

Abstract:

**Informal structures, Self-censorship, and Management:
A look Inside Vietnamese News-making**

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Dis- and misinformation and false news are seen as vital threats against free journalism. This paper is about informal structures and corruption disrupting the news-making in Vietnamese newsrooms. In Vietnam, journalism is affected by repressive media laws with tightened regulations of the internet, and by informal structures in the newsrooms where nepotism and corruption are present. In developing countries, challenged by repressive legislation, there are many examples of how the presence of nepotism and bribing is seriously affecting the news reporting. (cf. Aggarwal, 1989; Lodamo and Skjerdal, 2009; Akabogu, 2017)

Launched in 1986, the economic reforms, doi moi, aimed to create a 'socialist-oriented market economy' in Vietnam. Since then, the government has initiated several policies and legal reforms to improve its public administration system. (Buhmann, 2007) The societal development has generated a growing income gap between the rich and the poor, and a growing informal sector. Tromme (2016) describes a widespread corruption in the welfare system and Transparency International ranked Vietnam as 107th of 180 countries on perceptions of corruption in 2017. Previous research examines the growing informal economy sector and negative effects of development causing inequality and environmental challenges (Hansen, 2017; Leducq and Scarwell, 2018; London, 2015) and harming the industrial development in the nation. (Cong Van Di, 2004; Masina, 2010, 2006)

This article examines the construction of journalists' practices in Vietnam by contextualizing the informal structures and corruption in the newsrooms. The key concept builds on the multi-level order of corruption perspective and will examine what implications informal structures have in some of the biggest and most influencing newspapers in Vietnam. (cf. Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Marks, 1993) The results indicate that informal structures are widespread in the news-making and that it enables corrupt behavior along with self-censorship. This results in a breakdown in the newsroom where trust and credibility are seriously affected.

[305 words]

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