debates and an explanation of my stance over the debates)? Different ontology and epistemology over change and its organising environment may lead to different directions of understanding change and the relationship between management and journalism during strategic change.

- Research on managing newswork change needs to be aware of the specificities of newspaper newswork that are different from other businesses. Previous studies have identified three specificities of newspaper newswork: a business that has great social impact, an organisation that controls newswork via dual systems – hierarchical and professional, and a profession where its people are obsessed with time, sequence and timing (cf. Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3). A few studies have examined the specialities of newswork from the management perspective — namely the impacts of doing newswork on managing newswork, and vice versa (cf. Section 2.3). Specifically, how the journalists’ conceptualisation and enactment of newswork influence the ways in which managers understand and enact strategic change (on newswork) is under-explored in the previous studies.
- The contemporary newspaper crisis has been a popular topic in media management study. As a young interdisciplinary field, media management has been traditionally aligned with media economics, and a majority of media management literature on the newspaper crisis have explored the business side of the issue, i.e. how to find a new business model for newspaper companies to adapt to the changing market and audience. Little is known about the journalistic side of the issue, i.e. how to manage newswork change in an effective and efficient way to fulfil the dual goals of newspaper companies.
- The process perspective examines organisations as processes “in the making” not as “things made” (Hernes, 2007) and focuses on “the dynamic constitution organisational and management phenomena” (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010: 19). Specific to this research, the selected process-oriented studies, including the sensemaking and sensegiving perspectives, the dualistic perspective, structuring and

routinising are compatible in terms of the research emphasis on the people who actually engage in organisational activities, the research focus on the dynamic constitution of change and strategy in the making and the role of organisational context in the development of such dynamic, and the methodological approach to the narratives given by organisational members at work.

Some issues can be raised regarding the previous statements. First, given the patchwork nature of media management literature and the loose structure of the process perspective, the commensurability of different theories, lens and approaches applied in the theoretical framework needs to be reconsidered and tested in the empirical case studies, by justifying how useful they are in terms of answering the main research question, that is, the interaction between management and journalism during strategic change. The commensurability issue of theory building will be further discussed in the final sections of Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Second, with respect to representing the uncertainty and complexity of the enacted reality — newspaper organisations and organising, narrative analysis is selected as the main approach for data analysis, and the reasons for this methodological choice will be explained in Chapter 4 Research Methods.

### **3.6 Research questions**

The purpose of this research is to study the interactions between management and journalism at a time of uncertainty and complexity in newspaper organisations. Accordingly, I suggest the following main research question to guide this study: *How do newspaper managers deal with newswork changes in the processes of a strategic change?*

The interaction between managers and journalists when a strategic change is emergent in a newspaper organisation is not as straightforward as it may appear. Researchers exploring the relationship between managers and grassroots employees in the strategic process have found that the interactions occur at different dimensions of organisational life, and strategic sensemaking and sensegiving have been an ignored but distinctive aspect. However, their impacts on strategic performance have not been conclusive so far. Taking into consideration the current emphasis on the practice, process and context of a strategic change and the people

who actually engage in the change as a key to understand organisational change and strategic process, investigating how managers interact with journalists from different aspects — what people think, what people say, and what people do — in daily organisational life at the micro level and their impacts on *managing change* at the meso/organisational level — namely the balancing of tensions and conflicts, restructuring and routinising, and (re)drawing boundaries — seems useful and necessary from a theoretical perspective, as well as for the possible consequences for management practices.

Therefore, in order to carry out a more detailed analysis, I propose three ‘specified’ research questions that will help to elaborate the main research question further. In particular, drawing from the preliminary findings on *what people think* about change and strategy in Chapter 6, the three complementary questions specify the sensemaking issues confronting each researched newspaper organisation, namely blurred identity in Chapter 7, inertial structures in Chapter 8, and emergent routines in Chapter 9. The assumptions of identity, inertia and routines are argued as the triggers, enablers and hurdles of sensemaking and sensegiving in the newspaper organisations, and have impacts on strategic performance. The three questions look at the dimensions of managing change and strategic process, and the fit among strategic sensemaking and strategic performance. They add more depth to the analysis, and bring together the organisational and micro levels of analysis to advance our understanding of change as emergent and strategy in the making. The three ‘specified’ questions are:

1. *How did the managers with a ‘strategic’ **identity** — the key players in the strategic planning in the Swedish newspaper — make sense of the emergent strategy and their own strategic practices, and give sense to other employees?*
2. *How did managers and journalists in the Chinese case respond to the **inertial structure** — the biggest hurdle for implementing the strategy in their own words? In which contexts did their assumptions of organisational inertia enable or impede their strategising activities?*
3. *What is the role of mundane organisational and professional **routines** in the processes of a strategic change in the New Zealand newspaper? How do managerial and journalistic practices impact the emergence and development of organisational and professional routines, and vice versa?*

The first question challenges the assumptions of strategic change and the primary role of strategic managers. The second question examines the interdependence between the strategic sensemaking of organisational inertia and strategic performance. The third question focuses on the relationships between strategic practice and routines. The research focus on what people think, what people say and what people do about change and their impacts on organising issues has led me to rely on ethnography as “the vital need”, to use Watson’s (2011) words, to learn, represent and understand organisational life. The following chapter will provide an explanation of the research approach adopted in this study — namely ethnography as the main research approach and the actual methods for data collection and data analysis — and the scientific considerations underpinning this to answer the research questions.

# Part III: A Methods Toolbox

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Part III presents the methodological choices and research design of this study. As discussed in the previous chapters, the newspaper industry at this very moment is full of uncertainties and complexities. To better understand the complexity of change in newspaper organisations, I carefully select research methods which are much more inductive-oriented rather than deductive-oriented and make a research toolbox which consists of ethnography, qualitative interviews, and observations for data collection; memoing, coding, and narrative analysis for data analysis.

Ethnographic research at the selected newspaper organisations helped me collect empirical data about changes in management and journalism. The toolbox approach enabled me to depict the contexts and processes of the interaction between management and journalism. The multiple case study provided a good chance to look at the topic from different geographical contexts, dimensions, (epistemological) perspectives and levels of analysis.

## Chapter 4 Research Methods

*If the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat everything like a nail.*

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

Given the complexity of change as an organisational phenomenon, I adopt a methods toolbox to address the main research question set forth in Chapter 1 and the three complementary questions specified in Chapter 3. The aim of this chapter is twofold: to make explicit my rationale for choosing the multiple cases and the consequent methodological choices, and to allow me to reflect on the strengths and challenges of applying the process perspective in an organisational ethnography.

There are two different ways to study any topic in social sciences: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach works from the more general to the more specific. Researchers adopting a deductive approach learn about a variety of theories in the field concerning their topic of interest first, and then narrow them down into one or two ‘right’ or most appropriate hypotheses, and test them in a specific case. Differently from the deductive approach which is informally called a “top-down” approach, the inductive approach works from the bottom up. Researchers in this camp begin with specific observations and problem discovery, and then search for the appropriate theories to solve the problems.

The overarching philosophy of this research is inductive — find and examine questions *in the field* without pre-determined assumptions. The Hammer-and-Nail analogy made by Abraham Maslow can make this philosophy clear. In the book *The Psychology of Science* (1966), American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) said that: “If the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat everything like a nail” (15).

This research draws on a three-month ethnography at multiple newspaper organisations, with a focus on managerial and journalistic practice about doing digital strategies. A total of 47

managers and journalists were interviewed and asked to account for the change and strategy in the selected newspaper organisations. Data was also gathered using observations in the selected newsrooms. The unit of analysis was the account, which typically contained both descriptive and explanatory material. Managers and journalists were invited to narrate stories and special moments with particular reference to strategy and change. The use of biographic methods (e.g. semi-structured interviews, informal chats and bounding) encouraged the interviewees to bring together practice, interpretation, self-identifying, and self-evaluation that are part of strategic activities when telling their work life stories. The use of informal chats allowed the researcher to know more about the interviewee's attitudes, interpretations of and responses towards change and strategy in the selected newspaper organisations. Applying techniques established in grounded theory, especially memoing and coding, data have been coded into four main categories in order to clarify managerial challenges that newspaper practitioners are confronting, elaborate the changing identities of managers and journalists, and raise awareness of the uncertainty and complexity of professional and managerial practices in news organisations.

The goal of this chapter is threefold: present the process-oriented ethnographic methods that are applied in the research, specify the rationale behind it, and identify some of its choices and challenges for understanding organisational change at a time of uncertainty and complexity. To put it into a nutshell, this research is informed by and contributes to sophisticated process perspective in organisations and management studies. It focuses on newspaper organisations, specifically about how newswork are managed, maintained and/or change dynamically, in order to refine an epistemology of process for organisations and management studies, and vice versa. In other words, the more I know about newswork, journalistic changes and the way they are managed in newspaper organisations, the more I would like to know about how newswork and journalistic changes are constituted, maintained, and change over time. Interactions between management and journalism in news organisations happen in dynamic non-linear processes. The process perspective, no matter applied in journalistic studies, organisations and management arena / social sciences, views the interaction existing in the process of becoming, not as "things made" but as processes "in the making" (Hernes, 2007). Therefore, the chapter contains four sections: research rationale, ethnography, multiple case studies, specific methods for generating empirical material.

## 4.1 Research Rationale

The tools of analysis and the process perspective cannot be discussed separately from the study's rationale and research agenda. Magolda (2002: 2) cites Wolcott's (1995) point that "fieldwork techniques cannot be distilled or described independently from the questions guiding the research". As mentioned in Chapter 2, my research agenda was threefold: explore the strategic change in newspaper organisations, examine the interaction between managers and journalists when the strategic change is unfolded, even contested and scrutinise the diverse ways professionals at different levels of a newspaper organisation make sense of and respond to the change.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the research of media management is multi-disciplinary but often lacks a theoretical framework and sound research design. The newspaper industry at this moment is full of uncertainties and complexities. To avoid becoming narrowed by theoretical concerns, I use the inductive approach — to conduct ethnography at three newspaper organisations, find out the problems, and then search for applicable theories to answer the questions that come to light during and after the fieldwork. The whole study is ethnographic and draws on a toolbox as follows: interviews, observations and archival research for data collection; memoing, coding and narrative analysis for data analysis. As it is comparatively more exploratory and open-ended, the inductive approach fits well in answering the general research question without preconceived answers.

There are three main implications of applying the inductive approach in this research. Firstly, the inductive philosophy means the research is more exploratory and open-ended. It didn't decide a theory first and test it later. This way of thinking helps to break out of my familiar, rutted paths of thinking and more likely leads to a breakthrough idea. Secondly, the inductive logic favour drawing on a range of research methods as they become appropriate in exploration of the topic. Specifically, during the fieldwork research, I attended presentations given by CEOs and senior managers of the studied newspaper organisation<sup>23</sup>. From the

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<sup>23</sup> The CEO of the Jönköpings-Posten gave a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2014 EMMA Summer School (European Media Management Association). The Executive Editor-in-Chief of China Daily

presentations, I learned the then-to-date information related to my research, such as the organisation's development, emergent strategies and managerial concerns. After the public presentations, I was able to ask some follow-up questions of the senior managers. After the interviews with managers, editors and journalists during the fieldwork, I kept in consistent contact and had informal conversations with the interviewees. Besides, I did archival research looking at trade publications and monitoring the changes related to management that are shown on the selected newspaper websites on a regular basis. Thirdly, as the field (the newsroom) is where questions emerge and also where solutions occur and are examined, the inductive logic means the selected methods are newsroom-based and multi-levelled.

Langley (1999) compared different analysis strategies adopted by organisational scholars when coupling theory and process data. Langley evaluated the capacities of the strategies in generating theory which is accurate, parsimonious, general and useful. After stressing the intertwined nature of method and theory, he advised future researchers to adopt multiple strategies and codify process data to produce theory. With regard to qualitative research, he identified that it is common for researchers to cycle between theory and data.

This research examined some snapshots of management in newspaper newsrooms, with particular interest in organisational strategies and journalistic changes. One focus of this research is newsroom strategies. It was learned from the fieldwork that all of the three selected newspaper organisations have adopted a digital strategy. The digital strategy is an emergent strategy, as it has been adjusted, changed, and developed all along its inception. The other research focus on journalistic changes is also a developing phenomenon. Along with the proliferation of the Internet and technologies in the newspaper industry, how journalists select, produce and distribute news has changed constantly. In this always-changing process, convergence, new media, online journalism, mobile journalism and related terms have popped up as buzzwords and emerging trends in the industry. Media regulators, managers and practitioners cited these buzzwords regularly, as they sought to keep up with the speed of changes and trends in the industry. However, these buzzwords are cited and sometimes put into action in a superficial way,

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gave a speech at the China's Media Going Global International Conference at Tsinghua University, in Beijing China on September 3, 2014. The Executive CEO of Fairfax NZ and News Executive of *The Press* gave speeches at the 2014 JEANZ Conference in Christchurch, New Zealand (Journalism Education Association of New Zealand).

without justifying their meanings, objectives and implications for journalism. Both the emergent strategies and the constant changes in newspaper newsrooms have made this research difficult.

Jelinek, Smircich, and Hirsch (1983), editors of the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly* proposed in 1983 that for organisational studies, we need “an interpretive framework more like a rainbow—a ‘code of many colors’ that tolerates alternative assumptions” (p. 331). They described the evolving process of organisational analysis: from simple imperatives (‘do this, avoid that’), through more complicated analysis (‘there are criteria for analysing’), towards “more complex, paradoxical, and even contradictory modes of understanding” (p. 331). They argued that, by the “code of many colors”, researchers are able to explain what they see as a flow of particles and gain some insights, or as a wave to gain others.

## **4.2 Ethnography: an empirical enquiry**

As mentioned in Chapter 1 Introduction, ethnography in newspaper organisations is the main method of this research to examine the interaction between management and journalism. Ethnography is one of the established methods used to study journalism (e.g. Fishman, 1980), news organisations (Tuchman, 1991), organisational change (e.g. Pettigrew, 1985; Langley, 1999) and sensemaking (e.g. Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Gioia et al, 1994). However, there is a lack of consensus over what constitutes a 'true' or the 'best' ethnography (Smith 2011), and its strength in examining organisational issues has been criticised (Gioia et al, 1994: 368).

Despite its popularity in journalism and organisational studies, ethnography is not clearly defined. According to Schwartzman (1993: 3), ethnography is “to learn about a culture from the inside out”. It is the only method which can record and make ‘behind-the-scenes’ news production visible (Cottle, 2007: 5). Paterson (2008: 9) contended the key attribute of ethnographic research as “direct and profound contact with the news workers, in most instances, their working environment and culture”.

Ethnography is an encompassing approach (Walsh, 1998) or a set of methods involving the fieldworkers "participating overtly or covertly<sup>24</sup> in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1). The data that ethnographers collect and draw upon is not just "observational, interview, experiential", but also "intermittent, partial and disrupted" (Smith 2011). With respect to this research, the ethnographic data drawn upon are direct observation, formal and informal interviews, as well as archival research. They will be discussed further below in Section 4.4 Generating Empirical Data.

The strengths and limitations of ethnography have been a long-term topic of debate in the fields of journalism and organisations studies. Compared with other methods of news production analysis such as surveys and content analysis, ethnographic research has an unparalleled strength in helping researchers gain "basic information about the working ideologies and practices of cultural producers" (Schlesinger, 1980: 169; 363). It can "reveal the constraints, contingencies and complexities 'at work' and, in so doing, provide the means for a more adequate theorisation of the operations of the news media and the production of the discourses 'at play' within news media representations" (Cottle, 2007: 2).

Therefore, in this section, I am going to outline key ethnographic works in organisational, management and journalism studies, with a focus on organisational and strategic change, newspaper organisations, and managing newswork. The listed research comprises the key works I drew upon this research. Then, I am going to account for applying ethnography as the main methodological and analytical approach to not just provide "a thick description" (Geertz 1973) of the research focus — the interaction between management and journalism field, but also to explain (Smith 2011; Watson, 2011, Jarzabkowski et al., 2014) the becoming of such interaction.

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<sup>24</sup> Only a small number of ethnographers have observed and investigated the field in an autonomous and covert way (Smith 2011). Most ethnographers have to get the permission from their researched organisations first and then conduct their fieldwork overtly.

#### **4.2.1 Related ethnographic research in newspaper organisations**

Ethnography in organisations is hardly new. After reviewing previous ethnographic studies in organisational and management field, Schwartzman (1993) concludes that ethnographers have had two forays in organisational studies. The first foray of ethnographers in organisations was the Hawthorne Studies in the 1920s and 1930s. The Hawthorne study, in which anthropologists played an important but now largely forgotten role, legitimated the organisational behaviour research field. The second foray of ethnographers into organisational studies started since early 1990s. These ethnographers have examined public bureaucracies and studied the culture of corporations and occupations.

Media scholars have applied ethnography in news production for half a century, identifying traditional newsroom routines, professional values, and changing journalistic practices at the micro level (Paterson and Domingo, 2008). However, along with the proliferation of the Internet technology in newsrooms, scholars have found that this research tradition has serious limitations for the analysis of online journalism and other innovation activities of media. Most newsroom ethnographic research lack historical perspective and overlook processes of change in news production routines (Schudson, 2000: 194), sparking a new wave of ethnographic work in the 2000s.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, some scholars (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009; Kateřina et al., 2014) criticise the “newsroom-centricity” of news production ethnography tradition. For them, the research focus on newsroom no longer enables researchers to better understand the news production processes and cultures, as the material boundaries of journalistic labour have disappeared and “liquid media” are the order of the day (Deuze, 2007). Contrary to their argument, newsroom has been the main venue for conducting this research and there are three main reasons for the choice. First, given the dual goals of newspaper organisations (i.e. Willis 1988) and the two mechanisms of controlling newswork (i.e. Soloski, 1989), newsroom is the main source of the first-hand empirical data about what people do. Second, with respect to the process perspectives applied in this research, ethnography in newsroom is so far the best approach to learn the practice (i.e. Whittington 2003), process (i.e. Hernes and Maitlis, 2010)

and context (i.e. Pettigrew, 1985) of a strategic change and the people who actually engage in the change. Third, as discussed in Chapter 3, there is a debate in organisational and management studies about whether organisational environments are objective, perceived or both, and the sensemaking researchers view that organisational environments are enacted. Following the same line, instead of prescribing that organisations should adapt to their environments, investigating challenges, tensions and opportunities in real time is necessary to understand the enacted world, thus newsroom ethnography is necessary.

Ethnographic research into news production has some potential methodological blind spots, according to Cottle (2007), and the ignorance of internal managerial pressures on journalists and journalistic practices is one of them. This is, perhaps, because of the more difficult access to news managers. As Curran (1989: 132) criticises: “It is difficult to gain regular access as a participant observer to senior levels of management” and “managerial controls rarely exercised with continuous force”. Ethnographic theorists (Cottle, 2000: 33; Boczkowski, 2004: 147) propose a strategy to overcome these limitations: when conducting online journalism research, scholars need to focus on technology and ask how online newsrooms adopt technological innovations. In other words, they analyse online journalism as “a developing phenomenon”, putting historical, social, political and cultural factors into consideration.

Simon Cottle and Chris Paterson have reviewed the ethnographic research in newsrooms. Cottle (2007) overviews studies of news production and related professional practices since the 1950s. Reflecting on the studies and their findings, Cottle points out that, “ethnographic studies of news production provide invaluable insights into the nature and determinants of news production and a necessary corrective, therefore, to grand speculative claims and theories about the news media” (Cottle, 2007: 1). Cottle (2007) divides the studies of news production and related professional practices into two groups in different times: the formative ethnography started in the 1950s, and the substantive ethnography across the 1970s to 1980s. Early ethnographers of the newsroom learned that attending/participating in professional practices and news production was a new domain of study to gain knowledge and insights about news and news media. The latter ethnographers, who spend extensive and intensive

periods in newsroom observations and interviews, became “fully conversant with news-making process” (3) and gained invaluable insights into the standardised and ideological nature of news. Formative ethnographers on news production tended to explain news selection by individualist and subjective accounts (White 1950, cited in Cottle 2007: 3), while substantive ethnographers collectively contended that “news, in fact, was an organisational accomplishment” (Rock 1981, cited in Cottle 2007: 3). In other words, these studies collectively substantiated that news production and news manufacture were accounted for by organisational, bureaucratic and professional needs.

Among the early formative ethnographic studies into newsrooms, two works, *Journalists at Work: Specialists Correspondents, Their News Organisations, News Sources and Competitor-Colleagues* by Jeremy Tunstall (1971) and *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* by Gaye Tuchman (1978), have provided me with great inspiration. They have encouraged me to follow their steps to the newsroom and to the other side of the wall—to the management room. They considered news and news production as an institutionalised process, studying journalistic practice in the organisational context. However, there is a missing part in news production ethnography, that is, the analysis of news production at the organisational, meso level. This study seeks to fill that void, as it explores the organisational factors that shape news and news production, and examines the relationship between newspaper management and news production.

#### **4.2.2 Why use ethnographic research as the main methodological approach?**

Quantitative researchers have stopped interpreting their results and justifying their methods; they simply use methods common in their field and assume that numerical results speak for themselves. Unfortunately, the numbers do not speak for themselves, and they never did.

— Czarniawska 2014: ix

The reason for choosing ethnography as the main approach is to address the research question in an appropriate, grounded way. As Tuchman (1991) puts it, "the method one should choose when approaching any topic, including news, depends upon the question one wants to

answer" (79). Given the general research question about how to manage changing journalistic practices in newspaper organisations, the focus of this study is *the interaction between management and journalism* in newspaper organisations. The interaction, no matter to what degree, mainly happens within newspaper organisations, and can be partly reflected in managers' and journalists' daily conversations and practices. However, like any other research method, ethnography sometimes turns out to have gaps and limitations that could not have been anticipated, and researchers may even need to refine their research questions. For instance, ethnographers may assert "truth claims" generated from their full immersion in the field, while ignoring the fact that the truth claims are based on their "personalized seeing, hearing, and experiencing in specific social settings" (Van Maanen, 2011: 222). With respect to this research, the unanticipated challenges and limitations in conducting ethnography to investigate the management-journalism interaction will be elaborated in Sections 4.4 and 4.5.

### **4.3 Case study**

Case study as a research method is often used to answer questions like 'how' or 'why' instead of 'what' (Yin 2014). Yin (2014: 16) defines case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context”. The multiple case study approach taken here focuses on different dimensions of the digital change in newspaper organisations, with the aim of giving a more holistic account to managing emergent changes in newspaper organisations. Therefore the following chapters about data analysis are structured as explorations of each case.

To explore the link between journalistic changes and management in newspaper organisations undergoing massive configuration, I conducted a comparative study on three dailies in Sweden, China and New Zealand. The three newspaper organisations have so many differences in terms of national geography, media policy, political economy, people and culture. Despite these differences, the selected dailies are similarly exploring the ways to go digital and share a number of features, particularly their separate development of a hybrid model consisting of print and online. They are thus suitable cases for this comparative study. Specifically, focusing on digital strategy, I aim to examine changing journalistic practices and how managers deal with them.

The choice of the three newspaper organisations as objects represents a “most different cases” approach. According to Peters (1998), there are mainly two categories to apply comparative approach in multiple case studies: most similar and most different research design. Being an unusual research design for comparative study, the most different design strategy looks at “individual level behaviour” and attempts to “explain relationships among variables in samples of individuals” (Peters, 1998 : 40). The selected newspaper organisations are all exploring ways to go digital, albeit operating within apparently different political and social systems. Therefore, the focus of this comparative study is practice at the micro level: managerial and journalistic practice at newspaper organisations. Explaining similarities and differences with a focus on practice can tell the researcher a great deal about the way in which management of journalistic practice works.

In the first three sections of this chapter, I discussed the research orientation and explained the reasons for choosing ethnography and multiple case study as the main methods of this research. They are about the research design. In the following two sections, I am going to focus on the specific methods I applied in this research.

#### **4.4 Generating empirical material**

Before I start listing the specific methods which are applied to generate empirical data, I would like to emphasise that I study not organisations but organising — the processes of people's thinking, sensemaking and sensegiving, as well as their acting when they face a strategic change, which is emergent and sometimes contested. This focus, permeating all of this thesis, is a complicated issue in terms of being a multi-faceted organisational phenomenon 'out there' in its own right, and demanding a full understanding and representation of the multiple events happening in many places at once under study.

##### **4.4.1 Interview, observations and archival material**

Ethnography is the main approach for data collection. As mentioned before, the biggest strength of this research approach is to obtain rich description of the research subject and context. The collected data can be placed in two groups—primary data and secondary data, with different research objects. In detail, the primary data were collected from semi-structured interviews, observations and informal chats focusing on the informant's interpretation and evaluation of the ongoing strategy and related change within the organisation. The secondary data were collected from an industrial conference, expert opinion, organisational archives and statements focusing on the social-material context, mostly at the organisational level.

The approach to the study also took place on two levels. To reduce the operational difficulty that lies in ethnography, Van Maanen (1979) proposed dividing the various kinds of empirical information generated by an ethnographic study in this way into first-order and second-order concepts. First-order concepts refer to "the 'fact' of an ethnographic investigation", and the second-order concepts are understood as existing scientific theories used by scholars to organise and explain these facts (p. 540). Reflecting on Van Maanen's categorisation, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) raised concerns over the ethnographer's immersion in the data, where the main problem is "that of 'going native' ... and thus losing the dispassionate view required for a more theoretical, second-order analysis (435-6)." They argue this is the very reason ethnographic, interpretive research "appears inverted" — theoretical perspectives are derived from first-hand data, instead of the other way round, that is, theories drive the data gathering. Following the same line, in a longitudinal case study on strategy discourse and institutional adoption, Paroutis and Heracleous (2013) identify the first-order meanings of strategy derived from strategists, and differentiate them from the second-order meanings of what strategy might mean as held by others. These studies provide some insights into this study in terms of categorizing data and explaining incidences encountered during the fieldwork.

This multiple case study generates a first-order factual-based descriptive account of the newspaper organisations under review. Given that the research design is inductive and interpretive/pragmatic, I tried to avoid provisional hypotheses, tentative speculations, and commonsense hunches during the fieldwork. For example, I carefully picked a series of

neutral words in open questions, providing protection from charges of researcher bias. Instead of asking “In what way you are influenced by the current convergence strategy”, I asked “Have you noticed any strategies or big plans happening in the newsroom? If so, please specify.”

Also, data analysis began without a pre-determined set of analytical categories. Rather, it involved a search for themes and patterns within the data. These analytical steps will be elaborated in the following section. The risks of this approach should be noted. It does not necessarily generate a clear separation between the first-order analysis — the natives' and the insiders' accounts of change and strategy, and the second-order analysis — the scientific theories and perspectives that I apply to explain the facts. As Van Maanen (1978: 539) aptly describes it,

In essence, ethnographers believe that separating the facts from the fictions, the extraordinary from the common, and the general from the specific is best accomplished by lengthy, continuous, firsthand involvement in the organisational setting under study. Although capable of generating massive amounts of data, the strategy is risky nevertheless. Ethnographic research is guided as much from drift as design and is perhaps the source of far more failures than successes.

The contexts at the organisational level and at the national industrial level influence the ways that journalists make sense of changes and respond to them. As decision-making processes were mostly invisible and top managers were difficult to access, managers were asked to interpret how they made sense of the strategy, to recall the decision making process and to evaluate the strategic performance. Grassroots journalists were interviewed about the implementation of the strategy, their assessment of the strategic performance, and recommendations to higher level managers to improve their decision making. During the fieldwork, participants at the three selected newsrooms were invited to talk on three aspects: 1) the ongoing changes in the newsrooms, 2) the current strategy implemented in the newsroom, and 3) their evaluations of the strategic performance. They recalled some “turbulent moments” for the strategic change and organisational development. For the full list of interview questions, please see Appendix.

According to CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) scholars, discourse is a form of practice. The incident moments recalled by the interviewees are the discursive forms of their journalistic practice, thus providing data for this research. Needless to say, the collection of practice-only data is very time-consuming and intriguing. As mentioned in Part II Theoretical Framework, the research on organisational change as a process merely depicts newspapers as a cluster of working units or an organisational chart. They should also be understood as combinations of people interacting to achieve mutual goals. Thus the discourses in which people describe the goals, and that they enact to communicate in and out of newspaper newsrooms, are a crucial type of data in this study. I was lucky to pick up some discursive shifts in the selected newsrooms. The CEO at *Jönköpings-Posten* was currently concerned with the managerial challenges during the fieldwork. *China Daily* had just started its 'Convergence Strategy' and set up an All-media Newsroom one week before my fieldwork. So there was much discussion about it. *The Press* was subtly moving its subs, while the remained staff realised that there was to be an organisational move. This was one of the main topics during the fieldwork period. The data are therefore understood as responses situated within organisational moments rather than objective accounts of daily work.

As with each case study individually, making sense of the ethnographic material outside its historical and contemporary context will significantly limit our understanding by failing to place the phenomenon studied within its milieu of early-stage development: the rich, diverse, and evolving interaction between management and journalism. The main purpose of applying textural analysis is to complement the primary source's main findings (from the ethnographic case research) with enough secondary sources. To achieve such contextualization of the ethnographic case studies in particular, I conducted archival research of newspaper industry's trade publications in the three countries, read articles concerned with the two topics — change and strategy, and collect contextual data for narrative analysis. The data will be presented in Chapter 5 Research Contexts.

It is interesting to note that informal chats with managers were usually much more informative than formal ones. Informal chat is a good way for researchers to gain knowledge of both minds and practices from others. Helland (1993 cited in Krumsvik, 2009: 37)

discussed formal and informal access to highlight that researchers need to get approval, not only from managers to access the newspaper organisation for interviews and observations, but they also need to get informal acceptance and willingness from informants in the organisation to provide researchers with a valid and reliable understanding of the field. When I was asking for comments about the ongoing strategy at the Chinese newspaper, a senior news manager, also my former colleague and direct manager, told me: “Well, do you want some real stuff? Yes? Then turn the recorder off.” Not every interviewee is open and willing to express their comments, especially negative comments on a manager’s decisions. It was learned from the three fieldworks that interviewees are more willing to express their concerns in informal chats rather than formal interviews. A total of 18 informal chats at cafes and catch-ups encouraged deeper reflection from the interviewees and the researcher around the topic. Through storytelling, the interviewed managers and journalists not only provided a deep knowledge of the context of their practices, but also reflected how and why they responded in that way.

The fieldwork at the three newspaper organisations was not marred by any serious difficulty, just the moderate strain of working single-handed in a Nordic country where English is still not widely spoken, and in a politicised state-owned organisation where there is a distinct culture of fear and suspicion of fieldworkers from managers and journalists, and in a branch company which is under the control of an Australian conglomerate and thus has little decision-making power over the company’s overall change and strategy.

#### **4.4.2 Challenges in data collection: access, sensitivity and a query of quality**

Access is one of the biggest challenges in making an empirical query about change at any level in an organisation (e.g. Magolda, 2000; Watson, 2011; Van Maanen, 2011). Watson (2011) described himself as "a reluctant ethnographer" and clarified that the reluctance has resulted not from the writing part of the research job but the fear of data collection — "a fear of having to face the enormous difficulties of gaining the very high grade of research access that is needed to prepare an ethnography, a fear of having to find the enormous amount of nervous energy and emotional resilience to be able to work for long hours ‘in the field’" (204).

With respect to my research, the access to the newsroom was painful and extended. As I mentioned before, the three newspaper organisations were selected opportunistically, due to access difficulty. In August 2014, I went from New Zealand to Sweden for a summer school run by EMMA (the European Media Management Association). On the first day of the Summer School, Lovisa Hamrin, the CEO of a local family business which owns a series of newspapers in Sweden, gave us a presentation about management in the digital age. She told us that she was experiencing some managerial challenges since her newspapers went online. Her experiences matched perfectly to my research topic, and I was thrilled by the coincidence with my interests. At the following morning's tea break, I asked her whether I could conduct a fieldwork research at her newsroom, and she approved me immediately. After getting the approval, I had in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the CEO, two senior managers, and four journalists and editors at work, observed both managerial and journalistic practices, and chatted with them during breaks and lunch times.

My second case study was conducted in Beijing, China. I encountered troubles in getting access to the newsroom. Before I went back to China, I got an oral approval from the newspaper's top manager. As I had previously worked at this newspaper as a journalist for three years (2010 - 2013), I anticipated that getting permission to conduct a fieldwork research in the newspaper would be a straightforward task. Unfortunately, the fact was just the opposite. The HR manager was shocked when he learned that I was asking him for the access while just standing at the newspaper's reception. He told me in the phone that my application needed to be processed "in the formal way" — write a research design, contact HR department to gain the approval, pass the application to managers at different departments to solicit their consent, and then get started.

Gaining access was not just a matter of time and money, but of fear and doubt of the overall research design. At that moment, I knew my application was declined in a soft, gentle way. I went back to my hotel room, and anxiety and depression rose greatly. Magolda's (2000) fieldworker's tales succinctly summarised my feelings in the field. As he put it, "waiting was a necessary burden of fieldwork"; "patience was a nonnegotiable part of the fieldwork experience — a quality I lacked but was forced to acquire." I waited in the hotel room for two

weeks, and reviewed my research outline every night to make it 'look interesting', in line with the newspaper's interest and incorporating ethical considerations. I waited outside the newspaper's entrance to get some 'impromptu reunion' with my former colleagues, and tried almost every personal contact at the newspaper. Finally I got the access, but I had to make a tradeoff. Due to some sensitive political issues of the state-owned newspaper, as the manager explained, I could only stay in the lobby cafe in the newspaper's headquarters and interview a certain number of employees who were selected by the HR department. Since I couldn't have close observation in the print newsroom of newspaper, I figured I'd 'shrink' my fieldwork into open-ended interviews (Fontana and Frey, 1994; Levy and Hollan, 1998), to get useful information about the contexts and processes of the natives' lived experiences.

Soliciting stories as a method for data collection encourages my interviewees to recall and recount the context(s) and processes of the research subject — managing journalistic change, and more importantly, the sensemaking of an emergent strategic change, which is often retrospective, subjective and iterative. Patton (1990) categorised different types of ethnographic interviewing, and I chose to apply them in a mixed way which included semi-structured, open-ended interviews, informal interviews and bonding. The intent was to engage with my respondents, learn about them and vice versa. I am the only one who conducted an ethnographic research in the state-owned newspaper since its establishment in 1981. The restrictions on my access should be understood in that context.

The third fieldwork site was the most time-consuming compared with the other. Given the duopoly of the newspaper industry in New Zealand, there were only two choices for me to conduct a fieldwork at a newspaper organisation in New Zealand. I emailed and phoned managers, editors and chief reporters at NZME, Fairfax NZ and its mother company in Australia for about four months. Unfortunately, I got only one reply — a decline letter from NZ Herald at NZME, saying that the organisation had a few different things underway at that moment and could not help me out. With the help of my supervisor and a colleague in the department who was a veteran journalist at Fairfax, I got access to *The Press*.

I have to confess that my story of getting quality access to newspaper organisations may not be as painful as those experienced by other ethnography advocates, but it is important to tell as it shaped the data. The results I got from the field are less than satisfactory, as I still feel I could have collected more data. However, the above 'accessing' confessional tales and the following subjective stories of my experiences in different phases of the fieldwork are worth highlighting for mainly three reasons.

Firstly, the fieldworker's tales provide an alternative way to reflect on *the complexity* of human experiences. Specific to this research, my 'accessing' tales and other confessional tales enable me to represent the inter-connected dynamic of the interaction between managers and journalists when a strategic change was unfolding. The native's narratives about the research subject are usually believed to be more important than the fieldworker's narrative. However, the native's narratives/accounts, which are claimed as the pragmatically-oriented, truth-seeking "lived experiences", cannot represent the wholeness of human experiences.

Secondly, my confessional tale of accessing the newspaper provides a record of not only what were accessible and said, but also what were inaccessible and unsaid. It is important to note that the inclusion of the subjective, fieldworkers' experiences does not necessarily relieve their pressure to describe the complexity of any organisational and management phenomenon. Instead, it complicates the issue by exposing the questions which are essential to ethnographic research in organisational and management studies, i.e. what does 'good' ethnographic work entail? Since there is no real alternative in studying 'how things work' in organisations, how could ethnography enable us to provide a full description of organisational and management activities? Fieldworkers' subjectivity, i.e. their engagement with respondents, familiarity with the context, and rapport with the natives, are taken into account when they conduct an empirical fieldwork to provide a full account of the already-complicated issue — managing journalistic changes in newspaper organisations.

Thirdly, there were lessons to be learned from these subjective descriptions. As DeVita (1992: xiv) precisely put it, "There were, in most cases, important lessons embedded in the content of their [fieldworkers'] experiences. ... lessons about the anthropologists, about the

people being studied, and about human experiences in a cross-cultural context". Gaining quality access has been an integral part of this research, which is not just a process of learning about the site and its inhabitants, but also of figuring out my own epistemological quest for dynamic understanding of organisational and management issues. In hindsight, the declines, waiting, uneasiness, doubts, these unpleasant encounters in the field have prompted me to bridge the gap between research and practice via adjusting my theoretically directed research design to the empirical data collected from the field, and positioning myself in the field. The value of publishing fieldworkers' tales will be further discussed in the following section as it deals more with the data categorisation and analysis.

Gaining access did not end with getting permission to undertake the research in the selected organisations. It was an extended task throughout the whole process of the fieldwork. Namely, accessing means not only to enter the selected organisations, but also to get quality information from the others living in the field. This challenge has been widely noticed by other ethnographers. For instance, Whyte (1997) wrote that, "being physical inside does not guarantee you access to the information you are seeking ... patience and persistence will pay off" (16).

Constant negotiation and explanation of the research rationale, aiming for engagement with my respondents, became necessary. For instance, newspapers managers were skeptical of ethnographic researchers. When I asked a digital manager at *Jönköpings-Posten* about the newspaper's future strategy, he refused to tell me. He explained that, if he recounted the strategy which was dynamic, unfolding and uncertain, he was concerned that the research results and following publications would bring potential risks to his organisation. This concern was shared by top managers in the other two newspapers. A manager told me on the last day of my fieldwork that, due to his busy work schedule, his first response to ethnographers was to decline and he didn't believe in the value of qualitative, ethnographic research. He would rather spend the time on his work or with his family rather than negotiate with me about the value. The blunt, straightforward excuse, together with dozens of declines for my access applications, prompted me to think how to increase the chances of getting quality access to organisations facing uncertainty and complexity.

Studying organisational change from a process-oriented perspective is also fraught. After getting the access to the newsroom, what should I observe and study? Can I sit side by side with a manager from morning to afternoon to record every single practice? It seems unlikely. I needed to have a dynamic understanding of the managerial and journalistic practices which were related to strategic change. A worry-and-satisfied feel about data collection was salient through the whole research, especially after the fieldwork. I felt lucky when I got access to the news organisations, while I quickly felt unsatisfied once I completed the data collection and found I could have done more. Since the research focus is about managing newswork change, especially the interaction between management and journalism in newspaper organisations, simultaneously and paradoxically, I have expected to capture radical, and/or accessible changes during the fieldwork time, while looked for something stable, i.e., empirical regularities, patterns in event sequences and/or underlying mechanism(s) in processes of managing change.

Another challenge concerns with a query of quality. Ethnographers are usually worked alone in the field, which inevitably delimits their research scope to a specific time and space, or times and places. To cope with this challenge, researchers are required to be equipped with what Silverman (2006) called sensitivity. Specific to my research, sensitivity means that I need to be acutely aware of the hidden and tacit aspects of everyday activity happened in the site, record the sporadic accounts given by the others during my observation, as well as position the roles of my respondents and myself in the process of understanding organisational change. These issues, i.e. how to turn "strips of everyday activity" into evidence for theories and the issue of time orientation, will be further discussed in Section V Data Analysis.

#### **4.5 Analysis in action**

“... when it comes to writing, the literature in organisational studies and elsewhere in the social sciences is relatively silent ... how ethnographers get from field notes to monographs ... is rarely discussed in print.”

- Van Maanen (2010: 241)

Ethnography is not just an exploratory approach to learn the native's point of view in newspaper organisations, but also an analytical perspective in producing persuasive findings (Van Maanen, 2011). However, the latter — how to present ethnographic findings has rarely been discussed (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek and Lê, 2014). In this section, I focus on the analysis in action — the processes of transforming raw fieldnotes to comprehensive findings and generalizing case studies. In sum, interviews, observations and archival collection helped generate written accounts and descriptions about the organisational phenomenon under review. However, it is a challenge to put these fragmented accounts and descriptions in a meaningful order, bring the ethnographer's experience to his or her readers, and make academic contribution to organisational studies. Memoing and coding from the grounded theory and narrative and textual analysis are the methods for analysing the empirical data. They will be elaborated successively in this section, and the challenges I encountered in data analysis will be discussed as well.

#### **4.5.1 Memoing, coding and narrative analysis**

In the first group, the first-order accounts given by informants in the fieldwork were the unit of analysis. Informants were asked to recall and narrate work life stories related to change and strategy in the organisation. Informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1994; Charmaz, 2006), especially memoing and coding, the primary data were color-coded into three main categories: sensemaking accounts given by 1) strategy makers, 2) middle managers, and 3) grassroots journalists/editors. Memoing is necessary in doing fieldwork, and the way the ethnographer constructs the record determines the following data analysis. Recording is an essential part of ethnography (Shakespeare, 2009), and the interplay between theory, ethnography, and writing are "inseparable" in ethnographic research (Denzin, 1997). Geertz (1973: 19) sees the ethnographer as the scribe to write a thick description of the issues under review, as well as "the explorer and quasi-insider" of both exotic and familiar social worlds (Emerson et al., 2001). Van Maanen (1988) explored the differences among extensive fieldnotes and identified three styles of storytelling — realist, confessional and impressionist stories in the fieldnotes to represent the real world.

Drawing upon Van Maanen's (1988) differentiation of the three forms of representation, I kept a detailed record of my experiences in the field and put the large amount of raw material from the fieldwork into three categories. In detail, I categorise my fieldnotes into three columns: one for realist tales (other's stories — what they said to me, what I saw at the newsroom), one for confessional stories (about the context—the time, location, access, my at-the-scene feelings about the people, the field and the context, my immediate comment), and one for the impressionist tales which combine the realistic and confessional tales together.

The reason for putting the fieldnotes into three columns are twofold. First, it aims to separate facts from fictions, and differentiate three types of concepts derived from the field: the first-order understanding held by 'others' — managers and journalists at work/the first understating which are manifested by the people experiencing a phenomenon, the on-the-spot understanding generated from my direct experience as an individual researcher, and our scientific understanding and explanatory concepts about the others and their activities in the field. Second, it aims to provide a more detailed and fuller account from the insiders about strategy and change. By differentiating these concepts and understanding, it is easier for me to explicate the interaction between management and journalism, highlight the repeated iterations between theory and data which is common with qualitative research, and have a better understanding of the complexity of organisational change 'out there' and our bounded rationality of understanding such issue.

Coding is situated at the centre of the analytical process as “the process of defining what the data are about” (Charmaz, 2006: 43). Then, I used narrative devices in making sense of the coded material. I used Hernadi's hermeneutic triad (Czarniawska, 2004) as a device of textural analysis: explication, explanation, and exploration. Hernadi's hermeneutic triad turned out to be in line with John van Maanen's idea about the forms of representation, thus enabling me to analyse the data in a systemic way.

After analysing the primary data in the first group, the patterns of organisational communications between strategy makers and doers were integrated with the secondary data in the second group, in order to cast the relationship between strategic discourse and various

media and societal contexts, mainly at the organisational level. Although techniques from grounded theory and narrative analysis help me clarify the raw material from the fieldwork, they do not provide results. Sensemaking accounts by strategy makers and doers are a mix of data at different levels: practice, process and context. The messiness of text collected from ethnography has been mentioned in several organisational ethnographic studies (Van Maanen, 2006; Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron 2001; Agar, 2010). For example, Van Maanen (2006) reviewed organisational ethnographic studies from 1986 to 2006, with a focus on textural practices from all sorts of fieldwork practices<sup>25</sup> which are ‘biographically and situationally varied’ (14). He describes ethnographers as "intrepid" (14) and that text work conducted during and after ethnography has become “heavier, messier, and less heavily located in time or space” (16). Agar (2010) makes a similar argument, saying organisational ethnography provides researchers with “a multi-genre tale of the field”, which consists of data at different levels: micro, mess and macro. However, Agar (2010) claims the research rigor of ethnography and fieldwork, as "the conclusion is that the tale, blurred genre though it is, is in fact clear and it works".

Drawing on published exemplars of ethnographic articles, Jarzabkowski et al. (2014) propose various practical forms of writing and data representation to turn raw field notes into comprehensive findings. Their proposed ways of presenting evidence are at odds with the traditional methods of data presentation in management studies. Especially, they stress the value of the "textwork" — those ethnographic thick descriptions, narratives, or tales (Geertz, 1973; Langley, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988), in "illuminating the field and our experience of it" (Jarzabkowski, Bednarek and Lê, 2014: 275) as ethnographers. According to Jarzabkowski, Bednarek and Lê (2014), the issue of transforming from raw material to comprehensive findings is mainly about sharing the researcher's experience of the field by writing. "Ethnography is by definition entwined with writing" (274).

A key aspect of the approach in the thesis has been soliciting and analysing vignettes. This has become regarded as a valid technique in organisational studies. A series of qualitative studies in strategic change, strategic planning and managerial sensemaking have examined

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<sup>25</sup> Fieldwork practices can include: fieldwork approaches, working style, place, pace and time, as well as evidentiary approaches.

'vignettes' as the unit of analysis. For example, Rouleau and Balogun's (2011) qualitative study on middle managers and strategic sensemaking, frequently referred to in this study, represents a methodological exemplar. Rouleau and Balogun (2011) explored the "*discursive sensemaking capabilities*" of middle managers. They interviewed middle managers and asked them to recall some "*vignettes*" related to strategy and organisational changes. Then they identified that middle managers enact their strategic influence in two situated, but interlinked discursive activities—"performing the conversation" and "setting the scene". For Rouleau and Balogun (2011), these vignettes, developed by the authors upon narrative data collected from observation, interviews and focus groups, enabled them to "go beyond observation" to understand strategic performance as researchers rather than just an audience, and provide them access to "some of the backstage and not just the overt". In other words, the vignettes contain two types of information for data description: *what* the middle managers did and said in terms of strategic sensemaking and performance, and *why* they did/said things this way. This is consistent with the sensemaking perspective which underlines the ongoing processes by which cognitions develop rather than managerial cognitions themselves. With respect to strategic planning, Wolf and Floyd (2013) reviewed the related research conducted over more than 30 years, and identified a dearth of knowledge in strategic planning. Despite the wide application of strategic planning in the realistic world, the relevant research has been inconsistent in connecting planning to organisational performance. They therefore call for reviewing and cataloguing what we know about strategic planning and re-considering new directions for future research. They suggest that strategic planning is "an observable construct", and thus direct observations (Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011), case vignettes (MacIntosh and Maclean, 1999) and other ethnographic methods (Grant, 2003) are more powerful than second-hand accounts as a source of descriptive data."

#### **4.5.2 Challenge in data analysis: it is not just a thick description but also goes beyond the ethnographic circle**

Ethnographers have identified writing as the most challenging and innovative part of ethnographic study (Van Maanen, 2006; Langley and Abdallah, 2011). For instance, as Van Maanen (2006: 13) put it, "Textwork is suturing together of two words meant to convey that writing is a labor-intensive craft." Smith (2011) further evidenced how ethnographic field research is "notorious for its time- and labor-intensiveness", but ethnographers "only hint at

these difficulties rather than acknowledge them explicitly". Surprisingly, most writers dodge the question of writing style in their ethnographic report (Maanen, 2009), and only a few have challenged the traditional positioning of 'we' and 'others' in ethnographic writing (Shakespeare, 2009: 95; Smith, 2012).

Richness in empirical data, as the main strength of ethnographic research in organisational and managements studies and beyond, presented the biggest challenge. The massive amount of field material was at times irreconcilable with the time limit imposed on me to give immediate analysis and to give a full account of the chaotic, fluxing immediacy of lived experiences of managers and journalists at work.

The data analysis is time consuming and the expectations of the researched organisations add more pressure to the ethnographers. During my final day of the NZ fieldwork, I had some follow-up interviews with the news manager who gave me the opportunity to conduct the research and then I was asked to provide immediate findings. Given the shaky access to quality information and the time limit, I said I could have provided a full report a couple of months later, but he stopped me and said, "I don't have that time. A big change is coming. You just tell me your findings so far." I thought for a few seconds and gave him a simple answer, which did not seem interest him too much. "Training, the newsroom lacks of training. Journalists are clear about the digital-first strategy and they understand the change is inevitable. But they complained that managers didn't invest enough to implement the strategy. They did not get any related training in the past," I said. "This problem will be solved. We are going to give them a training soon," the manager responded. We both looked disappointed. After I left the newsroom, his question hovered in my mind for a long time. The news manager I studied could not understand why I needed so much time to write my report and who would be interested in reading it two or three years later. The research subject that I look at — managing changing newswork is so much complicated that I was and am not able to wrap it up in a short answer. Of course, lack of training was one part of the story I wrote about the newspaper organisation, but is not the whole story, nor the research question I seek for answer. Thus I have acquired a serious debt towards the researched newspaper organisations, as they have offered me great opportunities to collect so many stories.

The massiveness of empirical data leads to the messiness of the data, with different units of analysis. The data collected at the field was messy and multi-levelled: managerial and journalistic practice at the micro level, organisational and professional routines, newsroom culture and organisational context at the meso level, as well as related media policy and newspaper industrial development at the macro level. As managers at work especially those at senior and strategic positions were quite skeptical about the researcher in their organisations, the applicability and practicality of the sensemaking, practice and process perspectives into media management research need to be further examined.

More importantly, the multi-levelled data calls for a theoretical framework which follows the practice and process perspectives at the same time, and enables researchers to describe and explain the intricacies among practice, process and context. It is a challenge to categorise the data and identify their interlinks. Although the study focuses on practice (both managerial and journalistic practice at the micro level), the context of such an initiative has many levels and many facets. The contexts at the macro, industrial level and at the meso, organisational level in the three different countries are interlinked with the journalistic and managerial practices at the micro level, and thus worth clarifying. Moreover, data about the doing-a-strategy as a dynamic process, such as organisational and professional routines, boundaries and identities, needs a theoretical framework for analysis that follows the practice and process perspectives at the same time.

The second challenge concerns with writing, which was precisely expressed by Paula Jarzabkowski in the *Endorsement* of a SAGE book series on process, sensemaking and organising (Hernes and Maitlis, 2014) — "While many authors collect longitudinal data, there are still insufficient methodological tools and techniques to deal with the nature of that data. Essentially, there is a lack of frameworks and methods to deal with good processual data or to develop process-based insights." My struggles for interpreting the fieldwork data in the meaningful way reflected the complexity of the research subject, and more fundamentally, exposed the methodological challenge in practicing process studies.

To confront this challenge, color coding as noted above were conducted to examine for recurring concepts and themes. Stories of the others collected from the field were selected by their relevance to certain recurring concepts and plotted into persuasive descriptions. I also took the advice given by Jarzabkowski et al. who proposed practical various forms of writing and data representation to turn raw field notes into comprehensive findings. Their proposed ways of presenting evidence are at odds with the traditional methods of data presentation in management studies. Especially, they stress the value of the "textwork" — those ethnographic thick descriptions, narratives, or tales (Geertz, 1973; Langley, 1999; Van Maanen, 1988), in "illuminating the field and our experience of it" (Jarzabkowski and Bednarek, 2014: 275) as ethnographers.

The challenges I met across in the field are not methodological mistakes or problems that would have stopped me from exploring the research subject in such way. They *are* field material, as much as what they meant to be. Some are unexpected, dynamic, implicit, or inaccessible, while others are dull, static, routine, vocal, and easy to access. The field data intersect with other. Researchers who simply put them into neat boxes and lines would definitely fail to capture them as the lapse of a moment or to interpret them as how they worked in such way.

#### **4.6 Ethical concerns from field to desk**

From field to desk, ethics is an important issue in this ethnographic enquiry, for 'others' — managers and journalists at work who took part in this research, myself as an individual fieldworker and the readers who learn the unfolding of strategic change from plain text. As Czarniawska (2014: 176) precisely put it, "doing research means making moral choices, continuously, and often under time pressure." With respect to this research, ethical concerns go through the whole processes from data collection to analysis.

In this research managers and news professionals were interviewed in a professional setting. The interviewees were informed about the research design on first contact and were given my contact information. A question list was developed before the interviews and was amended in accordance with the position of each interviewee. Each interview lasted approximately an

hour. No sensitive information about the interviewees was discussed in the interviews. However, some interviewees raised concerns about anonymity, especially when they were asked to comment on the ongoing changes, emergent strategies and the decision-makers' practices. Some refused to be recorded as that discouraged them from speaking up about their personal assessments of the changes. One of these concerns is that the publishing of this research may trigger pressures on the interviewees and threats to their opportunities for advancement or to their job security.

Therefore, not all interviews were recorded. Some interviewees, at a certain point during the interview, asked me to stop the recording. Some added new and interesting information after the recording. Casual conversations and informal chats were also unrecorded. In all those scenarios note takings were permitted, and I wrote down the unrecorded conversation as soon as possible. The interviewees approved all the quotations used.

Not everyone who participated in the interviews agreed to identify his/her name in this thesis. The actual names of the interviewed managers and news professional have been replaced by general titles such as 'manager', 'editor' and 'journalist' or by letters, with the exception of those of the researched newspapers' CEOs and editors-in-chief who are already well known via wide news coverage<sup>26</sup>.

Taking the suggestions by many researchers (e.g. Holstein & Gubrium, 2002; Czarniawska 2014), each recorded interview has been fully transcribed. The full transcripts are particularly helpful to generate research findings, especially when I re-read the text with the intent to understand the other's narratives in the context(s), tighten the plot and increase readability. Since the text is in itself a partial representation of how things work, the others' narratives, the fieldnotes and the researcher's narratives were intersected with an aim to provide a fuller account of the unfolding of strategic change in the researched newspapers.

In this research the interview recordings are stored on electronic devices, including my personal PC and an iPhone. Transcriptions of the interviews have also been stored

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<sup>26</sup> Please see the Appendices for the full list of interviewees in the three cases.

electronically. The Human Ethics Committee of the Canterbury University reviewed my research before the fieldwork and an approval was given.

This chapter provides a description of the research design, the explanation of the research approach adopted in this research, and the methodological considerations with respect to data collection and analysis. The overall approach is ethnography, which is not just a methodological approach, but also represents the analytic perspective on the research topic. This, it is hoped, will provide a more holistic account to managing emergent changes in newspaper organisations. The next part about data analysis follows the methodological considerations underpinning this research, and will discuss the different dimensions of managing journalistic changes in the three newspaper organisations.

# PART IV: DATA ANALYSIS

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Part IV presents the three case studies of newspaper organisations during strategic change. The cases illustrate the complexity of managing newswork during strategic change from three aspects — context, content and processes. The whole purpose of Part IV is to integrate and extend previous research on organisational change by considering the impacts of these three factors on creating new ways of managing newswork.

While the Swedish and Chinese newspapers were facing financial and operational challenges at the early stage of digital restructuring, the NZ newspaper was simply seeking a substantial step up in its digital performance. The semi-structured interviews allowed for a rich description of the factors contributing to the resistance to the strategic change — ranging from how senior managers scanned, interpreted and responded to the change, and how middle managers intermediated the meanings of the change and strategy, to how grassroots journalists comprehended, accepted and acted upon. I then supplemented my findings with observations at the field and the secondary data about the newspapers.

The data analysis will argue that newspaper organisation is an emergent environment in which managing and doing newswork are parts of the same strategic processes, and that, therefore, they cannot be treated and studied as separate managerial entities. Applying the sensemaking and related process perspectives, the managing of newswork is understood as a social process of enactment in which both managers and journalists make and give meanings to their practices and in turn make the strategic change — which is emergent, incremental, and idiosyncratic in nature — meaningful and sustainable. During the strategic change, sensemaking about newswork has positive impacts on strategic performances only when the social goal of newswork is addressed simultaneously with the business goal, the past experiences and lessons gained by strategy doers on the frontline are valued and backed up by strategy makers, and when managers give the time and space which allow quality journalism to be achieved.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the writing of this research is both polyphonous (Küng, 2007) and elastic in terms of moving back and forth between theory and (process) data (Langley, 1999). The way in which the findings in three case studies are structured and represented aims to accord to the theoretical framework set forth in Part II — namely, to understand managing newswork by exploring the contexts, content and process of change together with their interconnections with time (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2003).

Part V has five chapters. Chapter 5 deals with the contexts of strategic change in the selected newspaper organisations. The reason for putting the contextual discussions at the beginning of data analysis is mainly because this work seeks to understand strategic change within its context. Chapter 6 offers a cross-case analysis, with a focus on managers' and journalists' sensemaking about the content and processes of strategic change which was emergent and even contested in the researched newspapers. The findings on people's sensemaking about strategic change indicate some disparity between managers and journalists in terms of making sense of identity, organisational structure, routines, time and space and their relations to the success to the strategic change. These cognitive disparities between managers and journalists about strategic change constitute the managerial challenges facing newspaper organisations and, for sensemaking scholars, they might have great impact on strategic performance. Chapters 7, 8, 9 then examine the impacts of strategic sensemaking on strategic performance on a case-by-case basis. Specifically, Chapter 7 explores the managerial and journalistic sensemaking of identity and the impacts on organising and managing activities in the Swedish case. Chapter 8 examines the sensemaking of organisational structure and professional routines and the impacts on the implementation of a digital strategy in the Chinese case. Chapter 9 investigates the managers' and journalists' sensemaking of time and space — two fundamental dimensions of newswork — and its role in fostering a networked newsroom in New Zealand. Although the structure of Chapters 7, 8, 9 is the same for each case, given their idiosyncratic differences, each case will highlight the particularities of each newspaper organisation as found during data collection — that is, hybrid identity, inertial structure and blurring boundaries, thanks to the time and space shifting from print to digital.

## Chapter 5: Research Context — Newspapers in Sweden, China and New Zealand

This work seeks to understand newswork change from the organisational and management perspective. Although the study focuses on newswork, especially managing newswork that occur in daily practices at the micro level, the context of such an initiative has many levels and many facets. The contexts at the macro, industrial level and at the meso, organisational level in the three different countries are interlinked with the journalistic and managerial practices at the micro level, and thus worth clarifying.

Although the overall momentum of the newspaper industry worldwide is declining in revenue, the decline in different countries varies. According to a think tank's prediction<sup>27</sup> on the future of newspapers around the world, the current form of newspapers in the US becomes “insignificant” in 2017, and those in mainland China, New Zealand, and Sweden will be extinct in 2023, 2024 and 2025 respectively. To understand these variations, one cannot ignore the interdependence between news media and political systems. As highlighted by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) in their modern classic *Comparing Media Systems* that, “one cannot understand the news media without understanding the nature of the state, the system of political parties, the pattern of relations between economic and political interests, and the development of civil society, among other elements” (8).

This chapter therefore cannot hope to analyse the meso and macro contexts of the three dailies in their full intricacy, but will attempt to identify key issues in the organisational context (at the meso level) and the government policy and industry sector (at the macro level) that are relevant to this work's theme — the newspaper manager's response to changing journalistic practices at a time of uncertainty and complexity. It falls into three parts. The first

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<sup>27</sup> Future Exploration Network was the think tank which created the “Newspaper Extinction Timeline” in 2010. However, Ross Dawson, key predictor of the end of the newspaper, said his predication was “significantly misunderstood”. “As a futurist, I believe predictions are often not worthwhile because nobody knows the future. The future is unpredictable. Yet the reason why I did make these predictions was to provoke, to be able to wake people.” In other words, Dawson expressed an optimistic attitude regarding the future of the newspaper industry worldwide. Source: <https://rossdawson.com/keynote-speaker/keynote-speaker-videos/creating-the-future-of-news/>

part briefly introduces the current development of the newspaper industry in Sweden, China and New Zealand, highlighting the current market positions of the researched newspaper organisations. The second lists key “going-digital” events and achievements from 2013-17 in the three newspaper organisations. The last recalls a couple of incidents that I encountered in the fieldwork, and which are related to organisational contexts and culture during the period, in order to prepare the ground for the following development of this thesis — a field study that concentrates on understanding how newspaper managers deal with changing journalistic practices.

## **5.1 Environmental analysis: a changing newspaper industry in Sweden, China and New Zealand**

### **5.1.1 Swedish Newspapers: Intensified Regional Monopoly in a Considerable Stable Market**

Sweden, together with other Nordic countries<sup>28</sup>, have been regarded as top performers and overachievers in terms of economic development, civil liberties, quality of life, as well as news media. The Nordic markets for newspapers have long been exceptionally good; thus it is not surprising that these socially high-performing countries are “endowed with high-performing news media” (Ohlsson, 2015: 10). People in the Nordic countries, compared with the US and the UK, are the most informed about international public affairs. They also repeatedly score the highest in relation to domestic news knowledge. One main reason for this is the performance of the Nordic news media (Arnold 2008; Curran *et. al.* 2009: 15). The news industries in these small and sparsely populated countries in the northern outskirts of Europe stand out as a “Nordic Model”, as they have successfully been providing “commercially delicate” and “socially meaningful” information to the public (Ohlsson, 2015).

Unfortunately, the development of the Swedish newspaper industry still follows the declining trend worldwide. From 1980 to 2010, the Swedish morning press lost 22 percent in circulation and the tabloids 48 percent (Nordicom 2013, cited in Barman, 2014: 21). The

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28 The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

reach of print papers among Swedes has shrunk and the access rate of Swedes to a print paper, with no regard to paid-for or free newspapers, decreased to 59 percent of the total population in 2012 from 72 percent in 2006 (*Myndigheten för radio och tv*, 2013, cited in Barman, 2014: 19; Ohlsson, 2015: 34). Although they have devoted more time to media consumption, Swedes spend 10 fewer minutes in reading the daily press than they did 10 years ago (Barman, 2014: 19).

Notably, the Swedish newspaper industry in recent years has been considerably more stable compared with that in the US and the rest of Europe. In the US, newspaper circulations have been falling for several years, contributing to a significant reduction in the number of daily papers. This is yet to be the case in Sweden as the number of daily newspapers in Sweden barely changed from 1980 to 2012, but the number of daily papers issued per week has seen a slight decrease (Nordicom 2013, cited in Barman, 2014: 31; Ohlsson, 2015: 32). A growing number of small, low-frequency newspapers have compensated for the decrease of a number of high-frequency newspapers from 2004 to 2013. In 2013, the number of low-frequency newspapers reached a record of 90 in Sweden (Ohlsson, 2015: 32).

The Swedish newspaper industry has a high level of ownership concentration. A few large newspaper groups mainly of three types — family businesses, foundations and not-for-profit organisations, as well as foreign actors, have dominated the market. The Herenco Group, the owner of JP where I conducted my research, is controlled by the Hamrin families. The top two largest ones Bonnier (Stockholm) and Stampen (Göteborg) are also family-owned, controlling approximately 43 percent of the total national circulation in 2013 (Ohlsson, 2015: 39). The third largest owner is Schibsted, a Norwegian media group and the only foreign actor operating in the Swedish newspaper market. Foundation-controlled groups are another active actor, especially in local news production. The above mentioned groups all have regional/local monopoly status.

Sweden has employed a direct government subsidy system to selected newspaper companies<sup>29</sup> since 1971, as “a political response to the increasing tendency toward local monopolies” (Ohlsson 2015: 26). In 2013, the amount of the financial support reached SEK460 million (USD54 million), and approximately half of Sweden’s some 165 newspapers received the subsidy. A majority of the recipients are small, low-frequency newspapers which as mentioned above emerged between 2004 and 2013. The subsidy took up an average of 37 percent of the total revenues of the recipient newspapers. In addition to the direct government subsidy, an indirect support derived from Value Added Tax (VAT) reductions is widely employed by many European governments. Swedish newspapers have been exempt from VAT since 1969 (Ohlsson 2015: 29). Notably, in Sweden, the state’s involvement in the development of media markets has steadily diminished, based on the development of media policy, especially to the public service sector in the present century (Ohlsson 2015: 12).

Convergence is another characteristic trait of the current newspaper’s development in Sweden. Djerf-Pierre and Weibull (2010) have conducted a historical analysis on the development of five provincial newspapers in Sweden, with a focus on the development of organisational cultures. Their findings indicate that convergence is the trend of the current development of the Swedish newspaper industry, especially the mainstream, local newspapers. The convergence trend has caused diversifications of various kinds in the researched newspaper companies. The papers, which are owned by large media conglomerates, have shown different views on their business strategies. Similarly, the papers have exhibited different expectations toward digital forces. Managerialism has also risen in the era of media convergence as a greater share of the managerial recruitment of the papers comes from those who have had no background in the newspaper industry (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2010).

Along with the current industrial flux driven by digital forces, newspapers have lost their dominant status to the Internet in Sweden’s national advertising market. The advertising

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<sup>29</sup> “The support is distributed in proportion to printed circulation, the newspaper’s market position as well as its financial stability and corporate accounts” (Ohlsson, 2015: 26).

market share of the Swedish print papers dropped from nearly 75 percent in 1989 to only 25 percent in 2013 (Ohlsson 2015: 37). Despite the fact that newspapers have put increasing efforts into attracting audiences and advertising revenues, by means of digital subscription and paywalls, the impact of these efforts remains limited. In addition, the rise of the metro phenomenon of free distribution daily papers has added competition to the Swedish newspaper market (Curran et al., 2009: 8). These newspapers, free of charge and financed by advertisements, are an important player in the Nordic media seen as a whole<sup>30</sup>.

### **5.1.2 Chinese Newspapers: Accelerated Pace of State-Controlled Media Going Global**

While many major western media are tightening budgets and making redundancies, some Chinese media are busily expanding and accelerating the pace of going global, including Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), *China Daily*, *People's Daily* and *Economic Daily*. Xinhua News Agency had over 180 news bureaux worldwide in 2015, up from 171 in 2014. CCTV has nine international channels and over 70 bureaux outside China, broadcasting in Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. CRI sends its voice in 64 languages to 90 radio stations worldwide, and is the world's second largest radio network after the BBC (Yang, 2015). *China Daily*, *People's Daily* and *Economic Daily* all have made progress in the media's 'go-global' campaign, and the achievements made by *China Daily* will be discussed in the second part.

China's media global expansion has relied on massive financial support from the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Government since 2005, with a goal to build an "all-dimensional, multi-channelled, wide-ranging and deep-levelled grand framework of overseas publicity" (Zhang, 2010: 43). One of the most massive but controversial CPC sponsorships of state media amounted to 6.6 billion US dollars in 2009, with the goal of enhancing China's international influence. The announcement of this massive financial support has caused a stir among media scholars. Most have criticised the increasing media control of China's state media, and questioned the operation and performance of these CPC-sponsored international networks. The question of whether these state-sponsored Chinese media will improve

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<sup>30</sup> For a recent analysis of this particular segment, see Bakker (2013).

China's national image or enhance its international influence, is a complicated one and is beyond the scope of this research.

The deputy editor-in-chief of *China Daily* summarised the current media's (integration) background into four characteristics. Firstly, great changes have been undertaken on the public opinion landscape. As the Internet and mobile devices allow people to access information without the limits of time and space, traditional media have been marginalized and are no longer mainstream. Secondly, traditional news media are experiencing a turning point in China, with falling newspaper circulations and the merging and stopping of publication of a series of regional and local news outlets. Thirdly, with respect to targeted audiences, the Internet, mobile devices and SNS (social network service) take the lead. China has seen a sharp increase in Internet users, especially cellphone users in the past decade, which reflects a huge market for mobile reading. According to the latest China Internet Network Information Centre report, as of December 2015 there were 688 million internet users in China, and 90.1 percent of them (or 622 million) were mobile users. The number of cellphone users in China was 50.4 million in 2007, and the number is expected to rise to 1.07 billion in 2017. Last but not least, the Chinese top authorities have accelerated the pace of reform since 2014 and have paid great attention to reform in the cultural system.

The year 2014 has been entitled the 'Year of Media Convergence'. On August 18, 2014, the Chinese President Xi Jinping said, at the fourth meeting of the Leading Group for Overall Reform, that China will build several new-type media groups that are "strong, influential and credible". The meeting also approved a guideline about promoting media convergence and the development of traditional and new media. Xi's comments marked the first time — since China launched its policy of reform and opening up to the outside world in the late 1970s — that China's top authority had spoken about the integration of traditional and new media outlets. According to Xi's address, publicity officials needed to intensify their "Internet-centred thinking" and to be aware of the new trends in the media industry. Traditional and new media must complement each other in the fields of content, channels, platforms, operations and management. The media reform aimed to form new types of mainstream media with multiple communication platforms, advanced transmission methods and a competitive edge. In order to survive and thrive, traditional

media should adapt, develop new ways to interact with the public, and change their mindset.

The top-level media reform was not a sudden move. In recent years, Chinese senior officials have reportedly reiterated the importance of the media in building public opinion and have stressed the urgency and significance of embracing new media. On April 14, 2014, Liu Qibao, head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee said at a symposium that China is going “to actively promote the convergence and development of tradition and new media; to diversify the form and improve the method in order to build a world-class, mainstream media with powerful influence and strong competition.” Chinese authorities have seen new media and digital technologies as leverages to gain their rightful share of global influence.

Differently from most democratic countries in the West, there has been a unique key player in the media reform campaign in China which is the state, especially the Communist Party of China (CPC). News content produced by the above-mentioned state-controlled media are filtered or edited to meet the CPC approval. The heavy content control in the Chinese media context has aroused criticisms from its Western counterparts. Wright (1959) precisely describes Chinese media as an “alternative system of mass communication” (90). The sociologist Manuel Castells (2010) has discussed China’s opening-up and reform in-depth in his book *End of Millennium*, and has proposed that researchers make assumptions on the political and social implications of China’s reform based on one premise — the instrumental role of the Chinese state and the CPC. As Castells (2010) put it, “*China’s modernisation and international opening up is, and was, a deliberate state policy, designed and controlled so far, by the leadership of the Communist party*” (313, italics in the original).

Zhao (2000) has echoed<sup>31</sup> Castells’ proposal to pay great attention to the CPC’s role in understanding China’s economic and social issues in his own work and describes the trajectory of CPC-controlled press commercialisation in China since 1978. As the party is

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31 Castells’ book *End of Millennium* was firstly published in 1998.

“structured in dominance” (Zhao, 2000: 20) in the Chinese press, both ideologically and institutionally, the CPC has played “an active role” in supervising Chinese transformation from media commercialisation to conglomeration.

Veteran journalist Song Zhibiao<sup>32</sup> commented on his social media posts after the announcement of media reform that Xi’s remarks on media convergence called an end to state CPC-controlled press commercialisation which had lasted for a couple of decades. Traditional media, especially print media, failed to survive under intensive, continuous pressure from state control, market competition as well as digital technologies. Although there are nearly 100 media groups in China, it is just an “ostensible development” of media commercialisation. The state’s retreat from controlling traditional media and the Internet both-handedly, as highlighted in Xi’s remarks, will put journalistic professionalism at risk.

To agree with Castells’ premise, one would regard the current media reform for promoting media convergence and developing new media in China as merely an industrial issue. More importantly, it is a political issue. It can be seen from Xi’s remarks that the Chinese top authority sees the Internet as a challenging opportunity. As traditional media’s influence on public opinions has seen a decreasing momentum in the digital age, the CPC aims to give a top-down push to traditional media, to integrate with new media, build several new-type media groups that are “strong, influential and credible”, and in turn extend the CPC’s control of traditional, mainstream media to globalized, digitalised media, thus enhancing China’s political control in the global public sphere.

In addition, with respect to Chinese models of leadership, management scholars have identified that there are significant cultural differences in China when compared to Western methods of managing. For example, Martinsons and Brivins Martinsons (1996) provide cultural insight into the key obstacles to cultivate a new generation of innovative Chinese managers. Shi and Wang (2011) compare the cultural differences between China and US in

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32 Song had worked as a journalist for China Fortune magazine since 2011. He also wrote columns on mainland news and affairs for the Hong Kong-based Oriental Press Group. He was sacked by the company following Beijing's introduction of a rule banning mainland reporters from contributing to overseas news outlets in July 2014. Source: South China Morning Post <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1557370/i-was-fired-writing-hong-kong-columns-song-zhibiao-guangzhou-based>

terms of the organisational management and leadership models. These differences in culture, leadership and management style are more or less evident in the researched newspaper in China and they will be taken into account when the strategic management processes have been examined. The state control of mainstream media has aroused contradictory arguments and research results in academia with respect to journalistic professionalism, media commercialisation and marketisation, media organisational structures, as well as *Guanxi* and informal organisational networks. All these will be further discussed in the following chapters about *China Daily*. These state news media have gained financial autonomy from the state and become profit-making operations. I asked the news manager and the digital manager about the profits about the company. But they refused to give me the answer.

### **5.1.3 New Zealand Newspaper: Collaborative Duopoly in the Market-oriented Industry**

The New Zealand newspaper market has had a near duopoly structure of two Australian-owned media groups — Fairfax NZ (Formerly the Murdoch-controlled INL) and APN News and Media (ANM) for over 30 years. Fairfax-owned newspapers took 48.6 percent of the daily newspaper circulation in New Zealand in 2008, while the newspapers of ANM had 42.4 percent (Rosenberg 2008). Each daily newspaper has a near monopoly in its main circulation areas. *The New Zealand Herald*, headquartered in Auckland in the North Island, is the country's best selling newspaper and serves the upper North Island. Fairfax's *The Dominion Post*, headquartered in Wellington, serves the lower North Island. *The Press*, another Fairfax owned daily broadsheet newspaper published in Christchurch is the largest circulating daily, with 64,000 papers per day, in the South Island.

The dramatic change in the media industry has been particularly felt in New Zealand, where the Internet penetration and smartphone ownerships rates are among the highest in the world. In 2015, 91 percent of New Zealanders were active users of the Internet. The smartphone ownership soared from 48 percent in 2013 to 70 percent in 2015 (Mcveagh, 2016). Among them, 90 percent of smartphones users visit social media regularly. Take Facebook for example, 2.5 million New Zealanders access Facebook each month, with each person checking Facebook on average 14 times per day. Estimated by the two newspaper duopolies, at least 40 percent of New Zealanders access news information through a social media

platform, and nearly 50 percent from a search engine. Mobile devices is the most preferred device of the year (Research New Zealand 2015). Print newspapers are no longer the preferred platform for New Zealanders to get news (Mcveagh, 2016). The overall daily newspaper circulation in New Zealand decreased sharply by 35 percent between 2000 and 2014 (Ellis, 2013). The advertising revenues has decreased accordingly. In addition, as the Internet enables a large number of other providers come to the NZ market, the advertising market has become highly competitive.

Despite the continuous discussions about introducing a paywall to the NZ newspapers since 2013, neither of the newspaper duopolies has charged its audiences for reading news online. Top managers of the two companies have been coy to be the first to set a paywall. In 2013, Andrew Boyle, head of Fairfax NZ said that its publications were investigating paywalls “quite actively” but couldn't give a definitive timeline for it (Ahmed, 2013). In 2014, Jane Hastings, the newly-appointed chief executive at APN at that time, said that the company's flagship newspaper *The New Zealand Herald* had a paywall ready to roll (Peacock, 2015). APN announced in September 2014 that it would introduce a metered paywall by March 2015. But it didn't happen and a number of in-house deadlines have come and gone. Later that year, Fairfax NZ said that it had no plans to put general news on Stuff behind a paywall but might charge for some specialist content (Pullar-Strecker, 2014). Stuff.co.nz and NZHerald.co.nz, the two behemoths of the New Zealand online news world, have been equivocal to set a paywall. This is partly because “there is not much first-mover advantage in being first to go to a paywall”, argued Devon Funds Management analyst Nick Dravitski (Pullar-Strecker, 2014). The one who initiated a paywall on online news would push the audiences to the other.

The consolidation of newspaper ownership has been further intensified at a time when digital communication is the preferred medium for the public. As the print revenues come under pressure from digital competitors, it is not surprising that the New Zealand newspaper companies have started to team up with direct competitors and global media players. In 2004, Fairfax joined hands with its rival APN News and Media in printing, and some of Fairfax's

newspapers<sup>33</sup> are now printed at NZME's<sup>34</sup> printing plant in Ellerslie, Auckland. Earlier in 2015 Fairfax collaborated with Sky Sport to live stream the Rugby World Cup on the Stuff website (Bagge, 2015). In May 2016, a merger plan<sup>35</sup> between the duopoly businesses in the NZ newspaper market came to light which, if successful, would create the country's biggest stand-alone media company. Michael Horton, former managing director of the *Herald* publisher said that the merger was "the only way, commercially, that they can survive". The market conditions of the NZ newspapers have been challenging and the revenue of APN newspapers in New Zealand was down by 10 percent at the end of the first quarter of 2016 (Gray, 2016). Top managers at the two businesses both appraised the coming merger for cost saving. As printing and distribution are not considered areas where publishers stand to gain a competitive advantage, the combination would "provide the necessary capability to continue investing in high-quality local news, sport and entertainment", said Fairfax chief executive Greg Hywood (Gray, 2016). In May 2017, the merger plan for NZME and Fairfax was rejected by the Commerce Commission.

To battle fraught market conditions, dailies in New Zealand have applied "a populist approach" (Ellis, 2013) by giving people what they want. In 2012, the country's most popular print paper *The New Zealand Herald* moved to a tabloid format, as readers picking up their newspaper are now more likely than ever to be reading a tabloid-sized paper, delivered in the morning. The shift to the compact format has been followed by most regional newspapers across the country, either to change size or delivery time, and with more entertainment-driven content.

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33 Some of the Fairfax newspapers, including The Waikato Times, Sunday Star-Times, Sunday News and some community titles, have been printed at APN's modernised print facility at Ellerslie in Auckland since June 2014.

34 NZME is the short term for New Zealand Media and Entertainment — an overarching banner of three New Zealand media brands including APN NZ, The Radio Network (TRN) and GrabOne. The organisation provides content to over 3.8 million kiwi audiences via a portfolio of radio, digital, e-commerce and print brands. Source: <http://www.nzme.co.nz/about-us/> About Us page of NZME. NZME owns The New Zealand Herald, several other North Island newspapers, The Radio Network (TRN) chain of radio stations and the iHeartRadio online platform.

35 NZME and Fairfax NZ Limited and their respective parent companies, APN News and Media Limited and Fairfax Media Limited, seek Commerce Mission approval to merge the New Zealand operations of NZME and Fairfax in May 2016.

From the beginning of some colonial newspapers<sup>36</sup> in the 1840s, newspapers in New Zealand, which copied their British counterparts, have perceived themselves as the Fourth Estate (Ellis 2013). Similarly to its Nordic counterparts, New Zealand has ranked highly for press freedom on the RSF<sup>37</sup> Press Freedom Index. Also, there is a light-handed state media policy, with few restrictions on overseas ownership or cross-ownership. As the newspaper industry is owned by overseas companies, the government involvement into the newspaper industry is limited compared with Sweden and China.

## **5.2 Digital development of the three newspaper organisations**

### **5.2.1 The *Jönköpings-Posten* (JP)**

By European standards, *Jönköpings-Posten* (JP), the newspaper I studied, is a big player in a small newspaper market. The Swedish-language morning newspaper is based in Jönköping, a city with about 89,400 people in southern Sweden. JP has eight local branch offices and the motto “the world's best local news”. It aims to provide news and information to the public in the city of Jönköping and its surroundings.

Swedish newspapers have declined gradually in the past years and JP is no exception. It had a circulation of 32,800 copies in 2012 and 31,400 in 2013, dropping by four percent (Barman, 2014: 105). Among 35 Swedish newspapers with a circulation above 20,000, JP was listed as 15th in terms of the least decreasing circulation. Similarly to other regional newspapers, the so-called 33/67 business model<sup>38</sup> for traditional newspapers which has been successful for the past 150 years has now crumbled. The circulation shrinks and advertisements cannot subsidise the cost base, thus putting tremendous pressure on the organisation’s operation.

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36 The first New Zealand newspaper is New Zealand Gazette, firstly published on Petone Beach, Wellington, on December 30, 1840.

37 Reporters Without Borders (RWB), or Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), is an international non-profit, non-governmental organisation that promotes and defends freedom of information and freedom of the press. from wiki [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reporters\\_Without\\_Borders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reporters_Without_Borders)

38 Newspaper revenues are in general derived from two main sources: newspaper circulation and advertisement. For a typical local newspaper in Sweden, 33 percent of the revenues comes from the circulation sales and 67 percent is derived from advertisements (Barman, 2014: ii). Another composition of newspaper circulation/advertisement revenue streams is 75/25, which is prevalent among tabloids in Sweden such as Aftonbladet and Expressen (Gustafsson 2009, cited in Barman, 2014: 6).

The newspaper has had a local orientation and strong ties to the regional community throughout its history. It was founded in 1865 by Herman Hall (1837-83), first published on January 17, 1865 and ran on a weekly basis. In 1904 it began to be published six days per week from Monday to Saturday. According to the official presentation of the newspaper on its website, which is consistent with the manager's accounts in my interviews, the newspaper aims to provide "readers and advertisers with a wide variety of content with high reading value that reflects and is adapted to today's local community".

As a newspaper, it is not alone in producing news. JP has, from the start, been part of a conglomerate of holdings. The newspaper is owned by Herenco Industries, a fourth-generation family-owned company which owns five businesses including *Hallpressen*. Hallpressen, or Hall Press in English, is a media house reaching a quarter of million people every publication day via nine subscription morning papers, a dozen free papers and news sites. When the Herenco Group expanded its development in other industrial holdings, the newspaper and newspapers were no longer the group's core business. However, the leaders of the group have consistently seen the newspapers and newspaper publishing as a key platform for closer ties with the local community. Besides, financial gain and efficiency in production have been the focal concern for the newspaper's managers. JP is one of the most profitable papers in the country (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2010: 304).

Compared with other provincial newspapers in Sweden, the JP newspaper has exhibited negative and reluctant attitudes towards new media technology. JP went online only from 2012 and was the last of its kind to go online in Sweden. *Sundsvalls Tidning*, a sister newspaper published in Sundsvall, established its website as early as 1995 (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2010: 304). The former leaders of the JP newspaper regarded new media technologies as high-risk projects where the cost of the technology investment was high and had a slim prospect of turning a profit. As its former CEO believed: "I will let JP go online only if someone can prove to me that money goes there too". The current CEO told me in 2014 that she was struggling to make the decision to go online and she has already met some managerial challenges. But as going online is an inevitable trend in newspaper industry, she had to follow.

Although JP is a dominant player<sup>39</sup> in the local market, the competition has toughened as more and more local media startups<sup>40</sup> are fighting for the readers' attention. In the city of Jönköping and its surrounding areas, there are four news outlets, excluding public radio and TV, competing for the locals' readership, including *Jönköpings-Posten* (the print paper with an online edition), *Jnytt* (owned by the same company as *Jönköpings-Posten*), *Jmini* and *JKPG Live*.

### **5.2.2 China Daily (CD)**

The newspaper studied here has played a pivotal role in digitizing China's news media, as well as opening up and globalising China as a society. It is one of China's largest newspapers, with a total circulation of 900,000 within and outside China. It is also the flagship brand of media digitisation in China. The newspaper's website was launched in 1995, and now the news site has an average of more than 52 million page views per day. Besides the main news site, the digital-media arm of the newspaper group has eight website clusters<sup>41</sup> and three mobile platforms, which provide the leading edge of the group's development. It gathers together both domestic and foreign news professionals and excellent resources, and focuses on offering high-level news and an information service for global readers with a special focus on China.

The China Daily Group has expanded globally at a fast speed in recent years. It has more than 40 bureaux and offices in countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, India, Australia, South Korea, Singapore, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa and Brazil. It has extensive cooperation with Reuters, AP, AFP, *The New York Times*, *USA* and *the Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *The Financial Times*, the BBC and the ABC. On July

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39 The Jönköpings Posten now has a local monopoly status in the city of Jönköping and its surroundings. It is the only morning newspaper in the region (Djerf-Peirre and Weibull, 2010: 304).

40 Rönnerberg Galmor is one in a group of journalists and media entrepreneurs that in recent years have started local news sites as a response to the crumbling newspaper industry. As print revenues keep falling and news organisations are forced to cut positions in their newsrooms, these small local news outlets have filled a hole and are trying to fulfill the democratic mission of journalism (Jönsson, 2015).

41 Website clusters refer to the organisational websites targeting audiences in different countries and areas of the world, e.g. US, Europe, Asia-Pacific and Africa.

8, 2016, *China Daily* set up an office in Hawaii to print and distribute weekly editions of its newspaper, being the 10th office<sup>42</sup> for printing the newspaper across the United States.

*China Daily* has a relatively upmarket remit compared with other newspapers at the same level in China. Its readership, both in China and the rest of the world, is mainly high-level officials, diplomats, executives and academics. Thanks to its language advantage, it is an active player on English social media. Its updated content features not only Chinese stories, but also increasingly global news that appeals to a broader range of social media users. The newspaper's identity was forged as "a voice of China to the world". The main way for an international audience to access information about China is through the Internet, followed by TV, newspapers, broadcasts, magazines and books. Ninety nine percent say the Internet is a key route for exchanges. The younger generation has a more positive outlook on China and in developed and developing countries, people aged 18-24 tend to think of China as attractive, well on its way to being the world's largest economy, and plan to visit China.

The newspaper commenced a digital strategy called the Convergence Strategy, in the wake of the government's call. Only one week after Xi's address on August 18, 2014, the newspaper embarked on its digital strategy; it set up a brand new newsroom called the "All-Media Newsroom" and installed expensive software named 'Eidos Methode'<sup>43</sup> for cross-media news production and publication. My fieldwork started from August 20, 2014, which was right in the phase of strategic formulation of this initiative. "There will be no physical barrier among different sectors in the newsroom. People working for print, web, social media, and mobile media work under the same roof, which is a new attempt (for media convergence)," said Wang Chengmeng, a senior editor at the China Daily website in August, 2015.

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42 As of July 2016, there are a total of 10 offices of China Daily for printing and publishing in the United States, including New York, San Francisco, Washington, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Seattle, Atlanta, Boston and Hawaii.

43 Eidos Methode is a content management system which has been widely used among international flagship media organisations, such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Financial Times.

### 5.2.3 *The Press* and the Stuff Website

*The Press*, first published on May 25, 1861, enjoys a local monopoly in Christchurch<sup>44</sup>, Canterbury region in the South Island. It is the oldest surviving newspaper in the area. It was purchased by Australian publisher Fairfax with other eight newspapers from Independent Newspapers Ltd (INL)<sup>45</sup> on July 1, 2013. According to the company's annual report in 2015, the total revenue of Fairfax NZ was down 5 percent in 2015 from what they collectively reported in 2014. Among which, the advertising revenue was down 6.1 percent, while the digital revenue was up 38 percent. The number of stories published across digital platforms has increased from 400 to 1,500 a day.

Top managers at the parent company Fairfax see the Internet, not newspapers, as the key driver of the company's future development. As former Fairfax chair Roger Corbett put it at the end of 2015: "Fairfax media has achieved a profound transformation in the last four years from a traditional media business into a stronger, more diversified media company increasingly focused on high-growth opportunities". In 2015, the parent company Fairfax in Australia delivered revenue growth for the first time in eight years, up 0.3 percent to A\$1.84 billion.

The Stuff news site, the NZ company's core business, is setting an impressive pace of growth. Its audience increased by 23 percent in 2015 from a year ago, moving from seventh to fourth largest digital site in the country. From March 2016, it has become No.1 New Zealand (that is, leaving out global brands operating in the country) digital brand with monthly audience of over 2 million (Fairfax website). Its monthly audiences in Canterbury alone reaches 297,000 (GO Local Canterbury Media Kit PPT). In December 2015, Stuff announced it would launch a strategic partnership with Facebook, to continue the social media platform's global rollout of its innovative 'Instant Articles' programme (Fairfax 2015

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44 The newspaper's headquarters in downtown Christchurch was badly damaged in the earthquake in February 2011. All news production had been transferred to their printing plant near Christchurch airport until June 2012. The new main building was one of the first buildings in the Christchurch CBD to be rebuilt and operational. (Source: Christchurch City Library <http://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/christchurch-newspapers/>)

45 INL had significant links with News Corporation, the Australian-based global media company. The relationship dated back to 1964 when News purchased a 29.8% stake in the Wellington Publishing Company.

December). The partnership underlines the company's unrelenting commitment to putting audiences at the centre of its publishing model.

Aiming to build a digital future and improve audience monetisation, Fairfax has reshaped its traditional newspaper business in New Zealand through product innovation, newsroom restructure and significant editorial and sales transformation. The restructuring of the traditional business kicked off in 2013, starting with a shake-up to the company's senior hierarchy and how different regions were handled (Ahmed, 2013). The company has been split into three distinct regional groups responsible for business within their catchments: Northern looks after Northland, Auckland and Waikato; Central for Wellington, Manawatu, Taranaki and Hawke's Bay; and Southern for the South Island mastheads, with new senior managers assigned. In 2014 and 2015, the company were implementing 'digital first' strategies, and integrating newsrooms across the print and online platforms. Unfortunately, this did not put 'journalists first', and newsroom layoffs continued (Myllylahti, 2015). In early 2016, Fairfax cut 70 full-time positions of its editorial team for money saving. The sub-editing work has been moved to a third-party provider Pagemasters based in Australia. Journalists in New Zealand are not happy with the aggressive move made by its parent company Fairfax Media in Australia. It is the second major restructure involving job losses at Fairfax within a year. More than 180 editorial positions were disestablished and 160 new ones created when the "digital-first" strategy was unveiled in May 2015.

### **5.3 Some incidents I encountered during the fieldwork**

During the fieldwork, I wrote emails to my supervisor daily to report my findings. Most of these fieldwork diaries are "impressionist stories", as Jon van Maanen (2011) termed the context of the fieldwork and the researcher's first impressions at the scene. In this section, I select some excerpts from the fieldwork diary, which describe the contexts of the selected newspaper organisations, and show my first impressions with the observation context and the interviewees.

*With respect to my fieldwork research at the JP—a local newspaper group, it is unplanned and fruitful! I've done nine interviews with JP staff, including CEO, managers, editors and journalists. However, I didn't observe too much in the newsroom.*

*When I was free at 5 pm after classes, it's usually the busiest time for editors, while journalists have already finished their daily work. Also, they talk in Swedish, so I didn't spend much time shadowing in the newsroom.*

*— Email excerpt to my supervisor on the 3rd day at JP*

The selection of JP as a fieldwork newspaper was opportunistic. In August 2014, I took a long-haul flight from New Zealand to Jönköping, Sweden for a summer school run by the European Media Management Association (EMMA). EMMA is a top research association in the field I am investigating. On the first day of the summer school, Lovisa Hamrin gave a keynote speech. She is the CEO for Herenco Industrier, a fourth-generation family-owned company which has five businesses including Hallpressen, a media house reaching a quarter of million people every publication day via subscription morning papers, free papers and news sites. She told me that she was quite interested in my topic, because she was experiencing some managerial challenges with her newspapers going online. I thought this was a good opportunity, so I asked her whether I could do fieldwork at her newsroom, and she approved this immediately.

I was the first fieldworker in the newsroom of JP, a daily newspaper with over 150 years of history. Lovisa defined the vision of the group's leadership as "effectuation"<sup>46</sup> — an entrepreneurial way of decision-making in situations of uncertainty. This leadership vision goes beyond the organisational mission or vision statements. Researchers (e.g. Sarasvathy 2001, Brettel *et al.*, 2012) have found that this is generally the most effective and appropriate style that steers innovative projects and drives productivity among group members. Just one day after our first meeting at the summer school, I started my fieldwork research in JP's newsroom. The following is Lovisa's reply to my fieldwork application, which is indicative of the CEO's positive way of thinking about uncertainties and changes.

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<sup>46</sup> Effectuation refers to processes that start with "a set of means as given and focus on selecting between possible effects that can be created with that set of means" while causation builds on prediction and processes that "take a particular effect as given and focus on selecting between means to create that effect" (Sarasvathy, 2001: 245; Brettel *et al.*, 2012).

Could you briefly describe which situations and functions/ people you would need to meet and how much time you want for each person? Maybe an easy way is to copycat the method already used (questions and people list) in the other Field Studies.

If you could provide me with this I can arrange for meetings. The sooner the better!

— Email excerpt from Lovisa to me on August 13, 2014

Sweden is a typical observation society<sup>47</sup>, in which observing and being observed are two important features. Many scholars who conducted ethnographic research in a Swedish organisation have mentioned the open attitude of Swedes toward field researchers. “In Swedish municipalities, there are sometimes more researchers than administrators in sight. In companies, the researchers compete with journalists and with visitors from abroad and from headquarters,” as described by a leading professor (Czarniawska, 2014: 69) in a management research institute in Goteborg, Sweden. This is echoed by two Master students at MMTC in Jönköping International Business School<sup>48</sup>. They studied the changing roles of middle managers at Herenco Group, and told me that they had no difficulties in accessing the field and their interlocutors.

As noted in the previous chapter, my fieldwork at China Daily was not as fortunate as at the Swedish one. I started to apply for fieldwork access in early August in 2014 and Qu Yingpu, the deputy editor-in-chief, approved my application quickly. After my fieldwork at JP, I flew to Beijing from Stockholm on 18 August. However, the HR manager was a bit shocked when he learned that I was asking for access to the newspaper’s reception. He declined my application to shadow editorial meetings and to observe journalistic practices in the newsroom, because “too many senior editors get involved”, as he explained.

I arrived at Beijing safely yesterday and visited the *China Daily* newsroom this afternoon, obtaining approval from the big boss. But I encountered an access problem when meeting with an HR manager who seemed very suspicious about my research.

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47 Italian sociologist Giampietro Gobo (2008) terms the “observation society” in his book *Doing Ethnography*.

48 In February and early March 2016, I studied at MMTC in Jönköping International Business School as a visiting PhD fellow. With this opportunity, I conducted a follow-up research about JP.

He said, “You know China Daily is a national newspaper. No one has done fieldwork research at our newsroom. I don’t want to release any controversial, business-secret information to the Western world.” I don’t think he trusts me. He said that although I had received oral approval from the big boss, the research still needs to be conducted in a formal way.

- Email excerpt to my supervisor on 20 August, 2014

He suggested that I shorten my fieldwork from two weeks to one, and to stay in the newspaper’s lobby cafe to meet my interviewees who were approved by him beforehand. I did my first interview at *China Daily* four days later before I ran out of my *guanxi* (pronounced guan-shee) and personal contacts for getting the access. However, I still believe it was very fast access to the newsroom, not to mention I am the only one who has received fieldwork access to the *China Daily*’s newsroom. Ethnographic applications to a Chinese state media “in a formal way” usually mean an indirect rejection after long-time consideration from the managerial board.

I finally get the access to the China Daily’s newsroom. I did three interviews this afternoon and I am going to have around 15 more interviews with managers, journalists and editors at work.

I am allowed to stay in the newsroom for only about one week. I can follow a journalist/editor for a couple of days to observe and record his/her daily routine. Unfortunately, I am not allowed to go into the editorial meetings, as the senior editor explained that “too many senior editors get involved in the editorial meeting.

- Email excerpt to my supervisor on 22 August, 2014

China is one of the most *guanxi*-oriented countries. Yang (1994) has provided an excellent anthropological account of *guanxi* practices in contemporary China, which are usually defined as social interactions, personal relationships, or networks of informal relationships and exchanges of favors. The process of getting official permission to conduct a fieldwork in

a Beijing-based factory was “slow and painful”, as she described, given the number of bureaucratic systems involved. This complicated and painful experience gave her a valuable lesson in the thorough bureaucratisation of urban China: the prevalence of *guanxi* in every facet of Chinese milieus and the necessity of studying the art of *guanxi* in a politicised urban China (9).

Compared with Yang’s experience, my fieldwork at the national English newspaper in China was exceptionally easier to be carried out. On the last day of my fieldwork at China Daily, I met the HR manager and he joked that: “Shao, you use a good strategy — come to my door and apply the fieldwork face to face. We have good *guanxi* as former colleagues and friends. You know it’s hard to refuse you. That’s the main reason I let you study our newsroom. Otherwise, your application would be processed in the ‘formal way’ forever.” I do not see any substantial difference from my knowledge of similar practices in New Zealand or Sweden as I received fieldwork access to *The Press* with the assistance of my departmental colleague who has insider knowledge and good personal connections with the newspaper.

I intended to visit *The New Zealand Herald*, which is the most popular newspaper in the country. But the access application which lasted for nearly three months was declined by the newspaper’s chief reporter, saying that: “we have a few different things underway at the moment so aren’t really in the position to help at the moment”. *The Press* then became my second best choice among NZ newspapers at that time.

These episodes from my fieldwork in Sweden, China and New Zealand raise a question concerning the ‘otherness’ of the fieldworker and its relationship to understanding about the field. Organisational scholar Czarniawska (2014) argues in her research method book to early scholars in social science that, the would-be and wannabe field worker needs to recognise the importance of being “*located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding” (45, emphasis in the original). “An observer can never know *better* than an actor’ a stranger cannot say *more* about any culture that a native can, but observers and strangers can see *different* things than actors and natives can (p45, emphasis in the original),” as she puts. As ‘an other’ in the newsroom, I have developed an understanding about the difference in terms

of ‘*tizhi*’<sup>49</sup> of the print and the Web at the State news group. The web team operates in a more commercialised but less bureaucratic way compared with its print counterpart<sup>50</sup>, and I was more welcomed by both managers and journalists working for the web. Although I worked at the Copy Desk at the newspaper, mainly for the print, and speak the same language as my interlocutors, I have never felt native in the course of my fieldwork, and rounds of negotiations about limitations to my physical access reminded me constantly that I was not one of them.

My otherness as a fieldworker in the selected newsrooms has been a double-edge sword which has simultaneously allowed and constrained my fieldwork practices and my understanding of them after the fieldwork. As Niklas Luhmann (1988) pointed out, the world as seen by actors is necessarily unlike the world seen by observers. The otherness has helped me get closer to my interlocutors and know more about their deep, more personal concerns in relation to the organising work, such as their confusion about professional identity, worries about personal career path and frustrations about buck-passing in the bureaucratic organisation. Simultaneously, my otherness has stimulated my interviewed journalists to push/direct me to a load of official documents and statistics which are vaguely connected with the organising work that I am looking for, or to pass my inquiry to top managers who are inaccessible to most of the journalists, and me, too.

#### **5.4 What and why context matters?**

In this chapter, I have presented some key trends in the newspaper industry in the three countries, and have introduced the current market positions of the researched newspapers, highlighting the main changes and challenges they have met in the news field in the recent decade. Some of these changes have occurred at the industrial level and have led to the formulation of digital strategies and the restructure of newsrooms; others have occurred at the organisational level, outside and inside the newspaper organisations, such as leadership shifts and staff redundancy. By European standards, *Jönköpings-Posten*, the newspaper I studied, is

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<sup>49</sup> The term will be further discussed in Chapter 8 about the Chinese case.

<sup>50</sup> The differences of organising work between the print and the web at the *China Daily* will be further discussed in Chapter 8 about the Chinese case.

a big player in a small newspaper market. *China Daily* is an emergent globaliser with great financial support from the state. *The Press* is a local news provider like *Jönköpings-Posten* but owned by the news conglomerate Fairfax in Australia.

Nowotny et al. (2001) identified some fundamental changes in the literature on the social and management sciences and characterised the changes as a co-evolutionary process between science and society. Nowotny et al. (2001) noted that, in the social and management sciences, there are “greater pluralism of research practice”, “a greater recognition of the localised (in time and space) character of research practice and outcomes”, “a wider recognition of the emergent rather than planned views of the research process” and “a recognition of the complex interactions between multiple stakeholders in the research process and a more contested landscape for evaluating the quality and relevance of research processes, outputs and outcomes”.

The three case studies more or less illustrate the above-mentioned changes in our understanding of organisations. Specifically, this research adopts a pluralist approach to examine newswork as a managerial and journalistic issue. It is an attempt to combine a variety of perspectives, including sensemaking and sensegiving, process and practice perspectives, and simultaneously assess the three factors of change — the contexts, content and processes and their impacts on newswork. The selected newspaper organisations are not as representative as the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and USA Today in the newspaper industry which have drawn wide scholarly attention.

The complexity of organising environment that is emergent rather than planned raise major challenges for researchers who explore new forms of organising and strategising. In Table 5.1 we see that all the newspaper organisations in my case studies engaged and developed their digital strategies through more or less deliberate attempts to change different aspects and elements of organisational practice. However, these attempts do not necessarily follow the same pattern. When emergent change become a universal in organisations as Weick (2003: 237) noted (cf. 2.5 for a detailed definition of emergent change), it seems short-sighted and ‘acontextual’, to use Pettigrew’s (1985, 1987) words, for organisational change researchers to

understand change — which consists of “ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alterations that produce fundamental change without a priori intentions to do so” — with a priori assumptions. In order to suspend a priori assumptions and provide a realistic, empirically grounded account of the research issue — managing newswork during strategic process, the inductive ethnographic research has been employed to “understand the social world by first discovering the conceptual lenses that the members of the organisation use to see and interpret their experience” (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 435), and the organisational contexts at the meso and macro levels have been discussed.

It is important to take notice of the concepts of emergent organisational environment. The concepts of emergent organisational environment enable researchers to examine organisations as dynamic entities which are always in a state of flux and shaped by continuous and intertwined processes of organising and strategising (Janssens and Steyaert, 1999). Specific to this research, the understanding of organising and strategising is based on the interactions between actors (referring to them as managers and journalists) and observers (referring to us as researchers) in the field. The interactions happened not by identification (they like us), but by the recognition of differences (we are outsiders and different from them). By exploring these differences we will understand both actors and ourselves in the field better. In this uncertain and complex environment, a newspaper’s decision to go digital has meant changes in the creation of news by news professionals — the journalists. Thus, the last section of paragraph creates a link to the rest of the thesis, as it discusses the background and contexts in which journalists conduct newswork and managers organise and strategise newswork.

**Table 5.1 Newspaper contexts at different levels in Sweden, China and New Zealand**

|   | <b>Sweden</b>   | <b>China</b>  | <b>New Zealand</b>   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>The Newspaper Industry</b>   | Top performers and overachievers worldwide  | Global expansion campaign of the State media  | A near duopoly structure for over a century  |
|   | Considerable stable market  | the CPC's 'instrumental role' in media reform                                       | Foreign-owned newspapers   |
| <b>Uncertainties and Complexities in the Current News Environment</b> | High level of ownership   | The State owns and controls the traditional, mainstream news group.                 | A merging plan of the two dominant newspaper companies was proposed in May 2016, but rejected in May 2017. |
|   | Family business, foundations, and not-for-profit organisations                            | An sharp increase in Internet users, especially cell phone users                    | Digital communication is the preferred medium for the public.  |
|   | Direct government subsidy to selective newspapers   | Massive financial and political support from the State                              | A pending paywall proposal since 2013  |
|   | Convergence and diversifications  | The year 2014—the 'Year of Media Convergence'                                       | "A populist approach" by giving people what they want  |
|   | Newspapers lost their dominant status to the Internet in the national advertising market. | Top-level media reform  | Profit-oriented news industry with limited government involvement  |
| <b>Researched Newspaper</b>   | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i>  | <i>China Daily</i>  | <i>The Press</i>   |
|   | The Swedish-language local morning newspaper  | The national English newspaper  | The largest newspaper in the South Island  |
|   | Family business   | State media   | Australian-owned Fairfax   |
|   | a circulation of 31,400   | a circulation of 900,000 within and outside China                                   | a circulation of 64,000  |
|   | Negative and reluctant attitudes towards new media technology                             | All-media Newsroom' established one week after the State's media convergence policy | 'Digital-First' Strategy   |
|   | Two news sites (JP online edition and Inytt)  | One news site with more than 52 million page views per day                          | The Stuff is the most popular news site in the country with monthly audience of over 2 million.            |

## Chapter 6 Micro-practices of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving: How managers interpret and enact an emergent change to journalists

*Organisational members do not simply behave and conduct work, they think about and make sense of their world. Thus, sensemaking refers to the process whereby organisational members translate an organisational event and construct a meaningful explanation for that event. Establishing of common understanding is important to an organisation, because it enables organisational activities to become routinised. Also, it helps organisational members to achieve a level of commonality and continuity that facilitates organisational action.*

Leona Achtenhagen (2007: 3)

As I mentioned at the beginning of Part IV, the whole purpose of the three case studies is to integrate and extend previous research on organisational change by considering the impacts of the three change-related factors — content, context and process — on creating new ways of managing newswork. And this chapter explores the ‘content’ of managing newswork during strategic change, as shown in the lower-left box in Figure 3.1 Theoretical Framework. Since the content of strategy in the three cases has been discussed in Chapter 5 Research Methods (cf. Table 5.1 for an overview of different newspaper contexts), the narratives of managers’ and journalists’ own stories of strategic change are the focus of this chapter, the aim of which is twofold. Firstly, it aims to examine the role that the content of strategic change plays in the way people think about and act upon the change and the interaction between management and journalism. Secondly, it throws a spotlight on the advantages and limitations of the sensemaking perspective in understanding the complexity of managing newswork during strategic change.

Changes in action are intertwined with changes in mind. Before showing how people actually act upon change, it seems appropriate to inject a chapter on what people think about the very change itself. As discussed in Chapter 3, from a sensemaking standpoint, organisations are "socially constructed systems of shared meaning" (Weick, 1979; 1997) in which organisational members actively form (enact) their environments through their social

interaction. Therefore, to probe the minds of managers and strategists to see how strategic sensemaking and sensegiving occur, it is important to examine the meanings that managers and journalists create during strategic change.

People's retrospections and interpretations about strategic change not just provide the who and the what of sensemaking and sensegiving, but also illustrate the conditions associated with these in newspaper organisations — where, when or why they occur, with the latter having been under-explored in the strategic sensemaking studies (Orton, 2000; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). The narrative analysis on people's retrospections and interpretations of the strategic change provides evidence that the content of strategic change plays a part in people's acceptance, sensemaking and commitment to the change. Managers and journalists make sense of their experiences of change through different temporal orientations — namely the past, present and future, and their relationship with the ongoing change. Middle managers, as the meaning creators during strategic change, are key 'sensemakers' and 'sensegivers' on the front line, but they are in the odd position of being the most knowledgeable about the content, process and context of change, yet the least able to do anything about them.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, what managers and journalists think about the ongoing change is described, then their interpretations about the content of the strategy are presented, and finally, the results of the analysis are assessed and discussed in relation to the sensemaking perspective.

## **6.1 Managers' and journalists' interpretations of ongoing change**

The attitudes, desires and willpower of people engaged in carrying out a strategy are one of the most sophisticated but invisible dimensions to study in the field of organisational changes and strategic management. As outlined in the literature review, empirical application of the sensemaking perspective in organisational and management studies reflects that the sense-making perspective is somewhat too integrative, parochial (Cooren et al., 2012), and the

sensemaking data collected from in-depth interviews are retrospective, subjective and highly contingent (Gioia and Mehra, 1996).

During the fieldwork research, I asked managers and journalists the same question: "Are you experiencing any change in your daily work?" Their answers vary, not surprisingly. The interviewees provided me with a large number of accounts of change. These accounts are of complexities and uncertainties, with openings. Changes ongoing in the researched organisations, in their description, are not radical, but incremental. They are more like a top-down action, but not a technology disruption, with little engagement from the grassroots employees.

### **6.1.1 What middle managers and journalists say about change**

Among all the interviewees, middle managers are the ones experiencing changes the most and the main source of negative feedback towards change. Middle managers, especially the ones in boundary-spanning sub-units or positions, are losing their strategic influence as a consequence of restructuring, downsizing and outsourcing in the news organisations. The interviewed middle managers share a negative attitude towards change. They suffer stress from heavy workloads and fear of losing their jobs. Moreover, their struggles are not noticed by or shared with senior executives at a higher level or the journalists at the grassroots level.

At the Swedish newspaper, a senior journalist who has enacted certain managerial practices described the ongoing changes as "full of confusion". She discussed her increasing confusion with the higher level staff of the organisation and asked for "some reasons" for the constant changes but got "no clear answer". "If you have the solution, I think you would get the Nobel Prize," she joked to me, with an unwilling smile on her face. In the words of the senior journalist:

Everything has changed. ... When I started as a journalist, the journalists could say anything they wanted to. If the reader said, 'Can you write something like that? ', we would say, 'Of course not, we decide what we are doing'. But now we are looking for

more readers, as we have to do. We could have done that earlier. ...Our newspaper is much less now. We are losing every day in the paper. (Interview, Senior Journalist)

At the Chinese newspaper, a middle manager of news production who has worked in that position for over seven years said she has changed jobs for four times from 2013 to August 2014. Her current job is for the marketing department, named 'Supplement', writing promotional stories and soft marketing advertisements for the newspaper's clients. She is a senior news editor and was the person in charge of daily domestic news feeds. However, her current job is not related to journalism or news at all. The middle management team has been reshuffled, and almost every middle manager at the newspaper has changed their job. From August 2013 to March 2014, she took charge of the *Weibo* posts of China Daily. *Weibo*, or microblogging in English, is China's equivalent of Twitter. As she puts it:

I think the reason why the boss assigned this job to me is I have good *Guanxi* (personal relationship network) with journalists and editors at different beats and in different provinces and regions. ...During the time that I was in charge of *Weibo* posts, the followers of China Daily's *Weibo* account saw a sharp increase in number, from 700,000 to nearly 2,000,000.

But she was the only one working on the social media marketing of the Daily. A deputy editor-in-chief was another member of the *Weibo* team, but "How dare I ask him to do the posts?" she said.

I worked alone and heavily relied on my cell phone, as I had to post the latest information at any time at any place. My daily working status was sticking to my cell phone, sending posts from morning to evening, from domestic news to international news. I got sore hands every day. What's worse, *weibo* posting was just my part-time job. I had other jobs to do at the same time.

The heavy workload and frequent role shifts made the manager become "frustratingly exhausted", as described in her own words. The more I felt the negative emotion from her account, the more I have come to believe that an important problem lies in treating change as

a problem. The turbulence and resulting resistance to change is, in all three cases, most severe in the copy section — the last step for daily newspaper production — in part because the newspapers are still making a living from the print papers, in part because the copy section relies more on technology than other sections to make a change, but also because the strategy of going digital and the present resources and particular tasks for the copy-editing section are not congruent with each other. In other words, these are the counter-effects of the practice and process elements on the managers' and journalists' cognition.

A night editor at the NZ newspaper describes his job as being to "make sure the paper comes every day" and to "put out the best paper we can". He showed his concern towards the quality of journalism and his loss of journalistic expertise in the daily routine work of filling the boxes (in the newspaper pages), layout and styling, proofreading and rigid deadlines.

Until 18 months ago, I was still writing. So I still write web stories which I get to put online. That's pretty much my only link with online. And I talk to the Editor Joanna that maybe I could do more digital stuff in the evening. But she wants me in this role, to have a specialist in the paper, because I've worked across almost every section in the newspaper, so I know the paper well, I know what goes where.

The newsroom, where the digital-first strategy has been fully adopted and implemented, cuts the number of subs and asks journalists to write and edit stories. The journalist is the only one who is responsible for the quality of his/her stories, there is almost no editing filter in the news production here. The pressures of quality journalism all come down to the night editor, "usually the last person for the newspaper before it goes to be printed" as he described himself.

Around the deadlines, it would very tricky if there are problems with pages. If we have to re-write headlines, I don't have anyone just say, defence double-checking, no one around. ... Actually that's got lots trickier for me at night. As fewer people are working on the stories, there are more mistakes. I find some mistakes. I find more mistakes. I correct more mistakes. But they don't get all checked, because I can't read every single word in the paper.

He says he has experienced fewer changes than others in the newsroom. The number of subs has been decreased. The hub, called the editorial services, has put most of the subs who formerly worked for the daily to work for newspapers in Australia, so fewer people are working on the New Zealand side. He said he had heard that this was going to happen and this would be very tough for them.

Well, when I started, we had the news editors working in the same house as ours basically, and we had an in-house layout sub who was doing all the ... We had a much bigger pool of staff to put the paper together. That's being cut back a lot. We don't have any in-house training. And because we have earlier deadlines now, and the printing of pages becomes a kind of a national thing, all the prints have to be delivered.

The (digital) procedure change is probably not aimed towards news editors like me, but in terms of fewer people working for the paper now.

Interestingly, he does not think the risks for low quality are the fault of going digital.

No. I don't think going online is a fault. I think it is just now that fewer people are doing the jobs that we have done before. Sub-editors are under pressure. They have to do so many pages at night and they have met the levels and expectations on them. So they don't have the luxury of time. So when we get stuff sometimes, you may see it's been very roughly written. Headlines don't make sense, or wrong captions on pictures. That's just the consequence of fewer people doing it.

The editor's narrative has at least two implications in terms of the role of cognitive elements in the strategy process. First, the management's thinking has not encompassed the entire process, especially at the cognitive level, and the managerial pressures from 'being digital' all come down to the last step of the news production process — the copy centre. The management needs to make decisions in a way that encompass the entire process. Secondly,

the 'Digital First Strategy' at the Press newsroom is based on a set of assumptions and future expectations around journalists, audiences and customers and managers themselves, but not about editors, as it is beyond the range of assumptions that are the foundations of a strategy formulation. The latter implications will be further discussed in the later section.

Similar cases can be found in the Chinese newspaper. A middle manager at the Copy Centre said he was frustrated about the all-media strategy because he hasn't had enough staff for work, although no one in his section was sacked.

Our former routines are: I need 2 for domestic (news), 2 for international (news), 1 for business and 1 for sports news. You know, stories at the different beats have different deadlines and editors don't have to stay there all the time and wait. But now, our copy editors have to be there all the time. Whenever a news story comes, we start working on it. It is very hard for me to organise the working schedule for my staff. We lack hands.

When he recalled some 'big moments' related to change in the newsroom, he pointed out that a lack of determination from the managers is the biggest problem for the newspaper to confront change and seek to innovate.

Everyone in the news industry is applying an incremental, trial-and-error, evolutionary approach, like wading across the stream by feeling the way. This newspaper is not an exception. However, our biggest problem is that we haven't had a firm stand.

Around 2000, the concept of convergence was first proposed. There were some 'big actions' in 2008 and 2009. For example, the business section of the print merged with the business section of the website. They worked together. They even got an annual award for their work excellence. I felt the year of 2008 was the most innovative year with lots of great attempts and experiments. However, it was halted, due to some non-editorial issues. Ridiculously, the most successful experiment became the biggest failure. After that, no one in the newsroom has had enough confidence to experiment again. (Interview, Middle Manager)

In the Swedish case, depression swept the newsroom when the digital transformation was on the way. Before making a move towards website development, the newspaper company restructured the print section, cutting the editorial and journalistic staff working at the town newspapers in the Småland Province with Jönköping as its municipality. The large-scale redundancy made the remaining employees at the *Jönköpings-Posten* stressed and depressed. In the words of one employee:

Most people had to quit their jobs. ... Now we work for all the papers, not for one paper. The material can go across different papers and websites. As a local reporter, I feel it's a shame that the local material get reduced. But in the meantime, I completely understand that the company has to make changes. ... I think everyone has got used to it. (Interview, Journalist)

### **6.1.2 The dynamics of attitude towards change**

It is important to note that the attitude towards change is not static. From the above narrative, we can track how attitudes (towards change) change. The editor at first had a neutral attitude towards change, which is apparent in his explanation about the necessity to apply “a trial-and-error approach” in the earlier stage of the strategy process. The editor then held a positive attitude towards change, as he was encouraged by the celebration of “some big actions” achieved by his peers in the other department at the end of the year. However, he was quickly annoyed by the sudden halt of the trial project, and felt it was “ridiculous”. When the change came to his department, his attitude became more negative. He blames “a lack of determination in decision making” for his resistance to change.

The dynamic of the editor's attitudes towards changes, from natural and positive to negative, provides a vivid illustration of the impact of cognitive elements on strategic performance. Resistance, as a cognitive element in the strategy process, is a psychological issue. As highlighted in the Literature Review about the sensemaking perspective, cognitive approaches to management draw heavily on psychology, i.e. Morgan (1986) interprets the cognitive elements as "organisations as brains".

Chip Heath, a leading expert on organisational behaviour, calls for change deciders to "make the emotional case for change". He argues that there are two sides to the way human beings think about change. One is the rational, analytical, problem-solving side of our brains, while the other is the emotional side which is comfortable with the old ways of thinking, and has great anxiety about the negative in a change situation. He describes the rational side metaphorically as 'The Rider' that makes decisions, and the emotional side as 'The Elephant' which provides the power to execute them. He explains how this dual tension between "The Rider" and "The Elephant" works in an organisational change process:

It's not enough to show intellectually that we need to change and then to decree what those changes will be. If it were, a lot more organisations would succeed in making strategic shifts. Formal power is tremendously useful, but if we *start [Italic in original]* by wielding it we probably haven't aligned the Rider and the Elephant. And if we rely *only* on the formal levers of power to lead, we may get too far ahead of people—they understand that they must change, but the motivation hasn't kicked in (Heath, Interview with McKinsey).

In reality, the cognitive element is always overlooked. Managers in the three cases fail to balance the dual tension between 'The Rider' and 'The Elephant'. In most cases, managers simply made a decision to change and ordered the doers to execute it. There is a cognitive misalignment between crippling planners and confused doers, or 'The Rider' and 'The Elephant' in Heath's metaphor, in the three fields. There is only one exception, which will be discussed in Section 6.2 Making Sense of the Strategy.

With respect to giving the sense of change top-down, the planners in the China case lost a great opportunity to scale up the "bright spots", which are empirically demonstrated in Heath's research to be powerful in motivating the doers. Heath points out a tendency in people's cognition, especially in a changing situation, to focus on the negative. Organisations focus on the problems and not the bright spots. The principle of bright spots is that people should try to "be more like yourself at your best moments", rather than to benchmark yourself against others, such as GE or Apple or Nike, and merely focus on the negative. It is the

manager's job to scale up bright-spot success, because the doers can only be motivated by managers who create an emotional case for change, not just an analytical one.

Heath's call to build on the bright spots to boost motivation is similar to Amabile and Kramer's proposal to be aware of "the power of small wins". The power of "bright spots" and "small wins" is the power of progress, which is fundamental to human nature. The manager's awareness of their organisation's own progress is helpful to crystallise change and boost motivation. By helping them see their own progress, the people who make change happen will feel themselves recognised and appraised, realise their work is meaningful, and be greatly motivated. Unfortunately, managers in the Chinese case do not understand it or know how to leverage progress to boost motivation.

Besides attitudes and resistance, technology is an inevitable element in the narratives about change. Technological change has always been a major focus of the research on transformation of the media and the cultural industries more generally. Turning to the news industry and journalism, the impacts of technological innovation on the form of news itself and on news workers have been extensively discussed. However, there is a missing part in news production research: management and the level of decision making.

The research conducted by Schlesinger and Doyle (2014) tries to fill the gap. The research focuses on technological change, but examines the attendant impact on news production from management and decision-makers in two newspaper organisations. Their focus on technological change is at the managerial level, "the point at which attempts are being made to devise strategies for dealing with a rapidly changing environment, both in terms of how technology is impacting the internal workings of what is rapidly ceasing to be 'the newspaper' and how the business itself might be reshaped to maximise revenues, and in particular, find new income streams." (4 - 5). Following the line of news production ethnography, they question decision-makers' pursuit and capacity to evolve and reconfigure in the changing environmental conditions.

The visual manager, who is in charge of seven visual journalists in the NZ newsroom, reviews the changes of videoing technologies since the early 1990s when he started his journalistic career. He stresses that technological changes have fundamentally restructured journalistic practices and procedures, especially those of visual journalists. Technological changes occur quickly around the Internet, and as he puts it, leaders must keep a watchful eye on the speed of technology changes and provide in-time training for journalists.

For the (current) restructure, we call it a 'news agency approach'. As visual journalists, we don't serve just one master, we serve many masters. ... To shoot video is the biggest change happening for photojournalists. There is an interesting thing in the restructure: our staff are quite committed to video and they want to learn as they see that as their future. However, in training these photographers to become videographers, we hadn't expected they would become quite such a marketable commodity in the employment workforce. We have lost quite a few staff to higher paying jobs. ... It's interesting that around the country TV journalists actually feel quite threatened by us. ... We've got feedback quite often from TV journalists who were quite worried about their jobs. (Interview, Middle Manager)

From the above narrative, we can see that technological change not only results in changes in terms of journalistic practice but can be a managerial issue, especially about maintaining human resources. On the one hand, managers must keep a watchful eye on the speed of technology change and provide in-time training to satisfy the worker's desire to learn new technology. On the other hand, they must be aware that technological training may encourage a loss of technology talents.

Change, uncertainty and risks have been a norm of organisational life, especially for those working in the newspaper industry. The overall view of change as something inherently problematic and filled with challenges and risks does not fit with the blueprint designed by managers in the same organisation. Journalists and managers I encounter are negative about changes. Their sense-making of change is problem-oriented. Similar experience is found in other in-depth case studies where interviewees are frustrated and sad and hate changes in their work. The negative bias, emotion, or atmosphere prevailing in the fieldwork encourages researchers to propose troubleshooting suggestions to managers to overcome challenges and

win opportunities. However, for both researchers and newspaper managers, there lies an important problem in treating change as a co-existence of opportunities and challenges.

In this sense, there seems to be an unfortunate discrepancy between how to handle newspaper change in theory and what newspaper managers actually do. Scholars in this interdisciplinary field have extensively investigated the causes and effects of changes in newspaper organisations. However, the decision-making dimension of these changes has been surprisingly ignored. What and how managers think about and act upon change is the focal point of this research. To be sure, this is not a silver bullet for solving any problem whatsoever related to the newspaper industry. But this research is a fresh mechanism for representing ongoing, confusing and complicated changes in a different and structured way. In order to have a neutral focus on organisational change, I not only study what people think about change, but also explore how people act upon change and how they make change happen. To study what people think — the cognitive and discursive dimension of organisational change — I apply the sense-making perspective, while to study the latter two dimensions of organisational change, I apply the practice and process perspectives, which will be further discussed in the following three chapters (Chapters 7, 8, 9).

## **6.2 Making sense of the unfolding strategy**

### **6.2.1 Ambiguous strategy, transparent strategy**

Every interviewee is clear about the company's overall strategy to go digital. However, most of them are confused about how to get there. Below are some of their answers to the question: "Have you noticed any strategy that is being implemented in the newsroom?"

Digital first, absolutely. (Interview, Journalist)

The end goal is to make money from the web. That has been said time and time again. That's the focus. (Interview, Journalist)

There is a missing link between where we are and how we get there. (Interview, Senior Journalist)

A big reshuffle. ...lots of redundancy. (Interview, News Manager)

The strategy is media convergence. But what is convergence? I don't know. No one knows. (Interview, Digital Manager)

We are not clear about the goal of the strategy. (Interview, Middle Manager)

Like strategy researchers, people who get involved in any strategy process are forced to turn to the fundamental question of strategy — the concept of strategy. *The Economist* gives it a simple yet powerful definition: strategy answers two basic questions: "Where do you want to go?" and "How do you want to get there?" (Eisenhardt, 1999). From the above narratives about strategy, we can see that managers in the three cases work on the first question — what is the strategy? However, they seldom address the second one, or they do not know how to answer it. The answer to the second question is what the journalists are eager to know.

The digital strategies in the selected newsrooms are ambiguous in terms of 1) the message of the digital strategy itself, 2) the intentions of message sources, referring to the motivations of the strategy makers, and 3) the interpretations of the message receivers, referring to the interpretations of the strategy doers.

In the literature about strategy content, a few scholars have noted that strategy ambiguity does not mean communicative incompetence or inefficient organisational performance. Instead, strategy ambiguity, as Eisenberg (1984) argues, can facilitate organisational change. "At the organisational level, strategic ambiguity facilitates change through shifting interpretations of organisational goals and central metaphors. At the interpersonal level, ambiguity facilitates change through the development of relationships among organisational members (10)". The overemphasis on clarity and openness in organisational research is a misleading standard to gauge communicative competence or effectiveness. "Clarity (and conversely, ambiguity) is not an attribute of messages; it is a relational variable which arises through a combination of source, message, and receiver factors (6 - 7)." Although transparency in organisations and management is generally considered a good thing, there is also a "dark side" to transparency (Birkinshaw and Cable, 2017). Organisational transparency

does not necessitate the acceleration of information gathering, the coordination among different sections and individuals in organisation, and accountability of managers who made the decision about the strategic change. Excessive sharing of information creates problems of "innovation overload", "endless debates and second-guessing of senior executive decisions".

So, there is a fascinating paradox here: How to balance the transparency and ambiguity in the process of creating meaning of a digital strategy for managers themselves? Before the meaning about the strategy is created for and shared with the doers, senior executives themselves may need to make a choice in their minds first: What information about the strategy do they need to open up and what to withhold? When is the right time to do each and/or both? Given the current newspaper's industrial situation which is full of uncertainty and ambiguity, is there still a role for a strategy which has lasted for over a year?

These are both cognitive and practical issues that managers must confront in the strategy process. Given the complementary and reciprocal nature of sensemaking and sensegiving, before the meaning of a strategy has been created for the doers, managers who make the strategy need to get the balance of transparent and ambiguous information related to the strategy right. The following narrative reflects the importance of a shared management cognition in the strategy process.

... (the CEO) asked me to focus on 'strategic work'. I try to focus more on the daily work, have contact with people at work. If I just focus on strategic work, maybe it will be too late to apply my strategy. Because everything changes so fast, journalistic work changes so fast, we need to catch it and give a response to it very quickly.  
(Interview, Digital Manager)

Clearly, the digital manager and the top manager interpreted the strategic work in different ways. For the digital manager, strategic work refers to opening up the strategy process to the people at work via constant communication, and coping with the strategy's evolution with the pace of daily work changes. On the other hand, the top manager somehow follows a traditional approach of making sense of strategic work, by which strategic work is about planning in annual executive get-togethers. In this sense, if strategy is about strategic

sensemaking and sensegiving and then the empowerment, the empowerment and the doers are excluded from the process of making sense of the strategy for managers in the eyes of the boss. Moreover, the digital manager sees his role in the strategy process as a mobiliser for the current, while the boss sees the digital manager's position as a vision-designer for the future. It is important to note that strategy is not just about top-down clarity, but about building up and sustaining new relationships during strategic sensemaking, in which people's cognition is central.

### **6.2.2 Cognitive change, strategic change, and the existing mindset**

In the three cases, the launch of the digital website and subsequent digital projects, although they have been described as a strategic change for each researched newspaper, they did not cause a change in the cognitive infrastructure. The Internet and digital technologies have been seen as a means full of opportunities which enable the organisations to extend their existing role in the digital platform, and thus reinforce the existing mindset.

A journalist in the New Zealand case, who describes himself as "old-fashioned", shows strong resistance towards the organisation's strategic choice to be digital first, and labelled it as "a bad idea". Given the context of a local monopoly and the "not too fragmented" audiences, he is more inclined towards the print instead of the digital. He then accuses deciders, with their "focus on the digital platform", of ignoring the organisation's individual difference from its counterparts in other markets, and the existing and expandable strengths of the print. His response to cope with the existing strategic choice is two-directional: highlighting the strengths of the print, while pointing out the manager's ignorance of "the daily stuff". At the end of the narrative, he calls for managers to move beyond the changes in terms of a "platform" towards the change in terms of "construction". The "construction" here, based on my own understanding, refers to the construction of the reality (about what people do and how they do it), and more importantly, the construction in people's minds (about what and how people think).

I am a bit old fashioned. I always think it is a bad idea to give away our news, to give it away for free. But you know we have made that bad decision and I don't have any problems with the focus on the digital platform. ...

Well, I think it is great to have that strategy. At the end of the day, we still need to fill the newspaper, it's still making money. We are a bit unusual in the way that we have a bit of a monopoly here on the daily newspaper (industry). We are a small provincial area, and we've got a...loyal audience, not too fragmented. So we will be one of the last survivors. So we still have this newspaper. At the same time, we are developing a whole new strategy, and look, we just do the best we can, day by day. People that generally make this strategy are not doing the day-to-day stuff. So you know; it is understandable that they don't take account of the reliability of stories, these sort of things. ...

Print is struggling and it's no secret. Print is struggling because it's lost its revenue strength. But people are still into news. No doubt the platform will change. ... the construction needs to change too. (Interview, Specialist Reporter)

This is a powerful example of the involvement of cognitive change and strategic change, from a doer's perspective. Cognitive change involves strategic change. It is no surprise that both deciders and doers are crying out cognitive change alongside strategic change. However, it has proved hard in reality. Many researchers on strategic choice and performance have attributed the failure of a strategic change to entrenchment in the mindset. However, the three cases show some strikingly different examples that cognitions are not just hampering a strategic change, but are sometimes a mobiliser. Managers, in implicit and/or explicit ways, modify the meaning of a strategic change, thus reinforcing the existing mindset. They incorporate the ongoing strategic initiatives into the organisational macro-strategy in the long run, legitimating the strategic choice. They use tacit knowledge to dictate their strategic choice and action. There is always a role for organisational memories in the moment of making a strategic choice and/or putting it into action. These examples can loosely be

encapsulated as "a range of sensemaking processes that gives rise to sets of explicit and implicit cognitions" (Küng, 2007: 138).

In recent years the sensemaking perspective has steadily increased in popularity within organisation and management studies. Sensemaking scholars emphasise "senior managers' 'cognitive base' and the influence this has on how strategic issues are perceived and acted on (Küng, 2007: 142)", as a way to better understand and explain organisational phenomena. As mentioned in the Literature Review, despite its rise in popularity, the role of managers' cognition in the strategy process has been the subject of academic attention for a long time. However, there is a distinction between the sensemaking perspective and the other management cognition literature. The sensemaking perspective concerns the processes by which cognitions develop, while most of the management cognition literature examines the content of cognitions (Küng, 2007: 142).

*Example 1: Sensemaking and the strategy process*

Here is a powerful example of the process by which cognitions develop. Sensemaking scholars have identified three components of sensemaking: scanning, interpreting, and responding (Milliken 1990, Bogner and Barr, 2000). The interlocutor is the executive director of the newspaper's print-web convergence projects from the very beginning. He puts the strategy process in this way:

It is hard for me to elaborate the strategy. Yes, we do have a strategy named media convergence. For me, media convergence is **like a spell**. It is an issue that everyone ought to tackle. However, at this stage on the worldwide level, no one finds an effective way to tackle that issue and realise convergence successfully. The current situation of **media convergence can be captured by the analogy of Ebola virus disease**. Since the first virus outbreak happened and was discovered, we have been finding various solutions to stop its spread. On a worldwide level, there is no known treatment for Ebola in humans. Even if there is one cure for Ebola, there is still **a long way** for us to put it into use and eradicate the disease. You need to go through medical testing, Human subject research, pharmacy licensing in your country etc... Doctors who are going to introduce the cure to their own countries have the same psyche as newspaper managers who are dealing with convergence: we don't know whether it works. Here **the 'it' refers to the approaches which are actionable in the self-context, but not the concept of convergence per se**. On the other hand, the confusion about the approaches to realise convergence **does not necessarily mean that it is worthless to make convergence happen**. It is crucial to have **a new mindset** to boost organisational development, to energise and mobilise its resources, otherwise the company would stall. **Convergence is one of the trendy mindsets**. In the changing situation characterised by increasing digital growth and profits, and massive fortunes flowing to the web, it is not surprising that newspaper managers live in hope of convergence and **have sought myriad ways of realising it. In the process of realising the goal, there is lots of uncertainty in terms of finding a way to get there**. However, I don't think we are confused about the direction of the strategy. **What we confused is how to get there**. (Interview, Digital Manager)

*A metaphor of the concept of convergence — the cognitive elements of the strategy process*

*A metaphor of various developments of convergence worldwide — the cognitive elements of the strategy process*

*Referring to the strategy duration*

*The manager's individual cognition of the strategy*

*Referring to the actual doings of the convergence strategy*

*Strategy is a construct.*

*Referring to practice and process of doing the digital strategy in the organisation.*

*The manager's individual cognition of the strategy*

Compared with the narratives on the strategy content, those about the strategic process are far more complex. The data of the narratives are messy and multi-levelled. The narrative about the strategic process here underwent a first-level interpretive analysis (Feldman, 1995). It was broken down into units containing one action/topic (e.g. strategic choice and the content of the strategy as different topics). In total, eight topics were identified (see the left, italic column in the Table) and each of these topics was then examined using the following questions: 1) What is the meaning of the topic for the interlocutor? 2) How has the meaning for the interlunar/manager been created? 3) How has the sense been created for the doers and diffused to the different levels of the organisation? Through this procedure, three patterns of micro-stabilities of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving were identified: accepting/resisting strategic change as a mix of transparency and ambiguity, making strategic choices anchored by tacit knowledge, as well as justifying strategic change in order to intensify the existing mindset rather than the other way around.

The way the manager frames the strategy reflects his sensemaking processes, which consist of scanning, interpreting, and responding. With respect to scanning, he gathered information from the external environment and the internal environment. For him, the concept of convergence, at the worldwide level, has not been clarified. At the same time, it is problematic to apply the convergence concept into local and organisational contexts. The scanning of the manager's sensemaking has been embodied in the analogy of "The Spell". He perceives the whole environmental development more as a threat than an opportunity. He labels convergence as a spell cast on newspaper managers who have no other choice for the future. Here, as discussed in 3.2.1 Sensemaking: Scanning, Interpretations and Responding, cognitive frameworks affect what is noticed by making some stimuli more salient than others. The manager makes challenges more salient than opportunities, both brought by putting convergence into action.

After scanning, the manager analysed and interpreted the data. This process of sensemaking is evident, when he gave a list of the problems that a pharmacy would meet in the process of introducing a drug to cure the Ebola disease. He recognises the potential ramifications of the convergence efforts ahead of many peers, despite an underlying, shared understanding that convergence is the only antidote to cure the dying newspaper industry.

The last part of his narrative can be read as responding, the last stage of managerial sense-making processes. Unsurprisingly, his action as a result of environmental analysis is feeling more confused. As he puts it in the end of the interview, "I don't think we are confused about the direction of the strategy. What we are confused about is how to get there." Before the strategic choice was made, the manager was only confused about the definition of convergence which is the main strategy content. While the strategy was under way, he was uncertain about the meanings of convergence and the ways to make convergence meaningful to his company.

Given the complexity of the three managerial sense-making processes, uncertainty is likely to be generated (Milliken, 1990). Certain managerial sense-making actions can even "perpetuate hyper turbulence and, in effect, institutionalise hyper competition", according to Bogner and Barr (2000). Bogner and Barr's finding provides a good cognitive explanation for the manager's sensemaking processes in this research. In such an uncertain, ever-changing situation, the digital manager who gets involved in the whole strategy process becomes more and more uncertain about the ongoing strategy. Each of the three sensemaking processes is complex (Milliken, 1990), adding more uncertainty and ambiguity from the managers' cognition side and in turn increasing the uncertainty of the whole environment. In some conditions, these processes can "become institutionalised as standard operating procedures within firms, and as shared recipes within industries, which in turn perpetuates hyper-turbulent conditions" (Bogner and Barr, 2007: 212).

Given that responding is about "taking action as a result of analysis" (Küng, 2007: 142), to fully understand how the manager takes action based on his conceptualisation of the strategy, more discussion about what people do and how they do it needs to be conducted. Specifically, how deciders "give sense", or "ascribe meaning", to environmental events and then share it with doers in a way that they can "make sense of", that is "comprehend, accept, and act upon" (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 444).

Before we started the interview, the manager asked me a question: "As you are studying convergence, tell me, what is it?" He mentioned that he had visited a number of high profile newspaper organisations worldwide in the past few years, such as the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *South China Morning Post*. In this hyper-competitive environment, he said that, "what managers had used to make sense of and act within their industry has been compromised". The boundary among industries, as well as the shared recipe of the industry no longer worked.

The above narrative does not provide much data about responding, the last stage of managerial sensemaking processes. Or we could interpret that the last part of this narrative can be seen as his action as a result of the environmental scanning and analysis: the manager becomes more confused. He justified the strategic change by incorporating the strategic initiatives into the content of the macro-strategy.

Media convergence, for China Daily, has two core tasks. The first task is to restructure in order to improve work efficiency — the efficiency of communication at different platforms. The second is that, hopefully through media management, we could find out something that we could actually make money on. There are two overarching tasks for our organisation since its inception: to expand influence, or so-called international communication, and to increase profits. They are crystal clear, and never changed. (Interview, Digital Manager)

The manager's opinions of the strategy are mixed. Each of the three sensemaking processes, which has been demonstrated in the narrative as extremely complex, is affected by cognitive frameworks (Bogner and Barr, 2000). These cognitive frameworks will be discussed in the following chapters. Scholars have stressed the role of cognition in strategic change, and described a change in cognitive infrastructure as the prerequisite of any strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). Despite the fact that cognitive change is involved in strategic change, or saying what people think involves what people do, it is not simple to make any fundamental change in people's mindset, even when a strategic change is under way. In most cases, sets of explicit and implicit cognitions, such as myths, mental models, cognitive biases, tacit knowledge, prove to be "a significant barrier to corporate renewal".

The strategy process is in fact far more complex than the content of that strategy. While the efforts to go digital are at different stages at the three studied newspapers, the executives are unanimously uncomfortable with the inclusive approaches proposed by Gast and Zanini (2012) and similar scholars of open strategy (i.e. Metzler et. al, 2014; Tavakoli et. al, 2015; Hutter et. al 2016). The resistance to the strategic change and the overall negative attitudes have been illustrated in the previous section.

*Example 2: Cognition of the present and organisational memories*

The Chinese case "provides empirical support for a number of theoretical contentions concerning the role of organisational memory". The success/failure in the past "did play an important role in shaping the current cognitive models that in turn engendered the overall uncertainty (in middle management) about the change initiative. The following are strategy narratives given by two middle managers in the Chinese newspaper.

We are still at the initial stage (in the strategy process). The previous plan was to include China Channel from the web into the All-Media News Centre, as a pilot project for the Print-Web Convergence. We did similar pilots in the past, in Economy News, Feature, and International News sections. However, after these pilots, the boss Zhu, and the top editorial board feel this may not be the best way to achieve convergence. Or to some extent, you'd better talk with Boss Zhu. It's the best way to know the (strategic) initiatives from him. I can only retell some of his ideas.  
(Interview, Middle Manager at the All-Media News Centre)

Around 2000, the concept of convergence was firstly proposed. There were some 'big actions' in 2008 and 2009. For example, the business section of the print merged with the business section of the website. They worked together. They even got an annual award for their work excellence. I felt the year of 2008 was the most innovative year with lots of great attempts and experiments. However, it was halted, due to some non-editorial issues. Ridiculously, the most successful experiment became the biggest

failure. After that, no one in the newsroom had enough confidence to experiment again. (Interview, Middle Manager at the Copy Centre<sup>51</sup>)

The above narratives manifest a shared 'mental representation of the world' between the two managers. Liu was the leader of the historical pilot project, while Zhang, although he was involved in the project, recognises the project as a big success. Unfortunately, since top managers didn't recognise the success sufficiently or make the most of it, the two managers who are both involved in the current project, automatically retrieve similar memories, draw analogies to past situations, and have real doubts about the change initiative and the possibilities of the overall success.

Given the reciprocal nature of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving, the research on the creation and diffusion of meaning surrounding a strategic change cannot only target the side of the managers/deciders, but also needs to take the journalists/doers into account. The following is a piece of memory and hindsight given by a doer of the pilot project.

We have been always talking about convergence. Around 2009, the economic news team of the Web was moved to the print and joined with their print peers to set up an Economic News Centre. In my memory, this was the first attempt at media convergence at the level of restructuring. The previous ones were just at the level of daily routines. For example, journalists were asked to send a teaser, photo and video clip for the web once they had covered the news for the print. Before the big restructuring attempt at convergence, I don't know whether there were any other strategic changes. (Interview, Journalist)

Although much effort was made in the previous pilot in the organisation, the past success was not built up as a pivotal 'bright spot' for motivation and team spirit. The meaning of the progress was not spread across the organisation, and thus it has been widely seen as a big but meaningless change. In addition to the memories of the pilot and successive ones for media

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<sup>51</sup> Part of this quote was used in Section 6.1.

convergence recalled by managers and journalists, no record of them can be found from the top manager's speech focusing on media convergence, the organisation's development timeline events about media convergence, or online reports about the organisation's convergence development.

The failure to build upon the bright spots in the past has two kinds of implications. Methodologically, it reflects the limitations of conducting semi-interviews in ethnographic study: the collected narratives from the interviewees are mainly retrospective, and sometimes a mix of different-time references including the present, the past and the future. The secondary data, such as conference speeches, online reports and news coverage, have the same problem. But more importantly, some memories are collective, generated from interpreted and selected information, and can be highly subjective and only partially accurate. This inevitably makes it difficult for researchers to study the cognitive elements in the strategy process, as sensemaking and sensegiving are contextually embedded, happening in a certain context and a certain time. When the moment has passed and the context changed, it is hard to trace back the whole picture of management cognition. Practically, it provides some suggestions for managers to understand the power of organisational memory and reshape the organisational historical record.

### **6.2.3 Metaphors used by managers to make meaning of a strategic change**

The Chinese and NZ cases offer support for theoretical assertions concerning the role of symbolic elements in strategy activities. As mentioned in the literature review, a growing field within the management cognition literature concerns the symbolic aspect of managerial cognition, that is, how managers use metaphors to frame the meaning of a strategic change in order to foster understanding and seek support for the change.

Cornelissen et al. (2011) specify the conditions and uses of metaphors in effecting support for and legitimising a strategic change. They divided metaphors into two groups — relational metaphors "that convey a system of connected counterparts and underlying causal relations"

between the source and the targeted change, and those that "are based on common attributes or superficial similarities" (1703). They argue that the relational metaphors are more likely to have persuasive effects on fostering understanding and creating legitimacy for a change.

In the Chinese case, two metaphors are widely used by managers at work to frame the ongoing strategic change to go digital: 'Central Kitchen', and "Curator". They are used to refer to different aspects of the strategic change by different managers with print-and-web convergence as 'Central Kitchen', the All-Media Newsroom as 'Central Kitchen', and journalists who support the strategic change as 'Curator'. Putting them into Cornelissen et al.'s differentiation in terms of the form of metaphor, both are relational metaphors. The following narratives explain the contexts of these metaphors, especially how they are used by managers to frame the strategic change.

In September 2010, Qu Yingpu, the executive editor-in-chief at that time, borrowed the metaphor "Central Kitchen" in a news interview about convergence. He said that:

*At China Daily, we are going to build up a 'central kitchen' for print-web convergence. This concept concerns platform construction. Without a platform, no matter how good the quality of our news content is, we are the only audiences. In order to expand the newspaper's capacity for international communication, platform construction is the key. We've already had a strategy, tactics, and a what-to-do plan, so the next is to build up a platform.*

During the fieldwork in 2014, the digital manager of China Daily at that time recalled the pilot project in Feature Sections in 2010 and 2011 when he was in charge, and used the same metaphor to describe the strategic activities regarding convergence at that time. He pointed out that the metaphor has lost its persuasive effects on implementing the change.

*I was in charge of the print-web convergence project in the Feature Department four years ago. In most cases, doing convergence was a collective action. We all got our hands on the project. No matter what kind of hands this project required, for example*

a roundsman chef, a vegetable cook, or a janitor, I did my best to get the resources ready and worked for the project. In my team there might be seven people but they worked separately on different bits of the project. It is impossible now. In the current situation, I need just one or two at most to do the work that used to be done by a group. This is a big difference in putting convergence into action when comparing the past with the current experiences. (Interview, Digital Manager)

The digital manager then expressed his awareness of updating the meaning of a strategic change created by managers for the doers along with the unfolding of the change. He describes an ideal strategy doer metaphorically as a 'Curator'.

Working for the web is different from working for the print. The web people focus more on editing. I think an ideal web editor is a curator, who manages to do anything in order to market news goods and service. A curator can do an interview, can edit, film a story and so on. A good curator sees a news story as a small exhibition. He or she needs to integrate internal and external resources and workloads to make the exhibition interesting and attract people to come to it. (Interview, Digital Manager)

Although the metaphor of 'Central Kitchen' has been perceived as having outlived its usefulness by the digital manager, the news editor-in-chief used the same metaphor to describe the ideal newsroom which converges the print and the web in his mind. He put it like this:

The 'All-Media Newsroom', based on my own understanding, is a 'Central Kitchen'. We cook dishes ordered by our clients — beef stew, beef roast, or beef stir-fry — just to cater to the diverse demands of clients. (Interview, News Editor-in-chief)

After taking a closer look at the targeted change and its "connected counterparts and underlying causal relations", it can be observed that different metaphors that are used by managers to frame a change, particularly one that is complex and contested, contribute to the variations in terms of persuading the doers to make the change happen. In other words not

every metaphor can be expected to be equally effective in seeking support for a strategic change.

We can also see a shift in terms of the symbolic meanings of the metaphor 'Central Kitchen' among the key decision makers in the Chinese case. Although convergence, as an emergent strategy and an ongoing change, has changed a lot, according to the digital manager, the metaphor of 'Central Kitchen' has outlived its usefulness, since the focus of doing convergence has shifted from "platform construction" to the strategic capabilities of the doers' restructuring. Grant and Osrick (1996) pointed out that, if the metaphoric language is too seductive it may prove hard to eradicate once it has outlived its usefulness. This gives a reason the metaphor 'Central Kitchen' is still widely used by other key deciders in the newsroom.

In the NZ case, managers used "news agency" to describe the organisational approach of doing the digital-first strategy. This is also a relational metaphor, which links a given motive for a change (Landau, Sullivan and Greenberg, 2009). Motive is defined here as the interests or beliefs that individuals have in relation to their organisation. As a branch company of the national largest news website in NZ, managers in the researched organisation view themselves as supporters of the strategic change. However, when they use the 'news agency' metaphor to create the meaning of the digital-first change, the managers innocuously/unintentionally underplay the identity of their own organisation, viewing itself as a news feeder for the mother company's website.

The focus on the symbolic framing and its persuasive effects on strategy activities (e.g. legitimating a strategic change and maintaining an organisational identity) extend research on managerial sensemaking. Much research from this perspective addresses, as mentioned, the processes by which cognitions develop, but not the content of these cognitions. However, as stressed by Gioia in a series of articles on a strategic change (e.g. Gioia, 1986; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994), the importance of metaphor as a form of sense-making and -giving around strategic change cannot be ignored.

It is evident that managers face the challenges of finding or creating powerful metaphors that help them understand and *shape* their strategy activities. These metaphors used by managers at work, similarly to those used by scholars to study organisational life, reveal how the reality of organisational life has been understood and shaped "in accordance with the perspectives through which it is engaged" (Morgan, 1997: 350). The metaphors that managers use to make meaning of strategy activities *shape* what they see. By extension, the metaphors that scholars use to understand the multifaceted strategy activities are their way of understanding.

Tsoukas (1993) stresses the essential role of metaphors and analogies in the generation of organisational knowledge. Metaphors used in organisational literature are put into three groups: metaphors as ways of thinking, metaphors as dispensable literary devices and metaphors as potential ideological distortion. Following the line of Tsoukas' seminal work, Morgan (1997) notes that metaphors create ways of seeing and shaping organisational life. He lists different metaphors used in understanding organisations, including organisations as machines, as organisms, as brains, as cultures, as political systems, as psychic prisons, as flux and transformation, and as instruments of domination. These metaphors reflect "the nature of the reality with which managers have to deal". In the words of Morgan (1997, 349-50), "Think 'structure' and you'll see structure. Think 'culture' and you will see all kinds of cultural dimensions. ... This is the manager's dilemma. We tend to find and realise what we are looking for."

In the following three chapters about *what people do and how they do it* in a strategic change, I will follow this line of understanding the reality of strategic activities, by identifying *the ways* in which people engaged in the strategy process make meaning of the processes and share it with different levels of organisations. In detail, managers at JP understand and shape the strategic change as something paradoxical while for managers at CD it is a response to the external environment which is calling the tune. Managers at *The Press* understand and share the change as flux and transformation versus organisation as machine.

## 6.3 Discussion

This chapter addresses a fundamental conundrum at the heart of strategic change: how do newspaper people make a cognitive change alongside a strategic change in an ever-changing situation? This challenge is particularly salient at this moment when newspaper organisations are putting their hopes on the digital but have reached no agreement on how to reach their goals.

Drawing upon the narratives by people involved in the strategic change at three newspaper organisations, I demonstrate the role of the content and processes of managerial cognitions in organising work. The contents of cognitions I examine in this chapter are attitudes, resistance, emotions, identity, and memories. The processes that these cognitions develop are examined via the sensemaking and sensegiving perspectives.

By making a distinction between the contents of cognitions and the processes that they develop, this chapter provides a cognitive explanation for the resistance to strategic change. The focus on the contents of cognitions enables me to identify the meanings created by managers in the strategic process, while the analysis on the managerial sensemaking processes explains how those meanings are created. In doing so, I contribute to knowledge about resistance to and ambiguity and uncertainty about an emergent change.

The focus of this chapter — the changes in people's mindset during a strategic change answers the research questions from the cognitive and process perspectives. It highlights that the content of managerial cognitions, including attitudes, emotions, identity and memories, is an integral part of a strategic change. Cognitive resistance of managers and news professionals correlates clearly with the sluggish responses to change dynamic. When a unified and proactive understanding about an emergent change is lacking, newspaper organisations struggle to mobilise news professionals to act upon the strategic change in a collaborative and continuous way. Change in mind does not necessarily happen before change in action. Instead, change is a process in which what people think, what people say

and what people do co-exist and co-shape. When changes in newspaper organisations happen fast and from unpredictable places, solving the cognition problems is no longer optional.

Theoretically, the distinction of the sensemaking perspective from the literature of management cognition in general provides a theoretical framework to identify and describe what constitutes resistance to strategic change and its development in organisations. Given the reciprocal nature of sensemaking and sensegiving, the description of the sensemaking processes in this chapter is partial. Responding, being the last stage of the sensemaking processes, and the sensegiving processes is not discussed in this chapter, mainly because it is about actions in response to managerial sensemaking. It will be talked in the following three chapters which try to understand strategic change in a different way — with a focus on what people do and how they do it.

There are some inconsistent and even contradictory findings between this chapter about what people think and the following three chapters about what people do. The old saying that it is easier to say than to do is one of the biggest headaches for any organisation. Newspaper organisations aim to produce good outcomes financially and socially. But the best intentions can be derailed by non-professionals, unknowns and wild cards — like news aggregators, popular social platforms and new apps such as Pokemon online. Moreover, the future of newspapers is unpredictable and managers cannot expect to first set a goal and order employees to fulfil it. Strategic foresight in a time of uncertainty and complexity is rather a trial-and-error process. The strategic process is not designed in a linear, neat way.

A number of questions remain open for further research with the sensemaking approach. Firstly, the application of a cognitive approach in organisational and strategy studies has raised concerns over research rigor. Although the cases are selected, with a special focus on changing practice in newspaper organisations, purposefully rather than randomly, the choice of the three newspaper organisations depends on the acceptance of access by research subjects to a large extent. Secondly, this research is drawn upon the work stories recalled by managers and journalists in the selected organisations, which makes it difficult to differentiate discourse as a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice or of social

practice, and to differentiate discourse from action. Observations and analysis on the real-time communication may solve this problem. Further research needs to elaborate a theoretical and methodological framework which helps open the black box of the strategic process in newspaper organisations and address the related issues head-on, i.e. what people do in a strategy and how they do it. Thirdly, a more profound question is, who I am studying? In the three cases, top managers are difficult to access, middle managers who are happy to accept my interviews may not be strategic managers and journalists are mainly strategy doers who seldom engage in the strategic process, especially the strategic formulation phase. Putting the cognitive approach in the field of newspaper change and strategic management aside, research in this multi-disciplinary field has become increasingly fragmented. Specifically, the practice and process perspectives have gained increasing interest among scholars. However, it is not clear what the process and practice perspectives actually stand for, what their similarities and differences are and how they can be used in organisational studies.

In summary, a central finding of this chapter is that the sensemaking of change and change-related issues, including strategy, technology and identity, can have a tangible impact on organisational performance. The three cases provide empirical support for a number of theoretical contentions concerning the role of management cognition in organisational change and strategic process. Drawing upon the narratives given by managers and journalists about change and change-related issues, it identifies that middle managers play a key role in strategic sensemaking and sensegiving. However, the misalignments at the cognitive level between managers and journalists put people in middle management in an odd position — they are the most savvy about strategic change, yet the least able to do anything about it. These cognitive misalignments, even though they may be rooted in the past, have endangered commitment and caused inaction in the strategic process. This chapter therefore has begun to forge a link between what people think and what people do, or say, cognition and performance in the strategy process. Focusing on the sensemaking dimension of managing newswork, it uncovers further links at the cognitive level between what people think and what people do in the strategy process within an organisational context. By extension, the next three chapters will focus on what people do, and explore the links from the sensemaking and process perspectives.

## Chapter 7: The Swedish Newspaper: balancing tensions in managing newswork changes

"*Master managers develop the capacity to use several contradictory logics simultaneously.*"

Quinn, 1988: 14

Managing newswork changes is a challenging task in its own right, but we all know that it is not the whole story. Confronted with new technologies and new ways of doing journalism, newspaper managers have more new tasks to juggle and more types of tension to balance. The focus of this chapter is the ensemble of *managerial challenges* in the Swedish newspaper organisation. It aims to answer one of the specified research questions mentioned in Section 3.6: How did the managers with a 'strategic identity' — the key players in the strategic planning in the Swedish newspaper — make sense of the emergent strategy and their own strategic practices, and give sense to other employees? It presents some episodes of the everyday practices enacted by managers, editors and journalists in the strategic process, and investigates the *patterns and logics* in organising and managing these everyday trivial issues and chaos.

The investigation is based on a basic assumption in the Organisation Studies field that, in Leona Achtenhagen's (2007) words, "a fit between the organisational structural and environmental contingencies would have a positive impact on performance". Tailored to this research, the assumption which has triggered my empirical investigation on managerial challenges is: a fit between the way of managing newswork and that of doing newswork would have positive impact on implementing the digital strategy in the newspaper organisation. In other words, the case study aims to find empirical links between managerial actions and journalistic performances in the strategic process of going digital.

Before I started the fieldwork research at the *Jönköpings-Posten*, I expected to see that the digital strategy had been implemented in an integrated, networked way, and big moves in terms of managing newswork had been made as a result of digital technologies. Not

surprisingly, the reality was beyond my expectation and far more complicated. In detail, some of the results surprised me. But, above all, two points came out loudly and clearly. First, there is a distinct separation between management and journalism in the newspaper organisation. It works as an underlying tension which is pivotal for the newspaper's operation performances. Second, although fundamental changes are being undertaken in the way of doing newswork (by journalists and editors), the way of managing newswork has not changed accordingly. The dual-goal pattern which is at the heart of doing journalism has not yet been granted the managerial attention it deserves.

The empirical data informs me of four main aspects of 'how things work' in the Swedish newspaper context: 1) how managers think about the ongoing changes and strategy; 2) how they make sense of their own strategic practices and 3) give sense to other employees, 4) how they enact in the strategic process. They are closely related factors which are pivotal for managing newswork change. However, since the first two aspects have been discussed in the previous chapter, I focus on the latter two aspects in this chapter, that is, the actual deeds performed/enacted by managers and journalists in the strategic process.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. I firstly identify three main managerial challenges from managers' and journalists' discourses and practices. They are not only cognitive resistance to the ongoing strategic change as discussed in the previous chapter, but also institutional and professional obstacles to an unfolding strategic change. I then focus on two strategic managers in charge of the newspapers' print and the web teams respectively, and present their sensemaking and sensegiving activities. Thirdly, I choose and apply a paradox lens to understand these challenges and argue that the tension between professionalism and commercialism is at the heart of these strategic practices (full of cognitive, sensemaking and performative tensions). The reasoning for the paradox lens are explained and the impact that the overarching tension has on the ways of managing newswork are detailed in the last section.

## **7.1 Three main challenges in managing newswork**

The narrative analysis and observational results of the Swedish case have pointed to three main challenges that could redefine the ways of managing newswork, including challenges in making economic profit, pressure on working and organising in a hybrid network, and the perils of multitasking.

### **7.1.1 Challenges in making economic profit**

Drawn upon the managers' and journalists' narratives about their daily work, how to make economic profit was one of the biggest managerial challenges. The newspaper was the last of its kind in Sweden to go online, and there was a consensus of the journalistic group that the decision was inevitable and clearly driven by commercial imperatives. Following are the quotes from a journalist and a manager who gave typical description about the challenge.

I like what we are doing when it is necessary. But I am not sure that we know what we are doing. We have too few people here working (as reporters). ... We gave up some resources, but we need to keep the main advantage. (Interview, Manager)

For us (referring to the website team), it is a kind of struggle. For local newspapers (referring to the print), they are clear about what they want to give to the public. But for us, we have other parameters to tell what we put on the web. We can't publish too many things at one time, but need to think carefully about the publishing — what to publish, when and where. It would be a bad idea to publish a long interview in the morning, because people won't have time then. But something like a car accident, we have to get it out in time, and publish it in a minute. It is a kind of publishing war... Sometimes the pressures come from the newspapers, but sometimes it might be because we don't have enough resources to get the whole picture. (Interview, Journalist)

Although the interviewed journalists and managers mentioned the challenges in pursuing quality content and meeting audience's needs, the challenges in making economic profit were the most "urgent and crucial" for them. A sub manager who has worked for the company for nine years commented on the strategic performance of digital transformation in these words:

I think there are some misconceptions about charging for digital. It is hard to have a long-term strategy such as five years in the future or three years in the future. I think that things are evolving rapidly right now. As for digital charging, you need to attract as much traffic as possible, and in the meantime, try to figure out programmes to do with the traffic. Because I think on the web, the crowd is going to pay for what we are doing. There must be a news story, this is something that is in my mind. The road will be difficult. People do not want to pay for the news. But maybe they want to pay for more specialised news like business news. It's just a small section of the whole population. That is fine if you are global, or like the *Swedish Daily*. But we've been local. What we do here is local stuff and we need to have a really strong tie with the local community. And then try to figure out what we need to do with that strong connection. You have to build your foundation and meanwhile, be responsive with the technology, with the people ... and then try to figure out what you should do.

(Interview, Manager)

### **7.1.2 Challenges in working in a hybrid network**

Digitalisation has been widely noted as the main cause of the strategic changes in newspaper organisations. In the Swedish case, another challenge posed by the digital revolution concerned the ways to organise and work in a hybrid network. The adaptation to digital technologies was at the heart of the managers' discourses about their work, and many of them recognised that the rise of the hybrid was the source of their work pressure.

In detail, the workplace was hybrid in the way that journalistic, editorial, print, website, and marketing staff worked under the same roof, with varying values, goals, routines and work schedules blending together. The company shifted to a hybrid model, sharpening its business focus on one print newspaper — the *Jönköpings-Posten* — and several websites. Before the hybrid, it had undergone a structural transformation — converged vertically by shutting down the print newsrooms in the other six towns in the region, selecting only the 'best' editors to

work at the restructured newsroom at the *Jönköpings-Posten*, and leaving just one or two in each of the towns for marketing.

In an interview, a digital manager described his daily work and said that he had miscellaneous concerns, such as "how to get the web stories interesting", "attracting more internet traffic" and "getting more online ads", alongside his managerial work. I asked him which of these concerned him most and he replied as follows:

Well, I am not concerned more for the marketing side than for the journalistic side of the work, but with both at the same time. We all know that if we don't get the ads, we can't pay for the stories. And if we don't get good stories, we can't attract ads (to the news websites). We have to do both, at the same time. (Interview, Digital Manager)

The above narrative exemplified that the hybrid newswork created new pressure on managers by adding new jobs (which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter) and clashing values, goals, and work routines. A print manager gave a similar narration about the pressure. He said that it was difficult to put people in different groups under the same roof. "They can't put together", he said, especially "when you don't have lots of plans or brainstorming things beforehand." However, neither of the two middle managers described in detail about how they tackled the challenges to "do both at the same time".

Digital transformation does not necessarily lead to performance transformation. The path from A to B requires lots of sensemaking and sensegiving efforts, to reach a consensus among strategy-makers and strategy-doers. These efforts happen in people's mind, and since they are performed by human beings, they do not work in a rational way. Because technologies have tended to re-mediate (Bolter and Grusin 1999), not replace, the (previous) ways of doing newswork, until recently the managing of newswork has essentially been performed in the same ways for decades. Not anymore. Today, newswork is at an inflection point as digitalisation, convergence and transformations in audiences and advertising markets

force newspaper organisations to use their most valuable talent — journalists — more effectively.

### **7.1.3 Challenges in multitasking**

Two years ago, we sacked lots of news production staff. We started to make news with a lot fewer people. I am not sure that is the right way to go. We were very late when we started with the web and social media. ... Including the big boss, we have eight managers here. We have more bosses than reporters. I don't think this is the right way to do. Because we have a problem. We have different sorts of bosses and they don't know what we can do with this social media landscape. No one knows. They don't really know what to do. (Interview, Journalist)

The above quote from the journalist is an example of how employees at the Swedish newspaper 'get sense' of a strategic change from the higher level of the hierarchy. The big structural change in the newsroom made the remained staff under great pressure. The journalist expressed her dissatisfaction with the managerial performances twice in the above discourse by saying "I am not sure that is the right way". One discontent came from the increasing workload due to the redundancy of editors and journalists and the adoption of the digital news platforms that require large amounts of news feeds. As a result, the remained news professionals were spread too thin to work in a proactive, innovative way. Another disagreement was due to the 'lack-of-focus' of managerial activities. The management team had no lack of hands or talent compared to the journalistic team, but they did not understand the rationale for the ongoing and upcoming changes and strategy, and giving sense to their employees.

In the eyes of the journalist, managers needed to be multi-tasked as the grassroots employees were required. Managers themselves were also aware of the multi-tasking issue and raised questions concerning the perils of multi-tasking on strategic performance. A manager, who was in charge of eleven websites under the newspaper, recounted his busy working schedule. He had been in the managerial position for about six months and before that, he worked as

the website manager at the Hall Press — the mother company of the *Jönköpings-Posten*. In his own words:

I am taking charge of 11 websites, and the daily feed for each site is 20 to 25 news stories. ... well, to describe my work ... I work with newspapers like the *Jönköpings-Posten*, but I have much more work other than that. What I am doing today is ... ask the newspapers about their input, put them on the web, work with the newspapers, find something that is very local ... because for a newspaper you can have only pictures, but the websites need more. So I chat with them, talk about their input, social work and technical issues. ... Yes, my work is mainly managerial, but sometimes I work as a technician. (Interview, Manager)

The manager had to handle multiple jobs — managerial, editorial, and technical — but he did not seem to have a clear work focus. When he elaborated the newspaper's digital strategy and his daily work on it, his narrative indicated some negative implications of multitasking, such as attention fragmentation and difficulties in time management. As he put it,

Local stuff. It's all about being local. Because there is no point for us writing about an emergent situation in Ukraine or in Stockholm. There are so many resources there and we can't be the best. But we can be the No.1 in the local market. This is the direction (of the website development). ... The website here at the *Jönköpings-Posten* is going to have a new layout from April. Before that, there are some realistic issues, such as how to present news differently from previously (to be more audience-oriented and personalised), how to display advertising. These are the problems I need to think about and solve.

Another manager of the print team shared the same concern and noted that multitasking was a terrible approach to cope with unceasing changes, meetings and information. Thanks to the information overload, managers had little time left to reflect on their strategic planning and performance.

We come in the morning, then we will have a meeting. After that, we are working the whole time by ourselves on our work. Five, six years ago, we had time to speak with our colleagues. We had time to think. But it is difficult now. It is like a factory mode. (Interview, Manager)

Organisational and management studies have long pointed out the importance of reserving chunks of time for reflection. For instance, in his book entitled *The Effective Executive* in 1967, Peter Drucker noted that, "In every executive job, a large part of the time must therefore be wasted on things which, though they apparently have to be done, contribute nothing or little. Yet most of the tasks of the executive require, for minimum effectiveness, a fairly large quantum of time" (29). It is clearly reflected in the above managers' narratives that multi-tasking has imposed great time pressure to perform and has hampered their strategic creativity. Although it is still difficult to avoid them, the perils of multitasking have at least been noticed by the interviewed managers and journalists in the Swedish newspaper.

Moreover, a cognitive gap in terms of multitasking between managers and journalists can be seen from these narratives, that is, journalists were required to be multi-tasking, thanks to low budget for the print and editorial redundancy, but managers had already recognised multitasking as a terrible managerial approach. Multitasking has been incessant and prevailing in managing and doing newswork. The contradictions of sensemaking and sensegiving of multi-tasking might be another cause for poor strategic performance. The two-week ethnography in the newsroom enabled me to capture some episodes about how managers and journalists worked with various types of dilemmas. They were pulled apart, and struggling with balancing different pairs of initiatives, values and interests. In front of multiple tasks, managers and journalists became somehow insensitive to each other's work.

There are also some insensitivity between the print team and its web counterpart, which can be reflected in the following quotes given by a digital manager and a news manager. The two managers illustrate different styles in terms of managing newswork: one is profit-oriented while the other is quality-focused.

Digital media have already swallowed (print) journalism. There are many new ways to get to our readers and customers. (Interview, Digital Manager)

You should go and ask the digital manager about the strategy. I am responsible for the quality of daily news on our paper's paper. (Interview, News Manager)

## **7.2 The dualistic work of managers: sensemaking and sensegiving in the strategic processes**

This section focuses on the non-rational aspects of organising — sensemaking and sensegiving activities. The sensemaking and sensegiving activities of two managers at the Swedish newspaper are analysed. As highlighted in the Literature Review, senior managers have long been the focus of the strategic management and managerial sensemaking studies. A few scholars have questioned the related research that posits senior managers as one homogeneous category of change agents. Some suggest clarifying the dual sensemaking-sensegiving roles of the senior management team in an organisational change (Balogun, Bartunek and Do, 2015), while the others suggest taking other organising actors, including middle managers and grassroots employees, into consideration (Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011).

In the previous chapter, I identified managerial cognitions in the Swedish newspaper, namely, managers' attitudes, emotions and perceptions of change and strategy. In this section, I turn to some vignettes drawn from field research and illustrate the processes by which the above-mentioned managerial cognitions were developed. These vignettes are about sensemaking and sensegiving given by two 'strategic managers' at the Swedish newspaper.

As shown in the previous research, to study the multi-party, situated sensemaking and sensegiving activities, it is necessary to focus on organising actors, be located at the micro-level, and examine the activities in context (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Rouleau, 2005). Two managers, compared with others at the managerial positions, are self-reflective. In a sense, their accounts about change and strategy contained not only what they did and said, and also how and why they did and said about strategy and change.

I interviewed a strategic manager, who described his job as "for the future of the newspaper". However, he showed lots of skepticism towards my research. He was hesitant to have the interview in his office. Before we started the interview, he asked me why I interviewed him and how I was going to use the interview in my thesis. He told me directly that:

... It's a kind of secret. Because you are publishing something that is about the long-term strategy, and some other people around may ... so some questions I am not able to answer you. So I hope you could understand well. (Interview, Manager)

Although being cautious to show me the data about the strategic targets and performance, especially those related to economic profits, the manager explicitly voiced the future of the newspaper resides at the digital. In detail, they are going to add more video content on the two websites they own. This move is very market-oriented, as he said:

Although our local community is a little bit small, but we can use that database and we can find the readers in Jönköping to the other way round. ... not to watch TV but to watch three screens at the same time, ... three or five minutes of their attention. ...I have another document which will give you more page use.

The newspaper has adopted the digital technologies, and has made some innovations in the ways that it uses the technologies. However, it needs some time to get a clear idea of whether it is deriving measurable business benefits from its investments in the Web.

We've been to go digital for a year and a half, and the measurement is tough. Till recently we figured out how to measure the digital stuff and relate to profit proficiency.... how many pages and other figures when you divided them into figures, how much you need to charge for every page show? Or ...they are different figures of what we are doing right now. (Interview, Manager)

The company's digital deployment can be divided into three areas: within the organisation; the Jnytt website which targets at localised online advertising; and the [jp.se](http://jp.se) who targets at dealing with their relations with readers in the local community. The manager has a digital-aware mind-set which was reflected in our discussion. Firstly, he keeps a record of the change and acknowledges explicitly that any change or innovative project needs some time to mature. In other words, he assesses change as a continuous process rather than a snap.

When they are mature enough, they are ... and now they are beginning to ... to change something again. ... Restructure again and more digital ... They are not sure

what we are going to do next a few days ago. They said they don't have time to do what they are ...by now. But now they said 'okay we can do it'. And another challenge now is that there are more change. (Interview, Manager)

Secondly, he pays special attention to the resources, especially the journalist communicating professional skills as the organisational VIRO resource<sup>52</sup>.

Professional journalists are good communicators. When it comes to local (newspaper) journalist, I think their communication is ... good for the company and professional journalism because readers are changing, readers expect more localised news and more internationalised news.

First of all, we need to change what mostly are supposed to change. We look at what we have, we have journalists. On one hand, we let people go, on the other hand, we have to recruit more. The downside now is we need to recruit people who has digital expertise. (Interview, Manager)

Thirdly, he also highlights the importance of communication.

We look at what we have, we have journalists. On one hand, we let people go, on the other hand, we have to recruit more. The downside now is we need to recruit people who has digital expertise.

Splitter and Seidl (2011) criticised that most practice-based strategy scholars are unaware of "their inevitably scholastic view", which leads to the practical irrelevance of their research on what people do in relate to strategy. The 'doxa' of the strategy researchers (strategy-as-practice in particular) guides their interpretations of the field by "excluding any practice that would go against the taken-for-granted assumptions"(104). In other words, academics, as the outsiders of the field who are freed from time pressure and pressure to act (105), interpret and reflect on the practices relate to strategy in a way that does not comply with the logic of manager's act and activities in the reality field.

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52 The VRIO resources refer to Value, Rareness, Imitability, Organization (Barney, 1991).

### 7.3 Discussion

Newspaper, with a history of about 350 years, has developed all sorts of traditions, values and routines along its development. One such rule that still prevails the contemporary newspaper organisations is the inherent tension between professionalism and commercialism. In other words, a newspaper organisation with a journalistic aspiration has to fulfil a dual goals at the same time — make economic profit and serve for the public.

In this chapter, I have investigated the interaction between management and journalism from *what people do*, namely the managerial and journalistic practices related to the strategic change which was at the inception phase at the *Jönköpings-Posten*. I have emphasised that there is an invisible but established distinction between management and journalism within the newspaper organisation. The distinction has been inscribed and manifested in everyday discourses and practices of managers and journalists at work.

The tensions discussed in Section 7.1 revealed that the newspaper organisation as the locus of an opposition between two logics and two processes of managing newswork: the profit-oriented and journalism-oriented practices. On the one hand — the self-management among journalists — the workforce who execute newswork, is shaped through peer recognition who follow the professional values such as objectivity, accuracy and balancing. They are professional savvy and quality savvy. On the other hand — the profit-savvy side of managing newswork is processed and measured by numbers, such as revenues, audience size, and profits.

The importance of balancing this ultimate tension has been highlighted in Quinn's (1988) article about convergence. According to Quinn (1988), convergence is mainly a business-oriented strategy for news organisations, while the strategists ignore the other side of managing newswork. The Swedish case supports Quinn's argument. The strategy, which was about convergence, or convergence in industry (vertical convergence in the news group), with some relevance to convergence so do the other two cases, should not be measured

without the professional consideration. This is the increasing managerial concern among the others: As Lovisa said that, I am "extremely concerned" with putting my newspapers online.

Managing news differs from managing newswork and news organisation. The distinction is reflected in the above three managerial discourse about their everyday managerial work. The senior journalist enacted certain managerial work, i.e. recruiting journalists, training, and mentoring young journalists. Her managerial work mainly revolved around her professional expertise. The news-in-chief who has a strong journalistic background talked about managing newswork — the journalistic side, including news source, news quality, professional standards, and the newspaper's social influence in the local community. The digital manager concerned about managing news organisation — the business side, including the revenues, profits, technological investment, and the size of readership.

As discussed in Section 2.2.1 about the newspaper as a business with dual goals, empirical studies on news organisations have revealed the established separation between management and journalism. For example, Fagerling and Norbäck (2005) studied the inherent balancing act between the journalistic aim and the commercial imperative in a Swedish newsroom, and argued that configurations of the established organisational boundaries could intensify the social identity construction. Breaking down the inherent separation between management and journalism does not necessarily bring identity crisis to managers, editors and journalists, nor boost efficiency in managing newswork changes.

It also indicates that managers with different formal titles within the organisation and at different levels of the organisational hierarchy lacked communication. In other words, there is an invisible wall between management and journalism within the organisation. In the Swedish case, at least at the strategic inception phase, the two strategic managers made little movement across it. Interestingly, there are opposite findings in terms of crossing the imaginary wall between management and journalism in the other two cases, and they will be further explored in the following two chapters.

Given the fact that the Swedish case I studied here was in the inception phase of implementing the digital strategy, there were not much interaction between managers and journalists. However, different results have been found in the other two cases, and the intricacies between stability and change — namely the inherent social norms of organising newswork and the rise of a new way of organising — will be further explored.

## **7.4 Summary**

This chapter is not a neat brick that fits the overall construction of this thesis. It is the capture of a moment in which a digital strategy was about to initiate in the Swedish local newspaper. It is my first attempt to learn 'how things work' in newspaper organisations from a process-oriented perspective. It is an ethnographic record of the site and its inhabitants. It is found that, in the Swedish case, the digital strategy was in its inception phrase.

Theoretically, the tension-based interpretation of the strategic process from managers' and journalists' discourse prompted me to explore a neglected question of in the field — the identity crisis of newspaper managers in the middle of the strategic change. Practically, the one-sided managerial focus on the economic goal over the professional goal encourages researchers to examine if management and journalism research should be primarily designed to serve the needs of the industry. Although digital technologies have had far larger implications than journalistic practices, newswork is another polysemic and intricate concept that merits more academic elaboration and emphasis for the newspaper industry. Change in newswork affects power relations within organisations, i.e. deskilling of some workers and re-skilling of other ones, which in turn have impacts on middle managers — the way they work and the material context within which they are able to do their day-to-day duties. Various duties of strategic managers, middle managers, grassroots journalists and editors need to be re-defined and re-clarified in the strategic process. Who are they in a newsroom specific setting is not only a practical issue, but also an academic issue for understanding strategic change and management. Similar findings about middle management have been found in the Chinese and NZ cases, and the above mentioned points will be further discussed in the following chapters.



## Chapter 8: The Chinese Case: the *Tizhi* Issue and Organisational Inertia Problems

China has been an odd player in the global media landscape. As discussed in Chapter 5, the media context in China is very different from its Western counterparts. However, media organisations, especially the State-owned newspapers, are seeing radical changes. At the crossroads of marketisation, digitalisation and media convergence, newspaper managers in China not only need to factor commercial and professional goals into their decisions, but also take the State's intention and political direction into account.

This chapter explores how managers and journalists in the Chinese case responded to the inertial structure — the biggest hurdle for implementing the strategy in their own words, and examined the contexts in which their assumptions of organisational inertia were shaped. It aims to answer the second specified research question: How did managers and journalists in the Chinese case respond to the inertial structure — the biggest hurdle for implementing the strategy in their own words? In which contexts did their assumptions of organisational inertia enable or impede their strategising activities? Drawing upon the process perspective on organisational change, especially the sensemaking role in strategic performance (cf. 3.2.3 An Ignored Part: Conditions Associated with Sensemaking and Sensegiving), I argue that journalistic practices express — and are expressed by — the organising and strategising processes within which a strategy is formulated and implemented. The change in journalistic practice is a product of a specific way of organising work. The managers' and journalists' accounts about the *tizhi* issue indicate that the liabilities of inertial structure have been overestimated, while the value of innovative sensemaking conducted by the exact people who get involved in the strategic process has been underestimated.

The remainder of this article is structured in three parts. In the first part, I review interviews and observation field notes related to managerial challenges and identify the *tizhi* difference as the biggest hurdle for strategic performance. Secondly, I investigate the changes in practice at different layers of the organisational hierarchy, in order to visualise the strategic management process in the newspaper organisation. In the last part, I rethink the

inconsistency between managerial expectations and journalistic practices and note the routine rigidity accounting for the organisational inertia.

### **8.1 *Tizhi* difference — the biggest hurdle for strategic performance**

*Tizhi* is the biggest impediment to strategic performance in the Chinese newspaper, according to the twenty in-depth interviewees at work for this research. Among them were two top-level managers, seven middle managers, two HRs, and nine journalists and editors working on different sections of the print and the web. Note that because of political sensitivity, names of interview subjects are pseudonyms. When I asked them what the challenges in implementing the digital strategy were, surprisingly, they gave me the same answer: the *tizhi* issue.

The newspaper's employees can be divided into two camps: those 'within the *tizhi*' and those 'outside the *tizhi*'. A majority of the staff working for the print are positioned 'within the system'; while most employees working for the newspaper's web apparatus are positioned 'outside the system' in their workplace, although the state-owned newspaper has increasingly employed contracted and freelancer journalists to meet the government calls for institutional reform and media marketisation in the past two decades.

The newspaper, as a service organisation (*shiyè danwèi*), has a *bianzhi*<sup>53</sup> system, in which the number of established posts has a fixed quota. Only staff working 'within the *tizhi*' have a *bianzhi*. Specific to the researched newspaper, most of its print staff have a *bianzhi* and therefore take the authorized positions, while web staffs are kept outside the system. The newspaper is not merely a place of work, but provides a range of benefits (welfare, housing and perks) to the staff within the system. Each employee with a *bianzhi*, or holding an

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<sup>53</sup> *Bianzhi* refers to the authorised number of personnel (the number of established posts) in a Party or government administrative organ (*jiguan*), a service organisation (*shiyè danwèi*) or a working unit (*qiye*).

authorized post, has an individual dossier (*dangan*) labelled 'cadre' as the person's social status, implying the person is of the leading personnel in state and Party organs<sup>54</sup>.

Some scholars have interpreted the *bianzhi* system as the Chinese equivalent of the nomenklatura system<sup>55</sup> known from the Soviet Communist Party. However, as Brødsgaard (2002: 362) has stressed, the *bianzhi* system and nomenklatura cover different realities. The *bianzhi* system appears to encompass millions of employees working in different types of work units<sup>56</sup>, ranging from a Party organ to a service organisation like a hospital or school, while the nomenklatura system includes only topmost Party leaders in these work units. For example, the researched newspaper has a couple of hundred people within the *bianzhi* system, but only the editor-in-chief and the Party secretary of the newspaper will be listed in the CPC Central Committee's nomenklatura.

The difference in *tizhi* has caused job inequality and tensions between print and web employees. As described by a senior manager at *China Daily* quite precisely, "The *tizhi* issue is tricky to explain to *laowai*<sup>57</sup>. The print is a (public) institution, while the web is a company. The difference lies in payment, compensation, and social welfare. The web pay is relatively low." However, the difference is never confined to payment and social welfare disparity. Drawing upon the references given by the web staff, it was clear that journalists/editors working for the web felt "less valued" than their print colleagues. An editor who worked in both teams described the tensions at the grassroots level as follows:

Differently from the print, the web does not have a formal, rigid structure of organising work. The print has a clear division of jobs and duties. A web editor

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<sup>54</sup> In his classic study on the workings of the Chinese bureaucratic system, Barnett (1967) only mentioned the concept once and translates it into "tables of organisation."

<sup>55</sup> Nomenklatura is a Soviet/Russian term which means "a list of positions, arranged in order of seniority, including a description of the duties of each office" (Harasymiw, 1969: 494). The term stems from Latin and refers to a system of names used to indicate the taxonomic position of an individual organism (Li, 1998).

<sup>56</sup> In the classic work about the social relationships in contemporary China, Yang (1994) has given a detailed description of the social structure of Chinese urban places (18-19). People were assigned to work in "work units" (*gongzuo danwei*) such as a factory, school, office or hospital. Each work unit, containing Party, Youth League, and labor union offices, is the basic cell of the state order, with a rigid system for monitoring the thoughts and conduct of its members through various means.

<sup>57</sup> *Laowai*, literally meaning "old outsider", is an informal term or slang for "foreigner" in Mandarin. It is typically used here to refer to someone who doesn't know the Chinese media context or various Chinese milieux.

always needs to do various types of work. ... Print journalists are higher-waged and higher-valued. Most of my web colleagues felt belittled. (Interview, Web Editor)

The web editor found the *tizhi* issue has been a common excuse for underperformance and even inaction by both managers and journalists. Indeed, the print and the web are operating in two systems. The operation system of the print is more traditional, while the web is a subordinate rank under the print section. “The hierarchy (of dominant print and subordinate web) has existed for a long time, and will be there in the future. But the *tizhi* issue cannot be an excuse for slacking in the implementation of the convergence strategy,” he added. The web editor had a five-year contract with the web team and after working for a while, he learned that his wage was lower than a new recruit's in the print's economic news section. Frustration and underperformance are natural responses. He explained as follows.

I can address this easily. I used to write stories for the print only. I am now required to write stories for the news site, social media platforms, Chinese website, video and so forth. But my wage doesn't change too much. Why should I do it (referring to convergence)? (Interview, Web Editor)

The tension between print and web is deep-rooted in their organisation, according to the interviewees at different levels, thus making it difficult for them to collaborate. One manager thought that the tension lay in the mindset, which is typical of newspaper practitioners at work in China.

In their mindsets, there is a clear division between paper and web. However, in reality, it is just about news products delivered through different channels. The web does not serve (the needs of) the paper. The web is a separate entity itself. Web editors have different ideas of making news (from their print counterparts). In the US, journalists barely have a similar thought. They focus on just news content and the platform through which to deliver the content is the editor's business. (Interview, Middle Manager)

Another middle manager proposed a pragmatic solution. “To solve these crucial issues about *tizhi* and *bianzhi*, an easy solution is to make the payrolls the same.” However, the easy

solution neglects the reality of internal competition for resources between managers and journalists working in the two teams. Some middle managers were so wary of these pitfalls that they decided to muddle through with pilot projects aimed at print-and-online collaboration and convergence.

The newspaper ran some pilot projects in different sections, such as economic news, feature news and international news. One pilot operating in the economic news section yielded successful results; however, it was halted “unreasonably”. Managers and journalists involved in the pilot all blamed the unreasonable disruption on the *tizhi* issue. However, they did not address this point explicitly but instead provided a more elaborate explanation.

...After the pilot, the board members, especially the editor-in-chief, realised the way we worked in the pilot may not be the best choice (of media convergence). You’d better talk with Z (the editor-in-chief), as I could only relate some of his ideas. (Interview, Middle Manager at the All-media News Centre)

Some big changes happened in the top management. The current person-in-charge of media convergence project is a broadsheet nostalgic. (Interview, Middle Manager at the Copy Centre)

The biggest tension comes from (the differences) between print and web. Similarly to the *Southern Metropolis Daily*<sup>58</sup>, most newspapers face a common set of tensions. Some people who were enthusiastic about the (collaboration) project did lots of work, but were criticised by the big boss. Therefore, web staff have walked away from the paper, and found alternatives, thus sapping enthusiasm and collaboration. (Interview, Middle Manager)

The above quotes imply that the real reason for the innovation disruption was the power shift in the topmost management. As media convergence has been highlighted as a national policy, operational managers and grassroots journalists at work are receiving less space to innovate. The effort they put in identifying, developing and implementing the convergence strategy

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<sup>58</sup> *Southern Metropolis Daily*, founded in 1997, is a daily tabloid newspaper published in Guangzhou, China. It was one of the pioneers in adopting a media convergence strategy in China. Source from [http://www.nfmedia.com/jtqmt/201206/t20120605\\_147072.htm](http://www.nfmedia.com/jtqmt/201206/t20120605_147072.htm)

will not be measured and in turn appraised for either profitability or professionalisation. As long as the newspaper is controlled by the CPC, the control of the market is certain to be the secondary force pushing forward media change and strategic management. Whether they converge well or poorly makes little difference, thanks to the nepotism and bureaucracy — two great examples of the *tizhi* issue in the newspaper and similar organisations. The representations of the *tizhi* issue in daily practice will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Not surprisingly, I did not have the opportunity to interview the editor-in-chief who is on the list of the CPC Central Committee's nomenklatura. I was not able to learn his plan to solve the deeply-entrenched issue which has been lingering in the organisation for several years. I turned the question to the deputy editor-in-chief who was in charge of the convergence project. The deputy editor-in-chief replied: "The differences in *tizhi* really exist, but it will be solved eventually. The print and web will work under the same roof, with the same payroll standards." However, he said the newspaper has yet to set up a timetable for the issue. From his quote, we can see that the permanent difficulty managers and journalists have faced during the strategic change process is the *tizhi* difference between the print and the web. For the managers and journalists at work, the biggest challenge is not to identify the challenge in the midst of uncertainty, but to face it and overcome it. As the *tizhi* issue is a root cause of the underperformance of both managers and journalists, its examples in everyday practice need to be further explored.

## **8.2 Changes in practice at different layers of the organisational hierarchy**

When I asked managers and journalists about changes triggered by the adoption of the convergence strategy, the answers varied. Excluding the three HRs (one manager, one for the print and the other for the web), I interviewed eight managers and nine journalists<sup>59</sup>. In the managers' group, five of them identified changes of differing degrees in their daily work; one saw no change in his position, and the remaining two, the only two top managers in my interview list, did not address the question in a direct way. In the journalists' group, all of the

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<sup>59</sup> Please see the Appendices for the full list of the interviewees at *China Daily*.

nine grassroots journalists and editors gave me ‘a thick description’ of the changes and related conflicts in their routine work.

In order to understand more clearly the challenges facing newspaper managers and journalists, in this section I am going to list the descriptions of the changes given by managers and journalists at work, and then identify to what extent the changes in their description are 1) changes *in practice* and 2) are related to the *strategy*. It was found that there is a gap between the expectations of decision-makers and the realistic work, and some middle managers who were assigned to strategic positions failed to play a strategic role, thanks to the traditional, rigid decision-making mechanism.

Among the five managers who identified changes in their daily work since the adoption of the Convergence Strategy, two of them were experiencing the highest number. One was A, a female manager who was entitled the ‘Assistant Manager of the All-media News Centre’ and deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper's website. She had started her new job one month before my fieldwork at the organisation. The other was B, a female manager who was working at the 'supplement', a sub-division of the marketing department for the print. She had been the person in charge of domestic news feeds and told me she had changed jobs four times between 2013 and August 2014.

### **8.2.1 A print veteran at the web team (A)**

When I asked about the changes since the adoption of the Convergence Strategy, a top manager mentioned A and recommended that I observe her work. The top manager had high expectations of A's work — a strategic position which is aimed at the convergence project and is newly added to the organisational chart. As the top manager described: "Our convergence attempt this time is more about doing, rather than trying to do. One accompaniment is the newly added position of A which aims to connect the print and the web."

After receiving the approval from the news manager, the digital manager and the HR manager respectively, I observed A's work for a day<sup>60</sup>. Her office was on the fourth level of a high-rise which was about 5-minutes' walking distance from the print headquarters. The Web Team, including the executive editor-in-chief and the manager of the web team, worked in the building as well. A's desk was in the middle of the floor, with the homepage management team in front, three online news editors behind, and international and economic sections on two sides. Although there were few physical barriers between the manager and her subordinates (the three online news editors were sitting right behind her desk), they seldom communicated, neither online nor offline. The office was very quiet and everyone was concentrating on their own work.

| Work Diary |         |  |   |
|------------|---------|--|---|
| Start Time | Venue   | Tasks  | Related to convergence strategy?  |
| 9:00       | The Web | Sourcing<br>Find news stories for the day<br>Browse wire news by searching the keyword 'China'<br>Read news sites of the <i>Global Times</i> and CNN<br>Refresh the main news sites such as the China News Net and Xinhua<br>Constantly checking Weibo and WeChat on her cell phone<br>Found a news source and sent it to the print editors and journalists via RTX messaging system | No, as she didn't set the news rundown for the web. The sourcing activities were for the print. |
| 9:30       | The Web | Editorial Meeting<br>discuss about the distribution issues of the web<br>seven to eight channel editors<br>no participant from the print   | No, she didn't say anything in the meeting.   |
| 10:00      | The Web | Arrange the order of shifts of the print staff for the coming National Day Holiday;<br>Answering my interview questions;   | No.   |

<sup>60</sup> The observation was conducted from 9am to 6pm Beijing time on August 27, 2014.

|       |             |  |   |
|-------|-------------|--|---|
| 11:00 | The Web     | Editing<br>A print journalist C emailed L a story about the top court and L was editing the story<br>C sent an interview quote to L from the scene at 11:20. L thought it was interesting and called a print editor to add the quote.<br>L rang the editor again to check whether the story was polished.<br>Sourcing & Monitoring | No. Although the story was published online first, the editing and proofreading work were not conducted by the web staff. |
| 12:00 | Lunch break | L told me she would back to the office after 2:30 pm, as "she has something to deal with at the print."  | -   |
| 12:57 | -           | The news about the top court was published online, ahead of Xinhua and the <i>Global Times</i> .<br>I found the online news did not have a byline of C.<br><br>Monitoring  | -   |
| 14:58 | The Web     | I told L about the byline miss. She used RTX message to tell an editor sitting behind.<br>The missing was added momentarily. No updates of the online story afterwards.  | A little bit, as the story was published and updated by an online editor at the web.                                      |
| 15:00 | The Print   | Meetings   | Not sure.   |
| 18:00 | -           | I left the office  | -   |

From the above work diary, it can be easily seen that the manager did not really get involved in the work of the web team. Although she was assigned to 'connect the print and the web', her daily work was no different from that of a print editor. Although she was working at the web, most of her work was for the print. Her work can be summarised into four types: 1) sourcing; 2) monitoring; 3) communicating with print journalists and editors; and 4) attending editorial meetings for the web and the print separately.

Much research has produced evidence that sourcing from wires and checking the news rundown of their competitors are the typical work of an editor at a traditional newspaper. The manager followed the routines of a print editor while working at the web. Although she regularly checked news websites and posts on social media platforms such as Weibo and WeChat, she utilised the digital platform as an alternative way of collecting news sources for the print.

She said that the main job was to constantly monitor the websites under the newspaper banner. On her PC, there was software listing the click numbers of online news stories published by the newspaper's websites. "Will you do follow-up reports after you learned of the audience's interest?" I asked. "Only once in a while," she replied, "We don't have enough hands. I just want to know the audience's interests, and that's the only thing I can do at this moment."

As the organisation was at "the expanding phase", both print and the web lacked sufficient hands. The manager told me that she usually started work at the web from 8:30am, but finished at different times at night, as "the paper needs more hands".

Finding interesting news stories for the print is my extra work in this position. It's not a big deal. Now there is only one person selecting stories and editing the news rundown for the print. She is not very experienced in editing daily news but rather does feature stories. Another editor is at training. There is a lack of hands. I've got used to it (doing editorial work for the print). (Interview, Middle Manager A)

At the web, the middle manager supervised eleven web editors working for the China News Channel (English). The eleven editors worked a total of 16 hours in three shifts per day. The remaining shift (from 10pm to 6am Beijing Time) was filled by the newspaper's staff working in the United States. Apparently, she prioritised the print work ahead of the web work.

During the day, the middle manager communicated with journalists and editors for the print, while seldom assigning a job or talking to the web editors. She explained the inaction at the web as follows:

My current job title is deputy editor-in-chief of the news site. My main job is to supervise the web editors working for the China News Channel. However, I have only a few web editors on hand to edit news stories. During editorial meetings in the morning, I seldom arrange for them to cover news stories, unless a big breaking news story is missed. They have their own routinised flow of work, and I can't interrupt it or push them too hard. They have very heavy workloads, such as

updating sub-sites under the main news site, looking after servers for our clients, using various apps like Kindle. Translating and editing news stories and publishing them online are just one part of their job. (Interview, Middle Manager A)

The manager attended three editorial meetings on that day, one at the web and the other two at the print. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to shadow in the editorial meetings, due to "political sensitivity" according to the HR manager. The two teams had editorial meetings separately. There were no participants from the print side in the web meeting at 10 am on the day, said A. She did not say a word during the meeting and, as the only representative of the web, she attended the editorial meeting at the print every day. "If the print has any important news topic, I will feed it back to the web," said the manager.

### **8.2.2 A senior news editor working at the marketing department (B)**

B was working in the marketing department which was named 'supplement', writing promotional stories and soft marketing advertisements for governments at the provincial and regional levels. Before that, she worked as the person in charge of domestic news feeds for the print. Her new job was not really about doing journalism, and she explained this as follows:

I guess the reasons the boss assigned this job to me are that I am a generalist, senior journalist and editor, and have good *guanxi* (personal relationship networks) with journalists and editors at different beats and in different provinces and regions. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

From August 2013 to March 2014, she worked at the Copy Centre, taking charge of web news<sup>61</sup> and the newspaper's account on *Weibo*. *Weibo*, or microblogging in English, is China's equivalent of *Twitter*. During the time that she was in charge, the followers of the newspaper's Weibo account saw a sharp increase in numbers, from 700,000 to nearly 2,000,000. "It was right timing, as the State tightened its control<sup>62</sup> on VIP accounts on

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61 The web news is written by print journalists, not by journalists and editors on the newspaper's web team.

62 Sina Weibo was launched in the summer of 2009. At its height, Weibo had attracted more than 600 million registered users. However, after a series of State attempts to control the web, such as stern admonitions, large-

Weibo," the manager said. Thousands of followers of the VIP accounts became the potential followers of the newspaper and other mainstream media outlets. However, there were only two people working on the Weibo posts: one was B, and the other was a deputy editor-in-chief of the print.

I worked alone and heavily relied on my cell phone, as I had to post the latest information at any time at any place. I was constantly sending posts from morning to evening, from domestic news to international news. I had sore hands every day. What's worse, the Weibo posting was just my part-time job. I had other jobs to do at the same time and there was no substitute for my job. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

The manager said she dared not ask the editor-in-chief for help to relieve her job exhaustion, thanks to the hierarchy.

I am just a manager for a sub-division of the Copy Centre, but he is the deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper. How dare I ask him to do the posts? He is also very busy. He puts a 'nightly' news post online after his work at 11pm and posts a 'Good morning' one on Weibo every day. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

The manager said that journalists showed little intention to write Weibo posts unless she asked them to do so. She said: "I have very good contacts with the grassroots journalists. If I asked them to help, most journalists would like to cooperate. I am the manager at the sectional level, and I always push journalists to write posts in the name of the deputy editor-in-chief." The newspaper has a main VIP account and nearly a dozen sub accounts on Weibo. These accounts are operated separately. By harnessing the hierarchical power (such as the involvement of top-level managers in B's Weibo team), B could easily coordinate the resources and use the content of the sub accounts. However, the current Weibo team has "little power to collaborate". In April 2014, the newspaper set up a "*Weibo Work Group*" under the Web Team. The three-member team focuses on daily social media posting.

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scale deletions and real-name registration, along with the emergence of WeChat in early 2011, the Weibo activity has been dropping since late 2011, and dropped precipitously in the fall of 2013.

The current problem is that, after passing our job to the Weibo team, they don't have the same resources as we have. They seldom seek to co-operate with the print staff. They don't have the power to coordinate resources in different departments and different places. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

In the first half of 2013, the life channel of the Web Team moved to the print headquarters and worked with the print's Feature section. B was assigned to work as the executive manager of the joint section. However, physical convergence did not promote the two teams to cooperate, in terms of news content, production and delivery.

Despite working in the same office, the two teams have different focuses: the web editors monitor the web pages every day, while print editors stare at the (paper) pages. The relationship between the web and the print is more about internal frictions. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

To fill the blanks on the pages on the web and the print, editors were competing for news content and journalistic resources. Some editors for the print would think: "As the web did all of our work, why do we repeat the work?" Others were enthusiastic at writing news for the web. However, the boss thought otherwise.

There is not much interaction (between the print and the web). They do not cooperate unless I ask them to, saying 'this type of story is more favorable online and we should do more', or 'this story can be promoted by QR code'. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

Besides a lack of enthusiasm for working collaboratively, the frequent changes of top managers have impacted news production, especially the editorial styles. Between 2013 and 2014, the Feature News department changed its person in charge at least four times, according to B. The first had a strong vision of digital news production and promotion. The second manager favoured covering high-end culture, arts and the like in a quest to go upmarket. The third one preferred stories reporting from the grassroots in vogue. The fourth and current person-in-charge likes stories about time-out, the Beijinger style of living, and those highlighting the 'beer and skittles' side of a culture.

For example, if we are going to write a feature story about the Forbidden City, for the current person-in-charge (of the Feature News), it is boring to run a common, monotonous report about the culture there in the past. He wants the other way round — something fresh, exciting, about life and luxury. A story of a guided tour of the Forbidden City is favoured, packaged with info sidebars about prices and places to shop and eat. (Interview, Middle Manager B)

The frequent change in the management and the apparently radical differences in their editorial styles have caused guesswork, suspicion and chafing among the grassroots journalists and editors.

### **8.3 Discussion about the organisational inertia problems**

Gilbert (2005) unbundled the structure of organisational inertia into two distinct categories: resource rigidity and routine rigidity. Resource rigidity refers to the failure to change resource investment patterns. Organisational underinvestment in resources relates to external resource providers (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), customers (Bower, 1970) and market power (Arrow, 1962; Gilbert and Newbery, 1982). Routine rigidity refers to the failure to change organisational processes. Even when incumbent firms invest, the persistence and inflexibility of firm routines can cause organisational inertia. Gilbert (2005) defined the organisational routines as "repeated patterns of response involving interdependent activities that become reinforced through structural embeddedness and repeated use" (742).

In the Chinese case, the resource rigidity was not evident. The organisation put lots of investment into the convergence project, i.e. the establishment of the All-media Newsroom and the purchase and installation of the Methode software. Unique to the state-owned newspaper, it was not the market but the State that made its investment in new technology and reallocation of resources happen. The State not only shaped but also constrained the internal strategic choices of the organisation. As media convergence was emphasised as a state policy in Xi's remarks, authority has been centralised and procedures have been standardised in the organisation, leaving more routine barriers to grassroots journalists.

### **8.3.1 *Tizhi*: An overestimated hurdle for organisational inertia**

New managers are assumed to have a golden opportunity to reallocate resources, make big changes, and overcome the inertia. Meanwhile, it is very tempting for a new CEO to make changes in a more deliberate fashion. The above-mentioned middle manager A took the second approach. She showed little intention of making big changes immediately but to take time, understand the business, get to know people, and only then make changes.

Mutual understanding (between the print and the web) is badly needed. This is the reason why I come to work here (at the new cross-sectional position). ... Before I came to the web, I heard lots of complaints and I complained as well that not all stories written by print journalists were published or published first on the web. Print journalists used to ignore the difficulties confronting the web editors. My task is to take stock of such as a relationship, understand it and then improve on it. (Interview, Middle Manager A)

Interestingly, the results were the opposite. Contrary to her willingness to understand differences and make changes, she did not make a change to the news making process status quo. When I asked her to specify how she could enhance the mutual understanding and make changes, she replied as follows:

The web has less staff (referring to journalists and editors for news report)... so our digital news report needs to give priority to cover the following events: overseas visits of national leaders, events participated in by the newspaper's head, some special topics organised by the web, and jobs assigned by the web managers. ... My daily job is to tell web editors about the news rundown of the print. Then the web can give prioritised coverage to the above-mentioned events and make sure they are reported on the website in a timely manner and ahead of the print. My job is to make the news making process run smoothly, with more mutual support but fewer complaints. (Interview, Middle Manager A)

Instead of shaking up the organisation in which print and web worked separately, A's solution to increasing mutual understanding and decreasing complaints was to formalize the selective news making process, give prioritised digital coverage to a set of events to favour bureaucrats, and intensify the dominance of the print over the web. In terms of existing resources, the print had journalistic and editorial resources, while the web had capital resource since the State earmarked a subsidy for the media convergence project. Without breaking down the ingrained resource allocation pattern, building media convergence is only a political slogan. The problem is not conceiving the strategy; the problem is implementing it.

Similar evidence can be found in the middle manager B's case. B said that she preferred to post three kinds of content on Weibo. First were the events organised by the newspaper, i.e. the Copy Centre ran a display booth at an exhibition to attract more subscribers. The second was breaking news. The third was promotional teasers for the news stories which would be published the next day. B said that journalists would get 25 yuan for publishing one post on Weibo, but not everyone in the newsroom knew of the reward, as some sectional managers did not pass it on well. There is no real evidence to suggest that the posting procedure failed to encourage journalists to do more work and become more digitally focused. But problems emerge when the Weibo posting processes are framed in terms of the allocation of resources. Thanks to the limits of time, space and manpower, the posting process was routinised and served the print more.

Drawing upon the data about A and B, it can be seen that routine rigidity was the main source of the organisational inertia. Routine barriers were prevalent in the organisation. From B's recall of the convergence pilot in the Feature News section, we can see that the disparity in terms of the work routines of the print and the web caused the underperformance and resistance from grassroots journalists. The move by the web staff into the print's office implies that the organisational process was more aligned with the print environment, which was difficult to change, self-reinforcing and not built to adapt to changes. The routine rigidity explained why "the two teams had editorial meetings at the beginning (of the convergence pilot project), but not any more later" in B's recall.

Another source of the routine rigidity is that the original motivation for designing an organisational routine was separated from the people executing the routine. This is evident from the inconsistency between the top manager's high expectations of A's job and A's actual work in the cross-sectional position. Top managers showed a willingness to give it a go, but they did not give a how-to script.

The differentiation of resource rigidity and routine rigidity helps me understand the inertia problems of the organisation. In the Chinese case, the organisation invested in technology, capital and manpower resources to develop the convergence strategy. However, the structurally and cognitively reinforced routines, in terms of resources allocation, decision making and news making, impeded the bringing of the strategy to life.

The inertia problems raise a question about the role of middle managers in the researched newspaper organisation. There is an assumption that middle managers, as 'mediators' between senior managers and grassroots employees, have strategic influence for organisational change and development. However, there is a lack of study on how middle managers enact the alleged strategic influence (see Chapter 2 for more discussion). In the Chinese case, the two managers, A and B, were middle managers in some strategic positions which were built to achieve the organisation's goal of convergence. However, after taking a close look at how they enacted the alleged strategic influence, it can be noted that their managerial practices were basically at the implementation level: that is providing information inputs and directing implementation. The two middle managers had little upward influence on the higher level managers, as they were either reluctant to (referring to A) or dared not (referring to B) shake things up and make some changes. With respect to the downward influence on individual subordinates, A passed her control over the web editors and turned to the print which had more journalistic and editorial resources and which she was more familiar with. B utilised both hierarchical power and her *guanxi* network to push the implementation of the strategy. However, as both A and B chose to formalise the multi-media news making process and give priority to the print, grassroots journalists were constrained in making multi-media news in an innovative way.

Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) proposed a typology of middle management involvement in strategy. They argued that the overall pattern of a middle manager's influence is bi-directional: upward and downward. However, in this case, neither A nor B showed any upward influence or intention to influence the high level managers. Looking at the middle management as a whole (cf. Appendix Interviewees in *China Daily*), I interviewed a total of six middle managers in the organisation. The following are their answers to my question<sup>63</sup>: "What has changed in your work routine since the adoption of the convergence strategy?"

It was not the establishment of an All-Media Newsroom but the social media development that triggered the changes (in my work routine). In the print-only time, once we published stories, that was the end of the work. Since we have had social media, we have worked longer. We need to monitor news, pick up the ones with added value, and publish them on social media first, then the web, at anytime. (Interview, Middle Manager at the All-Media News Centre)

Major change like this rarely happened in the US newspapers. ... On a Friday night I was asked that, 'What do you think of the project<sup>64</sup>? How can we put that into detail?' Then I was told: "We are going to put it into use on Monday.' ... My daily work does not really change. (Interview, Middle Manager at the Copy Centre)

Convergence is an empty promise. Decision makers pay lip service to the strategy. Since the establishment of the All-Media News Centre, my jobs have been the same as before. (Interview, Middle Manager)

It is very hard for me to make changes. Because we need people who are willing to change, and make change without fussing about personal gains or losses. Before our (authoritative and professional) development reaches a certain level, it is very hard to overcome the internal inertia and make changes happen. (Interview, Digital Manager)

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63 A' and B's answers were discussed before and thus were excluded here to avoid repetition.

64 Referring to the new Methode software for multi-media news production and distribution.

The decision-making process in the organisation was top-down and unilateral. The middle management team was not involved in formulating the strategy and was very much "told" to implement the strategy. They rarely sent feedback or suggestions to the higher level managers<sup>65</sup>. Drawing upon their answers, I am more tempted to define all the interviewed middle managers as operational managers, even though some of them took charge of strategic positions.

In the typology of a middle manager's influence in an organisation, Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) have highlighted the cognitive contributions made by middle managers in the strategy process. They argue that an organisation's strategic framework is based on the intertwining process of action and cognition involving managers. Although in this case the data did not show many behavioural contributions made by middle managers, it was evident that the middle management team as a whole was sluggish in implementing the strategy and was sending negative cognitive messages to grassroots journalists. They all had strong backgrounds of print journalism and were experienced in making news for the print. However, coordination across the sections they were in charge of was poor. The organisation overlooked the 'bridge' role of these middle managers and ignored some essential but invisible networks held by the middle managers, i.e. their good *guanxi* with grassroots journalists. The cognition of "prioritising the print" was deeply ingrained and prevalent among middle managers, and became tacit in the organisation. In this sense, middle managers, who did not make behavioural contributions to make change happen, were cognitively discouraging grassroots employees from doing so.

### **8.3.2 Middle managers and the underestimated value of innovative sensemaking**

Middle management was not the only layer in the organisational chart that was blocked from decision making and strategy formulation processes. It was the same with grassroots journalists. The quick execution of the Convergence Strategy, plus a reshuffle of middle

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<sup>65</sup> Only Manager B did once. A grassroots journalist at work complained to B that he received lower payment (at least 2,000 yuan) from those working at the newspaper's competitor headquartered in Beijing. The manager thought it was unfair and thus reported it to the higher level manager. She was told later by HR that the journalist who made the complaint was wrong in calculating. His payment was 500 yuan not 2,000 yuan lower, as he did not exclude the tax. The journalists didn't get a pay rise.

management, shocked journalists at work. The changes in strategy and leadership happened suddenly, making the grassroots feel that the strategy was an arbitrary choice. Owing to the editorial leadership in newspaper organisations (which was discussed in Chapter 5), leadership change always causes editorial changes. In the Chinese case, the editorial changes were more explicit and were voiced by people in the field. Journalists were asked to shorten their stories so that the newspaper could hold more stories per page and cater for audiences whose reading experience was fragmentary.

I don't know about others, but I myself was not advised beforehand about the initiation of the strategy and the change in the head of my beat. I heard this news from an HR when we had breakfast together a couple of days before the big move. I was very shocked. (Interview, Journalist in the Print Team)

I don't know what is happening in the print as I work for the web. I've heard that convergence is a strategic plan for the whole organisation, but I don't really know the details. (Interview, Journalist in the Web Team)

I have no idea about how the decision was made, or who made this decision. But I noted the new strategy from the changing editorial requirements. ...Now I am very confused about how to write an investigative story. Since the adoption of the convergence strategy, we are asked to write shorter stories, cutting a cover story from around 1,000 words to 400 words. It is very hard to fully explain an issue within the word limit. Changes are happening everywhere: the story becomes very fragmented; the editorial rules are changed; and we have new direct managers. (Interview, Journalist in the Print Team)

All of the nine interviewed journalists and editors said the adoption of the strategy was a sudden move. Similarly to middle managers, grassroots journalists neither participated in the strategic formation nor gave feedback to the higher level managers. The communication in the newspaper organisation was conducted through 'boxes and lines' of the management hierarchy, which was filled with downward orders and requirements, with little upward

feedback and recommendations. The communication pattern in the newspaper is top-down and unilateral.

It is important to note that the collective knowledge of grassroots journalists could not be ignored by top managers. Surprisingly, when I asked the journalists and editors at work to assess the strategic performances, they made some insightful recommendations to higher level managers to improve their decision making. First, half of them recommended setting up a collaborative mechanism, which would go beyond the superficial, proximate cause of the *tizhi* difference between the print and the web, and increase the collaboration in terms of different types of resources, such as capital, journalistic and editorial resources. Secondly, most of them pointed out the ineffective communication between different layers of the hierarchy. They illustrated how two-way communication was crucial to implement the strategy. Thirdly, grassroots journalists suggested that middle managers show confidence and decisiveness in their daily work, thus they could be motivated cognitively and practically.

Similarly to the middle managers, the grassroots journalists were isolated from the decision makers and decision making processes. Drawing upon the data in Chapter 5 about what people think and the data in this chapter about what people do, it is evident that there is a gap between the expectations of decision makers and the realistic work. Journalists and editors are those who put the strategy into practice, thus they have more opportunities to encounter problems in their work. From a close look of the journalists' answers, it can be easily found that the grassroots journalists responded to changes and related tensions in a negative light. They were passive recipients of the strategy, thanks to the traditional ways of setting strategy in the organisation. Meanwhile, the situation of little change at the management level while there was radical change at the grassroots level, also implies a low level of collective engagement.

## **8.4 Summary**

In this chapter, I have analysed the content, process and implementation of carrying out the Convergence Strategy in the newspaper organisation, and have identified routine rigidity as

the main reason for the organisational underperformance and inaction. Following the work of other scholars, I have emphasised how news practitioners respond to changes in a structurally and cognitively routinised way. Although the *tizhi* issue has been claimed as the biggest hurdle for strategic change, a much bigger problem is that people have allowed themselves to become trapped by it and not tackle it. If the middle managers are released for strategising, through a series of on-going and situated accommodations, adaptations, and alternations, sufficient modifications may be enacted over time and fundamental change may be achieved.

Firstly, I have described the most prevalent challenge confronting managers in the CPC-controlled national newspaper: the *tizhi* difference between the Print and the Web teams. The differences in terms of payment, social welfare, resources and peer recognition are inscribed in the organisation and have caused tensions and inequality between the two teams, and in turn have influenced their ways of responding to changes.

I then presented the change in practice of people at different layers of the organisational hierarchy. Top level managers showed a willingness to change but did not change their ways of organising news work. Both middle managers and grassroots news practitioners were isolated from the decision making processes. Middle managers were reluctant to make change happen by formalising news making process and intensifying the editorial alignment with the print. Grassroots journalists and editors had enthusiasm and insights to make change happen; however, resource and routine rigidity hindered their attempts to change.

Theoretically, in this chapter, I have applied the sensemaking and process approach to study the strategic management and investigated the managerial challenges in the Chinese newspaper organisation. Differently from most strategic management literature which studies formal boxes and lines of an organisation, I have focused on changes in practice conducted by the actors involved in carrying out a strategy in an organisation — managers and journalists. By drawing a picture of changes in practice at different layers of the organisational hierarchy and seeing journalistic practices as a sign of a specific way of organising work, I have identified the top managers' oversight of the informal communication network — the *guanxi* network of middle managers, as a booster for strategic performance. I

highlight the differentiation between resource rigidity and routine rigidity which could help us understand the organisational inertia, i.e. poor organisational communication, low collective engagement, underperformance and inaction. The sensemaking and process-oriented research advocate studying actors at work and their daily practices, which help to bring the managerial challenges at work to the surface. These challenges might be obscured or inadequately described by drawing upon other perspectives addressing the factors at the organisational and macro levels.

Similarly to the previous two chapters, the findings in the Chinese case have broken down a couple of assumptions related to management and organising work. First, it is assumed that, the more the digital strategy is objectified (in the organisational chart), the more journalistic practices are re-aligned with the web. This has proved to be wrong in the Chinese case. In terms of resources reallocation for sustaining competitive advantage, compared with the other two newspapers, the Chinese organisation has put more investment into manpower, capital and technology resources, but has failed to realign news practices with the web. The practices of making news and organising news have been kept more aligned with the print. In this sense, neither a new strategic position in the organisational chart, nor capital or technology, can be seen as the VRIO resource<sup>66</sup> for the newspaper to realise its strategic outcome. Although the newspaper possessed some resources (i.e. the big State subsidy as a capital resource) that its competitors may not have, the firm was not organised to exploit the resources. The middle managers in the strategic positions in the organisational hierarchy identified a resource gap — the print possessed almost all of the journalistic and editorial resources while the web had more capital and technology resources, but they were reluctant to change the deeply-embedded routines in news work and organising news and to upgrade the resources weaknesses. They formalised the web news work, gave priority to the print, but made little effort to exploit the resources.

The second assumption is: more streamlining news work, more alignment with the web? No. The Web is fragmentary in terms of a reader's reading habits, which leads to the fragmentation of doing and organising web work. The traditional editorial leadership is still

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66 The VRIO resources refer to Value, Rareness, Imitability, Organization (Barney, 1991).

appropriate for managing the web work as an editorial manager has more resources (to play with) compared with one without a journalistic background or expertise. If managers could further exploit the *guanxi* resource — the invisible, informal communicative capability, more realignment with the web can happen, as editorial authority is not objectified in the lines and boxes of an organisation but typified in the changes of editorial styles and prioritisation of different news stories.

In addition, the inaction and underperformance reflected the poor communication in the organisation's strategic management process. In the Chinese case, it is evident that to overcome organisational inertia, change in the way of communicating and organising is a necessity. It makes it necessary to re-think the work of management and the role of managers. A strategic manager is not the one who routinises the reallocation of resources and objectifies the routines formally in news making rules and informally in editorial styles. Instead, a strategic manager should identify and prepare VIRO resources for the actors, and give them space and legitimacy to exploit the resources.

## Chapter 9 Unbundling a digital-first newspaper in New Zealand: a zoom lens with a sharpening temporal focus

*Today, our lived worlds are plural, inflected by conceptions of space and time specifically segregated from one another. Segregated spaces and times require means to communicate among them; their mutual compartmentalisation enhances and extends a sense of distance among our various lived worlds, thereby abetting a wide cultural acceptance of communications and informs technologies, or IT, as necessary and natural.*

Hillis, K. (1999: xiv)

This chapter is about the routines in organising and managing newswork during strategic change. Specifically, it aims to answer the third specified research question mentioned in Section 3.6: What is the role of mundane organisational and professional routines in the processes of a strategic change in the New Zealand newspaper? How do managerial and journalistic practices impact the emergence and development of organisational and professional routines, and vice versa? As Chapter 2 outlined the importance of time and space in organising and conducting newswork, as well as our understanding about the complex organisational phenomena (cf. 2.2.3), in this chapter, I am going to explore the role of the time and space shifts (Küng, 2011: 46) in the emergent environment, especially their impacts on the interaction between managers and journalists. I propose conceptualising news routines as a source of connections and understandings among managers and journalists and a cycle of cognitions, accounts and actions, and identify that the routines of managing and doing newswork have been shifted from the print to the web, and the focus on time and slow speed has shifted towards thinking in duration.

Researchers tend to use different lenses to understand complex organisational phenomena, depending on various theoretical orientations. Each lens highlights certain variables and dimensions of that phenomena while ignoring others, thus providing different sets of interpretations and solutions to newspaper managers. As discussed in Chapter 2, Feldman (2000) challenged the dominant understanding of organisational routines as stable and

unchanged, and proposed a performative model to demonstrate organisational routines as a source of continuous change. Previous research in organisational and journalism studies also highlight the importance of time and space in organising and conducting newswork, as well as our understanding about the complex organisational phenomena (cf. 2.2.3). In line with Feldman and other process researchers who examine the role of time in strategy making (i.e. Das, 1991, 2004), in this chapter, I am going to apply a zoom lens — with a sharpening temporal focus — to examine the internal dynamics of professional and organisational routines as "flows of connected ideas, actions, and outcomes" (Feldman, 2000: 613) and "as sources of connections and understandings" (Feldman and Rafaeli, 2002) in the New Zealand newspaper. Specifically, I am going to explore how managers and journalists understand and make sense of time related to their daily work practice and routines, and then analyse the role and effects of subjective, psychological time on the process and content of strategising and managing newswork.

This chapter contains four parts. First (9.1), it focuses on the temporal dimensions of professional and organisational routines in the New Zealand newspaper. In detail, copy editing practice and new positions, cross-platform news making practice and cost saving, news marketing and news values have been examined. Secondly (9.2), it identifies the boundaries in practice that news professionals have crossed. The journalistic experiences of time and space have changed, while some changing experiences misalign with the organising of time and space in the newspaper organisation. The third section demonstrates the management issues rising from the boundary crossing, i.e. identity clashes, journalistic deskilling, and lack of communication between managers and journalists, which are caused by the inconsistencies between journalistic practices and managerial strategising (9.3). The last section (9.4) discusses the theoretical and methodological implications of the lens — the zoom lens with a sharpening temporal focus, in understanding newspaper change.

## **9.1 Making sense of time for strategy-making and implementation**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the study of boundaries, from both organisational studies and journalistic perspectives, focuses on routines. The two groups of perspectives study

boundaries in two forms respectively, namely organisational boundaries and professional boundaries. Boundaries are often viewed in a negative light: they are static, long-lasting, established routines and resistant towards change. The findings in the NZ case study suggest, however, that both professional and organisational boundaries have changed a great deal since the local newspaper initiated the digital-first strategy over nine years ago. From a close-up look (a zoom-in lens) at the temporal and spatial factors in the process of strategy making and news production, it is found that the dynamic of boundaries is established and developed by the incremental de-skilling of the journalistic professionalism, and the emphatic bias of the management towards immediacy and *Stuff* as the first and foremost artefact. The inconsistencies in aligning the time and space/ artefact between managers and journalists are the real culprit of poor strategic management and the dumbing down of journalism (as discussed in Chapter 6).

When I asked journalists and managers at work about change, the answers varied, but with one interesting similarity: norms. The question was: “What kinds of big changes have you noticed and are experiencing in the newsroom at this moment?” Journalists cited norms such as news process, news value and (identity) while managers mentioned norms including principles and responsibility, power shift, as well as new roles and positions. Singer (2015: 21) suggests that “journalists cite norms not only as identity markers of the professional news worker ('Who I am') but also as boundary markers between professionals and non-professionals ('Who I am not'/'Who is not me')”. Norms have been a useful, two-sided marker in the journalism field: in times of relative media stability, they are used to distinguish good and bad journalists, while in times of media instability, they distinguish between insiders and outsiders. With respect to the precarious present and uncertain future for local newspapers, Singer's argument may help explain the following journalistic concern, complaints and resistance towards any change in the norms. The following are some examples about how time is such a structuring factor of newswork and how the norms are being applied to define and articulate resistance.

I think the most interesting thing about being a web editor is that you don't know whether it is a busy day or not. If it's a really busy breaking news day, we have a huge amount of work to do. But some days it is relatively quiet, and we need to look for

content. It's quite hard to get the workload and work content balanced. You never know. So the web editor's work is really, really up and down. (Interview, Web Editor)

It depends. I would have at least one job per day. That can change if news happened. Sometimes three jobs per day. Sometimes it could be a lot. (Interview, Specialist Journalist)

People were reluctant to embrace the digital first strategy at the beginning, but we gained a boost because of the earthquake (in Christchurch). People want the immediate info, there are no excuses for holding this info back. (Interview, Manager)

There is no competition between me as a print journalist and a breaking news journalist for the web. It is sort of working in the way that she is dealing with the police, fire and ambulance calls and making sure that they do the breaking, emergency stuff. For example, if it is an education breaking story, I will be doing that, but they always help me as well. Most of their jobs will be following the web. But we need stories for the web and the paper as well. (Interview, Specialist Journalist)

The problem is that *The Press* is quite conservative and quite traditional as well, you still need to remember your core audience who strive to read newspapers as well. All is about balancing out there. So we need to find a balance between the kind of stories you want to do online and traditional press leadership and the press and the Stuff brand. (Interview, Senior Editor)

Newspapers are stretched by financial realities obviously. So you have to cut somewhere. The choice is you cut the number of reporters you have, or you cut the number of production staff you have. And what we decided to do is we cut the number of production staff we have. We have same amount of reporters, but we have less subs. (Interview, Manager)

From the above quotes we can see that time is subjective. Time is an essential factor for strategising and organising newswork, and individual strategy makers differ in their conception of future time, shifting their focus on time and slow speed towards thinking in duration (as they want to deliver immediate information to audiences and get quick business return). This finding is in line with Das's empirical research on the temporal dimension of strategy making. As Das (1991, 2004) criticised, the notion of clock-time is too simple to

conceptualise the importance of time in strategy making, and advocated adopting a more sophisticated concept of time — namely, treating it as psychological and subjective — to reveal the hidden dimension of strategic change.

It is also evident that journalists themselves put profitability before credibility. Following the line of Singer, the unstable environment might be the reason. As the whole newspaper industry has been plunged into a tailspin, the professional norms are more used by journalists to delineate an outward-facing barrier to prevent non-professionals getting into the industry, rather than an internal sifter to scrutinise themselves and isolate good from bad professionals. In this specific context of local journalism at this very moment, the boundary is more outward-facing, involving the need for journalists to be multi-tasked (produce content and revenue at the same time) and project-oriented, blur the boundary within the profession, thus to meet the urgent need for profitability coming from the outside.

But why managers at work cited norms as well in their narratives about the ongoing changes in the newsroom? Are there any overlap between professional norms and organisational norms? Is organisational boundary as outward-facing as the professional one at the local newspaper in this moment of uncertainty and complexity? What are the implications? If the impact that going digital is having on the business of journalism goes far beyond the financial side, to the very core elements of the news industry itself, such as the professional norms, does it have the impact on the organisational norms? Have managers redrawn the organisational norms to fit into the changing professional norms and the changing news environment as a whole? Does the nexus between organisational boundaries and professional ones change? How? Who is the trigger? Who is the engine? They change in a sequence, or change simultaneously?

Looking at these incidents with an eye toward boundaries in practice invites a torrent of questions about time, space and identities. Boundary crossing means changes in various forms, and scholars have provided a long list of these changes. But why make such a list? Practically, a list of changes seldom helps managers to become clear about the future of their organisations, or hardly relieves the workload and pressure on journalists who are

experiencing changes every day. Academically, the list of changes is restricted to certain cases and research contexts, and thus there is a lack of generalised insights about the issue. Moreover, as the changes underway are happening in an unprecedented way in the newspaper industry, the lists of changes or the 'findings' could become easily out of date. Instead of listing changes, the experience of change is worth analysing, which contains the experience of time, of space, and of identity. The experience of change is comparatively more stable than change itself. The experience does not refer to one-off activity. Rather, it is formed by a series of repetitive, daily, trivial activities, which accumulatively set up borders for what we assumed as journalists and managers.

## **9.2 Those boundaries that news professionals have crossed**

### **9.2.1 Breaking boundaries of space**

As shown in the title, this section focuses on the space factors of organisational boundaries and those of professional boundaries. It examines the physical arrangement of the newsroom as a whole, analyses the symbolic meanings of seats and proportions of editor-in-chief, sub editors, journalists for print and the web, and interlinks these meanings with the perception and implementation of the digital-first strategy.

#### *Newsroom physical layout*

Scholars from organisational and journalism fields have examined the spatial dimensions of organisational boundaries and those of professional boundaries. For example, Susan Keith (2015) examined the symbolic meanings of five objects of 20th-century newspaper journalism, including the U-shaped copy desk, stylebook, pica sticks, proportion wheels, and paper dummies. She argued that the 20th-century newspaper newsroom eras could be called 'the age of the copy desk'. Along with the disappearance of the U-desk and other tools distinctively designed for copy editing, the power of copy editors in newspaper newsrooms has faded. Keith's study on the spatial dimensions of news production implies that the spatial factors in the news producing process are interlinked with the spatial arrangement in the organising process. The objects used in news production are the embodiment of the power shifts in the organising process.

The newsroom of *The Press* is structured as a typical workplace for a traditional local newspaper: the staff work in a single open floor around a series of half-height walls between desks; they are seated and compartmentalised in accordance with different beats. The editor-in-chief and some senior editors are seated in the centre, with visual journalists on one side and journalists at different beats on the other. The desk arrangement creates a clear area for group discussions between editors and journalists. Compared with beat reporters, web editors are positioned closer to the senior editors' group.

This arrangement of staff and space was indicative of the arrangement of the news service. The news service provided by the researched news company is amalgamated and centralized. The focus is on the news producers not news consumers and is a local news production branch which is physically a traditional newspaper newsroom. It has a national website which is a virtual hub of all mastheads under Fairfax New Zealand. The news products are sourced from the local community, but targeted at national audiences. The different branches are connected virtually by the national website. The convergence of news editing and the segmentation of news production have caused some crucial issues. The news delivery is centralised while the news production is segmented. One important part of the whole news making process has been ignored by decision makers — the editors, who are not only professionals, but managers at the same time.

### *Print and digital: two spheres or one?*

In the NZ case, the platform of print journalism and the platform of digital journalism have not been separate spheres of news work, even if journalistic performances and managerial decisions about news work appear at times to be polar opposites. The digital platform is immense and out of the bounds of space (referring to media reach/coverage), thus having endless potential. In a word of a manager:

I always feel that I have two kinds of life. One is journalistic life on the ground, and another is the virtual world on the web. ... My main job is on emails. We get to know each other very well in emails. I know their workload, their personality. But I've only seen them one or two times within a year. (Interview, Manager)

With respect to how to think about the relationship between the two platforms and act upon it, managers and journalists at work made opposite choices. For most interviewed journalists, print or digital is an either/or question. Being digital is more like an add-on rather than a fundamental change to their daily work. The following are some journalists' opinions about the two platforms.

It's hard to do both. ... You are trying to follow a meeting, but at the same time you are trying to follow the web. You are trying to write a story but you also need to listen to what's going on in the meeting for the next story. (Interview, Manager)

For editorial managers, it is also an either/or question, but the conclusion is in the reverse. A senior editor's work is managing the news content for a day and overseeing about 16 to 19 journalists in the newsroom. In the interview, he discussed the pressure of doing print journalist and digital journalism at the same time. He put the digital platform ahead of the print.

It's extremely challenging. It is hard to know whether you should update a story online or you hold it back for the print edition. It is all about the thinking about how we could maximise our audience, not just everybody on the print, but on digital as well. (Interview, Senior Editor)

For senior managers of Fairfax NZ, it is not a question, but a both-and solution, or a both-and promise of being digital. Their initiative towards being digital is clear and settled and they have a managerial delusion that once money is not the problem, the quality of journalism could be guaranteed.

Print is struggling and it's no secret. I don't say it is obvious. The obvious thing is that print is struggling because it lost its revenue strength. But people still want news, no doubt the platform will change, the construction needs to change. (Interview, Manager)

This currently added, virtual, digital platform has drawn wide scholarly attention (Tuchman, 1972, 1973; Raviola, 2010; Zaman, 2013). It disrupts the traditional linear news production, requires multi-tasking of journalistic work, and increase of newsroom division of labor.

*Alienated copy editors, flowing news-managing power*

Lots of changes observed during the fieldwork were going on at the copy desk. There was only one copy editor left in the researched newsroom, the rest were either sacked, or re-allocated to the newspaper's parent company based in Australia. Not surprisingly, copy editors, often called the "last line of defence" against errors in newspapers (Vane, 1997), were found to be more likely to be physically and psychologically burned out than other newspaper journalists. With respect to space, they deal with a series of work related to filling news holes in the printed paper. They are no longer the controller of the newsroom, or the controller of the print platform. With respect to time, they are forced to meet the most rigid deadline in the newsroom — the publishing deadline for the print. They are the last person to touch the news copy of the day. The following quotes manifest the conflicts between the two platforms and how copy editors are struggling to balance the conflicts in time and space.

Until 18 months ago, I was still writing. So I still write web stories which I get to put online. That's pretty much my only link with online. And I talk to the Editor Joanna that maybe I could do more digital stuff in the evening. But she wants me in this role, to have a specialist on the paper, because I've worked across almost every section in the newspaper, so I know the paper well, I know what goes where. (Interview, Copy Editor)

As the newsroom's last line of defence against errors, the copy editor had valid questions about the ongoing changes. He was intent on joining the conversation about how jobs in the newsroom need to change, i.e. to write web stories and to develop social media skills. However, the senior editor required him to dismiss the relevance of social media to his job, and stay with the traditional print focus.

The copy editor was not happy. He was isolated in night shifts and burdened with endless wordsmith jobs for the print only: checking facts, tidying up grammar, fixing misspellings, writing up news headlines and so on. In a newsroom where multi-tasking is more important, copy editors cannot afford to be dismissive of social media. He could not demonstrate his value in a digital first newsroom. As the newsroom is doing away with copy-editing positions, the person experienced in copy editing is meant to be a strong candidate for a trainer of copy editing skills and another position. As the part of the newspaper's strategising effort, copy editing duties have been handled by journalists who need to take more responsibility for the quality of their own work. Journalists who are playing multiple roles in the newsroom, need to learn the expertise of copy editing.

Not just managers, but journalists at work also undervalued the work space and values of the copy desk. The copy desk has long been "an unsung, isolated outpost", and copy editors are deemed to be "the forgotten stepchildren of the newsrooms" (Vane, 1997). The overall under-appreciation of the copy desk from top managers to grassroots journalists is partly because of the invisible nature of the job itself. Copy editors deal with news processing not news producing. Their names do not appear in news outlets like those of journalists, photographers and graphic colleagues. Moreover, they would have the spotlight on them when they failed to correct embarrassing errors made by reporters. An us-against-them attitude in the newsroom is quite evident in the following two quotes from senior journalists.

We don't really know (about the number of subs), because we work quite separately. When I firstly started journalism about 10 years ago, we worked in a newsroom with our sub editors. ... But now we don't see them. We have nothing to do with them. They work on a different floor. You might get a call or an email from someone you've never meet before, asking about a story. So they become far more disjointed now. Eventually, it looks like they work as aliens. (Interview, Specialist Reporter)

We need to save money and they can make savings from the sub-editing area. They can make money by sub-editing Australian newspapers. And the strategy is that we won't have sub-editors in a short time. We will just have, maybe a news editor or a

night person who checks copy. And potentially journalists are going to make sure they write things right. (Interview, Specialist Reporter)

My proposal here is not to protect the past, or to denounce the newspaper's strategy as a bad decision. Instead, I am calling for newspaper managers and journalists to pay more attention to copy editing skills. Once the copy-editing positions have been removed from the newsroom, the copy-editing skills and duties need to be passed on to journalists in the newsroom.

A study on copy editing shows that copy editing is good for business (Vultee, 2015). Digital audiences deem edited content more professional and thus they are more likely to pay. In a period when the traditional business model has collapsed and a new one is yet to be found, news editing continues to play a valuable role and thus needs managerial talent to blend it with the newspaper's profit goal and yield improvements to the bottom line.

The boundaries between job titles have been broken down. As newsroom job titles and duties have shifted in response to increasingly digital audiences, copy editors, as the most beleaguered of staff members, need to change accordingly. The managerial decision to remove copy editors from the news production chain may make news production more efficient in terms of time and space appropriation, as journalists are freed from the copy editor's meddling. But it may also result in down-grading copy editing expertise, such as editing for accuracy and improving text. In a newsroom which requires more multi-tasking staff for cost saving, the value of copy editing needs to be underscored by the top managers. The dismantlement of the copy desk in the NZ case manifests the spatial replacement of copy editors from the news making chain, the blurred boundaries between job titles, as well as the collapse of the linear news production in the digital age (the last two will be further discussed in the next section). The copy editors must, in many cases, work extremely fast to overcome blown deadlines in the newsroom. The irony is that, given the importance of the copy desk to the newspaper's quality control, copy editors are sometimes treated as a 'secondary class' or given little thought at all.

I think we still put out a very good paper. Some nights, like a dream everything works beautifully. But some nights, it's been just problem after problem, and you still have the deadline there all the time. (Interview, Copy Editor)

It can be seen from the above quote that the scarcity of time sometimes forces copy editors to let the newspaper go with mistakes. The redundancy of copy editors is aimed at saving costs and processing copy more efficiently for the print. In this sense, managers have shifted their staff from processing content to producing content. But in an age of increasing pressure to push news out and keep a fresh digital presence, how important are such mistakes?

Notably, the collapse of a boundary may not always mean fewer boundaries at work in a newspaper organisation. At first sight, the blurred boundary between copy editors and reporters would appear to lend itself, especially for reporters, to a more individualised, time-efficient and cost-saving way of news making. However, boundaries between different areas of news producing, processing, delivering and marketing, still exist in the sphere of journalistic practice. Once the boundary between copy editors and reporters has been removed and collapsed in the NZ newsroom, more individualized and invisible boundaries in the sphere of journalistic practice have emerged. Journalists are required to do more multi-tasking in news producing, self-editing in news processing, and self-marketing in news delivery. These multiple tasks could only be accomplished simultaneously by a sufficient input of time, expertise and effort.

The New Zealand newspaper is not the only case and the neglect of copy editing has been found in the other two newspapers. However, they are taking different approaches and instead of having fewer copy editors before a story is published, they either give the copy editing work to the assigning desks (CD), or reduce the original writing content (JP). No matter what approach is applied, managers at work under-appreciate the value of copy editing, and assume that the copy editing skills could be obtained by journalists without training, or mastered in an intensive news schedule. The change in copy editing is not necessarily detrimental to the quality of journalism, but fewer readings before a story is published online or in print is.

For example, the executive editor of the Copy Centre at the China Daily said he was frustrated with the All-Media Strategy. He had not enough hands, although no one in his section was sacked.

Our former routines are: I need two for domestic (news), two for international (news), one for business and one for sports news. Stories at the different beats have different deadlines and editors don't have to stay there all the time and wait. But now, our copy editors have to be there all the time. Whenever a news story comes, we start working on it. It is very hard for me to organise the working schedule for my staff. We lack hands. (Interview, Middle Manager)

The stress and frustration endured by the copy desk cannot be fully explained by focusing on copy editing work and values alone. Instead, the importance of copy editing skills needs to be assessed in the whole process of making news and organising news. Similarly, the copy editing work cannot be fully explored by focusing on the space-related boundaries between copy editors and their newsroom colleagues, such as how they are seated, organised and treated in their everyday work. Time, as a finite resource, needs to be considered as well. It is important to note that, although the chapter is divided into 'boundaries in space' and 'boundaries in time' sections, in reality, there is no clear division between the boundaries in space and time. The temporal and spatial dimensions of boundaries are always intertwined with each other. Cross-platform news making breaks the professional boundaries — the boundaries of verification, traditional news values, but also erases the organisational boundaries, such as the job titles of the news process and the power of making news. The latter will be discussed in the following section.

### **9.2.2 Boundaries of time**

Another way of looking at professional and organisational boundaries in a newspaper organisation is to compare the temporal dimensions of news organising routines and news production routines. How managers organise time-related resources to fulfil the digital-first goal and in turn how journalists respond to the temporal re-organisation. In other words, this

section seeks to answer the following two questions: 1) how did journalists appropriate time to streamline news process, including information gathering, original writing, and editing/cross-checking and media selection (for news delivering)? 2) How did managers re-allocate time as a finite resource in doing digital strategy, especially that journalistic work related to enacting the digital-first strategy?

In the process of blending long-standing news workflow with new, digital-first demands, managers have given journalists additional labor and speed pressure. They are required to be multi-tasked, accelerate the speed of communication in journalistic work, and put media selection one step earlier. However, examples from the case study show that the same digital platform that managers expected to improve journalists' ability to handle additional labor and speed pressure can also have perverse effects. Along with the collapse of the long-standing news workflow that print journalists get used to, the inconsistencies between managers' time re-organisation and journalists' time-constrained professionalisation not only caused bad performances and inaction in implementing the digital-first strategy, but also undermined the credibility of journalism and societal trust on the newspaper brand.

### *Blown deadlines, two timelines*

Besides being back and forth between the two spheres, journalists work on two timelines: a print timeline and a digital timeline. In the words of a senior editor, “We need to find a balance between the kind of stories you want to do online and traditional press leadership and the press and the Stuff brand” (Interview, Senior Editor).

Another position in the newsroom feeling the pressure of time is that of journalists for breaking news. The blown deadlines in the newsroom and cross-platform news making turned out to be a threat to the credibility and trust of the printed outlet and the news brand as a whole. While conceding the need to look into confirmed information on social media, the newspaper's web editor defended the use of tweets in a breaking news scenario:

We try to send them messages, try to get them, but we don't have that time. It would be nice if I reply to everyone and that will build up the engagement (with audiences), but we don't have much time to do that. ... Twitter, social media is a great place to engage with people. If you reply, they really appreciate it. They will feel more involved with the press. It can be done more in the future. (Interview, Web Editor)

### *Shifting workload, streaming news process*

In his classic work of "Putting 'reality' together: BBC News", Schlesinger (1990) points out a scholarly ignorance of "the structuring role of the time-factor in production cycles" (121). Drawing upon an empirical case study on news production at the BBC News, Schlesinger (1990) demonstrates how the time-factor shapes newsmen's production concepts, and the form and content of news. An apt instance in the current study came from one senior reporter who covers breaking news and political news for the newspaper for 11 years. There are four different types of time which must be identified from the following quote in order to understand the journalist's description of her daily work, in somewhat frustrated tone.

I am trying to follow a meeting, but at the same time I am trying to follow the web. I am trying to write a story but I also need to listen to what's going on in the meeting for the next story. (Interview, Specialist Journalist)

At the first read of the quote, it looks like perfect evidence for backing up a somehow 'overused' argument that journalists are required to be multi-skilled and suffering a burnout syndrome because they are spread too thinly. Cross-platform news production or multi-media news making, to use a similar name, was the key research topic in news production studies from the late 1990s to the early 2000s when convergence was the field's buzzword. After researchers conducted ethnography in the newsroom and had in-depth interviews with journalists at work, they disappointedly and unanimously found that the digitalized way of news production had been merely embraced by journalists working at traditional news outlets. There is not yet a fully-converged newsroom in the real world. Convergence is more like a myth nowadays, as what scholars and news professionals think about the term is not realised, not even with a clear direction to make it come true. The earlier news production

scholars often attributed the failure of convergence, especially that in news production referring to cross-media news making, to endless deadlines.

The journalist talked about 1) time of sourcing on the ground, 2) time of sourcing from the web, 3) time of writing on the current stories and 4) time of preparing a running story next day. Time 1 and time 3 are scheduled and predicted; while times 2 and 4 are unexpected, immediate. The tendency towards immediacy is contained at regular time-slots, i.e. the journalist tried to find something unexpected, uphill and updated during a fixed time slot of the conference. Her tendency to immediacy is so urgent that she could not stand and wait out the unfolding time for the news story.

It depends. I would have at least one job per day. That can change if news happened. Sometimes three jobs per day. Sometimes it could be a lot. Because Christchurch if I take 15 minutes video, that will take me 30 minutes to inject, and 15 minutes to choose, and as long as I grab for the visions that I want, so the whole process from shooting to uploading online will take about two hours. Sometimes it is really quick, because it is quite obvious, what you need, on average, a job will take three hours from start to finish. (Interview, Journalist)

The above two quotes reflect the individual conflicts at the individual, journalistic-practice level: an ideological fetishism towards immediacy sometimes conflicts with the market-based temporal demands of organising news work. Journalistic fetishism towards immediacy is not just a response to market needs, that is, to give audience whatever they want at the time they want. The political journalist is focusing on the process of the news story in terms of how much time it takes, but she is not fetishising time. The journalist does not think strategically, a good journalist, as stressed by Schlesinger (1999), is obsessed with time (on news making), not the duration (from news content to economic return).

The inconsistencies of time and space between what journalists need and what they are organised caused them to make shortsighted, result-targeted choices — see quick returns,

show managers what they want, while worrying about the credibility and journalism quality later. It is a loop of being professional and profitable. This is an eternal either-or question for journalists, as they are more sensitive to the differentiated of different times and spaces than managers. On the other side, managers view the print and digital sphere as a whole, ignore the differences of the two sphere, too much externally-focused, while ignoring what underlies the traditional, print sphere can't be easily moved to and survived on the digital sphere. Practically, managers need to be more time sensitive. The easiest way probably is to bring journalists inside the wall, letting them engaged in the whole starting process from formation to assessment.

It is how journalists go through the moment of uncertainty and complexity. When the space and time of making printed news parallel with those of making digital news, it is easy to get confused as they didn't know the future and couldn't differentiate the two spaces, as managers didn't give them enough time and chance to get involved into the strategic formulation or assessment phrases. Even after many of them accepted the multiple timelines of doing journalism, it is still often difficult to stay grounded in a time and see events relative to the dual-role of journalism. They were put in the manager's shoes, and they didn't even realise it.

### **9.3 Sensemaking and sensegiving, boundary crossing and identity crisis**

The above two sections have examined the newspaper's strategising processes through attrition in print and investment in digital resources, i.e. time, journalistic and editorial resources. A big shift in priorities, which was reflected in the 'digital-first' discourses and views, has accompanied unseen perils, including identity crisis, a lack of proactive planning and insufficient communication. In the strategising processes, the established professional identity of journalists has been changed and an entrepreneurial, market-oriented identity has been forged. In the words of journalists at the newspaper company:

News values have changed. ...I'd like to know how many hits we can get by writing this story on the web, and how much money we could get from the Internet-savvy strategy. (Interview, Specialist Journalist)

Something makes me a little bit uncomfortable as we've given people what they want, e.g. more tragedy news, or stuff that was not considered as news, but now we consider it as news as it's what people want to read. (Interview, Specialist Journalist)

We've been asked to check the accuracy, because we don't have as many subs as we did have. It is a little bit nerve-racking, because you have to be very careful that you are not making any mistake. You need to check your own stories. (Interview, Journalist)

The discourses provide insight into processes whereby organisational and individual identity change can occur. The parent company Fairfax's move to be 'digital first' throws into question journalists' understanding of 'who we are as a journalist working at a newspaper branch'. The top-down change of the organisational identity has caused ambiguity about individual identity among grassroots journalists in the branch newspaper. In detail, the education journalist and the breaking news journalist did not have a clear sense of who they were: a quality content provider or a good news seller. The other journalist was "nerve-racked" because she had to be a news reporter and a news editor at the same time.

In an empirical examination of identity ambiguity and organisational change, Corley and Gioia's (2004) found the presence of temporal identity discrepancies as one of the "previously unreported aspects of organisational change", which refer to the inconsistency between an organisation's current identity and claims of what it would be or what its members would like it to be in the future (p. 190). My interviews with managers and journalists in the New Zealand case also captured temporal identity discrepancies in the emergence of the identity ambiguity. The inconsistencies arose not because people believed the end goal — digital first — was undesirable but, rather, because of subtle doubt about the way in which the company could get there. The doubt was salient in interviews as journalists and editors frequently concluded their thoughts about the future with comments such as "I have no idea about how this works", "But how can we get there?" and "We want to see why

they are doing what they are doing”. The following are some examples reflecting the temporal discrepancies.

They (Fairfax NZ) want to beat the traditional news outlet — TV. We (*The Press* branch) can shoot something and put it online within an hour. We put it online and the 6 pm News (a TV news programme) needs to wait. We can beat them, and that is the strategy. They want people to get the news from the Stuff first rather than relying on the news. ...It (Fairfax NZ) is more interested in the multimedia experience. They have video pictures every day, and are more integrated with social media, like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram... Possibly I have no idea how this works. I kind of think that the previous TV is a dead format. People now are paying money to watch what they want to see, TV content is not popular. I don't know how technologies will go and how it will work, so I am quite conservative about the strategy. (Interview, Middle Manager)

I quite agree with them that there is a lack of communication about how to get the end goal. The end goal is to make *The Stuff* the biggest money maker. It has been said time and time again. It is the focus. ... There is a missing link between where we are and how we get there. (Interview, Web Reporter)

Technology is a good one, but I guess it is about better communication. If we can see why they are doing what they are doing, it won't have so much resistance. We want to know how we can make money from the changes we've been making. (Interview, Journalist)

The ambiguity about identity at both the organisational and individual levels was uncomfortable, which triggered complaints about the management team. As some journalists said in the interview:

Training is badly needed. Everyone is new to the new software. So we need to give training after we get rid of the old one. But it will take time. (Interview, Web Editor)

They (managers) are going to have to adjust. We need to work out exactly how we get it done. They are not telling us. They just say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. I think they can give us a briefing, even if there is not much to say, just to let us know, anything they need to report. So people can get to deal with that, not just the date. (Interview, Journalist)

We need multi-communication between the management team and the team of people who are making, creating and getting news out. There is room for managers to communicate, so that people don’t feel that it’s just an assignment. (Interview, Journalist)

This lack of communication hindered the interactions between managers and journalists in terms of sensemaking and sensegiving. It was also exacerbated by the ambiguity about identity because it was more difficult for grassroots journalists to commit to a strategic change without a clear sense of what were the appropriate meanings attached to the change, and what the change meant in relation to their new identity. In the face of ambiguity and situational variation, managers need to be aware of the importance of sensemaking and sensegiving in the strategic process.

In contrast to previous research on organisational change and identity tensions, this research examines the time-based incongruities between management and journalism and is therefore more in line with Albert’s (1977) temporal comparison theory. The findings not only show what ambiguity and uncertainty arose in the unfolding of a strategic change, but also represent how ambiguity and uncertainty change over time.

Contrary to the argument on newsroom centrality, I argue that the newsroom is the main locality of empirical study in the industry, especially for those studies related to the future of the newspaper industry and management of newspaper firms. Apart from the fact that journalists do not have to work in a newsroom to make news nowadays, the boundaries in practice among different identities within a newspaper newsroom (including grassroots

journalists, editors/editorial leaders, strategic managers and top managers) have been redrafted from within, which has significantly impacted on the sustained development of a newspaper company but has been ignored by managers and scholars in the field.

The newsroom, or the organising of newswork, is still the key for exploring the issues related to a newspaper's changes and future. NZ Fairfax chooses to be business-oriented. Their decisions are more about attempts to answer the market call, to cope with the external pressure first, while ignoring the internal pressures in the newsroom and the cross-country media conglomerate as a whole. Audiences set the agenda of doing journalism, thus editorial standards have been changed. Once the editorial staff moved to the mother company, the professionals working in local newsrooms lost their managerial control (editorial leadership) first and then their key staff to sustain the company's strategic goal.

The above-mentioned implications are dualistic. When boundaries break down, it is challenging to maintain cohesion in the news making process, and at the same time, it is opportunistic to find new ways of collaboration in which communication is the key. The finding is consistent with that in the Swedish case which analyses changes with a focus on tensions. Change is based on communication and team work. However, the separation of editors from journalists hampers communication across the boundaries between management and professionals, and hampers the collaboration between the two teams — editors and journalists — who are designated to work hand in hand in providing a quality news service. Managers need to rethink the way they define and assess newspaper performance. There is nothing wrong with expanding the audience reach, increasing online clicks and shares, and eventually achieving an improvement in the return on capital, but they do not necessarily indicate whether a newspaper organisation is fundamentally healthy, in the sense of fulfilling the dual role of journalism: being sustainable (credible and trustworthy) and profitable at the same time.

The biggest headache for measuring newspaper performance is that the return on capital for news platforms, print and/or digital, can be measured directly and separately; while the

potential for trustworthiness and future development, must be inferred as a whole (platforms are just platforms, tools for delivering news for the company/organisational brand).

From the NZ case, we can see that the managers assessed the past and current performance from a single-lens metric, highlighting the returns on capital at the digital platform instead of the print. Decision makers then predicted the future performance with a hope that trust and credibility gained from the print-based journalism (bit-by-bit, over-time) would remain unchanged on the digital platform at least and preferably increase in accordance with the expansion in digital media coverage (in terms of the audience's time and space). They are assessing the news performance in the wrong way and the reason is simple: performance on A is not able to have an effect on fulfilling the promise of A and B. In this sense of assessing news performances, their Swedish counterparts did better, because at least they were aware of the ways to monetise the digital and re-establish the trust among online audiences. They did not assume that the trust from the print outlet could be simply transplanted to the digital.

We still need a much more complicated framework to assess the current performance and infer the future performance of a newspaper organisation. This framework needs to clarify the decision making process at different phases (in a temporal, horizontal dimension), including strategy formulation, strategy implementation and assessment. It also needs to visualise the choices/decisions of different strategising actors by accommodating their practices into different platforms, such as the either/or platform, and the both-and platform.

## **9.4 Discussion**

Following the line of the previous two chapters about the Swedish and Chinese cases, in the concluding section, I shall analyse the strategic performance of the New Zealand newspaper organisation in terms of the re-establishment of routines and boundaries, and discuss the theoretical and methodological implications of the process perspective in understanding changes in practice within the newspaper organisation.

The zoom-in lens helped me record the mundane activities of strategising in the newspaper organisation, and provide a thick description of what people were doing when the organisational ethnography was conducted. Although what people are doing is inherently contingent, doing is never objectless and cannot be recorded or represented without reference to a specific time and space. Drawing upon the thick description of the mundane activities of doing a digital strategy, the zoom-out lens enables me to develop a procedural understanding of strategic practices. Activities, in fact, never happen in isolation. Managerial practices and journalistic practices are mutually connected, and to a large extent they constitute a nexus. The practices are established by the nexus and establish it. In this sense, the study of practice is the study of the nexus of practices and their associations. This gives the reasoning for the discussion on routine, identity and boundary issues.

The managers at the three organisations failed to view themselves in a big picture in two ways: 1) lack of communication that links managers with journalists and 2) little assessment of news work and managerial work, especially those of the non-profit performances. Lack of training, zero journalistic involvement in strategy formulation, and profit-focused assessment caused bad performance and inaction within the newspaper organisations.

In the NZ case, the strategising practices were objectified and thus represented in terms of the time that actors spent (in their mundane, highly contingent, diverse activities) and the space they performed in. Ethnographic observation and interviews with managers and journalists showed an account of complexities and diversities, with openings. There is nothing wrong here, as managers, editors and journalists play different roles in the organisation and have various commitments to fulfil. As practices are time- and space- constrained (practices are not objectless), a closer look at and comparison of how a specific practice is temporally and spatially performed and organised have yielded some interesting results.

With respect to how a specific practice is temporally and spatially organised, managers at work idealised their capacity in controlling the time- and spatial- dimensions of managerial practice, i.e. they simply assumed that the control of time and space on the traditional platform could be maintained and even extended to the digital. They overlooked the time-

and space constraints of journalistic practice, and the design of the managerial practices in an idealised both-and scenario, in which control of time and space over the traditional sphere and freedom of time and space self-contained in the digital sphere would flow and exchange easily without blocks.

With respect to how a specific practice is temporally and spatially performed, journalists at the NZ local press were both victims and controllers of time and space. To accomplish a specific journalistic practice is to make an either-or decision of time and space: news professionals work against the clock by streamlining news process on the traditional sphere as a controller, while chase the contingencies and let reporting unfold as it happens as passively. In this sense, journalists are more like a controller on the traditional, print space, but a victim on the digital one.

The zoom-in and zoom-out lens enables me to examine both the practice and process of a strategic change in the NZ case. More importantly, it enables the articulation of the alignment and misalignment between journalism and management at the individual, practice level, and at the organisational level. Some approaches make us "more articulate, more capable of appreciating differences that matter" (216), as Nicolini (2012) argues. The zoom-in and zoom-out lens shed light on the discrepancy between performing and organising a specific practice in temporal and spatial dimensions, and encourages managers at work to make full use of the connection between the two.

There are limitations to the zoom lens. It is difficult to encompass data at different levels and detect the interplay among them. The temporal focus is one possible solution. But the zooming metaphor still needs more theoretical and methodological overlaps in organisational and journalism studies to provide theoretical orientation to capture the interplay. Similarly to the zooming metaphor, the temporal focus has theoretical and methodological perils. As most organisational and newsroom ethnography studies are often "studies of convenience or opportunity" (Ancona et al., 2001: 647), the temporal lens, which uses multiple measures to capture organisational performance over time, is very hard to apply in the fieldwork. For example, a newsroom ethnography lasting for two weeks may not be accommodated in the

organisation's timeline of change. Observable changes may happen before and after the fieldwork. Secondly, the use of a time lens needs a researcher's knowledge about time lags, feedback loops and durations. Thirdly, the time lens is a dynamic approach. Compared with the variables highlighted in other lenses of practice-based research, the temporal variables are perishable by nature and hard to choose. This lens allows researchers to detect linear patterns and even quadratic forms, but not readily detect spirals that increase and decrease over time.

# Part V Conclusion

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This final chapter concludes this study. The aim of this chapter is to revisit my reasonings of practising the process approach to examine 'how things work' in newspaper organisations. It is a summary of findings derived from this study and my final consideration of its theoretical, methodological and practical implications. It is a rethinking of some urgent, fundamental and practical questions facing newspaper managers at a time of uncertainty and complexity. It also raises a number of broader discussion points concerning the uniqueness of managing news organisations from other types of businesses, and the application of management theory to the newspaper industry.

## Chapter 10: Discussion of the Three Cases and Conclusions

*In human affairs (...) it is pointless to try to predict the future (Drucker, 1997: 20).*

At the beginning of this thesis, I quoted Heraclitus's statement that people cannot step twice into the same river, so as to demarcate the process perspective applied in this study. The statement has been variously translated and interpreted by scholars (Weick, 2010: 104). For instance, Haxton (2001: 51) highlights that the process under observation and the observer are no longer the same, by saying that "just as the river where I step is not the same, and is, so I am as I am not." Kahn (1981) stresses the importance of time in understanding process, saying that "Or rather, not again not later but at the same time it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs" (168). Geldard (2000) gives a general interpretation which includes various translations of the statement, putting that "new and different waters flow around those who step into the same river. It disperses and comes together ... flows in and out ... towards us and away" (158).

Incidentally, this study follows the tradition of people who discuss process by tracing back to 500 BC and describing Heraclitus's statement, and interprets Heraclitus's statement in a different way. In detail, different dimensions of change and strategy have been examined, including the organisational contexts (Chapter 5), managerial and journalistic cognitions (Chapter 6), strategic sensemaking and strategic performances in the Swedish (Chapter 7), Chinese (Chapter 8) and New Zealand (Chapter 9) cases. The empirical, multi-dimensional investigation via a process lens has generated three types of conceptual results — patterns, mechanism and meanings — about the processes of an emergent strategic change in the three newspaper organisations. Focusing on three aspects of human experiences — what people think, what people say, what people do, this research captured some moments in the processes of managing newswork change, and examined them along with my self-reflection as an ethnographer who was engaged in the field where those changes were unfolding and where the people were involved. In other words, this research on the interaction between management and journalism and its impact on strategic performance is a dual process and the

others' sensemaking and experiences about change and strategy intersect with my own sensemaking and experiences of studying those people.

Change is endogenous *per se* (Hernes, 2014), and strategy is situational or “contextual” to use Pettigrew’s (1985) words. This research has sought to employ a multi-dimensional analysis as a means of understanding the complexity of strategic change from a contextual and processual standpoint and generate insights into anomalies between the theory and practice of change (Pettigrew, 2010; Chia, 2010). Organisational researchers have widely acknowledged the role of content, context, and processes in affecting change development, but as Devos, Buelens and Bouckennooghe (2007) criticised, the three factors and their impact to change have rarely been simultaneously assessed. As discussed in Part II Theoretical Framework (cf. 3.5 Pulling different research threads into the theoretical framework), this research incorporates the sensemaking perspective into the contextual- and process-oriented theoretical framework initiated by Pettigrew (1987) to understand the complexity of change, and simultaneously assess the three factors’ role — content, context and process — in shaping people’s response to change efforts (this is discussed in detail later in this chapter). This work has shown the value of such approaches in terms of generating a more dynamic understanding of change, but also demonstrated the methodological challenges such approaches entail.

The concluding chapter is therefore structured into four sections: 1) an analytical summary of the three case studies, 2) the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications derived from the study, 3) limitations of this research and future research, as well as 4) some final thoughts about newswork. It begins by re-stating the research questions and providing a direct answer to each question, which is structured around the similar findings regarding managing newswork change in the three case studies. The aim of this section is to wrap up the key findings of the previous chapters that are developed on a case-by-case basis. As the three researched organisations are dramatically different from one another, in this section, I delineate 'something in common' rather than differences about 'the research triad' — what people think, what people say and what people do. My final considerations of theoretical, methodological and practical implications that derive from the study are then presented. The aim of this section is to sharpen my theoretical reasoning about managing newswork during

strategic change, and to reflect on the possible research projects and the limitations of this study. The last two sections present my suggestions for future research and my personal thoughts to professionals working in newspaper organisations, including newspaper managers, journalists and editors.

## **10.1 Key findings in the three case studies**

This work explores one of the most complex and multifaceted concepts of our time: change. In the opening chapter of this work, I pose this central question to newspaper organisations, namely 'how do newspaper managers deal with newswork change at a time of uncertainty and complexity?' In addition, three 'specified' questions are also addressed in order to elaborate the main research question further. The three 'specified' questions are:

1. How did the managers with a 'strategic' identity — the key players in the strategic planning in the Swedish newspaper — make sense of the emergent strategy and their own strategic practices, and give sense to other employees?
2. How did managers and journalists in the Chinese case respond to the inertial structure — the biggest hurdle for implementing the strategy in their own words? In which contexts did their assumptions of organisational inertia enable or impede their strategising activities?
3. What is the role of mundane organisational and professional routines in the processes of a strategic change in the New Zealand newspaper? How do managerial and journalistic practices impact the emergence and development of organisational and professional routines, and vice versa?

In the closing chapter of this work, the newspaper organisations and I, are in a position to answer these questions. As a young scholar who is learning to understand the complex reality with a dynamic, holistic perspective, I embed the empirical answer as closely as possible within the multidisciplinary theories and perspectives this study has employed.

The extensive interview data has demonstrated the managerial challenges facing by newspaper managers at the researched newspaper organisations. Focusing on the changes in

practice by both managers and journalists, I have visualised the content, process, and implementation of strategic management in the newspaper organisation in a time of uncertainty and complexity. The results in the three cases show that there is a recurring story in the three cases — namely change is emergent, and people’s views on change impact the strategic performance of newspaper organisations. Newspaper organisation is an emergent environment in which managing and doing newswork are parts of the same strategic processes, and that, therefore, they cannot be treated and studied as separate managerial entities. The managing of newswork is a social process of enactment in which both managers and journalists make and give meanings to their practices and in turn make the strategic change — which is emergent, incremental, and idiosyncratic in nature — meaningful and sustainable.

In the Swedish case, strategic managers grapple with different types of dualities in terms of organising the strategy-related content, structure, practice and process. These dualities are perceptual, cyclical and interdependent to each other within an organisation. Among these dualities, the tension between profit and quality is the most pervasive duality that mostly needs to be balanced. The case study illustrates that sensemaking about newswork has positive impacts on strategic performances only when the social goal of newswork is addressed simultaneously with the business goal. It identifies the importance of the continuous interaction between managers and journalists in strategic change and thus calls for managers to become more aware of the journalistic, professional issues.

In the Chinese case, the managers’ and journalists’ accounts about the *tizhi* issue indicate that the liabilities of inertial structure have been overestimated, while the value of innovative sensemaking conducted by the exact people who get involved in the strategic process has been underestimated. The change in journalistic practice is a product of a specific way of organising work. Journalistic practices express — and are expressed by — the organisational processes within which a strategy is formulated and implemented. The case study demonstrates the positive impacts of the past experiences and lessons gained by strategy doers upon strategic performances.

In the New Zealand case, the routines of managing and doing newswork have been shifted from the print to the web, and the focus on time and slow speed has shifted towards thinking in duration. By doing so, news routines work as a source of connections and understandings among managers and journalists and a cycle of cognitions, accounts and actions. These findings underline that decision makers need to be more aware of the changes in the journalistic, professional side and give the time and space which allow quality journalism to be achieved.

### **10.1.1 Similarities of the most different cases**

The three newspaper organisations shared one similarity in the strategic processes of going digital: although they are at different stages of developing digital strategy, middle managers, especially the ones in boundary spanning sub-units or positions, have been losing their strategic influence in the process of restructuring, downsizing and outsourcing of the news organisations. In detail, the restructuring and downsizing in the Swedish and New Zealand newspapers led to a redundancy of copy editors which in turn put news quality at risk, while in the Chinese newspaper, almost every sub-manager changed their formal roles in the organisation, with some even shifting from editorial to marketing.

The finding on middle management is consistent with the previous research which applied a practice approach to explore the impacts of the external environment and technological transformation on strategic performance. It is no surprise that advanced technologies, an ever-changing characteristic of today's society and hyper-competitive market have brought uncertainties and confusion to the management team, and make the study on patterns of management complicated. The hyper-competitive environment impacts the speed and frequency of strategy activities in organisations. As fast and frequent responses to competition require decentralization, innovations which are consequential for the competitive advantage of an organisation have been increasingly performed by the line-managers (Whittington et al., 1999; Zenger and Hesterley, 1997) and managers at the periphery (Johnston and Huff, 1997). Strategy making does not happen in a well-scheduled time and way, but becomes a much more continuous process (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1999). Strategy

is not a static state but a chronic process in which more people are involved and more often, than ever before.

This study draws a similar argument from a different perspective — the role of middle managers in strategic sensemaking and sensegiving. As ‘mediators’ between senior managers and grassroots employees in an organisation, middle managers are claimed to have strategic influence on organisational change and development. However, there is a lack of study on how middle managers enact the alleged strategic influence. Instead of focusing on the imposing of external contingencies on management, this work places its focus on the exact people who are involved in the managing processes, and make the case that strategic sensemaking and performance are tightly coupled interdependencies, and middle managers are at the front line of strategic making rather than strategic implementation. More importantly, the finding is in line with Weick's argument about emergence change as a universal in organisations. As Weick (2012) put it, "organisational change is emergent change laid down by choices made on the front line. ... Within the framework of sensemaking, management sees what the front line says and tells the world what it means". In the same vein, I argue that middle managers who play a dual role in strategic sensemaking and sensegiving, are decision makers rather than decision doers, in a strategic change which is unfolding and even contested.

Media convergence has been widely pointed out by media researchers and managers as one of the most ideal models about 'how things work' in newspaper organisations. Senior executives are granted power and money to seek for a standardised model of convergence to save the declining industry. However, in the researched organisations, such strategic effort was unfortunately put into a wrong place — making a plan of change with a priori intentions to do so, i.e. convergence. Convergence is a commonly accepted concept and an assumed direction of the newspaper's future, while it does not necessarily refer to everyday strategic practices. The managers' view about convergence as a strategic change overestimates the promise of convergence, while underestimates the value of sensemaking and sensegiving enacted by the front line, including journalists, editors, operational and middle managers. In a sense, instead of focusing on planning a strategy to achieve convergence, it would be much more helpful and rewarding for managers to take notice of small actions and trail-and-error

experiments continuously unfolding in the front line, work doggedly to stay in tune with the people who are involved in the strategic change, and value these people's sensemaking and sensegiving impacts on bolstering the strategic performance of their organisations.

Fine-grained analysis of the managers' and journalists' narratives about how they make sense of change and strategy creates a rich picture of what emergent change looks like in everyday organisational life. The way of managing change, strategy, or any organisational phenomenon in a given form has never stayed still, but has not changed dramatically either.

There is a recurring story in the three cases, namely, changes in managing and doing newswork are incremental, continuous and evolving. They are situated accommodations, adaptations and alterations, rather than abrupt disruptions, planned transformations or fresh starts. In the Swedish case, managers were happy to adopt the path they were on. In the Chinese case, there was no technological inevitability towards a strategic change of "All-media Convergence", even though massive government and technological support were at place. In the New Zealand case, sub editors were sacked and journalists were encouraged to be more profit-oriented, which caused a huge complaint about the top management team who ignored and stomped on journalistic pursuit to generate quick gains. In all the three organisations, there was a lack of communication between managers and journalists. Without the communication in terms of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving, managers cannot maintain an accurate view of how journalists construe their moods and moves, and respond with rapid, effective adjustments. And, nor can journalists.

The emergent nature of change, empirically evidenced in the three newspaper organisations, can be best summarised in Orlikowski's (1996) words. His description has been cited by a great number of researchers (i.e. Weick, 2000; Burke, 2017; Tsoukas and Chia, 2012; Pettigrew et. al, 2001) who take notice of emergent change and its effects. As he puts it,

Each variation of a given form is not an abrupt or discrete event, neither is it, by itself, discontinuous. Rather, through a series of ongoing and situated accommodations, adaptations, and alterations (that draw on previous variations and mediate future ones), sufficient modifications may be enacted over time that fundamental changes

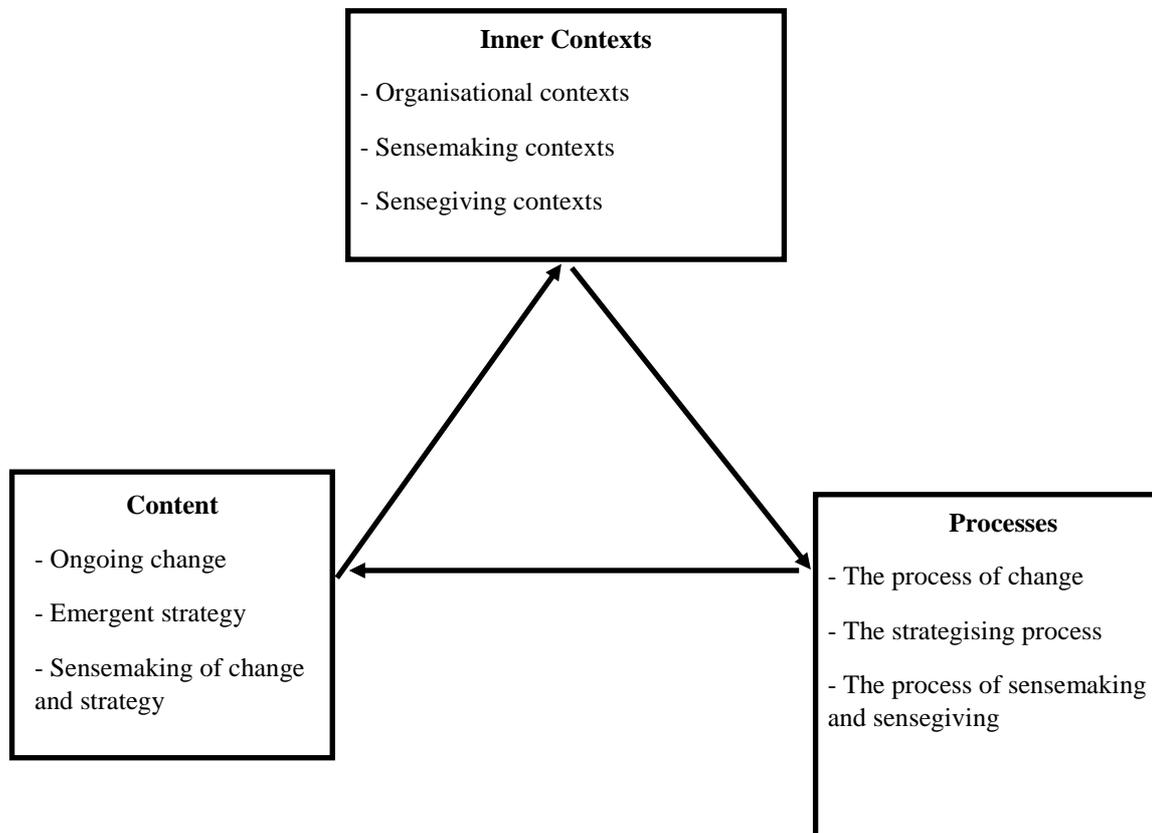
are achieved. There is no deliberate orchestration of change here, no technological inevitability, no dramatic discontinuity, just recurrent and reciprocal variations in practice over time. Each shift in practice creates the conditions for further breakdowns, unanticipated outcomes, and innovations, which in their turn are responded to with more variations. And such variations are ongoing; there is no beginning or end point in this change process. (66)

It seems that there is a tension between the analysis of how people experience strategic change as poorly planned and how they struggle to work in that environment and my understanding and representation about such issues. It is also hard to make a case that either of the researched newspaper organisations made a success in managing newswork during strategic change. Newspapers as a business with great social impact show many faces and perform multiple functions. Newspaper managers face the ongoing practical struggles and the everyday coping strategies, and therefore need to manage their organisations in complementary and systemic ways. They need to address the market and service ethics simultaneously, bear in mind the long-term strategy with short-term goals, and take notice of the unexpected, unforeseen, unexpected small actions that have surprisingly large consequences. These competing and apparently contradictory tendencies of managing newswork *in practice* are well embedded in the writing on such issues, which in turn reflects *our understanding of organisations and organising*. For process researchers, organisation is not a *fait accompli*, “in its sanitized and easily recognizable stable state”, but “a quintessentially human cultural achievement: a symbolic artefact precariously sustained through language, discourse, actor meanings, social interactions, and power relations” (Chia, 2010: 135). In order to capture emergent change empirically and examine how it is constituted, we must to “strive to abandon academic distance, immerse oneself in the initial flux and flow of reality and attempt to understand organisational emergence from within the phenomenon itself” (Chia, 2010: 135). In order to represent complex organisations, we are required to “address the power of ‘ands’ — not only in recognising and managing dualities present as organisations seek simultaneously to build hierarchies and networks, but also as we tackle the double hurdles of scholarly quality and relevance” (Pettigrew, 2000: 262).

## **10.2 Contributions of this research**

The main theoretical contribution of this thesis is that this research is an attempt to develop and extend Pettigrew's broad theoretical framework of understanding organisational change by incorporating sensemaking and sensegiving perspectives and to apply organisational and management theories into journalism studies (Küng, 2008). Beer and Nohria (2000) stressed the complexity of organisational change itself, saying that only 30 percent of many efforts at organisational change lead to good strategic performance, and thus claimed that an integrated theory or framework for understanding change does not exist. The theoretical framework developed in this research (as shown below) is inconsistent with that claim. Instead, the incorporation of different perspectives in change studies is in line with the reality that changes in action and changes in mind are always intertwined.

*Figure 10.1: A theoretical framework for understanding different dimensions of managing newswork during strategic change*



The process perspective in organisational and management studies is in line with my research initiative. It has been a rich repository that contains theoretical concepts, ideas, and topics for understanding and representing organising and managing/organisational and management issues. Despite its increasing popularity in the social sciences, the process perspective, in Langley and Tsoukas's (2010) words, is "a loosely connected network of concepts, explorations, and empirical studies that focus on the dynamic constitution of organisational and management phenomena". Specific to this research, the process perspective poses some theoretical challenge to the ethnographic inquiry about 'how things work' in newspaper organisations.

To understand the complexity of the organising phenomena (including organisational change, newswork change and the organising change), it applies an inductive, ethnographic and multi-dimensional approach. It examines five dimensions of managing newswork change —

strategic cognitions, sensemaking and sensegiving, managerial challenges, routines and boundaries — and investigates the patterns, mechanisms and meanings of the managing processes.

Newswork is defined in this study as a combination of institutionalised and professionalized practices. The research on managing newswork therefore focuses on the balancing between institutionalised and professionalized cognitions, sensemaking, and performance. It combines the interdisciplinary insights into dualities to explore how newspaper managers deal with constant change and uncertainty, especially those related to journalistic practice. It highlights the uniqueness of studying newspaper organisations in transition as an ideal research subject to understand organising and management issues, including organisational change, strategic performance, as well as innovation. It demonstrates the intricacies among various actors in doing a digital strategy, especially the way that managers deal with these dualities and changes journalists' attitudes, behaviours and performance.

It applied the zoom-in and zoom-out lens to answer the call from Pettigrew (1985) that organisational change researches need to "beware the myth of the singular theory of social or organisational change" and "look for continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncrasies, the actions of individuals and groups, the role of contexts and structures, and processes of structuring" (p. 1-2). It also developed Pettigrew's inductive and integrative epistemological stance/idea by examining the organisational issue in three cases which were at different phases of digital transformation in various social contexts. Given huge differences among the three newspaper organisations, the zoom-in and zoom-out lens also enabled me to identify certain patterns, mechanics and meanings from the empirical data which were massive, messy and with multiple levels of units of analysis. To represent the complexity of the tangled world, it applies narrative analysis, using the others' quotes to say about their own deeds.

More importantly, it integrates the sensemaking perspective into the multidimensional investigation on the strategic process to shed light on its hidden dimension — the mindset of people and its impact on strategic performance. The sensemaking perspective is consistent

with the process-orientated investigation on change as emergent rather than planned, strategy making that have replaced strategy implementation, managerial challenges as juggling between profit and content (*Jönköpings-Posten*), structuring instead of structure (*China Daily*), routinising rather than routines and boundaries (*The Press*).

However, the sensemaking perspective does not enable me to give a full description about the above processes from with two focuses of research — namely what people think and what people do. Empirical evidence has showed that the interaction between what people think and what people do are mostly unplanned, unforeseen, and unexpected. The path from strategic plan to effective performance cannot be systematically or rationally created, but certified, by managers and frontline journalists in the news organisations. As Weick (2000: 238) put it, “A new ‘code of change’ could be the recognition that organisational change is not management induced ... Within the framework of sensemaking, management sees what the front line says and tells the world what it means. In a newer code, management doesn’t create change. It certifies change.” Small move in the front line could have ripple effect on either bolstering or hampering the strategic performance. Similar to managers, the emergent nature of change requires change researchers to look for continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncrasies, structuring and inertia, at the same time. The trick here is to make a fit between people’s minds and practices, balance various interests, values and social norms, and work doggedly to stay in tune with the frontline people in the perpetual flux of change.

To return to the broad question of change, I would like to take the side of Weick's view that change is emergent rather than planned. The debate between whether organisational change is emergent or planned (i.e. Beer and Nohria 2000) never ends. The very reason for me to take Weick's side is not to define the nature of change or draw a path of its evolvement, but to embrace and understand change as a process of becoming. Compared with other process-oriented research, the sensemaking perspective initiated by Weick is more imaginative and bolder, as well as more inter-disciplinary. Although it cannot provide a full understanding of 'how things work' in "the world as in flux, in perpetual motion, as continually in the process of becoming" in Hernes' (2007) words, the conception of change as emergent at least sheds light on the underrepresented and unknown side of 'how things work', that is, something about people's minds, about what they think about change and its impact on what people say

and what people do, and vice versa. The sensemaking perspective also enables change researchers to look for continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncrasies, the actions of individuals and groups, the similarities and differences simultaneously.

Methodologically, this research is an empirical application of the process-oriented perspective, concerning strategic sensemaking, managerial challenges, organisational routines, time and boundary issues. To cope with the patchwork nature of the management literature (Küng 2007) and the complexity of the research subject (Pettigrew 1985), namely managing newswork change, the research writing is polyphonous. It has recorded the fieldwork experiences in three distinctive tones: the managers', journalists' and my own as the fieldworker. Narratives in the first two tones are objective and represent what people think, what people say, and what people do in a specific time and space, while the fieldworker's narratives of me are subjective and reconcile my on-the-spot experiences in the field and retrospective hindsight about the field and its inhabitants.

The intersection of different point-of-view narratives have enabled me to demystify ethnographic textwork in this multi-dimensional research on organisational change and strategic process. Especially, my confessional tale, which goes through the whole thesis, is my goldmine of research findings, inspiration and perseverance. What my readers can see is just the iceberg of this study, but what is more important is what is under the iceberg — the becoming of this research. The confessional tale has not only overviewed the key steps of my experience of researching, but also demonstrated my commitment to and pursuit of this research topic — managing journalistic changes. It is important. And this is also the reason I put it at the end of this thesis.

There are still many ineffable dimensions of an organisational change or any organisational phenomenon, such as organisation, strategy and innovation, for observers as a process thinker and process practitioner. When we identify similarities and likenesses from different episodes of change as a process, we re-punctuate the dynamics of change by focusing on the differences that are stabilized, while always failing to discern the subsidiary awareness that produces the stable objects. As Karl Weick (2010: 109) puts it, “You can't step into the same

process twice, nor can the stepping itself remain the same.” Therefore, as a young scholar who seeks to understand social phenomenon with a dynamic, integrative, and process-oriented perspective, what I could do in the organisational ethnography is to record all the accessible data, embrace its complexities and imperfections, and get the most out of it.

Practically, this research, which presents the managerial challenges at work, is of high practical relevance. It is fully in line with Picard and Lowe's (2016) call for more practically relevant contributions to the field. Three implications for managers can be drawn from this study. First, it gives more insights for managers to figure out the embedded but implicit patterns, mechanisms and meanings of managing newswork change from their everyday work and in the midst of uncertainties and complexities, and thus to embrace challenges and changes with more confidence. Ironically, when we immerse ourselves in it, we cannot understand the process. We have to get out and understand it as an outsider.

Second, there is a need for managers to be aware of the underlying logic of doing newswork, namely, news organisations with a journalistic aspiration are destined to fulfil two goals at the same time — making economic profits and serving the public. While digital transformation has encroached on the established ways of doing journalism, managers need to adapt the ways of organising journalism accordingly, to be able to face the challenges new technologies pose. Managerial adaptation is also needed to happen in people's cognitions, sensemaking and sensegiving, as well as practices, as this study shows the particular relevance of individual sensemaking (of managers and journalists) and the strategic performance of the organisation as a whole (as strategic sensemaking is a social process!)

Third, I would like to outline how the results of this study may be of help to managers in the news industry other than the newspaper. Since digital transformation and convergence are pervasive in the industry, managers need to think about change in a more holistic, dynamic fashion. Empirical evidence from this multiple case study shows that change is in fact in a state of a perpetual flux. It does not work as a linear process from strategic planning to implementation (it is not constituted, maintained or changed in a linear process, i.e. from strategic planning to implementation), but happens at different dimensions of organising

newswork and is constantly evolving over time. To some extent, change is not planned but emergent. The biggest challenge facing the managers in the industry is to recognise this perpetual flux and amplify it.

Moreover, as reiterated in the thesis, this research is about management, which intentionally leaves out business challenges, although some challenges, e.g. to look for a new business model to reach a higher performance, are important for the news industry. Instead, it focuses on human beings — the minds and practices of managers and journalists who engage in the managing processes. Therefore, besides the implications for managers, the research has more practical implications for journalists, who are the heart of the journalism profession and of the managing of this profession. The practical implications for journalists will be outlined in the last section of this thesis, and the reason will be explained as well.

### **10.3 Limitations of the study and future research**

Questions and doubts continue, however. So does change itself. Firstly, the physical differences and access difficulty in the three cases have made the comparative case studies fraught and somehow out of focus. The snapshots about some moments in a strategic process cannot provide a whole picture of the process and its coming-into-being. The Chinese case in particular, because of its uniqueness in terms of news policy, media context and organising, cannot provide universal guidelines or an innovative exemplar for its western counterparts.

Secondly, the research is drawn upon the work stories recalled by managers, editors and journalists, and investigate whether their discursive foci, attitudes and practices resonate with each other to gauge effective communication, management and performance. These retrospective data make it difficult to differentiate discourses about strategic cognitions, sensemaking and sensegiving, and strategic practices. Observations on real-time communication and practices would be a better source of empirical data for studying organisational change. There is much to be improved in terms of doing ethnography in newspaper organisations, i.e. longer preparation for the fieldwork, more archival reading before the fieldwork, and a clearer direction of research. Further research needs to elaborate a

methodological framework which helps open the blackbox of strategic change in newspaper organisations.

The intersected way of narratives analysis and data representation lead to simplification of the complex organising and managing issues into some snapshots and moments. They are only parts of the strategic processes *in my sensemaking*. Also, due to the differences in terms of writing style of research report to organisations, the story-based narratives in this thesis need to be revamped and refined. I always I feel that I owe a lot to the managers who gave me opportunities to conduct this research. Although I did not plan to 'give prescriptions' to newspaper organisations for solving their declining problems, I would like to expose and represent such problems to the people engaged in these processes. Thus the practice-related reports to the studied research organisations are the things-to-do after the oral defense of this thesis.

Another issue relates to the changing identity of managers, editors and journalists, who are the key players in the strategic process in newspaper organisations. The definition of being a journalist has been challenged, as more professionals from out of the journalistic field have been hired by news organisations. Some broad but fundamental questions, such as the definitions of newswork, journalism and management, are worth contemplating before investigating the everyday practices enacted by the key players during strategic change.

I would like to propose a number of broader discussion points that can be used as ideas for further research on change and strategy in news organisations. The first group of questions is about identity, i.e. who are the strategic managers and what are they meant to do in a newspaper organisation facing survival challenges? It seems that everyone working on the news time machine is an identity seeker, as the machine runs too fast to follow its original track. Managers, editors and journalists are losing their fixed identities, thanks to the lack of time and space to accommodate and routinise them, and the construction and intensification of an identity has been a psychological and sociological issue.

The second group of questions is about making sense of the people's minds. Since managerial cognitions and sensemaking happen in people's minds, when is a good time to study them? Are there any ways other than retrospective narrative analysis to learn about their happening and becoming? Or is it ever possible to capture and understand their complexities?

The third group of questions revolves around culture, or organisational culture in particular. Although organisational culture is out of the focus of this research (cf. 3.3.4 for the explanation that the organisational culture theory has been left to the side), it has more or fewer connections with the topics discussed in this research, including sensemaking, identity, managerial challenges, structural inertia and blurring boundaries between management and journalism. Especially, the sensemaking perspective, with a deep root in managerial cognitions and the psychology of organisations, examines the cognitive, psychological and interpretive aspects of the individual and the organisation, and therefore has a natural association with organisation culture, which is also concerned with the hidden inner driver of organisational behaviour. Culture and inertia are analysed together, as culture, which is forged through success, creates inertia (Schein, 1992). However, sensemaking and culture are seldom linked in theory, and as K $\ddot{u}$ ng (2007: 147) pointed out, many scholars have bundled the cognitive and cultural phenomena together under the same umbrella of cognition. Ravasi and Schultz (2006) for example examined the link between organisational identity and culture, and found the role of organisational culture as “a source of cues supporting ‘sensemaking’ action” and “a platform for ‘sensegiving’ actions aimed at affecting internal perceptions”. Agreeing with K $\ddot{u}$ ng (2007), I argue that the two areas of scholarship — the sensemaking perspective and the cultural approach — need to be disentangled and then linked to understand organisational change. The two approaches understand organisational change at different levels and with different foci, i.e. the cultural approach focuses on “shared meaning” (e.g. Smircich, 1983) as the glue of organisational culture, while the sensemaking perspective stresses “shared experience” of individual employees. For sensemaking researchers, to achieve effective strategic performance, shared experience instead of shared meaning should be encouraged, as “shared meaning is difficult to attain. ... Although people may not share meaning, they do share experience” (Weick, 1995: 188). In this sense, longitudinal organisational change study with a focus on the link between sensemaking and culture in theory and practice could be a direction for future research.

Last but not the least, given the patchwork nature of organisational and management theory, a more inductive, integrative and non-linear theoretical framework and research design would lead to a better representation of how things work in news organisations. This research is an attempt to incorporate the sensemaking perspective into the process-oriented theoretical framework to understand the complexity of change, and simultaneously assess the three factors' role — content, context and process — in shaping people's response to change efforts. The main reason for combining the above-mentioned theories and approaches together to understand and represent organisational change is temporal orientation — a critical choice with pragmatic and conceptual implications for change researchers. The findings in the three cases are based on retrospective narrative analysis. The retrospective studies, with a temporal orientation on the past recalled by people who engaged in a strategic change, are proved to be useful to generate sharp process conceptualisations and particular useful in comparing the three cases. Specifically, the analysis on managers' and journalists' retrospect about their change-related experiences have enabled me to identify the patterns, mechanisms and meanings in managing newswork during strategic change, and offered attractive opportunities for rethinking organisational theory in more dynamic terms, i.e. organising instead of organisation, structuring instead of structure, and routinisation instead of routines. However, the methodological limitations of retrospective studies cannot be ignored, i.e. the collected data were messy and multi-levelled (cf. 4.5.2 Challenges in data analysis). Time is “central and ubiquitous” for studying organisational change with the process perspective (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010: 11). Compared with the retrospective studies, real-time process research is “more challenging but likely to lead to more precise temporal data and richer understandings” (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010: 14). Time is crucial in organising and structuring newswork, as journalists are obsessed with time (Schlesinger, 1999). The matter of incommensurability among different theories and perspectives with different temporal orientations is still under debate. In line with Lucy Küng's (2007) call for applying the mainstream management theory to the media industry, I would propose that it is worth exploring the uniqueness of news organisations compared to other types of businesses. By doing so, the organisational and management issues in news organisations would be better addressed.

There are the questions which have prompted me to understand change with multiple perspectives, while leaving the essential research object (change), question (who, what), and scope (how) unchanged. I believe newswork continues to change at an unprecedented pace and at various dimensions, making new topics and perspectives for media researchers and professionals to think through. I hope that the account I give here could deepen our understanding about the complexities and implications of managing newswork changes, and highlights the uniqueness of newswork from other parts of the society.

#### **10.4 Final thoughts about journalism**

Weick (2016) addresses the fundamental question of organisational studies raised by Jerry Davis in 2015 — what is the organisational research for? Davis identified a gap between organisational reality and organisational inquiry, as he put it, "the world has changed in ways that outstrip the ability of organisation theory to explain it" (2006: 115). For organising scholars, as noted in Chapter 1, we have three "cannots" and three "musts" — namely, we “must act when we cannot foresee consequences; we must plan when we cannot know; we must organise when we cannot control” (La Porte, 1975: 345 cited in Weick, 2016: 333). According to Weick, the task for organisational research is more for building capacity than solving problems.

I agree with Karl Weick and I would like to ask myself a similar question: what is my research on managing newswork during strategic change for? My final answer is — for quality newswork. Management is more than "settled science" (Weick 2016), and it cannot be well explained in the boxes and arrows, structures and statistics. The moments I captured about what people thought, what people said and how people acted upon change and strategy are in past tense. The ultimate goal is not about to solve the survival problem for newspaper organisations or to help managers adapt to the digital world. Rather, I wish to help build managers' and journalists' capacity for managing and doing newswork by exposing the past problems and existent complexities of newswork to those people.

As this research started with a practical question, my answer to the research question is also practical, standing from the journalistic point of view. I depict the journalism crisis from the

management perspective, with the hope of illuminating the hidden dimension of the interaction between journalism and management. This is a social process of learning the norms of everyday work from others and those from me as a fieldworker. In other words, the last and ultimate contribution, or to say, the heartfelt goal of this work, is about journalism. It came from my journalistic experiences of the past 10 years. I experienced an urge to study journalism, especially how to make it better, when I was covering a terrorist attack in a small border town in China in 2011<sup>67</sup>. The moment was a mix of emotions: I was terrified and shaking when I saw innocent people being stabbed to death in front of my eyes; I was proud and feverish after I hid myself in a ward near the scene and completed a 3,000-word cover story; I was disappointed and frustrated to learn that the story would not be released until three days after Xinhua News Agency reported an 'official' coverage. At that moment, I felt powerless, as an individual female journalist covering a breaking news beat in a censored media environment. From that moment, I knew I would like to do something about it. That moment still lives in my mind. It is the moment that drove me to decide on this research topic, put in time and effort, travel several times to the fields in Sweden, China and New Zealand, and conferences in Canada, Germany, Portugal, Australia to address the importance of this research, making it meaningful and persuasive for newspaper managers.

Somewhat ironically, my past experience of covering breaking news, the research topic, and my experience of researching it all share a common thread. They all deal with some unexpected, uncertain, emergent and complex events in the reality. To describe this reality, we, as researchers, can apply a journalistic approach to cover the unexpected in an objective, balanced way. But to understand it, especially its importance to journalism, the management of journalism and our society, we need to view it from the managers' perspectives, because besides journalists themselves, they are the people who direct the future and provide an alternative perspective on the past and current situations.

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67 The series of terrorist attacks happened in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China on July 30 and 31, 2011. On July 30, two people hijacked a truck after killing the driver and drove it into a crowded street. Once there, the suspects jumped out and, wielding knives, hacked passers-by at random. The next afternoon, a different group of assailants set fire to a restaurant and again began attacking people with knives in downtown Kashgar. At least 14 people were killed and 42 others wounded (Shao and Zhao, 2011; Shao and Sun, 2011). Disappointingly, the story I wrote on July 31 was not publicised in China and is no longer available online.

The risk of inaction is greater than that of action. There are many reasons that we do not act. Our brain works against logic. We need to make our goal a priority, in part because it is easier to brain-numb yourself into the trivial, uncertain, unforeseen things in front of you, and forget about your identity, your goal, and dare not re-invent your identity, no matter whether you are a journalist, a strategic manager, or a media management researcher, and no matter what goal you want to achieve, a better story, a good business, or a persuasive thesis.

As a media management researcher with a journalistic background, I have voluntarily reinvented my approach to understanding the field throughout the research, which is partly reflected in this writing. The little confessional story in Chapter 1 tracks down the processes by which this research came into being — full of difficulties and anxieties in the field, and the constant brain-numbing iterations between field and desk. However, it is those down and struggling moments that make this research meaningful. Given that ethnography is in nature a partial representation of reality, ethnographers have no ways of 'learning the ropes' without being in the field, and acquiring of knowledge from the field is a process, which results from the interactions involving researchers, their theoretical framework, their field and the people or any research subject under review in such a field. Part II records my headwork, a term that I borrowed from John Van Maanen (2011), namely, my reading of the change literature across disciplines, the theoretical framework and my experience of making the theory choice to make it fit the research question. Part V embodies the textwork — one of the three "constitutive" tasks of ethnography, namely the narratives I encountered during the fieldwork and the storytelling which are meticulous, dramatic, surprising and/or ironic, and my experience of iterating between field and desk. I tell the stories from different aspects (i.e. contexts, dualities, routines and boundaries), different perspectives (managers' and journalists'), and in shifting tones (objective and subjective). They are my attempts to make this research meaningful. Since there is no ending in organisational changes 'out there', neither does my epistemology end from the iterations between desk and field.

Therefore, to conclude this story which has already happened and does not conclude in reality, I would like to cite the remarks of Tyler Knott Greyson in the preface of his anthology of poems titled *Chasers of the Light* (2012: 2). As he puts it:

Over the years as a photographer and a writer, I've found a lot of ways to express inside things in an outside way, and with these poems, I've come to see that they all share a common thread. Whether the poems live on found paper, or come about through blacked-out book pages, or accompany pictures I've taken, they all try to do two things:

Dissect big things, giant gestures, grand emotions,  
into small glimpses, tiny fragments.  
Take miniature moments, stolen seconds, blink-  
and-you'll-miss-them glances, and make them  
enormous.

The miracle in the mundane, the epic made simple.

To study change, the researcher should not be tired of trying different approaches. This way of concluding this writing is somewhat poorly designed, and is at odds with the inductive, interpretive and grounded rationale of this research. However, reality sometimes defies logic. What change researchers can make is not to firstly plan and then verify, but to be light chasers — never being tired of chasing, applying different approaches to chase the twinkle left by encounters and capture the trace of happenstances in everyday organisational life. Perhaps this is a conclusion in itself.

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## Appendix 1: List of semi-structured interview questions for journalists and editors

- Please tell me your job title and briefly introduce your daily work
- Do you know that the newspaper company you are working for has a convergence/digital/multimedia strategy? If yes, what is your perspective/idea about the term ‘convergence’?
- What are your attitudes towards the convergence/digital/multimedia strategy of your company?
- To what extent you’ve put the convergence/digital/multimedia strategy into practice?
- Since the company started adopting its convergence/digital/multimedia strategy, have you experienced any change in your daily work? Please specify.
- What is your comment about the current result of adopting the convergence/digital/multimedia strategy?
- Have you experienced any obstacle/stress when producing news in the multi-media way? If yes, please give examples.
- What is “a fully-converged newsroom” in your mind?
- What do you the main goal for your company’s convergence/digital/multimedia strategy, for the financial goal or for the professional goal?
- Do you think there are any potential to further implement the convergence strategy? And how?
- Which is the more important quality for a multi-media journalist, general communication skills or professional journalistic skills?
- Do you think convergence will save newspapers? Why?

## Appendix 2: List of semi-structured interview questions for newspaper managers

- Please tell me your job title and briefly introduce your daily work
- Do you know that the newspaper company you are working for has a convergence strategy? If yes, what is your perspective/idea about the term ‘convergence’?
- What are your attitudes towards the convergence strategy of your company?
- To what extent you’ve put the convergence strategy into practice?
- Since the company started adopting its convergence strategy, have you experienced any change in your daily managerial work? Please specify.
- What is your comment about the current result of managing and adopting the convergence strategy?
- Have you experienced any obstacle/stress when managing the convergence-related journalistic work? If yes, please give examples.
- What is “a fully-converged newsroom” in your mind?
- What do you think is the main goal for your company’s convergence strategy, for the financial goal or for the professional goal?
- Do you think there are any potential to further implement the convergence strategy? And how?
- When you recruit entry-level journalists, which quality of candidates you think is more important, general communication skills or professional journalistic skills? Do you think the requirement of entry-level recruitment has been changed since the company started adopting the multi-media strategy?
- Do you think convergence will save newspapers? Why?

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet

### **Information Sheet for participants**

The role of managers and journalists in performing convergence strategies in newspaper newsrooms

Researcher: SHAO Wei wei.shao@pg.canturbury.ac.nz

You are invited to take part in this research project. Please read this sheet carefully, so you can make an informed decision about participation. If you wish to take part, please sign the consent form. Please keep this information sheet.

I am interested in your experience of managing and/or implementing convergence strategies at the newsrooms. I want to know about the organization's news-making networks—the people and the sources—that you have found most useful and contribute to the management and/or implementing convergence strategies. I will interview a total of 55-60 people. I may ask you to recommend me to other people I could interview. I will not ask you details about your own personal circumstances, except where you want to raise them as relevant to talking about how you find out information.

You will be interviewed by Shao Wei on your own. The interview should take about 45 minutes. If you agree, it will be recorded on an MP3 device. You will receive a copy of transcript which I will ask you check for accuracy. I will also send you a summary of my research findings at a later date, and you are welcome to send me further comments on reading that.

Your interview will contribute to material to prepare journal articles, conference papers and a briefing of CERA. Your participation is confidential. That is, your name or identifying details, other than your job title, will not be published. The MP3 files and transcripts will be stored in password-protected computers used by the researcher at the university. Printed versions will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Shao's office.

If, during the interview, you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to pause the interview, withdraw your participation or bring someone else along to a fresh interview. You may also withdraw your consent to participate at any time until publication of a journal paper or presentation at a conference, in which case recordings and transcripts will be destroyed. All transcripts and recordings will be destroyed after 10 years.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

Further information, queries or any problems

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects) you can contact the research:

SHAO Wei  
University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140  
Tel: 03 364 2987 Ext 7536  
Email: [wei.shao@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:wei.shao@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

## Appendix 4: Consent Form

### Consent Form

The role of managers and journalists in performing convergence strategies in newspaper newsrooms

Date:

I have read and I understand the attached Information Sheet.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Information Sheet.

I have been given a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form to keep.

I understand I have the right to ask to stop the audio recording if the interview at any stage.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details.

When you have decided the specific nature of your participation in this project please tick the boxes below to indicate the specific nature of your consent.

I consent to being interviewed

I consent to my interview being audio recorded

Participant's name (please print):

.....  
.....

Participant's email or contact number:

.....  
.....  
.....

Signature: .....

Date.....

Please give this form to the researcher before your interview begins.

## Appendix 5: Interviewees at *Jönköpings-Posten*

|                     |                          |                |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| CEO                 | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 11 August 2014 |
| News manager        | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 12 August 2014 |
|                     |                          | 13 August 2014 |
|                     |                          | 16 August 2014 |
| Feature news editor | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 14 August 2014 |
| Senior news editor  | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 15 August 2014 |
| Web editor          | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 15 August 2014 |
| Digital manager     | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 15 August 2014 |
| Senior journalist   | <i>Jönköpings-Posten</i> | 16 August 2014 |

## Appendix 6: Interviewees at *China Daily*

|                      |                                     |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| HR manager           | China Daily                         | 18 August 2014    |
|                      |                                     | 20 August 2014    |
|                      |                                     | 10 September 2014 |
| Middle manager       | China Daily (web)                   | 20 August 2014    |
|                      |                                     | 22 August 2014    |
|                      |                                     | 25 August 2014    |
| Journalist           | China Daily (cover news)            | 21 August 2014    |
| Journalist           | China Daily (feature news)          | 21 August 2014    |
| Journalist           | China Daily (print)                 | 21 August 2014    |
| Middle manager (B)   | China Daily (marketing)             | 22 August 2014    |
| Editor/Journalist    | China Daily (web)                   | 23 August 2014    |
| HR                   | China Daily (print)                 | 23 August 2014    |
| Journalist           | China Daily (feature news)          | 25 August 2014    |
| Journalist           | China Daily (education news)        | 25 August 2014    |
| Middle manager       | China Daily (All-media News Centre) | 25 August 2014    |
| News editor in chief | China Daily                         | 26 August 2014    |
| Journalist           | China Daily (cover news)            | 26 August 2014    |
| HR                   | China Daily (web)                   | 27 August 2014    |
| Middle manager (A)   | China Daily (All-media News Centre) | 27 August 2014    |

|                           |                             |                  |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
|                           |                             | 28 August 2014   |
| Middle manager            | China Daily (copy centre)   | 28 August 2014   |
| Middle manager            | China Daily (copy centre)   | 28 August 2014   |
| Journalist                | China Daily (court and law) | 28 August 2014   |
| Web Editor                | China Daily (web)           | 28 August 2014   |
| Executive Editor-in-chief | China Daily                 | 2 September 2014 |

## Appendix 7: Interviewees at *The Press*

|                     |           |                 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Senior web editor   | The Press | 1 December 2014 |
| News manager        | The Press | 1 December 2014 |
|                     |           | 4 December 2014 |
|                     |           | 5 December 2014 |
| Specialist reporter | The Press | 2 December 2014 |
| Specialist reporter | The Press | 2 December 2014 |
| Specialist reporter | The Press | 3 December 2014 |
| Web editor          | The Press | 3 December 2014 |
| Web reporter        | The Press | 4 December 2014 |
| Specialist reporter | The Press | 4 December 2014 |
| Middle manager      | The Press | 4 December 2014 |
| Copy editor         | The Press | 4 December 2014 |
|                     |           | 5 December 2014 |